



Funding for this transcript provided through a cooperative project of the Montana Committee for the Humanities, the Women's Studies Program, and the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library.

Summer 2000

Oral History Number: 049-057
Interviewee: Lettie Cook
Interviewer: Mary Melcher
Date of Interview: August 1, 1981
Project: Montana Women's Oral History Project

Mary Melcher: Lettie, you said your family came from Washington to Montana in 1914.

Lettie Cook: Yes.

MM: And you were how old then?

LC: Thirteen.

MM: You were 13. And you came by train?

LC: Yes, to Monarch and then our dad met us then in Monarch down here and took us...No, I guess he met us Neihart and then he took us to the ranch, that's what he did. The train did go through Neihart.

MM: Your dad was here already?

LC: Yes, he'd come a few days ahead of us.

MM: What brought you to Montana? Why did you decide to come?

LC: Well, my mother was sickly all the time, and I had eczema all the time and so he figured he get away he'd get away from so many doctor bills and come up here and got along fine.

MM: he thought your health would be better here?

LC: It was. My mother was better, and I was too.

MM: Did he take out a homestead or—

LC: No, he bought a ranch.

MM: And he had been ranching in Washington too?

LC: Mostly, yes. He did some other outside work, mostly ranching there.

MM: So, when you were a young girl did you help on the farm and ranch?

LC: Yes, yes.

MM: What sort of things?

LC: Cut hay, helped stack hay, feed the chickens, milk cows, feed the pigs, and we went in the hay field again the next day.

MM: You did heavy, heavy work too?

LC: Oh, yes. We had horses, and we didn't have machinery like you do now. Well, we didn't even have a car.

MM: Did the boys do different work than the girls?

LC: No, we all worked together. Because I was the oldest. My brothers were younger than I was.

MM: Did you and your mother get well when she got here?

LC: Yes. She got over her sickness and got along fine. I think once we come here, was here about a week and she was so home sick she cried for about four or five days, she was so homesick.

MM: Was her family in Washington?

LC: Yes. She was never away from her father and her mother and her sisters. I can remember that, come home from school, and she'd be on the bed there crying she was so homesick.

MM: Did she get to go back much?

LC: No. She stuck it out. Stayed there until her father got sick, and then she went back to Washington and stayed with him a while and then she came back.

MM: And did you help her in the house with the housework?

LC: Oh, yes. I cooked and helped with the washing. We washed by hand. Ironed by hand. We didn't have an ironing board and we put an old rag, not a rag, but a blanket on the table and a sheet on top of that and ironed our clothes on the table.

MM: And did you iron lots of, all of your clothes like that?

LC: Everything. We didn't have it like now days.

MM: No permanent press.

LC: No. We didn't have many clothes to do with either, not like you do now.

MM: You'd have like, well, did you have pants then?

LC: Oh, no, we wore dresses.

MM: Even out in the hay fields?

LC: You bet. I wore a dress. I hadn't worn pants until I moved down here. I lived on King's Hill. I was the only one up there on King's Hill that wore a dress. They all had pants.

MM: And you just recently started wearing pants?

LC: The last 6 years. I never wore pants. Well, if I'd go picking huckleberries, I'd put on a pair of bib overalls. But otherwise I—

MM: What about those long culottes?

LC: No.

MM: You didn't wear those?

LC: I never...Maybe other girls did, but I never.

MM: What about riding horses? Did you ride horses?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: In your skirts?

LC: We had the saddle skirt with slits, and it's quite wide, I don't know what they call it now it's been so long since I talked about it. My mom used to ride with a sidesaddle. She wore a dress and she had a sidesaddle.

MM: Did she like to ride that way?

LC: Oh, yes. That's the way we rode in Washington—sidesaddle.

MM: Did you want to move to Montana when you were—

LC: Oh, we wanted to see different country and then after we wound up here we like it and we

made friends and everybody was good to us and they liked it.

MM: What grade were you in when you moved here?

LC: Oh, about the 6th grade because I was sick so much I didn't get to. I missed quite a bit of school because I had eczema so bad that my Mom took me to the doctor, and he made me...Well, she put sheets on the bed, of course, and that's all I could have a sheet and a sheet over me. I couldn't stand it, and sometimes you'd have to prop it up because I couldn't have it touch my body. I had it all over me. So that's why we really came up here.

MM: And the different climate really helped?

