Oral History Number: 262-008, 009, 010
Interviewee: Vivienne Schrank
Interviewer: Eloise Sagmiller
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Project: Montana Women Pilots Oral History Collection

Vivienne Schrank: Frank Wiley was one of the barnstormers that gave me my first ride. It was on this field where we have the airport now. The strange part of it was I made up my mind that, at 11 years old, that I wanted to be a pilot. I never changed my mind on this. I never (?) got to fly and I flew off that same field when I had been married 15 years and had a ten-year-old daughter, that long of time. We had been gone ten years, not out of Montana. I came back and it seems so funny that I flew out of that grassy field and I couldn’t get any cooperation with the county commissioners because they weren’t pilots. It was strange.

My husband wasn’t too much in favor of me flying. I knew him when we homesteaded out here. We came out here.

My dad was in the show business and some people insisted Crookston, Minnesota, that he have an opera house. He said, “That would be so expensive to make a building into an opera house.” Crookston is the size of Miles City. So he was trying to tell them. He said, “Well we’ve got 400 people here that really want an opera house.” So he said, “Well I have those several theaters,” he said to my partner, and I, and he said, “Well you could probably take some of the profits from them or even quit them and you could be home more than traveling.” That kind of favored my dad because my mother’s folks had separated and divorced because he traveled. He got thinking, “That might happen to me. And I’d just soon not.” I was just three years old at the time.

So they went ahead with the opera house. Of course, they quoted it what it would be and they knew they would have to take some of the profits from the theaters of course. Of course it was twice as much as they quoted, just like it is today. They always give you something and they tell you, “Well they had to put a pipe here. They had to do something there.” They’ll get you. That’s how they get around it. At that time, mother’s older sister who had run away from home when they separated...he sent them to the convent at first when he wouldn’t be home. So she took the baby with her, went back to her folks back east and finally got a job at the ribbon collar in Boston. The thing at that time, women didn’t go in offices or anything. Like he said, “What do you want to do?”

She said, “I’ll go to my folks, but I want to take the baby.”

Well, he got angry at something that was very silly. She wanted to go to the Governor’s Ball and he was going to take her back. The second time he came back he was still going (unintelligible) got her clothes and then he finally came back the third time and he said...That was way ahead of time that they knew about this deal. He said, “I’m not going to be able to make it.”
She said, “I’ve got my clothes and everything.” So what happened, he told her to go. She said, “Can I go with a group that we go with sometimes?”

He said, “Yes go ahead.” So she did.

When she went there, why the governor finally decided that they’d have a waltz, and give a prize for it. This fellow comes over that had a girlfriend there with their group. He said, “Would you dance this dance with me? Should we try for that prize?”

She said, “Well you have a girlfriend. You should dance with your girlfriend.”

He said, “Well she doesn’t want to. She’s just learning to dance. She suggested you.”

She said, “Well I’ll have to hear it from her.” So she came and begged her to. She thought, “It would be really fun if we got a prize. I think you can. You dance really well together for our group.” So my grandmother liked to dance anyway and she did. They got first prize. The governor was going to get the first dance with the pair that won. He pinned roses on her lapel and fixed her up and danced.

About that time, a fellow came over with some roses and he was giving them out to these good-looking girls, trying to make a hit. The last girl, she knew him, but she didn’t like him. She said, “Where did you get those roses? I didn’t see a flower shop up here.”

He said, “I’ve got my ways.” She wasn’t going to take the rose from him. She didn’t like him. This one girl asked him, she took a second rose and thought she’d give it to her, you know.

Anyway, she says, “Why didn’t you like him?”

She says, “He just boasts about crashing parties, and I’m sure he crashed this one. I don’t think he was invited.”

So right after that was announced, the governor announced that his partner had lost her roses. He hadn’t pinned them on well enough. He said, “Well if you’d be kind enough to pick them up before they’re stepped on, and bring them back.”

She said to this girl, “You see what I mean?” So they went back and she said, “I’ll talk to him and everything. You come along with me. Each one of us will take a rose separately. It will be more impressive.”

So what happened, when they got up there, she talked to the governor. She said she was sure she knew who had passed those roses out. She said, “He boasts about crashing parties and all that.” So she said, “That’s the reason we came up and reported it like this.”
So he says, “Do you know him and his name?”

She says, “Yes.”

“Would you introduce me to him?”

She said, “I’d be glad to.” She knew what he was going to do. Well she says, “I think the ladies should stay with Mrs. Thompson so he won’t get wise or think of something.”

So they went down there and she said, “The governor would like to meet you.” Of course he just pops up like a horny toad, you know. He crashed the party and even the governor wanted to meet him.

Then he said, “Well you know, I’m going around checking the tickets because we have just so many invited and the caterers have to know just exactly what to make.”

So he said, “Those that I don’t know, I have to go around and ask them to see their ticket stub.” Well of course, he goes around like he knows he hasn’t got his ticket stub, you know.

He said, “Gosh I don’t know where I lost that.”

He said, “Well we can find out because it’ll be in the book over here.”

He said, “Oh well I didn’t go over that with that lady. I talked with someone that did say to go over and get my name.”

He said, “That won’t make any difference. She’ll have everything down.” So they went over there and of course his name wasn’t on there. They weren’t missing a ticket.

He said, “They must not have counted that right.”

“Oh yes,” he said, “they did.” They’d had the beginning ticket, they had the end, and they went through it three times she said. She would put down the number by the name. So they couldn’t fool him on that. They were smarter than he was on these other people that didn’t have it that well. So he said, “The only thing I can say, you can’t prove anything.”

“I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

He said, “Well what if I decide I don’t want to leave?”

He said, “Well I have my ways.” He brought two of them over there and they took him out.
This fellow said, “Well I won’t vote for you when you run for office again.”

He said, “I don’t want you to. I want only truthful people to vote for me.”

So what does this fellow do? He asks for—my grandfather was also a senator—he asked to talk to the senator. He said, “Well he’s out of town.”

They said, “When will he be back?” He rushed up there and told him all about this deal. My grandfather was jealous I guess and thought, “She was dancing and getting first prize and all this.” So he gets back to her.

She said, “Well I can tell you what happened.” He still believed the bum instead of her. Finally, she said, “Well I don’t know what to do. You’ll have to ask the folks that I went with.”

He said, “Well they could let you out and you could go out.”

She said, “No, I couldn’t because our older daughter was awake when I paid the girl. She wanted to know all about it.” She said, “We sat on the bed and we visited.” He still didn’t want to believe her. So she said, “Well I don’t know. I’ve always trusted you when you were gone, but now that you’re acting like that and believing some alley bum to your wife, I don’t think we have much of a marriage.” That was when she decided, and they divorced.

Anyway, he sent them to the convent and then they’d be home. The other one ran away and she finally came back about the time this came up with the opera house. The first night they had a huge crowd. Then the next night they didn’t. These people that wanted it wasn’t there and my dad just thought, “They probably had rented some cabins out to the lake and that happened to interfere.” The second time, second Sunday they weren’t there.

While he was gone, my mother went to Catholic Church. They were Catholics. That young priest said that the members there couldn’t go to that show. I guess he thought it was vaudeville. That was risqué, you know. He was young. He talked with the older ones and got a big donation from my grandfather, or my dad. So he talked with the older fellows because they got such a big donation. He said that his wife was kind of upset with him and what he should do. They said, “We can’t lose that donation. So we’ll just tell them they have to study their Bible on Sunday and it isn’t (unintelligible). Don’t let them know that you didn’t know.” Sunday they don’t want them to go to entertainment.

So my dad said to my mother, “Well I’m going to take the full donation.” He didn’t know that they had made up their mind on that. He said, “I’m surprised that you have taken all of this. I didn’t think you wanted to take that dirty money that I made on the opera.” He said, “Oh no, you’re just supposed to study your Bible on Sunday and not go places.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
Of course a lot of them went places anyway and weren’t stopping people like that. My dad said, “Just let them have it.” He went back to where my mother was and he said, “Well that’s the end of me giving my big donations.”

She said, “Why don’t you tell them that you want some of it back.”

“No that’s what I wanted to see.” He said, “I’m no longer a Catholic. They’re more interested in money than people doing things.” He thought they had gone kind of crooked on it. So that’s the way it ended.

My aunt came back. She had run away you know. She could see that she had done the wrong thing because my mother wouldn’t go. She was back. Four years younger, my aunt was kind of stuck on boys and wanted to go out and do what she wanted to do. I think she’s a lot like my grandfather. I think she’s self-centered. My mother wouldn’t go. She was bashful and she wasn’t interested in boys. That’s when they’d be home, otherwise they’d be with the nuns, you know, while he was gone.

So she could see, she was keeping track, this aunt was. She could see that my grandfather, she took care of his things and bought a piano and gave her piano lessons and he went and sent her to Smith College for girls. They took wealthy people to send them there. She was just losing out on all kinds of things. So she came back then and she heard that her father was ill. She came back to reap the money. She was just that type of person. The baby turned out like my mother, very nice and kind person. She stayed with the grandparents.

The thing was she started a rumor and told my mother that her husband, my dad, was carrying on with one of the girls from the opera. My dad got it back. My mother was upset and it made him so furious that he said, “Well this is the end of that. She probably came back to get the spoils from your dad because I think she’s an awful lot like him, all self-centered and trying to break up our family. We just need to get away from here.” He knew that they’d have to quit, anyway, because they were going down there to quit before they were broke.

The only nice thing about it was they didn’t carry children around with them. When they came into a place, children would learn easily. I got to act in an opera several times at three years old. So I was musically inclined and my mother was afraid I was going to sing with the one group. I didn’t. She thought I’d start in to sing. They went up on a bridge and it was kind of a (unintelligible) deal. She had me because I didn’t mind. She said that when I started looking up, she thought for sure I was going to do it. This lady said—they were sitting in the box—she said, “Well don’t worry about it. They always laugh when little kids do something.”

So that’s the way that was. My dad had been thinking about what he’d do. So he talked with his partner. He said, “I hate to do this, but we’re not making money.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
“We’ve still got plenty of money yet. So when the contract’s through, we’ll just close and find something else. I’ve been thinking about the railroad that’s coming out to Montana. Do you want to go that far away?”

He said, “Yes, I want to get just as far away as I can from that sister of my wife’s before she breaks us up.” That was when they planned to come out. He came ahead of time and took up the land. Of course the railroad didn’t come through here, but it was a good thing. We stayed a good town. The other ones died off. So it worked out just fine.

My dad wasn’t a farmer or rancher so he had to pay for that. He had the only car, the Hudson, the cherry red Hudson sport car. They thought we were quite wealthy. I think they had enough money here to have one. They had wagons and sulkies and things like that, you know. The next year the sheriff got a car. I don’t know what kind it was. But as I said, I was musically inclined so I liked music soft and I wouldn’t like a noisy thing that you could hear three states away, his car. So you know those two cars in the county had a head-on collision.

It was Christmas Eve and dad was looking for a Christmas tree. We still lived out in the country. So he finally found a man that was looking for one, too. He said, “There’s one about 20 or 25 miles up north.” He said, “We can’t go up there in a car, but I do have a rig that can go up there.” So they drove up to that one place and went up and got their Christmas trees, and when they came back it was 20 below zero. They were both pretty cold.

So there was a bar here, the (unintelligible) salon. So my dad says, “Let’s go in and get a hot totty and warm up.” They were pretty cold. Well there were some fellows that were celebrating all afternoon instead of at home decorating the trees or helping their wives. That kind, you know. They were going to get the Frenchman drunk. I never did see my dad drunk, ever. He even ran the bar; the Hell Creek Bar here was ours. Anyway, he went out to start the car and got away from them. You had to light it with carbide lights from the outside. They missed him, and they got him back in there again. So the next time he got away, he decided he was going to not light it up because it was twilight, you know. He knew that the sheriff was in town with some passengers. He just knew he’d follow along the road and then it turned. It went down over a little hill, just a little drop. And then he’d stop there and light the lights.

Well, when he went down this street, why the sheriff was in Miles City with passengers. He heard this awful noise. He turned to the right automatically because he had driven in Minneapolis and around. He knew. Of course the sheriff said, “Well (unintelligible) is a family man. He’ll be home.” This was Christmas Eve. He got home earlier. So he turned into his house into the left. That’s when they had the collision. He broke three ribs, put him through the windshield and he was laid up for six months. That made it kind of bad. He finally had to go to work. He went into Miles City because they needed a fellow to run the machines. He was with show business so he knew. So he had to do that.
He laid there. For six months, he was home. The sheepherder that was there...This lady had taught my mother to cook. She’d have them over for Sunday dinner, all the bachelors. They just thought she was wonderful, you know. So they took care of things while my dad was laying there in bed.

He went to Miles City. Finally this one man, liked my dad quite well, he lived in Miles City. He said, “You know I’m thinking about having a meal (?) route. How would you like to join me? What we could do, you’re a family man and I’m a family man.”

He said, “Yes I couldn’t move my family in here. I had to make the money first.”

He said, “I can’t afford to pay in with you on that.”

He said, “That’s all right. You pay in at your convenience. We’ll meet at the halfway house and we’ll just trade cars. You’ll go home and be home with your family. I’ll be home with my family.” That’s what they did. They did passengers on that. The winters got so bad that they decided that they didn’t want to continue that.

So that’s when he went into other business. He finally went into the bar business even. This one man was getting drunk all of the time. He was giving all of his drinks away. He wanted somebody else to take over for him. He said he’d give him the first rent free. My dad says, “Well...” I guess he wanted 1,000 dollars towards the lease. He said, “Well, I’ll take that money that I don’t have to pay you. I’ll fix this up a little.”

“I don’t think it needed any fixing.”

He said, “I’m afraid you have been drunk. Look at the ceiling. It’s about to fall through.”

So he fixed that all up and changed it around. They had open house and they had quite a big crowd. Of course they had tickets and you get one drink free and that’s all. It did so well that this man got mad, and he was going to ask for his rent. He said, “I spent the rent. I fixed up your bar for you.” So he didn’t know what to say. They didn’t have things written down then. He wanted it back. He says, “Well you can finish out this month and then I want it back.”

He says, “Okay, but I’ll probably go across the street and start up one there. I’ve got to be in business.”

“Well I don’t think you’ll do anything with that old shack over there,” he said.

Dad says, “Well I may fix it up.” They all liked my dad, even though he wasn’t given (unintelligible). He did open house and he fixed that up real nice. They went over there. My dad did well and finally he had to leave. That’s what started. I’ll tell you, that’s the way we got started here.

7

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
Eloise Sagmiller: Did he have a name for the bar?

VS: Hell Creek. Hell Creek Bar. They had Hell Creek up there. He paid 1,000 dollars for the sign. It was a beautiful thing. That same person with the signs taught me in Miles City when they finally, I took...We were gone ten years then. We were married, and we lived here two years. Then they took the bank out, and they hired my husband. He got into the banking business right out of high school. They hired him to go to Forsyth, and we were here two years.

The thing was, I was starting to write stories when I was here. I got A plusses on all the stories in school. The teacher says, “No you take music instead. Major in music.” I had a chance to study some story writing material by this wife of this man that was in business with the mail and all of that. He was a good friend of ours. She got TB, and we had to go to Denver. So she gave me her material. You could write in. I couldn’t write on it. I could study it. So she gave me that to read.

Then when I went to school, they were short of teachers. They put a course in here—of course, this was ahead of myself now—back in school I was a sophomore. They were trying to get a three year contract to get normal training teachers to come up from Billings and teach. They needed teachers. There was a shortage. So these teachers would have to find out how many wanted to be teachers. I didn’t want to be a teacher, but I was my own boss at 14. My dad let me by my own...I was 15. I was a sophomore. I had already figured out what I’d do when I would graduate. I found out that teachers got twice the salary as any other job.

