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Interviewee: Hazel Dorr
Interviewer: Mary Melcher
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Mary Melcher: Hazel, you said that you're from Wisconsin, and you came out here with your family.

Hazel Dorr: Yes, we came out here...My father came out here to help run the thrashing rig for an uncle of mine, and that's what brought him out here. Also, because mother had lost her baby, and she wanted to get away from it all. So we came West. That's what brought us West.

MM: How old were you then?

HD: I was about 11.

MM: And what year were you born?

HD: I was born in 1906.

MM: Did you have any brothers and sisters when you came out here?

HD: Yes, I had...There was eight of us when we came out here. We'd lost the other brother.

MM: Was he lost in childbirth?

HD: No, he was two years old when he died—just about. He had contracted bronchial pneumonia, and he couldn't go through it. At that time, we didn't have the things we have now at all—medicines and things to take care of you, so.

MM: Yes. Your mother had nursed him at home?

HD: Oh yes. Mother nursed every one of her children.

MM: Did she have a midwife when you were born?

HD: No, just Grandma was with us, most of the time. She'd come and stay with us—until, Grandma came West.

MM: She came West with you?

HD: No, she didn't come West with us, but she was here ahead of us about two years, because

she had come with her...because of her daughters and things. That's what brought her here.

MM: It sounds like people in your family—in your father and mother's family—were moving West.

HD: Yes. An awful lot of them did. I got a lot of them in Wisconsin and Minnesota yet, though. (laughs)

MM: Were they after the land that was here?

HD: No, not particularly. Everybody had their own things that they wanted to do. Some wanted land, and some didn't. Some just wanted to see if they could find work. Dad come because he wanted to see if he could find more work, that's all. He had run a steam engine all his life, so he knew more or less what to expect and what to do, so.

MM: Your mother had an idea that she wanted to live out here?

HD: Yes, she wanted to go where they could get money enough to take care of the family [laughs]. That was the main thing. Because I remember Mother saying that, so. She was so worried about help because there you couldn't get much work where we were living. They had started a little tiny, bitty pulp mill right by us in Clovertown (?) Minnesota. That's what made us go back there. We tried to go there to live, and that's where I lost my brother. I can tell you another thing. My brother was the first baby—that's was our first—or first person that was ever buried there. He was the first one that was buried there in the new cemetery that we established at that time.

MM: Yes. You established it right before he died?

HD: Yes. Yes, we had only had it about two years, I think—something like that before we, before they put my brother out there.

MM: So the whole family came out here, and there were seven children or—

HD: Eight children.

MM: Eight children that came here.

HD: There was eight of us.

MM: And you lived in Great Falls?

HD: Yes, that's where we ended up at. We started in at Fort Benton. I know when we got off at Fort Benton, and we had to wait for my uncle for quite a while before he came into Great Falls.

Well, it was kind of funny because we children had been on the railroad so long and the days were so terrible. Oh, we were so glad to get out on the hill, but we told Dad, “Dad, is this what we got to live in—this awful hill?” Because it very steep and rough—nothing growing on it—and we’d come from where there was a lot of grass and lots of all things—everything else, you know [laughs].

He just stood back, “No,” he says, “I’m sure it won’t be like that.” He says, “We’ll go out to Uncle Gibson’s (?) and see what it was out there.” So then, we kids got along all right, but we just have a grand time to get off the train. That was terrible to have to ride two and half days, or something like that. We thought were never going to get here.

MM: Could you cook on the train car?

HD: Dad took on the things that we could eat along the highway when we left, and then we brought them on the train. Because we had gotten rid of our home and stuff in Clovertown at that time.

MM: That was quite a small town, Clovertown?

HD: Yes, it was. Yes it was at that time. It was real small. I don’t know if it has grown any for that matter neither, because I haven’t been back. I’m still writing to a girlfriend that was back there this summer. They had a big doings back there, and they went back.

MM: You had been in school in Clovertown?

HD: Oh, yes, yes. I went to school there.

MM: And you picked school up here in Great Falls?

HD: Yes, yes.

MM: What grade were you in?

HD: I was in the fourth grade when they come out. About the fourth grade when I come into Great Falls.

MM: Yes. How far did you go in school?

HD: I just barely got by, by the skin-of-my-teeth, because of the simple reason that I tried to take the last three years of my life in school with my uncle back there, so that I didn’t have to worry about not having my diploma because I wanted to get my diploma so bad. So, that’s what I did.

MM: So your uncle taught you?

HD: Yes, Well it wasn't my uncle that taught me. I had a lady by the name of Miss Hogasette (?), and she was the one who helped me through school and everything.

MM: Yes. And where were you in school then?

HD: Well, I was about up in there about fifth grade, I suppose—something like that. I can't recall exactly what.

MM: And you went back somewhere to go to school. You went to Wisconsin?

HD: Yes. Yes, I went to Wisconsin. I graduated in Madison, Wisconsin is where I graduated from grade school. And I took my lessons all there and—

MM: Why didn't you want to do it here in Montana?

HD: I couldn't seem to stay put, where we wanted to stay put, long enough for us to...You know, Dad would get a job and we'd move again and we'd get a job and move again and job and move again .That was getting so that I was scared that I was never even get out of the eighth grade.

MM: And you really wanted to do that?

HD: I wanted to do that. I wanted to do that terribly bad, yes.

MM: So you made a point of going back to Wisconsin?

HD: I've missed, because I...There's certain things that bothers me now. Now, like in certain tables and things like that. That bothers me quite a bit, and I have to stop and—

MM: Multiplication tables?

HD: Yes. I have to stop and think. So I decided when I had my children all my kids were going to go school, and that's what they did [laughs].

MM: Good. So, you went back to Wisconsin for three years. How old were you when you came back here to Montana?

HD: Well, I was about 16 when I come back. Not quite sixteen.

MM: And what did you do at that point?

HD: Oh, then I just found jobs wherever I could find. I worked in the beanery for a while in Cut Bank, and I worked down in Judith Gap and wherever I could find work, that's all.

