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Oral History 098-019
Butte Oral History Project
Interviewee: Marjorie Dunstan
Interviewer: Helen Bresler
Date of Interview: April 23, 1980

Helen Bresler: Do you know when your parents or your grandparents came to Butte? You said they came in the 1800s?

Marjorie Dunstan: About 1890.

HB: And how come they came to Butte? Do you know?

MD: No. My grandfather...well I guess my grandfather came from Norway. His brother had come here previous to that time and he was a rope man in the mines. He sent for my grandfather to come out and join him. He was a rope man in the mines also.

HB: And your family stayed here, so they must have liked it here.

MD: Yes, I guess so. There were a lot of Norwegian families here at that time, so they felt like it was home.

HB: Was there a real Norwegian community with their own festivals and that sort of thing?

MD: Yes, uh-huh.

HB: What was that like?

MD: Well, they used to—I've been told about it. They met at the Gold Hill Church; it was up on Copper Street, Copper and Alaska. It still stands there now. They used to meet there and have Ladies Aid. The minister at that time, I believe my aunts told Mr. Koch all about it, the minister was a shoe repairman. He used to conduct church services on Sunday and anyone who came from Norway he was kind of the center of—they would contact him and then he would keep in contact with their families. They didn't get a chance to write home or were too busy doing one thing or another why, he'd keep in touch with the families back in Norway. It was more or less a Norwegian community all of its own.

HB: Did the Norwegians all live together in a certain part of town?

MD: Not to my knowledge. I don't know where it would be.

HB: What do you remember about your parents and living at home? What was your home life like?

MD: My father died when I was two years old so I don't recall too much about him. He worked...when my mother and father were married they lived at the substation at Divide, which was later the Montana Power Company, I believe...1906...well, they were married in 1906, and I think the power company was formed around 1908. He worked there all his life. I can't remember too much about him. He died when he was forty-two years old. My oldest brother was then seventeen years old or eighteen years old. Montana Power gave him my father's job at the substation that was on Montana Street, still is on Montana Street. He worked the same job until he was forty-two years old and he died the same way, which is a bit odd.

HB: After your father died, did your mother have a hard time taking care of the kids?

MD: Yeah, my oldest brother I said was seventeen years older than me; he must have been nineteen when my father died, because he was seventeen years older than me. He supported the family. Then my second brother—lives in Missoula now—went to work for Montana Power and between them they helped support the family. But during the Depression my mother did go to work at the sewing room when my two brothers married in the early, very early 1930s. My mother went to work at the sewing room which I suppose is what more like what welfare is today but they at least worked for their money; now they can just do nothing to get the money, to get help. I remember I was in grade school and the man would come around once a month to see what supplies you need and I'd just—she'd be at work and I'd just tell them we needed everything that they had. Seemed that we got more than anybody else because I just told them yes to everything that he asked.

HB: Did a lot of ladies do that?

MD: Oh yes.

HB: Was it like—did she go somewhere to do that or was home...?

MD: No, W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] it was called. They had a building up on North Main Street. They used to go up and (unintelligible) at Main and Granville. It was a huge building up there and they used to go up there every day. They'd cut out dresses and aprons and things and then they'd sew them and make them. Then they were given to the needy families.

HB: Oh that's a good idea.

MD: The men worked on W.P.A.—the creek that runs through—Silver Bow Creek... Just a creek in the dirt and the mud...they put the cement rickrack, I believe they call it, on the sides of the creek. That was a project that the W.P.A. did. They also worked on the hill...the road out—the Old Nine Mile? A parting way. That was a project of the W.P.A. too. The men worked on jobs like that.

HB: So the W.P.A. did a lot of stuff here in Butte then.

MD: Oh yes. I think most people worked for it. Almost everyone I knew did. I was about twelve years old at that time.

HB: Was that because so many of the miners got laid off during the Depression?

MD: I suppose it was. There wasn't any work around. Butte is—the mines are the main industry, so I suppose that was the reason.

HB: Where did you go to school here? What school?

MD: The Monroe grade school and then I went to the Butte Public High School. Just a second... (moves away from microphone, addresses someone) Gerald's not here. He's out playing. He's gone with Laddy. Okay Aaron. (returns to interview) I was in the first class that—the new Butte—the Butte High School as it is now up on Main Street was completed in 1938. My brother—I had a brother who died when he was thirty-two years old—he was four years older than I. He started in the new high school when it opened right after Christmas. It opened the first of January 1938. He was in the first class to graduate from that Butte High School. At that time grade schools had half years; you could go from September to January or from January to June in grade school. I graduated from grade school in January, around the middle of January. I started that new Butte High School in the middle of January. He was in the first class to graduate and I was from the first freshman class to move to it.

HB: Did you like going to school?

MD: Yeah, I enjoyed school very much.

HB: Were there a lot of clubs or anything like that that you could go into?

