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Oral History 419-04

Milltown Oral History Project

Interviewer: Caitlin DeSilvey and Minie Smith

Interviewee: Dennis Pleasant

September 14, 2007

Dennis Pleasant: Dennis E. Pleasant. What else do you want to know?

Caitlin DeSilvey: Well first of all, this is Caitlin DeSilvey and Minie Smith interviewing Dennis E. Pleasant on the 14th of September, 2007 for the Milltown Oral History Project. We are here with Dennis. If you could just tell us when and where you were born?

DP: I was born in Missoula, July 5, 1928. My dad brought my mother in a 1926 Maxwell for me to be born to the hospital. There was a hospital right across the street from the Methodist Church where right now is the library. The library used to be a hospital there.

Minie Smith: The Carnegie Library or the new library?

DP: The new library. It was run by two brothers. Eventually they sold it out to the community. Community was there for a while before they built out there. I'm going to get my director's chair because I can't stand too long.

CD: Okay, so your family was living at Milltown at this time?

DP: My parents were in Bonner. I'm a Bonnerite. But I can tell you a lot about Milltown too. I used to go down there to chase the girls.

MS: So you lived your whole life in Bonner?

DP: Yes I did until I moved here. After I left the mill- no I was a superintendent at Bonner. We built a home up at the Turah exit. That's close to Bonner, you know. It's two miles up. It was so I could get away from the mill.

MS: When was that? When did you build the house?

DP: In 1961. We sold it in '93 when we divorced and separated. We were married 40 years. That's history.

CD: So what was the house that you were living in when you were a tiny baby and how many different Bonner houses did you actually inhabit?

DP: I just lived in one. They're tearing it down. That's one they're tearing down.

MS: So which house was it?

DP: I think it was 36. It was right in the middle of town. It was close to the old Roundhouse where the street car turned around. It went back to Missoula.

CD: So is it the one that's on the corner there?

DP: No it's four down from where the post office is now.

CD: Okay, but not right next to the mill?

DP: It's close to the mill.

MS: It's not on that little street that's opposite the office?

DP: No that's Silk Stocking Row. I told Kim that's what we called it and so he put it in the paper?

CD: That's what you called it?

DP: We had all kinds of nicknames for it.

CD: So who lived in Silk Stocking Row?

DP: The officials. My dad was a supervisor so he lived just a little ways from it. We had a bathroom fortunately. Not too many houses had bathrooms in those days.

CD: So then you stayed in that house?

DP: Yes I went into the army and when I came out, I stayed there until we got married and I bought a home in town. Then I kept that. Then I became a supervisor. They wanted me to move back to Bonner so I moved close to the ballpark when I was supervised and married. I had one child then. We were about the fourth house from the ballpark. That's still there. Then we decided to build a home. We got land and built a home where we did.

MS: And you said that was in the Sixties?

DP: Yes. We were there for about 31 years.

CD: So what had brought your family to Bonner? What was the story of how they ended up there?

DP: My dad was a supervisor for Weyerhaeuser in Washington and the general manager from Bonner took the train and went over and talked to him. The lumber industry was so big and strong in those days. My dad really wasn't looking to move from where he was. They made him a good offer, so he did. My mother was raised over there because she was in the Polish community. She came from Poland and all her family and that. She didn't want to move, but they did anyhow.

MS: What year was that?

DP: 1922. She showed me- it isn't there anymore, they tore it down- where the fire department is right down, you know off of the Broadway Market? That was still there. They lived just behind that in a house when they first came because there wasn't any house available in Bonner. As soon as one became available- and I wasn't born yet; I wasn't born until '28.

CD: So were those houses in Bonner reserved for the people who were supervising or sort of higher up at the mill?

DP: Yes most of them. Some of them, if you had a maintenance job or something where they were close, they had a house. Most of the people walked, in fact, they just about all did. They walked to work. That's when Milltown was going and West Riverside. They'd walk from West Riverside and had a bridge to cross the river so they could ride to the mill. It was interesting. Not too many people drove in those days.

MS: So when did you start working at the mill?

DP: When I was 18. It was in 1946.

MS: So that was your first job?

DP: No I worked at the railroad during World War II because they couldn't get help. So they started taking high school kids, miners. I started there when I was about 16. They lowered the age limit and my dad had to sign a release that it was okay for me to work and so on. So then when I turned 18, I went to work at the Bonner mill.

MS: What was your first job there?

