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Summer 2000
Mary Melcher: I’m Mary Melcher, and I’m interviewing Barbara Pasiga (?) in Anaconda—

Barbara Ferretti: Barbara Ferretti. Barbara Pasiga Ferretti.

MM: Pasiga Ferretti.

BF: Ferretti.

MM: Ferretti, sorry. In Anaconda, Montana, and it’s August 10, 1981.

Barbara, you were born in what year?

BF: 1909.

MM: Here in Anaconda?

BF: Right here.

MM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BF: I had four sisters but two are dead and one that—

MM: All girls in the family. And your father ran a tavern, had a tavern?

BF: As they called them saloons in them days. They didn’t call them taverns.

[Break in audio]

MM: When you were growing up what sort of chores did you do around the house?

BF: Minding the wood. My dad chopped the wood into kindling and for the fires, for the wood stove, and haul the coal out. I didn’t have to haul in because coal was heavy—what they called a coal bucket or a coal hod—so my dad carried that in. There was ashes to take out. That’s
about it.

MM: You didn’t do any housework?

BF: I was an only child. See, I had a sister that was born in 1907 and she died in 1908 and then I was an only child until 1919 when my other sister was born, and then my other sister was born in 1921 and then that sister that was born in 1919 she died in 1922, so there was only the two of us, so an only child didn’t have to do any work. [laughs] Spoiled.

MM: Sometimes I would think that you would have to do more work because you were the only child.

BF: Yes, well.

MM: You didn’t have to?

BF: I didn’t have to.

MM: And your mother ran the household then by herself?

BF: By herself.

MM: You went to grade school at a Catholic school and you are—

[Telephone rings; Break in audio]

MM: Your mom and dad are they both Bohunk...Bohemians?

BF: My dad was born in Europe—

MM: He was.

BF: But my mother was born here.

MM: What language did you speak at home?

BF: Croatian.

MM: And where there a lot of Croatians in Anaconda?

BF: Oh, yes. There was plenty, there was quite a few.

MM: Did your parents learn how to speak English?
BF: Sure but I’ll have to tell you this, we talked Croatian at home and I was retained in the first grade for two years because I couldn’t talk in English.

MM: You were?

BF: Yes. The sister—

MM: You hadn’t...didn’t know how to speak English when you went there?

BF: That’s right. So sister retained me in first grade for two years.

MM: Were you mad about that?

BF: Well, I kind of resented it. In later years as years went by the children, the boys and girls I went to school with were one year younger than myself, you know.

MM: So you could have used some extra help that first year to learn English.

BF: Oh, sure, right.

MM: Were there any other children that were retained in the same way?

BF: Not that I could tell you because their parents, I think, talked...They talked broken English but then the kids caught onto it, you know. Mother’d ask them something in Croatian and then the kids would answer back in English so mother would have to start picking up the English, too.

MM: Is that how the adults would learn English, through the children?

BF: Sure. Right.

MM: Did you feel like you were discriminated against in school?

BF: No not that much. I think all the...Well, the girls mostly, they accepted each other, you know.

MM: And did the teachers accept the Croatians too?

BF: In a way they did and in a way they didn’t. Sisters were, what would you say? Cared for the Irish a little bit more than they did the Germans, the Austrians—as we called ourselves then, Croatians—and the Italians. We could be smart but we were always put down.

MM: Just because of your nationality?
BF: Yes. I think that.

MM: You felt that pretty strongly as you were growing up?

BF: Oh, yes. I always thought I battled my way through school. You could be smart and you could do the homework for the other kids and you would be the one to get the zero and the kids would get the 100 or something, whatever, and you did the homework. There was a lot of that going around. You know, friends, go to each other’s house. I had Irish friends and I had French, and we’d go to one Irish home, not every day, and Croatian home, all right not every day would we go there but one we would go to and her mother would have apples, it was cold weather and she’d have apples in the over and they weren’t baked, just warmed up, and they’d warm your hands so nice. Then we’d go to another place over on Commercial Street and she had oatmeal cookies in there and with the, what they called crocks, in a crock, and we were welcome to them. Then we’d go to another place and we’d get candy. Every day of the week—five days a week—we had a different place to go. Candy at another place. At another place, Mother would bake about 12 loaves of bread and the first loaf that she’d take out would be cooled off when we’d get there after school and she’d cut that bread and she would put homemade butter on it and sprinkled sugar on it and that was one treat I couldn’t get at home. My mother didn’t believe in eating sugar, and that was one treat. Bread and butter and sugar never tasted to me better then there and they never tasted good to me after that, too. So we had our ways of going to each...that was a Croatian home we went to and there was an Irish home where we had the apples at and the Irish home where we had the oatmeal cookies and we had the candy at the French home.