MD: We had a very attractive high school band that Mr. Sheezer (?) from Glasgow came to Butte and he was very stern and very strict and they said that he'd never stay in Butte, that he wouldn't get by being—with so much discipline as he was used to putting out, but he built what was supposed to be the best high school band in the Northwest. Ended up going to the Rose Bowl game; not the year that I was in it, but the more years he was here. I was in band for four years. It was about a hundred and fifty piece band at that point.

HB: Gee.

MD: That's when they first started twirling. They'd never heard of a twirling corps before around Butte. His wife taught twirling and they had drum major and twirlers. Mr. Kilmer... Kilber, Mr. Kilber (?) had a Butte High School girls drum corps. That was about a hundred piece girls drum corps too. That was about the last—well, '38 to '39 was about the last year they ever had the girls drum corps.

HB: What instrument did you play?

MD: French horn. I didn't know how to play anything before I went to school and they—if you were interested, they would teach you.

HB: Did you march in a lot of parades there with the band?

MD: Oh yes. Every holiday there's a parade and then in March each spring there was a wonderful band concert. They put it on four days and it just packed the auditorium every night.

HB: I've heard that Butte had some really wonderful parades on St. Patrick's Day and the Fourth of July and stuff. Do you remember those?

MD: Fourth of July they always have...I don't recall on St. Patrick's Day, maybe that's because we didn't take part. I belong—I'm very active in Norwegian culture and Norwegian lodges. We have a Daughters of Norway Lodge here and they are mainly on the coast. It's a national organization and they can't believe that St. Patrick's Day—I tell them that St. Patrick's Day is practically a national holiday in Butte and so many of them never even realized there was a St. Patrick's Day! (laughs)

HB: (laughs) That's funny. Then there still is a lot of Norwegian community here or Scandinavian?

MD: Not near as many as there used to be, but there's two churches that—Gold Hill used to be considered Norwegian, however...I was talking to Pastor Jones the other day and he said there's very few Norwegian families actually going there. Gloria Dei used to be Emmanuel Lutheran up on Montana and Silver Street. When they moved it on the flat, why, they changed the name. When they rebuilt on the flat they changed the name to Gloria Dei and that's mostly Swedish. St. Mark's Lutheran is the German.

HB: By the time that you were growing up, you said you didn't really remember yourself any Norwegian festivals or anything. Had that kind of stopped? Or did they just never really do that?

MD: Well, they built Scandia Hall on South Main Street and it's still there. Very beautiful hall inside with the best dance floor in Butte. Five hundred block of South Main. All the Scandinavian organizations meet there or they used to meet there. The Scandinavian Fraternity, which still meets there, let's see...they call it the Brotherhood also. The Daughters of Norway met there and the Order of Runeberg, they meet there now too. They'd have festivals there, I know our Daughters of Norway have an anniversary every twentieth of February. They were formed in 1913 in Butte. My grandmother was first president. On their anniversary, they'd have lefse supper and dance and they'd serve over five hundred people. The Fraternity, when they had their anniversary too, all the Scandinavian people in the area would go. They'd also have lutefisk dinners, and the seventeenth of May is Norwegian Independence Day. There was always a big festival or celebration at that time. Several times of year they would get together. They still do. We get together with the Sons of Norway in Anaconda. Butte doesn't have a Sons of Norway any longer. They used to have, many years ago. We get together with the Sons of

Norway in Anaconda on the seventeenth of May the last three years and we'd have a celebration and banquet.

HB: Do you remember, did the Norwegians mingle well with other groups in the community? Was there ever a problem, you know, there was some friction with the Irish here for a while. Did that ever happen with the Norwegians?

MD: Not that I can recall...not in my time... It might have been earlier towards the beginning of the century.

HB: After you got out of high school, did you want to go on to college, or did you—

MD: I would have loved to go on to college, but we didn't have any money, for one thing. My health wasn't too good, so I wasn't able to go for the two reasons. I went to work for Metals Bank. Every girl that gets out of high school goes to work for Metals Bank to begin with...very good for training young people.

HB: Did you like it there?

MD: Yes, very much.

HB: What did you do after you worked there?

MD: Well I started in the (unintelligible) department and they gradually advance you through the Savings department, being teller, and then to the pay and receive teller. When I got as far as the pay and receive teller, that's the year I got married, so I stopped working. Then after two of my children were born, I went back and worked in the Time Pay department for a couple of years. Then I had two more children (laughs) so I haven't been back there since.

HB: What year did you get married?

MD: 1947.

HB: What was your wedding like? Did you have a big wedding in a church, or a little one?

MD: We had a church wedding. It was in the evening at Gold Hill Church. July 22nd, that was my father-in-law's birthday and my grandmother's birthday, so we thought that would be a good day to get married, which I'm not too sure, because every year (laughs) each of us wanted to spend the twenty-second of July with them. We seldom had the day to ourselves. My mother was in the hospital with a very bad heart condition. The doctor put her in a week before the wedding, so it was kind of hectic. We had a lovely church wedding and the whole wedding party went right from the church to the hospital so she could see us. She couldn't attend the wedding. I imagine there was around a hundred people there. It was a nice size.

