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Introduction

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FOREWORD

Rick Applegate

There comes a time when we can all benefit from just stopping, and taking a long, deliberate look back over what we have tried to do and what we have accomplished, in an effort to figure out what it has amounted to. That's what this book—an assemblage of reflections on important 1960s and early 1970s issues, by those who grappled directly with them—is trying to do.

The collection is, we hope, not just long overdue, but an irreplaceable undertaking, laying out many of the real stories, told in their own words, of those who were in the public arena during some of the finest days of Montana's history.

Unfortunately, a good number of the important usual suspects are unavailable for this compilation. They have passed on and so are largely unrecorded here, save for an occasional quote or other reference. But they are certainly not forgotten, because they helped drive many of these stories. Among them are: Leo Graybill, Chet Blaylock, Don Foster, Jerome Cate, Dale Harris.

But fortunately, there are many still around who have been willing to share their recollections, and those have been gathered up here. And it is likely—and we very much hope—that more will continue to emerge after publication, suggesting the need for a website or digital version to capture whatever else pops up.

In Montana history, the 1972 Constitutional Convention, well represented here, was an overdue and refreshing exercise, including an astonishing posse of elected women who, by their unprecedented numbers, added a breadth and level of talent and conviction not before seen in the state. Mae Nan Robinson/Ellingson stalked the halls with an impact that was reminiscent of the seismic arrival and continuing resonance of Dorothy Bradley, who showed up at 23 in the 1971 Legislature and stayed a while, returning much later to serve again. Daphne Bugbee and Dorothy Eck of the League of Women Voters were the vanguard of informed change at the Capitol in the early 1970s. And there was more to come . . . as you'll see.

Men, too, played a constructive role: Wade Dahood, a talented personality of great force and persuasion, was insistent that third-party liability and the abolition of sovereign immunity be enshrined in the Constitution. Dahood also made it abundantly clear that he was prepared to entertain and push for other innovative additions that made the Constitution's Declaration of Rights a lodestar that would go farther than later

work on civil liberties and political freedoms across the country. Don Foster pressed for the right of participation. Bob Campbell (well known for opening his trench coat to display the collection of political buttons he kept pinned to its liner), Chet Blaylock, and George James weighed in on many fronts, including the right of privacy and the right to a clean and healthful environment. Lyle Monroe pushed for the right to life's basic necessities and for the rights of folks under the age of majority. Jerry Cate played a leading role on environmental matters and kicked up a fair bit of dust during the "right to know versus privacy" debate.

In the early 1970s legislative sessions, Harrison Fagg proved to be far more adroit than one would guess, given his frequent habit of sticking his foot deep into his suddenly noisy wastebasket as he made his way to the aisle of the House. George Darrow always fussed as he repositioned his eyeglasses, and then he made very clear that he was a studious and non-nonsense proponent of careful analysis on the environment. During the coal debates, John Hall literally dropped the microphone after quietly preaching the importance of skepticism about the alleged universal benefits of large-scale mineral development in Eastern Montana. His words compelled a more deliberative look at coal mining and became one of the principal reasons the state ended up with the coal severance tax. Tom Towe skillfully drilled holes in the flawed logic of those who understood maybe a tenth of what he articulated on taxes and other important issues. And, after the dust had finally settled on the Convention, Mike Meloy, who had ably shaped the text and provided advice on many of the Constitution's provisions from the Legislative Council, focused his sharp talents on maddeningly elusive and complex issues of open meetings and documents. Outside the legislature, Jim Goetz, my colleague for much of the 1970s, continues to this day to push the legal frontier on environmental and other matters, shaping and reshaping the legal landscape, for which he has justly been recognized.

As a result of the work of these and the other writers, this collection shines a welcome beacon on so many more stories, reminding us that there are moments in history that, if lost to our memories, would leave unfortunate gaps in our knowledge and impoverish our understanding of critical historical developments in our public arena. And these gaps could leave unknown and un-regarded many important insights that would help Montanans address the difficult choices we face now and in the future.

In the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s, Montana's visionary leaders found themselves in a position to matter. The state re-embarked on a progressive march that, fragile enough at the time, eventually sagged. But as things political go, it likely will return again, when folks get a good, hard look at the corrosive character of our more recent public discourse,

which often ignores the many actual problems faced by today's Montanans. These problems will have to be confronted squarely by those who will feel compelled to assert themselves in Montana's public tomorrows. The next few generations will most certainly take a perplexed look back and ask just what Montanans were thinking and doing during the rewarding times described in this book. I hope these stories will be an important part of the answer.

The Montanans who speak here are likely among those, young and old, who hope for a revival of the collegial forward-looking values that can, once again, put Montana in a better place.

Congratulations to Dorothy Bradley for conceiving and putting her shoulder to this task and shepherding this collection; and to all those who speak so well here—for lives well lived, and so well tamped into these pages.

Readers are in for a revealing treat, and a great ride. At any point along the way, take a turn outside. Hear thunder in the mountains, see the light come up over the hills and spread across the unending, ennobling sweep of prairie. Read on . . .