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Interviewee: Dona Corr

Interviewer: Mary Melcher

Date of Interview: December 19, 1980

Project: Montana Women's Oral History Project

Mary Melcher: This is Mary Melcher. I'm interviewing Dona Corr. We've talked once before, but about three years ago. Now it's December of 1980, and we're in Missoula, Montana. Okay, Mrs. Corr, you told me that you were a tomboy, when you were...

Dona Corr: Yes, I was.

MM: And you did a lot of chores outside?

DC: Yes.

MM: Did you ever have any problem when you had to come inside and start doing housework? Did you miss working outside?

DC: No. It was all work, and I took it in stride. When I had to come into the house and do housework, or be outside, I did. The outside work was more strenuous. Especially pitching hay and chaffing wheat and things like that.

MM: You had done all those chores?

DC: Oh, yes, I did all those besides milking cows continuously: riding horses, taking care of horses, transferring the cattle from one field to another.

MM: You knew you had to work and you didn't mind working. When it was time to come inside, then you did that.

DC: I love being active. I have all my life.

MM: You went to a private school, you went to a Catholic school.

DC: I started in the public school. When I started school I couldn't speak any English, I spoke French. Then we had a teacher that was bilingual, spoke both French and English. By the time we were in school a year, my sister and I, we had learned to speak quite a bit of English, but at home we spoke French constantly. My mother still doesn't speak fluently.

MM: Did your father learn English?

DC: Yes, he learned it. It was broken English, but he learned it. He had to because carrying on

the business, he had to come to Missoula and speak English. Business farmers had business to do. They had to borrow money and pay back money and sell wheat and buy things. My father was one of the first people to own a threshing machine.

MM: So he did pretty well?

DC: On the ranch and in the fall he would go and thresh for the farmer that didn't own one.

MM: Did you go with him?

DC: No. No, I stayed home and took care of, helped my mother and my sister take care of the house.

MM: Did your sister work outside, too, with you?

DC: Not as much as I did. She fed chickens and would sometimes help feed the hogs and helped milk the cows, too. That's about the extent of her outside work. We were three daughters. My youngest sister is nine years younger than I am. My oldest sister is just 15 months older than I, younger than I am. We had no boys, you see. My father needed help and that's why.

MM: What happened when you went to high school? Who helped him then?

DC: When we went to high school in Frenchtown, three years, and we'd come home every night. We had a horse and buggy that we traveled with and we'd come home every night, and I'd do the chores before I left and finished when we got back.

MM: Didn't you go to Missoula for one year of high school?

DC: I went there for two years. I went to high school in Frenchtown and two years I went to Missoula and worked for my board and room. Took care of Lee Field's kid—his daughter. She was in grade school. Helped her with her lessons and took care of her, took care of the house and did all the housework. Mr. Field's sister lived with us. I wasn't alone at Mr. Field's.

MM: So, then did your father get your sister to help him outside? Did he hire somebody?

DC: No. Yes, he hired a hired man. At summertime that I did a lot of it like pitching hay. We had hired help. During World War One when hired hands were hard to get, at least in the summer, he had a year-long hired hand.

MM: How did you like taking care of that little child when you were boarding in Missoula?

DC: Didn't mind it. I graduated from Missoula County High School in 1922.

MM: Did you bob your hair in the '20s? Did you cut your hair short?

DC: It was about 1918 that I cut my hair short.

MM: Were a lot of girls doing that?

DC: They were all doing it at about this time. My sister didn't because she didn't...She had curly, real curly hair, and Mother used to keep it in curls—curl it for her. Her hair never grew as long as mine did. But, incidentally, it's very interesting. I kept this kind of braided hair when I cut my hair, and my youngest daughter—loved to dress up—used it for her hair. Hers was exactly the same color as mine, and she used it. She still is using that kind of hair when she wants to dress up.

MM: Did you wear pants when you worked outside?

DC: Yes. I wore bib overalls when I worked outside, but most of the time I, as soon as I got inside, I took off the overalls. I never did like pants. My two sisters live in them now, and I don't wear them. I have two pairs that I rarely wear.