MM: So the kids hung around all together?

BF: Five of us or six of us, you know, six girls.

MM: Your parents didn’t mind if you hung around people of a different nationality?

BF: Oh, no because they were...they knew each other and there wasn’t any badness in us, you know.

MM: Did your mom and dad stick pretty much with Croatian people or would they hang around—

BF: Oh, no, they mixed in.

MM: They mixed?

BF: They mixed.
MM: You were saying, though, that the people had their favorite saloons. Would the Irish have one and the French had another and—

BF: No, I think they mixed. They came in and out, you know.

MM: And people kept their holidays?

BF: Sure.

MM: From the old country?

BF: That’s right.

MM: Like if you were walking around downtown, would you hear lots of different languages?

BF: Oh, yes, you sure would. Not so much Spanish but a lot of French and the Irish, I think, they didn’t talk too much Irish, you know, they picked up the English language, though, I don’t think there’s very many here that could talk Irish.

MM: Was there one group that was richer than the others?

BF: Oh, I wouldn’t say that. I don’t think so.

MM: Everybody was pretty much the same?

BF: Yes. In the same category, you know.

MM: Okay, so you were going through grade school and you pretty much fought your way through and had a good time after school, it sounds like.

BF: Oh, sure.

MM: Did you go to dances with your family or what sort of social events did people participate in?

BF: Well, used to go to what they called pantages and then it was vaudeville, you know, on the stage.

MM: Pantages?

BF: They called it pantages and then it came into what vaudeville was.

MM: And they’d have shows here?
BF: And we’d had that at what was called the Margaret Theater which was named after Marcus Daly’s wife Margaret and then it burned down and they rebuilt it and we had the Sundial and now it’s the Washill Theater.

MM: How often would they come, these shows?

BF: Every week.

MM: Every week?

BF: Every week there was a different one.

MM: And could people afford to go?

BF: Oh, I guess they could because it didn’t cost that much, you know. And we had silent movies but that was later after I was maybe nine years old they had silent movies.

MM: Do you remember how your mother was doing the housework, did she have any conveniences?

BF: the wash tub and the washboard for washing clothes and the boiler for boiling the white clothes on the stove, I can remember that. A copper boiler. And soap—they made their own soap.

MM: She made her soap. Did she have a garden?

BF: Yes.

MM: She canned?

BF: No.

MM: Didn’t can.

BF: Not that I remember, you know.

MM: So then you went to high school, now, do you remember if most of the girls were going to high school? Did some start to work after they finished grade school?

BF: Oh, yes. Well, a lot of them they went...of what would you say? Housework, not in stores, but in houses, you know, keeping housework, like the Schwartz’s who were Jewish and they had a big store here and OK Store, they called it, Schwartz’s OK Store, and I know several of the

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girls that went to work there.

MM: How old were you when you graduated from high school...no, from grade school?


MM: At that age they would, some of them, started doing housework at about 13 years old?

BF: Yes. Then I know one lady that come in here yet, she never went beyond the 8th grade but she was quite a seamstress and she took in sewing at home.

MM: Starting right when she was young?

BF: Right.

MM: So it, say you were 13 and your family didn’t have a very good income and you went to work right away, it would be assumed that you should begin supporting yourself then?

BF: Well, most of them when they were working like that, which wasn’t very much, maybe they got 20 dollars a month, they’d bring that home and give it to mother. If they wanted any, Mother would dole it out to them but some mothers were smart and they banked for them and when they got married they had a little...What would you say? Dowry or whatever you call it, you know. As long as they were living at home then their room and board was free.