HB: Did you have a reception at home or anything like that?

MD: No, at the church parlors. They had a recreation hall and we had the reception there. We got married at 7:30 in the evening and at about 7:15 in the evening, it poured rain. But then it cleared up nicely by 7:30. It was just one of those spot storms that we have. It turned out to be a nice evening. Nice wedding, but I just felt so bad that my mother couldn't be there. She died Christmas morning, our first Christmas morning we were married. So that always comes back. This house was built on lots...she bought a chicken ranch south of Butte in 1912. There were six lots here. At that time, it was out of town. As the years progressed, we wanted to build our own home, so we looked into the lots. They told me the taxes hadn't been paid in the early twenties, before I was born. I didn't have receipts showing that they were paid, so we had to sell four lots to get enough money to pay back taxes on the six lots. We kept the corner two and we built here in 1965.

HB: How did you meet your husband?

MD: It was an American Legion dance. They used to have dances. It was upstairs over the public library at that time. That burned and then they rebuilt the library. Since then, they've had so many fires around Butte. It just isn't the same town.

HB: I've seen pictures of some of the old buildings and I can't believe it was so different. After you got married, what did your husband do for his first job or was he working when you met him?

MD: He was working for Robinson, produce. They were a food produce company. He worked there for a year and then we went on vacation. We went to Yellowstone Park for a few days and then came back and he no longer had a job. They decided they didn't need so much help. At that time, he went to work for Wellman Motors as an apprentice parts man. Since that time, he worked for various companies and now he's manager of the auto parts store, (unintelligible) Auto Parts Store. He's been with them for 28 years. I worked the last sixteen years taking care of the card index at the store.

HB: What kinds of things did young married people do for entertainment in Butte?

MD: Played pinochle? (laughs) There were three couples, friends of ours that married in the same summer. The first few years we used to get together on the weekends, on Saturday nights, in each other's homes and play pinochle, visit, and go camping. When our children were small, we bought a camp trailer. You couldn't afford to stay in motels if we went on vacation and we liked to go camping anyway. So instead of packing up the tent and everything every week, we invested in a small camp trailer. We'd go camping at Georgetown Lake, or up by Townsend, White Sulphur Springs, Seeley Lake...

HB: So you travelled a lot around Montana?

MD: Yes.

HB: Did you ever think that you'd like to move away from Butte?

MD: Yeah, lots of times. When I first got out of high school, I'd have loved to have gone to a big city. I tried to go to Seattle, or I wanted to go to Seattle, but I couldn't get anybody to go with me. I thought if another girl and I could go to Seattle we'd have a grand time. Never developed.

HB: Since Butte has changed so much, what are the things you miss the most about the way Butte was when you were younger?

MD: Oh, I don't know. Times change too, so I really can't say that I've missed any of it too much. I mean, your interests change as the years go by. We used to never miss a football game, but since they have a new field over here at the junior high we haven't been to any. When our children were in school, we always took an interest and an active part. But when they're grown, all your interests change to other things. (unintelligible) and that takes up a lot of our time. We enjoy the Elks very much. We're in the Elks bowling league. We go to conventions and participate in the drum club.

HB: It seems like a lot of people here in Butte belong to organizations. Has that always been true?

MD: I believe so. I enjoy lodge work, I'm very active. Past Matron of Eastern Star, past president of the VFW Auxiliary, I should put a plaque of past presidents pins on the wall (laughs). But I enjoy people and I like being with people. I'm past president of the Daughters of Norway, and past Grand Lodge president of the Daughters of Norway. And PTA, and everything else... If you want something done, ask a busy person. I love to keep busy. I like being busy.

HB: I'd like to know something about the Daughters of Norway. Is it mainly a club to get together and preserve your culture? What is it exactly?

MD: It's a national organization. It was all over the nation, and then before I joined, the Eastern section of the United States separated from the Western section. I belong to the Western organization. It was called Daughters of Norway of the Pacific Coast for many years, but then we changed it to just the Daughters of Norway. There's eight lodges throughout the western United States: Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho—not Idaho—Nevada, and Montana. And it's women of Norwegian heritage...used to be Norwegian heritage, now they've changed it to Scandinavian. As generations go down, or there's fewer that are really Norwegian, and yet there's people that are very interested, so if they're Scandinavian descent, or even married to a Norwegian, you're eligible for the Daughters of Norway. It's to preserve culture and heritage of our country. We try to carry on customs and traditions. We have a Hardanger sewing and rotary class.

HB: Oh, what's that like?