MM: Was this factory work in the beanery?

HD: No, no. No, no. That's in the railroad waiting on tables.

MM: Oh, I see.

HD: Because that what...Everything was called the beanery at that time [laughs].

MM: I thought you were canning beans.

HD: No, no. [laughs] Then I worked for some doctors, and I worked for a lawyer in Great Falls and—

MM: Could you type at that time?

HD: No. I can't type now [laughs]. I never had that opportunity. We were a poor family—I'm telling you—and we were just, we just barely lived. We never went hungry or anything like that. Dad always seen that the table was always fed. We was always fed good, but—

MM: But when you were 16 it was time to go to work?

HD: Yes, yes. I cheated on my age lots of times because of...so I could get work, because you couldn't, I couldn't do anything else, but just...If you had to work, you had to work. I've been out working—my brother and I, the oldest boy—has been out since we were 12 years old and working, doing something, someplace.

MM: Yes. You started working when you were 12 too for, like, odd jobs—

HD: Yes.

MM: And you got wages for them?

HD: Yes. And then, of course, at that time we didn't have to tell the government how much money you made or anything else. I was only getting 40 dollars, most of the time, wherever I worked for a whole month. And lots of times, I didn't even get that.

MM: Yes. Now were you staying away from your family?

HD: No, not always. I tried to stay as much as I could at home, because I liked to be home better than I did to be gone.

MM: Yes. And it would be expensive to pay rent, probably.

HD: Oh, I couldn't have done it that's all. The only place that I went to was the beanery, and they paid...they furnished your food and your lodgings. So I didn't have to worry about that.

MM: How many hours a week did you work, usually, when you had a job?

HD: Oh, always eight hours—

MM: Eight hours?

HD: —and sometimes longer. Now when I was working for the lawyers—for the lawyer and for the doctor and them—I have to take and work longer, because they always entertained so much. So, that's what I did. That's the only thing I had, that I could do. I didn't have any high school education so [laughs] I had to take what I got and be satisfied.

MM: Yes. Were you a hard worker, I imagine?

HD: Oh, I don't know if I was hard worker or not, but then—

MM: Must have been. So, you were doing housekeeping for the doctors and lawyers?

HD: Yes, yes. Before I was married, I was working for a banker in Choteau, and I worked for him for quite a while before I was married. Then I got married. Of course, I had gone off on a Fourth of July picnic with my dad's kids, and he wanted to me to stay with them beings how I was out of work. So I went out there and stayed out there, and that's when I met my man. I met him at the dance hall in (unintelligible). Kids all went down there to celebrate, and we camped out in the pasture. We had to milk the cows, of course, at home. We had to come at home at night and in the morning. The boys did that. They come home and did that, and then they went back again. Come back where we were camped up in the hills. We took ropes—ropes between two trees that was close enough—roped, and then we took our bedding and pushed it inside like this. That the way we slept outside. [laughs] Oh, dear, that was funny.

MM: Well what kind of work was available for young women then if you didn't have a high school education?

HD: There was not much work, just the beanery and once in a great while you get to working for people, you know.

MM: Yes. Housekeeping?

HD: Yes, housekeeping jobs. And the ironing. Oh, the ironing were terrific there.

MM: How did you heat your iron up?

HD: (Unintelligible) mostly.

MM: Pardon?

HD: (Unintelligible) mostly. You know, just the old-fashioned irons.

MM: And you'd heat it on a wood stove, and then press down and—

HD: Yes, yes. That's all. I ironed that way for years, years, and years [laughs].

MM: Made your arm real tired, I bet.

HD: Well, it was more because there was so much ironing to do. It wasn't that you didn't, you didn't mind the ironing and that, but it was just so much. You see, we ironed dishtowels, we ironed pillowslips, we ironed sheets. We just ironed everything in the house.

MM: Sheets?

HD: Yes, we did. Everything was ironed—everything that we had. That's why I didn't like to get into the jobs where there was too much ironing and too many people. I tried to go where there was two or three children—not any more than that. And I kind of stuck to that.

MM: Did you do laundry too?

HD: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. absolutely that's how anything in the house was done. Clean house from one end to the other.

MM: Did they have any washing machines or was it all on the board?

HD: Some of them had washing machines. Not every one of them, but some of them did. But most of them, they didn't. You just scrubbed on the board. Of course, I did that two years after I was married too, before I got one [laughs].

MM: So, how many years until...Did you work at these different jobs before you got married?

HD: Until I was 18.

MM: Until you were 18?

HD: Yes. I was 18 in January, and then I was married in '24. I was married in first of March in

'24.

MM: And you had met your husband at a dance?

HD: Yes. Yes. Yes, that's where I met him. I met him, and then, of course, I might have realized who was kissing me about all this time.

MM: His nickname was Frenchy. Is that right?

HD: Everybody called him Frenchy, because he had part French and part Italian—his nationality was.

MM: Yes. And what nationality were you?

HD: I'm almost a full-blooded Norwegian, not quite—on my other side. German and Irish on my father's side.

MM: Was there any idea that people of one nationality shouldn't marry somebody of a different nationality?

HD: No. The only thing my father used to always tell me: "Now listen, I want you know," he says, "where you make your bed, you have to lie in it. So, don't change that" I heard that all my life. That I was supposed to keep myself where I should be and—

MM: Yes. Be careful?

HD: Yes.

MM: What about your mother did she give you any advice like that?

HD: Well, no. No, Mother didn't say anything about that. She was so busy with her family that I think that the only time she had was to take care of them. I was the oldest one in the family. I'm the oldest one of her family. Then, of course, my brother Nolbrick (?) comes next and then I got...I got other brothers but...Anyway, my mother was always just busy taking care of the children and doing the washing. My mother was a spotless housekeeper. I don't keep house like my mother does. Oh, my mother would turn over in her grave if she seen my house now, I think [laughs], because there's so much I should've done and I can't do it.

MM: Did you help her with the work?