I did work when I was 13 in a store. I did real well. I worked there until about 15 and then they got, he sold out and they wanted to take me to Grass Range. He was moving his family and everything. This other man was terrible. He’d get right over your shoulder and see if you’d lose a penny. I made mistakes with him, and I never made mistake with the first one.

You had to learn that all by heart. Nothing was written on it. He turned me loose on that. The first day, he took me around and memorized all of this. After lunch, he went around again with me, and I had forgotten just two of them. Then I got that. Then the next morning he tried me again and I knew all of them. So he said, “Well you’ve done all right. I’m going to let you be in charge of the store.”

I said, “You’re kidding.”

He said, “No. I like to gamble, and I gamble in the afternoon. I know you can take care of it. I’ll let you know who not to let charge.” He told me and the first man he mentioned I just couldn’t believe it. He was such a wonderful man. I thought, “I don’t like to grow up. I’m finding what these people are like.”

A fellow comes in, a cowboy. He said, “I want a can of snus.” He hadn’t told me that they had any snus there. I couldn’t think of what to say to tell him. I said, “Well, there’s a counter here...”
with all men’s things in it. Maybe you can come over here and help me. I’m just starting work here and find it.” He found it right away. It was a can of snuff. I even knew the price of it, you know. I never said anything. So pretty soon Mr. Vanoy (?) knew he had left me at the store and he wanted to see if I was getting along. He came back and I said, well I told him about this. I said, “Well I’m just starting to work here. I think maybe you could help me find it.” He said, “You’re going to do all right.” He just laughed about it.

Finally a couple of days later a man came in, a stranger. I had been waiting on other people. When I went to give some change back, he told me it was wrong. “I don’t think so.”

He said, “Oh I want to get something else anyway.” So he kept changing his mind, this, that, and the other thing. I thought, “What in the world is the matter with that man anyhow?” Finally he told me, he could tell me how much he had come back.

I said, “No you can’t, because I’m doing it the way my boss wants it and the way I learned it in school.”

“Well you sure didn’t learn it very well,” he said. He said something about me being pretty stupid or something.

I said, “No at school we had a contest and I’d win first place. I got through first and I was always right.”

So he said, “Well I don’t think you make a very good clerk. I think you’re dumb.”

I said, “As long as you’re handing out the bouquets I’m going to tell something I think about you. You surprise me a lot.”

He said, “What about?”

I said, “Well I never knew a man change his mind as often as you did in the store. I thought it was only a woman.”

About that time, my boss comes in. “What’s the matter?”

“Well your clerk can’t make change for me.”

He says, “Okay I’ll do it.”

I said to him when he come along, I was sure I made it right. I said under my breath, “Would you let me keep my change so you’ll see how far I’m off and what I did wrong?”

He said, “Yes.” So he paid him off and he didn’t say anything then.
He went out and he said, “Well when I come back here again, I know who I’ll go to. I won’t go to you. I’ll go to your boss.”

I said, “I don’t think you’ll go to either one of us.” I think it startled him a little bit from what he was doing. I said, “Because this is a small town and you’re a stranger. I don’t think you’ll be coming back here.” He must have thought I knew he was a conman.

He went out and Mr. Vanoy just laughed and laughed. I said, “What are you laughing about?”

He said, “I think you scared him for a minute. I think he knew what you were.” He said, “You know what happened? Mrs. Kimball up at the store up here, she was taken for five dollars. I heard that the drug store was taken for ten dollars. I rushed down here right away.” He thought I’d be there helping him. “You outwitted that man. Wait until I tell everybody that my 13-year-old clerk outwitted a conman.”

So that’s the way I started out. I taught right after I was out of high school. They put the course in. You had to have 80 or above. I didn’t know what I had. The folks never pushed me to be the brightest one. They let me be my own boss when I was 14. I had that year to figure things out. My dad had put 5,000 dollars away for me to go to the university. I thought, “Yes I’d like to teach. I can get twice the salary with that,” I was figuring out. And I could be home longer. I had such a good time with my dad and mother. I guess I hated to leave. Then I got some money put together on that. The strange part was that I found out whether I could, I was hoping, I didn’t know what my marks were. They said 80 or above you could take it, otherwise you couldn’t. I had a 90 so I was lucky. So I thought, “Well I’ll probably have 80 or so when I get through this college stuff.” So I studied real hard. I came out with a 90, too. I was sure glad, but I worked for it. So I went out to Freedom to teach.

The funny part of it was I had a teacher ahead of me. We went out six weeks. One little boy was supposed to be out doing sports. Two other teachers were out there. I was too. He went to the (unintelligible) to go to the restroom, which is (unintelligible) toilets, you know. When he came in, he went back in to see something. I noticed he was in there an awful long time. I went in there and he was taking the keys and pushing them up on the piano. You know how you can ruin the piano. I caught him and I really gave him the devil. I put him down and I said, “You aren’t supposed to do that. You could ruin the piano. You really would have been in bad with your folks. That stool isn’t supposed to be touched because it twirls around. You could get hurt on that. Why aren’t you outside?” He said, “I don’t like sports.” I said, “That doesn’t matter what you don’t like. You’re not spoiled here. You have to do what you’re told.” So he went out.

When I saw the teacher I said, “I think I did something wrong. I scolded this boy and I’m just practice teaching out here. I was going to talk to you first, but I got thinking. I think I better get him while he’s done it so he’ll know what he’s done. He’s liable to forget and it won’t mean
anything.” She said, “You did exactly the right thing. You’re going to be a good teacher.” She was the one that come over to call on me after that.

I said, “I had a hard time teaching after you.”

She said, “You did?”

I said, “Yes you gave those kids all As and I had to give them what they deserved.”

She said, “I bet you hate me.”

I said, “No, I knew you were a good politician. I knew you were going to run for office for superintendent of the schools.” So we got laughing.

Then she said to me, “You’re studying stories?” Just like I told you I had gotten better marks.

I said, “With the teacher...No, I should major in music.”

So she said to me, “Well there’s a detective book over there. That must be for your husband likes.”

I said, “No I like it.”

“Did you ever think about being a detective?”

I said, “Oh no, those girls are girls of the street a lot of them in these detective stories.”

“They don’t have to be. They volunteer. I know because I’m a detective in Chicago.” She was going to throw her material away. She said, “I’ll bring them over if you’d like to read them.”

I said, “Well my mother says ‘opportunity only knocks once.’ So I better take them.” I did enjoy them and I didn’t intend to be a detective at all, you know. It was just an idea.

My husband was, our bank went out and he was invited to go to the bank in Forsyth. We’d been married just two years there and a two room shack. All we could get, we had a cute house picked out and finally their grandparents or something were ill. They had to move them in. By that time, people had all moved in for school. We didn’t have a dormitory then. So we had to take what was left, and we stayed there for a couple of years because we couldn’t see any better. We got along all right. My husband liked to give parties and they’d sit on the kitchen table and on the bed and all over. They had a good time. We went down to Forsyth and—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
VS: —the sectional. It’s going to be Wyoming, North and South Dakota, and us. I don’t think Idaho is in with it. I think it’s just the four of us. They generally several of us go together and do it. It’s not the big convention. This year I went to the big convention in Las Vegas. It was because it was close to California. Most of my relatives are there. My daughter is a nurse there. Our end, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren and so it was close enough on the end. What they were going to have out at Oregon was the same as I had two or three years ago for Washington. It wasn’t the same. Most of it was the same. It was very good material. They had some extra, too, of theirs. I couldn’t go to both of them. I couldn’t afford all that. I saved all winter and now I shoot the wad. That’s the reason he said, “Did you go down there to gamble?” I went down there. It was the 11th time I had taken in a world convention including one when I went to Australia and New Zealand.

ES: Now you were telling us about having a fight with your husband in Forsyth—

VS: I said what it was. He was surprised. I had fought with him a lot when I went with him. He tried to boss me. He did before I was even engaged to him or anything. I said, “This is going to stop.” He went with me so he could get away this girl that trying to date him all the time. He had been engaged and had broke up. She had reminded him of that.

Well anyhow, I made up my mind that I’d get along with my folks when I got married. That’s how it went. I scolded him. I said, “What’s the matter with you? You’re just so insecure. You were raised in the banking and you had that coming.”

He said, “That wasn’t very much.”

I said, “Well that doesn’t make any difference. Look what we’re paying for our...We pay 12 dollars for the house with an outdoor toilet.” You had to wash in the bathtub, I mean in the washtub and all that sort of thing. Pioneer women, I admired my mother so much putting up with that after all she had. She loved it just away from all this other stuff. I said, “We only pay 12 dollars there.” That’s all it was worth. That was the first thing when he told me we were going to Forsyth. I said, “Have we got a bathroom?” That was the first thing I said. That was the most important thing.

I hated to leave home because mother was here and she had gall stones and I would rub her. It hurt a lot, but she was taking medicine from Dr. Ferrin. So finally it turned out that after I went there I was worried about her. Dad waited on her a lot, but he wasn’t a nurse. I would rub her back. She was taken from Dr. Ferrin who was a very good doctor, very good practitioner. He won, Dr. Ferrin won first place in the whole United States with another man, and they should have given him a double end as long as they paired. This other man was 70 years old and Dr. was in the 60s. They gave it to the 70 year old one. My husband wrote up the story on that. He never would go into story writing with me.

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
I went ahead and wrote a novelette. I started from the top to the bottom instead from the bottom to the top. I don’t do anything like anybody else. I do most things by other people. I’m congenial. I didn’t want to go down to the pulp paper because at that time the pulp paper magazines stories were awful. They looked awful. So I wanted to get into slick paper. I said, “If I start from the top to the bottom I’ll stop somewhere there in slick paper.” I wanted one of those magazines. I sent a novelette in first. I was kind of proud of it. It was called *Country Cousin*, taken from that little story of the mice, you know the country cousin? We had gone on a trip and I did that. I got some rejection slips one from the *American Magazine*. They said that, they put a note in it, which was nice. I got a lot of rejection slips and some of them would write a note with it.

They said, “You have story writing ability. The only trouble with yours, it doesn’t match our stories. So from now on, read your magazine and find out which one you know the most about and send in a story then. You’ve got a chance to get in. Don’t give up.”

Well that made me feel good to get some word from them. Then I got another one. Finally, this girl that read the *Country Cousin*, she said, “That was the cutest story. There’s only one thing wrong with it. It’s just too good. You have to have some obstacles in it. Put some obstacles in it and send it back.” So I was going to do that. I had it in the trunk, seasoning. A story is not written, it is rewritten. You have to bring it out and you think you have everything down on paper. You’ll find out that most of it is right up in your head that didn’t get down on the paper.

Well I had that novelette, I put it in the trunk. I had a half of a short story put in the trunk. I hadn’t finished that. I had one finished of a short story. It was for *True Story*. I had so many confessions when I was in the seventh and eighth grades from kids because they knew I wouldn’t tell on them. Oh I had a gall of them. The other ones didn’t want to listen to their stories. Well, it paid off.

I wrote this and my husband had a fit when I was going send that one off. Of course we had that little fuss. I said, “From now on when you get a raise you take it.”

He said, “You’re sure domineering about that.”

I said, “I think I should be. Did you think about that 30 dollars compared to 12 dollars? You’ve got to believe in yourself. You don’t have to get what everybody else has.” The funny part of it was I was going to send my story. I said, “I’m going to send that story in when it’s finished.”

He said, “Well you won’t get anywhere. All you got was a rejections slip.” He was mad at me for fighting with him. He knew it was the truth when I told him. He didn’t like to face it.

I said, “Well I sure won’t get any place if I don’t send it in. Just for your information, I’m sending it in.” So I did. They accepted it.

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
He said, “You’re going to get into trouble telling those stories.”

I said, “No I’ve changed them a little bit.”

He said, “Yes but it’s your name.”

I said, “My name I put a nom de plume.” I forgot. I’ll have to look in the trunk to see what it is.

He said, “Yes but you can’t say Jordan.”

I said, “No but if you ever look in the atlas and see how many Miltons there were as towns?”

“No.”

“Well, take up the atlas and look.” I knew there were about eight in different states. I said, “I’m not putting the state down.”

“Well you thought of everything haven’t you?”

“Yes. Well, here’s the rejection slip, Milton. They get me my manuscript number 55, we want more stories from you.”

I got pregnant and I started to have a back ache with it. I was typing, finished that second story like that. My husband came home at noon and said, “I want you to quit sending in stories.”

I said, “What’s the matter with you? I thought you’d be glad.”

“I don’t want my wife making more money than I am.” So my back hurts so bad that I let him think he won. I said, “Maybe you’re right, honey.” Well, I took this detective training and the funny part of it is, he finally got transferred to Billings with a big raise. Boy, he took it.

Of course, I was bedridden for three months after I had the baby. I had a quack of a doctor. I had never been sick a day in my life, so I had no idea that I had, I had a nurse there that would hold my hand because they couldn’t freeze my breasts. I had ten boils right around there. Some of them opened before they were ripe. You know what a pimple is like. I wanted to scream every time that door opened downstairs. I was so upset. He finally said to me, he heard we were going to Billings, “Well there’s two ways of thinking about that.”

I said, “Well why would they change? You told me that it made a much healthier baby if I nursed it even on that one bad side.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
About that time, he opened up one of these. He said, “Oh, your breasts are like grapes.” He
doesn’t even touch the other. Well that time he punched me so hard with this darn thing, it
looked like one of those pens way back when they had the feathers on them, you know. Then
he put cream (?) in there. Oh that was terrible. She’d hold my hand because I was out on the
sofa. There was nothing to hang onto. They don’t want to freeze your breasts because it would
hurt so coming out. I don’t think it would hurt any worse than that did. About the time he did
that, the scissors fell off. He didn’t have them on right. He thought I threw them at him. I know
he did.

The nurse said, “You should have.”

So he (unintelligible) it down there like this and my husband said to me, “Do you want to wait
until this is all finished?”

I said, “I should say I don’t. I told you how much they hurt me. I want to get out of here as quick
as I can.” He didn’t believe me of course because men, when they get sick, you know, they’re
awful sick. A woman can take a lot of pain. I could. I’d had it. So he had to stay there and hold
my hand while the nurse was going to go with me. He was transferred to Billings, and he was
going to take our car and a few of the things of ours. We didn’t have much. That was a
furnished place, you know. He went and it was 30 below zero. I was worried about him. I was
getting up every day and I would stand up just a little while. I was so upset that I couldn’t play
with my baby.

The thing is that the hospital was crazy because I was in there two weeks, one of the two week
deals. I was wiggling my toes all of the time and fixing my legs because I knew I was going to go
home pretty soon. They never came in to help me walk. Whenever I was going to ask them, the
little sound would mean an emergency coming in all the time. So I wouldn’t get to say anything
to them. So I made up my mind that I was going to teach myself to walk. So I would hang onto
the bed and go around.

Well, the third day I did that, because I was going home in another couple of days, the nurse
comes in and balls the devil out of me. “You could fall.”

I said, “Well it’s about time I would. I’ve been going around like this for three days.”

“Well why didn’t you call us?”

“Every time I’d get ready to call you, the bell would ring. That would mean an emergency.” So I
thought, “Well I’ll hang onto that bed rail. I’ve got to because I’ve got to go home.” It was a
good thing because my daughter cried for about two hours when I went home. I was on my feet
taking care of her. Then that other started up. So of course we had to get the doctor back.
He'd never seen anything like that happen before. Well, I didn’t doubt it then, but I sure doubted it later. So when he told me that it would heal quicker, well then that scissors fell and he thought I threw them at him. I told Milton, “No, I want to go to Billings.” So he had to hold my hand the day that the nurse went home to pack to go with me. We were going down on the train and he was going to take the car. He could hardly stand it himself. He wasn’t even getting picked on. When he left he said, “My God, why didn’t you tell me?”