DP: Oh I was working in a planer. Then I bounced all over. Then I went to the green chain. I worked on that for quite a while that was interesting.

MS: Can you explain what the green chain is?

DP: That's where they saw the lumber and it comes right out of the saw mill. It's sawed into a two by four and it's green. It hasn't gone into the kiln yet. In those days, they did a lot of air drying because they didn't have enough kilns. It's sawed into a two by four and two by six, whatever the width was. Then you sorted it there. Then it went out to the lumber yard and they'd stack it up and let it air dry.

MS: So the sorting was the green chain?

DP: Yes.

CD: So then how did you...

DP: In the old days, they'd pull it out with horses. When I started there, they had a person that was a mechanic in the garage. He revised some kind of a lumber truck out of an old World War I truck. He was able to roll those things on in loads. They'd haul them out in a lumber truck. Eventually they got the big carriers where they clamp on and took them out. They would pull

them out with horses then. I didn't get in on the horse part. They just ended that about the time I got there. There were still a few horses.

MS: So how many people were on the green chain at a time?

DP: If I remember right, there were about 36. They had a, what they called it, lead man. He was kind of a supervisor, you know. He would show you what to do. Soon as he could get off of it, he got off of it. A lot of them stayed there for years.

MS: So what was your next job after that?

DP: Then I went back into the planer. I was starting to learn to grade surface lumber, that's the grade you get- one, two, three, or four and so on. I wanted to learn to grade lumber. So I was learning that. I learned stuff as long as I was there. Then a job came open. See it was union and you could bid on it. Finally I got a little bit of seniority and I could bid on jobs. There was a job, what they called, counting the lumber before it went into the boxcar. You counted it twice to make sure the customer didn't get gypped or we didn't get gypped. I counted the first time and another person would count the second time. Then they'd load it into the boxcar. That's what I was doing until I went into the service. I went into the service just four years after that. The Korean War broke out and they grabbed me right away in 1950. Then when I got out of the Korean War, I went back to that old job. Jobs were opening up and I became assistant foreman out in the lumberyard where they were stacking lumber way up in the air. We were still air drying. We had lumber clear to Milltown stacked up out there. It was something. I wish I had some pictures of that. I don't.

CD: So then you were assistant foreman and eventually you worked your way up to supervisor?

DP: Eventually I became foreman of the lumberyard. I had 55 men. Women weren't working those days yet. They came later. They came in 1968. We'd stack the lumber up and let it air dry. Then we had some equipment for it. A lot of that was hard work too, you know. Then we started what they called- the lift trucks came in. we got some lift trucks. Then we started just stacking them in regular loads but letting the air get to it by putting strips in between and stacking the lift truck then. That was really handy.

MS: They dried faster?

DP: Yes it didn't kill everyone off. The lift truck would stack it up and air-dry it. We'd mark it on the end when it was stacked so we'd know how long it had been there in the air. In the summer time, you could sometimes get lumber to dry in about 30 days. In a summer like this one, it would probably be quicker than 30 days.

CD: So we're just changing tack a little bit here, but what do you think is the biggest change that's happened to the Milltown/Bonner/West Riverside area in the time that you've known it?

DP: The biggest change?

CD: Yes.

DP: Well I think part of it is the modernization of the mill and I think the biggest change to me was the way people started driving to work. They modernized the mill in 1962. So everything was more or less push button, as we called it. The biggest area change, I think, was the Milltown

houses especially, started getting water, started getting bathrooms, and started getting modern. They had the old well. We had a couple of them in Bonner too. The wells that were out in the community, you'd just go out and fill up your bucket and take it back and heat it up, washed your dishes with it. Or you'd put it in a big galvanized tub and take a bath. That was it. They finally got running water in the houses. They made the houses modern.

MS: Did the company do that in Milltown?

DP: No the company did in Bonner, but in Milltown you owned your own home there.

CD: So when you were a kid, people in Milltown would have been really rare for them to have running water in their houses?

DP: Even in Bonner it was that way. I've got pictures of Bonner. I don't know where they are now, but I showed it to somebody one day and they said, "What are all these little houses in the back?" I said, "That was your bathroom, the toilets."

CD: So along with that, has the appearance of the area changed a lot from what you remember it?

DP: What?

CD: The appearance of the area, the way it looks? Has that changed much?