LC: Helped me fine.

MM: So, did you go through the 8th grade here in Neihart?

LC: Oh, yes. And then I finished in Washington.

MM: Did you get any high school?

LC: Oh yes. I got about the 10th grade, and then I had to quit. My dad was sick. He had leakage of the heart so I had to help my mom.

MM: You helped your mom take care of him?

LC: Take care of him and then stay on the ranch. She had him in town for a while, and then I'd stay on the ranch and cook for the boys and that.

MM: And milk cow and—

LC: Oh yes, and we sold cream for our money for groceries and that. I'm telling you, times was tough in them days. You didn't have it easy. Kids now a days don't know what hard times are.

MM: That was in the 1920s? You were about 16?

LC: Sixteen, seventeen around there.

MM: So it would have been about 1920.

LC: Well, the real hard times was in the '30s, wasn't it? Yes, in '30.

MM: But it was hard in the '20s too.

LC: Yes, and it was hard in the '30s too. You saw it rough.

MM: Did you have a drought problem?

LC: No, it just—

MM: You didn't raise any crops?

LC: Oh yes, we had hay. We didn't raise no grain. It was too high up. We were just right up here, about across from Knolls', and it was too high for that. Boy, you got snow there in the winter, oh my. Lots of it.

MM: Did you have to carry water or did you have a well?

LC: Oh, yes. No, no we carried every bit for washing and everything you'd the water on the stove with a boiler and just as soon as that come down you'd pour another bucket full in and run down to the well and get some more water.

MM: You did have a well?

LC: Oh, yes, we did. We didn't have to pump it or lift it up with a rope like some we just had to put it down. They had it kind of deep, and then they had kind of platform around a whole in the center and you'd get from there down. It wasn't hard at all.

MM: You didn't have to dip way down?

LC: Oh no, so I guess you'd call it a shallow well, but it was a good draw. By that, I meant that we had plenty of water.

MM: So when you were 16, you quit high school and were helping take care of the ranch?

LC: You bet.

MM: While your dad was sick and your mom was in town with him.

LC: Well, she was in Neihart with him. Doctors said they couldn't do nothing for him so we had him in town and, of course, had to get to the hospital too for a while.

MM: Did you ever see wild animals much when you were at the ranch?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: Did you ever have to shoot any of them?

LC: Well, they didn't bother us that much. Oh, sometimes they would but not too much.

MM: What kind did you see?

LC: Bear and deer, mostly deer. There was no elk around that I know of like they are now. I think they came in. Coyotes and things like that. Of course, they're bad on animals, too. On stock, rather, I should say.

MM: And you're the oldest girl in the family?

LC: I'm the only girl.

MM: You're the only girl, and you had three brothers?

LC: Yes.

MM: So you were cooking for them, and how long did you do that?

LC: Oh gee, I don't know. Oh, I don't know, quite a few years. Then after my dad passed away, why, then my mom would go out in the field and help. Then I'd cook and then I'd go out, maybe, and need to stack her horse and come back in and cook and do the dishes and then go...There was always chickens to feed and garden to hoe and that so you could be running down the field all the time.

MM: So you were working in the garden and in the field and in the house for quite a few years until you married or—

LC: Yes, I was 22 when I got married.

MM: So it was probably about six years. How did you socialize during those years? Did you go to dances or—

LC: Oh yes, in horseback or in a buggy. So we had it.

MM: What would you do if you had a date with a young man, would you go to a dance or would you go horseback riding or—

LC: You mean—

MM: Did you go on dates?

LC: Yes, but what did you mean? You'd go horseback or just...You'd either go horseback or you

had to go in a buggy. By that part them days.

MM: Sometimes would you just go horseback riding for fun?

LC: Oh yes, a bunch of us would get together and go out and take a couple sandwiches and that, oh yes.

MM: And then you went to dances and—

LC: Oh, yes, yes we'd go to dances.

MM: Did you have box socials?

LC: Yes, we had quite a few of them to raise money for different things. Yes, we had that.

MM: Did you have a library that you could go to or—

LC: No, no, just a little school down the road. Neihart had some library. They had a pretty good one but not like Great Falls.

MM: So, did you get books from Neihart from the library there?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: Where had you gone to high school? In Neihart?

LC: Mostly in Washington.

MM: Mostly in, you went back to Washington?

LC: Yes, we went back there for three years.

