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**Oral History Number: 435-007**

**Interviewee: Anne M. Shaw**

**Interviewer: Sandra Williamson**

**Date of Interview: October 2, 2010**

**Project: The Gathering— Collected Oral Histories of the Irish in Montana**

SW: Okay, so we are here today at 623 Crestline in Missoula, Montana on October 2, 2010, interviewing Anne Shaw for The Gathering. Anne, we are going to start with a little about yourself. Could you tell us your name?

AS: Anne Shaw, Anne M. Shaw is what I go by generally.

SW: Where and when were you born?

AS: I was born May 6, 1935, in Great Falls, Montana.

SW: Where did you grow up?

AS: I grew up in the Fort Benton area.

SW: Okay, and where have you lived, just kind of an overview of all of the places that you have lived.

AS: [laughing] Well, I grew up on the Missouri River north of Loma and when I was five years old they took me to Fort Benton because I was getting under the table and looking out at people through my fingers when they came. [laughing].

SW: So you were shy, right?

AS: Well, I hadn't seen anybody but my family for all winter. Anyway, so from the time I was five years old 'til I got married I lived in Fort Benton in the winter time. We always spent the summers at the ranch.

SW: And who did you live with in Fort Benton? Did you live with your parents?

AS: I lived with my parents, yes?

SW: And then who lived at the ranch?

AS: Well, nobody else, just us.

SW: Okay.

AS: Well, I had an uncle that was there occasionally.

SW: So he took care of it while you guys were—

AS: No, no, my father, when I was about five years old he closed the, well it was a little later than that, it was after I had gone to school, he closed the ranch. He got rid of all of the animals and so then he didn't have to go down there because it was eight miles across the prairie and no four-wheel drives so if it drifted you found another way or you shoveled. So he finally closed it up as he did for the winter.

SW: So you were in Fort Benton and then you also lived in—

AS: Well after I got married we went to California. My husband was in the service and then back to Montana where we farmed north of Carter and then after that we went, of course when the children were old enough, we had to move back into Fort Benton to go to school, for them to go to school. They went to the Apple School out there until our oldest was in the sixth grade. And then after we got back into Fort Benton and our youngest had gotten through with kindergarten I started going to the College of Great Falls. I drove, I think the round trip was 41 miles, maybe it was 42 and I drove for four years. Fortunately they were pretty good winters. I didn't have too much trouble and I was always thankful that the Helena Hill, as what they called it when you come up out of Fort Benton, was always sanded and kept open for me at seven o'clock in the morning when I left. But, because I wanted to be home at four when the children got home. So then after that we bought my parents place down on the Missouri River so we lived there for 10 years. And then sold that, well actually we sold the Carter place and moved to Missoula where my husband and I have lived since 1982 and we purchased the north block of the Professional Village in Missoula. And then I went back to school, to the University and studied music and after eight years my husband said I think it's time you got a job. I wanted one more year, but no [laughing]. So we had one of our sons was down in Los Angeles and he sent us a ticket to fly down because he was working at LA-X on, what was the name of the little, I can't remember the name of it now, but anyway the airline, we had to go to Spokane to catch it and get down to California. And when I got down there I was taking a class in bilingualism from the University there and I kept listening to all of the code switching down there and it was fun and we went to different things so I thought well, I can come down here and teach. And of course they were always looking for people who had enough Spanish that they could get by. So then I, we moved there to Hawthorne, California and then my husband would come home, but I did have Doug there so he was there, I could depend on him and then I got a job in Compton, then went to Los Angeles Unified and then went to Durango, Mexico where I taught for a year. Didn't learn as much Spanish as I might have because we were having too much fun running around with our [word unintelligible] friends [laughing].

SW: And you had taught at an international school there?

AS: It was an international school, actually Durango is where they filmed all the westerns and mainly those schools are set up for embassies and all of the people that are from the U.S., but since they didn't have one there it was just mainly for the merchants, the people that could afford to pay the fees for the school and wanted their children to learn English. So I taught English in the first—there were two classes. I would teach the morning and we would switch and the other teacher would take mine and I would take hers and I would have the English again in the afternoon. So it was an experience. We got to go out and—

SW: So what do you do now, Anne?

AS: Well, now I have a book store in Havre. My second oldest son was on the ranch when he finally had to give that up. He had taught himself computers and this in in the '80s and so he went to Northern and got a degree in Computer Science and he and another fellow started the first internet provider in Havre. He was located in the first Buttrey's store which had been turned into an atrium mall and when the owner, who was Don [Vapel?? name unintelligible] I took Spanish at the College of Great Falls from his son, he could not pay the electricity, the fuel bills for it, he was going to sell it and then Dave being in there, there were 13 renters and he would have had to move his internet and of course one reason he had it was because he had a, it was a high building he could put his antenna there and do the [word unintelligible]. Anyway so he bought the building and I thought that he needed a bookstore so I started that. It's a long story, but anyway I started the bookstore there so right now I am doing the bookstore. I have written a couple of books and am working on a third one and an article for the Montana Magazine of Western History.

SW: So what are the names of your books?

AS: I have *Roscoe and Tooley: Montana Runaways* and the next one will be *Roscoe and Tooley Ride the Bootlegger Trail*. Then the next one is going to be ["Montaana"??] about the sheep industry in Montana. So I'm working on that one. We all thought that at one time somebody said when you were out of state, "Where are you from?" and you tell them Montana and they would say "oh Montaana" because of the sheep. I saw very few sheep when I was growing up in the '50s. There just weren't that many.

SW: Yeah, I don't remember a lot either.

AS: No, and my interviews and the people I've talked with they say that was about the time that the sheep industry kind of fell apart. It was in the '50s, so—

SW: Very interesting. So I know that you're married. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are married to? How old were you when you got married and how did that all come about?

AS: Well, I was just 18 and he was just 21. We were both legal, just [laughing] and so we got married and he was home on emergency leave so everybody thought I was pregnant of course [laughing].

SW: Oh, and you were just trying to get married. [laughing].

AS: And so anyway we got married and went to California. My mother was always so chagrined when people would say in April, Has Anne had her baby yet? And they would ask if I had had my baby as I was married in August and fortunately it wasn't born until the last of July.

SW: So it was all on the up and up. [laughing]

AS: It was all on the up and up. [laughing]

SW: So you were married at 18 and how did you meet your husband?

AS: He was in school. He went to school there.

SW: So did you date for quite a while before you married him?

AS: Well no, well we dated for two years and then he went to the service. He was in the service and we decided to get married. But the story was that we were riding around one Easter, it was early Easter, it was the 25th of March in, it must have been 1952, no it was 1951 because that was when he graduated. He was a senior and anyway they had been trying to fix me up with a friend of my girlfriend's boyfriend. So without he called me on the telephone and of course all the guys were egging him on and would I go out with him?

I said yes, and I said, "But, you will have to come to my house." I knew my father. [laughing].

He said, "Well, if I'm out in the car will you come out."

I said, "No, you will have to come in and meet my father." [laughing].