MM: Did you, after you started going to high school, did you hang around with any of these girls that were working all the time?

BF: No.

MM: No. Then your friends were just from high school mainly?

BF: Right, right.

MM: Why was that? Just because you didn’t see them anymore or—

BF: Oh, you did run into them and talk to them but they had their own interests, I guess, when they were working and—

MM: Their life was different?

BF: Right. Their life was different and you were going to school and you had your homework to do and there wasn’t any automobiles around, I’ll tell you that. Horse and buggy days.
MM: So you didn’t visit as much? What was high school like?

BF: Oh, that was fun [laughs]. That was a lot of fun.

MM: Did you have to study hard?

BF: Oh, yes, you had your homework and it was the same gang that started the school with you when you were in the first grade and so they just…you just went along. Very few went to the public school. See, we had public school and after kids graduated from 8th grade they’d go up to high school. But it was, maybe one or two would leave to go up to high school but we still kept in contact with each other and you’d meet up with each other when you’d go to church on Sunday. That was a must, you had to go to church every Sunday, every Holiday.

MM: So you went to Catholic high school, too? This is a very Catholic community, Anaconda?

BF: Yes.

MM: And the nuns ran these schools?

BF: Yes. Well, see we had the Dominican nuns at St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s had the Ursuline nuns. It was two different…Then the Sisters of Charity run the hospital so we had quite a variety of religious orders.

MM: What subjects did you have in high school?

BF: I don’t know [laughs].

MM: You can’t remember?

BF: Chemistry and algebra and that. Then the last two years I transferred into the commercial course which is typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping, so I graduated with that. You had to take two years of high school, general high school, and then you could transfer and get two years of commercial, as they called it.

MM: And that’s what you decided to do.

BF: Yes.

MM: Okay. When did you start dating?

BF: Right after school [laughs] Right after I graduated out of high school.

MM: Out of high school. Before that, when you were in high school, were you still considered
too young to date?

BF: I don’t know. I guess I wasn’t interested because school meant more to me than dating around. You did go to dances and everything but there was no steady boyfriend.

MM: You’d go in a group?

BF: Yes.

MM: And your father was still alive. Was your mother widowed at some point?

BF: Yes. She was widowed in 1922.

MM: 1922. And how old were you then?

BF: I was thirteen then when he died.

MM: And what did your mother do? What kind of work?

BF: She was born in this country but because she married an alien she was considered an alien so she had to go look for her citizenship papers. She had went to the county and asked for relief, you know, like child...children’s relief. They wouldn’t give it to her because they said she wasn’t a citizen so she had to fight for citizenship papers. Then when she got then she figured, well, she was going to ask for children’s relief and that was...well, she was a housekeeper at St. Peter’s church for 18 years.

MM: That’s how she supported you and your sisters?

BF: My sister. My one sister.

MM: Did you work during that time? You didn’t? She managed.

BF: But she had a hard time, I’ll bet you. Of course, living expenses weren’t expensive in them days, you know. And she owned her own home so there wasn’t any...just the taxes to pay. We had no telephone.

MM: Did she sell the bar?

BF: Yes, she sold half of the property. So, she sold the bar which is no good to anybody, you know, a mother with two kids you can’t run a bar. I don’t think you could. Maybe in this age. In this day and age, you could but not in them days.

MM: Had you been born in your parent’s home?
BF: Yes.

MM: Did a midwife come in?

BF: Yes. A midwife delivered me.

MM: And was it a Croatian midwife?

BF: Yes, it was.

MM: So, the midwives would serve their community?

BF: Right. Oh, they served anybody that wanted a baby delivered and if they run...ran into any complications they always called a doctor. Sometimes right after the baby was born, they would call a doctor and the doctor would come to the home. There was a lot babies born in their homes.

MM: By midwives? Did you get to know the midwife later on?

BF: Oh, sure. She was my first mama [laughs], as she would say.

MM: Okay. So, now we’re getting you up to the point where you met your husband. Had you met him when you were in high school? You met him after high school, and then started dating him and got married when you were about 19? Nineteen. Did you have a wedding in the church?

BF: No.

MM: In your home?

BF: yes, in my home.

