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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: 207-002
Interviewee: William Hunter
Interviewer: Gladys Peterson
Date of Interview: August 3, 1988
Project: Stevensville Oral History Project

Note: When this interview was conducted, the interviewee requested to remain anonymous in the transcript and audio. Archives and Special Collections has chosen to lift this restriction now that the interviewee is deceased.

GP: I know.

WH: You know, when I was a young age, I never saw [unintelligible].

GP: No. We'll just play it by ear. This is an interview with Bill Hunter in Stevensville, Montana, on August 3, 1988. Bill, what's your full name?

WH: William Hunter. That's all.

GP: William Hunter. That's all. Well, that's enough.

WH: No middle name.

GP: That's enough. You say you were born here in 1901 in Stevensville?

WH: That's right [unintelligible].

GP: Is that right? Well, had your family been here quite a while?

WH: No, just a year or so. They came in about 1898.

GP: What brought them here?

WH: Farming.

GP: Where did they come from?

WH: Dillon, Montana.

GP: From Dillon. So, how long had they been in Dillon?

WH: Oh, they arrived in Bannack in...when the gold rush [unintelligible].

GP: So, they've been in Montana quite a while, then, hadn't they?

WH: Well, several years. My oldest brother was born in Bannack, Montana.

GP: Well, that's interesting. Now, they came in 1898, you said.

WH: About that time. A year or so either way.

GP: But they were living in Dillon. Now, they were still having children. I guess I'm trying to decide, was it your grandparents who first came to Montana earlier?

WH: Yes. My grandfather has got a plaque on his house where he lived yet, with his name and everything as justice of the peace back in that time.

GP: Where was that?

WH: In Bannack. Yes, in the 1800s.

GP: Did you ever know your grandfather?

WH: Oh, yes. Yes, he came here and stayed a week or two at a time, several times.

GP: Did he stay over in that country, in Dillon or the Bannack area?

WH: Yes. He moved to Dillon and retired in Dillon, yes.

GP: Do you remember your family talking a lot about those mining days over there?

WH: Well, not too much. Only thing is my father's uncle and W.A. Clark walked into Dillon, carrying their blankets. They started prospecting, and they hit a pocket of gold worth \$60,000.

GP: Is that right? This was your uncle, you say?

WH: Yes. My father's uncle.

GP: Your father's uncle. Yeah, you'd have to get the generations right.

WH: They hit that pocket of gold worth \$60,000 and they sold it to a big mining company for \$60,000 and that was the end of it. Petered out right there. There was nothing more came out.

GP: W.A. Clark. He was lucky, but he was also smart, wasn't he?

WH: I don't know, I never saw him or knew him or anything much about him.

GP: What about your father's uncle? Did he stay in mining over there?

WH: No, he didn't. He retired in Dillon and went in the banking business. He was in the bank in Dillon.

GP: So, the name was Hunter? Was you father's—

WH: Roe.

GP: Roe. So, it was on your mother's side?

WH: No, my father's side. My father's uncle's name was Roe.

GP: I'm trying to figure out why his name was Roe if it was his uncle. Your grandfather's name, was it Hunter?

WH: No, it was Halleck (?). Well, one grandfather's name was Hunter, yes.

GP: But it was on your—

WH: Mother's side.

GP: Let's see if I can get all this straight now. It was your father's—

WH: Uncle.

GP: Your father's uncle.

WH: He came from England. My father came from England also.

GP: Is that right? I'm going to write this down so I can get it straight. Your name is William Hunter and your grandfather was justice of the peace in Bannack.

WH: He was justice of the peace and express agent and a blacksmith all at the same time.

GP: What was his name?

WH: Retallack [Judge Charles Retallack].

GP: Retallack. R-E-T-A-L—

WH: L.

GP: Two "L's"?

WH: Yes.

GP: I-K?

WH: Yes.

GP: Was this on your mother's side?

WH: Retallack was, yes.

GP: That's what I wanted to find out, okay. This was your mother's maiden name probably.

WH: Yes, it was.

GP: Sometimes I have to see this in sort of like a family tree before I can get this all straight. You say this man, it was your father's uncle, who was with W.A. Clark.

WH: Yes, yes.

GP: Did your father's father—

WH: I never knew any of my father's relatives. They came from England, and only one brother came to the United States and he was out here in the early days, but I didn't...wasn't old enough to know him, didn't meet him.