I said, “Honey, I told you and you didn’t believe me.” So he gets the best doctor that there is in Billings and when he got a hold of him his name was real popular, he was a bone specialist.

So he laughed and he said, “No, don’t feel bad. I’ve got a clinic and I’ve got a doctor that I can give you.”

Well, I went up there. I was bashful when I was in high school. I was popular because I was bashful. The boys didn’t like girls chasing them. I used to get the pick of the crop, but I never realized that until afterwards. I thought it was because Mother would give me a new dress every time something went on because she could. I said, “Don’t do that anymore.”

She said, “Well I kind of like to do that since I put on weight. I can see you in that dress and see what my shape used to be like and everything.”

I said, “I know but you’re making enemies.” I didn’t know they were mad because I was getting all the best boyfriends. I never thought that until way after that. That was life.

The funny part of it is that one girl that my husband quit and wanted to go with me was a friend. He was a senior when he came back. I was a sophomore. The seniors would always have to have somebody of the junior class. They wouldn’t have enough in a little town like this. So when he read that article, that story, right away he saw me in the part of that little French maid. He said it to the teacher that was going to be the director. She said, “Do you know Milton that’s what I thought when I read that? I could see Vivienne in that part.” I was a sophomore then. They never picked them out of sophomores. So she said, “I’m for you and you are. We’ll have to take a vote at the class.” Well this girl that wanted to get back with Milton again, she thought he’d have to take her home after these practices you see. She was all against it. She said, “We’d be ashamed having a sophomore in that.”

The teacher says, “Well we have to take a vote on it.” They all voted for me to be in it except her.

So we went in there and I was supposed up on the chair with her in this rocking chair. Then I was supposed to fall out when I got ready. Then I would scream, you see, I was afraid of mice. Instead when we were up on that chair, she said, “You would have to be in this.” She pushes me off backwards and it hurt me, you know. I wasn’t ready for it. I’ll be darned if I was going to get back there on that chair with her again after that. I saw the coffee table. I thought, “Well
that will be solid.” So I went over there and wiggled. It was one that was given to the school. They hadn’t fixed it up yet. I knew I was going to eventually fall off of the thing anyway. I spotted a chair, a straight chair. I let it wiggle a little bit more so it looked like it was real bad. I pretended and fell off of it. I pretended like I was falling off of it, which I did. I would have anyhow. The people just roared. I think they told them ahead of time that there was going to be a sophomore in it and it was the first time. They just roared. I thought, “Well I’m glad they thought it was funny.” I got on the chair and was all right.

So that was when I came out, why my husband said, “You stole the show tonight.”

I said, “No, I think your former girlfriend helped me steal the show.”

“She wouldn’t have done that.”

I said, “Yes. She said, ‘You would have to be in this play, bang.’ And I went off backwards and hurt myself. I wasn’t going to get up there again. I wasn’t going to fall down again on that.”

He said, “I suppose you hate her pretty much.”

I said, “Well, I did right at the time she did it and she hurt me. I’ve kind of forgiven her now that she’s made me the star of the show.”

So that was the way it went. I had been in a lot of plays. This teacher had seen me, too. I started in real young getting in things. I think that helped a lot. Although I was very bashful for in between, oh when I got about nine years old, Mother started me when I was eight years old in school because I had to walk in three and a half miles. That’s seven miles a day with two other kids. She did start me at six because she’d know in the spring there’d be snakes and things. She wanted me to be old enough to take care of myself.

So I only got six weeks of, six months of schooling for first grade because winter set in. Then they got a rig that took us, kind of like a car with (unintelligible) in it. You couldn’t see out. Of course when it got cold, they had to take a sleigh. This man was driving it. He never did get us to school on time. He had mules so that they’d be sturdier than horses. He’d go along and we had hot bricks put in it to keep our feet warm. Of course our overshoes were not lined like they are now, fur liner or anything. Our feet would finally get cold. They’d cool off. So we’d jump out of the thing, the rig because he was just pickling around and yodeling. So as soon as we’d get out, he’d act like he was going to run away from us. Then he’d whip up the mules. We’d get so mad we could have boxed his ears. He never got us to school on time. So my dad finally said to Mother the next time, I was going to be in the third grade, he said, “Well let’s go in and rent a house. This isn’t fair to Vivienne. She’s going just six months each time.” She said, “Well okay.” So they did.

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
So Mother went down with me when I went in and the teacher had been there before and was a very good teacher. She knew, she was going to wonder why I was ten years old in the third grade. The rest of them were about eight. So she told her why. She said, “Well, we’ll see how she does. Maybe she will do well in a little further. She’s probably retained an awful lot being older.” So in two weeks she put me in the fourth grade. The only mistake she made was she didn’t hold me in the arithmetic in the third grade. The thing was, that bothered me from then on. I was studying something else, but I could have taken that home and studied it. I should have had that with it. That was the only thing that she really did wrong. The rest of it was all right. It bothered me and of course when you get in the eighth grade, you get a complete of it.

So I was having trouble. Mother was going to help me with my arithmetic. She was so well educated to set the table right and everything, but she was not a teacher. I couldn’t get it from her at all. It exasperated her because she couldn’t teach me. She finally, we never said bad words to one another at all. She finally got so exasperated she said, “Well you’re just dumb.” She’d never said that to me before. I started to cry.

My dad came home. All he had was a sixth grade education. His dad took him out because he was playing hooky and he went to the lumber mill. He had a head on his shoulder of mathematics that you wouldn’t believe. When he went there they were going to give maybe ten dollars to the rest of us. It was a big salary then in those days. They were going to give him five dollars, just a sixth grader. When they were making out something, he could tell them what the answer was. When they saw that he was doing that and they said, “Well, we said we’d pay him five dollars but he’s worth ten dollars to us. And he gets them right.”

When we go over it afterwards he gets them. He came in when I was crying. He said, “Honey, I’ll teach you how.”

My mother said, “Well you just had sixth grade. I don’t know. She’s just in the sixth grade.” I was in the fifth to sixth grade.

He said, “Now you’ll be taught differently than I learned. That was many years ago. I can teach you to understand that I’m sure.”

He started in and I began to get it right away from him. He was a regular teacher in it. When he got through, I said, “Well, I’ll look in the back of the book to see if it’s right.” He told me what the answer was.

He says, “Well, put down the answer I said first.” I did and we went to the back, and it was exactly right.

I said, “Dad do you see that in the air? I mean away from your eyes, a problem, do you see it lurking there where you can see those numbers?” Isn’t that something?
Well, you could tell he was sharp. He had all his amusements here after we went broke after he was laid up for so long and still picks himself up and does it. He was bright. I guess he didn’t need the education. He wasn’t lazy. He rode the freights. There were 14 in the family. 12 children and the two parents. They couldn’t afford three cents a pound for sugar to put up jelly. They had wine at the table. They were French. Isn’t that something? He went on those freights and he took some extra money along with him. He didn’t know what he was getting into running freights, and they just rolled in the first night I suppose. So he had to get off. Of course you couldn’t get a job then and he made as much money as he had, but he wasn’t taking it with him. He sent it home to his folks because he knew they could use it with all those children.

ES: What was his last name?

VS: N-A-U-L-T. Pronounced “no” but they didn’t know how to spell it. So they called it Nault and they still spell it N-O-L-T and K-N-O-L-T. They still didn’t know how to spell it. It’s the wrong spelling. So it was one of those things. It was marvelous that he was as bright as he was. He wasn’t lazy either. This will be something that hasn’t been told that you have.

ES: What was his full name?

VS: His name was Schrank. Shrink, shrunk, shrunk. I’m the one in the middle. Oh you mean my dad’s?

ES: Yes your dad’s.

VS: Yes, Joe Nault. Joseph Jess Nault. Mother’s was Thompson—Irma Star Thompson. We got away from that aunt anyhow. She was going to break up everything. She ended up with cancer and didn’t end up too well. They finally made up anyway and they finally came up. She apparently married a man and were a regular fashion place. She was all (unintelligible) was terrible. She was the brightest one in her class and everything. Mother just took it. She didn’t think she was very bright. She was slower to get it. She said my aunt would take the top line when they were at the convent. I think the nuns were getting kind of wise that she was doing something. “She’d take the title and then she’d go down two or three paragraphs and she’d read down there. So they’d ask her to explain herself. She’d say, “Well there’s a part in it that I liked real well.” She’d go down the third one or something and fool them. She was smart that way. She was awful, Ines. She must have taken after my grandfather. Of course I thought he was wonderful. When I was three years old I had my picture taken with him and he just fussed all over me, you know. I didn’t know him as he was. I think Ines took after him.

The baby that went back with them and she finally grew up and everything and got married, she was like my mother. She was the one that I got all this stuff from when she, she didn’t want me to know she was in a wheelchair toward the last. I wheeled that stuff to the neighbors before they bought from because she’d lost her husband. He had, he lost a leg and everything, a diabetic or something condition. They looked after, they were right next door to one another.
They were the best of friends and when (unintelligible) and I go down and visit her, we visit my aunt. It’s an hour and a half drive and three hours around. Those people were so nice one time they thought we were going back and we wouldn’t have lunch. They had a lunch ready for us and everything. They were wonderful people. So they come over and the one girl worked real hard, the daughter. She was grown up and had been married and divorced. I don’t know what that was. She had a daughter and that daughter got married and had grandchildren. Anyway, she was with her mother in this other house. The mother was younger than my aunt. You wouldn’t know it. They had, my aunt didn’t show her years because she died when she was 91. She had the brightest brain you ever saw. She should have written stories. She could write me an 18 page letter and you could hand it to anybody and it would be interesting. I tried to get her to write stories.

Heavens, what am I talking about? I haven’t got to it yet.

This lady that’s going to be at the sectional deal, Ann Pellegrino, she flew the route of the Emilia Earhart route with the same type of plane. She talked to Bill at Butte at the big banquet. I didn’t know that. I was up in at Billings. I got up there at seven o’clock in the morning to go to Butte. I had gone around with a mail truck this way and that way. I had to get there because you’re supposed to. I went with the fellow that’s just 30 miles up. My gosh, he was charging me so much. Finally I just went around, I took the uncomfortable route and saved some money. I was up there at seven o’clock and didn’t get started until two in the afternoon before it was open enough in Butte that an airline could go in.

This Ann shows up around noon. The only good thing it did was with my trick knee. I had to go to the bathroom lots of times. I had a lot of coffee that morning and had coffee at the place where I stayed, you know, the Rimrock Inn. I stayed there for so long it’s just like I’m family. This one girl that’s a good friend of mine has been through three ownerships. She’s still there. She’s real good. We always have a good time when we go up there visiting and everything. I’ve got acquainted to them.

It was nice. I didn’t know she was going to speak. She was sitting in the other row. She came in around noon. They tried to get me to go to Spokane. I said, “Well, for heaven’s sakes! That man is expecting me up there.” This is Mike Ferguson, the one that’s followed all my flying. He’ll call Billings because that’s the way I’ll come. I said, “I don’t know what I’m gaining going to Spokane if I still can’t get in there I’m going to be an awful long ways away from Jordan.”

Then they wanted me to go to Bozeman. I said, “No that won’t do. The weather, that’s bad. I only know one couple there. They’ll already be driving. They’ll be gone.” I said, “I’m going to stay here. I’m going to be a gambler. I’m going to stay here.”

This lady said, “I’m going to be a gambler too just like her. I’m going to stay here.” We went up on this smaller airline. They wouldn’t let them in.
But a man came in and he said, “It’s all right at Billings.” I thought he had come out with an airline or something. I didn’t ask him. He said, “It’s clearing up just fine.” I don’t think he was a pilot or anything else.

They were going to try it again. I wanted to find out. I found out, asked the girls that were with the airline. She said, “Oh no, we can’t go because we’re responsible for passengers.” So he must come up with some other kind of plane. It was rotten weather.

This gal spoke there and when we came back, she was ahead of me. I didn’t even know she was speaking. When I got there, my luggage wasn’t there and that man promised me that the Northwest, you know, that they were going to have it on there. They knew the weather was like. When I got there, it didn’t show up. I was waiting and they had a minibus come to get us. I let them go because I hadn’t gotten my luggage yet. Here was this Ann sitting there. A fellow comes up to get her, and she has him wait. She saw me waiting there. Then he said, “Well the plane hasn’t left yet so they probably haven’t unloaded yet.” Well it finally took off. He said, “Well, they’re going to get a report.”

I said, “Well that man said he was going to get it on.”

He said, “Yes he said he was going to get it on, but he didn’t. There’s another one coming three hours later.” So we went over and put a claim in.

Then they said, “And you ride with us.” It was just walking distance to where we’d stay there. It was so icy and carrying your luggage, I could never have made it that way. So we went up there. When I got there they had a room for me, they didn’t have a room for me there at first because I always order about a month in advance. I ordered a month and eight days in advance. I was waiting for Northwest or some of them to answer me. So they were slow in doing it. They already sold out 151 rooms. I got this man; I didn’t know how old he was or anything. And I talked to the girl first. I asked to get a cancellation.

She said, “We can’t do that.”

I said, “Well I’m a personal friend of the man putting on this show.” Well I was, Mike Ferguson was putting it on you know.

So she said, “Well I’ll put you to the desk manager.” So she did.

Of course I said the same thing. I was going to use everything I could to get a room. He said, “Well I’ll check. They can’t do it, but I’ll check to see if anyone checks out. I’ll put you in.” So after that, I thought, “Uh oh, he said that but I wonder if he will.”

So pretty soon he called me and...oh, at the time he said, “It might be by the Laundromat, but I’ll get you a room. I feel like throwing somebody else off and get you a room.”
I said, “Well you can get me by the laundromat. Shall I bring some Tide and we’ll wash clothes together?” He hadn’t seen me to know I was older. I think he thought it was some young person, kidding him like that. He called me four days before this came. I kind of backed on that deal, that story. I already had ordered a room at the War Bonnet. I wanted to have a room. Gee, you know, cold weather and we had free transportation but you knew you’d have to take your coat to check it in. You had a (unintelligible) to fall in different rooms to go. It would be a terrible thing. So I thought, “Well I’ll call just two days before and see if I’ll stay with the War Bonnet or not.”

He called four days ahead of time. He said, “I’ve got a room for you. It’s not by the laundromat either.” So when I got there, he was a young, good-looking man.

He said to me, “Do you want me to put you up in Mike Ferguson’s room?”

I said, “I don’t think (unintelligible). I enjoy a fellow with a sense of humor.”

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
Tape 2, Side A

ES: —about the formation of the 99s here in Montana. Do you remember how that happened?

VS: Well that happened when Orva Dan...I didn’t meet her right away. She came out here from Iowa and had a ranch, wood stock and everything. It was 45 miles east of Jordan. I didn’t meet her right away. When I did, I was flying, you know. She was a true 99. She was from Iowa. I said to her, when she said, “We should start a chapter up here.”

I said, “That sounds like a good idea.”

She said, “I’m so tied down and everything.”

I mentioned that maybe we should go to North Dakota. They were a chapter. They were western. The states, they have different ways of what they do.

She said, “That’s a good idea.”

I said, “I can fly up there in my BT Cub because we do our work at night. I can fly up to Williston and get back in time.” So I volunteered to do that.

It was like a tea party. They didn’t have any project or anything with it. I thought, “Gee this is a long ways to fly just to go have a cup of coffee.” I mean I wasn’t able to make a distance like that in Montana. It’s big. It’d be a long place to go. So when I came back I said the only thing I could think of, “They were nice people.”

Of course there were a few little gossippers like there are. That didn’t mean anything to me. I didn’t know people in the corner and that kind of interrupted the meeting, which I didn’t think should be. They didn’t have a project. I said, “I think we have to have a project so that we have something to work on and not be just a meeting and a cup of coffee.” So she thought that was a good idea. So we were going to do that. Orva Dan was the name of the gal that was the AOP. Gladys Crider, she passed away two years ago, she made her and me members at large. You had to be sponsored in and you had to have your private license. We both did. Gladys only had about 40 hours when she went on that trip to Canada with me. I had 400 or over 400 hours. So I was a commercial pilot already then. You had to be a private pilot to get into the organization of the 99s. It had to be approved. I went up there and got that news for her.