MM: Was that common in those days to—

BF: Oh, yes, that was common.

MM: To get married in your home. He worked in the smelter, is that true? So you started keeping house?

BF: Right.

MM: And did you have a child pretty soon after that?
BF: Oh, about a year after.

MM: Was there any birth control around in those days?

BF: That I don’t know. I guess there was.

MM: You didn’t hear about it though? And you had five girls all together?

BF: There was four years between the first two and there was six years between the last two.

MM: That’s interesting. Did you plan it that way?

BF: No.

MM: It just happened?

BF: It just happened.

MM: Did you have a midwife come in?

BF: Yes.

MM: You did?

BF: All of them were delivered by the midwife.

MM: Did you consider—

BF: But with the first one the doctor was there with the midwife. The last one I had a midwife and a doctor there.

MM: But for the three in between you had the midwife?

BF: Just the midwife.

MM: Did you consider having a doctor for those two, or did you—

BF: Oh, I guess there wasn’t any complications or anything, I don’t know.

MM: You just thought it would be safe with a midwife?

BF: Yes. She knew what she was doing.
MM: Was it the same one—

BF: Yes.

MM: —that delivered you?

BF: No. Another one.

MM: The years when you had them—

BF: Well, see, she was a licensed midwife.

MM: She was by that time they—

BF: Because she came from Europe, from Croatia, and she had taken the course over there. When she came here, she was a registered midwife.

MM: Was she single?

BF: No, she was married.

MM: How much did you have to pay her?

BF: Twenty-five dollars for a baby.

MM: Did she stay after the baby was born?

BF: She stayed...Well, she came back and forth for ten days. She would take...bathe the baby every morning and take care of you and take the bed clothes and the baby clothes home and wash it and come back at, oh, about seven o’clock in the evening and check on you but you stayed in bed for ten days.

MM: One reason you had the midwife was because you knew you’d get that care afterwards, that she would come into your home and help out and...Did you think about that in having the midwife?

BF: No, not necessarily. There wasn’t any group insurance or anything, and people in them days figured it...they couldn’t afford to go to the hospital. The man was covered—because he worked at the smelter—by the company insurance, but the family—the wife or the kids—weren’t covered by...The man was the only one that was covered by insurance. So my husband used to bring home 29 dollars a week, clear of wages. Out of that, you had to make his bucket, you had to buy him street car tickets, so there wasn’t very much for the family there. You really
couldn’t afford it.

MM: Making his bucket? Does that mean the lunch every day?

BF: Yes, the lunch.

MM: Would you send a big lunch?

BF: Well, he wanted two sandwiches in there, and he wanted two kind of fruit in there. There was some coffee and, if you could afford it or if you had it a candy bar now and then. Piece of cake or some cookies.

MM: Okay. What years were your children born so I can get an idea of when you had the midwife? Was it like 1929 was one born?

BF: Yes. ‘29, ‘33, ‘35, ‘36, and ‘41 [laughs] you know you forget about that last one, you know.

MM: Okay. So I understand that sometimes the midwives preformed abortion in Anaconda?

BF: Oh, not this particular one.

MM: Not this...But some of them did?

BF: One of them that people talked about.

MM: Women that were pretty desperate not wanting to have a child could contact her?

BF: Yes. Right.

MM: Was it a safe—

BF: She wasn’t very well liked, I’ll tell you that, among our class of people.

MM: Why is that?

BF: She was Croatian or...I just didn’t believe in that.

MM: What did you believe about it?

BF: I don’t believe in abortion.

MM: It was thought that the woman should have the baby if she was pregnant.
BF: Right, right.

MM: Did you ever know what kind of abortions they were? Were they safe or unsafe or—

BF: Some were and some weren’t. Many a woman died here in town leaving a baby maybe a year old or fifteen months old that grandma had to raise, you know.

MM: Did they die after childbirth or—

BF: No, from the...if they had an abortion, complications.

MM: And that woman who performed them was looked down upon?

BF: Oh, yes, very.

MM: So you would have never had her deliver your child?

BF: No way. I’d got to the hospital first, I think.

MM: It was during the Depression that you had your children?

BF: Right, true.

