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Interviewee: Daniel J. Masse
Interviewer: Jon J. Warman
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Jon Warman: This is Jon Jerome Warman. I'm talking here with Mr. Daniel Masse and for the record Mr. Masse, would you give your full name?

Daniel Masse: My name is Daniel J. Masse. I was born back east but I've lived out here ever since 1956.

JW: Where were you born, in Massachusetts, weren't you?

DM: Yes I was born in Massachusetts, right in the Boston area. Then of course as a young man I was forced to go to the service and I did my service time mostly in the Pacific and in the area of the islands down there, taking over one island after the other until finally we got right to Japan. That was concluded with Iwo Jima and Hiroshima, the Philippines and right up to Japan proper. I was there right after the war. I was on one of the first ships that moved into the channel going up to Nagasaki.

JW: Were you taking supplies there to the island?

DM: It was quite a supply because we were always in the fallout areas, fighting and you begin to see the people themselves. We noticed only the soldiers and the combat conditions. And here we were right on the Japanese soil, and it was interesting to see how submissive and afraid they were of us, terribly, terribly scared of us. They didn't show up two, three days until after we arrived there when they realized of course we intended no harm.

JW: What type of ships did you generally ship on, just merchant men?

DM: This vessel that I was on was what they call an "amphibious general command." We directed amphibious operations all through Okinawa, Hiroshima and Iwo Jima. It was mixed up of marines, soldiers, and naval personnel. We were pretty much in the thick of it, of these combat battles that took place all there. Good experience. Most of us were lucky to come out of it.

JW: I understand later that you spent some time in Germany?

DM: Oh yeah.

JW: You were there, soon after the war? When would that have been, '47 or '46?

DM: It was in '48. Actually '47 and '48. What happened was after I was released from the service, people, most of the veterans, were pretty restless anyway. They were the type of people who just didn't know how to readjust. It was difficult. So that was when I first took to going to sea that is on merchant ships. So right down in my hometown area in Boston, I managed to get my documents and I went to New York and got on a grain ship going to Germany, and that was the latter part of '47. Germany was pretty well devastated then. When you got there why, you had the same conditions you had in Japan. The people were very, very submissive, were very poor and hungry.

JW: What cities did you see while you were there?

DM: Berlin and Hamburg. Both of them of course, Hamburg was pretty well hit with bombing range. After that I got back to the United States and then I decided to go to school. When I decided on my education actually, I was going to go right back to Europe to learn industrial design, and that's how I went back there in a different capacity. I went there to serve at the Department of the Army in the medical depot, and I stayed there for a whole year in Germany. That was the more interesting part. The interesting part about it was I had a chance to both live in that Bremen area and Hamburg area, and that's when I met a good many German families and German people and worked with them. In the course of working with them, why then you begin to realize that the things that took place under Hitler's period were just things that could well pretty happen any place else. Many times I've had people tell me the same thing. They said "well if you were here, you would be a Nazi yourself." I'm kind of inclined to believe that that's true. If you had any ambition at all, you would have to go along with the majority party.

JW: Did you see any of these labor camps that are so talked about today while you were in Germany?

DM: You're talking about the...

JW: Auschwitz and Belzec.

DM: No, no. Those were far removed from these areas here. We heard all kinds of stories, that is, people who had been in those areas and most of them, the Germans didn't want to talk about it anyway because they knew it was just something that just delighted some people. They didn't believe it. Most of the people at that time were still unaware that there were any of these so-called big, I'll say "incinerators," or whatever you'd call them?

JW: You don't think that the main population of people in Germany were actually aware of these camps, or aware of what we're told today was going on there?

DM: Well let me put it this way. When I was over in Japan when I first hit the beach, and we were one of the first ones that went to shore, we saw all kinds of soldiers that were held as prisoners by the Japanese, and these were Dutch, and these were Australians and New

Zealanders. Now we never got a chance to talk too much to them, but I did meet with people one or two days. We did run into them. They were quite starved over there in Japan. It's the same thing over there in Europe. Under those conditions of stress and total warfare, that's what it was, total warfare, there probably were what they call "displaced persons," DPs. When you're talking about DPs over there, you're talking about Ukrainians, you're talking about Latvians, you're talking about people who come from all over Europe, Polish. It had nothing to do with their loyalties, and therefore you had no way to properly assess whether these people were abused or not. The only thing that we did find out was that after the newspaper people got in there, and I don't know how they blew up these things, but then the stories start coming out of the cruelties that had been against the American soldiers in the Philippines or whatever happened in Europe. They were desperate. They were desperate, that was the only thing to say for it. Everybody was fighting merely for survival.

