

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 049-007**  
**Interviewee: Leah Coate**  
**Interviewer: Mary Melcher**  
**Date of Interview: March 31, 1972**  
**Project: Montana Women's Oral History Project**

Mary Melcher: I'm Mary Melcher. I'm interviewing Mrs. Leah Coate in Forsyth, Montana. It's March 24, 1977. Okay, you said your family came from Illinois originally.

Leah Coate: Yes.

MM: But you were born in Nebraska?

LC: In South Dakota.

MM: In South Dakota.

LC: Yes.

MM: And your family had come in a covered wagon from...

LC: In a covered wagon, my mother and father, had come in a covered wagon from Illinois to Nebraska and then they went on to South Dakota. They lived in Nebraska for a while. And in time they went to South Dakota and that's where I was born. Then when I was a year old, they came back to Nebraska. They lived there.

MM: And there were quite a number of children in your family?

LC: There were eight, four boys and four girls.

MM: Four boys and four girls and you were one of the youngest?

LC: Yes. Next to the youngest.

MM: And what did your mother tell you about the covered wagon trip from Illinois?

LC: She said it would rain every night and their bedding would get wet. They'd set out the next morning, and they said they had to hang their bedding on top of the wagon to dry in the sunshine through the day. Then the next night it would rain again, but the canvas wasn't very good.

MM: How long did it take?

LC: I really don't know. I never asked her how long it took.

MM: When you were growing up, do you remember what chores you did? You lived on a farm.

LC: Yes. Oh, we had to always go after cows, bring them in for the boys, my brothers, to milk. We gathered the eggs and took care of the chickens. I guess, we rode horses a lot, we played a lot, and we always had horses. We were, three girls, we're younger than the rest of the family and I think we spoiled, probably, by the boys, the four brothers were all older than we were. They probably spoiled us a lot.

MM: Really?

LC: I think they did.

MM: Did you do work inside the house, too?

LC: Oh, yes, we washed dishes and carried in water in small pails. We always just had to carry the water in from the pump.

MM: Was it very far away?

LC: No, our pump was, I would say, maybe 30 feet from the kitchen. Then the windmill was about 200 feet. But, that was for the stock. In Nebraska, where I was raised, the water level was very close, so it was easy to get water and it was good water. It was in northern Nebraska, in the Sand Hills.

MM: So did the boys work mainly outside and the girls work some outside, but inside, too?

LC: Well, as far as the girls working outside, all we ever did was feeding the chickens and gathering the eggs and maybe carrying some water and maybe some wood. But the boys worked in the hay fields and milked the cows and did those things. Plowed, they raised some corn and some cane there. But mainly, that part of Nebraska had more hay land, it was up around Ainsworth and Bassett, Nebraska where the, the native grass was very good instead of hay. And they would hay practically all summer long.

MM: Did you sell it then?

LC: Yes, Newport was a little town ten miles from Bassett, at that time, was one of the largest haybaling places in the world who'd sell hay. It was just a little town, but it had great hay barns that'd cover a whole block. And you'd put your hay in there, your big 'ole hay in there and we would sell it to all over in the United States, I guess.

MM: Do you remember how you were punished as a child? If you were spanked, or what

happened?

LC: I remember one spanking Mother gave me, but that's the only one. And I had sassed her pretty much, but I know that we had to go sit in the corner quite a little. My father died when I was not quite three, and Mother raised us. She was a real gentle mother, I think. She talked to us more than anything else. Told us what we should and should not do and we'd have to stand in the corner if we were too naughty, or go to bed, sometimes. I remember, well remember, I was rather naughty, I think, and rather a tomboy. And this one Christmas I wanted a hammer and nails so bad and instead of that I got a big doll. And I knew, my older sister was in college, and she had brought these dolls home to Florence and I and my sister, just older. And it made me so angry I smashed my doll, so I spent all of Christmas day in bed.

MM: You smashed your doll?

LC: I didn't want a doll, I wanted hammer and nails.

MM: How old were you then?

LC: I must have been about four years old.

MM: And your sister was in college? Where in Nebraska?

LC: At, uh, oh, I believe it was Aurora. I would say.

MM: That was in Nebraska?

LC: Yes, it was in Nebraska. It was a huge college, and I believe it was Aurora, but I wouldn't be positive. I didn't pay too much attention. She and a little friend of hers came home for Christmas and they brought these dolls for us.