MM: Never liked them.

DC: I don't like them.

MM: Not even during the winter?

DC: Not even during the winter.

MM: Okay, now you went to college right after you finished high school?

DC: Yes. I finished high school in 1922 and went to Western Montana College in '22 and '23, but I had only one year of college. Was able to get a certificate to teach and got a job teaching in Frenchtown—my hometown. I taught and went to summer school two years here at the University and one year at Western Montana College.

MM: Did your parents encourage you to go to college?

DC: What?

MM: Did your parents encourage you to go to college?

DC: Yes. My parents never discouraged anything worthwhile that I wanted to do or that any of us wanted.

MM: Do you know if very many of your girlfriends went away to college?

DC: In Frenchtown, at that time, in 1922 and '23, I was the only one that went to be a teacher. My girlfriends all got married, at that time we were younger.

MM: Did they marry pretty young?

DC: Around 20.

MM: You were older than that?

DC: Well, yes, I was 20 when I started teaching, I was born in 1902 and I started teaching, see, in 1923, I was 21. I taught for six years in Frenchtown. Then I was married. I was married in '29 and taught another half year after I was married because the eighth grade teacher, who had been teaching there all this while, died. Got sick and died that summer. I took her place until Christmas. At Christmas time my husband didn't like my going to work. I was gone all week and so I quit, and another girl from Frenchtown who had gone to school after I did, Evangeline Torme, took my place.

MM: Do you remember talking to your girlfriends to find out what they were going to do if they wanted to have a career or if they wanted to get married?

DC: It was just taken for granted that everybody wanted to get married or would get married when they finished school. Most of my girlfriends worked as maids in homes here in Missoula before they were married, but they didn't work very long.

MM: What about you? You went to school to become a teacher. Did you plan that you would be a teacher, or did you plan that you would marry?

DC: I planned to be a teacher, but eventually I would marry.

MM: Then you'd quit teaching?

DC: Yes, quit teaching. Not go on the way people do today. That's why teachers are so numerous and the doctors so scarce. A lot of the women are teaching.

MM: So, were you about 27 when you married?

DC: See, I married in '29, yes. I was 28 the year of it. I married in June. I was 28 in July.

MM: Did you feel any—

DC: No, I was 27 in July.

What?

MM: Did you feel any social pressure to get married?

DC: No, I was not very popular, anyway. Since I was 16 years old, I weighed 160 pounds. I was fat but very able to carry on like that, very active. So it didn't bother me. I was the second fastest runner in Frenchtown. The fastest one was real fast; she was a tall, slim girl. I mean among girls. Because of my looks and because I was very independent and a tomboy, the boys were much fonder of my sister than they were of me.

MM: You were a little too independent?

DC: Well, and probably too outspoken, too. I ran on too much. My sister was a very pleasant person. She was very clever and very, just a charming person. And I wasn't. I was opinionated and stuck to my opinions and...

MM: That's okay.

DC: I don't know. It isn't okay to make you popular among the men. Isn't this great how different one sounds on those tapes than we think we sound when we're talking?

MM: Yes, I notice that a lot.

DC: And the expressions that we have that we're unaware of.

MM: So, you met your husband, and you did get along with him.

DC: Well, I met my husband at a dance in Frenchtown. I don't know whether I should tell you...The first time I ever saw my husband, he was working for Mr. Schultz—the Missoula Orchard, of Missoula Orchard near the O'Keefe School. I was soliciting with a lady and a neighbor lady for the St. John's celebration. He was with another fellow, and they were digging an outdoor toilet hole. He was down in that hole and I thought he was the homeliest man I'd ever seen in my life, except for he had beautiful eyes. Then, it wasn't until years afterwards that I met him again at a dance.

We had traveled to the dance, my three sisters and myself, from Missoula. We were living in Missoula in '27, we were living in Missoula then. We went to Frenchtown, our old hometown, for a dance—the three girls. I had a Model-T Ford and drove the car. Met him at the dance, and he drove the car back. The fellow he had gone with drove their car back. He drove us back. He asked for a date, and I thought, if he wants to date me, I'll go along. I did go, and we dated for two years—'27 to '29.

