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Breanna McCabe: Hello, this is Breanna McCabe. I'm a graduate student at the University of Montana, and today is Friday, October 11, 2019. I'm at the Mansfield Library on the University of Montana campus, and joining me is Robin Dent. Robin, thanks so much for being here. Do you mind introducing yourself? First of all, I'm just gonna have you say and spell your first and last name for the record.

Robin Dent: Certainly. My name is Robin Dent, capital R-o-b-i-n. Dent, capital D-e-n-t.

BM: Excellent. Tell us a little bit about your background and what brought you here to Missoula.

RD: Well, I'm a classically trained musician, so I grew up in Superior, and I came here to study music performance at the University of Montana.

BM: Excellent, and what year was that?

RD: That was in 1991.

BM: Where were you from?

RD: Superior, Montana,

BM: Oh, good. Were you born nearby?

RD: I was a Navy brat, so I was born in Fallon, Nevada, and then I was in Potrero, California, a country California girl. Then Coon Valley, Wisconsin, 50 miles outside of La Crosse. They wanted to keep us backwoods and country, so that was nice. Keep us sweet my dad said. He didn't want to be city girls.

BM: How old were you when you moved to Montana.

RD: Eleven.

BM: Okay, excellent. I'm gonna move this just a little closer. What was Superior like in those days?

RD: Well, there's a drive-in theater, and there's a bunch of mountain lakes. You could go target practicing, and as a child, I enjoyed shooting fruit and vegetables and exploding targets. Then I

was active in cheerleading, and I tried to do track, which I wasn't very good at, but did that for four years in high school. I was very active in band and all those other activities.

BM: When did music enter your life?

RD: My mom had studied voice in Bozeman, Montana, and she had actually been offered, when we were in Wisconsin, a contract to sing, but she wanted to take care of us girls instead. So, we were raised knowing about music, classical music, specifically opera, and my dad liked country and rock so we had some Rainbow in there and Charlie Daniels Band. A little of everything.

BM Which medium was yours of choice?

RD: Well, I sang, and I actually got to sing at our graduation, which was lovely, and I was in band and choir. I studied bass clarinet, clarinet, and I played piano. I still play piano. I'm actually getting ready to compose my album Celtic classical contemporary music with a folk edge delving into jazz and blues. It's certainly interesting that I play that kind of music because Jay's Upstairs was a punk rock club, [laughs] and that wasn't what I thought I was gonna actually do. But yeah, that's what came out of Missoula, Montana. It's a lot of punk and indie rock and rockabilly, and it's fascinating.

The reason I wanted to run Jay's Upstairs, I might be jumping ahead a little bit, is because George Gershwin ran a club in the '20s and I love George Gershwin. Him and Mozart, they're my men, and so I thought that would be cool. I went to music school for a year and a half. I dropped out like a lot of kids do that go and take 21 credits, oh, I'm gonna do it all. That was that was pretty good and went back to school later and finished my degrees. I decided, well, I could be an unemployed musician and have a degree, or I could still be an unemployed musician and do other things too. So, it's kind of fun. Actually now, I'm into sound healing, vibrational sound therapy, so it went the whole spectrum of it all.

BM: Music as a common thread throughout. Flows through your veins it sounds like. So, take me back to deciding you were overwhelmed with the school and you decided music was still going to be a part of your life. What did you do next?

RD: Well, I went and I got a bartending job at Connie's Lounge, and Connie's used to be the old Luke's, the biker bar downtown. Was kind of a hippie scene, and that's a big thing in Missoula. We had a band Ramen that would play there, and it packed the house and they'd do open mics. Mr. LaFlesch would come in every now and then and I decided that I wanted to work for him, so I would go in there every week and be like, hey, Jay, you're giving me a job today. I went and harassed him for months until he hired me, and at that time, they were doing Thursday night karaoke and cover bands on Friday and Saturday. I thought, well, look what's going on in Portland, look what's going on in Seattle, Missoula's got music, and it was hard to even get them to do this. I had to—after the first year I ran it how he wanted, but then he gave me control of the books, and I made an originals venue where they could only play two to three

covers. A lot of the local bands were like, oh yeah, she just let us be there, but no. People had to actually give me a press kit, a demo kit, that I would review and write their little write up. A lot of local people, because I never played there because I'm classically trained—I probably would never play there and I don't want to take that the wrong way—but they thought that I knew nothing about music so it's fascinating [laughs], which I let them know because I had no problem with dumbing it down a little bit. We made a very pretentious scene where these people would come and just be fierce look at people, and they'd have an attitude and ego, and they'd think that they're just god's gift to music. I was like, oh okay! but we did have national and local acts come through.

It was interesting the actual way that I built it up is these bands would travel across the country on the road, and they'd be exhausted. They'd have people that were mean to them at venues that say you get this much. Well, we gave a percentage of the till, a third of the till and two-thirds of the door, so we could show them exactly how much they'd get. That wasn't much, but it was because of the hospitality. We fed them, they got some house drinks, they got a pitcher. It was because of how we treated them that we got listed in the *Pollstar* and on the national, this is where you need to stop by—just Montana hospitality is what built Jay's. A lot of people don't know that because some of the local acts made more than the national acts that came through. Yeah, fascinating. Yeah, have a national act come through and pay them \$80, but that's what they made.

Then running four to five bands a night, which was interesting, because I didn't realize some of my songs that I play could go on 20 minutes. Well, some of the punk bands that was there whole set. All they had was 20 minutes of music. Okay! So, I booked those a few times; okay, I guess we need five bands so the most bands I ever ran in a night was seven. It was insane A lot of fun.

BM: Yeah. Oh, let me pop back in. It looks like when you applied to tend bar at Jay's, it was more of a twisting Jay LaFlesch's arm, but what was on your resume then other than Connie's?

RD: Well, I had studied music performance. I've gotten a lot of the John Philip Sousa [Award], the Arion Award, things like that. Come from a musician background. He had heard me perform although the other people hadn't, and he knew I was smart and that I could do a multi-faceted job. That I didn't really drink, so that's another big plus. So, he pretty much gave me a chance and let me run with it. Jay, he's an old-school man, old-school. You know how old-school men are. Nothing against him, but that's the way it was back in the day. He did really give me an opportunity. It's not that way anymore. No more good old boys. [laughs]

BM: What was so appealing about Jay's to you at the time when you were at Connie's? I'm just going to move this up a little bit.

RD: Just having an open space, an open slate. Once I showed them that we could do it and run with it, we went from being three days a week to five to seven nights a week open with live

music in Missoula all the time. Which sometimes I would be like, oh, the band broke down on the way here. I'd be like, I'm going to call Oblio Joe's and see if they want to cover, just some of our regular villains. 'Well, let me see who has an open mic tonight,' or just whatever we could do when those kind of things happen.

BM: Do you think your wheels were turning while you were at Connie's? Had you been to Jay's in your off time to know that it had potential for a bigger scene, or were more people of your genre hanging out there? Was it the cooler place yet?

RD: No, no. They had a laundromat downstairs and they played...Goodness! I'm very prude, so they played at adult movies. I was like, oh my goodness, oh goodness. I'm gonna go upstairs and put the animal show on,' which later on it's funny—I had a bartender that was a vegetarian and she thought that was horrible the animals eating each other. I was like, oh, I didn't think about that. So, we changed it to something else then so it's just whatever.

BM: The TV in the bar?

RD: Yeah, we'd just have it on without the sound, so it was pretty rundown. Upstairs, the bathrooms, and I'd get up there and be like, oh, it was cleaned? I'm like, I'm gonna mop it again. Pretty dark, pretty dingy, pretty redneck. Like I said when we first started out we had the '80s rocker scene in there and the people, the karaoke people, and to really get the young people in there. Then the best thing we did was open up the 18 and up—18- to 21-year-old—which was a nightmare to police because we had to have wristbands, we had to watch them. I'd run around and make sure they're not drinking, but we had stings that we had to pass too. But on that really brought it home is because we brought the youth into it and let them be in control. We actually had one band in there that had to play, for two years their parents had to come down and sit with them because they're 16 years old. They couldn't be in there; they weren't 18. Their dad would come down and sit with them, and then when they're done, they had to leave and come back and get their pay. That's just how it was because I ran a tight ship. I don't want to go to jail. it's serious business.

BM: You already touched on this, but what was the owner Jay LaFlesch like?