MM: Were people having a real hard time making it?

BF: Oh, I think so. We were on, what you’d call the government welfare, I guess you would have called it. When they had FERA and WPA in all them days.

MM: Did your husband work?

BF: He worked on WPA.

MM: He did.

BF: Fifty-five dollars a month. But then we could get commodities and clothes and an order for food.

MM: So you made do, you raised a garden during the Depression?

BF: Yes. That’s when the canning...I can remember the canning then. I don’t remember my mother doing any canning. I can remember buying dried fruits and all that and then they’d put them in water and overnight and boil them the next day but I don’t remember my mother canning.
MM: Would neighbors help each other out if you were in a pinch?

BF: Oh, yes. They really did and if there was any leftover food, and there was a family next door to you that was poorer than you, you shared your food with them. Or if there’s any leftover you took it over to there.

MM: Was that a pretty uneasy time? Did you just hope for the next year? How’d you get—

BF: Yes, you did. Then the menfolk would go down the valley, down Deer Lodge Valley, and help the farmers down there when they were picking potatoes. They’d bring home four or five sacks of potatoes for the winter use and some cabbage if you...So they made sauerkraut or you couldn’t...You couldn’t take three or four sacks of cabbage home and have it all winter unless you made sauerkraut. Then they’d get a sack of turnips, a sack or carrots, and a sack of rutabagas so that would keep you going during the (unintelligible). There was no frozen foods or anything then. No convenience foods, everything was cooked at home.

MM: Did you have your hands full with your children?

BF: I wouldn’t say I did. I guess when your younger you can take it. Of course, if you were older you wouldn’t.

MM: And your mother—she was still in the area?

BF: Oh, yes. She was over getting...being the housekeeper at St. Peter’s.

MM: Did you visit with her?

BF: Oh, once a day, I guess. And she’d come over. I’d go over to visit her, which was two blocks away, and the evening when she was through with all her work and everything she’d come and visit.

MM: Do you think that children died in childbirth very often? Did people loose their babies?

BF: Not that much. My sister died from diphtheria.

MM: How old were you during...when the flu...the flu hit here in 19—

BF: Nine years old.

MM: Do you remember that?

BF: Vaguely.
MM: You didn’t lose any relatives or friends?

BF: But they used to say that people could...They were drinking brandy, and that’s what kept them from dying from the flu, so I don’t know. But we had what...an isolation hospital up by the...in the back of the court house where they put these people with influenza and it was an epidemic because the church was closed and you couldn’t go into the church and then if they died they were buried outside the church, you know what I mean? They went and brought the body to the front door of the church and the priest prayed over them and then they took them out to the cemeteries to bury them.

MM: People couldn’t get together. It was forbidden? Okay. In your marriage, did you and your husband make decisions together?

BF: Yes.

MM: There was no feeling that he should handle things because he was the man?

BF: Well, we were two different nationalities.

MM: Oh, what nationalities?

BF: I was Croatian, he was Italian.

MM: Oh. Was that unusual —

BF: No. Then an Italian girl would marry a Croatian boy, so it wasn’t unusual.

MM: So the nationalities were mixing up?

BF: Right.

MM: What if you wanted to marry a Protestant? What about that?

BF: I don’t know. I guess...I don’t know whether my mother would have accepted that or not. I don’t know.

MM: Was that done very often?

BF: : No, not too much. Not around here it wasn’t. If you were Catholic you married a Catholic. If you were a Protestant you married a Protestant.

MM: Did people get divorces or separations very often? What would happen if, say, a man was
an alcoholic or he beat his wife, do you think women would just stick it out or—

BF: They did. They really did. Many a woman, I guess, took a beating.

MM: You heard about that?

BF: No, but I knew about it.

MM: You knew about it.

BF: Of course, the kids, they always thought about the kids. The children were the ones that would be suffering from it.

MM: They might have suffered from the violence, too, though, with the man there.

BF: Right, right.

MM: Do you think it was a common thing for women to be beaten?

BF: No.

MM: It was an odd case?

BF: Odd case, right.

MM: What would be people’s attitude if a woman who was beaten by her husband decided to leave? Do you think they would accept that?