MM: He didn't mind you being outspoken?

DC: Evidently not. He loved me the way I was. He was a very good man. He loved me all my life, the way I was. He stood with me all during our married life. I loved him, too. He wasn't perfect. He had faults, but nothing today's men couldn't have taken... I took over the supervision of the family. I took care of the funds. He brought home the check, and I took care of it, didn't waste any of it. I managed to raise five children.

MM: You handled the finances.

DC: I handled all of the finances after we were married.

MM: Did you both feel that you were more capable to do that?

DC: We did because I had been a schoolteacher, you see, and he had only finished the eighth grade. But he was a doctor of motors. He knew from the sound of a car what was wrong with it. Of course, he had to dig into the inside like doctors do before he found out exactly where the trouble was. He was a very good mechanic, and he loved cars and learned his trade by himself, working on cars.

MM: So when you were dating, you, did you go to dances and things like that?

DC: That's what we did. I was teaching. We'd see each other only weekends. He was working on the railroad on a railroad gang.

MM: Did you, were you called an "old maid" at that time? Were people considering you... ?

DC: If I was, it wasn't to my face. I was aware of the fact that everyone thought. I got along fine. I spoke up timidly. I got along fine when I thought that I was in the wrong. When I was sure that I was in the wrong, I accepted it and apologized.

MM: What was your social life like? Before you married, you lived with your sisters some of the time?

DC: After we moved to Missoula in 1927, I had...My mother had a rooming house here in Missoula and then I had a room, kept a room year round at her house. My sister had married. She married when she was 18 years old. She had two babies, and her husband left her. So, she went to work as a waitress here in Missoula.

My mother took care of the children, and I lived in. My youngest sister was helping my mother with the rooming house. We were all girls. During the week, I taught in Frenchtown, see. So, during the week I lived there. I either paid board and room at a one place or Mrs. Goslin and I,

a primary teacher, rented a place, and we batched. She lived in Missoula, too.

MM: Was it very common for husbands to leave their wives? There weren't very many?

DC: That was rare. Well, we came from a Catholic community, see. Those who were intermarried among the neighbors in Frenchtown stayed together all their life. But my sister married a non-Catholic who was really opposed to her faith and made it hard for both of them to live together. Besides, he died of a heart disease. He must have been sort of sick. He was a very poor product. So she had to work and she had...She was married to him three years and had a baby every year, and she had two. So having to earn a living and having children, too, was very hard. At that time, from our faith and from our...The general attitude of the public at that time, the husband supported the wife. We felt the same way about that.

MM: Did you think it was good when he left?

DC: Well, in the first place, he was not a Frenchman. Not as far as I'm concerned, but as far as my folks, my family, especially my mom and myself and my sister were concerned. He didn't have too much of a chance because he didn't speak the French language, you see. Besides that, he didn't have the principles that we had, even under the same moral code, he didn't.

MM: Did he give her any problem that she wanted to raise the children as Catholic?

DC: He didn't stay with her long enough to do that.

MM: I see.

DC: He would also see other women on the side. So she wouldn't approve of that, and we didn't either. It was almost a mutual separation. It wasn't very painful to either one of them.

MM: It wasn't?

DC: He went on and married two or three times again before he died. She remarried and married...This time she married Fred Longpre, a worker and a fine writer. They were very poor when they first married. He adopted her two children and became a wealthy farmer...a wealthy rancher.

MM: Did they ever get a divorce, or did they just separate? She and her first husband.

DC: They got a divorce.

MM: When you were first married, did you plan your family in any way? You had five children, right? Did you want to have five children?

DC: No. I wanted as many children as God gave me. But, we planned the family through...We planned the number of children that we had, what's the word I want to use, now—

(Break in audio)

DC: —and after the first four, I had one born in '31, my oldest was born in '31, another in '29, one was born in February in '31. Then the second son was born in '33, no, in '34. The first daughter was born in '35 and the second one in '36. Then the last one wasn't born until '44.

MM: How old were you then?

