

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 471-003

Interviewee: Katherine “Tobie” Weist

Interviewer: Hannah Soukup

Date of Interview: October 2, 2020

Project: Katherine “Tobie” Weist Oral History Project

Hannah Soukup: Today is October 2, 2020. I'm Hannah Soukup, the Mansfield Library's Oral History Curator, and today I'm speaking with Tobie Weist. This is the third installment of our interview series with her about her research and work as an anthropologist and a [University of Montana] professor.

Thanks, Tobie, for doing this a third time.

Tobie Weist: Well, thank you. It's all new. I mean, I don't think I've been repetitive hardly at all

HS: No, you have not.

TW: I think I might have mentioned this before, but I want to talk a little bit now about the influence of my research and our stay on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, in which when we went to the reservation and we had an alternative. We tried the Crow if we couldn't get accepted on the Cheyenne reservation. We met with the president of the tribe, who was John Woodenlegs, and he was quite a well-respected president, I think, in Montana and all the way over to Washington D.C. Really, really good person. Anyway, he asked what we were there for, and I'd talked with my husband Tom the night before, or we had discussed the night before, 'what are we going to tell him why we're here?' To me, anthropology seems so invasive and far-flung, and I really hate to say, "Well, I'm going to talk to a lot of people about their life." And they say, 'you've got to be kidding. We don't want that.' Because their very sensitive about being culturally different.

So, we decided that Tom would talk about his work. Now, what he wanted to do—and this was kind of on the spur the moment, he came up with this idea; it was a great idea—to look at the folklore and look at the tales that were prevalent, that were spoken to children, to each other on the reservation and to look at the history of the reservation. In fact, that was his real concern because most of the work on Native Americans had really been about the distant past—well, what I would call the distant past. That is, pre-reservation life as hunters and gatherers, and in terms of conflicts with military or invasions. What we were interested in was the current reservation. So, he said he was interested in doing the history of the reservation, and John Woodenlegs loved the idea, so we got accepted without any problem. Except he had a friend, I can't remember her name, in Billings. Well, a woman, white woman, was interested in the reservation and Native life. She was kind of a mentor to him dealing with us strange white people who moved through. We met with her and she approved of us, so we got to live on the reservation.

We lived in the...well, there's two sides of the reservation and the main road runs through it. One side is the Indian side; the other side is mainly the white side, which has the people working in the hospitals and the schools and in nice housing. But we lived on the Indian side, which I wanted, and there was a trailer, court and my grandmother helped me buy a trailer. It's the first nice place I lived in [laughs] because we didn't have a whole lot of money. My son who was four at the time played with the Indian kids who lived in the trailer court, and we became friends with the other people. It was a central place in that if we lived on the white side, a lot of Native people wouldn't really have wanted to come and visit us. But it became known as a place to go and visit and talk, and we served coffee and anything we had to eat. So, it worked out very well. We were there for over a year.

I became friends with Belle Highwalking, an older woman. I took her as kind of like a mother-grandmother because she was in her 80s, and living by herself as a widow had children and grandchildren. She got some funds from the agent [Indian Bureau] that the government handed out, and she had a lot of, what they call, commodities—really bad food. So, we became friends, and I did an interview with her a long, long interview. It took a long time which the archives does have [Mansfield Library's Archives and Special Collections], all the notes on that. She would visit frequently. It was a place where she could get warm, and her English was fairly good. It was really quite good. I learned a lot about the reservation from her and about...and everybody who worked for me were women. It became very clear—and I felt comfortable that way—but it became very clear that...and I was, what, 30, 31, I think when we went there. So, I guess I was kind of young. There'd been a lot of Americorps young people working on the reservation, and particularly the girls were suspect for having relations with Indian men and that was a real no-no. So, it was good for me. I had a family, I had a child, and I would never be in the...Since our trailer park was on the thoroughfare, you might say, everybody knew who came to visit. I would never allow a single man in or a man in if Tom wasn't there because people gossiped a lot, as they do everywhere.

But when I finished my work and was working on my dissertation, I came to realize I had this golden opportunity to talk to all these women about their lives as women on the reservation. I mean, I wrote down materials, but it really wasn't as pointed or focused as it should have been. Because at this time in the late-'60s, mid- to late-'60s, the women's studies wasn't that prolific, and interest in in women as a category wasn't that—some people like Margaret Mead might have carried out some materials, but really not from the current perspective of the struggles that a lot of women go to dealing with patriarchy and having many children that you're taking care of and the men are drinking money and they're trying to support a family. So, that's one of the reason the things that led me to the research that I did, which was really on the history of Plains women. More of a woman's standpoint than just as an object that was there because they were there. So, I feel really good about the research that I did on that. That was very influential.

Another thing that influenced me from my work on the reservation was that you've got to be doing something productive for the people you're living with. I really felt like I was just kind of, I

don't know, wasn't able to give back to the people that were helping me. Ever since I've always tried to do something either teaching or Peace Corps or something like that in the work that I was doing overseas whether it was as a teacher or as a researcher. So, those were two things that I really thought were important I wanted to mention.

I think also, I became from working with the Native peoples, and I found them not easy to interview. They're very quiet, and you really have to get to know them and they feel that they trust you before they'll really do much talking. Belle, of course, she trusted me, and so I was able to do her life history. But you have to feel like you're paying back, I mean, you're giving back in some way and that's one of the reasons—one of the things I became interested in was social change. What change was taking place, how laws and governments impact on the lives of all Native peoples, and how my perception of what is happening may well not be their perception.