He said, "Will you answer the door? You won't send your little brother will you?"

I said, "No, I don't have a little brother." So he still talks about my father looking over his glasses at him. [laughing]. So that was the first date.

SW: Oh, nice. Does your spouse also have Irish ancestry?

AS: Well yeah, Shaw, but we can't find out too much because there are so many. I have looked online and all we know is his father was born and, we are going back to North Carolina this year and I may do some searching. His father was born in Mount Airy [?] in North Carolina and then

they came out west and it was a big family. I think there was probably 13 of them. His father talked about [word unintelligible] and from that I thought that's Irish. So I have been looking, but if you go on and type Shaw into Google and get these long, long lists of people and there are even chat rooms, but I couldn't find any first names that sounded familiar because they are all, well one of them was Eli and it's very ironic that our grandson, without even knowing this, named his oldest boy Eli.

I kind of looked in the Ellis Island record too when I could look online. I just haven't had time to do a lot. But there are quite a few Eli Shaws.

SW: Well it can definitely be...it's like finding a diamond in the rough. It really can be a needle in the haystack sometimes.

AS: And then the records weren't so well kept in those days so as we know from my father whose birth certificate wasn't registered until 1943.

SW: Wow! So you do have children. Can you tell us a little bit about your children? How many do you have?

AS: Well I have four, we had five. One died in a car accident. Our oldest is in Bozeman. He is a construction materials supplier. I am kind of wondering whether he did anything on your Veteran's thing because that is set in cultured stone and that is the type of thing that he does. And then I have told you about the second oldest that is the internet provider. The twins, at one time one lived in Las Vegas and the other one in Reno which was really handy for us. But now Doug got a job with the wind turbine company and he was working for them and moved to Oklahoma, and then they outsourced so he lost that job and how he is working at Fort [Sidal?? word unintelligible] as a heating and cooling agency or whatever they call it. Anyway his twin brother, Chuck, he's in North Carolina and he is working for a landscaping construction company.

SW: So now we are just going to kind of move on into family folklore and if you don't know everything, that's okay. Just kind of go with what you do know or what you think may have happened, that's fine. So when did your ancestors [word unintelligible]?

AS: Well my grandfather did all of that, Jay Stranahan. He was born in North of Ireland in 1699 and he immigrated to New England in 1725. He had a son, James, who was born in 1735 and John in 1737 and William in 1739. So there are the three branches of the family. Samuel was the son of James, he was the one that I found in the Encyclopedia Americana and then I looked on their web site that he was the one that was the founder of Prospect Park in Brooklyn. So that was James Samuel, but now the—

SW: That would have been like a great uncle or a great-great uncle?

AS: A great-great uncle yes.

I have to get back here—I think ours are John. I always forget, but yes. Farrand comes down through John and it was from Stockton in North of Ireland it says or Scotland here and then they went down into Ireland. So you can have copies of all of these kinds of— my grandfather and my father wrote and I have all kinds of these papers.

SW: So he left Northern Ireland in 1699? So when did they come from Scotland into Ireland?

AS: Well that's when— he left Ireland in 1725. He was born in the North of Ireland in 1699 so James was born in Ireland, but the family came from Scotland apparently, the parish of Strachan in Kinkardine County Scotland. And then my father always said that they came from County Cork, but I don't know. That's what he told me.

SW: And so they were Scotch-Irish. They came down into Ireland and do you know what brought them from Scotland to Ireland or did they come over [word unintelligible]—

AS: Yeah, they never did say, but you know it's very interesting because the New England people did quite well. They prospered and James Samuel was a wealthy gentleman in New York in Brooklyn and so all of these show the genealogy coming down there. When we get down to my great-grandfather, who was the 49er, he went from—and I think they were up in Herkimer County, New York because he left and went to California and dug his gold and buried it and then went back to get his sweetheart who was Mary Ellen Terry in Herkimer County. I am not sure whether they came—and some of this will probably tell—across the isthmus or around the horn, but I think they maybe came across the isthmus. So then when he gets back there of course there he was looking for his gold where he buried it and of course it has been some time and the river has risen and it has washed out all of the dirt around this tree and there is his can of gold or sack of gold, whatever it was, I always had pictured a coffee can, but whatever it was, was still held in the roots of this tree right along the side. So anyway he went to dig his gold and went to Martinez, California where he started a vineyard and he was [word unintelligible] they had...Farrand was their oldest and then I think was Clint and then there were twins, Cady and Cora, and then there was Willoughby, Uncle Will. Now of those, Cady and Willoughby and Farrand are the ones that came to Montana. But anyway, when my great-grandfather, they were digging a wine cellar in the rock and he had the Chinese digging away and they came running out and they said "the mountain is talking" and him to come down. He said nonsense [word unintelligible]. They were very stubborn. So he went in and it promptly collapsed on him and my grandfather's writing would tell about how they could still see him after they dug him out and you know, what he looked like and everything. But anyway, so after he was killed my great-grandmother married a man by the name of, and I think that it was [word unintelligible]. Well he didn't get along with the older boys. Now, I have never heard how Will and Clint got to Montana or what they did. They must have stayed home because grandfather was about 13 at the time, my granddad. And he went to San Francisco and sold newspapers on the street and apprenticed to the lawyers. Lawyers were, Murphy was the one anyway he married the

daughter. But he went to Hastings (?) Law School in San Francisco eventually and graduated in 1882, got his law degree. I have, and I should have brought that up, I have the drawing of Pomoroy, was a famous attorney, famous law lawyer, who had written his book and lectured and everything and have, my grandfather did a drawing of him and I have been going to get that over to the Law School and I haven't, but I did speak to someone over there about a bunch of his law books and some of them came from San Francisco from his benefactors, the attorney's there. But anyway, so he eventually married the daughter, the young daughter and he talks about that in his writings that she was like a younger sister and they got married. Well, they had a girl, Viola, interesting coincidence; Viola must have been a popular name. But, the reason I am saying this is because that was the steamboat that my grandmother, his wife came up the river on. But anyway, they had a daughter and according to him, she was letting her brothers stay and sponge off of him and he said it's either them or me and she choose the brother and he left, but his [word unintelligible] had gotten in touch with her daughter and she has a little different story, so...I have all those writings too so...[laughing]. But anyway, so he came to Montana and of course with his law degree settled in Helena and this must have been '82 so it was probably around in the '90s sometime when he came. Then my grandmother and of course she was the one who had come up the river on the steamboat when she was one year old, on the steamboat "Viola Bell" and I have the diary of her mother and of course this story is because her mother's father, it would be her grandfather was an Englishman. So he was apparently a remittance man and he took off so, this I've written for... this is the story that's going to the Montana Magazine of Western History with the diary. But anyway, so he came up and married my grandmother and according to some of his writings, he says that when he was an attorney for some of the cattlemen, now of course we know that the cattlemen in Montana, many of them never saw a cow. Some of them lived in Europe, some of them in New York, Philadelphia, all over. They ran the cattle on the open range. Of course then in about '86, and of course this is in the '90s, but still there was some remnant of some of that left and so the cattleman was doing law recruits said you should come to Fort Benton. So he came to Fort Benton and my aunt said, and something she wrote for a publication, I can't remember the name of that either, it's a little thing about the pioneers, but she said he was the only attorney in town at the time.