JW: I imagine everybody was starving at the end of the war including the German people, not just people in the camps.

DM: Precisely. I remember going to the homes of several of these German people as I started to make friends with them and they were very, very ashamed that they didn't have anything to offer. Some of the bread they were eating, I'll tell you, it was pretty hard to bite and relish it because it was probably the worst type of flour at that time. We were one of the first ships, American ships, that were bringing grain there, and everything was black markets, black markets all over the place. Currency had no value at all. In fact it was what a lot of the Americans called "military currency" over there, the script, was dealing with the script. The rest was barter, simply barter, whatever you could trade, cigarettes, sugar, coffee, any item like that. That's what they were interested in getting. That shows how hungry and how desperate they were for something that was worthwhile to eat.

JW: Were there bad feelings, do you think, by the Germans towards the Americans and British?

DM: We seem to have gotten along really good. There was no ill feeling at all. In fact several of the people told me that they were Nazis, right outright. Of course, I don't know what capacity they were, if they were members of the party structure. That was pretty much accepted over there. Any man who had any responsible job, had to be a party member. They didn't have to hide that. They certainly weren't. They were constantly searching to be free. There were a good many of the women who worked in the offices there that were married to Nazis. In fact a little girl from Bavaria carried on about for a good sixth to eight months. Her dad was the mayor of Danzig. Of course at that time was called "Supok" (?), the corridor up there, the Polish Corridor. Her brother was an SS officer, and we spoke quite a bit about this.

JW: Was her, did her brother survive the war or was he?

DM: No, evidently he didn't make it in the onslaught of these Russians. She was quite clear about that. She said that when the Russians were coming west, that is coming into Western

Europe, they just ravished the whole thing. And of course anytime they caught an SS vest man, the first thing they did was shoot him. There was no trial or due process there. They just caught an SS man and just shot him. She figured her brother must have suffered that type of fate.

JW: Yeah I don't imagine the Russians treated the SS with much respect after the war.

DM: I guess there was. The way you have to look at it is the fact that they were fighting, killing each other. Once the initiative was taken over by the other side, they were out for revenge. That's all there was to it, whatever the reasons I don't know. But there was a lot of killing after the war, I understand. In France, lots more Frenchmen were killed after the war than they were during the war because it was acts of revenge to get back at these people.

JW: Did you hear anything about this incident in the Katyn Forest, where supposedly some fifteen thousand German officers were killed by the Russians? Was there any talk of that kind of incident going around at that time, or had it been kept pretty quiet then?

DM: That came up from time to time, but the question that really was important to ask is who had reason to eliminate the cream of the Polish military staff. Well, the Germans had no fear of them because they had overrun the country, had control of all of it. My conclusion is that the Russians would benefit by that sort of thing. So all of the things that I had seen at that time and of course, it wasn't complete at that time, pointed out that the suspicion was on the Russians. There is nothing you can do about those things. There were a lot of people who were fighting, recovering ground, and retaking ground. Somehow they couldn't be burdened by all these prisoners of war. A lot of them, I guess, on both sides for that matter, they just shot them rather than abide by the international Geneva Convention.

JW: How about the Jews? Did you run into any Jews that were still in Germany at that time?

DM: No, evidently. I never heard anything about the Jews at all. In the whole year that I worked there, the subject didn't come up except once in a while.

JW: That's something that just wasn't discussed at the time?

DM: It just wasn't discussed over there. I suppose the reason for that was that nobody was aware of what the propaganda picture was at that time. There wasn't a big thing about it. Even the American Jews didn't say anything about it. It seemed this cropped up after '54 something like that. That's when this became a big thing. I suppose very much after the so-called "Nuremburg Tribunal." Of course the Nuremburg Tribunal was a very, very black mark against what you would call "international law." From all the information that I have ever read, it was looked down on because anybody that took part and played a part in their own military tradition merely because they lost the war, they were treated as criminals for participating or being in collusion with the so-called "international government," which in this case was Nazi Germany.

JW: I guess we can just figure that war is simply that. It's war. It's never a pleasant thing for either side.