MM: Then you came back out here?

LC: Yes.

MM: When your dad got sick.

LC: He was awful sick when we came back here again.

MM: So, after your father died your mother had to help with running your ranch a lot?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: Did she work out in the field?

LC: All the time. She worked out in the field until she was 89 years old.

MM: That's something.

LC: You bet.

MM: Great. Did she work out in the field before he died?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: She did.

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: Did she get more responsibility after he died, like before did he run the ranch?

LC: Well, he was really too sick. He just gradually kept going down and down all the time. We'd take him to the doctor and they'd give him what medicine they had but he kept going downhill. No, he was sick quite a few years.

MM: So your mother was sort of running things then, too?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: She ran things for quite a while?

LC: Because the boys was too young. You know how kids are, they want to play everything.

MM: Okay. So did your brothers help with the ranch too as they got older?

LC: Oh, you bet. You bet they did.

MM: By the time you were ready to get married, did your mother not need your help anymore?

LC: Oh, I'd help her. We only lived three miles from her, and I'd get on a horse and go up there and maybe fix some kind of meal for supper. Of course, she didn't have nothing but a wood stove and I'd fix that up and put it the oven. You couldn't put much wood in because you had nothing to regulate it. Then I'd tell her or leave a note or something. So that's the way I'd done. I made it kind of juicy so it wouldn't dry up on them, you know, macaroni and cheese or tuna

hot dish or something like that and I'd fix it so it wouldn't dry up.

MM: So she'd have a nice surprise when she got in. So, where did you meet your husband?

LC: Out on the ranch. We was neighbors. That's my first husband.

MM: How long did you know him before you got married?

LC: Oh, ever since we come here.

MM: Oh years.

LC: We got married in 1926.

MM: Then you were keeping house, and did you work outside too after you got married?

LC: Outdoors you mean?

MM: Yes.

LC: Oh, yes. I had chickens and pigs to feed, mostly chickens and eggs to get and that and garden, but otherwise I didn't do much. I had a hard man, and he wanted a cream cake every day. He milked the cows and he'd ask me if I'd make him a cream cake, whipped cream cake. And I'd made one every day, and I had two kids. He got his cream cake when he left the ranch too. [laughs]

MM: And you were pretty good to him.

LC: You bet. He was good to us and he was good to the kids and we liked him. Of course, he was a drinker, but that didn't bother us.

MM: It didn't bother you?

LC: No, no. Of course, we wasn't against drinking or nothing, but we just, oh, we didn't want him around when he was drinking so he'd sober up and come home. Or when he'd sober up he'd come home, I should say.

MM: You said you had three kids, is that right?

LC: Me? Yes.

MM: You went to Great Falls and had them in the hospital there?

LC: Oh, yes, all three of them.

MM: With the same doctor?

LC: Yes.

MM: What was his name?

LC: Dr. Irving.

MM: And you knew of midwives in this area?

LC: Oh yes, yes. There was one attending that was real good.

MM: Did you know women that had midwives there when they gave birth?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes and they got along fine.

MM: Did anybody tell you what to do while you were pregnant, about how to take care of yourself or anything like that?

LC: No.

MM: You never had any problem?

LC: I never went to the doctor until the baby was born. Yes, I went one time before he was born. That was the only time I went. You went that way and I just kept on going, and then finally I was kind of sick and so I had to go to the doctor. I think it was my kidneys. Something wrong with my kidneys, so he gave me some medicine and sent me home. I never went to the doctor.

MM: You just kept good care of yourself?

LC: That's right.

MM: And you never had any problems afterwards?

LC: No. I don't remember even taking the baby back to the doctor for a checkup, tell you the truth, unless there was something wrong with them. I never had no trouble with mine so. I don't think many other women did. Some maybe did but some didn't that I know of—my friends anyway.

MM: Did you plan to have three children?

LC: No [laughs]. No, you just take what you get, I guess [laughs].

MM: Did you try to limit your family in anyway?

LC: Well, I didn't want too big a family. We just too poor I figured, trying to work for a day's wages and everything and that. No, you can't have a big family. Of course, people got by that had eight and nine kids just as good as the woman that had two or three.

MM: Well, was there any birth control around then?

LC: Not very much.

MM: Just a little?

LC: Just a little, not very much.