SW: And his name, one more time was....

AS: Okay, Farrand Ebenezer Stranahan. And

SW: Would you spell the first name one more time.

AS: F-A-R-R-A-N-D

SW: F-A-R-R-A-N-D.

AS: Now you can get copies of these. It needs something that will copy it well, because it's...from what he did of course they were all on carbon paper. So anyway he came to Fort

Benton and at one time he was mayor, at one time he was district judge, he was president of the Stockman's National Bank—whatever it was at the time in Fort Benton which went under during the Depression. He managed to go around and get most of the money, so much on the dollar from everybody and then he did sit in on the Supreme Court a time or two—the Montana Supreme Court. He also was involved in—knew there was some reason I wanted to get that book and I can't find it—he was involved in the “the Wild Bunch”. What's his name? The train robbery up there? Kid Curry and the Curry gang when he would go down to Landusky, take the train, he lived in Fort Benton at the time and go down to Harlem and take the stage down to Landusky. Pike Landusky was quite a character and of course was named after him. He told about taking the stage and it was icy and he fell and sprained both wrists. Well, earlier he and Pike Landusky had had words and I guess Pike Landusky told him, he said if you ever come back to this country bring a six shooter or whatever. Anyway, so he was couldn't cut his meat, he was eating in the restaurant so he passed it to the guy next to him and here it was Pike Landusky and he cut up his meat for him [laughing]. That was one of the family stories.

SW: That's funny [laughing]. Okay so you've given me a pretty interesting story and...So you don't really know a whole lot more about their lives, what they did in Ireland or—

AS: No they don't give much except for the different spellings here.

SW: Just the names, but as far as what they were doing in Ireland at the time when they left?

AS: I think Uncle Clint told in something that one of them had fought against the Crown or was wanted by the Crown and so he took off from Scotland and went down into Ireland and changed his name.

SW: Oh, that's interesting.

AS: Now, that's in some of this stuff. As I've said I've got so much of it here that I have to look through it.

SW: So then that's what would have brought them into Ireland from Scotland, was that he was—

AS: Yeah, and I think that was Uncle Clint's writing anyway.

SW: So then that brought them into Northern Ireland.

AS: Northern Ireland and then whether it was economics or what, you know, I don't know. And of course they were always protestant so what that had to do, you know, Scots would fight against the Crown, as well as the Irish and so whatever, they weren't Orangemen apparently, it doesn't sound right to me.

SW: So they think he went down into Northern Ireland to probably try to get away?

AS: Yeah, to try to get away from the Crown.

SW: To try to get away from the Crown, interesting! So I am just going to ask you and when you kind of look at all of this information surrounding you here on the table and all the stories that you have heard throughout your life about your family, what does your Irish ancestry mean to you?

AS: Well, it's always kind of interesting to think about your roots, where you came from, the Picts and the Celts. When I went to the College of Great Falls I had this professor, Chris Stevens, who had married an Irish gal and eventually went back and I think he lived in Belfast and finally died there, but you know he was the one talking about peering out at the woods [laughing]—the civilized people were down on the Mediterranean [laughing], but I've always thought of it as kind of, more of a level-headed-type of down-to-earth intelligent people that had to live in this place where there was not a lot that they could do. You look at some of the area around here even, granted they didn't have quite the mountains, but it was still not the country that they could farm or they could do a lot with other than just graze sheep and a few things. When we went to Ireland, well it's been three years now, it was very, very interesting to see around the country there and Scotland and the kind of country that we came from.

SW: Well, I think just looking back on just this little bit that you've told me, your grandfather was, I mean to have his father die and to be kind of in a position where, here he was in San Francisco, what was he going to do? He gets a job as a newspaper delivery boy and then somehow down the road became a lawyer.

AS: Yeah, they are always very, most of the Irish are very self-sufficient, very doing something very...you know tenacious, being able to overcome...My god, they've lived there and all the troubles. They've had to overcome a lot.

But I was going to go on and tell about my father. You know my father, of course I have pictures of him in here and he was the favorite son. He was the oldest, born in Helena before they moved to Fort Benton.

SW: And his name?

AS: Clinton Goodwin. And so after his grandfather, Goodwin, died, he spent quite a bit of time with his grandmother up there in the Helena Valley in the Prickly Pear Valley and of course she raised turkeys and she would go out and call "turkey, turkey, turkey" so she became "Tuckey" [?]. So to everybody, the whole family, she was Tuckey [?]. But anyway he became a farmer. You know grandad Stranahan was very, very adamant that they should be self-sufficient and of course he kind of considered himself as the patriarch of the family. And Uncle Clint was over in Idaho and he had an orchard down right in Lewistown, right down I guess the freeway is over it

now, but right at the Loma river and so grandad always wanted to, you know, be a big landowner and all of that and when, I guess, grandmother died there was the insurance and they bought a ranch out east toward Geraldine, which my brother-in-law lives on today. But that was the big ranch and then we had the river ranch and the story about that and how they got the river ranch. You see he was going to Landusky, to Harlem on the train and you go by this big bottom on the river, horseshoe shaped with big bluffs on the other side where the oxbow comes around and cut the river bottom there, in fact that's part of my [word unintelligible] and anyway he thought that would make a good place. My father was out on the Teton. The Teton River doesn't give you a whole lot of water and here is this Missouri River going by, you know, lots of water and of course you had to irrigate, you had to grow these tremendous crops. Well anyway, so it was owned by Joe Blankenbaker who was down at Virgelle and they had the place down there. And so grandad and daddy went down and talked to Joe Blankenbaker. Well he couldn't get up there, it's quite a ways by river and you know the track is there and it's really hard to get there. There's no way the steep river, Missouri Breaks are in the way, it's just very difficult to get there and if you go by road it's about 25 miles. So anyway they talked Blankenbaker into selling him this place. Well, the only way he would sell it, because he and Charlie Lippard, another big cow man, did not get along. So he said I will only sell you this if you will promise never to let Charlie Lippard have water down there. Because Charlie Lippard's pasture was the pasture we had to go across to get to the highway [laughing]. So grandad said "oh yes, no we will never let him". Well so later years, now Charlie was Charlie and anyway he didn't really like us going through his pasture, but there wasn't too much he could do about it because it was a county road, but it was only two wheel tracks and like we talked about, the snow you know, or the mud, if you couldn't go one place, well you took off another place so we, you know, were quite liberal in getting across the prairie anyway we could. So anyway he put in and decided, when wheat became very profitable to grow, he fenced his fields. Well on time there were seven gates to get down those eight miles. I don't ever remember that many, but I do remember four. So he put his fence so close to the cutback on the one side, you couldn't get around the other, but you know, it was very dangerous. We could have slid off. It was slippery. So my father finally said, that was my father's, his father's agreement with Charlie, so he would let him have water. To get water he had to come down and go through a little piece of our property down underneath the railroad bridge to the river. And there was a little coulee there that they could get down there to the river. So when Charlie did this fencing, my father says "well you can remove that fence or I am going to shut the gate and your cattle won't be able to get the water down there". So Charlie had to move the fence back a little, so we had some room to get by [laughing]. Otherwise we had to go clear through the middle of the field and there were two more gates. So it was kind of interesting to see all of these different deals with farmers and ranchers.

