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Oral History Number: 120-006a
Interviewee: Joyce Luetta Hickey Redding
Interviewer: May Vallance
Date of Interview: February 17, 1978
Project: Bitterroot Historical Society Oral History Project

May Vallance: Good morning. I'd like to have you tell us something of your family history and particularly of the schools you went to and where you taught.

[Break in audio]

Joyce Redding: Ok. I'm Joyce Redding and my father was John Hickey and my mother was Alice Chilson. My folks came to the Bitterroot Valley early in history. My mother's folks, the Chilsons, came in 1874 and my father's folks came in 1881. My father's folks were interested in mining. They came here for that purpose and settled on a ranch west of Victor, 160 acres.

MV: Is that right?

JR: Yes. Now my mother's folks, the Chilsons came, as I said, they came in 1874. He was a drayman and hauled produce and brought people from Utah to the Valley here for a number of years. The Chilsons moved around quite a bit in the valley. They lived at one time in Hamilton and then again at Corvallis and here at Stevensville. When Chief Joseph went through the valley, the family went to Fort Owen to stay. My grandfather started out with the group of men that were going up to the battlegrounds, but his wife was pregnant and so the men told him he'd better go back and stay at the fort, which he did, and one of the girls was born there at the fort.

MV: Well did your grandfather go even over to Fort Benton to bring the supplies over here?

JR: Yes, he did.

MV: He freighted.

JR: He freighted, that's true.

MV: That's very interesting.

JR: Then as I say, my father was interested in mining. He worked first in the Colonel (?) mine as a young man before he was married. Then later when he and my mother were married and we lived on the farm west of Victor, he was very interested in the mines near there. There was the Pleasant View mine and the Ore Finder and the Bitterroot Prince. These mines were owned by the McCormick family from Missoula. They had charge of the hiring the help and then they had

to prove up on these mines every so often, you know, to keep in control of them. My father worked for them in the mines.

MV: What did they mine there?

JR: They mined silver and lead and, now, that's all I remember for sure. Then in 19—well it might say here '02, that my father had spotted fever early in his life. I think they'd only been married a couple of years. Of course, he had quite a time getting over that. It left him in poor health the rest of his life.

MV: What did they do for him when he had spotted fever?

JR: The one particular thing that I remember them telling about was that they packed him in ice. He said that he got so hot that he just felt like he was on fire inside. I suppose that's what they did to comfort them. Then in 1908, he decided he wanted to go to Butte and go to the School of Mines and learn more about mining. So we did, we went to Butte. He worked in the mines in the daytime and went to school at night. He did that for two years and at that time his health was getting bad again; he was coughing a great deal. The doctor told him that he was getting miner's consumption and that he'd better go back to the valley; it would be better for his health. So we came back to the ranch, then. During this time we went to this little school called the Pleasant View School, and I remember especially two teachers that taught there. The time that I started, there was Jesse Poindexter, who later married McCullough, and I know she was my first grade teacher. Then after Jesse—of course, this was after we came back from Butte that Ralph Doherty was teaching there. I think that was the last year of school.

MV: How long was your terms?

JR: Oh, yes. Our terms of school at that time were only six months. That is because of the spotted fever in that area. Teachers wouldn't stay after March.

MV: Were there many people that had spotted fever? Could you name some of them?

JR: Yes, there were quite a few. Well, besides my father, I lost a brother with spotted fever.

MV: What was his first name?

JR: Victor Clyde. Then my father's father died of spotted fever, and there was a Williams family; Frank Williams had died with it. In the Payne family there was Doris, and in the Kerr family there was a boy died there, too. Generally, in this area you could figure that there would be two or three cases of spotted fever in the summer time. It was considered the worst area for spotted fever of any place at that time.

MV: What families went to school up there?

JR: There was the- there were two Hickey families: John Hickeys and Tim Hickeys, and the Myers family, John Myers family, and the Williams family. I think his name was Charlie Williams. The Briggs family, and the Hackett family, and the Kerr family, George Miller family, and the Cates family. That's all I can think of, of the families that attended school there. Then in 1911, we consolidated the school in Victor. My oldest brother drove the school bus, the school wagon.