MM: How would you find out about it if you wanted to use it, from the doctor or—

LC: No, no doctor. Just from your ears, from someone taking about it is all.

MM: What kind of things were they? Like, did anybody use a diaphragm or anything like that?

LC: Well, yes, some did and then douches was the main thing you probably used. That's about it in them days.

MM: They'd tell each other how to mix them up?

LC: Yes.

MM: Do you think they were effective?

LC: I think so. Yes, I do.

MM: That's good. Did you ever hear any talk of abortion?

LC: No.

MM: That didn't happen?

LC: I never heard it. Now, maybe some did that went around more than I did. Like I say, we just stayed up there on the ranch in Neihart and that. Go to other towns, bigger towns and everything, and you hear different things, you know.

MM: You never heard that?

LC: No.

MM: Okay. You were saying you thought people were different back then. Did you socialize more? Did you go and visit?

LC: More friendly. Maybe you don't think so because you're young, but they were more friendly years ago.

MM: They helped each other out when there were troubles and—

LC: You bet, you bet they did.

MM: Did you ever have any neighbors you didn't like?

LC: Oh, there's some of them you didn't like and some of them. Not many.

MM: Okay. After you were married you lived on a ranch, and were you ever lonely out on the ranch or did you—

LC: Never.

MM: You had enough work to—

LC: You were raised on a ranch and...Well, you were just raised on a ranch, and you don't know any better that's all. No car to go. If you wanted to go, you had to go horseback. You may have six, seven miles to go.

MM: So that would keep you from going—

LC: A lot of times I'd go five miles to see a girlfriend.

MM: You would?

LC: Oh, yes. You didn't have no girlfriends around. There might be boys that lived too far around. Everybody was busy. They had these here dances or card parties where if you felt like going you went and if you didn't you didn't.

MM: But sometimes you went visiting too, and you traveled five miles on horseback?

LC: Oh yes, yes. You'd go and have dinner, come home. They'd come to your place, and you'd

feed them. It was just the way it went. Nowadays, why, people won't feed you or nothing at their home.

MM: I had just had lunch with Larry. [laughs]

LC: [laughs] Did you? Now they don't. A lot of people don't. Times have just changed, you see.

MM: Well, then when there was so much distance they probably figured they had to feed you because you wouldn't be able to eat.

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes that's why.

MM: Did you know about the suffrage movement when women got the vote? Did you hear about that?

LC: Oh yes, but I don't know how old I was when I voted, tell you the truth. I just don't remember now.

MM: You started voting after women got the vote?

LC: Oh, not right away. No, not right away.

MM: Do you remember hearing any discussions about whether women should vote or not?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: What were they like? What were some—

LC: Well, some didn't want you to vote and some said a women shouldn't vote and some said they should.

MM: Do you remember why they thought they should or shouldn't?

LC: No, I just don't remember anymore.

MM: Did your mother vote?

LC: Towards the last she did before she never. Well, when we was out there on the ranch, it was kind of hard to go down and vote because the snow was too deep and we'd have to get way down there to the schoolhouse and it was so deep.

MM: Did she ever talk about women voting or anything round the house?

LC: No.

MM: So, your first husband died? How old were you, how long had you been married when that happened?

LC: He died in '65 so we was married 26.

MM: Quite a while. Did he pretty much run the ranch, or did you—

LC: No, no, he worked in mines. After I married him, we moved to town, and we was there for a while. Then I had one little girl three years old and one little boy, and we moved...I had this third little girl, and I had a girl and a boy and a girl and this last—the third baby—we moved out on the ranch and we was out there until she had to go to school, for three years.

MM: So he was working in a silver mine?

LC: Yes.

MM: In Neihart? Was that dangerous work?

LC: Oh yes, yes. He'd run the hoist, and the men would down, in a cage like. They'd go down this tunnel, down this track, and then they'd work in the mines and when they wanted to come up they'd ring a bell. Then he'd hoist them up and then whatever they'd come up for, maybe a...What do you call it? I know what it is. Oh, I forgot. But they'd bring that down. It's a long pole anyway. It isn't a pole just to brace the mine up, and they'd have to take that down and he'd hoist them down.

MM: He hoisted them up and down?

LC: Sometimes he'd run the old cars out, and he could bring them up. He'd run them out and dump the ore, and then he'd come back.

MM: Did you ever worry about him being there?

LC: No, no.