RD: He's a good old boy, and his wife Stephenie, I really like her. She's an awesome lady. I have a story about Stephenie that I'll tell you. She had a man that hit her, maybe in a previous relationship, but I think she sewed him into the sheets and hit him a couple times with that cast-iron skillet. Nope, he didn't press charges, and he never laid a hand on her again. So, I was like, damn lady I got a lot of respect for you. I was like, yeah, yeah, that's amazing and so I like Stephenie a lot.

BM: Did she tell you this story?

RD: Yeah, she told me that story. Yeah. I did a lot of on the work at Jay's—thousands of hours for free to prove myself. That's another thing that you have to understand is he didn't understand that I had to listen to the demo tapes, and I'd analyze it and write a bio of it because I'd be like, oh this is doing this, I'd be like, Oh, it's 'Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor' and here's Bach. But it'd be with the punk band being like...Well, who was it? A.J. Love I just looked at one of his bios that I wrote for him and he has it up there with the other people. What'd I say? Psychedelic storytelling, and he has it up there still today in my little bio that I wrote about them so they'd get a real kick out of it.

Jay is a business owner. He ran again he ran a good business, and I did my best for him was young. We made it work somehow.

BM: Is he still around?

RD: I believe so. He has the LaFlesch building, and he is running The Loft which is a private hoity-toity club. I'm like, so you went from punk rock to the hoity-toity club. We didn't end on the best terms. I had an injury and stuff, but I do wish them well. A lot of the rockers were—well, because I do energy work, they're like, she must have done something to us to make this go out of business the last call for. I'm like, no, you guys I pray for you all the time. You're fine. But they were a little paranoid about me because I had a little prayer candle that I would light every night for people, for the bands traveling or whoever was there. People knew I had my little prayer candle, and that's just how it was. I was raised in Superior. It's a big Bible belt thing there.

BM: Do you still have your prayer handle?

RD: Oh, yeah, I have a prayer candles at my office now where I do energy work and sound healing that I light specifically for the people that I'm working on. We need those bands to make it safely here.

BM: You touched on this too, but take me back to Jay's before you became the manager there. What was it like?

RD: Trina was running it, and Trina had a beautiful voice. She sang like Stevie Nicks, so they'd have all the '80s and '70s people come up and they'd do their songs and they'd watch it. They'd be doing their dancing and cocktail waitressing. Jay hired a cocktail waitress for us—this is after the fact—and I'm like, she doesn't want to be in the mosh pit. It's dangerous. She wants to be behind the bar where it's safe. We actually put a corral around it to protect the band from it. So, yeah, it was a complete a complete scene change. Then the '80s rocker bands—we used to have Rattlesnake Champagne that played at Buck's Club, and nothing against them I remember Tim and those guys in [unintelligible] with this big hair. They didn't feel so comfortable playing at Jay's once we made it into the punk rock, indie rock scene.

BM: How did you see the potential for improving that scene?

RD: This is great because a lot of the rockers were like, she doesn't know anything about music. I'm like, no, I'm a business person. So, I would have a poetry reading to get the poetry clientele during the open mic. Then I went to a punk rock band to have them come in, and then to a heavy metal Native American band from the rez. [laughs] Three different scenes would come in, so I'd have three different clientele scene changes in the night. They thought oh she doesn't know she's putting this together. No, I did that on purpose. I knew very well what I was doing, and there's a plan for it, putting that diversity and getting...People are like, if it could be as diverse as it was, and I'm like, well, we can put anything together. It was from a business standpoint just to get more money in the pot for the people.

Another thing that is of note that I wanted to say is, Jay, when we're talking about how we had to build it up, we did fundraisers to get the sound equipment to start the club. We did fundraisers to get the lighting to start the club. The bands, the local bands, played for free to get that so that we would have that space to play. Applauding them. They did that. They played for free. They fundraised the Jay's Upstairs *Ram It Home* album to record, so that we would have a little sampler in time of their music here Cicada Prosciutto, The Volume, and Sputnik, Sashole...Oh, I'm hoping they learned to play their instruments; I do love them. Nice ladies, but oh! Spanker, Humpy, Fireballs of Freedom—who used to be Honky Sausage. When The Reverend Horton Heat played there, he said, “You ain't no Honky Sausage. You boys are like Fireballs of Freedom.” If you go on YouTube, you can see the Fireballs of Freedom from '95 where they have their Fireballs of Freedom hat after The Reverend Horton Heat came down. We had famous people there, but they were humble. They were humble, and they liked the way we were. The Helltones, Oblio Joe's, Good Word, and then Mike & Rick.

When we had open jams, Jeff Ament from Pearl Jam, he would come down; we'd be, oh, yeah, no big deal. I'm like, oh, there's Jeff give him a Dos Equis. That's what he drinks. Be like, oh, yeah give him a couple of those, just write it down and we'll write that off. He'd be jamming up there. We're like, that's cool, because he lives up O'Brien Creek and he's local. We're just too cool to act like we knew. We know who you are, but we're like, oh, that's cool actually.

BM: That's fun. It sounds like a good mix. Just a clarification, when did the fundraising for the club begin? That was after you were starting the club?

RD: That was about 1993. I started in '92. When we when we wanted the sound equipment because we had, actually Mike Doerner (?), gave us a vacuum, and we had duct-taped it for a microphone stand. Even when we got the other equipment, all the nice 58s and the mic stands, the punkers, they wanted to keep that. That vacuum mic stand, that that lasted years, man. That was an awesome main fixture of Jay's Upstairs.

BM: What happened to it?

RD: I don't know. [laughs] I think one of them might have it somewhere at their house and still using it to this day. We'll have to ask John Fleming from Ear Candy. He probably knows.

BM: Do you remember what kind? I'm picturing Oreck.

RD: Yeah, it's something like that or a Hoover or some really sturdy thing, and they could adjust it because they'd have a little thing and they'd adjust the duct tape to it. It's pretty fun.

BM: Oh, my goodness. So, that was the first kind of stage, but it became clear that you were...more people were coming, or what was the build-up of, okay, we need to get lights and sound? Or was that known from the beginning?

RD: It wasn't known from the beginning. It was pretty much the bands had to bring in their equipment. We actually hired a sound guy where you get \$35 a night. We had to have a door guy, and some bands would want Jay Straw, the best sound in town, and he'd come and do our venue for like 100 bucks, which is unheard of because he's the best sound in town.

BM: Who was that again?

RD: Jay Straw. He's amazing gentlemen. So, yeah, just getting it built up on about '94, '95 we had it all. In two years, we got it all minus the...I think I told you about when Sasshole took the kitty litter and raw chicken, and they threw out the crowd, which took some money from the fundraiser because the cleaning bill we had to pay because I was very upset. I'm like, this is a health hazard. It's raw chicken. I'm like, why would you do that? That's why they're on my list because I remember that. [laughs] Another time—I'm getting off topic, but I have to tell you this story about when Pat Flynn [for The Banned] was playing, and they're like, oh, Pat Flynn got out of hand and cut himself. No, he took a razor blade to his forehead, and he cut the vein that was squirting out. So, I'm calling the cops, be like, I need an ambulance here. Well apparently, he had some kind of a warrant or something, so he ran downstairs and he hid. Deborah (?) the downstairs bartender was an EMT or she had some training in that, and so she got him patched up and sent cops away. I don't know where he went the. Musician ran off. [laughs] Just some of the stories that that happened there.

BM: Remind me who this was?

RD: That was Pat Flynn the band The Banned. The b-a-n-n-e-d. He's up there in his little skirt thing, and he just was...Like, oh that's punk rock. But I'm like, no, that's not that's a health, that's a health hazard, that's blood. I was very upset with him.

BM: You just mentioned there's the downstairs bar. What was the difference between the upstairs and the downstairs?

RD: Day and night. We had the old western, redneck, old good old boys—Dukes of Hazard type stuff—and then we had punks, punk rockers, rockers. Then actually sometimes, we'd have it so packed that the floor would look like it was gonna cave in. I'm like, okay. Actually once, the fire marshals came up. I was like, well, fire marshal says we're done so I'm shutting it down, no refunds, you guys gotta go. I'm like, that's what I gotta do. I said, "They're gonna riot you guys otherwise. You can't come in here. Just let me do it." I put the lights up, put the sound off, and I kicked them all out and didn't give them any money back. It was punk rock. But I had to tell the fire marshal, "You can't go in there and do this or tell them. They will. They will eat you up." Probably had 200 people with 110 people in capacity. So, yeah, I was over limit. [laughs]

I have to tell you this. Another thing the cops used to come all the time and say, oh, the neighbors...Because we had people that lived upstairs, down a few stores from us at the Howard's Apartments, and they could hear us, which is several buildings down. They'd be like, we need you to turn it down. I'd be like, oh yeah, they turned it down. They're like, no, they didn't. I'm like, no, no, I just talked to the band, and they turned it down. They never turned it down. We'd always be like, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, we totally did. The cops were always pissed. We're like it's good. [laughs] I think you really couldn't prove it because they didn't have like a Hertz meter or anything.