MV: With a team?

JR: With a team, yes. In 1911, he'd have been 16. Then as he got a little older and first he went to school in Bozeman. Then my second brother, Herbert, drove. Then after that, later on, a younger brother drove. So I had three brothers that drove the school wagon. Well, and then while the youngest brother was driving, they changed to the buses. He started out with the wagons and finished up with the school bus. The teachers that taught there that I remember— oh, I mentioned that, didn't I?

MV: Yes. Well then, you went on through high school?

JR: Yes, I went on through high school, and then I started teaching in 1919, was my first—

MV: Did you start before you went to Dillon, to Normal School?

JR: I went to a university the first—

MV: For one summer?

JR: For one—no. I didn't start school until late, and when I went to Butte, they put me back. I'd just been in this little country school. I was 19 when I was ready to graduate, and Mr. Holtz was superintendent at the bigger school then. I had got some extra credits as I went along, and in the spring of 1919, he told me if I wanted to go to the University and make six credits—

[Break in audio]

JR: —the university and he'd give me my diploma when I got those credits. So I did; I went to the university. When I came back in the fall, I got a call from Miss. Irwin; would I take a country school? They were short of teachers. I thought, well, yes. If I teach, I sure (unintelligible). She was trying to get me to school, and while she was waiting and trying to get me to school, I had a cousin in Missoula, and I'd stayed there when I was going to university. She talked to the superintendent there and told her I could teach. I got a call from the superintendent there and she had a school already for me to take down there in Missoula County, and that was the Cormiere (?) School out near Frenchtown. Then, after I got that school, then I had a chance to get the Curlew School here in Ravalli County, but I'd already taken the one in Missoula County. I

just stayed there the one year, and then I went back to summer school. I had a brother that lived in Bozeman, and well, he wanted me to come over there and teach. So I contacted the county superintendent there. Yes, I could get a school there. That was a school between Livingston and the park [Yellowstone]. It was called the Suce Creek School, but I didn't like it there. It was so windy and the winter was so hard. When I came back, I got in touch with Miss Irwin again, and I got the Upper Burnt Fork School. There was two of us teaching there; Charlie Barker was teaching the upper grades, and I taught the lower four grades. Oh, I'll tell you some of the families that attended school up there. There was a Zoft family, and the Don Millers, and the Earl Millers, and the Ralph Kramers, Websters, the—

MV: Were there Simmons?

JR: The Stemmons family. Let's see it I—oh, the Hackeys—wouldn't want to leave the Hackeys out, and Barkers, there was a Barker family. The Forgie (?) family up at the grist mill; they lived up on the grist mill at that time. I stayed there for four years, then I decided I'd go back to Dillon, and stay for the full year and get my two year certificate, which I did. I mean, my graduation, they give us a graduation at the end of the two years. Then that gave us a first grade certificate. Isn't that right?

MV: Yes, I think so.

JR: That was called a first grade certificate, wasn't it?

MV: But you still had to write the state examinations?

JR: Yes, then after teaching on that certificate for eight years, we got our life certificate. After finishing there at Burnt Fork, and after going to school that full year, I got in to the Bozeman schools. I had third grade there, but I didn't like in Bozeman either. I wasn't used to supervision and it bothered me. I had a chance to come back here to Stevensville and I did. I was glad to be back here where I had relatives and knew a lot of people and was a lot happier here. I taught here in Stevensville 30 years. Altogether, I got in 37 years. Now, is there anything that I've left out?

MV: Did you meet your future husband here when you came back to Stevensville?

JR: Yes, I did. He was working up at the Thousand Acres. He had been there a good many years. I had met him before and gone to dances and danced with him, but didn't get interested in each other until I came here to teach.

MV: Well, I'm sure this is going to be of great historical significance and I appreciate you telling us all of these things very much.

JR: Well, thank you, May. I appreciate your coming. I'm glad to give it.

MV: Thank you.

[End of Interview]