SW: Well they really did have to work together and try to form these alliances or compromise and they were working. That's very interesting.

AS: Of course he's the one now that has the Lippard-Clawiter grants that you can get down there and he finally sold his place and made some money off of it.

SW: So, talked a little bit earlier about when you family came to the United States that they settled—could you go over where they settled again?

AS: Well, all I know about is the New York to California to Montana, Helena—

SW: So New York is where they—

AS: Upstate New York, yeah.

SW: Any you don't know why they settled there? Is there a reason that they went there?

AS: No, it doesn't say anything here.

SW: Let's see. We went over how they came to live in Montana and your father came here because his brothers were already here.

AS: My grandfather came first...I'm not sure who came first, my grandfather or Cady. Cady was an attorney in Havre. He, I found out that he lived in the Messianic Hall there and was caretaker. I remember when I went to Eastern Star, he was master of the lodge the year I was born, 1935. I can remember going to visit him once when he was living there and that's after Aunt Mary died. Mary would have been...I'm not too sure. I've got pictures of her, but she was Mary Parkinson and pictures of her and a friend in the valley. She was a friend of my grandmother's, so two girls married brothers. But anyway, that was in Messianic Temple there. My first ride on an elevator, and that old elevator is still there with the brass and if you're not careful you can get your arm caught in them. But anyway and looking down into the hall at the beautiful blue carpet which is still there and unfortunately the lodge is not doing all that well, but anyway [laughing]. So that was Uncle Cady and he was actually a lot more fun than my grandad.

SW: Was your grandad pretty serious?

AS: He was, although I can remember coming in, of course I was only five when he died, so I probably wouldn't remember him quite as well as Uncle Cady, but I would go to him and of course he made wine. We come from wine country. All through prohibition they made wine and they would bring in the railroad cars of grapes into Black Eagle and they would go up and get the grapes because my grandad said you know, you can't make wine with anything but grapes. You can use raisins and pitch, but anyway so I can remember going to him and he would give me a little swig of wine. But anyway I was going to tell you about my father then. He went to Bozeman and studied animal husbandry. Of course I'm not sure whether this is because of his father wanted him to do that. He tried to send his youngest son, Harold, to Harvard to study law. But of course at that time, you know, they could do that. Harold wouldn't do that. He did come to University for a while, but I don't know how long. But anyway, so my father studied animal husbandry and he might have gone into banking, but his other brother, Benjamin, now

there were three boys and then there was a daughter. So there was Clinton, and then there was Ben, Benjamin and Harold and then Alice. And Harold is the youngest, Alice comes in after the two boys. Harold Willoughby so most people didn't know him by his real name, it was Wiggs Stranahan. But anyway, well it was Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch was the story and he was always pestering people to read Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch to him until finally he became Mrs. Wiggs and finally just Wiggs and he kept that all of his life. But anyway, my father took the place out on the Teton and he met my mother [name unintelligible], my mother was [name unintelligible]. Her mother died when she was 12 so she never finished school or anything, but she read voraciously. But anyway, so then they bought the place down on the river, down on the Missouri and later on they asked him to run, my father was always very involved in things and they asked him to run so he was a legislator from Chouteau County for, I think only a couple of terms because they reapportioned it and he couldn't campaign enough to do because he had the ranch. But then he would put in a really big garden and he sold sweet corn for 20 cents a baker's dozen which was 13 and all the other stuff was my mother's, the cucumbers and you know all the rest. But then in the fall he had potatoes at \$2.00 per hundred pound sack. You dug it yourself.

So he plowed the potatoes. He would send out postcards to people, to all his customers, he would say that the potatoes were ready and he would be plowing on such and such a Sunday and they would come down with their sacks and pick potatoes. I still have people tell me that they remember going down there. And that was probably, I think they came with spending money, but it was probably as much as anything because nobody ever came down there. Otherwise it was eight miles across the prairie and well, but the time we bought it we got the stock passes so we didn't have to open gates [laughing].

SW: So what do you know about the Stranahan name or the Irish names in your family? About their origin, do you know something about that?

AS: Only that the Stranahan, Strachan or Stranahan and there's the spelling right there.

SW: So quite a few different spellings. And they came from Scotland, from Strachan in Kinkardine County Scotland.

AS: My sister has a lot of this too so Uncle [name unintelligible], but she had some letters from him. But I know he did say something about the—

SW: The origin of the name?

AS: The origin about coming down and—

SW: And changing to Stranahan?

AS: Yes. Well and they changed the spelling as I said, because of the fact that they were afraid they were going to get caught by the Crown, by the English. And of course the English, and of course it's kind of interesting because on my grandmother's side, her grandfather was Arthur Hill and he was supposedly a nobleman or something, but we figured he was a remittance man and after the three girls were born why he left. So they never knew much about him.

SW: So now a little bit or how the name had changed to Stranahan and kind of why. What about traditional first names. I know we talked about Wiggs, which was a fabulous story.

AS: Yes and you know our family has never been much for nicknames, but they used initials. It was CG and BF, Benjamin Farrand I guess, and so H.W.—Harold Willoughby.

SW: So there is no naming traditions as far as Mary coming down.

AS: No Farrand is the one and of course Ebenezer was his father. Not a lot of nicknames.

SW: We are going to go now to your childhood and we are going to talk about some of the childhood memories of where you grew up and I know you have talked a little bit about some of that and do you remember a lot from growing up down on the ranch?

AS: Oh yeah, it was wonderful. I think of those poor kids now that never get out, never go by themselves. When I was, why I don't know, I suppose about 12, my father had a little single shot .22 and he showed me how to, you know, you had to put one shell in, cock it and he gave it to me and I would go out and plink at stuff. I never tried to shoot anything, but I wandered all over that bottom.

SW: Were you close in age to your siblings.

AS: I only have my one sister and she is 12 years older than I am.

SW: So you were really kind of by yourself.

AS: I was, we were both only children [laughing].

SW: So you wandered around in the river bottom and—

AS: Yeah, it was— we both reminisce about when she grew up on the Teton and when they sold that and that was traumatic for her and of course I remember my goodbye to the river.

SW: I see that that is still hard for you to talk about.

AS: It is.

SW: And how old were you when that happened.

AS: Sixty. [laughing]. It was my son's. It was with my son when he was down there after he was no longer there.

SW: So then has it been sold?