I always like to tell this story of when I was on the reservation. It was difficult. This was in the late '60s. I think, Johnson [President Lyndon Johnson] was in; there was New Deals coming in and real concern with increasing the economic well-being of Native peoples. So, there's a lot of change. People were saying, "Things are really difficult," and they were. There was enormous amount of poverty. They said, "Oh, things used to be so much better before." They'd go on and on by how it used to be really good, but it was really bad then. I had in my mind this vision of buffalo hunters out there, killing buffalo and tanning hides and eating a jerky or the food they ate. Came to find out I was all wrong. Actually, it was in the 1930s, was during the Depression when they had the CCC camps [Civilian Conservation Corps]. So, the men went away. They were working; they got money. They actually, in terms of their well-being, they were doing well at that time. Then, of course, when the camp shut down, life became much more difficult

Another thing that was interesting too, I did work—while I was there on the reservation, there were a number of suicides by young men. Some of the families that I was close with had had suicides in their family. Then there was a psychiatrist, James Baker was his name, who came—I don't know if he was working for the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] or—but he was looking into these suicides, and I was working as an anthropologist. So, so we worked together looking at that, and I did a lot of work on, not only interviewing as much as I could, but also getting some kind of further background on who was committing suicide. Most important, I did looked at a lot of the historical material and found out suicide was really old. It wasn't some brand new—it did occur, maybe not as prevalent as it does more recently. And all the suicides in the past were related to problems with interpersonal relations. That was kind of the key that seemed to be in the literature behind why the suicide was occurring—a disrupted relationship with a wife or loss of some very important people. So, I went to I went up to Forsyth, which had the records—it's the county seat—to look at the Indian suicides and also the white suicides that were occurring. I came to find out that in the 1930s, lots of whites were committing suicide. No Indians were committing suicide. So, you see the relationship between kind of the economic, political, social life which is an important part of the process of suicide. A lot of the suicides of the reservation—I shouldn't say a lot—but some of the suicides that I looked at, one in

particular struck me, is that one young man committed suicide. His brother, cousin—I can't remember, I think it was his brother—had died in it in a car wreck. He committed suicide, I'm pretty sure, to join his brother.

This gets to something else that is kind of—I found this in Africa too—that relations between an individual and family members aren't...Let's see, let me start over. The emphasis upon individuality is much less than—in both the Indian and African individuals—that they are so closely associated, they are part of somebody else's ego. So, that you can't separate a person, a child, from their mother or father because they are part of that person. It's a really different way of looking at relationships and in our society which we put so much emphasis upon the individual as a separate being.

HS: Yeah, because a tribal society is a communal thing.

TW: It's not just the society itself. There's a lot of conflicts that go on. There was a lot of violence that went on. Drinking, a lot of heavy drinking when we were there. It's that deep relationship you have, the kinship, that, so you called the son of so-and-so—not a separate name. Or when a child is born when they would take the name of an ancestor. We do that a little bit but not quite with the emphasis that they do there. Those were some of the things I wanted to mention.

HS: Thank you.

TW: Which goes into my teaching because those are things that that I could talk about, and you asked—and I think it's important question—you as a non-Indian, how can you teach about Indians. Not very well, frankly, if you want to know the truth. [laughs] So, I was real pleased when Malouf took back some of those classes because I don't think he had any concern over...I don't know that he didn't, but I don't think he did quite as much as I. I felt really not always the person who should be teaching. That's why I like Native peoples doing that work.

HS: But don't you think, or I'm just wondering, just because Malouf was more confident about it, do you think that that made him a better teacher, or is acknowledging a hesitation to do it because you're not Native a good thing in a professor?

TW: I think it depends I respect Malouf. Can't say it I always did, [laughs] but he had been deeply connected for so long with so many people, and he comes out of an earlier generation of anthropology in which I think there was a feeling of, I don't want to say pride, but the knowledge you have about learning about other cultures, which is unique. A lot of people don't have that. So, I think he felt much more comfortable teaching about it and feeling a great need to do so. There's a little bit of the, how can I say, rescuing the poor—the poor people. So, I think he felt...I'm not that much. Me, I like the hard facts myself.

HS: How do you feel about that idea that many researchers, anthropologists, historians feel about their work doing something to rescue a minority population?

TW: A lot of that's gone now. I don't think you have very many anthropologists which would adhere or support that point of view. And that's one...when anthropology started in the late 1900s, early 20th, particularly out of Columbia and New York and particularly teachers, it was trying to describe and making the world knowledgeable about other ways of life, and that those are important to those that are living it. There was an attempt to rescue, for Native Americans, the past that had been really kind of overlooked and not recognized as being significant to a way of life. So, there was that emphasis. When I came along in the 1950s, '60s—'50s, '60s, and through there—things are beginning to change. We wanted to look not so much at the past, which was important but how people were living today and the problems they were facing and the difficulties of getting an education or health care—became much more focused on particular aspects. To talk about a whole culture is out of...difficult to do. It's just too massive. So, we became much more focused on looking at, let's say, women for one or health issues or political systems—asking more pointed, more theoretical questions, not just descriptive. The older—and Malouf came out of the older—very descriptive in his work that he did in teaching. We're not that descriptive anymore. We're much more focused on a particular set of ideas now.

Then one of the things I think—particularly as we began to see that we can't speak for these people; they have to speak for themselves. We have to recognize and investigate that, so that there was a real change of philosophical change in, let's see, '70s, '80s. No, later than that—'80s, '90s—in which anthropology became much more concerned with how people think and talk and interact rather than looking at their kinship systems or marriage patterns or something like that. So, there's a big change there. Much more focused on particular problems of poverty or health issues, so there's a lot of changes that were taking place. It was much more...you had to be a good writer, and sometimes a difficult writer too, like, what are you talking about? Yeah, so it was it was changing.