MM: Did, was it normal for young women to go to college, yet, when you were growing up?

LC: Well, I don't know. I think it was unusual. I think, uh, I could be wrong, but I think my sister was one of the few of them who went to college out of this county that I was raised in. Because I know that they all thought it was so foolish of mother to try to send her to college, but she wanted to be a teacher so bad.

MM: And your mother encouraged her?

LC: Yes, very much.

MM: That's good. She did become a teacher then?

LC: Yes, she taught for a good many years and then, in later years after the family started to grow, she was married and had a family, and then she lost her husband. She was superintendent of all the schools in Arvada, Colorado. She had four schools under her and she saw it through for ten years before she retired.

MM: What type of games and sports did you play when you were a kid?

LC: Oh, Pom Pom Pull away, Run Sheep Run, Kick the Can and...

MM: A lot of the same things we played.

LC: Yes, a lot of the same things, I think, are handed down. Ring Around the Rosey and London Bridge is Falling Down. Those. I know when I started school, my sister, the school was just across the road from where we lived, and the teachers were always boarded with us, it was a country school. My sister, just a few years older, was the only girl in school, so she talked Mother into letting me start when I was about, I wasn't quite five when I started. So there'd be two girls at school and there were 19 boys.

MM: Why were there so few girls?

LC: Everybody had boys in that neighborhood, I guess. I think that Florence and I and Mildred, that was my younger sister, for years was the only girls in that community. Just all boys, everybody had boys.

MM: So you played with the boys?

LC: Oh, yes. Played with the boys. That's why I say we rode horseback, we were tomboys, I guess, climbed trees.

MM: And the boys never tried to keep you out of their games?

LC: Oh, no. No, that was...my brother, my youngest brother, he was probably in the eighth grade when I started school. I don't remember just...but wouldn't of allowed them, anyway, to keep us out of anything. Very protective toward Florence and I. I think he just watched over us and took care of us.

MM: What type of social events did your family participate in? Did you go to church functions?

LC: Yes, we were two and a half miles from town, from the town of Bassett, but my mother always had what were called buckboards, and team, and we went into Basset, to all the church socials and always to Sunday School and church. And then at this little school house, we used to have pie socials and box socials and dances.

MM: Oh, you did.

LC: Yes, I had. And they'd come in wagons and horseback from miles around.

MM: You were right next to the school at that time.

LC: Yes, just across the road.

MM: What was the buckboard?

LC: I think they were called buckboards, they were, there's a button quite like a wagon that had a smaller box than a wagon. But at the same time, it was awful rough riding, it was like a buggy. But I think they were called buckboards, but I would take a certain...

MM: So you hooked that up to the horses.

LC: We did have a buggy, a single buggy, and one horse. But we couldn't all go in that if we all went into town. Just Mother, if she went in with her eggs or something, would use that.

MM: Did your mother sell eggs?

LC: Yes, she did. She sold eggs and made butter. She raised a family of eight of us. The older boys helped on the farm, but...I guess she must have done a good job, she raised us all anyway.

MM: Yes, that's a large family.

LC: It is.

MM: Did your brothers stay home a long time?

LC: The oldest brother stayed home, yes, quite a while. In fact, I was probably in the sixth grade before he was married. The youngest brother never was married. He was home. My mother was remarried when I was just out of eighth grade, and then we three girls went back to Illinois with her and her second husband. That's where I went to high school, in Illinois. My stepfather, had lost his wife. He had known my mother and father. In fact, he was a cousin of my father's and he, and then his brother had come out with my mother and father in a covered wagon. And then, after he lost his wife and his family was from...he had come to visit his brother, George, and that's when he and Mother were married. That's all.

MM: And by then most of your brothers were grown up.

LC: Ya, they were all grown up then.

MM: They were a lot older than you.

LC: Yes, and they had all grown up and moved to different places away. They eventually, the three brothers, eventually ended up in Scottsbluff, Nebraska and then the one brother in Finch, Montana.

MM: Do you remember if you had books around your house or any musical instruments?

LC: My mother had an organ that she played, I remember, every night, and we'd gather around the organ and sing. I never could sing, I remember Edgar'd say, "Oh, be quiet, you're off tune."

MM: Oh, no.