MD: It's very interesting. It's on linen material—it's a form of linen—coarse linen. You have to count every thread and then it's stitching and like a cut work. You cut the threads and then pull them. These are all my Norwegian gifts. When I was president of the Daughters of Norway they gave me a couple gifts. This is Hardanger work along the edge, but there's no cut work in that piece.

HB: Oh, it's beautiful.

MD: It's very interesting. You have to count the number of threads...you gotta do four stitches. We have a class on Tuesday nights, teaching this. Last fall they had a class on Norwegian language at Butte High School. Several of us went to that, and they're going to have it next fall too, I hope. So we're going to speak. And then in December for several years we had a lutefisk dinner, cooking the traditional lutefisk and lefse. There's only about—well, we have thirty-two in our Daughters of Norway in Butte, but there's only about twelve that are actually able to help do the work on this. We're very interested in getting younger members, because as our older ones—the ones that are really from Norway—as they get older and disappear, you know, pass away, we don't have too many to carry on. So we are hoping to get new, young members. So we had the lutefisk dinner and it was very successful, received very well, a lot of people came to it. More and more every year came to it, but it got so many we just couldn't handle it. And then the price of the fish has gone up so terribly high, and we have, the last two years, instead of having our banquet, or dinner, we've had a baked food sale. So starting in October of each year, we get together every Monday night and make meatballs, and freeze them, and lefse, and flatbread, and all the Scandinavian cookies, and then the first week in December we've been having this food sale. Christmas cookies and Christmas breads, and all these, and this way we can have the fellowship of learning to make all of these, and how they're done. Most of these things, you have to see how they're done, rather than reading them out of a book. You can't just get them from a cookbook.

HB: What is lefse? I've always heard people talk about it but I don't know what it is.

MD: It's a mashed potato, made from mash potatoes, rich mashed potatoes with cream and butter in them. And then you cool the potato and you thicken it with flour, and then you roll it out like a pie crust almost—very thin, as thin as you can get it. Then there are the big grills, three or four times the size of the pie tin, that you have to cook it on. A special grill. Used to be they cooked it right on the top of the stove, when they had flat-top coal stoves. But since most people don't have those anymore, you have an electric grill that you cook it on. And you turn it like a hot cake, and cool it. And it's real good with butter, and cinnamon and sugar, and you roll it up. It's kind of like pie, and then it's a thrill to cut it up and eat it.

HB: Sounds good.

MD: It's very good. And then flatbread is really quite similar, only there's whole wheat flour in that. And that's rolled paper thin. There's no mashed potatoes, that's whole wheat flour and water and that's rolled paper thin and it's real crispy.

HB: Is that plate up there, is that rosemaling?

MD: Yeah that's Norwegian painting, right, rosemaling.

HB: Do you do that too?

MD: I don't know how to, but there is a class of Norwegian people in Anaconda now who are doing it. Now that they've learned, we're hoping that some of them will come to Butte. A lady in Tacoma made that for me.

HB: My mother does rosemaling. She really likes it. We're Germans, but we think that Scandinavians do pretty neat stuff so she started taking a rosemaling class. That's really nice.

MD: The president of the Tacoma lodge last year (unintelligible) and a lady in Tacoma who teaches rosemaling made that for me. I'd love to learn how to do it. That's our next project, to learn rosemaling.

HB: Yeah, it's real pretty. I like the colors too, it seems like they use certain colors, like this kind of blue and the rust and brown.

MD: I understood that originally—I don't know if it's still true or not—they take it from vegetables, it's vegetable dye.

HB: That's probably true. (pause) What other kind of special things did Norwegians do? Did you have, besides (unintelligible) did you do special things for Christmas that were different from what everyone else does?

MD: Well, there's twenty days of Christmas in Norway. Our Christmas tree usually didn't go up until the twenty fourth of December, and my mother never took it down before the thirteenth of January. I don't (unintelligible) either. I was born the sixteenth of January, and the year I was born, I was told, the Christmas tree stayed up till after Easter. As long as she didn't take it down no one else bothered to (laughs). And then lutefisk is a Christmas Eve food; my family has never quite gone that strong on it, but that's Christmas Eve dinner (unintelligible) in Norway.

HB: How come Christmas lasts twenty days? Do you do a special thing every day or anything like that?

MD: Oh, I think in Norwegian history—I don't know too much about the history—but there is, I imagine, something every day.

HB: Do your children still live in Butte?

MD: Two of them, and our youngest son is graduating in May, May the 11th, from Montana Tech, in Petroleum Engineering. And our daughter is here, she works for Montana Power Company. Our oldest son's been in Billings for five years and he just moved to Sydney, Montana Sunday. He's going to see if he likes the job out there; the company transferred him

from Billings to Sydney. Our second son is an electrical engineer of physio-control in Redmond, Washington.

HB: And do you think that they are carrying on their Norwegian heritage?