When we got back, “You know when I was there, one of the gals there, they have a (unintelligible) Minot and have an airport there.” She said, “Are you going to take in anymore meetings? I wish you would.”

I said, “Yes, I’d like to. My, it’s quite a ways away.”
She said, “I thought of that. And I made up my mind that I was going to ask you to be my guest. So you can stay one night, and we can go back the next day in your plane.” So I accepted to do that and get a little bit more training there. So that’s how it started out.

When we were going to go to Billings for our first meeting, I had helped Orva with the letters. She said, “Where are we going to get the names of all these who have privates?”

I said, “Well, I know that. That’s up in Helena.” You can see Montana in the Sky, and it has who passes the privates and everything and the names. So we got that list, and I helped her write because it was an awful lot to write. She was a busy woman. I remember we’d have so much fun, we girls. We’d organize them. The things I was saying in them to get them interested.

We had a rain date. Billings had storms. So we went to Laurel. We each took our plane because we thought it would look like more planes there too, to make it look more inviting. I took a gal with me that she was, she was a semi-cripple. I just took her for the ride. I took my plane and Orva took her plane. Gladys took her plane. There were three planes there. There was quite a turn up and it looked real nice.

I didn’t know this (unintelligible) real well at that time at all. I knew she lived at Missoula. I knew she hadn’t done anything for the 99s. She hadn’t worked like we had or anything. She brings an inspector down there with her when we went up for election. I put up Orva Dan’s name. I said she was the true 99. It didn’t sink through those girls too much. They didn’t know anything about it. They were kind of half listening to it. They wanted her to be the first chairman.

I wasn’t as good of a politician as the inspector was. I knew him quite well and everything. I kind of liked him. I hated the deal to have to make a fuss because he started to introduce her. He wasn’t supposed to have anything to do with the 99s. I learned that by heart, that constitution already. I could have answered any of their questions even. I wasn’t going to start a brawl at the first meeting. Here we had a bunch to make a nice starting. So I didn’t say anything. I thought that Orva would probably win anyhow because I said it.

They didn’t understand, the girls. Norma won by just one vote. I was a little disgusted with that. I say to myself, “Should I say something to him and just eliminate that whole thing and say ‘That has to be thrown off’?” No because we got all these people on to join it. It would be starting out with something going wrong. So I didn’t’ say anything. So I right away nominated Orva again for vice chairman.

We can’t be called president or vice president. We can be called secretary and treasurer all right. The one that rules all of the world, they are called president and vice president. Then from then on, it can be...the rest of it’s all right. We’re called chairman and our duty is really president, just like the vice chairman. It’s just like the vice president you know.
So I nominated Orva Dan again for vice chairman because I thought she had to get in there somewhere. I was really upset about what had happened. I wasn’t as good as a politician as the inspector was.

Anyway, I guess Gladys knew this because I didn’t want (unintelligible). She immediately nominated me. She was good because she was a farmer’s wife and they go to these things. She knows how these things go. She knew what it was all about. She was a good politician. She said, “I was shocked because I had already nominated (unintelligible) I was going to have to withdraw. I think that she should be in here because she’s the only one among us that’s a commercial pilot. She knows her constitution so you can ask her any question you want and she could answer. She’s learned it by heart. She’s the only commercial pilot among us.”

That made a very good thing. I said, “I feel like withdrawing. I’m sorry. I appreciate it. You’re a wonderful politician. I appreciate that.”

Orva Dan was very gracious. She said, “No, I’m going to withdraw.” She could see then how things might go. So she did and said, “Well you’ve got a phone and everything. It will be better.”

Well, when we got through this meeting and everything, pretty soon this fellow comes up to us and he says, “I don’t think I’ll join the 99s today.” I couldn’t imagine what he was getting at at first. He said, “I’m Beverly Palmer.” I thought it was pretty cute of him to make a special trip up there to say that. They didn’t know the difference with Helena.

I said, “I appreciate a man with a good sense of humor. I bet you fellows that are named like women have quite a time. It’s a good way to treat it like you are to have a sense of humor. Some of the men get kind of angry about it.”

When they got through, I looked at Orva and he was gone. I said, “Orva, I was thinking of the letter I wrote. We girls will have so much fun.” We got hysterical laughing. They wondered what we were laughing at. I knew it was kind of impolite. I said, “I don’t think he’d appreciate it because it’s something that happened just to us. It wouldn’t mean anything to you.” I let it go with that. We just got hysterical over that. I thought, “Isn’t that something that fellow coming?” I was thinking of what I had written to him. I thought he was clever. I really thought he was a clever man for that. My dad has such a sense of humor and I really just appreciated him right well. That was our first meeting.

After that, why, they wanted me to get rid of our president—our chairman—when I got in. The thing is that she only held out a year. A lot of people knew things on her that I didn’t know. I started to learn things, and I wasn’t even trying to investigate. I knew nothing at all. I heard about how she got to go to Cuba for being a good lady horse rider, you know, at Bozeman. There were many girls that were very good and she wasn’t worth a darn. What she did...I found out about, and I was ready to believe it. I don’t generally believe gossip. I think you have to prove it. She told things on other men that she knew about them, whether she was sleeping
with them or not or somebody else. If they didn’t get her in, they were on the board. She would
tell their wives. That’s how she got the trip to Cuba.

She didn’t do anything at Missoula at all. Here we had done all this work, and she gets this
guy to go down there. So she must have had something on him. He was a pretty decent guy. If she
did, she manipulated herself because she was just one of that kind.

The next time they had election, I wasn’t there because we had a sectional there in Billings. It
was during the time she was chairman. She was good enough for that, but she didn’t have any
reports of the meeting or anything like that. She didn’t have any projects or anything like that.
She just held a meeting. Of course, she had been in the office and had been secretary and
things like that. She could do that sort of thing. I was a little burned that she got that and didn’t
have anything to do with it, didn’t do any work.

I wasn’t too cottoned up to her at all. I didn’t know her that well. I was trying to give her the
benefit of the doubt, but I didn’t think it was right to do what she did. Then I don’t know why
we had this so soon, but we did have a sectional during the time of that year. I went over and
helped out with it. I was vice chairman, you know. I went over and helped with one of the girls
that were there. I come home a day early when they were going to have election of office or
something like that. I figured this gal was going to be in two years. You could be in two years.

I had company. Milt’s brother and wife came from Spokane. He had written to them and said
that I had to be gone at that time. They didn’t stop. She was one of those. If she wanted to do
something, everybody had to cope to accommodate her. I think she was a little disgusted that I
wasn’t here. She thought I should give it up. He told her that I couldn’t because I was vice
chairman and this had been planned way ahead of time. I knew my mother was a good cook, so
I knew they wouldn’t be neglected when they came. I came home just as soon as I could
because they were going to be here a few days. Anyway, I went home the third day. I wasn’t
needed anymore. It was election of officers. I figured this gal would be in for another term. I
came on home.

Well after I got home, why this sister-in-law, she thought that I should be here when she was
here. She was very kind of spoiled I guess. I don’t know. They were going to go someplace. She
said, “I guess that’s all right as long as you neglected us when we first came,” or something like
that. It was something she didn’t have to say. I didn’t like it, but then we liked Amy and her
husband. We didn’t say anything.

I said, “Geez, she doesn’t have many manners.

Milton wrote and said I had to be involved. “She just thinks everything—she’s just spoiled—she
just thinks everything has to surround her.” I didn’t think I liked her. After a while, it turned out
she was a nurse and turned out to be halfway nice. She did have kind of a funny disposition.
Pretty soon my husband needs to know about the election and all that. It said, “We want to thank the former members that were elected and we want to greet the new members. Vivienne Schrank, chairman.”

I said, “Milton,” you know he could kid about things. I thought it was somebody else and he just put that in. I didn’t believe it. So he went on and told who the other ones were. It sounded like it was kind of authentic, but he was reading it to me. I thought he stuck my name into it to be funny.

So he said, “Well, read it for yourself.” Sure enough. I was upset because I wasn’t ready to take over yet. I thought I had another year. I figured I’d be elected the next time. It was so funny.

This girl got so angry. She was there, so I heard about it from the others. She lost out. They found out about her. Some people from Bozeman knew about her, and they just thought that she didn’t belong in there, period. They were ready to want to kick her out even as a member. You’re supposed to have good qualities, you know, for 99s. So they immediately, the one from Bozeman that knew about her put my name up and really campaigned for me. I won. She was just (unintelligible).

ES: When you use the word rain date, what does that mean?

VS: It means that if there’s a storm, you go to the next place that you select.

ES: So you had the place where you were going to meet pre-selected?

VS: Yes, and if there’s a storm that time, if you haven’t had the next one put in there, well you have it put in there where the next one will be. There weren’t any notices put out on the meetings or anything like that.

So as soon as I got in, I got a good secretary with me. She was a friend of this gal. Laurel, that’s where we had this meeting. Right away, why, her husband got mixed up with something to do with Norma. She wasn’t with him, but anyway, she was ready for me when I got in to kick her out. We were supposed to have good reputations and everything.

Well, I couldn’t prove anything like that. I was talking to my secretary and I was a little suspicious of her having something going on too. So I didn’t say that to her. But I said, “Unless we can prove this, this would be a very silly thing to do because you have to, to eliminate anybody. You’ve got to have some facts. I heard things about Norma and everything, but we couldn’t do that until we have facts on her for sure. I hate to lose that gal in Laurel because I like her a lot. She will have to understand that too and be broadminded. Just take it out on her husband if he got involved with something and leave us off the hook for a while.”
That’s the way it went. I got in on that. The first meeting I had, I had to get up at four o’clock in the morning. So we drove over to Billings and I decided to have it when there was something going on. Because I figured after you follow the first one, it always goes down a little bit. I knew some husbands would go with these girls that were kind of timid in flying long distances. So there was something going on there, a program that husbands would want to see, a lot of them, so those could go with the other ones.

So we got a good turnout on that. Norma had moved from Missoula to Billings because there were more ladies there that were 99s. She wouldn’t have to be going back and forth. She was thinking of herself again. After she got moved up there, she lost. So you can imagine. She didn’t even show up to that meeting.

The thing was nice about it because I guess things are on your side when you do things right, because there was a lady there from Jamestown, New York. She was with the education on that. When I saw her, that’s what I wanted to pick. I heard there were shops everywhere. I talked with her and said, “I want you to speak because I don’t have too much prepared. This was such a sudden thing to me.”

She says, “Well you have your meeting first and then I’ll speak to them if that’s all right, afterwards.” So she did, and she said, “I think that’s a very good idea that she has to be, to have some kind of an object to follow on it and phrase it.” So that’s how we started off with kind of a bang.

Then I got mischievous. I put different ones on different committees for doing different things. They’d have to report to the next meeting to keep holding them together. I said to my secretary, “I would like to put out a newsletter. That way, then, if you miss it, you can keep up with the meeting. I know that when I couldn’t go to that meeting that first year, I didn’t know what was going on. When I went there I didn’t know what was going on. I didn’t think that was right. What do you think about that?”

She said, “I’m glad to put it out. I’m very, very glad. That’s a good idea.” She was a teacher. So we did all right by then. Then I got these other ones. She got a kick out of it. (Unintelligible). Maybe we can hold this together. She said, “I think that’s a great idea. And I’m behind you 100 percent.” I can see why she said why you can’t blackball that girl. That was all of that. That’s the way we started out, not very nice, but it started to pick up real well.

ES: What kind of a program did she finally settle on?

VS: It was settled on just a plain meeting, that you had a meeting. From then on, we decided on the education shop. The education shop started, and we were the beginners of that.

ES: So you were teaching flight training?
VS: Yes, they were going to put these shops around. We just hung right on to it. I had my secretary contact them right away. We got credit for starting those shops up. So that worked pretty well. I did these little tricks of getting them into the meeting, too. We’d have them whenever a celebration was going on. That would bring some of the men. We started to gain.

ES: Approximately how many women were in your group?

VS: In the beginning it was 18. I’ve got the picture of all of them. I kept those two pictures out. (Unintelligible) was our world president. She was from Sacramento, California. I was the vice president. She was the secretary, she was the treasurer. Here was our bunch. (Unintelligible) 18. Now that fellow was taken with him because I went over that 50 foot (unintelligible), the barrier. This of course is when (unintelligible).

This Haddie Mitchell, a friend of mine, and I’ve forgotten the names of these two girls because they’ve gone. (Unintelligible) I couldn’t pronounce it. It was kind of like yours. I couldn’t pronounce it. I won’t remember it. When I say about my name, they couldn’t remember Schrank. I’d say, “Shrink, shrunk, shrunk, I’m the one in the middle.” A few years later, I was in Miles City and I went to tell her what my name was. She said, “You don’t have to tell me. You’re shrink, shrunk, shrunk. You’re the one in the middle.” I couldn’t believe she remembered. They were the girls (unintelligible) on there. So that shows that. (Unintelligible).

This is supposed to be written on. I didn’t mean to do it like that. I had (unintelligible) beneath each picture. My typewriter went out. That’s Haddie Mitchell, that’s my friend. (Unintelligible). That empty seat was mine. These girls, I’ll have to get their names from somebody. That was one of our first meetings. I was lost from them. (Unintelligible) this gal is from Gardiner and (unintelligible). She’s a good friend of mine on that. This other one was from Kalispell. She was Kay Smith. I got acquainted with her. We became good friends. (Unintelligible) and I knew this one. I didn’t know an awful lot of those there. I’ll have to go to catch up on that.

Then of course, (unintelligible), was taken with the astronaut. He’s holding my hand, too. Then Mike Ferguson is at the end here. This was the man that was behind my career. I’ll show you a bigger picture of him.

ES: (unintelligible).

VS: (unintelligible).

ES: Mike Ferguson is like an aviation administrator?

VS: Yes. There he is. Mike, it says on that one. This is the bag. I’ll have to show you the bag. (Unintelligible)

ES: For goodness sake, isn’t that neat.
VS: She had good sewing. She made that. He wanted that picture. (Unintelligible). Where is it now? The fellow who took it should have been up a little bit higher. No, not that one. (Unintelligible). They should have had that down. They were not used to my camera. They put that and it got (unintelligible) because it says, “I love.” He’s a nice man. He’s the nicest gentleman.

ES: Still in Helena?

VS: Oh yes. I thought he was skilled. (unintelligible). They showed it in picture form at Helena. Not at Helena, but at Kalispell when I was there. She was interesting. (Unintelligible). It was nice that I could get these kinds of pictures because this is (unintelligible).

I wasn’t there, but this gal from Gardiner is a friend of mine. She took these pictures. She was the only one who sent me pictures. I wanted them to send me pictures of every meeting so I could follow through. She did this and it was all from the air. Look at those planes. Isn’t that neat? I don’t know what that was for. I’ll have to find that out. That’s someplace else maybe on that. (Unintelligible). They’re going to be surprised to see that. They don’t even know I took it.

There were cookies for (unintelligible). We got 79 dollars on our deal. I don’t even know what it was. When I had this picture taken with my camera. That’s the officers. They made me get on it to take a picture of them. They had that. Then I had to take another because I was sure that I hadn’t gotten some of them on this side. I had to move over. I think that’s the good picture because that’s the way they should take it. I ran out of film.

(Unintelligible). Here we are before our first race in Miles City with our charts on that. This gal, which was when I was official greeter. He was the head officer. He interviewed us. She came from Oregon and she stayed there. There were rumors the year before (unintelligible). There was an air race going through there. It wasn’t the Powder Puff Derby. (Unintelligible) in Miles City. Here we are, a big picture. I thought I put that one in the last because that’s part of the (unintelligible).