Now, I never felt really quite so bad talking, teaching about Africa because first of all there's no courses on campus about Africa, [laughs] and Africans are so like night and day from Native Americans in that they're verbose, they're active, they can be dominant and just overwhelming. For example—this happened frequently I always kind of liked it—in the trailer that we were living in on the reservation, somebody'd come in, a woman or a man, it doesn't matter, they came to see me. They would sit and would do a little tiny chitchat, offer coffee, cookies, something like that. We'd sit there, and I learned, don't ask any questions, keep quiet. You know, it's so hard for us to keep quiet. It's terrible. [laughs] They'd finally come out with what they were there for. I don't know. Whereas if an African came in, they immediately started going on and on and on and on. It's just so much easier for an anthropologist—it's so much easier to ask questions on what you want to know about. Sometimes they'd bring up some issues that I really don't want to talk about this one. [laughs]

When I was in, oh, it was in South Africa ,the woman who was—when you go in in the Peace Corps, they put you with the family, or somebody who can speak English and help you learn the culture. She was asking me about sex as an older woman. [laughs] I thought, ‘oh, I can't talk about this. This is not a subject that I talk about.’ I was laughing. My reaction was, oh! [laughs] An Indian woman would never ever, ever ask you anything like that. The difference between the Native and the African. Just so much easier to interview in Africa.

HS: So, I had a couple of follow-up questions about some of the things that you mentioned. What sorts of contact had you had with indigenous peoples in the U.S. before you actually moved to Montana?

TW: None. I came from Ohio, and there was none. In my family, it's kind of interesting. I come from an extremely, deeply prejudiced family; it was a constant conflict. My family, my parents thought I was really weird. My father once said, “Why were you so different than everybody else.” Actually, my brothers felt like I did; although, I didn't know because they never talked about it. I'm just a big loud. When I see prejudice, I just, I just get angry. But blacks are bad, African-Americans were horrible names, but Native Americans were okay. I don't know why, but my parents thought my work with Native Americans, that's really wonderful, that's really good. I think as John Woodenlegs used to tell us, right around the reservation with the white surrounding community, Native peoples are looked down upon, and lots of negativity there. He said, “The further he got away towards Washington, the better he became.” Washington loved him. [laughs] So, in a situation where it's kind of, ‘lo, the poor Indian,’ that I grew up with as opposed to African-Americans who were part of the community. You've heard of this guy John Lennon [John Legend]? He's a well-known actor, singer. He's married to Chrissy Teigen, and he comes from my hometown. [laughs] Oh wow, I didn't know we had anybody well-known from my hometown.

HS: Then you had said that your research on the Northern Cheyenne women and your interviews with them wasn't quite as pointed as that as it could have been?

TW: I'd just be hearing them talk, and I wasn't thinking of them as women and investigating or asking questions about their life as women. It was just Native people's history, who they were related to, things like that, but it really wasn't dealing with a lot of the issues that I'm certain that women are faced with.

HS: So, less focused on gender identity and more focused on indigenous identity?

TW: Yeah, right. Afterwards as I was going through my materials, I said, “Oh! You missed it. You missed it.” That's when I started...and Native women or women in general were becoming a important category, let's say, to be investigated—to understand what women as women were enduring, succeeding, whatever. That's one of the things I always liked about “Henry” Whiteman [Henrietta Whiteman]. She was a strong woman, well-grounded in herself as a Native. A little bit flamboyant, let's say, but had a wide view of Native women. She was from

Oklahoma, a Cheyenne, a Southern Cheyenne. As opposed to Bonnie Heavy Runner who was much more concerned, of course, with the university, with the program, with Blackfeet. So, it was just different. Both wonderful women, I might say.

HS: As an anthropologist, what do you think are the ethics, or what were your ethical concerns about researching and interviewing indigenous people?

TW: I think always that I didn't...I wanted to make sure that I wasn't so-called using them. I probably was, but I didn't want them to feel that way. One of the things I attempted to do—of course, let's see, as a white, relatively young, married woman the women that I actually interacted with were older. They were the mothers and the grandmothers, rather than the women my own age, because they were busy doing stuff and some of them had left the reservation to live elsewhere in towns or marry elsewhere. So, I didn't...and I felt that when I wrote something, I wanted it to be true. I mean, right, correct. Some things—one paper in particular—which got rejected, rightfully so, because it was little...In my research going through the old history, I did a lot of work on reading the diaries and the journals and the comments that, let's say, Lewis and Clark and a lot of other people—that's where I drew a lot of my work on the history of Native women. And up in the Blackfeet, there were a lot of women, or any number of them, had their nose cut off, and people passing through would always remark because it was pretty ugly. I found that it was really by their husbands who did it, and they were afraid—they wanted their wives to look ugly so that they wouldn't be attracted to other men...attractive to other men. The underlying cause—the women were doing so much work in the fur trade. They were the ones that were preparing the hides; they were the ones that, well, they weren't so much doing the hunting. And not so much in the United States, but up in Canada, a lot of the women were the go-betweens that the French or British trappers coming in and the Native community. I don't think that was so true. It was mainly the men that were in this...down here in the United States. But I think the men were so afraid. And, of course, the white men were attracted to the Native women. So, they were controlling the women. But I would have [unintelligible] but it got rejected, which is right. It probably should have been. I think I was true on it, but I don't think anybody wanted to hear that.

One of the papers, I wrote which I really liked, it was on the giveaway and I'm certain they're still having giveaways like crazy. Not much had been written about it, but I had participated because it was the time of Vietnam War and so many young men and women were going away to serve in service and then coming back to visit or being discharged. They always had a potluck and a dance and a giveaway for them. So, I took a lot of information down about giveaways: who gives away, what are they giving, where does it go. It's a tie between the tribes. The giveaway is a primary way by which relationships are cemented between different tribes, different reservations. So, that was a fun piece of research. I really like that.

HS: You've really talked about the changes in the field of anthropology since you started, but did you have anything else you wanted to add to that?