GP: Did your father go to the Bannack area because your uncle was there?

WH: Yes.

GP: I see, but his name wasn't Hunter, it was, you said—

WH: Roe.

GP: Roe. R-O—

WH: E.

GP: R-O-E. I can't remember. I'm trying to get your family tree straight here. Did you say, then, that he stayed in in that area, your father's uncle?

WH: In Dillon, yes.

GP: In Dillon.

WH: Yes. He actually struck this pot of gold in Dillon and sold out. He retired to Dillon and went into the banking business.

GP: Oh, he's the one that was in the banking business. What about your other grandfather? He was a J.P. in Bannack. Did he just stay in that area, too, then?

WH: No, he moved to Dillon and retired, too. Dillon was the closest town, you know, in size.

GP: Your father was born in England.

WH: Yes.

GP: But, what about your mother then?

WH: Michigan.

[long pause]

GP: Your grandfather, then, must have been attracted to the gold fields, I suppose.

WH: I really don't know whether he was. He first came in and bought a little farm on what they call Grasshopper Creek.

GP: I've been over there. I can just about picture where that creek is along that road.

WH: He lived on that road about seven miles out of Bannack.

GP: Was he married when he came to Montana?

WH: Yes, yes. Six children, including my mother.

GP: Well, did your mother talk much about living over there?

WH: No. I never heard any of them talk too much about it. That's why I say I didn't think I'd have very much to—

GP: Well, this is all very interesting, anyhow. But you were born over here, and you say that—

WH: I was born out here about two miles and a half.

GP: Those are fairly deep roots as far as I'm concerned. Your father moved over here to farm, and he was married already.

WH: Yes, and my oldest brother was born in Bannack. Before that Bannack [unintelligible] go to Dillon. Then he moved from Dillon to here.

GP: I wonder if by that time, if Bannack had pretty well folded up. It was more of a ghost town than anything else, or is still stuff going on there in Bannack?

WH: Yes, there was quite a bit. I was over there in quite early days, and there was about 300 or so residents there at that time. Which had originally been about 1,200, I guess.

GP: When the strike was on, the boom was on.

WH: I rode in there on a stagecoach: four horses. And the bobsleds and four horses. Later on when the hacks were just a team, and one of my uncles was a stagecoach driver. Then my second uncle was a stagecoach driver. One lived in Bannack; one lived in Dillon. They made a trip each way.

GP: Was this when you were a child that you did that?

WH: Yes. Yes, I was only four or five years old, hardly that.

GP: How did you get there? Did you go south or go north?

WH: In Bannack?

GP: Yeah.

WH: Out to Dillon

GP: So you went around through Missoula?

WH: Oh no, right from Dillon across the flat there or whatever it is, across the country right up through Dillon.

GP: I mean how did you get there from here? That's what I meant.

WH: Oh, from here. I went from here in the on the train to Dillon. Took a train to Dillon.

GP: You had to change trains, somewhere, didn't you?

WH: In Butte.

GP: In Butte. Well, that must have been some memory to have to go by stagecoach or what did they call it?

WH: Just a stagecoach, a mail coach.

GP: You must have had quite a number of boyhood experiences that you remember from those days. Was the weather pretty cold when you were over there, or did you go in the summer?

WH: Yes, one time when I went there. One time I went there and had the bobsleighs and four horses. It was full of hay, and it had a big bunch of robes. I never got out from underneath the robes clear from Dillon to Bannack. It was that cold. Yes, it was. The last trip I made in there was on one of these wide-seated hacks with just the team horses. That was in about...I don't know when it was, about 1910, I guess. I was that old and the last trip I made into Bannack while in my youth was in 1914. I was in Bannack when the Second World War started. [World War I?]

GP: You were 14.

WH: Yes.

GP: So you weren't involved in the war at all, then, were you?

WH: No. I lacked seven months of being registered for war.

GP: When did they register them? When you're 16, 17 years old?

WH: I think it was 17 or 18.

GP: But you were living over here. Did you go to school here in Stevensville?

WH: Yes. What school I went to. It wasn't much.

GP: How far did you get?

WH: Just through the eighth grade.

GP: Through the eighth grade. Well, that was common. That was what people did in those days.