ES: That’s all your stops that you were going to make?

VS: Yes from ocean to ocean.

ES: Oh you went clear across?

VS: Yes. We had to get 2,500 miles in. (unintelligible) they couldn’t get more than 2,500 miles in a few days on that. I thought that was important for them because that shows something about the Powder Puff Derby that we were taking. None of them took any part on that. So that’s the deal there.
ES: That's really fascinating.

VS: (unintelligible).

ES: Tell me about your friend Pearl.

VS: (unintelligible) that's the picture of my daughter who is 56 years old. I posed that skirt up there like that. When she got older, her long blonde curls, they thought she resembled the movie star. It used to be—

ES: Shirley Temple?

VS: Yes. That's his third cousin and he was in the service. His mother wanted me to go down there and get in the movies. They were with Warner Brothers. He sent me that picture. I never got to meet with—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]
ES: —whose participation in search and rescue airspace development furthered the International 99s goals in untiring dedication and efforts in supporting and improving general aviation in Montana is gratefully appreciated, AOP (unintelligible).

VS: Frederick, Maryland.

ES: Well, they salute your pioneering effort.

VS: (unintelligible)

ES: That’s neat.

VS: This I got last November. That was from the (unintelligible) in Billings when I flew for—

ES: For excellence in aviation.

VS: (unintelligible).

ES: Isn’t that the cutest thing. (Unintelligible).

VS: I was teaching they (unintelligible) all small planes.

ES: Now wait a minute, come back here and tell me again because I’m sure I didn’t pick that up.

VS: (unintelligible) Oh 512 conventions, and I was in the Powder Puff Derby five times. (Unintelligible) they’d have big meetings. This one time it was in San Diego. I won (unintelligible). I’m glad I did because I used it on that one where I showed you those different features that I had. Maybe I did. That young fellow was the one for instrument. I taught him then how to fly the cruiser. He didn’t fly a tail dragger. So I taught another fellow that was from out here in the country, and he was on the west coast. He had 43 hours of flying. He was on a nose wheel plane. He never had a tail dragger. So I checked him out on the tail dragger here.

ES: I don’t know what that is.

VS: It’s just like an airplane up in the air that we have, and it has, in the back, this tail has this wheel on it. The other ones have the wheel in front, two big wheels and then they have a little wheel.

ES: So they call this one a tail dragger because it does. It drags the tail.
VS: They used to have just a rod that dragged behind it and they finally put a wheel on it. I think that wheel got knocked off. (Unintelligible).

ES: A cook by the name of—

VS: No he was one of my instructors, John Dove from Missoula. He was with the Western Insurance or something. That’s what this open house is for, for him. I was going to go to that. He and his daughter Carla, he bought it for her. She’s going to pay it for him. She’s working for a lawyer now. She’s graduated from Washington. She’s going to be there at that open house. I met her once.

ES: Now you’re going to get lonesome for your plane and you’ll want to take a ride.

VS: Well maybe so, but then I left it alone when Joe Dutton’s...They had it on that runaround that they had about a month or so after that, after I sold it. It was in it. I saw it out at Joe Dutton’s by the hangar, but I didn’t go near it because I didn’t (unintelligible). Mike Ferguson, he came over, and he was afraid I was going to cry. He wanted to be part of it because he took pictures. So he wanted to come over, and he kissed me about three times. So I think he thought I was going to cry for sure. He’s such a sweet guy. (Unintelligible) they don’t think anything about it because he’s such a nice guy. He’s not fresh or anything. It’s just a peck is all it is. He was so worried about me going to pieces. So he came here.

ES: Did they change the registration number or does that always stay with that plane?

VS: That will always stay with that plane. They are changing it for the cars. My car is 50 license, and it’s 99 on it. My husband had that done because every time there was a meeting, it would storm here and I couldn’t fly. Wherever we went, they could fly. Some of the places they went they could. He got that license. I’ve had that for years. Now they’re going to change that all around. So they tipped me off at the bar here, the (unintelligible), my dad did here. We’d come home to help mother out when he had a heart attack and died. The thing is we had this...I got off the track again now.

ES: You were talking about the number on the plate.

VS: The number on the car. This fellow from the Hell Creek told me, “You get up there right away to request that 99.” I was too late already. I don’t have to do that until September. A lot of these were up already. This was about a month ago. I went up there, and they said nothing could be done about it. I don’t know what they are thinking they are doing with that license and changing it around. I get so mad about all this changing things all around. It burns me up. Why can’t we just have a license the way we understand it and let it go? They are paying people extra to do all that. They holler about them being out of jobs.
The same thing is in putting them in the flight service station. We had a meeting, and I couldn’t attend to it. It went to Bozeman at that time. I had to be tied down here. There was a girl—and I can’t even remember her name now. She’s not even in the state of Montana. I can as I go through my records. She wondered if I was going. She was chairman then. I said I couldn’t. She said, “Write a letter of your opinion.” I sure gave them hell in my letter.

I said afterwards, “I’m sorry. I guess I shouldn’t have said that.”

She said, “You know that worked just fine. You said something about the minister and wife that got killed; they were told at Billings not to fly.” They were in the east somewhere. Of course, “God was with him. Nothing was going to happen to him.” He suggested he not go to Bozeman out of Billings. He went just the same.

They had to go over that mountain before they go into Bozeman. I go over the pass. It’s over to the right; it’s not where the road goes. He was going to that and he got pretty nervous. He talked to Livingston at the flight service station. He said, “Something awful happened.” His wife got nervous and she unstrapped herself and jumped out of the plane. He got killed too. He went into the mountains. I heard about that.

The thing was, I mentioned in my letter about trying to put this...I don’t know what it was. Anyway, it was to take the place of the fellows that take care of the flight service station. I said in this letter, “You know it makes me sick. I was thinking about that minister. I’m surprised that he got killed and it wasn’t taken care of. If he’d had that instrument that they wanted in there, he got killed off faster. Because I was flying south of Chicago, and there was a fellow that got lost. He tried to get contact, Chicago (unintelligible).” He was all excited in there. The combination was really something. I was flying back east to get in an air race with this Don Wilson. He had been a Navy man. He was an instructor in parachute jumping. Then he had this young fellow with him to see his grandparents here in Minnesota. So we were together flying south of Chicago. He was teaching me omni then. I hadn’t had that yet. When I heard that fellow (unintelligible) and the other one goes, “South Chicago omni,” he had an awful voice.

I told them in this letter, “I tell you if I had been lost I think I would have had an accident to hear a voice like that, a dead voice. I’m surprised that man really crashed because at least he had a good voice. He would have crashed a lot sooner if he happened to listen to that.”

Isn’t that awful to have a voice like that and you can’t talk different? I don’t even try to ask them for somebody or a phone number anymore. They got mixed up one time. I was in Billings and I wanted to call the Rimrock Inn. I got on there and (unintelligible) came back. He said that I had to put one in front of it. I thought, “They’re not out of town.” (unintelligible) of course I do it with my own number. Well, finally there is a fellow standing there and I’d have (unintelligible) without the one in front. My quarter came back. I don’t think they changed it yet. Somebody said it wrong or something. This fellow was standing there. I said, “Well, I’ll let you use this
phone if you just get me my number.” He got through. I said, “They wanted me to put one in front of it.”

He said, “No, you don’t do that.”

I said, “Well I did it once but I still got my quarter back. I might have made a mistake myself with the numbers, but maybe you’ll have more luck.”

He got through. She said, “We don’t send them any busses down to the bus depot. We just do it out at the airport.”

I said, “I want you to call the Yellow Cab then for me because I’ve had one heck of a time trying to get you. There was something wrong that they were giving me with the phone. I don’t even want to try it again.” So she sent a minibus down for me. I went to get him.

I lost 20 dollars on that deal. I don’t know if it was this fellow asking me for a quarter on the bus or what it was. He came down there and he was getting chummy with all the girls talking to them. I couldn’t read something he wanted me to read. He came down to help me and everything. I think maybe he got away with it or something. Somebody could have picked it up. I never heard from him again. He was going up to Canada. I just kind of think so. I laughed about it instead of getting upset. I studied to be a detective and I got taken. (unintelligible) that I should be pretty upset.

I said when Mr. Kelly called and asked for me, tell him I decided to go to another place. I didn’t want to see him anymore. I don’t know what he did with that. That was the only change that I had other than that thing, you know. I had planned on having money for the telephones. (unintelligible).

ES: I was so interested in that photograph that showed you and Pearl. When did you meet Pearl and did you fly more than one race with her?

VS: Yes, four of them. When she flew with someone else, she placed 50th. We were always up in the top 20. When I flew, I did worse than she did. I had a girl with jitters, and I had to stop before I could finish the race. I’m sure we would have placed that year because that girl really polished that plane beautifully. If she hadn’t, I wouldn’t have put up with her. She was swearing at me most of the time up in the air, even. I tried to jump out when we were driver. That was the first one from east to west. Generally they are west to east because you generally have a tail wind flying your race. So I didn’t know what I had. I had to hang on to her out of (unintelligible). It wasn’t very rough. I was flying and hanging onto her. She got me. Then, from then on, this was the story she told me.

She had her girlfriend’s plane back at Rapid City. I didn’t have a plane yet, so I was advertising for a plane and a co-pilot. She saw this ad. She went into the girl that owned the plane instead
of telling her. She said, “I want to get in the Powder Puff Derby. I’m going to use your plane.”
That’s the way she talked to her. They let her. They treated her like a little kid or something.
She got race jitters. I’m sure that if the owner would have been with me, we would have really
got quite a high rate for that plane. I finally had to put her on the controls so she wouldn’t be…I
was shutting her off.

When we got to Albany…and then we were on the dry run before we were in the race. She was
all upset. I hung onto her and was flying at the same time. I had a (unintelligible). At least knew
I could keep track. I was watching her where we were. She was supposed to be navigator. The
funny part of it was, before that happened, I was thinking of when we were taking off when she
(unintelligible) she was navigating. They told her not to fly, that she couldn’t fly the plane
because she was a pilot and I was an instructor. They told me that too.

The thing was, we took off and she was navigator. I said, “I feel drift on the plane, so be sure to
check your checkpoints.”

She said, “They’re coming right under.”

I said, “I turned it a little bit, but it feels pretty strong. Now, you be sure that they’re under you
because I think we’re having some drift.”

She said, “No, they’re right underneath us.” I couldn’t understand that because it seemed to me
that I should have had to correct more than I did. I was keeping track of it.

Finally, she said, “Gee, I didn’t see the last checkpoint.”

I saw a town over here, a small town. I said, “I want to fly over then to find out where we are.”

She said, “How can you do that? Have they got an airport?”

I said, “I don’t know whether they have or not. I don’t even know where it is. I’m going to look
for the air marker.”

“What’s an air marker?”

I said, “You’re out on this and you don’t know what an air marker is?” I looked at her and I said,
“You’re kidding aren’t you?”

She said, “No.”

I said, “Out west where they are so sparsely settled, they mark it on the building and they show
you an arrow to go to an airport. I hope they have it.” So I went up there and I saw what town it

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield
Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
was. Right at the edge of the port of the map, right at the edge—40 miles off course for the navigator that was supposed to.

She told me how she navigated to the East Coast to Rapid City and all this. She rode with someone that navigated. She didn’t navigate. There is quite a bit to take care of in the east. I found out the air marker. So I circled and I circled again so that I could go parallel to it. It had the arrow to Jamestown, New York. I got parallel and I got my compass fixed. I went out there.

She said, “There’s a place down there where we can land.” It was sleeting a little bit, not heavy, but just nasty and gray.

I said, “No.”

“Why not?”

“I want to get off. You get down there, there’s high grass and it’s been raining. We’d never get off of that field. I’m not going to sit up here 40 miles off course.”

She said, “We’re 40 miles off course?”

I said, “Yes. Now I want to have an understanding with you. I’m going to navigate to Jamestown. That’s 25 miles away. I don’t want you to start arguing with me or say anything to me.”

So she said something again. I said, “You’re not minding. After all, you got me 40 miles off course, which was very dangerous. Don’t talk to me again because I don’t want to talk to you.”

She said under her breath, “I wonder how you can find Jamestown.”

I said, “Well, you worry and you just worry quietly.”

So I went ahead and when we got there, I said, “Well there’s Jamestown, the place you didn’t think I was going to hit.” She was relieved. She was worrying all that time. I don’t know. She tried not to shut up and everything. I didn’t pay any attention to her. So when we got in there, she was so tickled to get down and know where we were. I asked for either an inspector or an instructor. I got an instructor. I wanted him to work with me out of it.

I said, “I’m not going to cut any corners. I know what our track is, 25 miles north. I’m going to go right straight the way I’m going now because I’ll know where I’m picking it up and I won’t get off. I’m not going to fool around with it.” He didn’t blame me for that. So he was helping me.

Some guy came in trying to tell us how to do it. I said, “I called her,” because she was pretty happy when we were there. I whispered in her ear, I said, “Have that guy take you outside and
show you around the airport. I’m just going to listen to the instructor.” So she did. She worked with me then on that. She was so tickled to be there. She got him out of the way.

I told him what I was going to do. So I said, “So you’ll know, I’m going to go on the same heading that I was from to here. Then I’ll know the point to know my checkpoints from there. I see where I’m going to have to navigate from now on. I lost my navigator.” (Unintelligible).

He felt sorry for me too. He said, “I’ll keep my fingers crossed for you.”

I said, “You better do that. I think I need it.” We got there all right. I was trying to think of where we went into Albany. I can’t remember what that was. I think it was Utica. We got to Albany. Going to Albany is when she got excited. We had a low ceiling and everything. It wasn’t that rough. I thought, “What’s she going to do when we go to the Rockies?”

(Unintelligible) was pretty confident when she was going to pieces. The river was there, and I wasn’t going to follow the river, but I had a checkpoint. I could watch her and fly. I got up to, we got up to Albany and she kept going. I wondered why she didn’t start to turn to the left. She was saying she was navigating then too. I wanted her to be doing something like that instead of worrying about jumping out. I said, “We’re going wrong. We’re going east too long.” Finally we went back to Albany to the south. It was right on the edge of town. I was keeping track because I knew darn well that it wasn’t right.

So I thought I’d better watch. I knew we should turn sometime. I thought she’d tell. I thought she was oriented. Finally I said, “I’m going to have to interfere. We’re southeast of Albany. We’re supposed to be northwest.”

She said, “No this is right.” About that time, there was a space between the horizon and the clouds. The sun was going down. We were going west, east.

I said, “Look over there. Where does the sun go down, in the east or the west?” She wouldn’t believe me. She was going to argue about that.

We went back there and she was talking, she wanted to take over then. We kept south of Albany. These things were all the same. She got a hold of the flight service station, but she was telling them a description of where we were. Things didn’t match. You couldn’t tell where we were. She put it down and put a hand over it and started swearing, “Those damn son of a bitches can’t even tell where we’re at.”

I said, “My gosh, all these places that you’ve described are exactly alike. How could they?”

So she said, “Well I just give up.”

I said, “Okay let me take over then.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
She said, “What are you going to do?”

I said, “I’m going to fly over the capitol. I don’t know. I’m going to have to fly high because I might be breaking some rules. They are going to know where the capitol is.” So we went over there. They guided us right on. When I got there, this wind came up and it was gusting. She was supposed to grab the wing. She just froze completely. So I kept it running and the fellows there saw what was going on. The two fellows came out and grabbed on to the side of the wing. She was a nut all the way.

ES: Good for you.

VS: I think I tried to forget it. I’ll think of it but I don’t want to. She was with flight service station. Can you imagine something like that?

ES: Was she a Montanan?

VS: No, she was from North Dakota, Rapid City.