BF: I’m sure they would, right.

MM: The community would?

BF: Well, they would talk between themselves...a little kid eight or nine years old and you’d go somewhere and they’re talking. You could hear them, hear them, listen to them say, “I wouldn’t take that.”

Somebody else would say, “Well, she should leave him.” And she would leave him. Sometimes she would, and sometimes she’d stay there.

MM: And then she’d figure out some way to make a living?

BF: Right.
MM: What were women doing? The women who supported themselves, what kind of work?

BF: Most of them were single girls, though, they would deal in the...What would you say? The millinery shops and the general dry goods stores and in grocery stores. There was no married women working around the single ones. Married women stayed home and took care of their families and their kids and if they had no kids they still stayed home.

MM: You didn’t work before you got married, did you? You worked at home?

BF: Yes.

MM: Did you have a washing machine?

BF: Yes.

MM: Did you have a washing machine?

BF: Yes.

MM: You did. Was it electric?

BF: Yes. Yes.

MM: And how did you take care of the carpets? Did you have any carpets on the floor?

BF: Oh, we had them carpet sweepers.

MM: Yes.

BF: Oh, you had carpet in the living room and that was the only place. You had linoleum in all the other rooms.

MM: Yes. And you were widowed when, in 1944?

BF: ‘44.

MM: And at that time you had five children to take care of and they weren’t grown?

BF: The oldest one was, what would I say, 12 or 13 years old and the youngest one was...wasn’t quite two years old.

MM: What kind of work did you do?
BF: First that I went to was, I was...went to the Inter-mountain Transportation Company and I scrubbed the buses and washed the windows on the buses for six months.

[End of Side A]
MM: Then you went up to the smelter?

BF: I worked at the smelter from November to November. I had one whole year and got laid off in November. Then I went to the Montana Hotel and worked in the kitchen at the Montana Hotel.

MM: What kind of work had you done at the Smelter?

BF: I worked in the filter room. General work that men did during the war time. There must have been 75 or 80 women that were working out there.

MM: Did you make good money there?

BF: Real good money.

MM: Then why did you only work there a year?

BF: Because they laid off the women then and then—

MM: Because the men had come back?

BF: Yes.

MM: Okay. What did you think about that? Did you want to continue working there in the smelter?

BF: Sure, I would have.

MM: Were the women a little bit mad about that?

BF: Oh, being laid off? Oh, sure they were.

MM: I bet. I would be mad.

BF: We each went our different ways then.

MM: Then you had to quit making that good money.

BF: Right, right.

MM: And you were supporting a family?
BF: Yes.

MM: And there were no laws to protect you then.

BF: No, nothing, not a thing.

MM: So then you went to work at the hotel?

BF: I worked at the hotel one month, December, and...for inventory. Then I went down to the foundry, the Anaconda Foundry, and I knew the manager—general manager—there, and he put me on January, February, and March I worked at the foundry of ‘46.

MM: What kind of work did you do there?

BF: I worked in the machine shop in the foundry drilling holes.

MM: So that was unusual work for a woman?

BF: For a woman, right. After I was laid off there I went up to the County Assessor’s Office and worked at the County Assessor’s Office and then I—

MM: Why were you laid off at the foundry?

BF: Well, they had cut all the women off. See, foundry belonged to the Company, too, and so they laid off the women were gone from the Smelter and then they laid off—there was only two of us down at the foundry—so they laid us off.

MM: Had the women been doing all...a lot of the work at the smelter during the war?

BF: Well, they out them into departments where they didn’t have the heavy duty stuff. It was mostly...Oh, what would you say? They worked in the mill and I worked in the magna-floatation, and some of them worked in what they called the sample mill where they took the samples assayed them—of the ore. Some of them worked in the laboratory. But that wasn’t...and the men respected the women. There was no hanky-panky going on.

MM: You were working.

BF: Right.

MM: And then you all had to go back to your other jobs that didn’t pay as well.

BF: That’s right.
MM: And make do with less wages. So, after the foundry what was your work?