AS: Oh yeah, they changed it completely. So you can Google it in Google Earth. Just put Stranahan, Montana in there and it's there. It was a lovely place.

SW: Oh, I can see that that's hard for you to talk about. So you grew up basically as an only child and you spent a lot of time alone then. And then when you came into Fort Benton at age five, your parents would bring you in to go to school.

AS: Yes.

SW: So what was that like for you?

AS: Well, what they did, and this is kind of interesting too because at the time, I didn't realize what was going on, but it was, well it would have been 1940 before the war and it was apparently a WPA project where they had childcare, they had what they called a nursery school and so they put me in this because I had never been around children before and they needn't have worried, it was never any problem for me. But the one thing I do remember and we would go and I didn't like taking naps in the afternoon and I remember this one woman [phrase unintelligible] [laughing]—and the one thing that was so funny and I told one of the gals, because she asked me, she was a black lady, when was the first black person you ever saw? And I said well, this story can be interesting because I was getting ready for the first day to go to this nursery school, is what we called it. And my mother said “now, there is a colored lady over there and I don't want you to make fun of her or say anything”. She was Mrs. Barnett, was the cook, they were a lovely family and the only black family in Fort Benton and very well thought of. And she cooked there.

Here I have this picture of this woman with patchwork and all these different colors and I got there and I looked at her and I was so disappointed—you know [laughing]. And the other thing, that's about the only things I remember about her was at Christmas time. And at Christmas time, they were passing out presents. And here are all these children getting drums and dolls and everything and here I only got just a little tin whistle. And now I realize it was because they knew that I was going to get presents for Christmas, I mean, my family wasn't poor.

SW: You didn't understand.

AS: But of course I didn't understand that. It didn't bother me that much, but I always thought how come—[laughing].

SW: Now what games do you remember playing as a child?

AS: I don't remember, but of course being by myself, what was so rich about my childhood is that we always, my father told stories. We sang, my father always told stories. And at night, we would sit out and this is why I hate all the lights. I keep thinking I want to write a little piece about take back the night. You know they talk about take back the night as far as far as for women, but I'm talking about for darkness.

Because we would sit out and look at the stars and we would sit out in warm evenings and talk and it was so neat.

SW: There was just a connection there.

AS: Yeah, and I feel sorry for people that don't get out and they never get to see the stars. I remember when Halley's comet came and I read in the paper and I had started at the University at the time I think, and I read in the paper where it was and it was nearby and that I could go out and see it right in the street and the street's pretty dark because the neighbor's over there have got lights that I would like to turn off, but I can't. So I went out and looked and it was in Taurus, which is my birth sign of course and right there you could see a little light, you know and that was the comet. And my mother had seen it the first time it was here and she talked about it so we were down in Arizona. Well, my husband's niece, Marlene was down there. It was where she was married and Doug had gone over, that was when we first went down to L.A. the time that Doug had sent us the tickets to come down on—well I will think of that name, but anyway and so we want to see Halley's comet. So we drive out in the desert and she borrows her boyfriend's binoculars and we drove and drove and drove to get out in the desert where you didn't have lights. And we finally got a place where it wasn't too bad and so we looked up and it looked just like I saw it here. It was not much different. It was just this little bit of light [laughing]. So anyway, that's what I remember, the nights looking at the stars and I really miss that.

SW: So your dad was a story teller and he sang. Did you mother sing too? Did you all?

AS: Oh my mother was a fairly shy and reserved person.

SW: So your father was more kind of—

AS: Yeah, he was very outgoing and he did readings. One of the books I tried to find for him was one that had his readings in it. One of them was the [name unintelligible]. He would do this and I can't remember all of the ones, but he did that for his [phrase unintelligible] and he would get up and he would do his readings and memorize all those things. You know and that's another thing. If kids can memorize songs like crazy, but can they memorize a poem if you set them down to that. I had a terrible time trying to get kids to memorize anything.

SW: Yeah, it is interesting, you know, just how a few years will do, you know, technology, everybody is so plugged in. And I think even when we were kids, my dad, we would go on trips and he would sing to us and so we all sang. That's what we did and he would tell stories from his youth and we would sit around and tell stories to each other.

AS: Yeah, one of my favorites, I would say daddy tell me about when you were a little boy. And he would tell about how they would play along the river in Fort Benton, of course he grew up on Fort Benton. And he says at the time they had livery stables. And this was 1900 about maybe up to 1910 or so. But anyway he says we would go up and down the river and gather eggs and then we would, because the chickens would lay all over the place, and they would find nests and get some eggs. And he says they would build a little campfire and get some water from the river in a coffee can, put it in there and if the egg floated they threw it out, they figured it was rotten and they would boil their eggs and then he was the boy that went around and got the cows to take out to pasture. So he would take them out when the weather got nice and they could go out to pasture on that big flat south, southwest of Fort Benton.

SW: So are the books that you've written based somewhat in those stories.

AS: Yes, yes, I had to make up some of them, but you know they were kind of the same. He told me Nobby [?] stories, he told me Gollywampus and the Three Kittens stories and I have those in the second book.

SW: So, what kind of music did he sing, does your father sing?

AS: Oh, well in fact, we were in a play together. We did The Red Mill and of course that was when they did the community productions. It was Victor Herbert's Red Mill and he was the Burgomaster and I was his daughter and everybody thought it was something that I could sass him back. [laughing]. My father never, never hit me but all he had to do was look at me and I died. He never, hardly ever said anything. If he looked at me that way, that was it. My mother, well, the only times I got spanked was for running away. I'd leave the yard and go because I knew where I was, I knew where I lived, I knew how to get back there. Fort Benton is not big. [laughing].

SW: And then did you remember any craft traditions or any traditions that you remember?

AS: We read, constantly. Everybody had a book. We read. That was your entertainment.

SW: And did you play any Gaelic games that you know of or that you can think of?

AS: No, I don't think any of that came down. We were Anglicized pretty fast.

SW: And then what was your housing like? What kind of a house did you grow up in as far as you know, on the river bottom there was that a house that they built or—

AS: They brought, that house was one that they moved in from Verona. Now I don't know Verona was a little town and there is an historic marker there south of Big Sandy. The power company has a substation there on the other side of the road, but it was moved in from Verona and they put that house in for the first years they were down there first, maybe a year or so and my sister could tell a little more about that because she was older. I was just a baby. And they lived in a tent and they had a little bunkhouse. So that house was moved in, but then when we first moved into Fort Benton there were several little houses we lived in, but the first time we lived in the Greystone [?]. The Greystone [?] was built by, I think it was Brown. It was either Brown or Green, a big cattleman and later on we purchased it, my husband and I in 1964, kicked out all the tenants and that was our house and where our family grew, where our boys grew up. But anyway, we moved into there in the fall of 1941 just before Pearl Harbor and I started a school then and we had the front apartment which later on was our oldest son's room, plus there was a little tiny kitchen. And at that time daddy was still down at the ranch and so we had gotten that summer this little dog. And we got it from my uncle in Cutbank on the way back from Glacier Park. We brought two of them and one of them we gave to another family, but anyway so that little dog, mother would put him in the kitchen at night to sleep. Mom and I would go down to the theater; it was like three blocks down the street and see movies. But she had to be very careful because she had a coat with a clasp on it and if he heard that he would bark, because he knew we were going out so she would have to hold that very carefully. So anyway we would get out and go to the movie and he wouldn't know we were gone, hopefully. We never heard anything about it. But anyway of all the people that would come up those stairs, it was up on the second floor, he always knew when my father would come and we could tell because he would start barking and it was the only time he would bark was if my father would start up those stairs.