ES: Would they often team you with someone from another state when you were involved?

VS: No, you could get anyone for your co-pilot. The nicest things that happened to me was with Pearl when we went to...I can’t remember. I went on five of them. It was a long time ago. It was 1955 or ’56. We got the trophy, I think in ’56.

In ’57, I was beat out of my plane by this girl that was about to be chairman. This fellow wanted to sponsor to me. We didn’t even ask him, Al Gillis from Billings. My husband was with me. Her husband was working for him. She heard about it. He had this plane for me that was coming up from the east. (unintelligible) that was the fastest. They were getting two TriPacers from back east. The fellows were flying it. He said to check them and to see which one would go the fastest. Some of them go faster than the other. They don’t know why but there’s something. They picked off the one that I should fly, then. It was the fast one.

By the time it got there, this Norma Wingfield heard all about this and she just blew back. She knew Al Gillis was selling a twin engine plane. She said, “I’ll just stop that sale if you sponsor her.” She could have been a good sport and said, “If you’ll sponsor me next time.” She was so stinking that she wouldn’t do a thing like that. She was so mad that I had won the second election. I know she threw that book away. I know she didn’t lose it. Now that’s a nasty person. That’s the only nasty person we got in there.

We had some good girls in the place. It’s a shame. She must have been (unintelligible), I don’t know. She went to psychiatrist, and I don’t think they could figure her out. Her husband finally divorced her and they had two children. She was fooling around with a fellow with a wife and

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
four children. She broke that up and married him. I don’t know if she’s still with him or not. She’s in Michigan some place. She got out of the state. She didn’t like any place. I don’t know. She threw these kids right out. They went to Billings. Some kids playing with her (unintelligible). She threw them off. It was a trailer house. She threw them out the window and pushed them through the glass frame. That’s when- she was trying to reduce. She was some kind of a drug or something else with it. She went kind of haywire. He sent her to a psychiatrist. I don’t know what they found out there on that.

ES: (unintelligible) that makes you hyper. (unintelligible) hallucinate or something.

VS: I don’t know and she wasn’t doing that all the time because she wasn’t gaining weight when she was in this first deal that I showed you. She was just as nutty then as a fruitcake. That didn’t help. Isn’t that terrible to have something like that in the beginning? We had such a good bunch of gals. We have such a good bunch of gals now.

ES: Now what kind of a plane were you flying when you first started in the 99s?

VS: A Taylor Craft.

ES: It had the wing on the top like this one or the bottom?

VS: No they were all top wings for me. I should have said that I never flew with a low wing. I tried it out later on. This had a wheel. That was the one that had the wheel. I had about 40 or 50 hours on it. I knew that I was going to have a big examination, a five hour one. I thought, “My gosh, I wonder if this course that it took...” See, I couldn’t go.

I was running the theater mostly. Milton did the machines. I had to take care of the rest of it. I even had to take care of the books there. When I first taught school in the country, I had to take psychology. When I studied after I got married, the two years that we were here, I was studying how to write stories. I already got an A+ in high school. The next to me in the same subject that we were writing on, got a B and a B-. So I figured, well, I’m good at writing so that’s what I’ll do when I go to the university. My dad had 5,000 dollars put away for that.

I was just a sophomore at that time. When I was 13, I (unintelligible) the store. We didn’t have the articles labeled at all. You had to learn them by heart. I went down that morning by myself. I wasn’t like (unintelligible). I didn’t have to have my mama with me at 13 years old. I went there, and he put me through the paces. He told me the prices of all the things. After lunch, we did it again. I had forgotten two of them. So he said, “That’s not bad.”

Then he told me he would do it again the next morning. He did and I knew them all that time. So after lunch, he went through it again and I knew them all. He said, “Well you’re ready to take over in the store.” I thought he was kidding of course. “No, I like to gamble and I gamble in the afternoon.” It was behind the store at that other store.
I said, “I don’t think I’m ready—

[End of Tape 2, Side B]
VS: —laughed at me anyway. He told me the list of not to charge, that couldn’t charge. The first man on that list was somebody I thought was a wonderful guy and I couldn’t believe he was a deadbeat. Some of these other ones, I hated to learn about these people, these bad things, because I thought they were perfect, you know. When you’re 13 years old you think a lot of things.

But anyhow, this one deal, this fellow comes in, and he’s a cowboy and he wants a can of snus. I had no idea what a can of snus was, and I thought, “Did he tell me that?” I just knew everything else. “Well,” I said to him, “I’m just new working here and these articles under this deal here…” It had a glass top and everything, kind of like the ones that they have in the stores now. I don’t know how he got such a modern one. “And so you help me, will you?”

He says, “I’ll be glad to,” so he went over there and he picked it up. It was a can of snus. It was snuff.

I knew what the price was and I said, “Oh, yes, thank you so much for helping me. That’s 1.65 dollars.” I can even remember the price (laughs). He went out satisfied and pretty soon my boss came in, Mr. Vanoy, to find out how I was getting along, and I said, “Oh, I’ve got to tell you a funny one. This fellow came in…” and I told him what I told you.

He got a big kick out of the way I handled it. He said, “Well you’re going to get by all right here.”

So the next day he goes down again and he says, “I’m not worried about you at all.” He didn’t get back right away, but he went there, and finally a fellow came in. I don’t know what he wanted but he was going to go around and pick it out. When he picked it out, I went to make change to him, and he told me it was wrong. Well I was pretty sure it was right, but I checked again and could see now it was wrong. “I can tell you what it is,” he said, “if you can’t get it.”

I said, “Listen, I know how to make change. I’m just going over it again to see what I might have slipped up on.” He said something about he could tell me and I said, “No, you can’t tell me because I’m doing it the way my boss wants me to do it, and the way I learned it in school and I’m not going to let anybody mix me up.”

He said, “It looks like you’re already mixed up.”

I said, “I don’t think so.”

He said, “I thought of something else anyway.”

So he goes back and gets something else back there. Then I went to make change for him, and he thought of something else and I said, “What the hell’s the matter with this man anyhow?”
So he finally said to me, “Well, I don’t know why you won’t...The customer is always right.”

I said, “Not necessarily,” because he was a stranger and I didn’t care how I talked with him, you know. He was burning me up because I was pretty sure that I was right on that. I wasn’t having any trouble.

So he got something else and he said, “Well, you don’t think so, but I think you’re dumb.”

I says, “As long as you’re handing out the bouquets, I’m going to tell you something that I think is odd about you.”

He looked at me, “What?”

I said, “I never knew a man that changed his mind as many times as you. I thought it was just a woman.”

So he was getting mad about it the whole time and I was being stubborn that I was right. About that time Vanoy came in, my boss, “What’s the matter?”

“Well, this clerk here is not giving me back the right change.”

He said, “Well, I’ll take care of you then,” my boss said.

(Unintelligible) and I said, “Will you let me keep this change that I have here to see where I made a mistake?”

He said, “Go ahead.” So he made the change with him and he didn’t say anything.

He started out and he said, “Well, when I come back here again, I know who I’ll go to. I won’t go to you. I’ll go to your boss.”

I said, “I don’t think you’ll go to either one of us.” He looked kind of surprised for a minute. My boss reminded me of that afterwards.

He said, “Why not?”

I said, “Because you’re a stranger and this is just a small little town, so you won’t be coming back here again.”

He says, “Oh,” and he left.

Well Vanoy started to laugh and I said, “What’s the matter?”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
He said, “I think he thought you caught him.”

I said, “What?” He says, “

He's a con man.”

I said, “Well, did I make a mistake?”

“No, I gave back the same thing that you have down there.”

Then he said, “(Unintelligible) store where (unintelligible) behind it. That lady admitted it. She’s been here for a long time and good at making change. She got beat out of five dollars. We found out.” They were telling because they thought this man, you know, they thought something was wrong. They went to the drug store and that brother of Walt Foster down here, and they said that they had been cheated out of ten dollars. So Vanoy went right down there, see, right away. He figured if they go in my store...When he went in there he found this going on and he got such a big bang out of it. He said, “Oh, am I going to have fun. I’m going down the street and say, ‘My goodness, a good professional woman at the store over here gets cheated out of five dollars, and they get cheated out of ten dollars over there and my 13-year-old clerk stumped him.’” (laughs)

ES: That’s a good story.

VS: So that’s the story, and I never made a mistake with that man. He sold it. He got a chance to go up to Grass Range. Wanted to take me with him, but my dad didn’t want me to go. He says, “Well, I can understand that,” because I was young, but he said to him, which made me feel good, “She’s one of the best clerks I’ve ever had.” I never made a mistake with him.

The next man that took over, he went over your shoulder like you were going to miss a penny or something, and he made me so nervous and I know I made several mistakes with him. But I stayed there. Then after I was 15, I didn’t want to stay there anymore. I was disgusted with him because he was...You know, I wasn’t relaxed with him at all. But this first one I had, he even said to me, “If you get hungry, help yourself to the candy.” He made you feel so relaxed, at home. I know I didn’t make any mistakes with him.

ES: Did you meet your husband here in Jordan?

VS: I met him when we were homesteading, when we first come out here. I was five years old and he was eight. He left when I was eight years old and he was 11. Of course, there was no romance there between two like that, but he used to come over, kind of liked my folks, and he used to come over to the house. He said—and I didn’t remember that until he brought it up—I’d hide behind a leather rocker and peek at him. I was bashful. Then I’d run back again. He said,
“Pretty soon you sang ‘I am only teasing you.’” I was musically inclined, even when I was three years old, and they told me about that. I took after my dad. My mother could play the piano, but she wasn’t musically inclined. My dad was, and thank goodness I got something. I (unintelligible) from him, but he at least left me something worthwhile.

So he came back seven years later, and had been engaged to a girl and she double crossed him or something and married somebody else. I think that’s the reason they came back, because they followed the oil rigs or something. There was some good money at that. And they were down to Casper and around. He went to so many schools that he had an awful time graduating here to get his (unintelligible) from the different ones it took a while. He did, but it was a problem moving so much. He came back, and he wanted to find me right away. And they told him that this Bessie was a friend of mine, she’d probably know. She said, “She’s at Miles City at the Fourth of July celebration.”

He said, “Well, I can go up to see her folks because I haven’t seen them for seven years either.”

She said, “Well, they’re with her.” So he had to wait. So she said she’d show him around, and then she started dating him. Well he didn’t like that sort of thing. That was back in the age when the fellows were supposed to date the girls. You know, they don’t think that anymore.

She said she was engaged and then he went to tell her that he wasn’t...Her boyfriend was out at the west coast of Washington, and she didn’t want to hear about this deal at all. And he didn’t appreciate that too much. He kind of wanted to talk about it and let her know about his life. And I don’t know if she got kind of fresh with him or not afterwards. Some fellow I think ruined her when she was younger. She was a pretty nice girl, but I don’t know what that deal was because I didn’t go into it. But he wanted to get away from her anyhow. She reminded him too much of the girl that double crossed him.

So he told her that he was going to go around with me a while and get acquainted as a good friend or something like that. I guess he scolded her, the way she was acting around him or something, because she was reminding him of his girl, his fiancée. She said, “Well, you’re not getting anything better.” She’d been in bed with my fiancé. My God, he come up to tell me about that. Well I heard that remark, but it was so preposterous that I thought these four little girls that used to do all the gossiping. They told me that and it was so preposterous. And I had another girlfriend, and she said, “Go to Bessie and tell her what’s going on.”

I said, “Well, she’d be so embarrassed about that because she knows how that was.”

She wanted me to stay all night there, and I said I didn’t care about staying all night with anyone. I’d like to be home for a night. But she just kept begging because she didn’t want to stay alone. She was watching some kittens for her older sister, married sister. They had gotten these kittens and they had to be called out, her husband, to town for overnight or something.
and they were afraid the kittens, if nobody was there, might run away. So she could feed them. But she didn’t want to sleep alone, so she begged my mother to let me go down there.

Well I had a date for that night, so all we had to do was play cards out in the kitchen. My date left early, at a reasonable time, ten minutes to ten. He was staying with an aunt. I had gone with his brother, his older brother, and he was the athlete. He was the one that got first in the state and put Montana on the map and everything. I quit him, you know. He never got over that because he was quitting all the girls all the time and thinking it was funny, you know. I made the remark that the next girl that dated him should do that so he would know what it felt like. And this gal said—she was ten years older than I—she said, “If he dates you, you do that.”

I said, “He won’t date me. I’m just a freshman and he never dates anybody but a senior. He doesn’t even date the junior. He dated you and you’re ten years older than I, so you see what I mean. I meant the next girl that he dates.”

Well, it turned out, I guess, I was the next girl he dated. He came down there and said there was a nice orchestra. He was going with this Ward Thornton and I knew him since I was a little kid in Minnesota. There was a group that came out from Minnesota, you know. He was just like a brother of mine or something, you know, and they went together. He went with Johnny, I guess. So he said, “There’s a nice orchestra coming in, and I know you like music, you like to dance.”

I said, “Well, that was nice of you to let me know. Thank you so much.”

He said, “Will you let me escort you to the dance?”

I said, “Of course you’re kidding.”

“No, I’m not,” he said, “You like music and you like to dance and you certainly need a partner, don’t you?”

I said, “Well, I am between boyfriends. That sounds real nice if you’re serious.”

He said, “Yes, I am.”

Well these girls were standing behind me, the four gossipers, and I didn’t know it. I turned around and they said, “Why, you’ll have to go to bed with him and everything else.”

I said, “Cut that out. What do you mean being behind there listening in? That’s very poor manners. It’s none of your business what people are talking about. You’re known as the little gossipers of Jordon, and I wouldn’t like to have a reputation like that and I don’t like it. Don’t do that to me anymore.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
So they didn’t say anymore, they just kind of walked away. Then I thought about what they said. Well, I said to them—they know, because these girls said—and I said, “Well, just between you and me, I’ve dated more fellows than you have,” I said to this one leader of them. “I think I’ve dated more fellows than all of you put together, and I’ve never been insulted. I think that’s the girl’s fault. They led them on some way and got into trouble. That’s the way I feel about it. I’m not going to blame the fellow.”

So the thing was, I thought about it and I thought, “Well, gee whiz, maybe they’re half right.” So I said to him, “You know, I didn’t tell you something. My parents want me to go with another couple or with a group. That’s all right with me. That’s my rules.” I never told him I was my own boss.

He said, “That’s fine, I’m sure I’ll find somebody.” So finally he said to me, later, “Well, you know, I can’t. But is it all right if I take Ward Thorton with us?”

“Oh,” I said, “Yes. He’s just like the brother I never had because he come out from there. That’s fine.” So they called us the three musketeers. We went together, and we went down there.

But that was so funny. Pretty soon some of the girls had heard I said that I quit him so he’d see what it was like. These girls come up to me and said, “Well, when are you going to quit him?”


They said, “Well, it better be pretty soon. It’s been three months since you’d been going with him.” And I had lost track of the time. He’d come up with the folks and play cards with us and he was just a perfect gentleman, as nice as he could be.

This one time I talked to Ward, he would show up, and I said, “You come up early this time.” He was going to take me over to an open house there for this hall that they had for, they were going to have flour and food for animals and different things. And they were having an open house. So I said, “You come a little earlier, Ward, and get here ahead of him because he waits until the crowd shows up before he comes and gets me.”

And so we went down there. And when we went down there, why, they were starting to dance all right, there wasn’t too many, but they were. He was standing there, you see. Ward gets right out on the floor and dances. He (unintelligible) and he looks so surprised, you know, the people just showed up. He come over for the next dance and apologized. He said, “Well, they just showed up now,” you know, that he hadn’t forgotten to come and get me. And he thought that somehow time had got away and he hadn’t watched it, that there was some mistake.