DM: War to me is just like a dam that's builds up. At some point the dam is going to give way and when it starts flooding the lower areas, nobody knows what is going to take place after that. Nobody has any control of it. War, once it's started, it's pretty hard to bring it under control unless you have the capacity to sustain your military and economic economy. You don't stand a very good chance of winning. Today of course, things are quite different because there's more technology.

JW: I guess you spent time in other countries in the Far East and many other areas. What type of impressions did you get? Were Americans treated with respect or just the opposite?

DM: Well the Americans are kind of a different people from all the other people in the world. They seem to make themselves at home very easily wherever they go. And the reason for that is they have such tremendous material and economic gifts that we have, that other people do not produce. America has been blessed with a good many of the abundance of all things that people aspire for.

JW: Money talks, eh?

DM: Money talks. There's a saying right there. When you're talking about some of those countries over there in Asia, you have to look at it this way. They were all poor, relatively speaking compared to us. We had something to offer. They had nothing except services and whatever things that they could offer us. And of course the Americans took advantage of the hospitality.

JW: I've always gotten the impression that most people think that racism is something that is just common to the white peoples; that doesn't exist in any other peoples. Do you think that's the case?

DM: Anybody that travels over this world is bound to experience the same things that I have experienced. I want to make it quite clear, that at this time when I was moving all over the world, I did not have any racial biases. I was a pretty free and liberal type individual at that time. But I encountered these things little by little in many places that I have been. Now in Japan, the Japanese absolutely do not show their racism but they are a racist people. Very, very racist; they were very, very cruel to the Koreans. I think they dominated over them in the mainland over there for something like thirty-seven, forty years. They absolutely denied those Koreans any rights to education. They kept them stupid. There were a good many Korean troops that served as labor forces with the Japanese army. I've even seen racism over there in Africa.

JW: I understand there are Koreans there in Japan that have been there through many generations, and still are not allowed to take Japanese citizenship.

DM: For generations sometimes, the Japanese do not take kindly to anybody else. They consider themselves, you might say, in a different category, and they kind of look down on them. It's always been this way. Anybody that doesn't see it is probably not aware or doesn't show any interest in the subject. If you look for these things, you'll find them in various ways. Now even Americans were discriminated against many times in Japan and many times that I've been there, by asking exorbitant prices for whatever service they have. They don't discriminate or practice their racism like we do.

JW: What about India and the Hindus, and I'm thinking of the caste system. Are you familiar with that?

DM: I've been to India all of twenty four, twenty five times. I'd say I've been there twenty four, twenty five times and I've spent as much as a month, a month and a half in various parts there. So I've got a good viewpoint of what racism is over there. See it's a caste system. Now you try to understand how these Hindus operate, these Hindus and these Muslims at that time. This was before they got their independence from England, and the Hindus are very race conscious and are caste conscious. The caste system is very, very unique. The people down there in the lower classes work down in the holes, digging out the grain and everything like that. Those poor devils, if they even stole one little handful of corn, or grain or wheat, the so-called "police" would very, very cruelly administer justice right on the spot. They get them with these big Billy clubs and almost practically break their hands. The police and the military themselves are in a different caste. They carry the tradition on. Family and family, and of course the high class is Brahmin and of course those people they all have servants. They certainly don't, never did have a lot of what you'd call civil rights or equal rights or economic rights like we have here.

JW: Is it true that the upper class people also interestingly are generally light of skinned, that they are the lighter skinned people?

DM: Well yes.

JW: The lower class ones tend to be the darker skinned ones?

DM: You notice that when you go down into Madras down into what used to be Columbia, I believe today its Chennai. In Chennai, that's what it was, the people were very, very dark there, in fact extremely dark. What they had is this straight black hair. But the people in Bombay and the people in Calcutta and the people in New Delhi and the people in various places like Masaka batan(?). The light type people, yes they were the ruling type, and they still are today. In fact they were the ones that were, that had the opportunity to go abroad for their education. Those are the people that I talked to most of the time. They liked to call themselves socialists or democratic, but that was kind of a joke because you'd always find that the communists were

very active at the sea, at the ports, in the facilities, where the docking facilities were. All of the steamers were all...

JW: They have unions there?