DC: Well, I had white hair. The nurses, they laughed at the hospital. A white-haired woman coming in to have a baby. I was fortunate.

MM: Did you have any prenatal care when you were pregnant? Did you get any help?

DC: Yes, I went to see a doctor, but not monthly, and I never had any problem.

MM: Were there still midwives around at that time when you were having your children?

DC: Not when I was having them. Even when I was born, my mother...we had a doctor, a doctor in Frenchtown. We were born in our homes, but there was a doctor with my mother. But there were midwives. I had an aunt who practiced as a midwife, but she always went to the doctor. Since I can remember, there were doctors present at birth.

MM: That was during the Depression that you started having your children?

DC: It certainly was. See, we married in '29, and the Depression hit that same year, wasn't it? We lived through the '30s, and my husband was the kind of man that if he lost a job, he looked for another job and he got one right away. He wasn't out of work during the Depression at all.

It wasn't until 1939 that he lost his job at the Missoula Mercantile as a mechanic, and then he established a little shop here in the back of our house. For three years he worked in the shop—repaired cars. He did pretty well, but he was not the kind of businessman that would try to sell cars. He wasn't a salesman.

He was very good at repairing, and he made a living. We had the four children, and we made a living until he got a job at the highway. I don't remember exactly the year that he got it. It was '41 or '42 that he became employed by the highway as a mechanic, and he was there until he retired, until '66.

MM: How did your family do? Your sisters and your mother, did they have a hard time during the Depression?

DC: Mother had that rooming house during that time, and she moved from the rooming house to a smaller house not far away on West Pearl Street and took in boarders. It wasn't easy, but we made it. My Dad had the ranch rented. When he was too old, we moved into town because my dad was too old to work the ranch. We moved in '27. He died in '37 at the age of 76.

MM: Do you remember how many of your clothes did you make yourself? Did you make your children's clothes? Had your mother made your coats?

DC: My mother was a seamstress and made all the clothes, but after I was married, I made the children's clothes. Yes.

MM: You made your own too?

DC: But I bought most of mine. Yes, I maybe took some of my old coats and made small coats out of them. After my husband went to work at the highway, I bought the coats, but they didn't have the amount of clothes that people have today. My granddaughter is living with me, and she...her clothes take up the two closets that I have upstairs, and they're big. But then, there used to be four upstairs, and those closets were adequate for them.

I remember washing sweaters on Saturday night and drying them for Sunday morning so they could wear them to church—their school sweater, their school clothes. They had a change...a couple of pair of pants. As children grew up, they grow out of them, you know, and they had jeans, what you call here today, to wear. They had to wear corduroys to school—Catholic school uniform.

MM: So you had to wash the clothes pretty often.

DC: Yes, and yes. First of all, when we were first married, I washed clothes on the board—before washing machines, but it wasn't long that my husband bought a washing machine.

MM: That made it quite a bit easier.

DC: It was a Maytag, and we used to run the ringers. Did you ever see one of those with the ringers? It had an electric ringer on it. Soon he got me a Bendix, and that was what I mostly used for 18 to 20 years.

MM: Is that a washing machine, too?

DC: A washing machine. A Bendix washing machine. I always hung the clothes outside. I still do. I have a Whirlpool. It's very good. It's doing a good job, but I have to hang my clothes outside or hang them up in the house in the wintertime.

MM: So, the washing machine was the first labor-saving machine you got.

DC: It was the first one, yes. Let me see. I got that first. Then the next thing was an electrical refrigerator.

MM: Do you know what year you got the refrigerator?

DC: No, I can't tell you. But it must have been, let's see. We moved here in '31. It must have been about '34.

MM: Where did you keep your food before that? Did you keep it outside?

DC: We had an icebox.

MM: You had an icebox. You got ice.

DC: We got ice.

MM: Everyday?

DC: No, every three days.

MM: Did you have pans underneath that would catch the water as it melted then?

DC: You see, the ice was in an ice compartment atop of our icebox, and there was a tube running down from the ice compartment. As the water melted, it went down into a pan underneath the refrigerator. All the food was kept underneath that block of ice, excepting what we wanted. The meat we used to put it right on the block of ice.