MM: Did you pack a lunch every day?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, every day. Have supper when he come home. He got off at 4:00, and you had your supper at 4:30. That's just the way we done it.

MM: The housework kept you busy during the day.

LC: Yes, I should say so. Not as slow as I am now. [laughs] I'm so darn slow it's pitiful [laughs].

MM: Did you do sewing?

LC: I didn't sew much. I appreciated new laundry and that. No, I didn't sew much. My mom had done that. She liked to sew, and she'd always make the kids' clothes.

MM: Oh, so she made the, your children's clothes?

LC: Then clothes wasn't so high in them days. You'd get pretty nice clothes and take care of them. When they went to school, I'd make them change clothes every day.

MM: When they got home?

LC: Yes. When they got home from school. Unless they were dirty, then I'd say, "Well, you can play in them." They all wore dresses—the girls did. They didn't wear pants to school. Dresses.

MM: When you would decide to move and things like that, from place to place, would you and your husband decide together or did—

LC: Oh, yes. I had two little nephews that lived up on the hill, on my husband's side. There's snow on the ground so he said, "I think we'd take the stuff and put it in a little jumper," he said. We didn't have no furniture and this house we had was furnished and we didn't have nothing. So we piled our bedding and our dishes and kids' clothes and ours and heaped it way up high. These two nephews up there was twins, and they said, "Well, here come Aunt Lettie and Uncle Oscar with all their junk." [laughs]

His mother told me, their mother told me about it, and I said, "It is junk all right because," I said we didn't have no clothes nor furniture. It was all just our clothes and mats, and I'd fold it all and put it in a box. It was snowing when we left the ranch, and we just put a canvas over it in case so it wouldn't get wet. But he said, "Here they come with their junk." [laughs]

MM: So you made decisions together in your marriage?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: It wasn't like, he wasn't the boss.

LC: No, no. That's the way this one is too. If we want to go somewhere, why, we decide do we want this, or buy something—furniture. Well, I say, "Well, shall we buy this or shall we not? Well, let's do it this time." That's the way he is, and he's the same as my first husband.

MM: You picked them that way? You didn't—

LC: Oh yes, we go over together and pick. Mine never liked to pick anything alone.

MM: I mean did you ever go out with any men that wanted to boss you around, that wanted to be the boss?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: So when you got married—

LC: I didn't like that kind.

MM: You didn't like them?

LC: No, I didn't [laughs].

MM: So you knew the kind that you wanted to marry?

LC: Because I'm no spender, but if I wanted to buy something and I got a dollar and I think I can afford it, I'm going to buy it. I've heard some men say, "Oh, you can't afford that. You can't do it." But I think I can scrape, get by till the next time I get money, I'm going to get it. Now that's the way I am.

MM: So even though you weren't working outside the home, the money was considered yours too?

LC: Right.

MM: Because you were working inside the home?

LC: Right, what was mine was his. That's the way we did it and that's the way we are today.

MM: Great. Did you know women that had to fight tooth and nail to get a little extra money?

LC: Yes, or lie about it. I had women would tell their husband that their grocery bill was a little more than I expected. Well, that's all right but don't let it happen again, and she'd keep that extra money. Oh yes, I've had quite a few women do that. I said, "Gee, if I'd done that, I'd get caught for sure." [laughs]

MM: But your husband, you two just assume that it was your money all? It was both of yours money to spend?

LC: That's right. Are you married?

MM: No.

LC: Oh, you don't know then [laughs]. Now that's the way we did, and like you say, it's different for some, for some. They're a tiger I think. No, I've never had that trouble.

MM: So you got along pretty well with your husbands, it sounds like? Did you ever have any girlfriends that were beaten by their husbands? Do you know if that was very common?

LC: Well, I've never had any, but I've been...It wasn't my friends or none. It was neighbors, and they were, yes. But sometimes it takes two to make a fight. So I don't think—

MM: Did any of them ever leave the men if they were beaten by them?

LC: No, not that I know of, that's of course a long time ago.

MM: How did people think about separation and divorce? Did it happen?

LC: No, no, no, that didn't happen much, and I don't think people believed in them because I don't believe of it myself, right now. Of course, I'm old fashioned. I know that, but where there's little kids, why, it's sad.

MM: You wouldn't even believe in it if a man was really beating a woman?

LC: Oh yes, I would there. Yes, no I don't believe on that, no. Unless there's chasing around or something like that it's different.