BF: I went to the County Assessor’s Office and I worked up there for three months and then the commissioner, the county commissioner, his girl left him. She didn’t want to work anymore, and so I...He asked me if I was interested in that work so I...He says, “I want to see you at my office tomorrow,” and he was an insurance man—general insurance, fire and car and whatever. Anyway, I went there, and I said, “Yes, I’d take that job” not asking what the salary was. What a letdown. I got 60 dollars a month for him where I was getting 60 dollars a week at the smelter. What a letdown.

MM: Sixty dollars a month?

BF: Sixty dollars a month I got from him. And I worked there for him about a year and a half and I went to work at Montgomery Ward’s where I was getting 100 dollars a month. Then Montgomery Wards had a fire. They burned out, and I went back up to his office to work for 75 dollars a month [laughs]. Anyway, in the meantime, the mayor was...a man was looking...He was running for mayor. He came in to pay his insurance, and he said, “I am going to run for mayor.”

I said, “Well, I’ll help you all I can.”

Election night he called me on the phone, and he told me, “You got a job.” So I went to the City Hall and I worked there 19 years at...Well, started out at 175 dollars a month. When I got through, at the end of 19 years, I was making 300 dollars a month.

MM: That was a big help.

BF: Here you’ve got kids, I had three kids in high school at one time. Three formal dances, buy them dresses for that.

MM: Did they ever work while they were in high school?

BF: Oh, yes. One of them worked at the theater, she was usher at the theater. Another one did her baby-sitting job, and the oldest one went around baby-sitting and helping women clean house which they didn’t get very much money. That was their spending money. Marianne went to work at the telephone office when she was right out of high school.

MM: So they helped you through the hard times?

BF: Oh, sure they did. The oldest one, she went down to Dillon to college and she graduated from Dillon. Then the second one went to Bozeman and graduated from Bozeman. Then the third one wanted to go to college to be a nurse, but she got a job at the Inter-Mountain
Transportation Company and she didn’t get to college. The fourth one went to Great Falls to college, and the little one—the baby of the family—she wanted to be a hair dresser. So they all got an education out of the deal. It wasn’t easy, but we didn’t have anything.

MM: Did you have to have a baby-sitter during some of this time? The older girls would watch the younger ones?

BF: Right. Right.

MM: Did you belong to any clubs here in Anaconda? Like a women’s club or anything like that?

BF: No.

MM: Let’s see. You were pretty young when women go the vote, do you remember anything about that, anything about the suffrage movement? What about prohibition? Was that a big deal here in Anaconda when you couldn’t drink? When it was against the law to drink?

BF: They still drank because they would sell moonshine around in them days, as they called it, red eye or moonshine. They made home brew— their own home brew.

MM: Did some people make a living off that?

BF: I guess they did.

MM: During the Depression?

BF: I don’t know of anybody that made a living out of it but I, I know my mother used to make home brew.

MM: How were you treated for illnesses? Do you remember?

BF: Oh, we had quite a staff of physicians here in town and they were very good and the...if anybody was sick at home they would come to the home and make home visits, you didn’t have to go to the doctor’s office.

MM: Do you remember if there were any home remedies that people used then that they don’t use know?

BF: I don’t, I don’t remember that.

MM: Were women considered an old maid if they didn’t marry at a certain time?

BF: Yes. Really. If they were over 25 and they didn’t get married they were an old...considered
an old maid.

MM: Did you have any friends who stayed single?

BF: No. And some of the men, they were married, some of the never married and some of them married when they were 40 years old.

MM: Were the men considered differently if they didn’t marry?

BF: No, they were considered bachelors. They called them bachelors, but most of them stayed home to take care of the old folks—the mother and the father.

MM: The men did?

BF: The men did. More so than the women.

MM: The men stayed home to take care of their parents more than the women did?

BF: Right. There was quite a few families here in town where the older brother would stay home, the others would all get married, you know, and the older brother would stay home with mama and papa and see that they were taken care of.

MM: That’s interesting. Do you think that the women felt like they should get married because they didn’t want to be called an old maid?

BF: Oh, I don’t think so, no.

MM: How did you fell when there were laws passed when women couldn’t be discriminated against so much as far as equal pay went? Did that mean anything to you since you had—

BF: No, I always considered I was well paid for what I was doing.