WH: That's what they did mostly those days, especially out west here.

GP: Yes. Did you stay then and help your father on his farm, or what did you do?

WH: No, I went to work when I was 15. Made my own living from then on when I was 15 years old.

GP: What were you doing? Start out with small jobs?

WH: Well, a few small jobs around ten, yes. I worked in a laundry...I don't know what you'd call it...A chore boy, I guess. He used to drive the little old Ford car around, and I'd run into house, get the laundry, and deliver them back. [laughs] I did the footwork and he did the—

GP: He did the laundry. Or, he did the driving.

WH: Did the driving, yes.

GP: Was this the owner of the laundry who did that?

WH: Yes.

GP: Then he went back and did the laundry.

WH: Went back and did the laundry.

GP: What kind of a laundry was it?

WH: Steam.

GP: Steam. It wasn't a Chinese laundry?

WH: No, the building's still standing over there. Then I worked for...When I was 15, I drove delivery for Farmer's Union store for a while. I was still 15 yet when I went to work in the garage. I put in seven years in the garage.

GP: You learned to be a mechanic?

WH: Well, as far as it went, yes, on my own. It was a self experience.

GP: Were they tough times for you?

WH: Well, yes. You got a dollar and a half a day to support you and yourself. I'd call that tough.

GP: That was tough, yeah. Now, we're talking, if you said you did that for about seven years, we're now into the '20s, aren't we?

WH: Yes. '23, I went into business on Main Street for myself.

GP: What was your business?

WH: It was a cigar store and a pool hall and a card room and confectionery.

GP: Did you have some capital when you went into that? Had you been able to save money?

WH: \$1,600.

GP: That was a lot of money then, wasn't it?

WH: [unintelligible].

GP: Did you stay with that business, then, a long time?

WH: For about 20 years.

GP: Well, you must have seen a lot of...we're talking now, the '20s, aren't we?

WH: Yeah, the '20s up into the '30s. Then in the year of '31, I chauffeured for Mrs. Daly.

GP: Oh, is that right? Well, that must have been interesting. You still had your business, though?

WH: No, I sold it out, and one year I got it back. I sold it out in '29 and went back into it in '31.

GP: Why did you sell it?

WH: I don't know, just bought it and paid for it and got a price for it and sold the place.

GP: Is that when you went to work for Mrs. Daly?

WH: After I sold it the first time, and then I went back into it the second time with a year's vacation. Then, after I quit her, I come back and took it back, and I stayed in there about...oh, until...I can't say when. I don't know how long it was about...'45, I guess.

GP: How did you happen to get the job with Mrs. Daly? Did she just know you?

WH: No, I never met her in my life, that was a secret. I was in Missoula one day, and my brother-in-law was down there we were talking. Mrs. Daly needed a chauffeur because she couldn't rely on the one she had at that time. He was an undependable alcoholic. So I said to him, I said, "I guess I'll go up and get the job and drive Mrs. Daly."

He said, "You haven't got a chance." So I came back here to Mr. George T. Baggs was a lawyer. Well, first I come back and laid in bed at night, and thought how I was going to get it. I came back and George T. Baggs was a lawyer of my dad's, and I knew him well. I drove for him here. I didn't work for him steady, just trips, you know.

GP: Was this after your sold your business, during that little period?

WH: Yes, during that year. I went to him and asked him how I would proceed to get that job with Mrs. Daly.

He says, "Nothing to it." He said, "I'm going to Hamilton tomorrow." He said, "You drive me up, and I'll take you in." I went in, and he give me the job there.

GP: What kind of a lady was she?

WH: Well, she was a little short lady. I don't know just how to describe her.

GP: I don't remember where she was from.

WH: I think Butte.

GP: He married somebody from Butte?

WH: Now, don't quote this.

GP: No.

WH: You can quote that, but I understood her and her sister were waitresses in Butte. W.A. Clark and Daly married each one of the sisters.

GP: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that.

WH: I drove Mrs. W.A. Clark, too. They were worth 60 million a piece when I drove them.

GP: Well, let's talk about Mrs. Daly, and then we'll get to Mrs. Clark. Where did you drive her to? Couldn't she drive?

WH: Mrs. Clark?

GP: Mrs. Daly.

WH: Oh, no. With the 50, 60 million, you wouldn't drive yourself.