HD: Oh, yes whenever I was home—whenever I didn't have a job. I babysat once in a great while and things like this I...just anything I could find to do, just whatever I could do. I babysitted for 50 cents from Friday night until Monday morning and did it many, many, many

times. And thought I was glad to get that 50 cents.

MM: For 50 cents from Friday night to Monday morning?

HD: Yes, many of times I did it.

MM: And was your mother working?

HD: Yes, Mother worked whenever she could, but you know when you've got a big family to take care of and the husband is lying in bed, well you can't...you don't have time to do much of anything else. So we had to help.

MM: How much did she work outside the home?

HD: Just at the Liberty Theater—to clean the Liberty Theater when it was going.

MM: Yes. That would be like a couple of hours a day?

HD: Well, it sometimes took her longer, it just depends on how dirty they were in discarding their popcorn bags and things like this and all the other junk because everything had to be clean every day.

MM: Was that in Great Falls—the Liberty Theater?

HD: Yes, yes. When the Liberty Theater opened up, my mother was one of the cleaners.

MM: Do you remember if it was common for married women to be working outside the home?

HD: No, not too much. I didn't know of anybody that was doing it, just in cases of terrible emergency like we were in.

MM: Did your parents approve of your husband when you decided to get married?

HD: Oh, yes. They okayed it. They both okayed it

MM: Where did you marry him?

HD: I married him in the Presbyterian Church in Great Falls, and then we went...we didn't even have a honeymoon. We had to just leave and go home, because he had the cattle to take care of. He had taken over a bunch of cattle from his sister, brother and sister-in-law...No, sister and brother-in-law. So when he took care of them, well then he had to...He had to go back and feed the cattle then because he had taken over the contract at the first of January. I was going to be a June bride, and then I didn't become a June bride because of the simple reason that he said

no. He says, "I want you to come now because Morris and Mary are planning on going to the old country again," he says, "leaving." He says, "I want you to marry me now, so I can have a cook," he says.

So, I says, "Well, I guess can take it the first of March then." So I got married in the first of March [laughs]. Oh dear, that was sure funny.

MM: How long had you been going on with him—courting at that time?

HD: Oh, I hadn't been very much. I'd just known him for a short while, but I knew he was a good, respectable person and I knew that he was...He was well-liked in the community, and I knew that he was kind. And was very good to me, I'm telling you that. He was very good to me all my life with him. I lived with him for 48 years, and he was just tops.

MM: Yes. Great. Did you feel like economic pressure to marry or any social pressure to get married at that time?

HD: No. No, I just liked everything, and I wanted him [laughs]. So that was it.

MM: Was it considered odd for a young woman not to marry? Were women called old maids and things like that if they didn't marry?

HD: Maybe they were at that time. I don't really recall.

MM: You don't remember people being called that?

HD: No. No, most of the time it was just well whoever you happened to find...just like my father said you know [laughs]: "Where you make your bed, you have to lie it."

MM: Make a good choice?

HD: Yes, make a good choice to begin with. He told me that so many times in my life that...But I did love my father. He was just wonderful. He was a good father. He did everything he could. He was pretty near two years in the bed that he couldn't get up and do anything.

MM: After he had been poisoned by the arsenic?

HD: Before he got so that he could find work to go in on...start in again, because he wasn't a young man. When I was born, he was only about 36 years old when I born. He was an old man when he got married. He didn't marry very young neither. I was about 18, just a little past 18.

MM: So, that was when your mother had started working in the theater when your father was sick?

HD: Yes. Yes, that's what pushed her into it. As soon as he got a job...They went to try different places to live and tried different jobs. He worked in the dairy, and he worked into carpenter work in the summertime and things like this. My father started out with making coffins in Grantsburg, Wisconsin (?). That's where he started out his life. His uncle showed him how to do that, and that's the way he learned. His work was all done like that. Then, he read. He read a lot. He only had about a fourth grade education, my father. But my mother, she finished off the eighth grade, and she worked in the courthouse in Minneapolis...oh, I don't know how many years. Nineteen...She was older than 19 when she married. So, that's what she did. She played the organ, and wherever our church was we played the organ.

MM: That's how you'd make music. You didn't have one in your home?

HD: No, no, no, no. We didn't have it. Mother went...She went to the church, and we played there. That's where she played.

MM: Did anybody play the mouth harp?

HD: Yes, my father did yes. My father was great to play the mouth harp. He called for dances and everything, square dances. My father called for a lot of square dances.

MM: So the whole family would go with him?

HD: Yes. My mother hardly ever danced. She'd get up and dance the first dance with Dad, and it was generally a waltz mostly and that was it. She'd sit around and watch the children and do things like that.

MM: Would the little kids dance too?

HD: Oh, yes. That's what my children did out in the Needham community. Most all of them they...A lot of my girls are known yet for their dancing, because they'd go off and just the two little girls—Doreen and Liliah (?)—that's what they did.

MM: Did you teach them how to dance?

HD: No, they just...yes, we always did. My father was great for that too. I could square dance and one-step, two-step, and go to the square dances. You know, I could do that long before I even met my husband. That's all we did. There was no other entertainment for you, that's all.

MM: That's neat. I'd like to know all those dances. Okay, so you got married, and you started keeping house and you were out on—

HD: I was out in the country.

MM: —out in the country.

HD: And I stayed out there. I never came back into town, except just when I had to [laughs]. Oh dear.

MM: You liked it out there?

HD: Oh, yes, I liked it. I really liked it. We rented a piece of property the first four years of our life, and we had 1400 acres then. We rented this...Then he kept upping the rent so fast that we just couldn't sling it with what we had to pay on the cattle and stuff that Everett (?) had bought and the horses. So then we decided then that we were going to get a piece of property of our own. We bought a piece of property that somebody else was kicked off of because they couldn't pay for it. So we bought the property hoping that we could do it. Well, it was just luck that we kept it up, because we finally...It was through a bunch of widows that lived out in our community and then a lot of them lived in Great Falls. There was about five or six of the girls. Then, one after another would help us out if we got into a pickle, and that's what kept us a going.