DP: Right now it's changed a lot. They did take out some houses. I think I told Kim. We went through on a bicycle and I showed them where the houses were and stuff one time. They took out about ten houses. They've taken out a lot more since then. Actually, it hasn't changed too much except for I remember we had the horse barns in back too. They converted those into garages, extra garages for your car. So that's where I put my first car.

CD: Oh those barns behind the houses?

DP: Yes.

CD: I just actually drove over there the other day and I was trying to figure out why there were so many barns back there.

DP: Yes there are some left, but I think they tore them all down. I went through on my bicycle here not too long ago, last year I think it was. I was checking the town and seeing what it was like. It's changed. They kept it so clean. The manager insisted. I was telling Kim that. This was when I was living with my parents, I said, "One time I left my car out. They told me to be sure to get it in the garage the next night. That was where it was supposed to be, not in the back alley."

CD: Did that also go for mowing your lawn or picking up stuff around?

DP: Yes they got very particular. At first they didn't. I remember when during the Depression in the Thirties, we just threw our cans and junk out in the back and they'd come around with a couple of horses and a wagon and pick it up every once in a while. We didn't even have garbage cans. I never will forget that. The garbage cans- we just threw the garbage out there and we had a

pile. At least we'd pile it up. Then you'd also pile all your wood there. We heated with wood. Everybody burned wood.

MS: You were saying before we started the interview, remembering the Clark Mill when you were in second or third grade. Can you talk about that just a little bit?

DP: I remember they shut it down just about the time I knew what it was and everything. It was named after one of the high ups in Butte. I think he was the president or something. His name was Clark. They named it after him. Being so close to Bonner- and Bonner was owned by the Anaconda Company, Clark was owned by Clark himself. It was a smaller mill. I remember that it was a smaller mill. I remember the logs came down the river. They'd push them up just like we did. The lumberyard was out there where the truck stop is now. I remember that. That's about all I remember.

MS: Then it was torn down?

DP: I never was in it to watch it run. Yes they eventually tore it down. Anaconda took it over.

CD: So did you work at the mill through the transition from when the Anaconda Company sold the mill? Did you work through that transition?

DP: Yes. Don't bring that up. I was 26 years old then. Then when Champion took over, I was there with them about eight years. Then I left.

MS: Was that different?

DP: Yes very different. They fired me.

CD: Well they gave you eight years.

DP: I saw so much politics going on, I don't want to get into this, but I saw so many things going on. I opened my mouth one time when I shouldn't have. That's all you have to do, just like the government, only you don't get a hearing much. Then when Champion took over, they were a big corporation. They had a lot of mills all through the country. What happened, I got to stay with them. They asked me to come back and work with them. I'll never forget that when I came back. Before I was getting four weeks vacation, same desk, same job and they said, "You get one week vacation. That's all you get because you're a new employee." They changed that after a while. They had all their people. A lot of their people they wanted to promote, North Carolina, Washington, and so on. They moved them to Bonner and so on. It was difficult because what few of us stayed from Anaconda, we were kind of like the outcasts. We'd try and tell them different things. Some of them would listen to us. Some of them wouldn't until they got in trouble. They'd find out that they were doing something they shouldn't be doing.

MS: So were you there when they made the big plywood mill?

DP: Yes I was there when they built it. Before that, we were all lumber and the red plywood. Of course, they started the plywood in about '72 and they finished about '74 or somewhere in there. Then they started getting the plywood and they ran it around the clock. We still made lumber, but not like we did.

MS: Going back just a second to living and growing up in Bonner, did you use the company store for your groceries or did you go into town?

DP: No, we used the company store. They would deliver. They'd come in the morning and take your order. Then they'd deliver in the afternoon.

CD: They'd come to your door and take your order?

DP: They'd come and sit down. If it was Christmastime, my mother would give them a drink until my dad found out about it and told her not to do that anymore. They'd come and they'd go back. You could also go to the store and buy something. They handled work gloves and whatever they could.

CD: Do you think that the community changed much when the company left? Did it change how people felt about living there? Did it feel different to you being in that area once it wasn't a company town anymore?

DP: No. After Anaconda sold, Champion wanted to sell it and they couldn't for some reason. They wanted to plot off all the land the houses were on and sell the houses to anybody who wanted to buy then. There was something- I don't know the details, but there was something they couldn't sell. They didn't want to fool with the town. It's a headache to take care of all those houses.

MS: So did they take care of them?