TW: [pauses] You know, I really don't...if I look at the university. I mean my department now, I think it's quite changed. Of course, archaeology is a central sub-area here at this university, and it should be because archaeology is prevalent. I mean, it brings in money and students, important. They did a lot of archaeology on road projects just making sure that no Native burial grounds or occupation areas were destroyed, so that was really important. Then there's work on health. I think that's another big area that anthropology has gone towards. I think the old-fashioned anthropology isn't kind of there anymore. I like to talk about kinship systems and how people get married and or divorced, whatever it might be. I don't think they do that anymore. Okay.

HS: Or maybe they tie it to current, maybe they track it to current trends.

TW: I don't know. One of the areas that I really liked, and I didn't do so much, I had a number of classes and that's on international and global change. I was really into, I'm really interested in considering importance of the global world that we live in. Of course, being in Africa, particularly all the countries that I've been in, and in Korea too, that global world is really essential. That fits in with Peace Corps.

HS: Yeah, that's for sure. Then you've also talked about your perspective is a non-Native scholar who extensively studied indigenous cultures and people. Did you want to talk anymore about that?

TW: No, I don't think there's that much more to talk about. I think something that's interesting is the reaction of people that I think they're feeling towards me as an outsider—a professional. That is, I'm not a chicken...I'm not a kitchen maid or something like that. I represent an educated person who comes from, I don't know, a secure white culture or something like that. I think with the in the Native peoples that puts them off. I understand that. So, I would do things—and people were really nice to me. A lot of the ladies like to play bingo. I would go play bingo. I tried to learn as much the Cheyenne language, which is extremely difficult language. Then when they had a big stick game match with the Crow or somebody like that, they wanted me to take care of the money because they trust me, which is true. They should. So, there were a number of ways that they would use me to...and that that was fine.

When I taught in in Africa, which is always kind of interesting and funny, they'd call me professor, prof. Then you get so much respect, not only for your education but for your age and things, which you never see here. [laughs] So, you always feel good when you're teaching in Africa because they like you so much. And in Korea too, high status for education. That was fun.

HS: Well, then if you feel like you've discussed pretty much everything you want to talk about regarding your research and your work as a professor, we can move on to what you did after retirement.

TW: Yeah, one of the things that I didn't talk about my research in Tanzania.

HS: Oh yeah, yeah. Let's talk about that.

TW: I spent a year there researching women. What I was looking at—and I don't think there was much written on this—the town I lived in, well, it had like 100,000 people but it was considered a small town. It wasn't a major commercial center; although, it was an administrative center in terms of the organization of Tanzania, which is divided into provinces. The town I was in was the administrators for the Tabora province. Although there were a lot of people that lived there, it was different than Johannesburg or any of the other, or Dar Salaam, which are bustling big urban. This was kind of like a small town, and it was that feeling because there weren't any roads going in and out. There were some to neighboring villages, but that was it, so you had to fly in to get in. There were no roads, or if there were, you could only take them in certain...they would be dirt, gravel, sandy roads. There was a train. I took the train in to get there. Then—

HS: So, I'm sorry. I'm guessing that at certain times of the year maybe those roads were impassable.

TW: They were impassable because of rain, but the trains always worked. The trains had been put in by the Germans. This is a really interesting town because not only, I think, Stanley [Henry Morton Stanley] and all the explorers, Burton [Richard Burton] stopped there. They stayed there because this was the biggest—they were on the trade routes. It was the center of a number of trade routes going east, west, north, and south. So, all the explorers stopped there. It was a Muslim town at that time because, well anyway, there's reasons for that. There was still Muslim housing, and about half the town was Muslim. Then the Germans came in, when it used to be German Tanganyika; it was a German colony when Germany wanted to be one of the big colonial countries in the world. Fortunately, it didn't last too long. But there were still German buildings there. The mint was there, the Bomba was there—military center. Then the British took over after the First World War when Germany lost all its colonies, so the British took over. The school—they started schools and all sorts of mainly educational and kind of developmental, so-called developmental projects. Then with independence kind of fell into disuse, I think, but a lot of people still live there.

So, one of the questions I was asking—I wanted to find out what was important for women in this town. They hated the town. I loved the town. I thought it was wonderful. I loved it there, but they hated it because they had no business. The women—African women are workers. They're either working in the fields, or they're working being seamstresses. They all have something that they're productive that they're supporting the families. The major breadwinners of the family, and so they hated the town because there was no business. It was so poor, and the government, the Tanzanian government with the urgings of the IMF (the International Monetary Fund), told them they needed to pay back their loans to the banks—European banks, which are well to do. So, they wouldn't get any more loans if they didn't pay back the loans they'd had before. In order to do that, because they were asking so much, they told, they said,

'well, one of the things you could do. You could cut social services,' which they did do, so that the schools were destitute. I visited friends—I had friends who were teachers—80 students sitting on the floor. They didn't have chairs or desks or anything. The hospital had no anesthetics, no gloves, no meds, nothing. So, the women who were giving birth, if they were having any problem, they died. It was just tragic what was happening, and so it was tough.

But I interviewed over a hundred women, and so I have all the material if you want it. [laughs] I know you don't want it.

HS: I don't know.

TW: It's huge. I should also tell you a story...I told you this story. I was thinking about South Korea, and but I did that one.

HS: Did your research there with the women, did it touch on the effects of European colonialism and the continued issues with it with having loans with European banks and everything?

TW: Well, the country has loans with European banks, not an individual. I don't think there was much money available. One of the things that I didn't focus on, but I'd I certainly looked at, was relationships between the genders. Most of the women I interviewed had pretty much, fairly good control over their lives they. For example, no woman—unlike the United States I should have done this—would ever share a bank account with their husband. Never do that. You do that, and you are destitute.

HS: Why?