MM: Financially—a loan?

HD: Financially, yes, yes. When we thought we were, for a while, that we were going to lose this piece of property that we bought, because it was dry. We didn't have any...Grasshoppers were there, the bugs were there, the Mormon crickets were there. Oh, they just pretty much eat us up. We tried chickens. We had 410 chickens ready to butcher, and that was going to pay for this piece of property that we had—the payment on it. Well some way or other, the man at the little store in Eaton had gotten oil from us, but he had used a gasoline barrel. Everett (?) worked with that fire and worked and worked and worked with it. It do no good, because for the simple reason that it kept...It would go up and it would get down, it would go up and it would get down.

MM: How did the fire start?

HD: With this fuel that we'd put in this brooder of ours.

MM: In the what of yours?

HD: In the brooder.

MM: In the brooder?

HD: Yes, that's what we raised our chickens with was the brooder. Anyway, we kept waiting for that to be over with. Well, pretty soon well, Dad says, "I think I got it controlled, Mom." He says,

"I think it will stay put now," because it raining outside. It was in May, about the 10th of May, it was raining. Oh, it was so bad that we had to keep the chickens going so they didn't die or get into trouble, pick up colds or something else. So anyway, he went to bed, and he decided to get up about five o'clock that morning. Course that was usually his time anyway. He got up a little bit earlier that morning—I remember that—and he went out there and here the thing had exploded and started a fire. He was so on edge about it. He was just terribly on edge about it, because he couldn't figure out what was the matter. Then come to find out...Well anyway, we lost all our chickens. They were all smothered because of all the smoke, you see, because it kind of half went over at times and explode and so forth. Well anyway, we found out that afterwards, that the man had put it in a gasoline barrel.

I remember one man when I was a young girl in Golden (?), Minnesota that he had a match in his hand, and he says, "I wonder if there's any gas left in there." Well, he says, "There's been no gas in there for five years," and he dropped the thing and it went "psht" and it took all his hair off here—all this. I remembered that, see. So, I told Everett, "I bet you it was the gas." Then, we went and inquired then to Ben about it, and sure enough that's what Ben had done. He had put it into an empty gasoline barrel, thinking it was all right—it was safe—and it exploded, you see. That's what we did with my brooders. So then—

MM: What year was that?

HD: Oh, don't ask me the year. I can't remember that [laughs], but it was many, many years.

MM: Somewhere in the '20s?

HD: Yes. In the '30s. In the '30s sometime.

MM: In the '30s?

HD: Yes. So that's once when the widows come up, and she says, "Well, Everett," she says, "It looks like Papa Wells trying kick you out again." "Kick you out too," he says...she said.

Everett says, "Yes. I don't know. I don't know what I'm going to do to get the balance of it. And I hate to sell my cattle because," he says, "they are right ready to be done yet."

"Well," she says, "we'll carry you." So she gave us our money then, and we paid the old...stick around. Because that's the way I felt at that time. I should never feel that. Because I've forgiven the man for it since, because I wouldn't be able to live if I couldn't have done that, you know.

MM: So, he would have kicked you off, and what would you have—

HD: Oh, yes. He had kicked the party off, and naturally he figured he was going to get the same thing to, but it didn't work this time, because the widows butted in on him. I can tell you many

times that they've helped us out when we were short on money or something, because she knew that Everett would be honest and pay it. At a certain time, he'd pay it if it was in his power to do it.

MM: Great. So those were hard years that—

HD: You bet, they were hard years.

MM: —the '20s and '30s?

HD: Yes, yes.

MM: The '20s the drought got over, though, about 1925?

HD: No. No, because in the '30s is when we had our worst trouble.

MM: As far as the drought went?

HD: Yes, yes. That was terrible, because I tell you we had Mormon crickets and then the grasshoppers come in. There wasn't a leaf left on the trees. There wasn't a garden left anywhere. Everything swept clean as a whistle. That's when Everett went up and milked the cows up at the...took milked cows up there, and we had 18 milk cows. He milked the cows up there.

MM: What time of year did they eat everything?

HD: Right in the middle of the summer.

MM: Right in the middle of the summer?

Hazel Door: Right, right. Had a garden all started, thinking that, well, you was going to have a garden and I canned a lot. That's the way I raised my family. I canned a lot. I canned 500, 600, 700 quarts a year—about 105 with meat—because we butcher in the fall and we had to take care of meat that way—what you didn't put down in lard...and so, that's the way we had to live.

MM: Did you have children then when—

HD: Oh, yes. I was only married one year—not one year to the day—when my boy was born the 28th of February, and our anniversary was the next day, so I didn't celebrate my anniversary with my husband. [laughs] Then, two years later I had another boy, and 18 months I had another girl. Then I had five girls—four girls right in one row—and then I had a boy and then I had another girl.

MM: So how many do you have?

HD: I have eight.

MM: You have eight and about even—four boys and four girls?

HD: No, I have three boys, and then I have five girls.

MM: Did you have a midwife when you had the children?

HD: No, no, no. Everett wouldn't let me stay out there. He says, "Oh, no. I can handle animals, but I can't handle you." So he made me go into Great Falls. So most of the time, he only set me in for near a month before my time was up. That was the worst thing I thought, because I didn't like to be in town and be away from home, you know. The first time I stayed with my grandmother, and the second time I stayed with my, an aunt, and the next time I stayed with an aunt.

MM: And then who helped deliver your babies?

HD: Always a doctor.

MM: Always a doctor?

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

MM: So you didn't trust midwives, is that it?

HD: No, it was Everett that didn't.

MM: Yes, your husband didn't trust them?

HD: Yes, yes. He wasn't, you see. He didn't want me to have the baby out there, that's for sure [laughs]. But it didn't bother me much, because I figured...I didn't have any trouble. I was always pretty good. The only one time I had trouble was with the fourth child that was born—that was a girl—and I was letting out the cows out the corral, out of the stanchions. When I let them out, well one of them turned right around and hit me smack in the middle, and I was just pregnant with her. I got very sick after that. I thought I was going to lose the baby, but I went into town to talk to the doctor and he straightened everything out. But then when I had her, I pretty near hemorrhaged to death. I just about went.