SW: He would be so excited to see him?

AS: He was just a pup, but anyway after that we moved into another little house and finally, we lived there for two or three years, and then finally we, in fact, I think later the lady that belonged to, that's where I started taking piano lessons. But later we bought the Overholser house. Now Joel Frances, he doesn't go by Frances in the book, but he is the one that wrote the book, Fort Benton: Montana's Innermost Port which I've used tremendously in my writing as far as information, it's great. But anyway we bought their house and we lived in there from the time I was in the third grade until I got out of high school and they finally sold it.

SW: What do you remember about chores? Did you have to do chores?

AS: I didn't do much, I cooked. My mother would have me warm up stuff for lunch when she'd be out helping daddy in the field. I worked, you know, I did a little bit, I drove the tractor a little and that sort of thing. My mother, having lost her mother at 12 and having all of the

responsibility of her younger siblings, never believed in making us do a whole lot. So I guess I just kind of got off without doing too many things. And then of course when I was in school, I was so busy doing things, I joined everything practically.

SW: SThis might be kind of interesting to hear. When you were down on the river bottom, you know, when you were in Fort Benton of course there was probably a store that you went to for your groceries when you were living there. What about when you were down on the river bottom? What was that like? You had to be fairly prepared. You couldn't make trips to the store so how did that work for you guys? What did you do?

AS: Well the first years, when they first moved down there and if the road was impassable, my uncle, Uncle Wiggs would bring groceries down on the Great Northern on the Galloping Goose. They would stop, now granddad and I mentioned about him being the patriarch and the whole thing. They were going to raise registered alfalfa seed and he talked Great Northern in to putting depot there so there was a depot, that's at Stranahan. But anyway they didn't go to the depot. They would let him off at the crossing so he didn't have so far to go. You could flag the train, but I think it came at something like four o'clock in the morning so you had to get up pretty early to flag it, but I assume he probably did get back in town, but he would bring the groceries down that way in the wintertime. And I do remember my sister coming down on the train a time or two in the spring when she was in high school and I was still not in school.

SW: So who did she live with? Did she live with your uncle then?

AS: She lived with my grandparents. It was not a happy time for her. She will tell you about it too [laughing]. They were pretty old.

SW: So they were probably strict?

AS: Well, she didn't have any friends or anything around and it was not...Besides she wanted to be home with her parents and this was from the time she started school.

SW: So you talked about going to school in Fort Benton and what are some of the strongest memories you have about school?

AS: Oh, music I guess.

SW: So you have a very strong interest in music.

AS: And of course I took piano lessons and then I played clarinet which is not the instrument for me, but—[laughing] it was just music in general.

SW: What about sports?

AS: Oh, not really. I played in pep band. I remember; it was kind of interesting because there was the Pep Club in Fort Benton. When the press puts out the old pictures from the annuals, and so here is the Pep Club. I had mine in there as far as the dance orchestra and different things, but the picture of the Pep Club and there they all are sitting there my [unintelligible] said I thought you would be in there and I said no, I wasn't in Pep Club, I was in Pep Band [laughing]. I wasn't in sports, although we did go to the games.

SW: Now did your family have a car or did you walk to school?

AS: Well, I always walked to school. We didn't have a car until 1949. We always had a pickup. I remember I see those 1949 Fords. If I was really younger I might get one and fix it up.

SW: So are you still in touch with some of your friends from childhood?

AS: Most of my girlfriends have died. I know, when we have our class reunions, the ones that are left, but there aren't very many left. Every year we lose more and more. But I had my two best friends died—oh, I will have to tell you about Beverly and her father. I was thinking about that the other day, you know, because printing and everything has changed. He was the linotype operator for the River Press, Bob Johnson, and apparently my father had worked on the Bozeman Chronicle when he was in college and he said at the time Bob Johnson was, they called him the printer's devil. Well he was the linotype operator in Fort Benton. So Beverly and I would stop by on our way down, the River Press was right down the street on Front Street and we would stop by and see if we could get a nickel out of him to go get an ice cream cone or something. But I can still remember the fire. The linotype, you know it's not the [unintelligible] keyboard. It's entirely a different keyboard. His fingers would just fly over that and he had typed out my name, so I had the whole Anne Marie Stranahan. Well, it's not the lead, it's whatever they used. I can't remember exactly what the metal is, but they did melt it down and used it.

SW: So we are going to talk a little bit now about religious and social practices [phrase unintelligible]. So did you grow up or do you belong to a recognizable Irish-American community? Did you grow up in an Irish community?

AS: No.

SW: Did you grow up as a member of a church or a religious group.

AS: Well, what's the Episcopal church. Now the story is my great-grandmother, when they moved to Helena, they were Methodist's, but the Methodist's didn't approve of dancing. So they tried the Episcopal Church. So, we always in Fort Benton, St. Paul's was our church and of course there were very few people that went to St. Paul's, but anyway then when they didn't have Sunday School, I started going with my friends to the Methodist Church. So I was probably Methodist most of the time.

SW: During my pre-interview, you had brought out Fern's [?] bible.

AS: Oh, I forgot about his bible.

SW: And you talked about how he had a rather interesting view of religion.

AS: Oh yes, I think he was an atheist. I don't know, agnostic might be a little bit closer, but he...Yes, the bible is in here. I had lost it for a while. I couldn't remember where it was and then I finally found it here. There it is and they spelled his name wrong, but there it is. Yes, and I am assuming that when he did all this, you can see his very meticulous writing. He was an artist. We had a little piece of marble with the Stranahan carved on it that he said he did waiting for his first client. He painted two pictures; one I have is the Good Samaritan. I think they're copies. I know the one that my cousin had and I don't know which of her children has it now, but it's the Three Minstrels coming home from the— there's a base—and it's a well-known picture. The first time I saw the original, a picture of the original, I thought well, that's my grandfather's painting. But he was a very good artist and I told you about Pomeroy and we can get copies of that if somebody would like.

SW: Let's see, so let's talk a little bit about local history and community life. Describe the place where you grew up. You kind of have a dual story there, because you did have two experiences.