BM: That is funny. Yeah, they were downtown though. Living downtown you gotta accept the consequences.

RD: Yeah, that's what I thought.

BM: What happened once you established the only original music rule?

RD: Well, it went pretty well for a while. Every now and then they did do the...What is that? The Kilroy song, that double where "Gotto is no roboto." The volume ended. A whole theme song. So, we let him do some theme nights. I was like, oh well, that's okay, but it really showed what was coming out. Like Tarkio. I actually had a band tape that Tarkio that used to play here who's now Colin [Meloy] in the Decemberists. I was gonna donate it to library, and my husband's like, that might be worth a lot of money. Let me see if I can sell that first. I'm like, okay, but if you don't, I'm going to give it to the library like this too. But yeah. I might have got off point for that.

BM: Oh, not at all. I mean, it seems like a lot of the bands were doing covers elsewhere. Why did you decide original music is the key here?

RD: Just having been in music performance school and being a musician, I composed some of my own pretty songs that I wouldn't play there. I could see what was going on in the rest of the country, like I was saying, Seattle and Portland. But I'm like, well, don't you think something's happening here in Missoula; don't you think we have a voice too and what the kids are doing. It was amazing. There was this band called godheadSilo. It was a drummer and a bass. Wow! Could they make some interesting sounds just like that. People do have a story to tell, and

when they can tell that story and you find some kind of commonality in it and they're like, wow, that means something to me, They're from a different place, and they're like, wow, we're not so different after all. It's a small world, and to have that interconnection with those other cities and make us a main stopping hub and making the other bands that can come, and that's really what did it. Making it other bands that can come and play original songs in Missoula, Montana, and have that be okay. Because on our website we had Jay's Upstairs Missoula, Montana, and I had this Native picture of the 1890s of Missoula with teepees and stuff, so people were like, oh! They didn't know what they were...they thought oh you guys got horses there? Yeah, we got horses and so on. Getting the acceptance of the local scene, so they would accept the touring bands, original music as well was key. Really key. Masterminding a music scene is fun, but like I said Gershwin, he's my man. Him and Mozart.

BM: And no one else is doing this at the time?

RD: No, no, everyone was...they're thinking well they want their bread and butter. They used to pay these cover bands 300 to 500 a night, and I was like, no way! I'm like, the national act just got 90 bucks, man, and the locals are getting 18. I'm not. So, it was a change where these bands had to be, well, 100 bucks is cool. We got five people, we just drove this much, we got food, we got beer. It's good. But it was a changing of the guards if you will—a shift from the cover band, pardon me, that kind of cock rock from the '80s and '90s and everyone dancing. Sometimes people stopped dancing, they just stood at the band, and yeah. The whole mosh would start. Fascinating. It was really fun. That was what I did in my 20s. Whoo!

BM: You talked about some of the types of bands that played there. What were some of your favorite bands, and also can you tell us the name of that Native hard rock band?

RD: War Cry was the name of that Native band, and they were awesome because I had the poetry reading and they had the band The Banned. Well, The Banned would dress up, like I said, Pat Flynn was in a kilt where, well, Brian, his friend was wearing a red teddy (?). The Native band was very upset with that, and I'm like, well, I can't help it. It has nothing to do with you. It's okay that's his outfit for performance. They're performance artists. They were all bent out of shape.

Then could you repeat that last part?

BM: Oh, your favorite band.

RD: Oh, my favorite band. Immigrant Savants (?). I really love them. I love The Reverend Horton Heat and then Tarkio, who became the Decemberists. I really, really like Tarkio because that's where my family's farm homestead was—their 200-acre ranch. I'm like, they named their band Tarkio, and then he changed it to the Decemberists. I'm like, I don't like you, Colin, but yeah.

BM: One of our other student researchers is hoping to do more on War Cry, and there isn't a lot of information written about them. What other memories do you have about War Cry?

RD: War Cry actually has something, when you go to Jay's Upstairs on YouTube you can see one of their videos, which I was very excited about and being a Native band about that. They're from the Salish Kootenai up there. Yeah, I think highly of them. Actually, my neighbor was dating somebody that used to hang out and go watch the band War Cry, and they just moved away. Having a Native voice and having a rock scene like that that they're really good. I did enjoy them, but you have to understand heavy metal. It's got a very classical format. It's all one four or five, so they think that they're playing metal, but they're actually playing classical. They just don't know it. The Reverend Horton Heat, I really enjoyed them as well, and I like my Cold Beans and Bacon band as well, and Tom Catmull, he's a good local singer-songwriter.

BM: Excellent. Was War Cry one of the few diverse acts that you saw at that time?

RD: No, they were they're pretty much straightforward metal, leather jackets, rock. I like to think a cookie monster is like, okay, wah, wah! Like they do. It amused me greatly, and they were hot too. They always were pretty to look at. [laughs]

BM: I love it. I'm getting a visual. That's great.

RD: Oh, I want to mention Oblio Joe's, Fireballs of Freedom, and Humpy. Humpy was very punk, but that's my sound guy. That's Justin, and he did some running of it later too. So I can't not mention [unintelligible] without mentioning those guys.

BM: Who brought in the biggest crowds?

RD: That's the biggest thing. Some of those people, Tarkio did amazing. Humpy, Oblio Joe's, Fireballs of Freedom, Spanker, Prosciutto, Mike & Rick—those guys, those were my main local people because they do things, like when they did the theme songs for the...what was that one with the "Fat Bottom Girls" [Queen]? They did that one too. Who was that? Oh, my goodness! Never mind. I'm not familiar with music...they are correct, I'm more familiar with music from before the 1900s than I am with all the modern music. But I could analyze it in the same way and be like, oh, that's this so. As far as this Jay's Upstairs *Ram It Home* album that I haven't opened. It's in pristine shape which is very exciting that's because it's punk rock. [laughs]

BM: You've heard enough of it.

RD: I had.

BM: You probably have heard all of this those tracks.

RD: Yeah, yeah. I was actually driving with my friend, and I was listening to a demo tape so I could analyze. She's like, ah, Robin, why are you listening to that. She's like, you don't have to.

I said, "Oh, I don't have to." I said I could listen to it, analyze it, write the bio, and then I can put in my pretty classical music. So, I would. Miles Davis in my truck right now, and that's jazz. That's a little modern for me.

BM: You're making this motion. Was this a CD or a tape at the time?

RD: Actually, that's funny I had CDs and tapes. Like the tape that I have from Tarkio and the Jesse Helmsmen is a tape. I'm like, well, can anybody even play this anymore that has a tape player? Yeah, I got demo tapes sometimes, and they just recorded that themselves and they turned that in so they could play there. That's why my husband was like, oh man, somebody might pay a lot of money for this. I'm like, really? My demo tape. I actually had all my demo tapes...had a huge stack of 300, 400 and I took them down to John at Ear Candy Music because he could sell those. He could use us. He'll listen to those and he likes those, and he ordered me a Spanish requiem that I liked because he knew I was classically trained. He's like, [whispers] oh, Robin you'd like this. Oh! Because he knows the secret. Other people, I didn't want them to know.

BM: What kind of a car were you driving at the time?

RD: I had a Volkswagen Bug. I had a '69 and a '71 Super Beetle, and I got over that quick. Now, I drive truck. I need a truck. [laughs] No more Volkswagen Bugs.

BM: What were your hours at Jay's?

RD: Oh goodness! I would get there at 7:00, and then I'd get home about 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. But no, like I said, all the stuff that I did on the side listening to those albums was on my time so it was 24-7. Bands would call me...Oh, Z100, let me tell you about them. I'm like, well, you guys know I work nights, and I would fax them the list for the radio ad. I swear they threw it away because they'd call me. I'm like, what's wrong with you people? I know I was a little [unintelligible], but I'm like, I went to bed at 4:00, it's 9:00, why are you calling me? I'm like, I faxed it to you and I had proof that I faxed it to them, but they didn't like me so much. But you go to bed at 4:00 and get called at 9:00 every week because somebody throws away the fax list, and I made sure I faxed it. They even had received, oh, you guys got the fax. Somebody's messing with me and threw it away.