LC: And when I was little. And then my sister played the guitar a lot, and my brother played the guitar and the mandolin. Not me, I had no music in me.

MM: Did you like to read?

LC: Yes. We read a lot. My mother read to us every night when we were small.

MM: And you had the school teacher boarding with you at one time?

LC: Yes. They almost always boarded with us because it was just across the road and a country school in Nebraska had bad blizzards lots of times, and it was hard to get back and forth. Almost always boarded with us.

MM: Did she give you extra help, then.

LC: Not that I remember. I don't remember that we really needed it, maybe. I don't know. I don't remember. When I was in the sixth grade, Mother sold the farm and moved to town. And when I went to town school, seventh and eighth grade, and, as I say, she got married and we went to Illinois and I took my four years of high school in Sheffield, Illinois.

MM: What was that, what was the school like there?

LC: At the time, I thought it was a very good school. It was a lovely building and I think, for the time, it was a very modern building and good teachers. I would say we had very good teachers.

MM: Do you remember how you celebrated Christmas or birthdays, holidays?

LC: Oh, yes. Christmas, the boys around the farm would always go out and get a big tree and then we were pretty active, always, in the parlor. In those days you had parlors and you had living rooms, and the Christmas tree had candles on it, of course they were only lit on Christmas Eve, the candles. But we'd go in and we could make a wish for what we'd like for Christmas and

go and pin it on the Christmas tree three or four weeks before Christmas. And they might be granted, and they might not, but at least they would know what we wanted.

MM: And did you ask for a hammer and nails that one time?

LC: That's rights. A hammer and nails and I didn't get it.

MM: Well, when you were a teenager and you were going to high school, what kind of socializing was there then? Like, was it too young to date?

LC: Well, no, we generally...I don't know exactly what it was called. It was a men's club that they had to...I don't remember. It wasn't—I don't think—a Lion's Club, but it was some men's organization that had a big decoration room with pool tables and a big dance floor. Every Friday night, they'd turn it over to the high school and every Friday night we'd go up there and they always had music for dancing, or we could play pool at the back room or different kinds of games. Somebody would always have refreshments, we'd take our turns—the full high school. It wasn't a big town. I think there was only 20 in my class. But it was a town that did a lot for the children. Then we had a little creek that run close to town. We skated on in the wintertime. There was a golf club out through the...where the trees were, where this creek ran. On Friday afternoons, anyone that had relation that belonged to the golf club could come on and play golf. My folks didn't belong, but I had a cousin that did and she'd have a set of golf clubs and I'd go out there and play golf.

MM: So, there was quite a bit to do.

LC: Oh, yes. There was always the movies. Movies always used to cost some ten cents. So we'd save all week to go to the movies on Saturday night.

MM: Did you usually go with a date, or go with a group?

LC: Well, and there was really, we had a date in one way. But there were 14 of us. Seven boys and seven girls that went everyplace together. Big groups always went together. We had parties together and we went to shows together. It was always with a group, more than just a single couple going to a place. So, I suppose you could say we dated, because each one would kind of pair off, but it wasn't always the same one. But the 14 of us, I think until I was a junior in high school, when those that were seniors, my sister and the older ones had graduated, that we 14 were always doing things together. But after they, the senior class graduate when they were seniors, well, then, part of our group was gone, of course. It had been the junior and senior class, the freshmen and sophomore, sophomore and junior, junior and senior class with these 14. We didn't take in any outsiders. We thought we were very special.

MM: You didn't take in any outsiders?

LC: No, we were, we thought we were special. We probably weren't, but you know, high school. You think you're just a little bit, at least we did, I remember that.

MM: Was there any type of sex education in the schools?

LC: No. Nor in the home—very little.

MM: Your mother never talked to you about it?

LC: Well, mother did a little. But a lot of people thought my mother was very strange in telling we girls things.

MM: Really?

LC: Oh, yes. It wasn't considered proper. Wait until you're grownup or married to learn anything.

MM: And then you learned it on your own?

LC: Yes. That was the theory then. But Mother really taught us girls a lot.

MM: Did you work during high school?

LC: No, we didn't. I don't know if there weren't any jobs there, but my stepfather had plenty of money. We had a big yard and we took care of the lawn because there weren't any boys around to clear the garden, pick raspberries, I remember that. Dad wouldn't let anybody come in and pick raspberries, he was very particular. And then he'd give them to all the neighbors, more than we could use. But he wouldn't let them come in and pick them, because they might ruin his bushes. So, Florence and I would do the picking. But that's all.