So I told him then that “No, you haven’t done anything wrong, and I’ve enjoyed going with you very much, but I don’t want to go with any fellow steady. We’ve been going together for three
months and I didn’t know it was that long until I was reminded about it with some of the girls. I think it should stop and don’t take it wrong. I told you I enjoyed it very much, but I’m not ready to get married yet or anything like that, and it generally gets serious after a while. I just made that rule for everybody that I go with.” Well, he acted like he thought what I said to him was all right. I said, “Those girls are crazy to go with you since you got first in the state and everything. You won’t have any trouble (unintelligible).”

He just couldn’t get over that, I guess, and I didn’t know that until much later. He didn’t go with any of the girls that were wanting to go with him. He went with a French teacher, which he shouldn’t have. And he married her. They lived together two years, divorced. He married another girl out west that I didn’t know. He lived with her two years and they divorced. Then he went into the service and he passed, you know, the higher-ups that get into the service—what do they call them?

ES: Officers?

VS: Yes, like officers, but it’s a group that does it. Well, they were over in the war there, and one of them got killed in the war over there. They go ahead of time and kind of line out the...I guess I used to know that as well as my own name, and I can’t think of it.

ES: The group?

VS: Yes, they’re a military group.

ES: That plan ahead.

VS: Yes, they send them ahead, and they kind of lay out the land, and they’re a group of soldiers.

ES: Oh yes, I want to say it too but I can’t.

VS: Isn’t that awful?

ES: Yes, it is. I hate it when my brain hits a flat spot. (laughs)

VS: Usually, once in a while when I was selling tickets, I’d go with the same denomination. And then, finally, I had a different one, and it’d go flat for a minute. And I’d just go like I was fiddling with the money until I got it in my head, and then I got it straight. But I have a blank spot on that, yes. Well anyhow, he was in this military service. He did that and he came back, finally. And he found out that I had gotten married and had beat out this one girl. This Bessie had been nasty to me, and he was tickled about that and everything.
That was all said, and he said he had been keeping track of me. (Unintelligible) was a nice fellow, but he heard he was drinking, we weren’t getting along, and I don’t know what all. I wondered what he was bringing up. He said, “Have you thought about divorcing him?”

I said, “I don’t believe in divorce.”

He said, “You should.”

I said, “Well, I can see how you do. You’ve done it twice.” Kidding him, you know. (laughs)

We were dancing and he said, “Well, it’s a shame to live with somebody and not get along.”

I said, “Oh, it isn’t that bad. I can put up with it. He said that he has to have a few drinks to tend the bar down there, and we’ve got a fellow that’s kind of slipping up, you know. And he had to (unintelligible). What were you getting at anyway?”

“You know, you’re the first girl that ever quit me.” He carried that in his (unintelligible) and I said—

ES: You made an impression. (laughs)

VS: Yes. I thought if he remembers that that long, I must have got to him. He pretended like he accepted it all right, but it shocked him, I guess.

I said, “What did you have in mind on this conversation?”

He said, “Well, I was hoping that you would go for divorcing him, and I was going to ask you to marry me.”

I said, “My God, so I could live with you a couple years, and you’d divorce me?”

Then he said, “How did you think that would ever work out? You’re the only girl that ever understood me.” I looked at him kind of funny, and he said, “Yes, and you’re the only girl that ever quit me.” That was bothering him all that time.

I said, “No, it’s no go.” The funny part of it was he went back, and two weeks later, why, we got an announcement that he was getting married. So he was comparing me, evidently, with that girl, making up his mind, and come up here and when that fell through, why, then he went back. And her dad was rich. She had right near San Clemente, that point there. Her dad was rich, and they had two daughters. But she didn’t live with him for too long. She didn’t think the schools were good enough here and took them to London.
So it was, I don’t know, he got kind of, he came back again by himself, came back to Jordan. He went down to the bank and asked to find out if we were still here and everything. He said he was going to come up and see me, and Milton said, “Well, I’ll phone her and let her know you’re here.”

He said, “No, I’d rather you wouldn’t. I’d like to surprise her.” So he did, and Milton was taking his lunch down. Over the noon hour, they used to close the bank and then he’d get some work done because he’d do the paperwork.

So he came up here and visited me and shook hands with me. Didn’t try anything funny or anything like that. I asked him to stay for lunch and I says, “I’ll call Milton and have him join us.” So I called Milton. I know he was tickled to death because he wondered why he wanted to come up, you know. So Milton was glad to come and I told him, “Well, bring your sandwich or throw it away or whatever because I invited him for lunch and I want you to join us.” Well, of course, that tickled Milton and he come up here.

When he went to leave, he had come up by himself with a van. His wife wasn’t with him. She was still in London. And he was traveling and going up around Canada and just making a loop and seeing the folks here that he knew. And when he got up, he put his arm around me. And it seemed like Milton was still sitting there, he hadn’t got up yet. He said, “You know that I went with your wife before she knew you or before you married her?”

He said, “Yes, I think she did tell me that.”

He said, “Did you know she was the only girl that ever quit me?” Of course my husband had a real smile on his face when he heard that because he had been a little bit worried about the whole thing. (laughs)

But he said, “Did you know I went with your wife? Three months or something, yes, three months.” Milton looked like he was squirming a little bit, didn’t like it, you know. Said she’s the only girl that ever quit me. So that’s the way, so he went back. It was too bad. He had trouble with his back or something, with exercise or something. He was a very good athlete, but he did die about a year or two after that.

ES: Is that right?

VS: Yes, yes. They had two daughters. He was so healthy looking and everything like that. I felt kind of sorry for him that his wife went that way and she was spoiled evidently (unintelligible) rich man and how they are. But at least they had two daughters. I don’t know how (unintelligible).

ES: Do you know where he went in the war?
VS: He was at the west Pacific.

ES: South Pacific?

VS: South Pacific, I mean South Pacific. He said something about if we got married, why, I’d be located in Hawaii because when they get through with them they come up there once in a while. He’d as soon be out of it. The Marines!

ES: Oh, he was in the Marines? Oh, wouldn’t you know it. Tough guy.

VS: I knew I’d think about it sooner or later. (Unintelligible) wait that long to think of it. Do you suppose I’m getting old? (laughs) They say you can think of your past but that wasn’t past. Isn’t that funny? It’s always a simple name, too. I forgot about the school that I taught at (unintelligible). But it was an easy name to remember and everything. It’s funny how a person has things like that (unintelligible).

ES: You weren’t married before the war?

VS: Yes.

ES: That kind of sneaked up on us. The war kind of—

VS: Well there was a war when I was five years old—five or six years old—too, that first war.

ES: The First World War? Really? Is that a fact?

VS: Yes. And there was a fellow that left his horse with us when we were homesteading.

We came in here when I was 11 years old, and that’s where I had my first ride in the plane. Now we’re going back to my flying. I was 11 years old and these barnstormers (unintelligible). Frank Wylie was one of them with Mr. Hesser (?) and they came over to Jordon and they put on aerobatic things and then the people would be curious about, planes were new then, you know. They’d all run out there and then they’d get rides, 15 dollars for 15 minutes.

ES: A lot of money.

VS: That was at that time, you can imagine, pretty terrible. Of course I didn’t know that. It didn’t mean anything to me. But they were giving the rides south of Jordan. It would be up where the restaurant is, where we went to eat. There was a place where they could take off. And they’d take one at a time. It was an open cockpit Jenny airplane. I was supposed to go right after dad. I thought maybe we’d go together, but it was, I think I could have. I was small enough, but they didn’t do that. When dad got through, why, they were through flying. There was a storm coming in.
I generally didn’t cry for anything. I wasn’t spoiled. Mother didn’t let me get spoiled. She’d spank me every day. They said I must have been a little devil, and you must have resented her. And I said, “No, that’s the way I learned what not to do.” (laughs) I never held that against her, no. I felt bad at the time that she didn’t believe me, but when you’re five or six you can’t argue with your mother. She’d forgotten that she’d moved the chair. She missed it with all these things, then she broke one of her prize vases, and that didn’t help it any. She thought I had done it. I was watching her, and then I had moved the chair. I don’t think she thought about it afterwards. I told her afterwards, married and back home here again and dad was gone.

She said, “I bet you thought I was a mean one. You got so many spankings.”

I said, “No.”

She said, “Did you tell people how mean I was to you?”

I said, “No. I said I got a lot of spankings. If they said something like that, no, that taught me what not to do.”

ES: Now did they take pity on you then and give you a ride?

VS: My dad...I started to cry and that was unusual for me to cry for anything. He knew how much I wanted to go and he said, “They told me that this storm is coming in, and they’re going to give rides. They’re going to take their plane where there’s more space. That’s just as well because when we took off, I was afraid we were going to hit that hole before we got off the ground. And if he got anybody in there that weighed anything, I don’t think he’d have made it.” I think he said that, he realized that then, what could happen. So they went over to this field that’s now the airport. I got my ride off of there, and I made up my mind that I was going to be a pilot.

The funny part of it is, I was sitting in there and they were working on the engine. Something was wrong with the engine. My dad says, “You drive your mother out with you tomorrow, because I’m going to be busy.” The reason he said that is my mother didn’t drive a car. I was 11, and I’d driven since I was ten years old. I parked cars in the garage down here when I was 11, had to back them into the stall. My dad recommended me. He was helping this fellow that he had been in business with carrying mail and passengers. They quit that finally, and this Howard Reeves put his nephew, Ralph Irby (?), into the garage. He’d built a garage—not Ralph Irby (?), but Howard Reeves—and he put his nephew in there. That nephew was the same one that invented the deal that turns your record over on the—

ES: Turntable thing.

VS: The turntable thing.
ES: Oh, for heaven’s sakes.

VS: Yes, it was after he worked here. He couldn’t get anyone, and my dad was selling insurance and fire extinguishers then. He’d take me a lot of times with him, later on I had gone with him. But he needed somebody, he said, to park those cars. (Unintelligible) cars in front and he hadn’t got a partner yet. Dad was helping him in between times. He said, “Well, I’ll put Vivienne in there. She’s driven a car since ten years old, and she’s ambidextrous. I’m sure she can learn it.”

So dad went in the first time with me. He let me drive, but he, and those stalls were not too big. They always remind me of those horse stalls in the barns, you know. It was just like a frontier land, I tell you. It was very rustic. I don’t know whether there was two-by-four or two-by-sixes that was down that (unintelligible) the stalls. And so dad rode in with me and just talked with me as I went in. I never touched anything. He was sold on it. I got in there the first time without hitting anything. I said to this Ralph Irby (?), “Do people know that I’m parking their cars?”

He said, “No, I don’t think (unintelligible).”

I said, “Don’t ever tell them. They’ll have a heart attack.” I was an 11-year-old girl doing that. I said, “They won’t realize that I’ve driven since I was ten, and they won’t realize that I’m ambidextrous so it doesn’t bother me.” I don’t get mixed up with directions or anything. That helps a lot.

When we went on our honeymoon that happened. We went to the Yellowstone Park and Milton was going to take me on a nice boat ride. We were on the other side of the bridge and had to come over the big bridge to get out on the big lake. We got under the bridge and he got stalled. He wasn’t ambidextrous and couldn’t get the thing going. I never said anything right away. I knew I could get it out of there, but I didn’t want to embarrass him. I didn’t say anything until finally he said, “I just can’t get this out of here. Could you?”

I said, “I think I can,” and I told him.

He said, “What makes you think you can when I can’t?” You know, he was going to argue.

I said, “Because, I’m ambidextrous. That means I don’t get my left hand and my right hand mixed up. It’s not your fault. Those kids that you were with did that to you.”

There were 14 of those boys and these two that were adopted, you see, one was, Milton was eight and the other was 12, I guess. They didn’t like it. They were part of the family, they were related. But there was two families out there where we homesteaded, and they were a mile and a half from where we were. Those boys just picked on those two boys. They just was jealous of them and—
[End of Tape 3, Side A]
VS: This woman came over to me and said, “Aren’t you afraid?” You know, telling me that before I went for my ride. Well it didn’t scare me a darn bit.

“They’re fixing that engine? Well, when they go they’re going to have it fixed.”—that’s the answer I gave them.

Then that lady said, “There’s wires down there, and you get your feet mixed up like that and you could have an accident, so keep your feet off that, then.” So I went up for my ride with my feet up in the air, and I could hardly see out I was so small. I have a picture somewhere of that. I wish I knew where it was. I’ll show you the picture of me trying to peek out to see. But I rode on my seat with my feet up in the air.

ES: So you wouldn’t get your feet tangled.

VS: Yes, tangled. Oh I tell you, I could have got along without that lady. I hope Mother didn’t hear her. She must have because when I got down, they asked if they could take me to Miles City because I was the youngest person. Well, I looked young. I wasn’t grown up until, I didn’t start to grow up until I was 13, really. I was small. I couldn’t hardly see out. There wasn’t any cushion for me. I was strapped in, of course. Mother said, “No, she got down safely this time. She’s not going again.” But they’d never taken any children up at all before that.

ES: Really?

VS: No.

ES: Were they two men in one plane or they had two planes?

VS: No, they had the one plane.

ES: They had one plane. And they were both in it when they took you up?

VS: No, no. They couldn’t be. They could only be one in a seat.

ES: Okay, I wondered about the division.

VS: No, it was just a seat ahead of the other in those open-cockpit: Jenny that was the name of it. The thing is, I made up my mind then I was going to be a pilot and I never changed my mind. Like little boys will say that they want to be a fireman because they heard the whistles and saw the fire and everything. Then they go out on their ranch and ride horseback and next thing they want to be a cowboy. But I wasn’t that way. I wasn’t changeable, that’s one thing. My husband said, when they said “You let your wife fly?”
He said, “Yes, it was costing me money. I think she’s had 60 rides already that I’ve paid for, so she better learn to fly.” Of course, he made that up, but the thing is I took my...well, we were gone.

We lived here two years. I had taught school first, before we got married, for two years. Then I taught after I got married because a girl got sick out there at the Bracka (?) School on the way going to Cohegan. They couldn’t get a teacher, and I said, “Well, I can’t teach anymore because I’ve taught my two years, and I have to go back to school again.” That’s what, I’d got that training in the high school. So I said, “But there’s six others that could go that aren’t full-fledged teachers.” I didn’t think I’d have to. I figured they’d get them.

This one teacher, I said, “Now she (unintelligible) to her husband’s teaching here.” I don’t remember what he was teaching. She applied for a job, and they gave this one room to two different ones, and she held on to it. The other one they hired first. They weren’t taking care of things very much, the school board then. She just held them to her contract and didn’t do a darn thing, so her husband was teaching. His name was Peter. So they asked her, and she could have gone out and done something for the money that she got, but she wasn’t about to. She couldn’t leave her Peter. You can imagine what the men did with that one. (laughs)

But they couldn’t. They finally got a special for me to teach, and I couldn’t get out of it then. I felt sorry for the kids. When I knew that I only had to teach until we could get a girl by the name of Delpha (?) Brown that was teaching out in the country school. Then she was going to run for superintendent of schools too, you know. She was going to get something else, and she had to get that much more training. But the thing was, I went out and I wasn’t very satisfied. I had planned on being all through and wanting to be home. And I was studying short story writing then all that sort of stuff. I was a little unhappy about it, but I got along fine with the kids. When I put on the Thanksgiving play, the kids had their parents responding to it, and they said they sure wanted me for their teacher to stay. They heard that somebody else was coming in. So they tried to beg me to stay. I could have if I had wanted to, but I knew this other girl could come. She’d be through with the school that she was at and she could take over, so I had her take over the first of December and then I didn’t teach anymore.