Then on being punk rock this is something the downtown...on a different note the Downtown Business Association, we were a member with them. They would not list us. They would not list us as a member. No, no! they were very uptight about that, so we are paid member. We'd go and pay the dues, but as far as being listed Jay's Upstairs is a member in the...No, no. That was

too punk rock for them. A little bit of discrimination there. Not that I don't love Missoula, my downtown, because I'm a business owner now and I want them on my side.

BM: It became clear that the meals and the beer were part of the reason bands like playing there. Was there homemade soup in a crock pot?

RD: Yes, there was. Stephenie, who I told you, who I love more than Jay. She's awesome. Would make tortellini, she'd make homemade little sandwiches with little rolls, she'd make a crock pot of food. If they wanted pitchers of beer, that's cheap. If they want shots, that costs a little more so I'd be like, oh, yeah, just have a pitcher beer because the cost, keeping the cost down. Because in bartending, we could promo so much, and every fifth or sixth drink you could promo to the people. Well, people are buying; I'm promo-ing to the band. Keep them here, not promo it to the people, which is kind of bad. But they get every fifth one, and that'd keep that band happy and keep them coming in because we really couldn't pay them much. It was the free Pabst, and they wanted Pabst they demanded Pabst Blue Ribbon on tap. We had Moose Drool as well, but nope, and Pabst is cheap so I'm like, sure, a couple of pitchers, sure yeah no problem. You have all the Pabst you want.

BM: That was all bands pretty universally wanted the Pabst?

RD: It just became a punk rock icon, and I was like, when did Pabst become a good beer? There's still a big scene with Pabst in Missoula. I'm like, wow. It's the punker, the rockers, that did that too. Every now and then I see someone like, hi Robin, who I am? I'm like, are you one of my rockers? They're like, yeah. It's hard to remember it all. It's a blur of seven, eight years. I was in my 20s then out of college, so need I say more?

BM: Was it just chance that Pabst was one of the draft beers?

RD: They demanded an on tap. They had us take Full Sail off and put Pabst on, so it's Moose Drool and Pabst. They don't need that microbrew, and they paid a buck-fifty for a pint of that. I was like, okay, it's gonna be the same price as Moose Drool, but whatever. That was also key to...They want cheap beer, and they'll play? Great, we'll give them cheap beer.

BM: Can you explain to me when you say promo that fifth beer, so you were—

RD: Basically, when people are in a bar, they expect that every fifth or sixth drink, they might get kicked one back from the bar. Well, I give that to the band not the people. My husband said I never get a free drink here. I was like, oh I'm sorry. The downstairs bartender would sometimes buy him a drink because I would be like, oh, that's going to the band and get that till ringing. The sound guy Taj, he's Mary Place's (?) son, he's awesome. He's like, I always hear that till ringing when you're there. I'm like, yeah, I like that till ringing.

Had a couple problems with bartenders where Taj called me and was like, the till isn't ringing. I'm like, I'll be right down. Had to let a couple of people go, but that's why it's good that I didn't drink and that's another reason I could run the bar successfully. Now, I'm older, I'm supposed to have a couple glasses of wine. I'm like, oh, it's so hard. I had a one and a half drinks last night, and I'm like, oh, the doctor wants me to have this, but it was difficult. [laughs]

BM: You didn't drink at all?

RD: Well, at the end of the night maybe, but he'd get me Mountain Dew, he got me Squirt, he got me the fancy Schweifer Ginger Ale [Schweppes?] because I like my soda pop and caffeine, so he went and expanded the soda. I wasn't limited on my soda. You get a pack, a shift, your pack of cigarettes and all the soda I want. You get a drink too, but I would rather have...because yeah, I've got two beverages here. So, many times I'd have a Mountain Dew and I'd have a juice and I'd have my Squirt. I'd have several drinks, several soda pops.

BM: So, non-alcoholic drinks.

RD: Non-alcoholic drinks, yeah.

BM: You were probably the only sober one aside from the 18-year-olds?

RD: That I couldn't catch, yeah. Right, right.

BM: How important was having those 18-year-olds join the scene?

RD: It was huge because the youth and having the...we had the millennials coming in out of the age of Aquarius. They're like, yeah and they're entitled and they're like, they want this and they're happy. A couple times in the day, we even did all-ages shows, which I didn't show up to. I was like, I just booked them. I'm not going. They're a mad house, but letting the youth know that they're also part of this and they're included this and that their music can be heard and they have a voice and they can dictate even what the bands are going to write about. It was powerful, just riding the wave of the kids. Whoo! I was a kid though.

BM: How many other venues were allowing 18-year-olds at the time?

RD: Well, I actually did a bunch of work with the Boys and Girls Club to help them get a sound system so they could do all-ages shows, but there wasn't a lot of places doing that. So, I did a bunch of volunteer work with them, and we did some fundraisers to get them the system do that. I don't know if they're doing so much with that now, but there wasn't really a lot. I mean, you could rent the Union Club upstairs and do stuff, but not so much. That's the thing, it's just keeping space for the venues, for the kids to play, having a place.

BM: Was that age group also making music, or just into the music?

RD: They were. I had those 16-year-olds where their mom and dad had to show up because they couldn't be there otherwise. Oh, and then the punk rocker thing. This on another note of the youth. I don't know if I mentioned this before but there was a punk rocker named Emmett and he's on MCAT. He does all this little punk rock stuff, and he's really into it. He was like, Robin, I want to spray paint this, and how much do you pay me? I'm like, graffiti's free. If you want to do some graffiti, the youth, and they would and I wouldn't have a problem. as long as it wasn't bad, nasty words, they could add some art, no problem. So, yeah, art and music.

BM: When did they do the art?

RD: When I wasn't looking, down the back way where the bands would load up. They'd go and spray stuff. [sniffs] I'm like, I smell they're doing it and get them, but it's free art.

BM: I heard that there was an iconic—

RD: Oh, the mural. Yeah, that was "The Earth Is My Grave," and I got this from somebody. They're like, well, Robin, they're gonna get rid of this, and so they had that up there. But the coolest thing that we got is from Connie's. When Connie's was going out, there was Bob Marley, and there was this pastel that said "Uprising!" It has hands in the air. My rockers went over, took that off the wall, and carried it over, and put it up in my venue. It was there, I think, until the end. "The Earth Is My Grave" thing got painted over. They're like, it's kind of morbid, but I'm like, hey, it's a free mural. Yeah, I put it up, and I thought it looked good. If you actually go to the YouTube, you can see it. But somebody put it into firewood. I'm hoping that Bob Marley pastel one is still somewhere. It was lovely art.

BM: Describe a night at Jay's Upstairs in its prime.

RD: Well, we'd get there. I'd have a local would come up and take down and unlock it for me. We'd get a beer, and he would watch Walker Texas Ranger, and because that's what the deal was. They wouldn't let him watch it downstairs. He'd come help me open the bar, watch his Walker Texas Ranger. Hey, I like Walker Texas Ranger, no problem. Then slowly people would start coming in for happy hour, the band would be loading on in, and then the door guy would come and the sound guy would come in. Then, wow! My other bartender comes, and I'm like, well, I'll be right back. I'm gonna go take a break. I'd leave for 20 minutes and come back and be like, wow! The place is packed. Oh, she made good tips when I left. She be like, oh, yeah, go have your break. But I'm like, well, I'm gonna be here all night so if I don't get my break now I'm not gonna get it. Then people would slowly come in and the band would start and the happy hour. They'd want to buy a couple ahead. I'm like, well, I can't let you buy these all now. You can maybe get one and have one coming, but you can't be...you can't buy 10 drinks now and be, well, because they're only a buck and then hold them here because we're business. So, they get their one drink, and they'd have one on the side. We get up there, and they'd start their show as people go out there and 'whooh!' and stand in front of them with these ionizers. Because we

were conscientious about our health, and they didn't do shit. Pretty much you'd look across the room, and it'd be smoke everywhere. We had a ventilation fan. Then we had these Christmas lights that went around the circle, and it'd be little tracker lights that would go around the tree. Then we had some little cam lights and the sound guy wouldn't do much, but the second act would come on and he'd start doing some little light stuff and whatnot. They'd be like, Robin, bring us a pitcher. Buy a pitcher up there, and then mosh pits might start happening. I'd be like, well, the other bartender...I have to go to the bathroom eventually, and she's like, I just tried to go to the bathroom and I got groped a whole bunch. I'm like, well, you're not very good at mosh pits then. I said watch how it's done. I'm like, boom! I'm through, but they were kind of probably afraid of me because I got them booked. I could get over, go pee, and be back in no time. Sometimes it was kind of brutal. Then at the end I'd be like, okay, I'd be like, one more song, and the band would be like, oh. They'd keep playing. I'd be flashing the lights on and on. They'd be like, Robin! I turned the breaker off. Robin! So, I'd turn it on and let them play one more song, but they're past due the downstairs bartenders are going, Robin, we need to get these people out of here. I've got the drinks, trying to get them pulled, and the band won't stop playing. We put all the lights up, and then we dump all the alcohol out because it's after 2:00. Then we've got a bunch of people in there still, and they're all roadies and they all know the band and they all want to be there while the band's unloading. I have to be like, no. you have to go! You can't stay. Then the bands would unload. Then a lot of the people would go to the afterhours, and I really wouldn't go to the afterhours very much. I didn't really drink much. I want to go home and rest and do my thing.