TW: Because men use it to see other ladies, and they drink a lot. Yeah. I should tell you about the system, the merry-go-round that they have in Korea, that's really interesting. They have it in Africa too. This is where a group of women, usually friends, might be relatives—they get together, and they put money in a pot. I know more about the Korean one because I really got interested in this out of my giveaways things. In which they, every month a different woman would be the head of it. So, you put in maybe \$5, and you put in \$5 maybe every week, every month, and they keep track of it. It's like a little bank. Then when you've been there—and they make they decide how long you go—you get the whole bunch back. So, that gives you a pot of money that you can use to buy furniture; most the women in Korea would use it to buy children's clothes. They would use it to buy a school uniform. Or in Africa...something that was beyond what they themselves could accumulate. Then you start, you just keep putting the money in, then once a year or whenever that they decide is the length of time before you get it. That works really well. It's a women's association, and they're found all over the world—not so much here, but in in a lot of countries where women need money because they support families and buy the food. Men might be concerned about getting the house, but beyond that they don't...It's not true for all men, but true for many of them.

So much too, particularly, in Africa—and I think probably with the reservation too but I never looked at it quite so closely—where women's strongest relationships are with other women. They grow up with a mother and sisters and cousins, who they call sisters, which is the same among American Indians. Men grow up with men, and little boys play with other little boys. You see, little girls in Africa, maybe they're five or six. They're carrying a baby on their back. They learn really early how to carry the baby because the mother's busy. They have too many children too. Anyway, that's my...but they're using more and more birth control. It's becoming really important. Women have emotional, close emotional ties with other women.

Men, it's much more difficult, I think, in Native and African men, to really express deep emotions. It's just hard. So that, for example, when I was in South Africa in the Peace Corps, there was a man who committed suicide. There were people dying all the time. Every week there were so many funerals they had to give them not just on Saturdays, but they had to start giving them on Sundays and other times. So many deaths. Anyway, this man committed suicide and he had—I don't know that they were quote-unquote fully married, but he had a woman that he'd been with and a couple children by her. He had his own house. Well, she started having an affair with another man, and he went to see her, and she just said, "Just go away buddy." He went home, committed suicide. I asked, because I was interested in suicide, I asked—in my compound, one of the daughters of the woman who I was living with was a nurse, and who had more experience with Western kind of ideology than many Africans. She said that women have an emotional support with other women. If you've got a problem with your husband or a problem with this or money, other women will help you out if they can, and emotionally they are there for you. She said, "Men don't have it. Men have drinking buddies, and they tend to..." They're, let's say, very insecure in their ego. So, they don't want other men to know that you're having trouble with your wife or this or that, so they don't share. They don't have—this woman was telling me—they just don't have the emotional support. I thought that was really interesting—to some degree too elsewhere

HS: What about in the United States?

TW: Yeah, you have men being close with other men going out drinking or playing cards or something like that. But their emotional support I think comes primarily from their wives. Doesn't it?

HS: Do you think that women in the United States have that kind of emotional support with other women?

TW: Some do, but a lot don't. I think there's more recently than when I was growing up. We were never...I never had girlfriends, you know, really deep girlfriends. But I think there's more and more of that now than there was in the '50s, '60s, in the last century, let's say.

HS: Anything else about your time in Tanzania?

TW: I really love Tanzania. It's a quiet country; people are very polite there. There's relatively little violence compared to something like Nigeria, which is kind of off the wall. Botswana's an interesting country. It's a quiet country. You don't have this exuberant African sense of being that is coming out quite as fully. That's why I like the books about the woman detective [Mma Precious Ramotswe] if you're familiar with those by Alexander Smith [Alexander McCall Smith]. He's got a whole series [No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series]. Oh, these are great. A lot of people like these books; it's a whole series about a woman who started her own detective agency because she was so good at it and in Botswana. I like it because...I don't care that much for the plots. They're okay, but she gives this man who'd been a lawyer there—he's a Scottish man—but he talks a lot about the values. I mean, not overt values. People in Botswana and the Tswana are real concerned about each other. They help each other, and they're polite. They're very quiet too; they're not exuberant as I would say the Nigerians are. So, it's a quiet country. You don't see much hassle. Like up in Nigeria, like every day you go out of your house, your apartment to go to school or go to the market, and there'd be a big conflict going on. People were yelling and screaming at each other, so that's interesting.

Oh, this was a really weird thought that I had. Did I tell you about the time when I took my teenage son with me?

HS: Yes.

TW: And we were in the car?

HS: Oh, no.

TW: Okay, so we got there, and about the next day, we went to the university. I was going to teach at this university, so we got a taxi, and a lot of people speak English, so that wasn't...We're going down the road. All of a sudden, we pass this nude man walking down the street. Matt looked at me, and I looked at him. It's like... Actually, that's very common in Africa. Yeah, it's really. It is. What it is men—it's more men than women. Women could do it, but yeah, maybe there was one that I heard about. We were in the town of Calabar, and what it is is they're schizophrenic. I talked to a psychiatrist, a psychologist back here and was telling him about this. He said, "That's really common among schizophrenics. They take the clothes off." I'm thinking of that poor man that got killed in Rochester, New York, the black man, he was, I think he wasn't wearing much of anything. He was schizophrenic. It's a kind of a worldwide thing. You don't see it so much. In the institutions, I guess, it's much more prevalent. Like in Nigeria, they never would have killed him, never ever would have. You just don't kill these people. You make sure that they're not causing conflict, but the conflict's relatively rare kind of. Interesting. We saw, there were a number of nude men. [laughs]

Then Matt had his beggar and I had my beggar so that when we went to the market, they would come up to us. I always made sure Matt had something to give to him, and I had

something to give to my beggar—they were old men. Anyway, just interesting. I found, one time in Tanzania, I was with the woman who was my assistant and she was my translator. She's really good. We were going someplace, and she said, "We can't go there." So, we took a detour. There was a nude man down there she didn't want me to see. [laughs] I didn't see any of that in South Africa; it's not that it wouldn't be there.