MM: Is there any—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

DC: I had it until I bought a secondhand Singer, but—

MM: When did you get the first sewing machine?

DC: My first sewing machine must have been gotten in the early '30s. It was after I came over here—moved here.

MM: Did your mom have a sewing machine? Did she—

DC: Yes, she had the first sewing machine. I still have her sewing machine that she got in 1914. Before that, she had a New Home sewing machine. From the time she was married, from the time I could remember, Mother's always had a sewing machine. Then, in 1914, she bought a White sewing machine, and she used it until about 1973. Still usable. It's a thread...Works with your foot.

MM: How long would it take you to make a coat, say, for one of your children?

DC: It would take me about a week by the time I took care of the house and took care of the children and cut it and sewed, yes, about.

MM: Did you buy socks or knit them?

DC: Buy what?

MM: What about stockings, socks?

DC: Oh no, we bought...We made them, excepting the woolen stockings my mother knit. I don't knit. I crochet, but I don't knit. My mother used to knit.

MM: For your children too?

DC: They didn't care for woolen stockings very much. Yes, they each had about a pair to wear during the real cold days of winter. They walked to school, you see.

MM: You bought their other socks?

DC: Yes. The other stockings were always bought. I mended plenty by hand.

MM: Did you make shirts?

DC: No, I bought my husband's shirts too. I didn't make shirts. I made dresses and coats for the

children, but I never made my husband's coats either.

MM: Did you can a lot?

DC: Oh, yes. My husband had a garden, and I canned, especially beans. We didn't raise many peas, but I canned beans and I canned carrots and raspberries. We had raspberries. Then bought peaches and pears and canned those. Cherries—we had a cherry tree. Canned cherries too.

MM: He raised the garden?

DC: He raised the garden, although the children...I did the watering, and the children and I did the weeding. He planted the garden, and he raised a garden. After he retired—he retired in '66 and died in '72—that was his hobby. Backyard—we had a big backyard—it was all a garden. Raised corn. We had any corn to can much, though. We never raised that much. We ate it. We gave a lot of it away. You have a garden, you know, and you give a lot of produce away to friends who don't have it.

MM: So was it about 1940 that you started buying your children's coats?

DC: Yes. After they grew into high school, I started buying coats for them. Especially the boys. Boys' coats I didn't make. It was the girls—girls clothes. I remember designing and making some chaps for one Christmas. When they were real small, they each got a hobby horse, and I made chaps for the boys to wear. Bought them cowboy hats—straw cowboy hats. I have pictures of them.

MM: Then they wore the chaps when they rode the hobby horses?

DC: When they rode the hobby horses. That was when they were young. Jimmy was probably in the first grade, and the other boy wasn't in school yet.

MM: Did you see many of your girl friends from high school after you grew up?

DC: One girl friend. We bought over here because she lived across the street here. We were very friendly with them. Later on, she and her husband separated. They were divorced. She married somebody else, and he did too. A couple started going...two couple started going together. The wife fell in love with my friend's husband, and the husband fell in love with my friend. So they were divorced, and they remarried. Exchanged mates. That stopped the friendships quite a bit. By that time, I was pretty well established in the parish. Oh, and by the way, I wanted to show—

[Break in audio]

DC: From the time that my children started school, they went to St. Anthony's Catholic School from the time they started school. I've been active in the community, too—on the community chest. Oh, let's see, I became active in the 1950s. The church—I became active in the '30s, as soon as I got here. In the 1950s, I was on the community chest—that which is now United Givers. I worked on all community projects. Solicited for the Red Cross. I didn't work with the Red Cross, but I solicited for them—solicited for the cancer drives and the heart drives and many of those drives that were put on. My last community effort was with WICS as long as...WICS existed in Missoula for about five years. Mrs. Bridgebill (?) was the leader, and I helped her. Mrs. Whelan helped too. We were the three women that carried on WICS as long as it lasted.

MM: What was that?

DC: WICS is Women in Community Service.

MM: What sort of things did you do?