MM: Were there, do you remember if there were jobs around if you had wanted to work?

LC: I don't think that there were any girls around that worked, that I can remember. The boys always, the boys in high school used to be delivery boys. Stores always delivered the groceries. You'd telephone in the ordering. I know they used the boys in high school. In the summertime they'd work around the ranches and all, but as far as I remember, none of the girls that we ran around with worked in the summer.

MM: And after you finished high school, you went to high school for one year?

LC: Yes. It was teacher's college, DeKalb, for about eight months. It was a short course. And then I took my examinations and passed in Illinois, but I wasn't old enough to teach in Illinois. I couldn't get my certificate until I was 18. So, I went to South Dakota and took the examinations

and passed there, and they didn't ask me my age, so I taught there two years.

MM: And did your mother mind you going away?

LC: Well, I think in some ways she did, but I lived with a cousin in South Dakota, so it wasn't completely strange. She knew I'd be well looked after.

MM: And you really wanted to teach then?

LC: I really wanted to. And then my mother wasn't very well, so I went back to Illinois and taught for one year. And, then this brother in Montana wrote and said I could have a school at Finch and I thought that would be a nice time to see the country, so I came out here and I taught in Finch two years. And I was married.

MM: Was it normal then for young women to go away to teach, or go away to pursue some career?

LC: Well, I think in teaching, yes. It was about the only career that I remember. Teaching is looked on as a good profession for young people, but you weren't supposed to be out being a secretary, or something. They didn't consider that such a very good job.

MM: Is that right? A secretary wasn't a good thing to do?

LC: Well, not for when you were younger. They wanted to wait until you were older and had more sense.

MM: Oh, why, were they afraid of what the bosses would do?

LC: I think so I don't know. I couldn't say, really. Just wasn't. I wanted to be a nurse, really, and Mother didn't want me to. She talked me into being a teacher.

MM: Why didn't she want you to be a nurse, I wonder?

LC: She felt it was just too hard a work. She had nursed a lot in her lifetime and a lot of time when we were younger and she was raising the family, she'd be a midwife. And she thought it was too hard a work for girls. She didn't want them to be.

MM: And most of the women would quit teaching when they got married, if they did?

LC: Yes. Very unusual, at that time, to do anything but keep house after you were married.

MM: Did you mind that?

LC: No, I really didn't. I rather enjoyed it. I taught, I said I was married in November, then in January, I finished out the term at Howard School because the teacher had resigned, but that's all I taught. And I, I've always enjoyed keeping house. I like to cook and I like to sew. We had, in 1921, I was married in '19, in 1921 they organized this Homemaker Club from the extension service at Bozeman and I learned to cook, I learned to keep house, I learned to can and sew through the extension service. And I've been a continuous member since 1921.

MM: And you really enjoyed that.

LC: I enjoyed every bit of it, yes.

MM: So you had taught about five years...

LC: Yes.

MM: ...when you got married?

LC: Yes.

MM: What was your courtship like?

LC: Well, just what do you mean by that?

MM: Well, you met him in Finch, Montana.

LC: Well, I met him when I went to a dance with my brother and sister up at Bear Creek School, way south and that's where I met him.

MM: Did you go out on dates? Did he come to call?

LC: Yes, he always came horseback. But we used to, then we'd go to all these dances with my brother and sister; he had a car. We took him to dances from Sanders to Hoshin to Bear Creek to UM and Ashbrook School House.

MM: You went to all kinds of dances.

LC: Howard Schoolhouse, that was the main thing. Once in a while we'd come in town to a show.

MM: Was it in Forsyth or Rosebud?

LC: Forsyth, yes, see, Finch was 15 miles west of Forsyth.

MM: What dances did you do?

LC: Oh, the waltz was my favorite one. The waltz was pretty. Then they used to do the Shabish and they did the Bunny Hug, I think it was, but mostly two-steps and waltzes.

MM: Did you Jitterbug then?

LC: No. I don't think so. I don't remember Jitterbugging, anyway.

MM: Did you remember if women were considered "old maids" if they didn't get married?