AS: Well yes, anyone who farms or ranches has to move to town most of the time. When we were out on the ranch they did have school six miles from us. It was over a road we could get over, but mine would have had to been 25 miles to get up to the school, the closest school that was open. So of course I couldn't. Yeah, Fort Benton is a lovely little town, quite. You didn't worry about your kids. They were out. The only thing to worry about is the river going by and I don't remember anyone ever drowning in the river. We were all pretty afraid of it. If kids wanted to swim they went up by the island. There was a spot there where they swam, but then of course one of the WPA projects was the swimming pool and so I learned to swim the summer that my sister had her son and when her husband was in the Army. The only fellow I remember who got suffocated in a wheat bin was the doctor's son and he suffocated and got down and of course everybody learned to be careful.

SW: How has Fort Benton changed over the years? Have you had the chance to revisit it or spend time there?

AS: Oh I spend time there all the time. It's grown some. I'd like to see about all the new names of the people that are there because there are a lot of young people who have come in. The Grand Union Hotel, I took my sister to her birthday dinner down there and that was only three weeks late on that, the other night and [name unintelligible] has done a good job with the Grand Union. I can remember Mrs. Leftley [?] sitting in there at the desk when they had it. My

brother-in-law and his wife and another couple owned it for a while. Now Fort Benton changes very, very slowly. But people are coming in. People are finding out the beauties of small towns.

SW: When you were growing up, the people that were living in Fort Benton, primarily they are living was probably based on farming or ranch community? Is that—

AS: Yes, quite a few.

SW: And the river also brought—there was traffic on the river there.

AS: Not when I was growing up. There wasn't that much tourism at that time, once in a while, but not much. Ranching families, businessmen, Fort Benton was awfully clicky though in that time. I am assuming it has gotten somewhat better now. I remember a friend going on about it and of course being too close to the [word unintelligible], but it was and my grandmother was deaf. So she was very, very hard of hearing. She wore a big old battery; you know it was an earphone. So they didn't mix much with people. So that didn't impact us. And the friends that my parents had were, they visited relatives or there were out on the Teton where they had neighbors there, and that was about it.

SW: Let's see. What places stand out most in your mind when you think back on Fort Benton.?

AS: The town you mean?

SW: Yes.

AS: Well I mentioned the Grand Union, the Chouteau House, the Pioneer. I worked in the Pioneer Mercantile. It was great. I always bought my clothes there. It was fairly expensive. I worked there for a couple of years during high school during Christmas season. In fact I remember when I needed a Social Security number finally for income tax purposes or something, and I called the Pioneer and Don, what's his name, and anyway he says oh, it's lucky you called now because I would have thrown it out next year.

SW: So were there lots of local gatherings, dances or things like that that you remember?

AS: Well my parents use to go to the American Legion things. In fact the day I had my appendix out they were gone. My grandmother had to call them and tell them to come home because I was having such a time. They took me to the hospital and jerked out my appendix when I was eight. But you know, we didn't— there wasn't a lot of getting together as far as that goes.

SW: Everybody was probably too busy.

AS: Well people stayed home and of course we were only there, being out in the country in the summer, why we didn't—

SW: How has historical events affected your family and community? For example, what were your family experiences during World War II and the Depression?

AS: Well, of course I told you about going to nursery school during the depression and of course anyone who was on a farm or ranch didn't suffer that much during the Depression. Things were hard to come by. I don't ever remember being poor, feeling that I was poor. I know we didn't have a whole lot of money, but I can remember my father, we'd go out to Great Falls and my father saying I could have one toy out of the Dime Store. I would look around and here is the big doll again. Here is all these things and I knew I'd better not pick those. So I would pick some little thing. I would look back on it and I would say, well for some reason I knew we could only afford so much, but I don't think he ever said it. My father, we went first class, always. And he was a good tipper, but you know he didn't waste money. I can remember my husband bring him down, and this was when he was still farming down there on the river, bringing him down a bale of broken baler twine that they could use and my father saying "Wow, new wire" [laughing]. My husband talks about that. You know he made do a lot. He did his own forge work. He never had a welder. He ran the forge. I used to turn the handle for the bellows, not so fast.

SW: What do you remember about World War II? Do you remember Pearl Harbor when that happened?

AS: I don't remember the actual event. I do remember all of the things we did. We had this ashtray, it looked like Depression glass, it was a green one and it had the tire around the outside, the rubber tire, it was advertising some certain tires, the tire event. You picked up everything, all your scraps, you took the logos off the cans, you took the ends out and then flattened them with the end inside, you had your ration books and they always saved theirs so that I could have shoes. So I had ration stamps for shoes. And they I would go to the Post Office and buy my war bond stamps. You bought stamps, you could get a war bond, but you could get the stamps for so much each time and then when you filled them out you'd have it done. My father went around and did the war bond drive and I remember speaking of Verona and that was the one place I remembered there was a place there that we went and saw some people and he got an award for selling all these bonds and I went with him a number of times to sell war bonds.

SW: So does your family have any special saying or expressions?

AS: Oh my God, lots of them. I don't know if I can think of any right now [laughing].

SW: So, holidays. Let's talk a little bit about holidays and how they were traditionally celebrated in your family.

AS: Well, we always went to Grandma's. Even up until the time that she was way up in her 80s, close to 90. She always had the Christmas dinners and Thanksgiving, Easter. My mother said she

never learned how to cook a turkey because grandma always did. Now my Uncle Ben, they lived in Butte and he had Standard Oil stations and they were just the three of them. They had one girl, Layla, and they would come over and then Aunt Alice was married to Howard Smith and he was a farm manager. He managed the Benjamin place out at [word unintelligible] Peak ranch. And they had the three; there was Charlotte, Jim and Bob. Bob and I are the same age; well he was a year older than me. And so we would all gather and of course it would be Uncle Wiggs and then the four of us, Mom, daddy and [name unintelligible] was gone a lot. By that time she was in school, but she was there until, I think she got married in 1943 so, but we always had dinner there and I remember the bourbon flowed and everybody got happy and loud and had a good time. Grandma would cook, the one thing I always loved, she always did the roasted almonds. You blanched them and took the skins off and then you put them in the oven and salted them and roasted them. Oh there were delicious and then you always had your little cup.

SW: Do you do that now for holidays?

AS: I haven't for years, I had at one time. I did have Christmas last year and this [word unintelligible] is still on there from Christmas. [laughing].

SW: So has your family created its own traditions and celebrations, songs or—you know with four boys it's probably—I don't know with my boys anyway are not as keen on a lot of that stuff as my daughter was.

AS: Right, boys are a little bit...but there was some sayings like "All I need is this remote control," that kind of thing. [laughing].

SW: So do you have food traditions in your family? Do you have any food traditions that you can think of?

AS: Well, good roast beef and potatoes and gravy, you know meat and potatoes. Our son, Doug, he cooks a mean apple pie.

SW: So we are going to talk a little bit now about mementos and keepsakes and I can just see looking here you have quite a lot of information about your family and history and what a treasure that is, photos. So what family heirlooms or keepsakes and mementos do you possess?