MM: But there weren't hardly, there weren't very many divorces in your community?

LC: No, that I can remember of, no.

MM: Did you know women that lived with alcoholics?

LC: Oh, yes, especially around the mining town.

MM: Did they have a pretty hard time?

LC: You bet. Some of them didn't have enough to buy groceries. You bet. One of them, I feel sorry for her. You bet.

MM: What if one of those women wanted to leave their husbands, would people look down on her for doing it?

LC: I don't think so.

MM: That would be okay.

LC: Yes, I think so. When you've got kids, don't have much in house, why, I don't think people are down on that, no. Well, is that all you want?

MM: Let's see. Well, were you in any women—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

[Break in Tape -- end of Side 1]

LC: —Out here I didn't, in Neihart. I did go to sewing, then I dropped out.

MM: What was ladies' aid?

LC: Just kind of a church doing. I kind of belonged to a church group, and you'd embroider and crocheted and make different little things if you wanted to.

MM: Well, was it a charity organization?

LC: No, just to get together and we'd have pie and coffee. Rebekahs [Rebekah Lodge] would take and they'd wanted to raise money, and they'd make doughnuts and that and they'd...or it wouldn't have to be doughnuts or a pie—whatever you wanted to make—or cookies. We paid a quarter for a cup of coffee and a doughnut and cookies. Of course, you could have more than one doughnut if you wanted it, and that money went into a pot and that was for the ladies' aid—a church doing that they wanted a bit of money for.

MM: What would they do with the money?

LC: What?

MM: Well, once you earned that money, and it went into a ladies' aid?

LC: Well, I think they'd buy stuff for the church, that's what I think they did a lot of times. They'd need song books or something for the church.

MM: Did you go to the Catholic Church?

LC: No, I'm not Catholic. I'm a Presbyterian.

MM: But you were still in ladies' aid. It was all different branches.

LC: Yes, yes.

MM: It was a way for the—

LC: Just to get away from home and that, and we'd have coffee and we'd put in a quarter and then buy what they wanted.

MM: It was a way to get out and see people.

LC: Just to get together is all I'd say.

MM: Well, before you got married did you, did you ever think about remaining single and having some sort of career? Did you ever have any ideas—

LC: No, no because I worked so much helping my mother that I never thought of it.

MM: You didn't have time to think about anything else.

LC: No, no. On the ranch with cattle and horses—we had horses and cattle and chickens and pigs and that—you don't have time to think of that. I helped her and my brothers did too until they was older.

MM: Well, before you married, did you feel any pressure to get married, like, was there feelings that women shouldn't be old maids or—

LC: No, no.

MM: There wasn't anything like that? You were just pleasing yourself?

LC: Yes. Get a home of my own. I wanted one.

MM: You wanted a home of your own?

LC: Yes. I wanted a home of my own, raise a family.

MM: Did you ever know if there were any prostitutes around here in Neihart?

LC: Oh, yes. There was some up in Neihart years ago.

MM: When there was mining there?

LC: Yes. There was one house there they had, I think, three women, because us young girls—there were three of us—we didn't know what it was. Your parents never told you much in them days. I was wondering what they were, and we'd seen one at the post office one time and the mail came in about 9:00, 10:00 one night. Us three girls went up there and she just had, all she had was just panties on—a little slip and a real worn dress and you could see right through it. We thought, god, that's sort of funny. So one day we thought, well, we'll just walk by and see it looks like in this building. All it was was just a big long hall. You could see there was rooms this way and rooms that was, just like a hospital, so we didn't see nothing [laughs]. All these men was going in, and we was kind of curious. Of course, we was only about 14, 15, I don't know. I think the other girls were too. We was all the same age.

MM: You didn't know anything about sex then?

LC: Oh, yes, we knew a little but not much. When we were done in there, we couldn't figure out [laughs].

MM: How did you finally find out what they did?

LC: Well, one girl got a little smarter than the rest of us so she told us. Oh, no, you didn't dare to ask your mom because they didn't believe in that.

MM: That wasn't something you could talk about?

LC: No.

MM: What about when you started menstruating, did your mother tell you about that?

LC: Oh yes, that was standard, yes.

MM: So you were just supposed to find out about everything on your own, was that it?

LC: Yes.

MM: But you were pretty curious?