DM: Oh yes, yes, there were. It was just a clear cut thing. They were all communists. They seemed to get along real good, as long as the working men were communist. The upper class I suppose were very much like the English that they booted out of the country just recently. There's definitely a class system over there. In fact to talk about racism, here I am. I am of European descendant and many times when I was in east Africa, mainly because I had a white face or walking around in Djibouti or various places around the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, the fact they thought you were white, they'd throw stones at you. I guess they hated all type of white people back there. Because of the, I would say, the "colonial period." Colonialism was breaking up. The British and the French and the Dutch were all withdrawing from Africa, and everybody who kind of had a white face or white skin was immediately considered enemies of the Africans.

JW: Did you ever get down to South Africa?

DM: No, I never did get down to South Africa. I've been close to it but I have a pretty good idea of what it's like, and the press has always one sided about that. There's no doubt about it. They have a long tradition of... I remember reading a lot about South African pilots had fought in Europe with the British and colonial capacity. They are all outstanding soldiers.

JW: To change the subject a little bit, I understand that you were involved in a campaign to replace Mike Mansfield one term. I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about that?

DM: Well the experience with Mike Mansfield was very, very simple. At that time I was not what you would call a "political animal." I had settled down here up in Clinton, Montana at that time. That was one of the businesses called Poor Henry's Bar; it was just fifteen miles east of Missoula. At that time we were very concerned with various gun legislation. It seemed as though back in Congress, Mike Mansfield, Senator Mike Mansfield, was the majority leader. We'd been reading right along Senator Mansfield was favorably inclined to outlaw pistols and register rifles and shotguns. Well now, right off the bat, that's the kind of issue that is just like apple pie and motherhood in Montana. You just don't involve yourself with things that are so inbred in to people in this area. So I was a member of the National Rifle Association at that time and I wanted to do my duty as a good gun owner, a man who participated in gun ownership, and uphold the so-called "Second Amendment." So I started by getting petition signatures to repudiate the agency and try to get Senator Mansfield to change his position on trying to outlaw handguns and register rifles.

JW: You had an actual organization didn't you? What was the name of that?

DM: Well the result is that when Senator Mansfield came up for elections, and this is when things began to take form. We had what we call the Citizens against Mansfield, which we called CAM for short, CAM. And the result of organizing this, well, I was quite green at politics at that time. I wasn't so surefooted.

JW: I guess this wasn't a particularly popular position at that time?

DM: Not to challenge Senator Mansfield, no, because he had such a well broad based position around here especially coming from the University. He represented Montana for a good couple of years. It was pretty hard for a lot of these so-called "democrats" to accept what Mike was saying in the United States Senate, in the Congressional Record about outlawing handguns. They just didn't understand it. So naturally these people came to look me over, to see if what I had was definite proof. I had the proof, there was no doubt about, it in the Congressional Record.

JW: Did you have interviews in the *Missoulian* and that kind of thing?

DM: Well there were a good many ads in the *Missoulian*. Of course I got something like about, I think it was \$1700 in contributions all over the country, which I used to run ads in the paper in Butte. I ran ads up in Great Falls. I ran ads in pictures of posters all over this western part of Montana. A lot of other groups joined with me, a lot of the so-called "sporting groups" Sporting stores were very indignant. There was quite a great deal of resentment for Mike Mansfield to take that position.

JW: Isn't it odd that the gun issue is certainly a prime issue in Montana and yet Mansfield has such a high reputation. Yet his voting record on the gun issue is not particularly impressive if you are in favor of people retaining their right to keep and bear arms.

DM: Well the way Mike Mansfield justified that, you have to take into consideration that he was the Senate majority leader, and being the Senate majority leader, he had to pretty much play the leading role for the entire Democratic Party. He must have been under tremendous pressure from these people back east, and people in the large cities that were wanting to see some kind of controls. I think that it's only fair to say that. I'm sure that he, himself, was well aware of it. The fact that it came out many times, he certainly didn't have that in his heart, but Senator Mansfield justified this in this way. He said that the reason why he actually supported that bill and made the speech in Congress was the fact that he felt that once you were in Washington, that you should have your conscience dictate to you, not your constituency. This of course, according to Senator Mansfield was a matter of conscious, and that

[End of Side A]

JW: This is Jon Warman, and I am continuing my talk here with Daniel Masse, and we are talking about the Citizens for Mansfield committee, or the, what was it, the Citizens to Replace Mansfield?