DC: We took girls—underprivileged girls—and sent them to the camps...Just a minute I can't think of the word that they for those camps. Anyway, the organization was started during the time of...It's a women's organization like the job corps. There were places throughout the United States, and there still are.

MM: To help young women find work?

DC: To take those women, and they taught them how to keep house. They taught them, those who hadn't finished high school, taught them high school. They trained them in whatever aptitude that they had as well as they did. As long as the girls worked there, many of the girls were trained for careers. We had one from Missoula that became a nurse. Another one went to college and I've lost track of her, but she became a teacher, I'm sure. She was able to, to go on. They take them and board them and pay them. They used to pay them a dollar a day while they were in the program.

MM: While they were studying?

DC: While they were studying. They gave them board and room and that dollar a day, but they had to buy their clothes with that.

MM: Was it just a lot of women that were in the organization?

DC: It was all women. Of course, most of them came from the South, among the Negro race, you see, from the South. Here we had about half white girls, the other ones were Indian girls. They were underprivileged girls.

MM: You were interested in helping these people?

DC: We donated our services, yes.

MM: You saw a need for it.

DC: Yes. The WICS program has Protestant women and the Catholic women. The Catholic groups, the Protestant groups, and the Negro groups, that interested in this program. It's still going on, but it isn't here in Missoula. There weren't enough girls that it got so...When prosperity came more and more, girls—

MM: During the World War Two years?

DC: This was after World War Two years.

MM: Was it?

DC: Yes. The last ten years, let's say within the...since the '60s. We did this during the '60s. It was easier for girls to get jobs. It became easier for girls to get jobs, to get work. Some of them joined the service, things like that, you see. There wasn't as much need for it, and besides we couldn't interest women helpers that would donate as much time as we did to carry on the program. It got so a burden. It was just Mrs. Rushfield (?) and I working. The burden became too great. Her husband was sick, and she found it harder and harder to work.

MM: Did you have to get donations from people?

DC: No, no. The whole program was paid for by the government as long as the Democrats were involved. When Nixon came in, when the Republicans came into power, the program was cut by half. You can see that every time. Now, I'm a Reagan person. I always thought that Reagan was the strongest man in the United States. I voted for him and I'm glad that he was elected, but I do know this, that the poor people will suffer with the Republicans in, and especially with a Republican Congress.

MM: Yes, I'm afraid so.

DC: You bet they will. The welfare programs are going to be cut and a lot of social programs that are for the people are going to be cut.

MM: Yes, I think so.

DC: I know that. Well, if they cut too many, they'll stay in power just four years, and that'll be it.

MM: Yes.

Well, I want to go back to this friend of yours who got divorced and then married her husband's friend. Now, was that a scandal in this area, in Missoula? You said—

DC: Not in Missoula. They weren't that popular. We weren't that popular in town socially to make it a scandal. With the Catholic people it was. Automatically, they could go to church, but they couldn't receive the sacraments. They were automatically excommunicated. They were all Catholics.

MM: That's why you quit hanging around with her, because you were—

DC: No, it was because she would hang around with me because she had other interests, you see. She knew that I didn't approve. I didn't say anything to hurt her feelings, but she knew I didn't approve. She became interested in her new life.

MM: Was there much intermarriage between, say, Catholics and Protestants?

DC: Yes, there has been.

MM: Was there then, or was that...Say, when you were growing up.

DC: Well, not while I was growing up in the Frenchtown Valley. We were all Catholics. We intermarried with Catholics.

MM: What if you had met a Protestant and fallen in love with him?

DC: I wouldn't have fallen in love with a Protestant. My principles were, I could see what was going on with those that had, the girls that had fallen in love with Protestants and married Missoula boys who were Protestants were divorced in a few years. You see, our principles were such that...Well, in the first place, until ecumenism started, the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church were really at war with each other. Catholics didn't allow their members to associate very much with Protestants and vice versa.

MM: It was different, wasn't it, than it is now?