LC: But some mothers, I think, told them some just...I don't think they just understood how to do it or too busy. I don't know which it was, but we got by.

MM: So you kind of learned from word of mouth.

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: Were there any Indians around here?

LC: No.

MM: Around Neihart?

LC: Oh, there was a family or two, but that was all. Is that what you mean? Oh yes, there was a family or two over there.

MM: Did they go to the schools?

LC: Oh, yes. We'd treat them just the same as anyone. We liked them. They was nice clean Indians.

MM: They were accepted?

LC: Yes.

MM: Were there any other races? Chinese people or Japanese?

LC: No. There was a Chinaman in Neihart years ago before we ever come here that had done laundry and that, but he was gone. So he might have come in 1897, around there.

MM: But he had gone by the time you got here?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: Well, when did you get a washing machine? When did you, in the '30's or—

LC: Oh, yes, my little girl was born in '34. I got one about...well, she wasn't a year old, so I'd say '34.

MM: Were you real happy about that?

LC: Yes. Do the wash by hand. Washed every day, diapers every day. Washed my little shirts and little gowns and rinsed...of course, would rinse my diapers out, but I had to wash them and hang them on the line. We all did. I wasn't the only one. We all did.

MM: Did you know many married women who worked outside the home? Were there very many?

LC: There wasn't very many that I know of. There was some but very few. We all took care of our homes.

MM: That was a full time job?

LC: Well, we had to cook. We couldn't open a can of this and a can of that because we didn't have it so much then and they didn't have that stuff so now. Why, we'd cook, like beans, we'd make our own beans, you know what I mean, and cook them and that stuff. It wasn't easy. You had to cook everything them days.

MM: How long would it take you to prepare a meal if it was a good meal?

LC: It wouldn't take long if you had your meat cooked, probably an hour, your potatoes and

your carrots and that stuff, it didn't take long. Your meat takes long, unless you're having fried meat and that doesn't take so long, but if you have a roast or a broil or something like that, it takes a little.

MM: Did you have a garden in town?

LC: No, out on the ranch.

MM: So you had to buy all your vegetables?

LC: Some guy from Belt, and he'd have a great big...well, he had a car with a little...well, I think he had a...It was a little truck was what it was. I was going to say he put a box on it, but I don't think he did. He'd bring up vegetables, even choke cherries, and people would buy choke cherries from that and gooseberries to make jelly and that.

MM: Did you have an icebox?

LC: No, not for a long time. Out at the ranch we took and put it down the well. Put it in a big bucket and then hang it down—not in the water, in the well—and keep it there.

MM: Butter?

LC: Yes.

MM: What would you do in town? How did you keep things cool?

LC: We got a little refrigerator when we was in town. We didn't have one at first, but we bought one from a guy in Belt. He had sales on them. We paid 10 dollars a month. Took us a long time to pay for it, but we made it. If we had 20 dollars to spare, we'd give it to him.

MM: Did women drink any alcohol in those days?

LC: Oh, not like they do now, no.

MM: Would you ever drink at home?

LC: Well, I never drink so I can't say. My dad didn't either so he never had it around.

MM: Did you know about the Prohibition Movement?

LC: Oh, yes.

MM: Were you part of that?

LC: Oh, in a way yes. But it didn't go very well.

MM: Did you play any sports when you were younger and later on?

LC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We played ball game and that stuff.

MM: In your dresses?

LC: Sure. Sounds funny, but that's the way we did it. Of course, our dresses were longer. We didn't wear them up here, we wore them down here. We've got a lot of old pictures of them.

MM: What did you think when dress styles started getting shorter?

LC: Well, seemed kind of funny.

MM: When they got up to your knee?

LC: Well, we wasn't used to it, you know.

MM: Did you find that you had more spare time when you got the washing machine?

LC: Oh, I was busy all the time.

MM: You just started doing something else?

LC: Because I'd crochet if I had my washing machine was going, I'd crochet. Otherwise, I suppose I did too, because when I'd wash I'd have to wash on a board and that, but I had to heat water for the washing machine for a while. We didn't have no hot water, and that took a lot of water.

MM: Did your husband have work during the Depression?

LC: Well, that's why we went on the ranch, during the Depression. That's when we went to the ranch for three years.

MM: You ran somebody else's ranch?

LC: His brother's.

MM: And that worked out pretty well?

LC: That was pretty good.