DM: The Citizens against Mansfield.

JW: All right, the Citizens against Mansfield.

DM: The CAM is what they called it. That was the abbreviation.

JW: Do you remember what year this was?

DM: '72, '72 was it.

JW: He must have been wrapping up his career at that time?

DM: He was, many times, I was reminded by a good many of Mike's favorite constituents, and they'd come in and say "who are you. Just a bartender challenging a national statesman and a majority leader in the United States Senate." Well the fact remains.

JW: Did any of them really get abusive it?

DM: Not at all. I've never had, just a few who are soreheads. The facts spoke for themselves. I had copies made of Mike Mansfield's speech right in the United States Senate. He clearly said these. These were underscored. There was no question about it. In fact when Mike came back here, he was forced to come back to explain to his constituency here just why he did vote the way he did. Certainly his own party, people who supported him all these years and thought highly of him...

JW: Do you think people really don't have a good knowledge of most of their congressman's voting records, I mean..?

DM: They place a lot of faith in them. Mike was admired by the vast majority of people around here. There's little doubt about it. I knew what I was going to be up against. It wasn't a very popular thing at all. In fact, the funny part of all this here was that this headquarters that I had was right up at Poor Henry's in Clinton, Montana. How many times do you hear people say that you never want to mix politics and religion over drinks? But I was very popular. I was just as popular as Mike at that time because of the fact it was an issue that was close to the hearts of all these Montana sportsman and target shooters.

JW: Well that brings me to another subject there. I understand that you have some difficulty there with the Highway Department and your property over there by the bar at one time.

DM: Yes, there was a, the highway came through just about after that time. The highway had some very, very clouded information that had to do with the common boundary between the land of Poor Henry's property, my property, and the so-called "frontage" area. Now strange again in this particular case, I went to a lawyer who was a good Democrat and the lawyer knew me quite well, and the next thing you knew, I found myself writing to Senator Mansfield about this.

JW: Did he help you?

DM: Oh yes. Yes, I got to see he pretty much buried the past.

JW: This was after the campaign?

DM: It was very much after the campaign. I wrote a letter to him and I asked him to do what he could to exercise the power of his office to force the Highway Department to produce some records, and he was always very cooperative and responded.

JW: Well, that was gentlemanly of him anyway.

DM: Mike could be a gentleman and of course he had to play his political game. I never did hold any grudge against him because I got to know the man, and although he was a very liberal Democrat, and I always held a conservative point of view, I had to take in to consideration that he was operating in a position where he had to act on a consensus of his constituency.

JW: Back to this highway department incident, didn't they actually run some type of line across the edge of your property or something, didn't they?

DM: They actually encroached and that is demonstrated and they finally did get them to court. Of course it was five days in court and I finally did win the judgment against them. This was all because the Highway Department was very, very negligent, is the word that is the charge we put against them, after five days of hearing and all the transcripts and embarrassment that I caused them. In fact, I...

JW: And you put up some big signs by the highway there?

DM: I not only put up signs...

JW: What did they say?

DM: I was also confident in myself I even wrote right on the frontage of the road, big signs I'd had as much as twenty two, twenty three words written right across the entire front of the disputed ground. I was never arrested, never charged with any kind of vandalism or whatever they call it.

JW: What about the incident with the manure?

DM: Well that there was part of the, after the highway was shown to be wrong and the judgment was in my favor. Judge John Hanson, I got the judgment of \$20,000 against them, and of course it was appealed. I was trying to force the appeal and bring it to a head because I was anxious to recover the damages. The highway kept me there two years longer than I should have by the time we got this resolved legally. The result is that I never did collect the money because that's going into something else. I believe there were some pretty crooked deals being pulled through because they didn't want me to win. But the fact remains that all of the right of way markers and the common boundary and the records show that the highway and "my ground" at least three feet, at the point where the building was. Going based on the highway documents, they took three foot, three to four feet of my property, and the porch was hanging right over on the highway ground. But this was all helpful. I think that Senator Mansfield did have some, carried some weight trying to force these people to issue and provide me with the records and it was interlocking with the attorneys. Although I was wrong, I was told by some of the professional lawyers in Missoula that I couldn't win because I was beating City Hall. I would beat City Hall if I did this and they couldn't afford to be charged with negligence in occasion like this. So I never did get the money. I had pride in the fact that I did beat the outfit and a lot of people were witnesses to a lot of the things that I did and the highway never, and the authorities including the attorney could never have me charged with anything

JW: How could they get away with this after a judgment is made and I assumed that you were assigned so much money through this judgment, how could they get away with not paying it? How'd they do that?