MD: No, they could care less. My daughter belongs to the Daughters of Norway, just because I want her to belong, I think. But so far, it seems young people don't take too much of an interest, and then all of a sudden they realize that maybe they should learn something about it before it's too late. I was the same; I didn't belong to the Daughters of Norway. My mother and grandmother always were Daughters of Norway. My grandmother was the first president, and my mother was very active. And then when my mother died in 1947, my grandmother had no way to get there, up to the lodge, so I joined so I could take my grandmother. I'd say up till that time I had no interest in it. But I think you have to reach a certain age before it dawns on you that you should really take advantage of these things so you know something.

HB: When you were growing up, do you remember any of the other ethnic groups in Butte and the special things they did?

MD: No, I never paid much attention. I don't think there were—there might have been others, but it was only the last few years that you heard about ethnic groups. I'd say the Irish and the Serbians are both very strong groups, but I wasn't acquainted with any of those people enough to know what they were doing.

HB: Do you think that was probably true of them too, that everybody knew about their own little group but (unintelligible).

(End of Side A)

(Beginning of Side B)

MD: (unintelligible) Serbian church over here, and the Welsh church that's up on Dakota Street, Dakota and (unintelligible). My grandmother used to tell me that when my oldest brother was little, his other grandma and grandpa, on his father's side, used to take him to church but they used to give him a nickel if he wouldn't sing so loud (laughs).

HB: Were churches pretty strong in Butte?

MD: Partly they were because Butte is a melting pot, like New York City, and I think that was a place for people to get together, keep in contact with people from home.

HB: Did people mostly stay in the church they were born into? Or did people switch churches very often here?

MD: I think years gone by, they each stayed in their own, but the last several years the way it's gone...well, like, Catholic people. There's a lot of Catholic people in Butte and they used to be so strict. You know, they all had to marry within their church or they weren't considered

married and I don't think that's true any longer. Each generation lessens that. They're not nearly so strict as they used to be.

HB: How did people in your church go about that? Did they want you to marry within the church too?

MD: Well, it wasn't preached to us. (Marjorie Dunstan's youngest son, Steve, enters, and meets Helen Bresler)

HB: What was your church service like? Was there any difference between the Germans, the Swedish, and your church service? Or the doctrine? What was the difference?

MD: Well, I don't know. I know the Lutheran Church is quite similar to the Catholic Church. The Germans—their church—are very strict. They still are. They don't believe in belonging to other organizations; they don't believe in dancing; I've never heard anything like that with the Gloria Dei or the Gold Hill.

HB: I wonder why that is.

MD: For years they refused to bury Masons.

HB: Oh, really?

MD: Gold Hill Church did. The minister there now informs us that that was merely the interpretation of the pastor at the time. I don't know why any order would be against the Masons because the Masonic Order is based on the Bible also.

HB: Have you ever been back to Norway?

MD: No, but I'd sure like to go someday (laughs).

HB: Do you speak Norwegian?

MD: No. I can understand some. We went to this class this fall and got a very brief—or, what do you call it—an idea of what it was really like. I hope to go back next fall and learn how to speak it more fluently. My grandmother and my mother used to speak it, but when we children wanted to learn it they'd say, "No, this is America. You speak American." And now we're all wishing that we had listened more and that they had made us learn Norwegian also. That's another thing that children don't pay any attention to until it's too late almost.

HB: You said your grandmother came from Norway. Had your mother ever been there?

MD: No.

HB: Did your grandmother ever tell you anything about Norway?

MD: Not too much about it. She came as a young girl. Her mother died when she was very young, I understood. She came as a young girl and she understood that there was no crocheting cotton out here in America. So she had a bustle and when she came on ship she filled her bustle full of crochet cotton. She must have had about 18-20 rolls of crochet cotton in her bustle to carry it out here. I'd love to know if I have any relatives in Norway now. My aunt is the only one on my mother's side that's left and she is 87, she'll be 87 next month, and she tells me that we do have relatives but she don't know their names. And if she can't tell me, I don't know just where to find out. Someone has mentioned that if I write to the church in the area where my grandmother lived, they keep very good records of families. So I'm considering doing that, I would like to know if I have any relatives there.

HB: What part of Norway is your family from?

MD: One was from Drammen and one was from Bergen, my grandma and my grandfather. I'm not sure which is which. I have it written down. I'd have to look it up. (long pause) And I've never ever come across anyone by the name of Knoile. K-N-O-I-L-E.

HB: That's an unusual name.

MD: Any place I've ever gone, I've looked in the telephone directory, never seen it. My father's people came from Wales, and I understood there were people there, but I've never heard of any. Then when my oldest son was in Vietnam, he went to Australia on R&R leave and I had him look in telephone books in Australia, and there's nobody by the name of Knoile. I'd sure like to find out someday if they ever find a Knoile.

HB: If you belong to Eastern Star, do you know Elizabeth Christy? I think she said she belonged to that once. What's Eastern Star? I'm real curious about all these clubs you used to belong to. I keep talking to ladies that tell me they belong to them and I don't know what they are.