MM: Because he had lost his job in the mine? Is that what it was?

LC: Well, things closed down, like they are now, a lot of times, and the silver was down so low that they couldn't make it, so they just closed her up. No, he wasn't on the WPA [Works Progress Administration] like some people. They had a lot of them on the WPA there in Neihart and they was glad to get it to pay the rent.

MM: Did you know any people that couldn't get on the WPA and couldn't find work?

LC: There was a few, but they left.

MM: Would neighbors help each other out if they were poor?

LC: Oh yes, yes.

MM: They would give each other loans and stuff?

LC: Well, not too big a loan because they didn't have it either. They just didn't have it.

MM: But little loans to get buy?

LC: Yes. Well, you didn't want to go hungry if you got kids.

MM: Did you ever hear about Jeannette Rankin when she was running for office? What did people think about that?

LC: Some liked her, and some didn't.

MM: Did people talk about her running for office and being a woman?

LC: It was a big deal. They thought it should be a man. But that's your opinion. Some liked it and some didn't, and that's up to you.

MM: What did you think about it?

LC: Oh, I'd rather see a man myself.

MM: Do you think that men do better jobs?

LC: Well, I kind of think so. I don't know why. That's just my idea.

MM: You're not sure why you think that?

LC: No. What do you think?

MM: Oh, I think women can do just as well.

LC: Well, in a way there's some women are smarter than some men. I'll agree with you there. I'll agree with you there.

MM: Yes, I wonder if women would be better at keeping us out of war.

LC: Well, I thought of that too. It's hard to tell.

MM: It is. It's hard to know.

LC: I've thought of that myself, but that's something that's hard to tell.

MM: Well, do you ever vote for women who are running for office?

LC: Well, mostly men. Oh, I have voted for some. Yes, yes, I have, that I thought she was all right. I did, yes, but like you said, I vote for the men. And get stung, too.

MM: Well, it's interesting because you said that you wanted husbands that wouldn't try to boss you but yet in a way you want a government that's made up of men that will in a way have power over you. But you think that you're wise enough to be a partner to your husband than women should be able to be partners in government too. Do you see what I mean?

LC: Yes, I see what you mean all right.

MM: Well, did people think it was strange when Jeannette Rankin voted against going into World War One? Do you remember much talk about that?

LC: Oh, I did hear some of it, and I didn't pay much attention to it. They discussed it, but I didn't pay much attention to it.

MM: Were you upset that we went to war?

LC: Yes, I didn't want to be in the war. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't want to say I'm not, but I don't like war.

MM: Was it pretty upsetting to have people leaving the community and not coming back.

LC: Yes, sure. Some of them comes back crippled and everything. You never know.

MM: Did you lose any brothers or—

LC: No, no one.

MM: Did any of them go or—

LC: No, they was either too old or, and some of them they wouldn't take them all kind of finally...They wouldn't take them. If you had work like in the mines and you didn't want to, they figured they need that. Then like farming, they figured they need you there.

MM: So a lot of them got—

LC: Yes, my first husband went. They didn't want him to go. They signed a petition for him not to go because they figured he should stay home and help his dad. His dad was all alone, but he wanted to go so he went. He was only in there a year.

MM: You went back to work in '65 or you went to work outside the home for the first time after your husband died? Is that right anyway, to start working outside the home?

LC: It was fun. I had nobody there but me, and it was to pass away my time.

MM: And you wanted to get out and see people?

LC: No, it wasn't that I just wanted to get out, and the lady I worked with lived in Neihart and she was so good to me and everything. The girls up there were so good to me, and I really liked it.

MM: What kind of work was it?

LC: Doing dishes and...well, we don't do the dishes, we had paper plates. But pots and pans, I should say, and putting the food out on the trays for them. Put trays out with doughnuts and things on them and making sandwiches and that. Everybody was good to me so I really enjoyed it.

MM: How long did you stay at that?

LC: Six years.

MM: Then is that when you married again, around that time?

LC: Well, no, I went to help my mom. She wouldn't come with me so I had to go down there and come home and take care of my place. Winter was bad, but I had a good neighbor that came and took care of my place for me. I'd go down there a week, and I'd go up home a week

and down there a week and up home so I couldn't keep it because they want you up there all the time—seven days a week. No, I had one day off.

MM: Okay. I guess we'll stop there. Thanks.

[End of Interview]