What time is it? Oh, I talk too much.

HS: Oh, it's okay.

TW: Well, we should start on, maybe, the Peace Corps.

HS: Sure. We don't need to go into much detail about this because we'll probably do a separate interview with you for the Peace Corps project unless you really want to delve into that here.

TW: No, that's okay.

HS: Okay. Could you just talk briefly about why you chose to work for the Peace Corps, and why the experience appealed to you? Because you served in both South Africa and Georgia and you've been in the Peace Corps multiple times.

TW: The Peace Corps was something that I'd always been interested in from the '60s, maybe more in the '70s when I came to the university. Both Tom and I were interested in this, but we had kids and they wouldn't take us. So, it was something that had always kind of been there. Of course, when you're interested in other countries and global issues, the Peace Corps comes up. I always like to say—I retired in 2000, yes, and in December I taught; January, I went in the Peace Corps. Yep, just...Okay. I had a friend stay in my house for the two years, really over two years that you're in the Peace Corps. I wanted to go to Zimbabwe because I love Zimbabwe as a country. I visited when I was in Botswana to Victoria Falls, and it was kind of like I thought, I felt like it was like Tanzania. Good solid country, nice people, relatively a lot of English. I'm terrible at languages. But there wasn't anything there. In fact, they shut the program down because Mugabe [Robert Mugabe] was such a horrible president. But they had this program in South Africa. The guy, my recruiter said, "You'll love this program. "Actually, I did love this program. It was one which South Africa was changing their political and social educational system from the colonial apartheid, British colonial structure that it had into something that's African.

The teachers had been trained under the British colonial educational system, which is not African, and so what...they had sent out a proposal and gotten a return—some educational professor in Harvard. It was horrible. Anyway, it was setting up the new system: the new curriculum, the new guideline, the new methodologies. It was really a total change. What we as Peace Corps volunteers were to do was to help the teachers to learn, actually, it's an American system of education. A lot of the young people had never taught before. They had a degree in geography or physics or something, but they said, "Don't worry." I think they did a great job. In

fact, I think most of my volunteers, who I was with, now are on my Facebook, and they're all married and have lots of kids and do have great jobs. They're doing fabulous things.

So, I was in a rural—most of our settings were rural, but some were in small smaller towns. Mine, I had three schools, and the teachers had been educated in teacher colleges, so they hadn't been to a university, which is okay. A lot of them were older and had taught there for years, so it was difficult to change, to teach them our kind of education, which is more goal-oriented, much more based on the culture. Theirs would be based more on the culture, the history of that community or that tribal group. Taught in their language, not in English or French or whatever that colonial language had been. It was very group-oriented so that students worked in groups, and they had specific goals in whether it was in, let's say, health or education or...What kind of things were they? Speaking English and language, history, whatever it might have been that they were studying or learning. In the lower grades, they'd be learning to read and write and work together. I found that those kids loved working together. That just came naturally to them—groups of four. They were supposed to get...they'd have a question, a problem they want to solve, so they all work on it together. Then they have a spokesperson who will speak for the group, and they did really well. Our American students just flop. They flunk that one big time. Our kids don't know how to work together, as little ones, I'm talking about like third graders or something like that. Different culture, in which the kids, they're always playing groups. You seldom see a child by him or herself. They're always together.

So, I was there for 27 months, and I lived in...when you go in, you have about three or four months of education where they get you so you learn the culture, they work hard on language. They're really good on language. They have native peoples working with you on learning language and learning culture. Then there's a structure—the Peace Corps office that has the head of the Peace Corps and assistance, a doctor is usually there or a nurse. They don't go into any country that's not asked. That country has to ask to have the Peace Corps come in. Then, with the Peace Corps, they work out what the focus of the project is. So, it might be on agriculture, it might be on business, it might be on education—those are kind of the usual things that they are concerned with. The agency's working with the government or the local political system, whatever it might be, so you're not there all by yourself. I found that in South Africa we had a really good office, and the people who were employed there—Americans and South Africans—were really excellent people.

I think I basically failed. [laughs] I don't know. You work so hard trying to get to your teachers to listen to students. They're so used to standing up at the blackboard and writing out—they'll write out sentences in English or in Sesotho, and then the kids have these booklets, these exercise books, and they're just copying it down. They don't ask them any questions. The students aren't expected to ask questions. It's just the teacher. It's all focused on the teacher. If the students misbehave, they all have a stick and they go around and they whack the person on their hand or legs or whatever it might be. So, corporal punishment is the way you get your students to behave, which they're the best-behaved students I've ever seen. They're so great. They just sit there, and they don't sleep. They really want to learn, and they're bright and have

good minds—most of them. So, I tried to get rid of corporal punishment, teach other ways. I tried to get so that students elected representatives to work on a student organization, so they're part of the decision-making process of the school. Fat chance that was. [laughs]

HS: But do you think that you can unravel hundreds of years of colonialism in 27 months?

TW: No, you can't. You can't. Well, they got rid of this next minutes, but they always said, at the end, you'd see more and more sticks coming. They always say, and this is true, when the kids—kids love to draw—anyway, they draw a picture of your teacher, well they're always a girl, almost always a woman, and right beside them is a stick, a switch. [laughs]