GP: Oh. What kind of a car did she have?

WH: She had a big old style Lincoln with hard tires and single brakes and one thing and another.

GP: Was it like a limousine?

WH: Yes, it was a limousine with a megaphone in it.

GP: Glass in between?

WH: Glass in between.

GP: How did she make you feel? Did you feel like a servant, or did she treat you well?

WH: Yes, she treated me well.

GP: Did she pay you well?

WH: Well, at that time—

GP: With \$60 million.

WH: It was pretty good at that time. It was \$125 a month, and telephone, light, and fuel, garden stuff all brought to the house.

GP: Did you live here, or did you live down there?

WH: She furnished me a house.

GP: Were you married?

WH: Yes. The house was just recently torn down. I was up there a couple of weeks ago too.

GP: Was it just north of the big house there?

WH: Yes, this way. [unintelligible] northeast.

GP: I have an idea of where that would have been.

WH: There was two white houses. The gardener lived in one, and I lived in the other. The gardener brought me vegetables out of the garden. In the house, she gave me fresh milk every day.

GP: Was this around 1930?

WH: '31. The year of '31.

GP: '31. Now, the Depression was on.

WH: Yes.

GP: Was that one reason...you said you made a profit on your store, but even during the Depression, you found a buyer for that.

WH: Well, I sold it in '29, just before the Depression began. See, the Depression come along in October '29. I sold it ahead of that.

GP: Then you quit that job when you...Did you have to take your store back?

WH: No, I didn't have to, but I did.

GP: Did the buyer want to sell it?

WH: There was no buyer.

GP: You just rented it out?

WH: My dad owned the building, and there was a fire. The fire never got out of the basement, so I didn't have much to replace [unintelligible].

GP: That must be the big fire that several people have told me about where a whole lot of stuff burned. The hotel burned and other buildings burned, is that correct?

WH: The whole side of this block up to the first two-story building over here. Across the street on the other side, clear to the bank and half a block back the other way east.

GP: Is that right?

WH: In 1923. That was in 1923.

GP: Okay, but now you're talking about '29.

WH: That was after the fire.

GP: Yeah, but you said your dad had owned it.

WH: He owned the building.

GP: They rebuilt the whole thing, then?

WH: He did. He owned five buildings over there, and he rebuilt them all.

GP: Well, what made you decide to stop working for Mrs. Daly?

WH: I don't know.

GP: You just had enough of it?

WH: No, I kind of liked the job. I'd report in the morning at 11:00 and go to town when she ordered the groceries and got the mail, and that was it.

GP: Did you ever take her on any long trips?

WH: Not Mrs. Daly, but her daughter I did to Butte.

GP: That was a long trip to Butte?

WH: Quite long at that time, in that kind of a car.

GP: How did you go? Did you go up to Missoula and down or across?

WH: No, I took Mrs. Daly and Clark over to a hunting lodge on the other side of the mountains, the Skalkaho Mountains. The butler said she'd been waiting seven years to make the trip, but she wouldn't trust that driver. So she took the trip when I drove her.

GP: That must have been quite a trip. Was it difficult to maneuver that long car over those roads?

WH: No, not as long we didn't meet anybody.

GP: Now, before we get back to your business, when did you drive for Mrs. Clark?

WH: Mrs. Clark come to visit Mrs. Daly.

GP: Were they friends?

WH: They were sisters.

GP: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot that. [laughs] It's hard for me to get used to that idea that they were sisters.

WH: It's all strange to you. Mrs. Clark came up from California and was visiting Mrs. Daly.

GP: Where did you take her, just sightseeing?

WH: That's all, just around Hamilton and the valley and that. I never took Mrs. Daly or Mrs. Clark any long distance. But she treated me all right. She'd just leave the car so the granddaughters could drive it or the butler could drive it if I wasn't around. They'd take it. So I'd say that was treating me right. During '31, it was tough times. Every morning, she'd get up, there'd be five or six at her back door for something to eat, and she never turned anybody away. She'd always give them breakfast, something to eat and probably three, four, five, six dollars or more. Even some she let ride back to town in her car with her. So I think she was all right.

GP: With you driving it?

WH: Yes.

GP: Wonder where they came from. They were local people or transients?

WH: Oh no, transients.