DC: Yes it was different than it is now since the last ten years...well, since '65, since ecumenism started. Now the Protestants or Catholics, we can go to Protestant churches as guests, to weddings as guests. It still isn't...well, it's allowed you do it if you want to, but it isn't the thing to do if a Catholic marries a Protestant in the Protestant church. We still look down upon that. But now it's permissible for a non-Catholic...My granddaughter goes with a Lutheran. He's German, and he's a Lutheran. She's engaged to marry him. It'll be permissible to have a priest assist at the wedding and a Lutheran minister both. So they can be jointly together now.

MM: Did you ever think about going back to teaching after your children were grown?

DC: I would have loved it had it be easier to get a job. I still have had to gone back to school and finished my college. I had only two years of college work. I'd have to go back for two years. Financially, I'm the kind of person that goes without things. I live within my income.

MM: Would it have been too expensive to go to school?

DC: Not too expensive, but we had a daughter with us until...I was raising a girl until 1962. By that time I was really too old to—

MM: You were about 60 then.

DC: Let me see. Ilene (?) was married in '65. She lived at home all that time. She was going to school. For the last two years she didn't go to school. She worked for the telephone company. She has two years of college work, too, and she was married in '65. I had her at home to take care of and see that she got to school and take care of her clothes and things like that. My husband's wages had increased right along. He became division supervisor of the Missoula division, and I didn't need to. We were satisfied. You can probably see that my house hasn't changed much since the last time you were here, excepting that I put down a rug and then that's just put down. I never saw the need for it, excepting that I missed school every time the school bell would ring. I wished that I was in the classroom. I knew I couldn't be, but I wished that I was from the time my children were one year old—my first one was a year old.

MM: I would think that that would almost be enough to make...even though you were, say, getting near to be 60 years old, it would almost be enough to push you to go back to school. Then it would—

DC: Well, it was during the Depression, see. Teachers kept their jobs—those who had them. They weren't hiring married teachers, either, during the Depression. The husband was employed...Even when the husband was employed or not, they didn't hire married teachers, unless she was a widow or a divorcee. So by the time the Depression was over, I was too busy with my family. My husband always brought his checks home, and we lived within our income, that's all. We bought our cars on time. Our refrigerator we bought on time, too. Anything extra that we had to have, we'd pay so much a month for it. We had the house insulated—that was on time.

[Break in audio]

MM: I think you told me last time that you thought about running for political office at one time?

DC: Oh yes, I did. County superintendent of schools. I just thought about it.

MM: You were interested in politics?

DC: Yes, but because my husband, the position that he had in the state, I didn't go into politics much. You take one side and the other side gets elected, and you're out. You know, because of—

MM: What was his position?

DC: He was working for the state highway as a mechanic. Then later on, at the time that I would have been free...In the first place, I was too old. I wouldn't have been elected. By the time that I was free to really do it the way I wanted to, he had the supervisor job, which was very important to him especially.

MM: He would have lost his job if another—

DC: There's always that chance. Yes, he would have. When you get one of those top jobs, you lose your jobs with a change of administrations. So I didn't take sides. There were changes of administration, but because we weren't prominent, either one of us in politics, and he did a beautiful job, he kept his job. There was always that danger maybe he wouldn't, but there was always that danger so that's why I stay out. Besides, I'm neither a Democrat or a Republican. I vote for the man, the person, that I think is fitted for the job. Best fitted for the job. Don't always win, but—

MM: So you thought it was fine that women were in—

DC: I worked on the elections for years.

MM: Yes, you told me that. You thought it was fine that some women went into politics.

DC: Oh, yes. Yes, and if I believed in them, I voted for them too.

MM: Voted for Jeanette Rankin?

DC: Frankly, I believe real (unintelligible) from the...As soon as women could vote, when the women got the vote, I registered right away. I've been voting every year since. Deep down, I think that I was really an ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] woman. I'm not now, because I think they've gone too far. I believe in equal pay for equal work, and I believe in transferring from one job to another without losing any benefits or anything like that. The women should have as many benefits as the men have. Ever since I can remember, I've been wanting that. That kind of injustice, I can't stand. I think that the ERA has gone too far today. Some of the women understand ERA isn't conducive to keeping homes together.

MM: How is that?