I had great living conditions. I had an outhouse. They built me an outhouse. Well, there was one. It was a two-seater. There was a wall in between, but it was cement. It was falling apart. The door would hardly shut, and then you'd open the door, shut it, you'd feel the crumbling of cement around you. 'Oh, I can see it right now. Heading in the *Missoulian*, Peace Corps volunteer killed in in toilet collapse in South Africa.' So, one of the conditions for me to live there was they would build a new outhouse for the community, I mean, for my family. The woman who was the mother of this compound, her husband who had passed away had been the...I don't know what you call. The head man. I think so-called king. She called herself the queen and the king of the tribe, and the tribal office was down the road a little bit. This was kind of a center of activity, so that when there might be a religious ceremony that was held there or people would come and visit, she was...I think she was really loved by the community. She would be out there with him, and then she told me, she says, "I'm an alcoholic." She spoke some pretty good English. What the ladies would do, they'd go out at night and sit at the local kind of...what they call it? There's a term for it. Little shops, and they make their own beer. It's actually pretty strong. I didn't care for it. Anyway, she'd totter back home. She's just as sweet as could be, but she'd really get angry when she drank too much. She'd let some of her tensions out, which I got used to. But it was funny. She was the same age as I was at that time, same birthday almost at the same year and day. Our husbands are dead. Our husbands had the...mine was Tom. Her husband in English was Tom. We had so many... She had seven kids; I only had two. There was a difference there. She liked to smoke too. Native...I don't know what you'd call it. A native weed, not marijuana. No, I don't think so. [laughs] But we'd sit in the afternoon in the sun, talk, yeah. It was good.

HS: You've also done a significant amount of volunteer work for the American Red Cross and the Missoula community. When you were with the Red Cross, you did work during both the Katrina and Rita hurricanes. Can you describe your experiences during both of those emergencies?

TW: They were the same emergency because Katrina came in first over New Orleans, and Rita was further west over Saint Charles. There was a hurricane that recently went over them, [pauses] had a woman's name. Anyway, that was last month that hurricane went through. Anyway, when I retired, the summer that I retired in 2000, I worked for the Red Cross. We had

an emergency here in Montana—you probably don't know—we had a big emergency here in Montana particularly down in Darby, Hamilton, but in other places as well. We had fire—a huge fire down there. It was a national...it was the national fire at that time, not like anything we have today. So, I wasn't doing anything just kind of sitting around, and so I called up Red Cross. I said, “Do need help?”

They said, ‘yes, we do. Come down, please.’ So, I sat at this table and took donations for food for animals and clothing...terrible clothing. So, when it was over and they shut down the operation, I continued working in the office with the Red Cross. When I came back from Peace Corps in South Africa, I started working for them again, and not quite as much as I eventually did. Then the Katrina disaster occurred, so I went—I conned somebody into letting me go down. [laughs] It was a little bit of under, you know, but anyway. So, you go for three weeks at a time, and you ship down. They'll meet you; they'll take care of you. They have kind of like stations where...First of all, it was...I won't say...It was organized. Looked like chaos to me, but it really wasn't. So, you go into this place, and they decide where you're going to go and what you're going to do. You're usually working with another, with a group, so they'll decide that you're going to go to this shelter or that shelter or your work in this area or that area. They were just really kind of getting organized because a lot of the people from...this was in...the capital of Louisiana is not New Orleans, it's...Baton Rouge. This was in Baton Rouge. They'd be sending groups of people out to this location or that location, where people had evacuated to. We were sent to Saint Charles because a lot of people, who actually had cars, a little more well to do than a lot of the people in New Orleans, and so they had the city center set up as a shelter. There were, I think, a couple floors of people, evacuees. They had their pillows and their blankets and their TVs and their belongings there. So, I think I was there maybe one or two days, and Rita was coming through, so they decided they had to evacuate this whole shelter back to...well, we went back to Alexandria. We all—all the workers and the evacuees—we went back there. They said, ‘leave your stuff here because we'll come back and get it. When Rita's through, we'll come.’ Well, actually, the center flooded, and they lost it all. Oh, I felt so bad for these people.

So, we were up at Alexandria and they said, ‘we gotta send you back there,’ to the Saint Charles area because there are people being evacuated out of Saint Charles and those towns around there. We went back, oh, I can't remember the name of that town, but there were, I think, three...there were about five of us that went back to this town. Then because there were so many shelters and even some didn't have recognition by the Red Cross, they still had to set them up because people were being evacuated out of other area towns. So, we went to the fairgrounds. They came by and said, ‘we need somebody to go.’

I said, “Oh, I'll go.” [laughs] It was just, it was just horrible. These people have been...they're African-Americans mainly, but they're all kinds of people. We had to set them up, try to get water. We had enough water. I don't think we had any food to speak of. We had some blankets and some mats. There's a couple of beds. So, there was one man who was having trouble, and his wife kept saying—there were three of us; there were three workers for quite a few number

of people—she said, “He’s not doing well.” So, we called the local ambulance, EMT, emergency medical. They came and they checked on all the men. They said, ‘he’s okay,’ but I was sleeping on the cement floor. Oh, well, And I heard when I woke up in the morning, I heard this woman crying, and he’d died during the night. He had two little girls. Then there was a big fight—I don’t know what it was about—between different ethnic, not ethnic groups, because they were all African-Americans, but I don’t know. I mean, this is getting really intense. I was going to say ‘hey, we got to stop this,’ but the elders of the community stepped in and they took care of it. And we didn’t have any communication. I mean, we were kind of...one woman, just finishing her—she was needed to have her last chemotherapy. Tough. There was a woman who had a colostomy [bag] that needed to be taken care of. There were people with major, major illnesses besides the children, and it was stifling hot. I mean, these are desperate situations.

I didn’t have a cell phone, but he did. You could walk out to a certain wire, and he could get some service, so he said, ‘hey, you’ve got to get rid of these people. Has to go. They can no longer stay here. Conditions are terrible.’ Red Cross is real sensitive to the living conditions of the evacuees, and so then the buses—that afternoon big buses came took them away. Then there was this car that drove up, and it had a woman who had had a baby the day before and they wanted to leave her off. I said, “No, I won’t let this woman be here because this is not a good condition for anyone,” and I said, “Who are your pastors? You’ve got places in this community that you can put her up and care for her.” So, I forced them to do that.

Then the woman [whose husband had died]—I don’t know. Somehow, someplace they came and picked up the body and took him off, and then she went off with the other...