But the thing was, like I say, I started to fly when we finally were here for two years. I met the lady detective in Chicago, and she was the one that taught (unintelligible) freedom. That was the one that I taught that I couldn’t think of the name. It’s an easy name to remember. She gave those kids As where she was staying from (?), and I had to follow that and those kids. They were even missing the first class. So I suppose because they walked and they were with the teacher, that’s the reason they didn’t fool around. I made them synchronize their watches. Their watches were not expensive, but the school clock was fine. Mine was an expensive watch because they had that for me to get in when I was younger, my curfew time. It kept good time with that. So I had them synchronize their watches, and I let them set their watches at school when they went home that night. As soon as they got home they had to tell their folks to fix...
their clocks right away to match it because that was the way the (unintelligible) so they could get to school on time.

I got a terrible note from the one because I didn’t stay there where the woman was giving them A’s. I stayed at another place because I heard about that. Anyway, I got a note from her, and she said something about she never heard of such a thing as having to synchronize your watches. Other experienced flyers never required that. So I wrote her a note back and I said, “Mrs. White, I think you misunderstand. I couldn’t be teaching out here if I wasn’t an experienced flyer”—(laughs) I’m flying now! Experienced teacher. I said, “I want you to know that I’m a good one because I had one of the highest marks in teaching, so I know what I’m doing. The reason that I wrote that and wanted the watches set is because your youngsters have not been getting to school on time. They’ve been missing their arithmetic altogether, and you can’t expect me to give them an A or any kind of a mark. I thought that the people should know because clocks are different, and the clock here is perfect because I set it. My watch keeps time and I have a very expensive watch because my folks insisted on it so that I’d get in on time when I was a little girl. I’m thinking of the kids, that’s why. I want them to get there to get their grades. I’m not trying to do anything like that. I wouldn’t be teaching here if I didn’t have the experience.” So that was it.

I said, “I want to see you this weekend when I go in.” Because you couldn’t walk, this place is too far to walk, you know. So Milton came out and got me. I was engaged to him then. I didn’t stay at the teacher’s (?) because I was afraid they would talk about me. Those gossippers were terrible. Some of them are just fine. I had three of the families out there were behind me 100%. I was so ticked that they made me teach right after the fourth of July, and I missed a trip to Canada with the folks. I was teaching to practice teaching. That one girl was smart, and she didn’t pass the exams when she came in that spring. I knew that, and she was to go into high school. I knew she was smart, and I knew she got scared. I knew that’s all that had happened. So that kind of carried over the bad feeling I had about having to miss that trip, to go out there I’d have two months to work with her. And I did. I told her not to be afraid of the exams—because I told her that I’ll bet she was—and build up her confidence and everything, and she passed to go in. So that did me a world of good on that.

Then I changed the history because I didn’t like history at school. My mother did, but I didn’t, “You could do a quiz program with it, so you’d have to work with that.” But I wasn’t lazy, thank goodness. I worked with that and made it out and the kids just loved it. And I know I would have loved history if I could have had it that way. The teacher that followed me didn’t do it. She had the same training that I did, but she wouldn’t be bothered. She just made them read it and memorize the dates, so the kids come to me right away wishing I was teaching there again.

But the one that tried to put me out was the one where I stayed because her daughter broke the piano stool. They were told not to go near it or touch the piano. She tried to tell me that her daughter was sick or something. I guess she wanted me to help pay for the piano stool, which was seven dollars or something like that. But I didn’t figure that I was to blame. She said, “Well,
Ayla (?) said that the teacher 18 years old wouldn’t have discipline. They have to be 40 years old.”

I said, “That’s where you’re wrong. I was brought up, the only one, with the seniors. I learned to be, you know, my mind runs like a senior person. And as far as that’s concerned, discipline begins at home.” I didn’t make a hit with her, but that made me mad because she was giving me the dickens, telling me that she was sick during that time, didn’t hear that rule. I said, “She wasn’t sick during that time.”

I made that rule at the very beginning of school because when I was practice teaching out there, a little boy was fiddling with the piano keys and could have broken it up. That’s when I told the teacher out there that I scolded him, and I hoped I hadn’t done wrong. But I thought I should scold him so he’d know what he was being scolded for. He might forget what he’d done. That was that lady that gave me the detective course. She had been a detective in Chicago and she came out here because most of her family was out here, Mrs. McKeever. She come and called on me and was a good friend of mine there.

She saw me studying short story writing and she wondered why, and I told her about what I got in grade school. Then I said, “I’m studying this because the lady that give me this, she was writing short stories, and she got TB and had to go to Denver.” She said she was through writing. She was, because she died there (unintelligible). And she was the wife of, she was Mrs. Howard Reeves. My dad was in business with him, carrying the mail and the others.

She did hand-painted dishes too, and my mother wanted her to paint some black with gold insides for (unintelligible). I’ve got some of those here. But she gave my mother another dish that she’d painted. Then when she died and everything, they couldn’t find her other dishes. Mother had shipped a lot of that right back because she said that she couldn’t sell anymore out here. So she thought that she should have them. Now, I don’t know what happened to them in Miles City, but I gave that girl the dish that Mrs. Reeves had given to my mother because I knew she wanted it. She was the younger one and I knew that she wanted something from them. I don’t know who took those, but they got mislaid somehow. But that’s how I was studying that.

Then Mrs. McKeever saw a detective magazine and said, “I suppose your husband is interested in that.”

I said, “No, I am.”

“Did you ever think about being a detective?”

I says, “Oh, no. Those girls, you know, they sleep with the men and everything else. I mean, they’re kind of women of the street.”
She said, “They don’t have to. They volunteer.” Then she told me that she was a detective. (Unintelligible) do anything like that.

She said, “I was going to throw my material away because I’m through. I wanted to come back to Montana. Most of my relatives are here and I want to be here with them when I’m older. I can teach.” And she was writing stories too, a magazine I didn’t know anything about, about the Ozarks. But she gave me her material because she was going to throw it away. She said, “You’ll enjoy doing that as you read those magazines.” And I did.

Five years later—I didn’t intend to be a detective. I just did it because it was interesting. I said to her, “My mother says opportunity only knocks once and you’re given the opportunity and I better do it.” And that’s what I did.

Then we moved away after two years there and went to Forsyth because our bank was taken out. We went there and were there three and a half years. My husband was in the bank there. I got pregnant there. I sent the one story. I got some rejection slips for a couple of them. I started from the top to the bottom instead of the bottom to the top. They suggest the bottom to the top, but I’m not anything like anybody else, you know, I have to do something different. I hated those pulp stories. At that time, the stories were terrible, and it was a terrible looking magazine. I wanted a slick paper, so I went from the top to the bottom, hoping that I’d stop somewhere along the way. I got rejection slips. The one from one of the magazines said it didn’t match their stories. That was all that was the matter with it. They said, “Now you read your magazines and see which ones that you know the most about their subject.” That was good advice.

The next one, I got another rejection slip someplace else on it, and I kind of knew what to expect then. This one said that she enjoyed my novelette very much, it was a very cute story, but she says, “You’ve got to learn that there’s more obstacles in life than that. And that’s the only thing matter with your story. You correct that, and you send it back.” Well, I intended to do that, but I put it, when Milton could be transferred to Forsyth, we (unintelligible) and I put it in the trunk. Like I say, a story is not written, it’s re-written. You take it out and you’d be surprised what was still up in your head that you didn’t put down on that piece of paper. So I had that put away.

I had the other one finished, the short story, and that was the one I think I told you that those kids when I was in the seventh and eighth grade would tell me their troubles. And they had some good, juicy stories. The reason they chose me is because they knew that I wouldn’t tell anybody. I changed the story. I used it because it was good material for True Story. All of this was excellent. But I would put all the stuff in it. I used a nom de plume, and I’ve forgotten what that is. It’s in the trunk somewhere. I did all that and I put the name, I can’t remember the name, but it was a familiar, kind of a common name.

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
And my husband would have a fit about how I was going to get into trouble. That was in Forsyth he was telling me. I said, “Well, no, I thought that all out.”

“Well,” he said, “your name?”

I says, “Oh, I’ve got a nom de plume for that.”

“Well, what about the town?”

“Well,” I said, “I didn’t say Jordan, I said another name.”

He says, “They might be able to find that.”

I said, “Did you ever look in that atlas and see how many Miltons there was that was towns, how many states?” I think there were eight states. And he gets it out. He doesn’t believe me, you know. He gets it out. I said, “Well, I’m not putting the state (unintelligible). I maybe leave out the name. I don’t know if that took anything off the chart.” He was (unintelligible) and I said, “No, I have a nom de plume.”

He said I wouldn’t get anywhere. All I got was rejection slips, which was kind of a mean remark. But I had scolded him because he didn’t take his raise. It was a very little raise, but we were staying at a 30-dollar apartment and we were paying 12 dollars here with a two-room place and outside toilet, you know, and no bathroom. Because the first thing I said, when he said we were going down to Forsyth, was, “Are we going to have a bathroom?” I hated to leave here because my folks were here, you know.

But anyhow, he said, “Well you won’t get anywhere.”

I said, “I certainly won’t if I don’t send it in. For your information, I’m going to send it in.” He was kind of disgusted because I scolded him about this other, and he knew he was wrong. He should have thought about the apartment, you know, take it even if it was a little amount. So I put it in there and I thought, “Gee, I hope I’m lucky.” Because I knew it was a good story for them, you know, it matched it all right. It come back and it said, “We enjoyed your story very much, and we’re going to give you manuscript number 55, you’ll be. And we’d like to have some more.” Boy did I show that to him.

Then the next time I was getting the next one ready and he comes back and he says, “I want you to quit sending stories in there.”

I said, “Why, for heaven’s sakes?”

“I don’t want my wife making more of a salary than I am.”

Vivienne Schrank Interview, OH 262-008, 009, 010, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
ES: Oh, wow. I would think if you’re that (unintelligible). I mean, gee.

VS: But the thing is, I was pregnant and I had back aches, and so I was willing to quit. So I made him think that was a very good idea. (laughs) Well, you have to figure out your manner. And we’d had that other fuss, you know, and I wanted to make him feel good. I thought, I’ll take care of that after, I’ll do that later, alligator. But this other was after, I mean, I hadn’t flown since I was 11 years old. I was married 15 years and had a ten-year-old daughter, (unintelligible). I started to fly in 1944. We were here at 1940, but they were going to put it in in ’43 and then they changed their mind again.

The men had offered to teach me his part free in Miles City. He was with Frank Wiley. I (unintelligible) didn’t know what Frank would do. They came out to do some celebrating. I was 15 then. Boy that sounded good to me because I wanted to fly so bad. I wasn’t using good judgment, really. But I took it to the folks, even though I didn’t have to. My dad said, “Well, no man gives a woman anything for nothing. Don’t go,” and I believed him. I knew my dad was right, because he was on his toes on everything. He wasn’t being mean at all. So I didn’t. Of course, I felt bad about it, but I never held it against him all because I knew that I was thinking clearer than I was. I realized that after quite a bit. But that’s why it went so long, and so I did that.

Then I think I mentioned to you on the other tape about the time I had the forced landing in Canada, didn’t I? They come out with the ropes, big ropes. That’s the one that’s the favorite of my friend that’s flying United there. She got such a kick out of them coming out with those great big ropes, and I had a runway made.

But out here I got my idea from that. We had a big snowstorm and people just 12 miles out were weathered in. And at that time, we had two planes to do that. We had to have skis on them. The druggist and the doctor here, Dr. Ferran (?), had a cruiser like mine, I mean like a cruiser like mine that I sold. But at that time I was still flying a Cub. We both had to have skis put on. But a plane came in without calling ahead of time: people from the city, evidently, a metropolitan area. They had to land in four inches of snow and almost had an accident.

That’s what give me the idea we had to do something about those dull people, those nutty people that think everything is like the metropolitan area. You know, I didn’t want a wreck on this field. And I knew that the county commissioners were making these trails out to reach these people. They didn’t know it was there because we had no telephone. But they all had radios, you know. And the wind would come up and would blow it up, and they wouldn’t know that place was there. They tried to get it centrally located so that it would reach many places to go, you know, get their mail and everything and leave a note. I knew it was blowing over, it wasn’t doing any good. I was listening to our TV about that time, I think it was. I think our TV came in about that time. I could be wrong. It was either TV or it could have been radio. But I did know that they had radios in their house. So it might have been radio, because I heard them
when they announced these meetings of different people and the dates and they were doing that for nothing.

I suggested to the county commissioners that they write in there—because there was no phone or anything—write to them and tell them what an emergency it was and what was happening, and I’m sure that they’ll do it and do it for nothing because that’s a lot more important than those meetings and their dates. And they went for it. And then they had their radios on, and they’d know when they were going to go out, and it worked just fine. It would have really broke the county if they’d done it the other way on it. So they followed that. They followed some of the things I wanted but they wouldn’t do the runway for 20 years. But it’s just the way things go. A little bit of this and a whole lot of that.

But I started in on flying at that time. But I thought I was going to have to quit when I had to get a five hour exam and have to go to night school sometime. Then the guardian angel—I call it a girl instead of a boy—on my shoulder had them put it in our high school, and I went to high school with eight boys. I’d already taught school and everything, married and everything. We were back home here the second time, you know.

I went there and tried to talk my husband into going to it because we had our evening entertainment. He’d be off in the daytime, but he said he was busy in the daytime too. But I went down a couple of times for something. I had to get a pad or something and he was visiting on the street, so I knew he just didn’t want to go down there and study. He didn’t like studying. So I guess he didn’t like school period. He was lazy about that, you know. I didn’t know that. But he was a good banker. He was very good with that. And when they put this new stuff in, why, it quit him, and he was the only one that knew how to do it on paper and he had all that work to do, you know. They didn’t know how to. And they didn’t get anyone to help them for a week, and they have to balance every day. So he found out that that wasn’t so much fun either, that new stuff. But that’s the way it goes.

But anyhow, it was kind of fun going with the boys, anyway. They were easy to go with and this Porter boy could, he was so smart that he could have repeated what he read from the book word for word, you know, a photographic mind. The other one was the son of the doctor here, you know, Ferran, and he and I got about the same marks together. We were right next. Then there was two that was lower than we were, but they still got good marks. Then we had two little dumb-dumbs there, and they had a fit because I wouldn’t have to take an examination. I was just going as a refresher course because I had 40 hours in the Taylorcraft, you know, to fly. But they had such a fit, and I said to the professor, “Well, let me take the examination to shut those little fellows up over there.” He kind of laughed when I said that, you know.

I helped him because he didn’t fly, and I told him about the horizon and how you could tell where planes were, whether they were above you or whether they’re below you, you know, if you were going to (unintelligible) me, and a lot of things that he didn’t know that wasn’t connected with...He was a good teacher with the books, all right. And the next year we had
teacher that was a native pilot. So I got an awful lot out of him and then some of the boys played hooky for a while there and he had me teach some of them while he taught the other. I was taking it the second time because that was before I was going to take the commercial.

ES: Do you remember what his name was?

VS: No. He was from Circle. I know the first one was Greymond. Why I can remember his name and not the other one. But the other one had an unusual name. That’s always the way it is. They probably have him down on the books in Circle.

ES: Did you ever meet a couple, or a man in particular, from, I think Hysham? DeMers was his name.

VS: No.

ES: He and his wife were both pilots.

VS: It’s funny I didn’t know them.

ES: Mike DeMers.

VS: They probably show up and I haven’t met them or something.

ES: It could be. She’s older than you. But I just wondered.

VS: Well you know, lots of times I’ll meet people, and they’re people that’s been from Jordan, and I don’t know them. I go to stores now and since we were away from flying, see, we had the theater. In 1974, went on a trip to Hawaii—and it was a gift to Milton when he retired, instead of a gold watch—for two weeks. That was in ’74, and in ’75, we sold the theater. We held the theater for a while so we wouldn’t stop all at once with our stuff. We were in so many things, and it was easier to quit like that. Gee, it’s hot in here.

ES: It’s warm in here, isn’t it?

VS: I’m going to put that fan out.

ES: You know what, I think that—

VS: We better go in there.

[End of Interview]