LC: Oh, yes. In fact, a lot of people thought I was an old maid, and I was 24 when I was married.

MM: Oh, you were an old maid already.

LC: Yes, I was already an Old Maid as far as some people were considered.

MM: Was there pressure on women to get married, do you think? Do you think people thought it was okay if a woman didn't marry?

LC: Oh, yes, I think so, out here in this country. I think there was more pressure in the East, probably, if you weren't married, but out here it didn't seem to make any difference.

MM: And you were married in Finch?

LC: We were married in Miles City.

MM: In Miles City.

LC: Yes.

MM: In a church?

LC: No, we were just, we were married in parsonage, the minister married us, but we were married in parsonage.

MM: Did you go on a honeymoon then?

LC: No, no, we didn't. We just went back to Finch. My husband was running a lumber yard, Frailby Pane, at that time. And we lived there in Finch and run the lumberyard for two years and then went back to farming.

MM: Did you have children right away after you were married?

LC: Yes, Jerry was born when we were married just a year, when Jerry was born.

MM: And you had six kids all together. Did you have a midwife or did you go to a hospital to have your children?

LC: Well, the first one was born in Finch. Dr. Haywood and Nurse Joe Roberts came to Finch. But the others were all born in a hospital in Forsyth. The hospital wasn't finished when Jerry was born, so there was no place to go. Just stayed in a room in town so the doctor and the nurse came out there.

MM: You had said your mother was a midwife. Were there a lot of midwives around in Nebraska?

LC: There seemed to be. So great a distance and not many doctors and the doctor in Bassett was not very good. He drank a lot. Couldn't ever depend on him. I know when I was three years old, about three and a half, my brother worked in the store in Bassett and come home one Saturday night, running back and forth, he was carrying my younger sister and he shut the door and caught my finger in the hinges. And they took me to town and the doctor was drunk, so an uncle was a druggist, he put the end of my finger back on and taped it, see. But for years, it was just a bump there, but finally, but it was after I was married before I had any feeling in the end of that finger. I used to stick it with pins and it didn't hurt at all.

MM: Were there any midwives around here, or in Finch?

LC: Not that I know of. I can't remember any.

MM: Did you plan on having that many children or was there any birth control available?

LC: Yes, there wasn't any as far as I know, but I always said I was going to have six boys. Six boys, I'm going to have six boys and I wanted to have a basketball team.

MM: All your own.

LC: I played basketball in high school and I liked it.

MM: The girls played basketball then too?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: What, do you remember what position you played?

LC: I played guard.

MM: Guard. I was a guard, too.

LC: My sister and I were guards.

MM: Do you remember if many children were lost during childbirth, then? It was pretty easy?

LC: No, I don't remember out in Finch, anyway. And there were an awful lot of children born that summer. I know that it seemed to me, Dr. Haywood said that when they came out, he said, "You know, this is the eighth Sunday I've been out in this community to bring a baby into the world." And so, and they were just about a week apart, all of them. But there were a lot of...but I don't remember any of them dying.

MM: Do you know if the view of death was different than it is now? If it was, if it happened more often if it was more easy to accept then than it seems to be now?

LC: I don't think so. I think it was just as hard. Maybe not. I know, when the Farmics lived out there and the four children, I had had their four children at school when I was teaching, but when Josephine was in the sixth grade she had pneumonia and died. I think it was probably as hard on our folks then as it is now. It was very unusual for a child to die. Yes, it was.

MM: In your marriage, did you and your husband make decisions together or did your...?

LC: We always talked everything over together.

MM: In times of hardship, did you take on extra economic responsibility?

LC: Well, just what do you mean by that?

MM: Did you ever go back to work after you were married?

LC: No, I didn't. I, at different times, had, like when they were putting a road through, I cooked for the road crew, but they ate at my home. We lived...and when the telephone people came through, I had those for six weeks, but I just cooked for them at home and they came there to eat. Things like that, but otherwise I, no, we lived on a farm. When Jerry was two we got on the farm and my hands were full always cooking for men.

MM: You had a lot of men to eat at your ranch?

LC: Well, there were always two or three hired men.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

LC: —out there I used to have anywhere from six to eight extra men to cook for. I don't think I ever set the table for less than 12. Of course, I had a family of six and then there are eight of us, and I generally had 18, 20 at the table.

MM: Oh, that many!