GP: Well, you took your business back then and maintained it for some time. What was it like in that business? You say cigars and confectioner, and what else did you have in there?

WH: Pool tables and card tables. There was no gambling or anything. It was just all [unintelligible].

GP: Was that pretty much a place where...were they mainly men who came in there?

WH: Yes, at that time. They were all men, practically at that time, yes.

GP: Was it pretty much a place where they could come during the Depression and not have to spend a lot of money and have some recreation?

WH: Yes, yes. I had about 20-some chairs all around it, 100 feet long, and they'd all fill up at night [unintelligible] because there wasn't too many cars at that time. Just a place for them to come and spend their evening and they didn't have to buy nothing.

GP: Did you have liquor in there?

WH: No. It was during Prohibition.

GP: That's right, Prohibition wasn't repealed until, what, '34 maybe? Something like that?

WH: '33 or '34 [1920-1933].

GP: Yes, right in there somewhere, but you never had liquor in there. They just came anyhow, just to socialize.

WH: Then I spent the last 20 years, I worked, ran the theater. My sister and my brother-in-law ran the theater for 19 years and 4 months.

GP: Who were these people that came into the store that you had, though? Were they farmers? Were they townspeople?

WH: Both. And transients, too. It was all classes.

GP: Everybody smoked in those days, right?

WH: Pretty much, yes.

GP: Is that mainly where your profits were?

WH: There wasn't much profit in anything, really. They were all little nickel and dime sales. I don't know, I guess I did pretty good, but then the sales were so small, it took quite bit to amount up, you know.

GP: Long hours, I suppose?

WH: Well, I put in some hours...from 12:00 noon to 8:00 or 9:00 the next morning.

GP: Did you stay open as long as you had customers, or what was it?

WH: Well, we had closing hours at 2:00, but I was running a game of cards called [unintelligible] they still stayed there and I stayed as long as they did.

GP: No money involved, though.

WH: Yes, they was, a little bit.

GP: Under the table?

WH: Well, no. It was just chips on the table, nickel chips. It wasn't anything to brag about, just nickels chips.

GP: Did anybody frown on that?

WH: No, we never had any complaints on that.

GP: It was just small stuff that was not against the law. Did they have gambling?

WH: No. Any kind of gambling was against the law. Spitting at the crack was against the law, then.

GP: Is that right? [laughs] Well, that's pretty good. Were those people having it pretty tough who came in there during the Depression?

WH: I think they did, but I don't really know. I know lots of them wanted to borrow money.

GP: Did you loan it to them?

WH: Yes, more or less I did. I had about, I don't know, 4 or \$5,000 on my books when I went out.

GP: Well, that was a lot of money in those days.

WH: In those days, it was.

GP: Yes, it was. I'm sure you worked hard for it. I was wondering about your family now. Was your wife from this area?

WH: No, she was from the mission [unintelligible].

GP: From the mission, you say?

WH: [unintelligible].

GP: Oh, I see. What mission are you talking about?

WH: Ravalli. This one on the Flathead Reservation. St. Ignatius really.

GP: Yeah. Did she go to school there in St. Ignatius?

WH: Yes.

GP: Did you meet her down here or up there?

WH: Here. She's living in Hamilton right now. We were divorced in '35.

GP: Oh, I see. I was wondering if she helped in your business, but I guess not.

WH: Well, yes. She waited tables when we ran the restaurant back in the early '30s.

GP: Was the restaurant in that same store?

WH: No, no. I had two businesses at once.

GP: Well, did you ever sleep?

WH: Not very much. [laughs]

GP: Doesn't sound like it. Did you get tired of the store?

WH: Yes. It was too confining in a way. I don't care to have this quoted again, but in 1942, I contracted tuberculosis from being inside of that closed-up, tight, smoky building.

GP: You're not the first one who told me that. In fact, your neighbor told me that. She had it, too.

WH: Yes, I know she did. She spent a lot of time over at Galen, but I never did go over there. I went to the doctor here and he told me I had TB.

GP: Were you feeling sick? How did you know to go to the doctor?

WH: I don't know. I went for something else, I think.

GP: And he discovered it.

WH: Yes, and he said, "If you want to live, you have to get out of there." That's one reason...I never even told my family. Even my sister didn't know until this year, and that was back in 1941.