AS: Well, there is the family clock in there that everybody...that was who was going to get the clock. Well that's a different story too. Now Uncle Wiggs was, oh, he might be called the black sheep, but not really, he was always around. He took care of Grandma into the end and he would come and baby sit for us when we would want to go somewhere and when he was in Fort Benton and would cook liver on Fridays for my kids. They loved it. But anyway, before that the family clock was always on that—right there where it is on the side board. This was the table, the clock and the sideboard there, the highchair, my father's highchair. Anyway, I was walking down the street in Great Falls and I saw the clock in the window of the pawn shop. So I

went in to find out, well it was on consignment, that and the stained glass window. Well the stained glass window was one that granddad had gotten for grandma at that house in Fort Benton and it was my mother on a summer's day, she is raking the hay, well this is of course when grandma was the girl out in the valley. So I couldn't afford that, but they wanted \$75.00 for the clock and I don't know why it was there, why it was even on that part of it. Because it's not the best, you know it's down by the Civic Center on the south side of Central Avenue. But anyway, so I went home and I told my husband. I said, "Well, our clock is there and it's 75 dollars." I knew I couldn't buy it. So bless his heart. He and his buddy went out that night to Great Falls and he came home with the clock. So I've had that one. Finally, I think they had 500 dollars on that stained glass window. That would have been a steal if anybody...because it's beautiful. Finally Wiggs took it back and I guess he had it put back in the house. I can't remember exactly, but...Yes, he did and when he died I said, "You know, I think Bob should have that window." Bob's my cousin. That was his youngest and so anyway, Bob traded his interest in the house which at that time was his mother's after she died and he traded his interest to his brother on the house and got the window. Well, this is now in Nevada, California, very carefully in the house with protective glass around it and I saw it when he was having it fixed. It was down and he had a woman doing the stained glass and it was very bold and she fixed it and got it all back. It's beautiful.

SW: I'm glad to hear that it's back.

AS: Well, it's in California.

SW: But at least it's in the family. That's wonderful. I like the story of the clock. So you have his highchair, his bible, the sideboard and the clock, and the table and then all of these wonderful historical documents and photographs.

AS: Right.

SW: So in the photographs that you have, what are the photographs of?

AS: Well these are some I found, oh well those are negatives and I don't have that done. I found these negatives. Tuckey [?], there she is with her second husband. So they were all curled and we lost a bunch of them and I have to get some of these done. That's my father. You know, in those days they wore dresses until they...Well, it was easier than taking down pants to change diapers. So we've got—that's my grandmother. Now these are the two that married brothers.

SW: These are really wonderful.

AS: Now Tuckey was the photographer and she took them and developed them herself. Now there's Tuckey, there's grandma and there's Claudia and this is Mary. Mary Stranahan eventually. I think this is so interesting because Claudia is the one...I don't know what happened here, but he slid down and now they all think it's funny, but Claudia doesn't. [laughing].

SW: [laughing] That's a great shot.

AS: This is the house in Helena where they lived. At the Freeman Creek Ranch. I guess David Goodwin had bought that before so she had that Freeman Creek Ranch and then Crawford was working with it. But anyway our father engineered, I mean my grandfather engineered divorces for all these—whether they needed them or not, I'm not sure.

SW: So do you partake in any traditions or rituals of Irish origin such as Irish funeral rites, Irish music or dance?

AS: Well we do the fiddle tunes. My daughter-in-law plays at Murphy's Pub in Havre.

SW: Well how did you first get started with playing the fiddle and these tunes? What got you interested?

AS: Oh, I don't know, just music.

SW: So you were self-taught a lot of the music that you...I mean you took piano, but did you teach yourself the violin too?

AS: No, I took lessons in California with a very good teacher. She was a lovely lady. She has student orchestras all over the world, but she was older and that's kind of an interesting story. I went to the community orchestra they had at Harvard College and she came in and I looked at her and I thought now just looking at her face and I said, "Now she gives lessons. I want to take them from her". And so we became very good friends.

SW: Well, were there any traditional or home cures for common ailments within your family or community that you remember?

AS: Well not really.

SW: Okay, were there any commonly held superstitions?

AS: No.

SW: No, not superstitious at all?

AS: No, everybody seems to be very superstitious in our family. [laughing].

SW: If you were to write a history of the Irish in Montana, what would you include for future generations?

AS: Well, of course I know the mines in Butte were one of the big things. As far as the other Irish, we didn't really consider ourselves very ethnic. I mean once you get to this country and move in you're an American and it's really...Yes, we knew our history was Irish and we were very proud of it and everything, but as far as any outward signs that we were any different from any other group, I don't think so.

SW: What are the most striking changes in your life so far? When you look back on your life, what stands out for you the most?

AS: Well, I don't know, it's not been so much a change as an evolution. You just kind of keep evolving and going with the flow, whatever happens. I know when we sold the river place or moved off of it and sold it, I was ready to divorce him, but I knew I couldn't make it on my own and I really didn't want to.

SW: That's really a tough thing for you to think about, leaving that place behind.

AS: Yeah, it was. See we bought it the year I graduated from the College of Great Falls and well that summer before is when we made the arrangements and my father was 76 at that time. A year older than I now and that year they had lost, well in '73 they had lost my mother's sister and Alice's husband, her second husband, John, had drowned in the Missouri, or had a heart attack and fell off the boat he was fishing from. And they just decided that they had better retire so they decided to sell and so we bought the place.

SW: I'm just wondering, when you had to let that go, something clearly you didn't want to do. Do you think part of that is because all of that history and all of that of your family having this place was...do you think that was part of that?

AS: Well it was, but it was just a marvelous place to be. It was so beautiful. You know just the idea that you were there by yourself. You could not see a light. There were no neighbors. There was no one. It was like being in your own little world. And of course I like to get out, but it's always nice to come home to it.

SW: I think for me, when I ended up buying the house that I grew up in and so I grew up there and then my children grew up there and now my granddaughter is growing up there. So there was just something about that place. It really is a place I should have let go a long time ago, because it is an old broken down place, but I just can't seem to. There is just a connection, it's more than just a place, there's something more there for me and I don't know if that's kind of how that is for you too?

AS: Yeah, but anyway so did you get the Willoughby, Uncle Willoughby Stratahan? See there are the other ones, there was Willoughby and Cady and Farrand were the three brothers that were in Montana.

SW: So Willoughby, what did Willoughby—

AS: He had a ranch out of Judith Gap, out there and interestingly enough, Mary, who was in the picture here was married to Cady, they named the Eastern Star chapter at Judith Gap was the Mary Stranahan Chapter. You know she was a grand matron of the Eastern Star of the state and so anyway, Willoughby had a ranch out there and then as I said Cady was an attorney in Havre. Well and of course that's that generation. Then we have Benjamin and daddy and of course Wiggs and Alice.

SW: So really, when they came to Montana they became pretty upstanding citizens here.

AS: And Alice, of course lived to...I think she was 103 when she died.

SW: And where was she?

AS: Fort Benton.

S W Okay, well I think that we will just get a couple of photographs of your beautiful mug with some of your family. So thank you so much for sharing.

AS: Well I hope you got enough and anything that they want to have.

[End of Interview]