DP: No they didn't care. They were looking at the production and the money and the plywood and that's all. They were looking at how much money they could make.

CD: So you talked a little bit before the interview about what you used to do as a kid, swimming in the river. What other kinds of things did you do for fun when you were growing up there?

DP: The Bonner baseball team was a town team. They would give us the old baseballs and the old cracked bats. We'd take them up and we all started playing baseball. Of course, some of the older ones got into high school played a little. I went to where Hellgate is. That was the only school. They played football there and they'd come back and teach us how to play football. At Bonner, we never had a gym or anything for basketball. Some of them had gyms and had a city league, but we never did. That never came until I was 21 or 22 years old. We got this gym and so on.

CD: Then in the summertime you'd go- do you want to talk about that swimming hole just a bit?

DP: Oh we were there all summer. Then we used to fish a lot. We'd go up on the river and fish in the hills a lot.

MS: You were saying that everybody had a bicycle?

DP: We finally got bicycles, yes. We'd ride bikes into Missoula. That was a little later. It was probably when I was a freshman or sophomore in high school. The war was on. There was no traffic. The only highway was the old 200 that goes through the Blackfoot, the Old Road we call it now. There were no freeways in those days. We'd ride into Missoula and we'd go into

Greenough Park. Greenough Park was a lot bigger than it is now. We'd ride around and go home. That was a big time.

CD: That sounds all right.

DP: We had a blast. Then we were on a lot of war projects too. In the wartime, we collected paper. I can't remember all the different things we did for the war effort. I was in the Scouts and the Boy Scouts would do it. We'd get the girls to help us. We had a good time. This was the first Bonner school. You can see part of it. It went clear out here. Eventually, this top part was a dance floor. The Anaconda Company put in a dance floor for the community to dance. Us kids took it over when we were teenagers. So we fixed it up and cleaned it up and kept it clean. It was just the top floor. We would dance up there. That's where I learned to dance. We'd get the girls and the boys. I was 15 in that picture.

CD: So you were a skier. This is a photo of a young man with cross-country skis.

DP: They also used that Bonner Hall for community things and Sunday school. We used to have Sunday school there every week. We had a couple of teachers that would only go teach Sunday school. The kids that didn't belong to a church- we had a Lutheran Church in Bonner and we had a Catholic Church. The Milltown kids came and everybody. That was the old Bonner school. They tore that down in the late Forties, somewhere in there. They put two houses in there. They had to move a couple of houses. So that was a good place to put them.

CD: So did you ever go down to the reservoir or the mill pond or around the dam there?

DP: I never went there too much.

CD: Maybe Bonner kids wouldn't have gone over in that direction very often.

DP: We knew where it was, but we didn't go there too much. My mother wouldn't let me. Two or three kids drowned in that are when I was growing up. One drowned right back at the mill. The mill had a dam too. They used that mostly for the logs. When they wanted to let some logs out, they'd let it out. There were two that I knew drowned. One of them was in my class. He fell in.

MS: Did you have brothers and sisters?

DP: I had one brother. He was 14 years older. He started college when I started the first grade. He went to the University of Montana way back in '32 or something like that. He graduated from Missoula County High.

MS: So he was gone by the time you were growing up?

DP: Yes pretty much. He left when I was in second grade. He went to school over in Spokane. He wanted to go to school over there, a business college.

CD: So you were talking a little bit about the dance hall and the churches and some of the community activities that went on. Did that change over the time that you were living in the Bonner area? Are those things still as important?

DP: The thing was, the church- the church I belonged to, I went into the Lutheran Church. I went with the Scandinavian kids because they were all my friends and so were the Catholic kids. Some reason, they got me going to Sunday school and church. The churches then were more family like. My dad didn't go because he was a Mason. My mother was a Catholic. So they had their own beliefs, but I see a lot of changes in that. So this one family kind of took me in and they had father-son banquets and that. I'd go to the Lutheran. One of the Norwegians would take me.

MS: Were there a lot of different languages spoken?

DP: Yes there was. I was going to bring that up next. I got to know more Norwegian than I did Polish I think.

MS: Did you speak Polish?

DP: I was learning. My mother was teaching me. She got disgusted with me, I can't remember. I think I just didn't want to learn or something. I could speak some of it.

CD: So what other languages do you remember hearing around?

DP: Oh the family and everything, when they'd get together- my grandfather didn't speak English. Pardon?

CD: What other languages do you remember hearing around town?