MD: Eastern Star is affiliated with the Masonic Order. It's the wives, or the women, of Masons. Wives, daughters, sisters, mothers. I enjoy it very much. The organization is based on the Bible also, and it's to help other people and just a friendly social organization...to be considerate of others, and thoughtful.

HB: Several people have told me that for years a lot of these clubs would get together baskets of food and stuff for poor people. Were you ever involved in that kind of thing?

MD: No, but they do have a fund if there's anyone needy in the group, in the Order, that they would help. Rainbow and Joe's Daughters are girls organizations affiliated with Masons. Then DeMolay are the boys order affiliated with the Masons. I was going to say too that my family, my oldest brother, wrote music. He wrote "Beneath Montana Skies", "Cheerful Smile" and "You Made Me Want to Forget", "Sweetheart of DeMolay". He wrote them...when he was nineteen years old he wrote "Beneath Montana Skies" with another friend of his. There is an ethnic group in Laurel, Montana that called me and they sing just Montana songs. This lady is composing a book of the history of the writers. She called me about the information on him and

it's his high school graduation picture. I was in Helena, visiting the Masonic Home here a couple years ago, right after she had called me to get some information about him and told me about this singing group. When I went to the Masonic Home here was a group of women singing Montana songs. So I inquired if they were the group from Laurel, and they were. So I told the lady sitting next to me that my brother had written "Beneath Montana Skies". Well, about two songs later they introduced "Beneath Montana Skies" and the lady next to me interrupted her and she said, "The sister of the man that wrote that is sitting right here." So they had me stand up and they sang it to me. It was the most thrilling moment of my life.

HB: How wonderful.

MD: The year that I was Worthy Matron of Eastern Star, that's the president of the people, I featured that song also. So that has been more popular in the last five years in Montana than it has been since 1930.

HB: Do you remember at any time any strikes or anything like that going on in Butte?

MD: Well there's always a strike of some kind or other. I'm very much against unions. They're the ruination of our country. In their day they have helped people, but it certainly has ruined our town. Right now, I just can't understand it. In our own business, unions used to be to protect the employer as well as the employee. Not anymore. In our own business, we tried to meet with the unions and explain that if they raised the wages that they'll just have to lay one person off. That person will have to go without earning a living. Why not keep a more even scale and keep everybody working, so everybody can eat? They don't care; they could care less if one guy starves to death. I don't see it at all.

HB: Do you think that the labor trouble here in Butte affected everybody?

MD: Oh, yes.

HB: What was it like? Was it violent?

MD: Well at times it has been. It used to be that some workers would stay behind the fence during the strikes. Some strikes would last over a year. Some workers would stay behind the fence, they called it, they stayed and maintained the mines. Other strikers would go to their home and destroy their homes. I mean, there were fires and they burned different homes, or they threw eggs at it, and endangered the lives of the fellow's family. That hasn't been for many years, but I recall when there were times like that.

HB: Was it mostly miners on strike that got violent?

MD: Always miners. That was the main industry. Of course, since they've tried to bring other industries in, they're always pulling strikes too.

HB: Butte's pretty much all union, isn't it?

MD: Oh yes. Which, some people say it's done a lot of good, but I have failed to see it because my family's always been in the working—when I was growing up, my family was all Montana Power. There's never been a union in Montana Power. At least none that I ever heard of. There was never a strike.

HB: Did your father like working for Montana Power?

MD: I was two years old when he died but they're a wonderful company to work for. They might not be the best paying in the world, but they're sure good to their employees.

HB: Do they have good benefits and that kind of thing?

MD: I couldn't say for sure. They must have them. My brother in Missoula retired four or five years ago after forty-three years with Montana Power. My daughter works for Montana Power now and my oldest brother, like I said, died when he was forty two years old. He worked for Montana Power all his life. They're good to their employees.

HB: I've heard a lot of people say that they like Montana Power because they seem to hire people from here, whereas Anaconda started bringing in a lot of people from out of state. Do you think that's true?

MD: It seems like it. Most of your Montana Power officials are Montana people.

HB: How do you feel about the Anaconda Company?

MD: I feel sorry for them. I don't think they're given a fair chance. Every time they try to get going, why, there's a strike. I've talked to people that are employees and they think that that's the only way to go, look at all we've gained. Which is probably true, but on the other hand, look at all the damage they've done too. (phone rings) Excuse me.

HB: Some of the older people I've talked to can remember Butte being a real lively town. Was it pretty lively when you were growing up?

MD: Oh yes, it seemed to me there was, there was always a lot to do. My aunt tells me that at the turn of the century there were 85,000 people here in Butte. It just seems hard to believe, because every time a strike comes along, or they lay off more men, then more people leave town. It's just like I say, one strike after another. They'll fool around now, the same H.D. is supposed to be such a good thing for Butte, and so encouraging, and now they're pulling strike after strike. They'll fool around till they'll pull out of Butte too. They think businesses can put up with all of this, but you can't. You can't pay out more than you take in and survive. I don't know how the government does it. They won't one of these days.