DC: I believe in home, in families. I believe that the family is the strength of the universe. I believe that families...that divorce should not be as prominent as it is. I think that if women were a little more submissive to the wishes of their husbands, reasonably so...I wasn't because I'm the one that ran the show.

MM: I don't think you could have been submissive because that's not your way, right?

DC: No, I'm not. I'm not submissive. I speak my mind. Although, for the benefit of keeping my family together, I would have excused many, many things that my husband did that I didn't like. The family to me was the most important thing. That's why I don't like ERA because it's destructive to the family. Then I have some moral principles that ERA don't approve of. For instance, I'm against abortion. Definitely against abortion. To me, abortion is killing, and that's always true. I'm also against artificial contraception because I believe that most men...Can't be just women, be both men and women, by practicing continence can reduce or—

MM: Limit?

DC: —order the size of their families if they're willing to make some sacrifice.

MM: So you think it's men's responsibility too?

DC: Oh yes, just as much as women. I always did.

MM: Did your husband ever help with the housework?

DC: Not much. I'm the kind of person that works alone. I don't work as fast. I think that I work as fast as I used to, and I know I don't because I plan twice the work that I get done.

By the way, let me get you some coffee.

[Break in audio]

MM: Back to the subject of politics, do you remember what people thought of Jeannette Rankin? Did they think it was odd that she was a woman, and she was running for Congress? Did they think she was pushy?

DC: No, I don't think so, or she would not have been elected.

MM: It was accepted that she should do that.

DC: Oh, yes. It was accepted that it was all right.

MM: She was respected?

DC: Of course, I always respected her. I voted for her.

MM: Did you ever meet her?

DC: No.

MM: Did you have any time to work for suffrage for women—the vote for women?

DC: No, no, I didn't.

MM: You weren't as interested?

DC: I spent so much time doing the other things, working with church organizations and the established organizations that were our charity organizations, like Cancer Heart. I prefer to do that rather than go into politics. As I said, by the time that I was ready to go into politics, (unintelligible) excuse my husband was important. I was afraid that if I took sides he might lose his job.

I would have been very popular as a political figure, I think, with the Catholics. I was well known throughout the state—throughout the western district—not in the eastern district but throughout the western district because I had been president of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, president of the Parish Council of Catholic Women, of the Deanery Council of Catholic Women. Of course, in Missoula, I was well known among the Protestants too with working with the community chest, with Camp Fire Girls. Seven years, I bought the food for the camp—seven years of Camp Fire Girls. I was on the Camp Fire board. It was in 1955, I think it was, that I was given the Gulick Award, in Camp Fiire, that's the highest Camp Fire award they have. I received that. Then I was chosen...I forgot, '58 I think it was that I was chosen by Matrick's Table (?), honored by **Matrick's Table** as homemaker of the year. So you see, people knew me in Missoula.

MM: Did you talk to your friends about the idea of running for office?

DC: No.

MM: Did you talk to your husband?

DC: I just thought to myself about—

MM: Oh. Did you talk to your husband?

DC: Yes. He laughed. (laughs)

MM: He laughed?

DC: Sure.

MM: Do you think he would have supported you?

DC: No. Well no, my husband never was in favor of women for office.

MM: Did you discuss that with him much?

DC: Not much.

MM: You just sort of let him have his opinion.

DC: I mentioned it once, and he laughed. I thought, well, it is funny.

MM: No, it's not. You could have done it.

DC: Well, you don't do it without giving up some things, honey. There were some of the things that would I have had to give up that I wouldn't want to. For instance, being a member of the legislature. I wouldn't have wanted to be away from my family for two or three months. Then I would not have been very good in Helena after I got there. From my greater knowledge of what happens there, the kind of social life, you're tempted to lead the...I think that they have too much social life. There is too much lobby rather than doing the work that they're supposed to do. However, I would be in favor of having a year-long legislature. I think this two or three months legislature is a farce. The laws that are made or that aren't made—some of the laws are so foolish the appropriations or lack of appropriations, too, because they don't take time to talk them over enough. They have to hurry too much. At the end—

[End of Interview]