MM: Did the doctor do a good job helping after that?

HD: Yes, oh yes. Oh yes, he was good with me; He took care of me and everything was fine.

MM: Did you have the same doctor all—

HD: All the time, yes, until he died. And then I had another doctor. I got another old doctor then, and he was very good. I never had any trouble with him either.

MM: What was your doctor's name?

HD: Doctor McCaully (?).

MM: McCaully.

HD: You know the McCaullys from Great Falls?

MM: Yes. Did you want to raise a large family? Had you planned it?

HD: No, I hadn't planned on it. When I had the fourth child, well then the doctor told me now, he says, "That's enough, you have four and now that's enough."

I says, "Yes, I suppose it is enough, but we'll have to see what the lord says." [laughs] So that's what I kept telling him all the time. And he laughed. He kind of laughed at me. And anyway—

MM: Did you know of any way to—

HD: No, at that time you never...you didn't, you didn't. I wasn't around to see people very much, because I was very much at home. I was a home person. I did a lot of canning and lot of things like that. I sewed. I made everything. I made everything for the kids, even to the boys' shirts and stuff. I sewed everything for them and kept them supplied with things. People knew that we were hard up. I had a few people that would give me things to help me remake and all.

MM: Yes. Like hand-me-downs?

HD: Yes, yes. A lot of it was very good stuff. It was good, lots of usage of it and so forth.

MM: So you weren't around other women who might have talked about it—birth control?

HD: No, no. Because we were seven miles from the...Our place where we bought was seven miles away from the main town, and so I wasn't around very much. The only time that I would meet them was at the Fourth of July or otherwise some other celebration there or when the Four H came out into the community. That gradually brought us all into it, but until then I didn't.

MM: Did you get lonely?

HD: No. I didn't have time to get lonely [laughs]. I had too much to do.

MM: Well, did ever go visit with neighbors?

HD: Oh, we had a few that we chummed around with, but not very many.

MM: Your children kept you company, probably, and your husband?

HD: Oh, yes. They always did. Then when you're raising a family so that you keep them where they're supposed to be. Then they went to school, and there was school activities so that's the way.

MM: So your work was to keep house and cook and can and make clothes, do the washing—

HD: Oh, yes. Everything was done. For a long time there before the well came back into shape again, we had to haul all our water from the spring. Every washday that's what I had to do.

MM: How much would you haul on washday?

HD: Well, about an eight and ten...I meant the eight and the five and then the...Well, no there was an eight and...There was a ten and an eight and five. I'll get it straight yet.

MM: Gallon bucket?

HD: No, no. Gallon cans.

MM: Gallon cans?

HD: Yes. Because you see had our cream...Our cream was taken to the market for...We took it up to Eaton, and they took it into Great Falls. That's the way we sold our cream for a long until the creamery closed the doors.

MM: Yes. You had to be pretty strong to haul those things, I bet.

HD: Well, we had our team.

MM: Oh, you'd hitch up the team and go down there?

HD: Yes, and back again. We didn't have a car until...oh, let's see. I don't remember exactly year. It must have been in the '30s before we got our first little coupe. It was called at that time—a Chevy coupe—and we bought that. It wasn't long before it was too small [laughs]. We had too many children. So then, after we had that, well, then we got a station wagon for a while, because that was coming into popular. We didn't keep that very long.

MM: How far away was the spring when you had to haul the water?

HD: About a half a mile.

MM: Half a mile?

HD: Yes, yes.

MM: And then pretty soon your children were probably old enough to help?

HD: Yes. That year that my husband was on the Baldy (?), we had to haul all our water, of course, down to the house. We wore out our little wagon from Sears and Roebuck. We wore the wagon completely out lugging that stuff back and forth, because that was a heavy load to take on a little wagon and it was a little farm wagon. I remember that it had little things on the side, well, I said the kids could play with them after. But they didn't play much playing with it, because they had to do it all the timeso there was not much playing [laughs].

MM: When did you find the rattlesnakes?

HD: Well, that is in...Oh, that must have been about in the '30s too, because it was all about...that all happened about the same time.

MM: When it got really dry the rattlesnakes came up to your porch?

HD: Yes, they came up to our, my, porch and worked around the cans. I was scared because I didn't want to leave the kids playing around outside where rattlers were. I knew the gardener snakes. They weren't afraid of the gardener snakes. They knew the difference. But as soon as that rattle would come, I taught them to be scared of the rattle then and to pay attention. Then, I had one in the root cellar—that had come down into the root cellar. We don't know yet how it ever got in there, because I always kept the doors well shut because of this. But one day Everett come down, and I said, "Everett, I can't go into the root cellar."

He said, "What's the matter?"

I said, "I think we got a rattler in there."

He says, "You do?"

I says, "I think so."

He says, "Well, let's get the light then and go see," he said. So we lit the lantern, and we went down in there, and as soon as we come in I heard the rattle.

I said, "Here listen, listen."

So then he says, "Yes, that's it." He says, "Right in here in this corner," he says. That was on the first door, see, coming in. So he says, "Well, we got to kill it," he says, "yes, you bet,"

I said, "I'm not going to let you back up there," I says, "to the range until you get rid of it." So, he did. He killed it. But, it was just about one button and an ax, so it was only a small rattler, see, but they can do just as much damage to you.

MM: How did he kill it?

HD: He killed it with a hoe.

MM: With a hoe?

HD: Yes.

MM: You shot some of them of them that were on your place?

HD: Oh, yes. I shot a lot of them. I must have shot, oh, eight or nine of them that first week that he was there...that he was gone. That he had given me the rifle...The .22 I should say, not the

rifle, because it was just the .22. I was scared stiff to handle a gun at that time. I didn't even want to handle it. "Well," he says, "you've got to do something if they're going to be coming in like that." So he says, "Just shoot, just shoot at them," he says, "They follow you. They follow your gun anyway."