HB: Do you think times are starting to be hard in Butte?

MD: I don't think so. I think people are making it sound that way, just like Paul Harvey says, if the news media keep quiet, I think we have to tighten our belts a little bit and...people have

been...living beyond their means for several years and I think we have to find out the hard way maybe that you just can't do that.

HB: When you were a little girl where did your parents live in Butte?

MD: On Front Street. I was born and raised there and lived there all my life until we built our home here fifteen years ago. Now my daughter lives there in the house where I was born.

HB: Did a lot of people live on the flat at that time or did most people live up on the hill?

MD: Most up on the hill. I'd say this was a ranch, chicken farm, south of town, quite a way south of town when I was little.

HB: And it's been pretty later that people have built this far out?

MD: Oh yeah, well, within the last...well, let's see. We've been fifteen years here. The country club used to be a big lake, Lake Avoca. I can remember Lake Avoca, I used to take the streetcar, there were streetcars in Butte and you could take the streetcar out there. That was a big day's ride to go out there and spend the day at the lake. Then Columbia Gardens, I suppose people told you about Columbia Gardens. That's a recreation park, but the A.C.M. just did away with it a few years ago.

HB: Did you go to Columbia Gardens very much?

MD: Oh yeah, every Thursday was children's day. You could go free on the bus, on the streetcar. Go off and pack our lunch, and they had a huge pansy garden and let you pick pansies. Three minutes you could pick pansies, and then almost kill each other get in through the gate and in to pick the pansies and then you'd have to go out and the next group could go in. But we'd always bring home a big bouquet of pansies to my mother.

HB: What other kind of stuff was out there? Was it real big?

MD: Oh yeah, it was huge. There was a roller coaster, airplane, and merry-go-round and concessions, a whole boardwalk, games and concession stands. There was beautiful landscaping. They had butterflies and harp and then they got pansies formation in this beautiful landscaping on the hillside, and then you go beyond that and there was a playground with swings and slides. Then the baseball field and the greenhouse where they grew all the plants. Up beyond, up to the north, there was a recreation pavilion with tables if it rained. There must have been fifty tables that fit in there. You could have a picnic under the roof and there was a big fireplace that you could have (unintelligible). The streetcar used to run every hour.

HB: Could you go just about anywhere on a streetcar?

MD: (affirms) They're very good cars. I would always get on the streetcar, you could get a transfer...

HB: How much were they?

MD: Streetcars?

HB: (affirms)

MD: Nickel...I think it was dive for donuts for a couple kids. (unintelligible)

HB: When did they stop running, do you remember?

MD: I couldn't tell you... I was in high school. I graduated from high school in '42. (unintelligible) I suppose around 1950.

HB: What was it like here during the war? I've heard that a lot of men didn't have to go because they were working in the mines. Is that true or did a lot of men go from Butte?

MD: Oh, a lot went from Butte, that didn't stop them. I think you had to be a fireman to stay out. There's a station, a navy station, the School of Mines—how the navy ever got all the way to dry land into Butte (laughs). The V-12 they call it, School of Mines.

HB: And did a lot more women start working then in town?

MD: I suppose so. The war broke out in December of '41. I graduated from high school in '42. I don't know if women went to work more than they did before...I suppose so.

HB: Another lady I interviewed told me that she had been going to school at the School of Mines in 1942 and then they started the V-12 program and they wouldn't let women go to school there anymore. Do you remember that?

MD: I don't think they ever had women up there. If they did, there was very few. Girls just didn't go to school then, it was too tough a school.

HB: Was it?

MD: Oh yeah, it's supposed to be the best in the world for mining. Now there's—my son was telling me yesterday—there's girls up there but there are still a lot more men than there are women.

HB: Yeah I've walked through up there and there don't seem to be a lot of women.

MD: My brother graduated from high school in '38, went to school (unintelligible) and there was no women then, none.

HB: Did most of the men at that time who went to the School of Mines work for Anaconda, or did they just go everywhere?

MD: You mean when they were through? When they finished school?

HB: Yeah.

MD: Well they went everywhere in the world. You graduated from Montana School of Mines, you're sure of a job. Always have been. Of course, I think it used to be all mining and engineering, but now they have different types of industry. Geological engineering and...maybe they did too then, but I wasn't aware. My son's graduating in Petroleum Engineering and—I know those mining engineers and geological engineers, anything pertaining to that. It used to be a real small school, two hundred or three hundred people. Now it's up over a thousand.

HB: When you were graduating from high school, did most of the kids work or did they go on to college?

MD: Not too many went on to college.

HB: Was that because nobody had money?

MD: Nobody had money. And if you didn't have money you didn't go in those days. I mean, nowadays there seems to be working ways, you can get assistance. But there was no assistance then.