BM: What were the afterhours?

RD: They were crazy after-hours parties that these rockers went to that they said, Robin, I'm glad you weren't there. You would have been offended. I'm like, oh my goodness! So, I am a little prude in that way being from Superior, but crazy rocker parties. I can't even say.

BM: Where?

RD: People's houses. After hours, they'd go, and then they'd be like, oh, this band. They'd be like, we just had this craziest time, and I'm like, I don't even want to hear what you guys did. I'm like, no, no, I'm going to my happy place. You'll see in there, Robin was nothing but a scenester. I'm grateful for that. If you said that I was a scenester, my grandmother would have read that and she would be very upset with me. So, no, my after-hours parties—sometimes I pop in for a little bit. They weren't rowdy like the rockers' parties. An example of it is coming and being like, oh, they're leaving with the people's phone. They're taking stuff out of the house. I'm like, hey, you guys, turn around, that's the phone. Grab it from them, put it back inside. Just over the top, yeah, 20-year-olds.

BM: So, that's just a typical night. Were the 50-cent earplugs a popular sell?

RD: No, I actually had a guy—and I really respect that he said this—because he would come in, and sometimes if it was a slow night, I'd have some classical music on. I'd have "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor" going on by Bach. He's like, "Robin, I'm leaving because no music that we can play can top this." He said, "I thought you were smart."

I said, "What?"

He's like, "Yeah, you're an idiot. You're an effing idiot." I was like, whoa! He's like, "Yeah, you studied music and this, and your hearing, your ears, you're going to be deaf." So, he gave me a pair of ear plugs. Then he told me to start selling them, and I got really good at, people would yell in what they wanted in my ear. It would just cut out the really high end. Hearing people with ear plugs in while I'm working. Because it would be painful, and I'm really grateful to him because I'm sure I've got some permanent hearing damage from that. As you age you can't hear the high and low sounds that the younger kids can. Yeah, I'm pretty sure that that guy saved me from being deaf. People would pay 50 cents. They'd reuse them too because that's a lot of money to them.

BM: But how much percentage of the clientele were using earplugs?

RD: About half. I really, really got like mama bear on them. Because after he told me that, I'm like, well, yeah, and because I'm a musician, musicians really want to hear their music. That's really important so yeah. Hopefully only about half of them are deaf now.

BM: Where would people pay their cover? Would it be at the bottom of the stairs or at the top?

RD: It's at the top of the stairs, so they'd actually have to...sometimes there would be a line going out and what not. We had Sharky (?). Sharky's still around. He's awesome. His name is Sean but he was my door guy forever, and then Justin and Taj and all those guys. Sometimes I found out later that, oh you let who in? What? But do the best that we can, but some of them young girls, ooh. Sure, they fake idea or something later; you can't do anything after the fact. But it's kind of scary. So, yeah, it's be going out to the street sometimes, backed up.

BM: I'm just thinking back to some of the scenes you described. This smoke inside of Jay's. Were you also just smoking as you worked?

RD: I smoked when I was in my 20s when I was there, and then I quit. I recently just started smoking 35 to 43. It was much harder to quit then, yeah. So, we were smoking too, but it was definitely, definitely very hard on the lungs. When you think about the secondhand smoke that everybody got in there, but that was back before they—this is the smoking section and this is the non-smoking section. That would be funny. Oh, okay! There's smoke everywhere.

BM: What was the reputation of the place?

RD: Like I said earlier when we were a member of the Downtown Association, I'd have to go to the meetings and I was like, I don't want to go to the meeting, Jay. He's like, oh, you got to go to the meeting. You're the manager. I'm like, oh, so I'd go there and they were nice and civil to me, but they would list all their members in the paper and stuff...They'd take our money, but they wouldn't give us our due time. They wouldn't write us down. We're kind of known as the punkers and stuff. But then we have the Top Hat and Steve Garr, and we had a really good relationship with him. He's doing his blues scene and his laid-back kind of jazz music. Sometimes I'd be like, hey, go send over for bottle of tequila, or sometimes he'd be like, hey, we need a bottle of Jameson. We couldn't exchange the money, but we'd trade a bottle back and forth. We had a downstairs bar too, but when the Top Hat's, they needed a bottle of Jameson, you'd be like, okay. It would be with the trusted regular that would take it over because you just can't send that with anyone.

We had this different scenes going on between the alley of two different bars but still friendly with them. Now, Stockman's hated us, I think. That's kind of funny. My husband's a rocker and he was downtown at Flippers, and he didn't have a coat. He put on one of my little half-shirt sweaters that he wore because he was so cool that he said that he took it off when he went by Stockman's because he would have got his ass beat. I was like, yeah. Same thing there. The western bars really weren't into it either. We didn't really have a lot of country-western; although, Louie Bond is amazing. He taught me from being a classically trained musician to being able to jam and write my own songs. I wish he would have played there because he's amazing. Yeah, yeah.

BM: When you threw out this example of the different liquors that you would exchange, is that a realistic that they would need the Jameson—

RD: And we'd need the tequila, yeah. Absolutely, absolutely. We'd need something like, oh, we need Jack and they needed high-end stuff. They needed Glenlivet. Okay, we got plenty of that. No problem. We need some well vodka. [laughs] That kind of thing.

Oh, we did raves later, and I actually had my friend, my best friend Shelly—she worked there with me—and she's like, you did it on purpose. You always get a headache every time there's a rave, and I'm like, oh no, no, I don't. She's like, yes, you do. I'm like, yes, I do, every single time. The techno, the mixing, kind of rapping kind of music. I don't mean to, but yeah, I always left. I always left. I was way more tolerable of the punks than I was of the techno, but we did raves too. She didn't mind when I leave because these people just drank water, and they tipped her. I think she was like, well, look at them. Her hand out. Yeah, it was very diverse even between the rave people and the rockers and the Indian rockabilly, everything. Yeah, Cold Beans and Bacon was kind of country, and they did play there.

BM: You talked about this too. Sorry I just want to make sure we're getting the full info, but what did the bands coming in and out of town make of Jay's and Missoula?

RD: Right. Like I said, we couldn't really pay them very much, but they really...we're like their mama bears. They felt like, oh, we're here. A couple times I'm like, well, yeah, you can crash on my floor. I'll make you guys a spaghetti dinner or what not, and they would be like, oh, we just love you. There's a band called 50 Paces and then they got to stay at our house, and they even contacted me years later oh how are we doing because they're kind of like family. That down-home hospitality of yeah we can't pay you well, but we're going to treat you well and treat you like kings and queens. That's another thing that The Reverend Horton Heat saw. We don't care if you're famous or not but we treat people well. We treat them how they treat me. So, I had some little rockers come with an attitude; oh, I got an attitude too, so they're like, whoa, okay, chicky we won't go there with you. I'm like, yeah, don't. Or you look in this the Jay's of our life, last call where I scream at bands. No! Because it was punk rock. They didn't know I was a classical musician. I didn't tell them. A lot of them will never know that. Well, they might know now, but we'll just let them think I don't know anything about music. It's best.