I think the only thing that I had shot in my life was a prairie chicken—it was up in the hills. Everett says, "I don't think you killed it," he says, "I think that you hit the twig, and the twig knocked him out." Then, of course, soon as I seen it I went and grabbed it. Oh dear! Because I could cut the head off if I had to. When you need to have food you can do that regardless of what...It's funny when you're looking for fresh meat and stuff like that. Well, that was always good. But that was the only thing I ever killed. I never killed anything after that.

MM: You didn't ever have to kill any wild animals?

HD: No. No, Everett took care of what little bit we did. But Everett was not much to hunt wild animals. We always had our own beef—our own something that we had to get rid of—that we didn't think should go to market and we always did that. When I canned...let's see '20...no, more that...must have been...Yes, that must have been in the '30s too, when I got my cooker. Yes, it was '31. I remember now because Velma's...that's when her birthday is. He decided he was going to get me a pressure cooker, because I had done so much canning and always the water was so hot and you just scald all the time when you're working with the pressure cooker—with the boiling water.

MM: You'd scald yourself?

HD: No, but what I mean is that you were always so hot. It was just terribly warm. So he got the pressure cooker for me. He bought the pressure cooker. Then from then on, then I canned all my own meat and I canned all my vegetables and I canned all fruit. He'd come into town when the fruit was on market, and he'd bring home as high as, oh, eight boxes of peaches and...Whatever we'd care to have. So much pears...generally a couple of bushes of pears. Once in a great while we'd hit the apricots, but not always can you hit apricots. It's hard to always get them. It seems that there's not so much of them going. And plums.

MM: Did you work outside the home any? Did you work out like in the fields?

HD: Oh, up until the boys were big enough, yes. I think our oldest boy was eight years when I was trying to run the team on the buck rake, and I was having trouble with them, because I wanted them to go one way and they wanted to go the other way. Really, if I had let them have the reins, they'd have done it themselves, but Vernon took over. He says, "Mama, let me do it. I can do it."

I says, "Okay, go ahead and do it." So I let him do it then, and I drove the stacker horse because I could handle Little Star. He was good. I can remember telling him.

MM: That was the first time you let him do it?

HD: Yes. But up until then, of course, I helped in the fields when it was haying time and that.

MM: Well, who cooked for—

HD: Well, I'd go home and cook.

MM: You'd go home and cook.

HD: Shoot! Nobody to help you out, that's for sure. You had to do it.

MM: Did you have a big crew that you had to cook for?

HD: No, no. It was just him, and I and the kids. But you know, you have to always keep a going. I don't care what it is.

MM: Really. You must have been busy.

HD: Oh, yes. I never had...Time never hung heavy on me, that's for sure.

MM: You never had what?

HD: I say. Time never hung heavy on me. I was always a busy [laughs], yes. I canned as high as eight, 700 and 800 quarts, because there would be about a 100 and...oh, about 105 was the biggest amount, because we always put so much down in a big...We had a 20 gallon crock, and we'd put down in Morton's sugar cure. That was a great help to us, because that way we would salt the meat down and it was just fine for us to eat.

MM: A twenty gallon crock full of meat?

HD: Yes. We'd fill that with the good part of the meat, like the steaks and this—whatever had to be cut off from the bones and that, well, that was kind of rough meat. We'd fix that anyway and put that into the jars, you see. Then my good stuff, well, we always salted it down. Then we'd take part of that out after it was cured in this salt and then we'd take it out and hand it in the high trees, because the birds wouldn't bother that. As long as it was salted, they wouldn't touch it. Then, we'd hang it up there. In the wintertime, we would keep a quarter always. We always butchered, generally, in the later part of October because that way it was cold enough to keep the meat, and we'd always put it high up in tree. We had big trees in our yard at that time, and then we'd put a sheet around it to keep the birds—the younger starlings—from picking at it.

MM: What about squirrels or chipmunks?

HD: Oh, we didn't have anything out there. No, there was nothing like that out in our community at all. That was all. We didn't have anything out there like that at all. Prairie dogs. We had prairie dogs and we had gophers, but they don't go bother anything like that.

MM: In this 20 gallon—

HD: Crock.

MM: —crock. Did it have a big lid on it?

HD: No, we didn't have a...I just kept a clean dishtowel over the top of it, and then put a rubber-band around it—elastic, you know, not a rubber-band, because we couldn't get rubber-bands that big. Elastic at that time.

MM: And it would be salted down, and it would keep?

HD: Yes, oh, yes. That would keep all summer long then. That's what we had to salt the meat then and then we'd boil it. You could take it off...It was dried, and then you just took the hunk of meat and did that. Then when you had your bacon and your hams, which we did, well then we'd bury them. I'd put dishtowels around them—white dish towels—because I had lots of dishtowels because we had feed sacks, and we'd put them...We'd put that around it—put a piece of paper around it—and then we'd put the cloth around it. I'd just sew it on there, so it be sure that nothing happen. Then we'd put in the oat bin, and then kept it in the oat bin.

MM: That's interesting.

HD: That's what we had to do.

MM: How much did you buy from town? How many supplies?

HD: Oh, nothing but flour and sugar and coffee, tea and your mush. We even got so we learned to grind our own wheat, when it first come in from the field because he always put in a little wheat so we could have it for the chickens and for the hogs. We brought it in, and then we ground that. Washed it and then ground it in a little feed grinder.

MM: And then you made bread too?

HD: Oh, yes. I always made bread. I still do once in a while. I haven't been since I've been sick, have I? (laughs) I've always made my own bread up until just lately. I was sick, of course, I told Doc I wouldn't do anything for a little while, but I'm going back to it. I went out in the garden and worked the other day again. So I know I'm going to be all right.

MM: How many loaves would you make a week?

HD: Oh. we'd average 10, and then I had biscuits and hot cakes besides, muffins, because that's what we lived on—cornmeal, cornbread.