DP: French. There were a lot of Frenchmen in the area. Finlanders, there were quite a few of them. In fact, they called West Riverside at one time Finn Town. It was so full of Finlanders. That's about the only ones I knew that I can think of.

MS: So these activities that you talk about with the church and the community, does that still happen today or has that changed over time?

DP: Yes it's different today. They go on swimming parties with both vehicles. They go and camp. We never did any of that. If we had to do anything, we had to do it ourselves. Now it's all organized. I coached Little League baseball for years. I was a ball player. Like I said, when I was little, we just played by ourselves. We just picked up what we could. Now it's so organized.

CD: Do you still go out there sometimes for events at the church?

DP: I belonged to the church until I moved here. After I moved in town- I still go to St. Paul's once in a while.

CD: You talked about how women started to work at the mill in '68. Was that a decision that was made by management that women would be offered jobs?

DP: The government.

CD: Oh it wasn't an equal opportunity, okay.

DP: We had to start working women. We had to have a certain percentage of them and so on.

CD: How did that work out?

DP: It wasn't good at first because those old-timers, "Women belong in the kitchen." My one supervisor said, "Oh boy, my old lady isn't going to come down here and work." I said, "What if she does? She might get a job. If she's in the union she could work in your department if she had the seniority." That shook him all up. He said, "That's what I'm afraid of."

MS: Women worked before that in the community? They worked as teachers?

DP: That was all. And they did house cleaning. There were a few nurses.

CD: Did you have any women working in the office before 1968?

DP: It was mostly men. We had two women in the office when I first became a supervisor. I remember that. That was in the Fifties. Most of those men were holdovers that had been there for umpteen years. Before too long, they were retiring or dying, whatever. Then they had some women working. They'd learn a certain job and then they'd hustle down to the Forest Service and get paid more money and better benefits. They'd go to work there. Right where the post office is, they'd go work in there. I remember that.

MS: So did your mother work at all at any point?

DP: No she just took care of the house. Dad made enough money. She took care of the house. She took care of me.

MS: That was good. What about the coming of the interstate? Was that a big change in the community?

DP: Not in ours so much. I know some towns it just killed it because the main road went right through the town, you know. All the businesses were there. The interstate goes way around and misses all that. I'm trying to think. I don't think it hurt ours too much because what it helped us was the lumber trucks getting there faster and better service. It actually helped more than anything. People started building farther out. I remember being a supervisor then. I had guy coming in from Stevensville to work. I said, "You're crazy to drive that far to work." They'd all come from the Bitterroot and everywhere else. They'd start building out. That's what built the Bitterroot up was when Champion took over the mill. It was so much bigger. The plywood plant and all that, so many more people were there. A lot of those Californians saw all that nice land up there for little or nothing and they bought it. They went to work at the mill. They'd drive. They're still driving. I know Wal-Mart where I work, that's close to the Bitterroot you know. A lot of them come in there from Stevensville to take up land.

CD: Right. They want to have space. So do you know anyone who's still working out at the mill? Are you familiar with anyone who's going through the layoffs and the changes that are going on there right now?

DP: No. I had lunch with some of my friends that are still living. One person was 81 and the other was 82. We were talking about the old days somewhat. There's no one left that I can think of. I think there's one, but his mind is gone. He has Alzheimer's.

CD: How do you feel when you go out there and you see people having to move out of all the houses that you grew up in?

DP: I just shook my head and said, "Well I guess you have to move with the change of time." See this is a big problem anywhere, changes. On your work force, when we'd have a change at the mill, we went from all this old-time work into modernization. Some of those old-timers about died. They couldn't wait to retire because they weren't used to that. The big thing is change.

CD: You were going to say something about the steel bridge and change.

DP: Yes they want to tear it out. I'm not understanding what's all going on because I'm not up there anymore. My son is. I think they just want to keep it because it's a landmark.

MS: So your son lives in Bonner now or Milltown?

DP: Yes he lives out in that area. He built a home out there in the Turah area. He built just across from where we used to live, where he was raised.

MS: How do you feel about the whole river clean-up? Is that a good thing for the community?