BM: Wow! How did the booking happen for out—

RD: They would send me a press kit, a really nice one. It'd be like...The local bands they had no idea, like, oh, I just go out and talk to her. But I'd be like, get me a tape or recording or if they didn't have enough people. There was one band only that I'm like, you guys really need to go practice for six months and then come back. Now, Sasshole didn't know how to play their instruments, but no problem because they had a following, and they got money. So, I've got no problem with that, because running business. That sounds bad, but yeah. They didn't know how to play their instruments. They're like, oh, we got a gig; we got to go learn how to play some chords. [laughs]

BM: They would know about Jay's because of this reputation that started to build or what brought them to Missoula?

RD: Yeah, the reputation. Well, we got listed in the *Pollstar* so as bands traveling through, they're looking for a stopping point between Seattle or to Vegas or they're over in North Dakota somewhere. So, we got word-of-mouth referrals. I actually had my little contact book that was just all these little scribbled things that I didn't...When I left Jay's I didn't give them. These are mine. No! Which is mean, but I think John took over or someone for me, so they could handle it. Yeah, the band's word of mouth and knowing that they're gonna be here and they're gonna get taken care of. Even if they only make 30 bucks we're gonna make sure they get some food and some gas, and they got a place to crash and they're gonna have a good time. So hospitality.

BM: That place to crash, how often was it your place?

RD: Yeah, I had roommates so not as often as I wanted. I think Justin the sound guy, I think he had people over all the time. His wife was really nice. I was like, man, my roommates are going to get me because they'll eat out of house and home. You're 20; you don't have anything like you do now. But it was fun.

BM: That's great. What was your reputation at Jay's?

RD: That's the interesting thing because, like I said, a lot of them didn't think anything of me. They had no idea I was smart or was classically trained or that I knew anything at all about music. Even now, I went to school for eight years to run a hospital, I run my sound healing business, and I'm cool if people think I'm crazy or if they want to think whatever about me. Doesn't matter to me. I guess a lot of naivety. A lot of them didn't really know me very well, and I really wouldn't really hang out with them very well. I was kind of raised middle class and from Superior so I was like, huh? Weird. [laughs]

BM: Yeah, it sounds like you weren't a pushover by any means.

RD: But I'm humble too. I'm humble. That's something even in my practice now, I can do these huge, big projects and things, but I'll be down to earth. That's another thing on the last question of being down to earth and being humble and just being a person. Treating people how they treat you, but doesn't mean that I want to get persnickety at people. Ripping them a new one, because you got to keep those little—as mama bear—keep those kids under control. Like the example I used of the fire department, that could have been really bad. I'm like, let me handle this. Yup, no refunds. Everybody's out. I screamed at them, and they left. If the fire department would have done that, I don't know what would have happened. It would have been bad or police presence up there with all those punks. I'll handle it. I'm just a...kind of have a hippie persona.

BM: Was there anyone else who worked there that could have made the same announcement and gotten that sort of cooperation?

RD: I think Justin could have—the sound guy—or Taj or Shelly. She actually had a guy from the downstairs bar throw a ball at her. Oh yeah, yeah. My bouncer was not happy with him. You don't want to do that. [laughs] It's dangerous too in that aspect, but they all looked out for each other. I never got hurt in the mosh pit. I actually got told—this is really sweet—that people, because I would walk home because I'm like, oh, yeah, nobody can hurt me, but people would stay and make sure I made it safe home. They wouldn't tell me, but they'd stand out and make sure and watch, made it to my car or whatnot. Isn't that...that's just Montana. That's lovely.

BM: How far was your drive home?

RD: I walked about a mile home. It was downtown on Main. It was over by Broadway and Scott, or even just making it to your car, standing out there and making sure you're okay there too. It's very, very, very nice.

BM: Were there dangers for patrons there other than second-hand smoke?

RD: Oh, yes. Actually, my last day there was a fight, barroom fight, to the point where I was standing in the sound booth and I was trying to see how many police I needed. I fell and ripped my tendons from my bones and relearned to walk. Then I was mad, and then I was like, whoa. They're like, whoa, Robin just cussed at us, and they're like, whoa. I actually apologized to them for cussing at them because they weren't used to me like that. It was really...they're like, so yeah. Those rockers—they were afraid of me that time, but that was a huge fight and I'm really actually glad, I guess, that I fell and got that stopped because it could have been bad. It could have been a lot of people hurt. But they were like, they stopped after that. Then I had to relearn to walk at 26. I had a cane. I was, just ran this punk rock club, and I'm like, oh, good. So, that was my Jay's days.

BM: What else was Jay's like as a social scene?

RD: They were like, man, those punkers thought very highly of themselves sometimes. They'd go on and they'd look at these other bands, like, eh, that they didn't like. Really kitschy and kind of trendy. Oh, and this is the best. Justin's like, Robin, I really love that nerd look that you're going for. It's really working for you. Good job.

I'm like, nerd look? I'm like, what are you talking about? I was like, oh, huh, this is just my clothes. I didn't know I was being trendy. I just was dressing like a nerd, and apparently it caught on, I don't know, which is kind of funny. [laughs]

BM: It worked for you. Did it feel like a community?

RD: It did. It really did. Even when I just stopped down to say, hey, John the university's going to be doing the music scene in Missoula. I said and I couldn't have them do this without including you. So, I stopped down and I said, "Breanna, here's the number and can you get a hold of all the old rockers because they might want to say something." Even if they say that Robin knows nothing about me, I'm cool with that. That's cool. They could have whatever opinion they want of me. Even now it's still close and tight-knit. He's like, oh, Josh May just stopped by, who was one of my bartenders too.

I'm like, wow! Regardless of what happened or anything, I'm like, give me a hug. I gotta go. I'm gonna be late for this recording. Just to have that.

He's like, oh, I know these guys and I'll get these guys. You pretty much could have a room a band, a bunch of different bands in a circle, and interview just telling you stories, which is lovely because they all want to come together and they all want to have it preserved. They all want to make sure that people know what can be done if allowed, if given the chance and the opportunity. Like I was saying when you have songs that Humpy had a "Blow Up the Butterfly" songs, but there's Oblio Joe's that says, "I don't believe in you," which is it's talking about well this god thing. You see me, but do I believe in you? It's just poking fun at that. Which I don't

want to come across like that because I love my god. Just amazing, looking back on it 20-some years later.

The fact that some of these people MCAT put on YouTube, you can put Jay's Upstairs in the internet or YouTube, and find videos from 20 some years later. So, I'm very proud of what the local musicians have done. I feel very honored to be a part of it. I'm really glad I made them do this because we have this for posterity. Even though I probably won't listen to it, I'm glad it's out there. It's wonderful. Being part of something like that that's bigger than yourself, and seeing what's happened and seeing people that were like, oh, yeah, I was at Jay's when I was 16. I'm like, what! I had my fake id and I remember you. I was like, oh, okay. Here I'm 40, and they're 30 something. Wow! But they'll come up to me, people, I'm like, do you know who I am? I'm like, no, are you one of my rockers? They might be or they might know me from some other facet of my life. It's just nice having that and being part of that. Then Jay and Steph, they were old. That was really cool of them to let me do that, so I'm honored by that too.

BM: That's really cool. I have a couple more too, if we're okay on time. It's about 6:15. What was it like being a woman in, what seems like, a male-dominated scene?

RD: Well, I figured out, and this took me a while, because yes I'm college and book smart, but common sense I guess eluded me, I'm like, oh...I said, oh those men are sitting in front of where I do the dishes because they can look down my shirt. I didn't know this. I figured it out. I was like you! So they're all—oh, none of them would sit there then because I was kind of feisty and being...No, I'm a hypocritical feminist. I want equal rights, but I also want you to treat me nice and be respectable. Like I said, the whole downstairs thing where they had adult videos on, and the owner has a picture of a naked woman and a snake in his office. You're like, oh, okay! Okay, good old boys. But that's where you work, and you're like, huh? So, going into that scene, I think I did okay with it. A little uptight and prude, but hey, Superior, Montana, that's where I grew up.

BM: So, you didn't play into the stereotypes to maybe enhance your tips or anything?

RD: Oh god, no. Actually, there was...It was a different Jay. Jay that had dreads—not the owner Jay—a guy went to put money in my in my bra, and he [Jay with dreads] grabbed his hand and was like, took the five and said thank you, and he walked that guy right out because it was a definite level of respect. This isn't like Fred's or anything. This is definite level of respect. We are bartending and people are drunk, but I keep them in line. They got to mind their p's and q's because I had a stun gun, and I also had a bat. I'd go [makes zapping sound]. They'd go, ooh!