HB: Yeah there wasn't much assistance of any kind, was there? I've also read that during the Depression there wasn't any kind of relief or anything like that. Was there?

MD: I don't know. After the Depression there was that W.P.A., but I don't know about before.

HB: Did you know very many people who were miners?

MD: No. My family was never—well, my father-in-law, Fred's dad, was with mines all his life. He came out from England in 1922, 1920, after World War I. He worked in the mine all his life. He showed the visitors through the mines for many years. He was very good at it, just a natural. That was his job, a guide. After they started having the guide into the mines, he was the guide for the Leonard Mine, and then the Kelley (unintelligible).

HB: And the Kelley, that's the one that's still running, right?

MD: Right.

HB: Have you ever been down in the mines? What's it like?

MD: Well I hate underground. I hate tunnels even. But my relatives from Norway came and everybody was working and somebody had to take them, to show them through the mines. It was interesting, very interesting. They say that they show you the part that they want you to see, where they show it's all clean and good air and all that. I was just going to go down in the elevator and they have the trains, tunnels through the underground, and they explain all the different ores. I wouldn't work there for nothing. No way could you get me down there. But he enjoyed it very much. Of course he was an English rogue, real fine gentleman, an English rogue,

and he took visitors from all over the world. He would get thank you letters from everywhere. But for myself, I never was acquainted with anyone that worked right in the mine until I got married.

HB: Yeah there seem to be, or have been, a lot more people who did other things than you'd think, reading about Butte. It sounds like everyone was a miner, but there were a lot of little businesses in town.

MD: Oh, sure. I think the mines are the main payroll. Because of the miners getting paid other things branched out, just like when they have a layoff it affects the whole town. Your restaurants, your clothing stores, your...well everything is affected.

HB: Do you remember when most of Butte's small businesses started going? Like the little grocery stores, that kind of thing?

MD: When they started folding up?

HB: Yeah.

MD: When the Safeway and Buttrey's came to town.

HB: And was that very long ago?

MD: Let's see...where Safeway is on Front and Montana used to be a big ice skating rink, I spent every night of my life there when I was growing up. Holland Rink.

HB: Oh, I've heard of the Holland Rink. I wondered where that was.

MD: Where Safeway is, on Montana Street, Montana and Front. I lived on Front Street, right over across from Pioneer Lumber, where I was born and raised. (unintelligible) It had to be in the late '40s. I was in high school, it's where I spent all that time was at the rink.

HB: Yeah, a lot of kids in Butte skated, didn't they?

MD: It was natural ice. Well, Thanksgiving night we always went skating on the natural ice and it seems to me for years on Thanksgiving night there's no sign of ice. I think the seasons are changing so much.

HB: Yeah, it seems to be.

MD: I used to skate a lot. Must have been towards the late forties or maybe early fifties that they built Safeway there and the telephone company. We always traded the little grocery store on the eight hundred block on South Main Street and that folded up about ten years ago. Gradually the little fella just didn't have enough business to stay in. Then, too they buy in such large quantities that they can sell it cheaper and the little guy couldn't sell theirs cheap. But I sure like the local stores because my mother was bedridden several years before she died, and all

she had to do was call her grocery store and tell them what she wanted and they delivered. It was always good, quality stuff, and they would bring it right to the house. She never went in the store for years. It's hard now for older people to—there's still two stores in Butte, the Miner's Market and Courthouse Grocery still deliver. But for older people that can't get around, it's a good thing to have a small one.

HB: You living on Front Street reminded me of another thing. A lot of people have told me about when the circus came and that it used to be down by where Albertson's is, I think. Do you remember that?

MD: Oh, yeah. They used to unload right across the street from us. You know, we were just above the tracks there. Oh, yeah, it would come in at four in the morning and we'd sit out there on the curb and watch the elephants and animals, they'd all unload right there and come up Front Street and they'd take them over by where the Civic Center is now.

HB: Did they used to have a circus parade?

MD: Oh, yeah. With the calliope and everything. Every year. The Ringling Brothers used to be the big three ring circus that always came to town.

HB: Did everybody go?

MD: I think so. We always got to go, it seems.

HB: They set up a tent and everything?

MD: Oh, yeah, the big tent and the three rings in the main tent. They'd stay for four or five days.

HB: What time of year did they used to come?

MD: July or August.

HB: (long pause) How do you feel about living in Butte now? Do you still think that Butte's an okay place to live, even with all the changes and stuff?

MD: Yeah, I can't think of any place that I would rather live. I get discouraged with the strikes. I think it's its own downfall, because there have been lots of different industries that have tried to come into Butte, like we don't have a McDonald's because the unions won't let them...as soon as they try to come in or start to come in, they'll say, "You have to hire so many union people," and [McDonald's replies] "We don't have to do anything." I can't take these unions at all. They have done as much bad as they have good.

(End of Interview)