DP: That thing- I knew what went in there because we had the dump right down there where the freeway crosses Milltown. They're cleaning it up in there. That was the dump they'd just take stuff and dump it out there, washing machines, old cars. They'd fill up the river and they didn't care about anything. I remember- and it wasn't too many years ago- the Missoula City Council thought if we dump all the old car bodies along the river, it will keep the high water from eroding, hitting the banks you know. Here was Missoula, car bodies back of the Wilma down around where the Edgewater is and on up. Anything years ago, they just dumped it in the river. They didn't know what to do with it. They'd take it out to the Bonner dump. Then what we'd do there- we'd get a bunch of scrap from the mill that really burned quick and dump it on a lot of this stuff. There were dead deer, dead dogs and everything, and burn it. The smoke would be just tremendous in Bonner and in Milltown depending on which way the wind was going. It was awful.

CD: So the cleanup of the sediment that's going on right now...

DP: Yes because so much of that came from Butte through the years. Look at how they cleaned the Blackfoot up river once in a while themselves. They'd have to go up to the Blackfoot and clean it up. They'd throw their beer bottles and everything else in there. The sediments from Butte, I think a lot is in there.

CD: Do you know any folks who wish the cleanup didn't have to happen or that the powerhouse could stay in place? People who wish it didn't have to change and that the powerhouse could stay there.

DP: I don't hear much about leaving things the way they are. I know those houses in Bonner. I was telling Kim about this. The last four I didn't know, but I heard about being built in 1916. I

said the one next to where I was raised, it was sold. They finally tore it down and built a new one there. One of the officials was coming over from Butte to live in it.

MS: So that was built in the Fifties or Forties?

DP: Yes, forties. That was another thing. Any time there was a promotion in the office, they came over from Butte. We were from under the Anaconda Copper Mining and so on.

MS: Was there problems like labor strikes?

DP: There were labor strikes. I'm talking about the officials. If we needed a Vice President, they'd come from Butte over to Bonner instead of promoting one out of the ranks.

MS: Yes, I see now.

DP: Yes.

CD: This is just a question about houses. You mentioned they were heated with wood. Were they at some point hooked up to the steam from the plant so they were heated?

DP: Yes the steam was hooked up to that one row of houses they're tearing out.

MS: So just on that side of the street?

DP: Yes by the office there.

CD: But not while you were living in those houses?

DP: They were there.

MS: He was on the other side.

CD: Oh on the other side, okay.

DP: They didn't have to pay for any utilities. That was all heat from the plant. They weren't going to burn wood. We won't get into that. We burned wood. Eventually gas came in later on. Gas came on when I was living there before we built our house. It came in about 1960 I think. I was burning wood in Bonner.

CD: When did people get telephone service?

DP: We had one of the first ones I remember. They had one at the hotel and the office. That was in about '35 or '36.

MS: So do you remember the hotel?

DP: Real well.

MS: What was the hotel used for?

DP: The hotel was used for the officials when they'd come from Butte. They had rooms all fixed up for them. They would use it. Then they had some bachelors living there, the single people from the office. They had a couple of others in there, but it was mostly used for guests. That was about it. They had a cook there and so on. You could go there and have a good lunch. It was a feast. A lot of the mill workers went there to have lunch.

MS: Anybody who was working for the mill could go there for lunch?

DP: Yes. Some of them frowned on the white linen and that. They didn't quite go for that. I laughed.

CD: So was it a commercial hotel or was it a company hotel?

DP: It was company.

CD: So if you were just traveling through town, you probably wouldn't stay there?

DP: I remember one of the officials said, "It's nice, but it's costing us money. Tear it down." At that time Anaconda was trying to cut costs or something. That's the way corporations are sometimes. It wasn't making them any money. It wasn't being used much anymore. There were about six people living in there plus the food. People who lived there, they got meals each day. They paid for it. They paid a flat rate a month. It came out of their paycheck and so on.

MS: Do you remember, were there gardens on the mill site?

DP: Yes. We had one there. It was right behind our house. It was right off the highway. It wasn't far from the highway. Our house sat here and the garden was here. First we had a football field. The general manager's son wanted a football field so they cut the gardens out and we put a football field in with a big fence around it. Then the gardens went. They went down more toward the horse barn because they didn't have as many horses. So it was good fertile ground.

CD: So you had a little plot there?

DP: They plotted it off and they staked it. They put your number of a stake. Then you drew a number and you had to take care of it. If you didn't take care of it and clean it up in the fall, you couldn't get another one next year. Some of the most beautiful potatoes and carrots and stuff they would grow in that garden because the soil was so wonderful.

MS: Because of the horse barn?