MM: Your children started going to school and they—

HD: Yes. We had a lot, like a two-tenths of a mile they had to go right straight up through the valley to go to school.

MM: Two-tenths?

HD: Like only two-tenths of the four miles to go school, and they went to McCumber School (?) in...a long ways from us. And we had an old saddle horse that Dad had. The only thing, she'd shy away a lot, but that wasn't because of the kids doing that. They get to racing her, and then she'd stop dead still. But then she was 32 when she died, so she had an excuse. But then we trained another little horse, a small horse, and Dad got him to ride—so two on one and two on the other. When I got the fifth one, we moved into Great Falls then, because the other girls and boys were ready for high school, so we had to do that so...

MM: You had to move into Great Falls?

HD: Yes. Then I only stayed one year in Great Falls alone without my husband, and then that was just during the school year. Then on the weekend we went home as long as we could go home. Then we'd come into Great Falls and my husband—

MM: Did you rent...you rented a place?

HD: Yes. I rented an apartment to begin with, and then I couldn't stand the apartment. I got so bad that...oh, the noise around and everything was too much. We finally bought a little house on the south side, and we lived there for just the one year. Then my husband picked up pneumonia, and he was so sick. He decided then that he would quit the ranch. He'd let the boys take over the ranch, and he'd come into town and we'd raise chickens. So, for 15 years we raised chickens. I had...Well, the two boys, we had a celebration out to Eaton when they was...when both those boys...when they got married.

MM: So this was in 1940 or so?

HD: Oh, yes. I don't remember when it was. But anyway, the girls were going to go to high school, and I tried to rent Laverne (?) out and Marcelene (?)—the older girl—out to a little lady in Centerville.

MM: They would board with her and do work for her?

HD: Yes. And that didn't work out so...She got so lonesome for home that she couldn't hardly stand it. She'd been home all along, you know. So then I began to let the kids go a little bit more then, to get them used to going away. You know how you do, gradually work into things.

MM: You let them stay away from home more?

HD: Yes, yes. And then, of course, it was better then.

MM: So, you were determined that they would get a high school education?

HD: You bet. I sure was determined that they were going to have a high school education, and they all did but Vernon, Vernon didn't. The older boy didn't. But afterwards he went school, and Winston went to school too. He went and took up carpentry. He studied it evenings and worked during the day.

MM: Puppetry?

HD: No, he studied so he could make carpentry work.

MM: Oh, carpentry.

HD: That's what Winston does to this day. Then Vernon, he got into after he was in the Navy. He went to the service in '44. So, that left us home with Winston for help. And, of course, the government was giving us so much stuff to do, and Everett was trying to keep up with that.

MM: What sort of stuff?

HD: Well, like putting in so much grain, and putting in so much...Having so much animals to sell, and all this—that all counts, you see. When Vernon went into the service, well then Dad says, "Vernon, for every bond you take, I'll double it," he says. So, we did.

MM: This is during World War Two?

HD: Yes. And he was out in '44. He came back in '44...and then...World War Two. He was in Okinawa when they quit, and then he had to come home from there. Then the first two years, he just couldn't knuckle down. He had quite a time to knuckle down to ranching again. But he got married and then lived there. So it was after '44, I guess, when they got married. In a year's time the other boy was married, and then in a year's time the other girl was married. So, the two boys—we had to give a big celebration in Eaton for the two get together, and so I celebrated there. Then when the girl was married, I made...I know we had an awful crowd that year. Oh dear, we had a lot of them. Of course, we were getting to know a lot of people then. I made 410 plates. That's what I served that night.

MM: What did you serve?

HD: That was what was for her wedding reception. We had sandwiches, and cake and ice cream, and then Dad furnished pop and beer to the men that wanted to have it—if they were old enough of course [laughs]. If they weren't old enough, they didn't get the beer, because that was—

MM: The women didn't have any beer?

HD: Oh, no. No, none of the women. Women drink coffee and tea, most of them. That's what we served. Then after that, then my other kids were all married in Great Falls, and we served it there, helped out there.

MM: Were you ever in any women's clubs?

HD: Yes, but not until later years. I was in Demonstration Club. I followed that for a long time with Cascade County.

MM: Home Demonstration Club?

HD: Yes, yes.

MM: Did you learn a lot there?

HD: Oh yes, because you learned everything to, how to prepare food and how to take care of stuff and how to do things. It was all more or less on things that you could do. They are still doing it, for that matter, because Lilia goes to that now here. They wanted me to get into again. "No," I says, "I'm through." I said, "I'm not going to do it any more" Because the first thing they want you in the president, then vice-president, then you want into the president. I don't like this kind of stuff, see? I'm not that way. I would rather sew or I'd rather cook or do something else.

MM: You just wanted to learn what they had to teach you?

HD: Yes, just what I had to have. That's what got me in on the pressure cooker business, because I knew...My mother was not a heavy one. She canned all right. My mother canned, but it was mostly fruit and things like tomatoes that would keep, you see, without no pressure cooker, and your blueberries, that would keep, you see, and things like this, or rhubarb. My mother would do that. But the other thing that she couldn't do, you see, unless you got the hot water bath. You couldn't do it. Oh, that hot water! Why, it was terrible. It was bad enough to keep the pressure cooker going, but that wasn't half as bad as the water business.

MM: And you were working with a wood stove, right?

HD: Well, actually coal—coal mostly.

MM: Coal?

HD: Yes, because we were just a short mile from the coal mine—four miles was all that we had to haul our coal. So we called...Dad pretty near always got slack, and I used the best part of that, see, because as it rolled down. Well, the best part would come down in the bigger chunks, and you'd pick it up like that. Then I'd put the other in the furnace—in the heater—and that's what—

MM: Well, when did you start getting any conveniences, as far as like washing machine—

HD: Not until I moved to Great Falls.

MM: Not until I moved to Great Falls?