Couple times not just being a male-dominated scene in the booking world, but with clients, I've had a couple clients that came in with guns and knives. I'm like, nope, you're handing that to me. It'll be right here, and when you're ready to go, I'll give it back to you. Because the old west kind of days and my stepdad Joe Raper (?), he made knives. I'm like, yeah, give me your knife. What are you doing with a Bowie knife? You're not sitting there at my bar with that, and

demanding that they have that from them. Then being in a man's world doing the booking was kind of fun. I think I used that to my advantage. Got them in for cheap, smiling, being nice.

BM: Do you think it was harder to convince Jay to let you do this very dominant managerial role even in the early '90s because you were a woman?

RD: Oh, yes, yes. Yeah, it really, really was, but he...I even have a letter of recommendation I was reading from, and he's like, well, but she could oversee and do this. I could maintain and be like, [makes a humming sound] because my mom was like that. Nope, nope. This is it. Like a judge would be. "This is it, and you will listen. So, with the crowd and everything, and he enabled me to do that. He could see that I could handle it, but it was a lot making that scene. Sometimes I would look out at everything that was going on in my club, going wow. I'm just like, everyone's happy so it's all good, just keeping everyone happy and that. Yeah. Steve Garr did the bookings. I think I might have been the only woman in town doing the bookings at that time. I never even thought about that. Wow! Cool. Yeah, so there's another thank you to Jay for that too.

BM: You talked a little bit about what the other venues were like in Missoula at the time.

RD: Yeah, we had Elk's Club, and then there was...What's that other one that was? I can't even remember. It's out of business now. The Union Club, Elk's Club—they could rent some places. It was the old... [pauses] Oh, I can't remember what that is? The Badlander. Nope, it's gone. It was where Rattlesnake Champagne used to play. It's kind of over by where the import market is and they have that one, The Bodega. The Bodega used to have live music, and it's a sports bar. What? Like they had the '80s bands and scenes, and they still had the places like Alberton and Superior, where I'm from, that were doing the western bands or the cover bands. I think it laid down a level of acceptance for those people doing the original scene at the time. Seems like we still have a scene now in Missoula which, yay, musicians! Yeah.

BM: That's great. You've talked about some of the craziest nights at Jay's. Can you share three of the craziest things? I don't know if you really told the raw chicken story.

RD: Okay. So, Sasshole was playing, and we had a full band and they had the guardrail up there. So, they start playing. They're three—

BM: Yeah, picture them.

RD: Their three chords that they know how to do and Kia we'd be like, aaah! That's her singing. That's the extent of her singing ability.

BM: Were they a physical attraction then or what—

RD: Yeah. They were a physical attraction. They're a girl band with attitude. They'd be like, f-you and this. Okay. So, they had the band, and they're screaming at them, telling them what punk girl bands do. They're pieces of this, and pieces of shit. Then they got the kitty litter. I thought is there actually poop in there? I didn't know. They could have actually put litter from what they were saying there in it. Then when the raw chicken came out, they're just throwing, and there's people in the audience with chicken coming off of their face and there's litter sticking to their head. The aftermath after everybody left just looking out at it and being like, and they knew I was mad at them. I was like, ooh! My mom would have got me for doing something like this, but they did actually—they had to pay it.

The other really crazy thing that we had in there was when we had...what was that? Seven bands in there, and fire marshal came up. It was pretty crazy then too, and we had to get everybody out.

Some of the Fireballs of Freedom shows where you look out, and it's waves—

Oh! Maggotfest! Oh, my gosh! The rugby players would rent Jay's Upstairs for Maggotfest, and what Maggotfest and rugby players are, that means that they play their football or rugby football and they get really drunk. But they do this thing that I don't even know if I can say in public, because it's like they would drink and stuff, but they would go and stand behind each other and get in this little chain thing where they're touching inappropriate parts and walk around kind of weird little elephant thing. Maggotfest. That was another time where I'm like, well, I can't get across the floor without being groped. I'm like, you're gonna get groped. If you have to go to the bathroom, accept it. It's gonna happen. Get in there and get out as quick as you can because there's nothing I can do about it. There's pretty much Maggots everywhere. Wow! Now, the Maggots were much...Well, they would handle their own. If they had any fights or anything, they handled everything all on their own. But that was scary compared to those punk rockers. That was scary stuff, the Maggotfests All these athletic type jock people in there in the punk rock bar. Wow! That was crazy. I can't even believe I forgot that. Can you even imagine?

BM: Did they rent it when musicians were still playing?

RD: No, they just had a party, and it was crazy. Yeah, it was crazy music, and it's just that many rugby players, yeah.

BM: That was probably an annual event, or was it multi-days?

RD: It was an annual event. They got it one day a year, and they trashed our place. But they were good. They were up and downstairs. They kind of took over the whole bar.

The other thing that was really crazy is Halloween because you'd realize that how are you gonna card people. Pray that the cops are nice to us tonight because you got people dressed

up, everything. You can't tell even if they have an ID. I mean, pretty much it would be crazy, so the Halloween nights would be awesome. Then the New Year's Eves that we did were also really, really wild, where, like I said, you got all the alcohol away but it's 3:00 and everybody knows the band so nobody's leaving. Like, you guys, you gotta go. You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here. You've got to go. You've got to go, you guys. Just that. Just looking at it at the end of the night and being—it's like, wow.

What I'm most happy about with all those crazy shows that happened and everything that went on there is the fact that it kept going on. That venue, that having crazy bands all together, just completely diverse kept going and kept working for years. It's still affecting the scene today. Like I said, when I went on the YouTube and the internet, I'm like, huh? It was nuts.

BM: Quick follow-up. Was there a countdown to the New Year that everyone would participate in, or did it just kind of all of a sudden it was the next day?

RD: There was a countdown and everything, but I mean, there had to have been like 250 people in that little, little place. Just got crazy packed to the point you can't even control it. Realizing when it was like that, that it's kind of like—I watched the Woodstock documentary and they were talking about, well, you guys are so good and you're doing this and that. Woodstock the same thing. They could have had the potential where it could have been crazy rioting stuff, but the people there, they were all crazy but they took care of it. They maintained, and not too many people got hurt and had a good time. We got some great stories to tell from it, and it was fun.

BM: Can I have you really quickly do a stream of consciousness things that you saw bands throw out into the audience? A list of items that might have been thrown since this seems to be a thing?

RD: Drumsticks, beer. I think they've been barfed on. We had the kitty litter. We had the raw chicken. We had ice. Clothes. We actually had a band spank the audience. They had to line up to get spanked. So, spankings were thrown out there. It was Cindy from Spanker, and she had a riding crop. She hit them hard. That was getting thrown out on the audience, and they were taking it. I was like, wow!

BM: A riding crop?

RD: Riding crop. We had a lingerie show up there too once, only once. That was crazy as well. Yeah, I think anything they could find: ashtrays, cigarettes, broken guitars. My friend Shelly actually has a broken guitar that they threw at the audience, went flying out, she got the piece of it, and she made it into a clock. She has it in her upstairs bedroom still to this day. So, it can be dangerous. I've seen them throw their whole set, just everything on the set, just destroy it at the end. That was probably the...I'm like, oh, I guess they're done playing, and they were. Anything goes. Never a paper airplane. That would have been appropriate, but no.

BM: Is there a Fruit Loops story?

RD: I can't remember, but I think there was some Fruit Loops. Tell me about that. I think it's really a blur of seven years of a huge party.

BM: I think I read some night where a band had thrown Fruit Loops out, and simultaneously, a patron had lost her wedding ring.

RD: Yes! Yes, that did happen. You have to be like, wow! Really! I don't even know if she ever found her wedding ring, but you have to be like, really? It's one of those things that couldn't it have been Captain Crunch, couldn't it have been Chex Mix? Nope. Yeah, that's fantastic. A lot of the things I didn't even get to really hear about what happened in the crowd afterwards because I'm kicking them out. I mean, the public and the bands, those guys have some stories. Stuff I probably don't even know that they did. I saw some things about the cooler. I'm like, what were you guys doing in my cooler? Oh, I don't want to know. I'm sure it was illegal. It was. Yeah.

BM: It was yeah did you ever have to do the cleaning up?