LC: Oh yes.

MM: At lunch and dinner?

LC: Yes, and breakfast.

MM: And breakfast.

LC: There was a bunkhouse where the men stayed. They were getting that ranch ready to sell and they eventually got 1,000 acres under irrigation so it took a lot of work to get that plowed and planted in alfalfa and then de-irrigate it too.

MM: Yes. Oh your husband was getting the ranch ready to sell?

LC: Yes, yes. Denver Joint-Stocks Land Bank owned that, had to take it on the mortgage and it was run down very badly and weeds were everywhere. They hired my husband to go out and get it in shape to sell. We lived there four years before they sold it.

MM: Did you have a lot of neighbors around?

LC: Well, it's close to the reservation, if you want to call those neighbors.

MM: The Lame Deer reservation?

LC: Yes, it's...Then we were nine miles from Ashland. We had one neighbor about two miles from us, and another one the other direction about two miles. But three little girls...You see, Charles was just a year old when we went out there, and the twins were four. I always raised a big garden and had so many to cook for, I didn't do much neighboring except Homemakers. I always went to that twice a month.

MM: Where was that held?

LC: Well, we held it in the homes—each one. We organized out there, and I would take my turn and each one...There would be twelve of us so generally you had a meeting at least once, maybe twice, a year at your own home.

MM: Then what would you do at the meetings?

LC: Well, that's when we learned to cook and sew and do all the things...and can, and then we talked about different things too. But the organization was first made and they came out in the college, the teachers would come to the college, and they taught us a lot. Later we had too many clubs in the county, and we couldn't have so many so our extension agent would come out.

MM: Did the older women teach the younger women how to cook and sew? It's that who taught, mostly?

LC: Well yes, but the teachers in the college taught us first, and then the extension agent would come out too.

MM: Were books available then? Was there a library around or magazines?

LC: There was a library here in Forsyth, and you could write in for books. Yes, we used to take lots of magazines.

MM: What type of magazines were they?

LC: Well I took the *Red Book* and *McCall's* or *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Cosmopolitan*.

MM: Oh, a lot of the same ones.

LC: The same ones. In fact, I think they were much better magazines then than now. They had more stories in them and more articles to learn things in than now. It seems to me that they...maybe it's just old age but I don't think the magazines are near as good today as they were then.

MM: What type of articles do you remember?

LC: Well, there was lots of knitting and crocheting instructions in. Then they always had two or three pages of receipts [recipes] that we could try out new things to cook. Then there were different pages that you can do and show you how to do that little carpenter work around the house, like putting shelves in the closets and making a few things like that. Those were generally in the magazines.

MM: Did women work in the library? Do you remember?

LC: Yes. Mrs....I can't think of her name. She's Virginia Spanibul's (?) mother, was a librarian. I remember. I can't think of somebody...The rest of them I didn't used to go in so much. Mrs.

Winsler (?) was when my boys were young, was the librarian for years.

MM: Do you know who started the library?

LC: No, I don't.

MM: Did you go to church, then? Was there a church in Finch?

LC: Yes. Well, it was at Howard.

MM: Oh, yes.

LC: That was two miles down, there was a little church, and we'd go down there. Then after we moved to town, of course, we went to church here. Then when we moved down toward Ashland, it was Ashland we went to church at.

MM: Did you go to church functions then too?

LC: Yes.

MM: Were you driving then in cars?

LC: Oh, yes. At that time I drove all the time because when you're on a farm and your husband's busy, you're generally the one that has to come in and get the repairs and things and get the groceries.

MM: Well, how old were you when you started having cars?

LC: Well, the second year we were married he got a car, but the first car as I remember I ever rode in, I was seven years old. The banker at Bassett (?) bought a car and hired my brother to run it. They went down to Omaha and drove it back, and when they got back to Bassett, he told him to come out and give his mother and the girls a ride. That's the first time I've ever ridden in. I think we thought we was going terribly fast, but probably 20 miles an hour. [laughs]

MM: What kind of car was it?

LC: I don't know.

MM: You said that you didn't participate in the women's suffrage movement.

LC: No.

MM: But you were interested in it.

LC: Well, I thought that we should vote as well as the men, but I didn't take any active part at all. In fact, I don't think very many women out in this part of the country did.

MM: Did you hear about it very much, what was going on?