HD: Yes. We didn't have no electricity. We couldn't get nothing that would do any good out there so, you see—

MM: So, through the '30s you didn't have—

HD: Dad was worried about gas. He didn't know how to handle it, and he was worried about that, so he didn't want to do that. Well, twice we thought we were going to get electricity down our way, and then they turned us down, because of not enough people signing to pay for it.

MM: So all through the '30s you were living out there?

HD: Yes, yes. I lived out there until, well, in the '40s sometime, I guess, before I came into Great Falls. I can't remember exactly when the date was.

MM: Were you real happy to quit washing on the washboard?

HD: Oh, yes. I was glad to that. My husband got me a little engine that was run with a gasoline motor, and I washed after. Two years I washed on the board, but after I got the second boy, he gave me the washer. I got the washer. That's the first convenience I had.

MM: The washer?

HD: Yes, yes. And I never had an ironing board. I used to always use the table to iron on. I never had an ironing board for...I guess, I got an old ironing board from a lady, finally, that was going to move into Great Falls or something. I don't remember how I got really now anymore, but I

got an ironing board one time. I thought I had a treasure. I really did, because it was so much easier on the board than to iron on the table.

MM: Did you do a lot of ironing?

HD: Oh, yes. At that time we did a lot of ironing. I didn't do as much as my mother did, but...because I had too many other things to do.

MM: Right. You didn't have permanent press clothes then.

HD: You sure didn't. Everything had to be ironed. Everything you wore, you ironed.

MM: I bet you didn't iron your sheets though.

HD: No, I didn't iron my sheets. But I was careful how I hung my sheets on the line, so that they would lay perfectly straight, and then I'd take them right out off the line and put them right up, so save that way. You do all the funny things when you have to. Then, of course my machine—that was a treasure to me—my machine. I got an old second-hand. It was a Montgomery Ward, but it was old, real, real old—my first machine—

MM: Sewing machine?

HD: —and the lady gave me that for 10 dollars...for five dollars. I took it out, and I used that for quite a long while before I got my Singer.

MM: When did you get the first sewing machine?

HD: Well, I don't really remember that neither. It's been so long ago that I...but that was first. The first one was that little one.

MM: Did you have some children when you got it?

HD: Oh, yes. That's what made me get it, because I had to have something to sew. Because I used to pick up my stuff every once in a while and go over to Mama's because Mama was living not too far from us. I used to go over to her, and use her machine to sew on, and I sewed like the dickens when I there, so I could get done in one. (laughs) Finally, Mrs. Alread (?)...She was a great pal of Morris and Mary Nix—that was Everett's folk. She used to come up a lot and come to the ranch. Of course, they bought the piece of property that we had, and then afterwards we bought the piece of property from them for where our range was. So that's how come.

MM: Well, when you would decide to buy property like that did you and your husband decide together?

HD: No, never.

MM: Was that his decision?

HD: It was his decision, and he did everything. That was the only thing we ever quarreled...because I figured he should tell me about that and so I whether I had the right to say yes or no. Not until we bought the last place did he ask me, and then he had finally come to the conclusion that he had better ask me [laughs].

MM: Finally trained him?

HD: I guess so. But that was the only thing we ever quarreled about.

MM: Because he wouldn't tell you when he was going to buy?

HD: Yes. When we bought the home place, where we lived all the 48 years, well he bought the place and even my brother knew about it! I said, "Well, now that isn't fair." I says, "Now why didn't you tell me that you was going to buy the place?" I was really peeved about it then, but I didn't get real angry about that. But it was afterwards when he bought the other piece of property—the 160 and when he bought the 200 acres up on the other place—I was really getting angry, because I figured he should consult me too. I had to sign it, you know. When you have to sign everything, you want to know what's going on. And just to take a chance on it. But then, of course, he was good to me otherwise. That's the only thing we ever argued about that I ever know of. I always got along so good with him, and he got along good with me. If he'd get mad about something, then I would shut up. If I got mad about something, then he'd shut up—most of the times. That's how we got along good.

MM: Just wait until you're not mad to talk about it?

HD: Normal. Yes, and then we could talk about it. Then it was fine. That's what I've been trying to tell my kids: "Talk about. Talk about." I says, "That's right, if you don't talk about it, how are you going to know anything?" So that's the way it goes.

MM: Did your husband think that he was supposed...Did he think he should run the outside part of the—

HD: Yes, decidedly.

MM: —and that you should run it inside?

HD: He wanted me to keep a house, and he wanted to keep things up and so forth. So I didn't have very many...Everything was given to me that I had, pretty near. Everything, even to the bed. But I still got that bed to this day, and it is still perfect. My daughter has got it in Great Falls

to prove it. She just took off the old paint and painted it again, and it's just beautiful now. Isn't it? Well, but that's the way it was. Everything was given to me. I never had anything until I moved into Great Falls. Then the first thing that I got was a refrigerator because, I figured, everybody else was talking about a refrigerator. A refrigerator. And I knew that it was the hardest thing to keep my stuff—my food—to keep everything, you know.

MM: That was in the '40s?

HD: Yes.

MM: And before that you just used your cellar?

HD: Just the root cellar. Then, we had an entry way, and I had it covered in there. See, you always had to have...You'd come into the door, and that was the outside door and then you had a long piece of ground before you had the dugout because that was the only way you could keep things that wouldn't freeze then. So, I had this cupboard in there, and that's where I kept my milk and cream and the things that I had that was perishable. I kept my eggs in there and—

MM: Would it keep during the summer?

HD: Oh, yes. It would keep, yes, because Everett was a good milker. He was clean about everything, and I washed the separator. I was very careful with that and scalded everything so that I'd be sure that it would keep. Then, we got so that our old well...It quit during those dry years, you know, especially after we had the earthquake, and it knocked off a lot of our springs in our community. They just disappeared. So, we took the old well and we got little, tiny quarter-inch rope, and we took all of our cream that we took to market. Because we had sweet cream all this while, even if we had to do it this way. We kept it down in the well. Of course, we could take it to the market twice a week at that time. So, we put them on these little things and I covered them.

[End of Interview]