GP: Is that right? You had children, obviously—

[Break in audio]

WH: I took the summer off and gave my business [to] a friend to run. My sister run the restaurant and I went over to Coeur D'Alene and Farragut, put in the summer and got cured up. I've never had it since.

GP: That's an amazing story. You must have been tough.

WH: Well, I don't think so.

GP: Well, a lot of people never got over it.

WH: I put three months in over there. I got over it outside. I think I caught it early. The only sign I got of it now, I got three scars on my lung.

GP: Yes, they used to call those spots, didn't they? Spots on your lung. Maybe they still do, I don't know.

WH: I don't know either.

GP: Then, you got into another inside business, the theater business.

WH: Yes, but that wasn't foul air.

GP: Yes, they don't smoke in there, in the theaters.

WH: No, but I was scared of it then.

GP: Sure. Did you have to get checked through the years for it, though?

WH: Once in a while when I happened to go to the doctor for something or other, I'd ask them just to take a spot check every so often.

GP: You were in the movie business when it was in its heyday, weren't you? That must have been interesting.

WH: We had it through about '46 to close to the '70s. It was 19 years, anyway.

GP: Was it open every day?

WH: Every day.

GP: That must have been another long day for you running that.

WH: We cleaned it up and got it ready in the daytime, run it at night. I never had a day off for I don't know how many years. Neither Saturday or Sunday or Christmas or New Year's.

GP: Is that right? It was open all the time.

WH: Open all the time, and I worked every day, never had a day off because there was nobody else in town that could man the projector at that time except me.

GP: Is that right? Did you say your sister was helping you?

WH: Yes.

GP: Did she continue to do that all the while you owned it?

WH: Yes. She was here yesterday, and my daughter was here yesterday. My son is coming this month from Seattle.

GP: Did you have a daughter and a son? Was that your family? Did they help you at all in your business?

WH: [unintelligible].

GP: Did you select the movies?

WH: Yes.

GP: How did you know what the people were going to like?

WH: Mostly westerns at that time. Yeah, mostly western which we would select anything we wanted to. My brother-in-law did that part [unintelligible]. We both had the privilege [unintelligible].

GP: So, the theater was quite a success in those years, wasn't it?

WH: Yes.

GP: Because people weren't going back and forth to Missoula and Hamilton quite as much, were they?

WH: Not quite as much, no. But then the roads [unintelligible] were pretty good at that time. That was in the '40s.

GP: Sure, that's right. You said you had that until '76?

WH: No, up to...Well, we got it in about '46. 19 years from that, whenever that would be.

GP: '46...'65. '46, '56-

WH: 19 years. Well, you could say 20 years, really, almost.

GP: What made you sell it?

WH: [unintelligible].

GP: Do you think you got out at the right time then?

WH: No, because we give \$31,000 and sold it for 15. We were having full houses most of the time. [unintelligible]. When we only sold it, we were having just three or four customers a night.

GP: If you made a good living from it during those years, you probably had it paid for, though, didn't you?

WH: Oh, yeah, we paid for it the day we moved in.

GP: So it wasn't a total loss then anyhow.

WH: No, we had a few good years, about seven or eight good years. And we knew television was coming. It was back east already. It was coming here. We just took that chance.

GP: What about the poor guy who bought it?

WH: He made...let's see... he found a sucker, and made \$20,000 on it.

GP: So, he sold it for—

WH: \$35,000.

GP: What about the next guy? Did he lose his shirt, or is it still going?

WH: Yeah, I think he did, and now it's up for sale again.

GP: Is it the same owner?

WH: No, it's [unintelligible] three or four times since then.

GP: Is it used much at all?

WH: I don't know what it's used for.

GP: They don't have movies? Do they have movies in there now?

WH No, I think it's locked up now entirely.

GP: So, it's mainly the building.

WH: It's for sale.

GP: Well, you've seen a lot of changes in in Stevensville in your lifetime.

WH: Yes, I've seen it grow from about, when I [unintelligible] about 5 or 600 to 1,200.

GP: It's pretty well the same size, though.

WH: It's expanded around the residents a lot. It's filled up a lot of empty lots and new houses and whatnot. Up around the high school and that, there's a lot of new houses.

GP: When you sold the theater, did you get into anything else?

WH: No.

GP: You've been retired since then.