HS: Oh, the deceased husband.

TW: Yeah, deceased husband. She went off with her little girls with the rest. So sad. Then after that, we went to another shelter, and after that one, we went to another shelter. I went to about four or five shelters, but that’s what happens.

So, I became pretty involved and took all the classes. Red Cross is really big on classes. Then when was it? Some years ago, a couple years ago, there was a Black Cat fire—the fires all along from Stevensville through to the Black Cat up on Evaro. I worked in those shelters. Then two years ago, I worked in the Lolo fires, but I don’t work on the fires anymore. The shelters are...I’m just a little too old. I get things confused. So, now I work with the blood bank, and I’m what they call a donor ambassador. Crazy name. I just register people as they come in because the people who are the hematologists, they don’t have time to, when they’re busy taking blood, to do it. Yeah, so it’s good.

HS: Why is volunteer work so important to you?

TW: When you’re busy all your life, you just have to keep going busy. If you sit down, it’s a waste of time. And I like people and I like to—even when people come in to give blood, I’m

saying, "Oh, where do you work. Oh, tell me about it." I'm always talking to people, and that's good. I like kids. I love elementary school kids; I just think they're wonderful. I used to work for Mrs. Rothwell. She taught second grade at Rattlesnake School, which is near where I live. So, I think about nine years I spent with her just going in two or three times a week in the morning and just going around making sure the kids are all...that they understand what they're doing if they've got questions, having them read to me, and things like that. Can't do that anymore. You're not allowed to go in the schools.

HS: Right, hopefully that will change soon.

TW: I don't think so.

HS: No, I know, but I mean soon as in...not in the next week or the next couple of months, but...

TW: Well, I have two great-grandsons, and Zayden who's in first grade, his class was shut down. There was a kid that had...then we thought that that he had brought the virus home to his family because they're in quarantine, or they were. My granddaughter was getting sick. So, I went to Costco and got a whole bunch of food, because I thought you got to feed all these kids, and you can't go out to the grocery store. But they were tested, and they came back negative, which is yesterday was yes. So glad! I mean, it's really scary. Then I asked Jeff, my son who works at Hellgate High School, he said there are two classes that shut down there. We're just going to have more. Missoula, Montana, I mean, the numbers are really getting real scary. It's like 900 and some a day. That's a lot. Somebody said it's gonna be with us for a long time even with the vaccine. It's just going to be there. And if you're old and decrepit, just watch out. [laughs] But I was reading this one article on these epidemics, and this woman was saying—it was in a Stanford publication, anyway, she's a history prof—she said that the yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans, not quite certain of the date there, but that was a real killer that. She said this COVID is really nothing compared to that one. But it's not...when I go overseas, you have to have a yellow fever vaccination, but otherwise it's nothing. I think it's just gonna kind of stick around and mutate and become probably really awful. I don't know. I follow mutations. There's a real good book called *Pale Rider* [*Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World*, Laura Spinney (2017)]. It's a history of the 1918 flu epidemic. It's really good. She talks about how they mutate, which I thought was really interesting.

HS: Do you have anything else you'd like to add to anything we've talked about today?

TW: I don't think so. Do you have any questions?

HS: I think I asked them all, but...Oh, I guess there is one other question I'd like to ask related to your work in anthropology with indigenous people here in the United States. I was talking to an indigenous anthropologist a few months ago, and he had said that there's still a lot of resistance within the anthropology—

TW: He is indigenous himself?

HS: Yes, and he said there's still a lot of resistance in the anthropology community toward indigenous anthropologists—

TW: I don't know why. Sounds good to me.

HS: Yeah, because he said that they don't like it when the researched or the subject become the researcher. Do you have any thoughts on that?

TW: No, no, I think it's fine. I've always read indigenous...I guess I can't remember some of the names, I should. My memory's not as good as it once was. Wasn't that good anyway. But some of the...they really weren't anthropologists; they were more spokespeople that were writing. Some were good writers, but they were angry. And sorry about that. I can understand your anger, but you have to look at our point of view too.

HS: They were angry about?

TW: They were angry, particularly if the anthropologists had delved into religious and sacred things. I understand that. I wouldn't touch it myself. I guess, I was just much more interested by what I saw is that you could be, go to a Catholic church and to the Mennonite church and still believe in peyote. Just this great flexibility in your activities—that you're not bound to one class or one category of person on the reservation, and that's acceptable. Whereas, let's say, if I were a Catholic, probably, they might get upset, I don't know, if I joined the peyote religion. Like you've got to be this or that. You can't be...

It was interesting I took a class from...oh, what was her name? Who taught contemporary Native American. She's white. She lives here. She taught a MOLL class. I forget her name, Debbie something. Anyway. One of the things that I got from her investigation, not only of so-called anthropology—she's an anthropologist—historical or indigenous writings, they were, now, what they're looking at is this great flexibility you find in Native communities. I said, "Oh, yeah, I wrote my dissertation on that," which I did. So that as anthropologists and this European descent, we have these nice little categories. You're this religion and then you're this political party and then you belong to this community or something. Whereas that doesn't make much sense to...you have to have all your options, when your options are tight or tough, you gotta have...you gotta use all that you have. I think there's a feeling of, let's say, this bigger world that might be called Christianity or the bigger world that's called Indian and sacred, and those don't necessarily conflict. That that was one of the things that I...

So, I think we should look at what indigenous people are writing and thinking and what their concerns are as, of course, valid. No, I have no...I can't imagine doing that. I wonder if it's not something he's feeling more than the reality. I mean, he's thinking and feeling something that's there, but I think most of...I would assume most of us would be glad to and find it important. I

would find it really essential to know how, why, what, whatever he's thinking and writing and expressing.

HS: Yeah. Well, thank you, Tobie. I really appreciate this.

[End of Interview]