DM: They have what's called "negotiating groups," and I think that they negotiated my rights away. I know that my attorney, I was offered six thousand dollars for complete and final settlement written by the chief legal advisor of the Highway Department. But the reason why they didn't pay or didn't have to pay was that somewhere in the back rooms, somewhere amongst the people who had an interest to see me lose this, including the Bar Association, the Montana Bar Association, they got a ruling that I could not transfer this file over to another lawyer because that's what I was inclined to do. Evidently they sidetracked me and after that, my lawyer never did bring the case before the final hearing. The result was that he must have been pretty well cared for and got his fee one way or the other. But that's my thoughts. I'll stand with it because a good many lawyers indicated indirectly, you can't beat City Hall once you get up against bureaucrats, bureaucracy like the Highway Department and other bureaucracy.

JW: It's easy to see why people get frustrated in these cases.

DM: It's like the water rights, the Water Rights Bureau is the same way. They just wear you down, and eventually time resolves it although not in a justified way.

JW: And also they have virtually unlimited tax payer's money to pursue these cases. Most citizens have pretty limited amounts.

DM: As a result of all these things that have taken place, this is what brought me into the so-called "posse comitatus." We had a group organized around here at one time that went down the Bitterroot, and I tried to organize one here in Missoula with Sherriff John Moll, Sherriff Moll at the time...

JW: Maybe you should just tell us a little bit about what the posse is, what's the purpose of it, and that kind of thing?

DM: Well the posse, the posse comitatus at one time was a very, very forceful organization. They gave direct support to the sheriff. We've got the, of course I don't have the documents right here, they've been all researched and everything, and the posse is the best form of local government that ever was, far and none because it's confined directly to the, within the limitations and jurisdiction of the county. You cannot go beyond your county boundaries and claim that to be posse. The posse is Missoula county or its Ravalli county or it's whatever county they're in. That's it.

JW: And this is basically just a body of able citizens who can be called by the sheriff?

DM: The power of the people and the power of the county. At one time it was popular because the sheriff needed support, and he was within his rights to summon all able bodied seamen, all able bodied taxpayers and property owners and voters. They would give him support. In other words, the posse is the conscience of the county. It is the people of the county acting out the wills and the sheriff enforces it.

JW: And what was the sheriff's response there?

DM: Well Sherriff Moll was very, very cautious. I wasn't aware at the time when I discussed it with him. I took all the material up there to discuss it with him, and I wasn't aware at the time that that he did have a posse in place. But it's not the kind of a posse that is normally understood to participate with this. You see the sheriff has no power to form his own posse. He can do it, but it doesn't represent and involve the people themselves. The people are the ones that sign a charter, go up to the courthouse and sign a charter. It takes seven men. These men have to be registered voters. They have to be property owners, and they have to be people who participate in the local government. These people will sign, only seven of them and this constitutes a charter for a posse comitatus. Now they act in cooperation with the sheriff. They don't have to carry out his wishes but they have what pretty much what you'd call an "oversight." In other words, they keep the sheriff honest. That's the reason that sheriffs don't look kindly on people who talk about establishing posse groups. They're an oversight group. Just like old Sherriff Plummer back in the old vigilante days.

JW: Henry Plummer.

DM: Yeah, Henry Plummer. The vigilantes played a very important role, and they still should play a very important role here in Montana. There's little doubt about that.

JW: In a sense, they were also a posse comitatus, but in that case they, the sheriff happened to be the head of the outlaws. They were in a little different situation.

DM: You see, we have a country, the way our country is set up, there should be accountability. If the sheriff is running his job, his business the right way, then he has no fear if the people looking over his shoulder to see if everything is in good order. Of course most sheriffs don't like that. But it isn't for the sheriff to like it or not. According to the posse guidelines, it doesn't matter what the sheriff likes. It's what the people want.

JW: He's the servant and representative of the people.

DM: He is nothing but the representative. He carries out their wishes and their will.

JW: They forget that a lot these days but that is the case.