WH: I've been retired since I was 62. I figured I had enough long hours and that.

GP: What have you been doing in retirement? I hope you've been able to relax a little bit.

WH: I remodeled five different houses.

GP: You bought them and sold them?

WH: No, I've still got them.

GP: You renting them?

WH: Including this. This is one of the first houses in town.

GP: Is this a house that was owned by Dorothea's—

WH: Grandfather.

GP: Grandfather, yes. Is this the house he built? Quite a historic place, then.

WH: I'd think so. I don't know what you'd call really historic.

GP: That's historic. In this country, that's historic. You remodeled it into apartments? Have you done anything besides work in your retirement? You just like to work.

WH: I like to work, but I can't now.

GP: Did you travel at all?

WH: No. That's one thing I wished I had when I was younger, and I didn't.

GP: You didn't do it after you retired at all either?

WH: Just stayed around Stevensville. Oh, I've made a few short trips or something like that like over to Seattle and something like that.

GP: Your children were with their mother after you were divorced? No? Did you have them? Oh, you had them. You raised them then? Are they around? You said your son is coming.

WH: This month from Seattle. My daughter was here yesterday.

GP: And where does she live?

WH: My daughter? Out here, about seven miles.

GP: Oh, so she never moved very far away then.

WH: Well, she went from here back as far as Portland to live and then back. They said they'd come back on account of me [unintelligible].

GP: Well, that was nice for you, I'm sure. I see lots of pictures around here. Is that your daughter's grandchild?

WH: Yes. Pictures, I've got so many of them I guess they're all stored in the bottom.

GP: Well, that's an interesting one up above there. You said that's your parents.

WH: Yes.

GP: Fine-looking people. You say you can't travel now because of your health?

WH: No, I'm going to have to have cataracts taken off my eyes, maybe this fall.

GP: Well, that's a very common thing now, so maybe after that.

WH: Well, after that, it's age interferes. I'm 87 years old.

GP: You don't look 87. You like you're fairly healthy person. Maybe hard work does that to people, keeps you in shape.

WH: I was fairly healthy until I got shingles and that left me with deteriorated muscles that didn't come back after that.

GP: Was that some time ago?

WH: About 10, 11 years ago. Then last year I caught diverticulitis. So it's pretty miserable.

GP: I'll bet. So, now you don't feel like traveling so much.

WH: That's right. When I was young and I was trying to make a living and couldn't go, and when I got finances enough so I could go, I didn't want to. [laughs] I guess that's the way most people...say you should do your traveling, vacation when you're young, but who has the money when they're young?

GP: That's right. Well, Bill, there must be some things that you can point to with pride. You've worked hard all your life. What are the things that give you the most satisfaction as you look back on your busy life?

WH: I think I liked working in the garage the most. It was the most work, and I think I liked it the best. You come up with something new every day, every time a car came in, and it was something new. I think I liked that the best.

GP: But you were a good business man, obviously.

WH: Well, I don't know.

GP: Did you enjoy those people that you were dealing with in your store and in the theater?

WH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Sure, they were most all friends at that time, you know.

GP: Is there anything you would have done differently when you look back now?

WH: Yes, I'd have went to school. [laughs] I think I passed up a lot of opportunities in my life where I thought I didn't have the education enough to go ahead with. It was my own fault that I didn't get the education because my dad, he told me, he says, "You finish high school," he said, "I'll send you to college any place in the United States you want to go." I passed it up.

GP: Were you a good student, too?

WH: Average, I guess. When I was just a little kid, I made the first two grades the first year.

GP: Well, that's not bad. That's pretty good, I'd say.

WH: Then in the third year I got carried over. They advanced me too fast, I guess.

GP: It evened out, then.

WH: Evened out. Then I used to chauffeur a lot around here.

GP: When you were still quite young, you mean.

WH: Yes. Even when I was working in the garage. My brother ran the garage. I worked for him and he had customers. In those days, they didn't have any [unintelligible] or anything, and they left their cars [unintelligible] warm. I drove for Dr. Randall (?) and Dr. Prince (?), John Dalling (?), Dr. Stevens (?), and Attorney Baggs (?). I drove for all of them at the same time. Whenever they wanted to make a trip like to Hamilton or Missoula or something.

GP: Now, it's interesting that you mentioned Dr. Reynolds. I have—

WH: Did I say Dr. Reynolds?