LC: Not very much because most people didn't even have a radio.

MM: Oh. Had you heard of Jeannette Rankin?

LC: Oh yes. She'd be in the papers, yes.

MM: But she was about the only one you did hear?

LC: Yes.

MM: Did you and your husband discuss politics?

LC: As a rule, we talked over and decided which one we thought would be the best. We didn't always agree.

MM: How did you feel when you weren't able to vote? Did you feel as if you were being discriminated against?

LC: No, I didn't think much about it, tell the truth. I just thought it was nice when we got the vote, but I hadn't worked toward it and I didn't think much about it.

MM: After you were married, were there many other jobs available to women other than to be a schoolteacher or work in the library?

LC: Well, I think as I remember after we was married, there were quite a few women clerks in stores here in Forsyth. But I don't...There's always been women working in the courthouse ever since I can remember here in Rosebud County.

MM: Most of those women weren't married, the ones that were working?

LC: I think most of them weren't, yes.

MM: Did you participate in the Prohibition movement?

LC: No.

MM: Did you hear much about that?

LC: Well, not too much. It was rather, as I remember, it was kind of a topic of conversation and lots of laughs.

MM: Lots of laughs.

LC: Yes.

MM: Do you remember if there were prostitutes in the community?

LC: No, I don't. I don't believe there was out of in Finch community. I think I knew everybody too well but maybe.

MM: Maybe in Forsyth there were.

LC: There might have been in Forsyth, but we didn't get to Forsyth too often then.

MM: Were you in contact with the Indians on the reservation much?

LC: Well, yes. They used to stop pretty often. I don't think they ever (unintelligible) my husband didn't feed them. He didn't bring them in the house. He'd come in the house and get the food and take them out and feed them. They were always a few that might come work for a week or two in the summer when you were irrigating, but they wouldn't stay very long.

MM: Did whites and Indians intermarry?

LC: Well, there was a few, but very few at that time.

MM: What was the general attitude toward Native Americans?

LC: I think...I'm ashamed to say it, but I think most of us looked down on the Indians. I know when my second boy was born here in the hospital, I after I could be up and around, they always kept you in the hospital so long in those days. You know, you stayed 12 days.

MM: Twelve days?

LC: Ten to 12 days. They wouldn't let you out before the tenth. In the room next to me, I went in, and she was an Indian. She had had a baby there. She was a Carlisle graduate, but she said to me, "I don't fit any place." She said, "I don't fit in your white man's world," and she said, "I go back to the reservation," and she said, "if I don't put on my blankets, I don't fit in there." So she said, "It didn't pay me to get an education."

MM: Where was Carlisle [Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania] at? Is that a

college?

LC: It's an Indian college in...I don't know. I think it was Oklahoma, but I wouldn't say. A very good Indian college.

MM: Oh. They didn't accept whites? It was just for Indians?

LC: Just for Indians.

MM: Oh. Were there any black families or Jewish families?

LC: Well, there was that one black family—Proctors. Only ones I know of that lived in (unintelligible), and none that I know of were Jewish. There could have been, but I didn't know of any.

MM: Where did the Proctors' live?

LC: Well, they live, I was telling you about, up Reservation Creek out there. Maybe the mother isn't living now. She isn't, but the two girls are still living out there.

MM: Oh, I didn't know that.

LC: Oh, yes. They lived here long before I came to the country. In fact, I think they tell me that Proctor came to this country with a cattle drive from Texas. Then he stayed and sent for his wife, and he had the two girls. They are still living up...it's way up Reservation Creek.

MM: Do you remember how the people felt toward this black family?

LC: They all liked them very much and accepted them, yes.

MM: More so than the Indians?

LC: Oh yes, more so. They were a very nice family.

MM: Do you remember how you felt when the dress styles changed?

LC: Got so short, you mean?

MM: Yes.

LC: I was horrified.

MM: Horrified. [laughs] When did you first wear a swimming suit?

LC: I've never worn one.

MM: You've never worn one?

LC: No, I never—

MM: You never liked to—

LC: Well, I never was around water when I was younger. Even as I got older, we had no place to swim even in Illinois so I just never was around water.

MM: Okay I think that's—

[Break in audio]

MM: Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Coate. I've just finished interviewing Mrs. Leah Coate in Forsyth, Montana.

[End of Interview]