RD: Microbiology ruined my life when I was in college, and if I could ever go back in time and not have taken that, that would be something I would love to do. With that being said, like I said, I would arrive and I would clean after it had been cleaned because it wasn't clean. I would be like, [makes squishy sound] to the floor going, hmmm. Sometimes you'd be, like, everything was just drenched and spilled drinks to the point of being—there could be a foot of water on there. Yeah, it was icky; it was icky. The Loft is hoity-toity, so it was really weird that they went from punk to that. I'm like, oh. I've never been at The Loft. I'm like, no, I don't want to ruin it. I'm gonna keep it how I remember it.

BM: Interesting. How did Jay's change over time from the early '90s to the 2000s? It sounds like it sustained its original scene for a really long time.

RD: It really did. It went from the karaoke and the cover bands. Then about '92, '93, boom! I got to hit into the original scene, which was slow moving, but then I saw things on YouTube of 2003. And when did this stop?

BM: 2003.

RD: 2003. Yeah, when the last call for the Jay's of our lives. They did a bunch of reunion parties, but I was too cool to show. Although, I do still see my rockers, like John. I'm like, oh hi, the university's doing this; can we include you in it? It's going to be great because if anyone can get them all in line and have some stories to tell from different bands—maybe not as long and in-depth as me—they've got some stories. I'm sure they do, yes.

BM: What was the time period that it started to garner a reputation outside of Missoula? Was it with that article that you said...what was that called again?

[pause]

RD: There were several articles in *The Kaimin* and the *Missoula Independent*. In '96 it really, really hit; '95 actually was really sweet, but in '96 we got a bunch of awards. Best place to hear rock and roll. I got best bartender. I was doing throwing things up in the air, which I won't do anymore, because I'm like nope I'm not doing it—the cocktail thing. We got best place to hear alternative music and rock and roll and mosh. They were getting awards up until 2003. Did I answer that question?

BM: Yeah. That was just when it started to get its reputation.

RD: Yeah, I think '95 about really when we got a lot more touring people in where we'd have regular. In the winter, it got hard because of the snow. We actually had a band that got stopped at Canada because they had a cannabis seed in their van, which is felony in Canada. They would have been better off if they would have had the product, but no, they had the seed. We got called by the customs because our band was not coming, and they are not getting out anytime soon. I was like, oh, you guys! [unintelligible].

Then this is on a different note, but we had a band that came from Australia, and they loved vodka cranberries. Normally, I wouldn't let bands have that, but cranberry juice, they can't get it down there. They can't export it or import it in. Yeah, that Australian band—can't remember their name—got vodka cranberries. They were so excited. I was like, wow, that's weird. Can we not get something in Montana that they can get in Australia? I don't know, but okay.

BM: When did you part ways with Jay's?

RD: That was in 2000. Yeah, I had a fall. That's okay though because they helped pay for my education. Hey, eight years college. Whoo!

BM: Was that the fall during the fight?

RD: Yes, yeah. I had to relearn to walk about a year and a half. I had a cane. It sucked but got even more educated. I got to crawl around my house and look at videos and art videos. I'm a happy person so I was like, oh, okay.

BM: How soon after the fall did you decide to leave?

RD: It didn't go well after I fell. They fired me after seven years, but I forgive them. It's okay.

BM: I don't want to press too much.

RD: They had their one of their family members that played a bunch of originals, which they weren't allowed to, and I had a problem with it. I told them no, and that didn't go well. But when you make an original scene and just because they're related, I got big balls, so maybe I shouldn't have said that but I still stand by it. I still stand by that. Nope, your little nephew kid can't play all covers. I've worked really hard on this for you. I wish them well so. I walk really well now, and I got eight more years of college out of it and run my own business. Yeah, they were okay to me in the end. You don't want to do that to someone if you have someone because you gotta pay for their education.

BM: So, it kind of happened all around the same time there was the fall, but did they justify letting you go?

RD: Yeah, I don't want it to sound ugly, but yeah, they paid for my college. I got a settlement because you don't want to have somebody working for you for seven years and then fire them. That's bad. Even people tried to say stuff about me, but I stand by how I ran it. I was 20 and I was feisty, and if somebody's going to play a bunch of covers, I'm going to rag on them. Worked too hard for that. Even on myself, I make myself write original music, even though I have some 14th century pieces that I redid and they're my own arrangement of it. But I only have a few covers of 14th century pieces. Yeah, I do wish them well, and I think it was a good time for me to part ways. Because it let some other people have the opportunity, and a lot of them thought they could do it and they're like, oh, this is really hard. They went through several people thinking they could do it, but they got some good people in there and they did a good job. I'm proud of what they did, and they could maintain it. I wish it was still going on.

BM: Yeah, that being said it only lasted three years after you left. [laughs]

RD: I know. I know. That's okay though because they're still doing music, and there's still a scene. They're still playing out, and now we have YouTube.

BM: That's true. You talked about a little bit about what you do now. I love that sound has been a common thread, but can you share more about your business?

RD: I do vibrational sound therapy. I'm a sound healer, and I do energy work. I'm actually working at starting up a little school and doing this. Right now, I'm kind of a snob like I was at Jay's, so I have a business, but I'm not open to the public. [laughs] I teach by invitation, and I have a few clients that I work with that afford me a good enough life that I don't have to have that. I'm actually learning throat and overtone singing, and I'll be teaching this to my advanced students where we're going into some compositions. We do a lot of work with the singing bowls and sound therapy, which is what I wanted to do when I first started studying music is to do music therapy. Here, I went full circle. I've got to run a club like Gershwin, then I got to...I studied medical coding and billing and how to run a hospital. Didn't want to do that. I've

become a sound healer, and I've also been trained as an herbalist, so I've gotten everything I wanted to do since I was a little girl done. Now, I just have to record my album next month, and I'm trading sound healing for that. I'm very excited to do that. Even though none of the rockers might not like it, it's going to be beautiful, pretty Celtic classical contemporary music with a folk edge, delving into jazz and blues. It'll be fun.

BM: That's so cool. What do you think Jay's legacy is in this town?

RD: Well, the LaFleschs have been around a long time. They had Marvin's bar, and Jay LaFlesch, he's known as a good businessman. He's known to take care of some of his employees and to be good to his family and to his patrons. Like I said, I feel really honored that at that age that he allowed me to do that because I was pretty spitfire too. Told him, "You sexually harass me, Jay, I'll get you." He's like, whoa, Robin's like...I'm a hypocritical feminist, no problem. I got no problem saying that. He was very respectful and always nice to me, but Stephenie, she's the shit. I still like her best.

BM: I should have also rephrased this because I also want to know just the legacy of Jay's Upstairs. I just said Jay there. But about that time, that special decade in time, what is the legacy that that lives on?

RD: I think it's just that the music's going to be heard that...What I have here. This is Edgar Cayce. It says, "Mythology is a song." If Jay's could be like a myth, then the song that they made continues on, almost, if we're gonna go in the Cayce, esoteric direction, why not? Letting people know that they have the power, that they can take and create something, and they can move it into a format that can be heard by all, and they can actually make something concrete that can be played back. So, here and now, we have a little segment, a little sound sampler if you will, of what was created then even though some people have passed. We've got Ferd (?), and we've got Chuck, and we've got these musicians that were with us and they're not with us anymore. But we can look back and we have those memories, and we have those songs. Lo and behold, somebody's gonna pick up the song and keep it going, even if the song changes that's okay because it's a good song, yeah.

BM: Beautiful. That really ties in with just my final question, which was what should people 100 years from now remember about the '80s and '90s?

RD: Again, Edgar Cayce "mythology is a song." The myth of the '80s and '90s, were we really here? Yes, we were. We have the song to prove it, and the song changes. The youth comes along, and they carry that song on. It's just the people [unintelligible] out there, rocking on yeah, 100 years from now. We are here, and they were here, and they did impact it. It's not going to ever be the same again because their voices were heard. What I do with my singing is when you have a vibration that's released that changes, and we know from physics that we affect the realm. So, those songs that went out from their heart, their heartfelt songs, affected

the audience, and it affected those other people that they came across. Therefore, it affects the world.

BM: Is there anything else? That's an exclamation point on the conversation, but anything else that you think we need to capture at this moment in time about this?

RD: What I really, really want is all my rockers to get together, and you've got John Fleming, and to finish the song that I've started with you and to bring that to a finale and the final cadence and let them put that icing on the cake and see where that goes. That's gonna be the end piece there. The finale. Who!

BM: Robin, I'm gonna let you off the hook here. Thank you so much.

RD: Thank you.