MM: You always thought you were?

BF: I did because I got the same pay at the Smelter and at the foundry that men did. I got the same pay at Inter-Mountain Transportation Company because it belonged to union, had to join the Teamsters Union when I worked at Inter-Mountain.

MM: But then you were forced out of work at the foundry and the smelter?

BF: Right. So I’ve consider that I did okay.

MM: And now are you a volunteer here or are you a paid worker?

MM: You’re in the Metcalf Senior Citizen’s Center. When did you get into this work?


MM: Right when it opened?

BF: I lived since it ...Well, it wasn’t Metcalf. It was Smelter City, and it was down on East Park and the Serbian church where we started meals. That was January 1, 1973, so Jean and I have been with the program since then. What I make here is supplemental to my Social Security.

MM: Do they still celebrate any holidays here, ethnic holidays?

BF: Oh, yes, we have what they call Masopust, that’s a Croatian big day and then the Italians have St. Ann’s day which is a good, big day with them.

MM: They still celebrate?

BF: And St. Patrick’s Day.

MM: And people get together for picnics and—

BF: Right.

MM: So you’ve seen that all the while that you’ve grown up?

BF: While I’ve grown up.

MM: And do people still speak their languages? Their foreign languages?

BF: Most of them.

MM: They do at home?

BF: At home, yes.

MM: But everybody knows how to speak English now but they still hang on to their foreign tongue?

BF: Oh course, I don’t.
MM: When did you lose your language? Forget it?

BF: I didn’t forget it.

MM: You didn’t? You still remember it?

BF: I can talk it, I can understand it, I can read it.

MM: Have you ever traveled to Europe?

BF: No, never.

MM: Did your mother or father?

BF: No.

MM: Where the Jewish, there was a Jewish family here?

BF: Oh, there were several Jewish families, there must have been eight or ten Jewish families here.

MM: I guess there was a temple in Butte. Did they go over there?

BF: Yes, they went to them. They ate bread to whatever it was. They went to Butte for their services. The Serbians went to Butte for their church. They had a church over there—Serbian, Montenegro, and what else? To me they were all Slavs, you know, Yugoslavian.

MM: And people mixed pretty much?

BF: Oh, yes, they were all friendly.

MM: Would the management of the company mix with the workers, too or—

BF: I’m sure they did.

MM: Did you go to Columbia Gardens when—

BF: Yes.

MM: What was that place like? All kinds of people there?

BF: Oh, yes. There was a lot of people there and they had the roller coaster there and the carousel and the big dance hall there and they had concessions there and they had a small zoo
and they had, what we would call now, botanical gardens, really exotic plants in their
greenhouse and their grounds were really beautifully decorated with the pansies and the
different flowers, geraniums.

MM: Would you go to dances there after—

BF: Yes. I went to several dances there.

MM: Would all kinds of people be at the dances?

BF: Oh, yes. Mixture. Everything. Butte and Anaconda people were mostly there.

MM: Ever remember any fight between different clans?

BF: No I don’t but there was rivalry during the football and baseball game. There still is between
Butte and Anaconda. There was always a rivalry there. But years gone by you’d go to a big
football game or you’d...Down to Clark Park in Butte there, Anaconda people sit on one side,
Butte people on the other side and they’d holler at each other, but there was never any fights.

MM: Were the Jewish people pretty well accepted?

BF: Oh, yes.

MM: When during the 1920s do you remember when women bobbed their hair and started
wearing shorter skirts?

BF: Flapper days? As you call them flapper days? Vaguely.

MM: Vaguely. Did you take part in any of that? Did you learn the Charleston? Do you remember
when styles started changing for women?

BF: Yes.

MM: How did you feel about that?

BF: Well, if you wanted to be in style you went with them and if you didn’t you wore your old
clothes that’s all.

MM: Did you make your daughter’s clothes?

BF: No.

MM: No, you bought them. Okay, I think we’ll stop there.
BF: You got enough [laughs].

MM: Let’s see, is it okay if we use this material in published form if you remain anonymous?

BF: Yes, sure, go ahead.

MM: Thank you.

BF: It won’t bother me any. [laughs]

[End of Interview]