DM: He also has the authority and the power if he gets the support of the people to resist federal involvement in the county level. It seems as though most of these modern day sheriffs, they all go their hands out for grants to come from Washington to train sheriffs and so forth.

JW: So they're no longer truly independent?

DM: They have compromised the actual authority of the posse doctrine. They have compromised it.

JW: What about this, I understand, one of the posse died one time. He had a nice funeral for him. Maybe you could tell something about that.

DM: What you're talking about here is an old vigilante person from down there in Stevensville. His name was Loren Medley. Loren Medley didn't call himself a posse, he always considered himself a "vigilante" and he wanted to bring forth the spirit of the vigilante. Of course the posse too, he participated in a lot of posse meetings that we had down there. Old Medley, he was about eighty two years old when he died. He was very active not only locally but in Nebraska, Texas and a lot of places from what he told us. The day that he died quite interesting things happened. I was asked if I would be one of his pall bearers. Naturally I accepted that right off the bat. I could see nothing wrong with bringing him to his final resting place.

JW: Was this the same day he passed on there? Did he have a heart attack?

DM: He died peacefully.

JW: I guess when you're in your eighties...

DM: When you're eighty two, I think you can attribute that to natural causes. When he did die we sought out most of the people who were active in tax resistance and posse comitatus. We managed to round up five of them. One wasn't, one was just part of the community down in Stevensville. The interesting part about this was that Loren Medley, the vigilante man, did want his funeral set up in a certain way. He left this in his will. This meant that the people who were his pall-bearers were all going to carry arms, ropes, nooses, and so forth before we finally put him in his resting place.

JW: And this service was in a church? This was in a church, this service?

DM: Oh yeah, this was all prepared by several of his close friends. When we finally got down there to the church I had...

JW: What church was this, do you remember?

DM: A Catholic church in Stevensville. I don't remember the exact day, but I have it on file, the funeral services, and the pall-bearers that participated. All of us, including slim Deardoff and Howard Stickly, a man by the name of Benson, we all had ropes.

JW: How did this minister feel about the whole thing? Was he a little bit bemused by this?

DM: This was priest. The priest didn't bat an eye about the whole thing. When we brought the funeral box right into the church, we walked right into the church with our guns, our ropes, and everything else. Right out there in the open. Everybody was quite surprised and amused. This being a rather unusual thing. In fact my wife, when I told her that we were going to have such a service for Loren Medley, she just said "well I have to see that". My wife was there to see for herself, and she was absolutely, she couldn't beyond belief that she saw us going to the church armed completely, with our side arm drawn and with ammunition and ropes. After the services were said, then of course they spoke of how Loren was very dedicated to what he was doing. We walked right out of the church, and there again it was amusing that people took it all in stride. Nothing unusual about it. It would have been very interesting if we would have had a good photographer; this would have been documented and photographed. We would have some copies of that. We did have some photographs, a photographer took some pictures but they were all washed out. It was pretty sad to see that we missed such an opportunity.

JW: Yeah I would like to see those myself.

DM: Finally we got down to the gravesite. Here again, this was during February, I remember it well. And just as we were lowering Loren Medley down into his final resting place, we fired

three shots into the air to finalize the ceremony. Everybody was pretty pleased about it, because this was how Loren wanted it himself. After the funeral services, we went back up to where he lived and his friends had prepared all this. We had a very good dinner, and everybody was, rather than sad, we were quite happy about it. A great gathering and carried on the tradition of the vigilante.

JW: Like an Irish wake.

DM: You got to keep in mind that Loren Medley was right down there in the middle of this historic thing. Lee Metcalf, big sanctuary down there for game and fowl and stuff like that. There's a statue, a marker down there where several vigilantes got together and hung three or four of these bandits and thieves, outlaws back in those days. There's a marker there with a sign. It's a memorial. So it's certainly not a thing that has gone out of style. We should make that...

JW: Well the Henry Plummers seemed to run loose these days.

DM: You shouldn't ever overlook the tradition that the people played in building this great state. I hope someday that we would get this back in good constitutional government, otherwise I think it will be pretty easy to get the vigilantes or posse comitatus back in action again. Maybe it would be a good thing one of these days.

JW: What other types of activities was the posse involved in, tax resistance type things?