GP: Yes.

WH: No, I never did drive for him.

GP: Oh, I see. But, you knew him.

WH: Dr. Prince and Dr. [unintelligible].

GP: Well, that's all right.

WH: The other doctor was who I used to... I drove this other doctor here, 7,000 miles.

GP: You must have taken him on some trips, then, did you?

WH: We went across the country, down into Kentucky and up into Virginia and across to Chicago and up into Canada and back out of Canada.

GP: You weren't very old either, were you?

WH: Yes, I was when I took him. I was in two businesses here. My friend was running one, and my sister ran the other. I took two weeks off.

GP: I see. Well, you must have liked to drive chauffeuring like that.

WH: I did. I was considered a very good driver.

GP: Do you still drive?

WH: Yeah, but it's kind of getting kind of hard.

GP: Well, when you get those cataracts removed, it'll be better.

WH: Maybe, yes.

GP: I'm just going to ask you one more question and I'll get out of your way here. Do you think it's easier today to make your way in the world?

WH: I'd say if you had a real good education, yes, but without a real good education, no. In my time, without a good real good education, I'd say no because you can't even get a job.

GP: In your time, if you worked hard, you could—

WH: Mostly get a job most anytime. Yes, most anytime. It's less like Missoula now and Butte. It used to be if you didn't have a job, all you had to do was go to Butte and go to work in the mines or something like that. Up until about oh, probably 20, 25 years ago, if you didn't have a job, all you had to go do is go to Missoula and you'd get work in the mill someplace. But now they're all filled up, and it's impossible.

GP: Yeah, they have their problems, and you better have a good back or they won't hire you. They never worried about your back 25 or 50 years ago, did they?

WH: My son-in-law's worked down there, been there 30 years [unintelligible].

GP: In where?

WH: [unintelligible].

GP: Oh, he commutes.

WH: My grandson is working [unintelligible].

GP: I was going to ask you. You said you'd better have an education. Did your two children get educations? Did they go to college?

WH: Yes, but not complete. My son went to college and his girlfriend and him moved to Seattle. He lacked one quarter—he got the flu—and he lacked one quarter, and he stayed out and didn't return, lacking one quarter for graduating.

GP: He spent his whole career, then, out in Seattle.

WH: Yes. He first took up geology, then he took up...education to teach. Then he was going to take music to teach. [unintelligible] And he never finished any of them. Lacking one quarter.

GP: How did he make his living?

WH: He worked at Fort Lawton for quite a while until it closed down. Then he finished up working for Seattle Athletic Club. He retired this year.

GP: What kind of work was he doing?

WH: He was in the restaurant work.

GP: For the athletic club?

WH: Yes. What he was doing for Fort Lawton, I don't know.

GP: What about your daughter? Did she ever work?

WH: She put 14 years in in this drug store here.

GP: Clerking?

WH: Yes. Then when it finally sold out, one thing and another, she was only making 75 cents an hour, and she asked for a raise. She didn't get it so she quit. She hasn't worked since. Of course, he makes pretty close to \$100 a day.

GP: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this, Bill?

WH: [laughs] I don't know, I think a lot more has been said now than I ever thought would.

GP: You've had some very interesting things to say about your business and your life in general and your reflections on life. It's very apparent to me that you've been a hard worker all your life.

WH: I was over in old Bannack about two years ago. Have you been over there?

GP: Not for eight or nine years, I guess. It's quite developed now, isn't it?

WH: It's a state park now. That is, the park's right on the edge of it. There's a creek and trees and there's only about three or four houses, now. I think there's only...maybe only one and three families live there.

GP: Living there, but they have the town itself developed. They've got the hotel and the jail.

WH: There's the hotel and a jail and a lodge house. My uncle's house was one of the best houses over there and my granddad's place—that's all that's left.

GP: Are their names on them?

WH: Yes, the plaque's right on the wall outside my granddad's.

GP: Oh, that's the J.P. You must be very proud of those roots.

WH: I hadn't thought anything about them, really.

GP: Well, you should be.

WH: I suppose.

GP: Well, you've certainly had an interesting and a full life there, Bill.

WH: I would just say I was kind of trying to survive. [laughs]

GP: Maybe that's a good place to stop. Thank you.

[End of Interview]