DP: Yes. And they fertilized it too. They didn't know what to do with the horse manure and they'd bring it up there in the fall and dump it on the gardens. It was right behind our house. I remember that.

CD: Was that when you were a child then?

DP: Yes. It went up during the war. Then they turned it into a log yard.

CD: So everything gets turned into a log yard eventually.

DP: Yes. Then we got this big wagon here in 1960 that would take a whole carload of logs off and dump them in the pond rather than take the old jammer and take one and two off and roll them off yourself. So they turned that into a log yard. That's just an extension now of where they're going with the log yard. That's all they're doing.

MS: Was it a safe environment or were there a lot of accidents?

DP: There were a lot of accidents. There was no OSHA in those days. I was there when OSHA came in and they even straightened out a lot of things. We used to say- they wouldn't fix something.. you'd go tell management that this is dangerous and that they should fix it. After somebody got killed or hurt, then they'd fix it. That's the truth. Don't quote me on that, but that's the way it was in those days. I remember a good friend of mine- he got killed at this one place that was real dangerous. They kept saying it should be fixed and boarded up because somebody was going to get hurt. Well, he got killed there and they boarded it up. There were other guys that got hurt real badly too. There were a lot of open saws and things. It was dangerous.

CD: Did your son go and work for the mill?

DP: They all did.

CD: How many kids did you have?

DP: Three boys.

CD: And they all worked at the mill?

DP: One had a bad heart, so they made him a watchman. The other two worked in the mill and my son said he wanted to go to the University. He tried everything else and said, "I think I'll try the university." He got his degree and the oldest son got on a good job. They knocked you around quite a bit. He got on with the Dell Corporation, computers and all that.

CD: So they started out working at the mill for a while?

DP: Yes they all started there.

CD: Is that how it was? If you had a family that was a mill family, then you just...

DP: Yes you could get them a job.

CD: They were third generation I guess by then?

DP: Yes. Dad kept wanting me to go to the university. I had the G.I Bill coming in and all this. This was after I had become a supervisor and I was making more than some of the coaches were at the university and some of the professors because it was so poorly paid at the university in those days.

MS: So what do you think that area Bonner/Milltown/Riverside will be like in 50 years? Do you think it will be changed or the same?

DP: Well I don't think there will be a mill because there won't be any timber. They're running out of it now. I knew they would. See when Champion bought, they had all that timber from Anaconda. Anaconda selected logs. They would cut so many trees a year. So we'd plan on having some for next year. When Champion bought them, they had a surplus of 36 years ahead of timber. When Champion took over, they had the plywood plant and that takes all the big logs and just peels the mill. They ran three shifts a day, six and seven days a week because it was money. Soon as the logs are cleaned up, they sold. They knew there was no timber left so they got out. They sold to Stimpson then. Stimpson had an agreement with Plum Creek who had some timber, which they got from Anaconda years ago.

MS: Ten years was it?

DP: Yes something like that.

MS: That's run out now.

DP: Yes it's running out. There's nothing. And the fires didn't help this year either.

MS: If the mill closes, then what do you envision will happen to the land there?

DP: There are so many rumors. One said Denny Washington was going to buy it and put it all into housing development and all this. You hear so many things. I think it eventually will be a housing development. They're going to have to get a lot of that dirt out first because it's full of sawdust and ashes. They'll settle. Who knows?

CD: Well I think that's about it.

MS: Yes. Do you have any special stories that you remember about growing up there that would be fun to include? Things you did or wished you'd done?

DP: I know we had a good time. It was so interesting because we had to figure everything out ourselves, which was good. Like I said, we didn't have all the organizations. The Scouts was all right. We were in the Scouts. There were no uniforms. We were lucky to get into the Scouts. I'm just trying to think of some different things. There was some class distinction between Bonner and Milltown. Of course we were all best of friends later on. That's why I said I didn't go to Milltown because my mother wouldn't let me until I got older. As a teenager, I would sneak down there sometimes on my bike. We all became friends especially when we got to high school.

MS: Was there a bus that came to get you for high school?

DP: Yes we had a bus at high school. Missoula didn't have one. They'd walk from all over town to go to high school. There were a lot of kids from here that went to high school. They would walk. Eventually- I was on the school board when we got the first bus to haul the kids to Bonner School. That's a long haul from West Riverside. It's three miles almost. I can't think of any right off hand.

CD: Okay. Well thank you for your time.

MS: Yes thank you.

DP: You're welcome.