DM: It seemed as though, where the posse was playing its most important part was the fact that the sheriff wasn't properly carrying out his role. He seemed to, according to the posse law, the sheriff has the right to question the federal authorities in his jurisdiction. In other words, if they are to make any arrests, or foreclose on any home, or take over a house for taxes or something like that, that should all be cleared through the sheriff. And we found it hard to believe that the sheriff was actually doing his job right when he wasn't protecting the citizens who had every reason to resist the federal authorities. We felt that the sheriff should have participated and in fact thrown them out because that is his right. The sheriff is the top boss in the county. It's not carried out that way today; that's the reason why there's been certain acts of violence like Gordon Kahl back there in North Dakota. Next thing you know, the whole, the entire posse idea got a bad name. The fact that you just mention posse today and everybody thinks you are a bunch of extremist right wing criminals. It's not. There's no reason. In fact in Spokane, Virgil Gunning, is still very active, and he still talks posse and he's still within the law because it's both on federal statutes and state statutes. They serve independent of the militia. These are things that people felt as though they had a right to participate in law enforcement, just like a lot of citizens like to participate in a good many other things. It seems as though with the bureaucracies that they have today, they just hire their friends so they can get their wages and they don't try to reduce the tax load on the people themselves.

JW: Were you once involved with running for a position? Was that down in the Constitutional Convention?

DM: Well, I ran as a member of the Constitutional Convention, yes, back in, I forgot just what year it was.

JW: It must have been early '70s I guess, if I remember it.

DM: The Montana Constitution was revised. It had to be written over.

JW: They rewrote the whole thing, yeah.

DM: They didn't quite rewrite it, we wrote it. They said they were going to "update" it, that was the word that they used. As a result there were people who were going to be elected to it. We needed a hundred delegates. I ran for the Constitutional Convention and I was one of the three Republicans. I didn't make it because a Republican in Deer Lodge, and Anaconda, and Missoula were heavy democratic. It should have been a non-partisan race. They did designate parties on it and I guess I was in the wrong party.

JW: Really, when you're talking about a constitution, really partisanship shouldn't play any part.

DM: Unfortunately, they did designate party labels on it. I didn't like it myself. But I did run as a Republican, and I think if I had run as a Democrat I probably would have.

JW: How was your campaign treated in the press? Did they give you fair mention?

DM: On the campaign of course, the major issue here again as a constitutional delegate that I was trying to become, I wanted to make sure that the provision, the gun provision was upheld, or held intact just the way it was. In fact I did go up and I made a five minute speech up at the convention. I was allowed to express my views, and I said that I wanted no changes, no control of handguns or anything because in our Constitution it said the right to keep and bear arms shall not be called into question. The result was that they retained the very same provisions that they had in the old constitution. Somehow it was...

JW: So in a sense you were successful even if you didn't win the campaign?

DM: Yes, it was successful in that way. I was surprised that one of the best supporters I had was a member of the American Civil Liberties Union. He came and sought out my information and I had all kinds of information on it, because he was in the Declaration of Human Rights. And I convinced him that we best leave that provision alone and he did push for that thing. Finally there were no changes, no nothing made that would dissatisfy the rest of us gun owners.

JW: I guess one of the big issues today in this state and all over the United States is the issue having to do with our taxation system, which upset a lot of people. I wonder if you've been involved at all in the original CI-27 [Constitutional Initiative number 27] or the new one which is CI-23 I believe at this time?

DM: This issue has always been very much in the minds of all property owners. We have a good many very active people that can see a lot of the abuse that has taken place in various bureaucratic levels of local government and state government. As a result of this, the only way that we can correct it to take, is to relieve the burden on the taxpayers and the wage earners. It seems as though in the university town, and a town that doesn't have much productive capacity, they do impose quite a burden on the local tax payers. It's not at all difficult to round up a bunch of people who would be glad to participate in any kind of a tax resistance movement.

JW: I read somewhere that the Boston Tea Party was over a one-tenth of one percent tax on tea caused the Boston Tea Party. When you think about the extent of what our taxes where, you actually work around a third of the year to fifty percent of the year paying some sort of taxes. That's a little incredible isn't it?

DM: Yes it is. When you stop to think that the indirect taxes don't show but there's a great deal of indirect taxes. The thing that's very important in this issue of taxation is that a lot of people who have worked all their lives to get homes, with their small meager and so forth, and now if they don't pay their taxes, they merely confiscate.

[End of Interview]