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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 465-034
Interviewee: Duane “Doc” Bowler
Interviewer: John Newhouse
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Project: Lee Newspapers in Montana Oral History Project

Note: Duane “Doc” Bowler was editor, managing editor and opinion page editor of the Billings Gazette from 1960-1982.

Duane “Doc” Bowler: I can't prove it. The man's dead. I'm sure he's dead— the telephone call. This happened during the campaign when I was working on the desk – [E.A.] Shorty Dye [editor of the Independent Record] came up and said, "Doc, you gotta kill that." No, he said, "Doc, I just had a call from Bob Corette."

Now Bob Corette, at this time, did lobbying for the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company, did legal work for the railroads—I know at least the Northern Pacific—I know that. I've seen him appear in court. [Unintelligible] on the State Board—he was then, or he would be subsequently, on the board of Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co., which is now Mountain Bell.

He said that Forrest, or Dave Anderson—that's Forest H. Anderson, [who was a justice on the Montana Supreme Court and later attorney general and governor] had called him up at sometime early in the morning, around 2 or 3 o'clock, and they were roaring drunk. And he said he told him if there was any more that appeared about his opponent in "the god-damn sheet of yours over here in Helena" that you were going to get two cases he didn't like, two decisions he didn't like.

"You know I'm a swing vote," he said. "You know how so-and-so are going to vote, and you know how the other two stand. I'm the one standing." Then he said, "And you son of a bitch, if I read another thing in that—"those were his exact words"—if I hear one more line about that guy, by gosh, you're going to get two decisions you don't like."

John Newhouse: And all for two inches [of copy].

DB: All we had wrong at that time, if my memory serves me, is two little squibs. This guy was going to speak at a Republican Women's Coffee Party. Those decisions involved the Montana Power and the Mountain States Telephone Company. Now what in the heck relationship were they to the Anaconda Company, other than the attorneys being tied in with them? Now, this is fantastic.

JN: Anderson was running for Attorney General at the time.

DB: He was Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and running for Attorney General. And the decisions came down.

JN: You shut up and the decisions came the right way?

DB: The decisions came the right way. But my question to you, again, is, "What in hell does the Anaconda Company care?"

JN: You make your point well. It's the attorneys who are using the name of the company.

DB: It's the attorneys that are using the name of the Company. Mike Lee, who was in the—what they called the Montana Municipal League—I forget which, Mike Lee was mayor of Anaconda. Mike was over working for a bill in the legislature. And Mike told me this.

He was getting this feedback that he was being opposed by the company lobbyists and he said, "I knew the Anaconda Company didn't give a damn about this case." He used an Irish brogue, and I won't attempt it. So I knew they didn't care about it. So he said he went to an assistant and said, "Listen, youse [uses a common Anaconda dialect] bastards. Keep your nose out of it, 'cause if youse don't, I'm going to Dan Kelly. And you'll keep your nose out of it." He says, "You know I know Dan Kelly." Kelly was vice president in charge of operations for the Western end of Anaconda. And they laid off. Mike says, "I got it through to the legislature, and then the sons of bitches got to the governor."

[Both men laugh.] That is fantastic, really.

JN: It sure as hell is.

DB: That's the way it is. Listen, we worked—the day that they closed down the slot machines in Montana—there's a phony deal in a way. They were closed down with a big hurrah. Well, John Willard and I were setting down writing down a story—one of those smart-ass things that newspaper reporters write about—that you could hear the ice in your drink these days, in Helena, you know—and Shorty read the story we did, and laughed and laughed and said, "Christ, fellas, it's good, but we can't use it."

We said, "Why not, Shorty?"

He said, "Would you believe that one of the key company lobbyists owns the slot machines at Lake County?"

JN: Oh. Ain't much fun at a newspaper with conditions like that.

DB: Whether this was just his knowledge or whether he received a call— I doubt—but I think the prize story of all, and this is the most fantastic one—you don't mind my taking a couple of minutes to tell it, do you?

JN: Hell, no.

DB: What are you doing after supper? Do you have appointments?

JN: No.

DB: Listen, my wife's going to a concert. You're not driving, are you? Let me pick you up. I'd take you home to dinner. This is fantastic. I know she's waiting for me; she's going to pick her father up. Where are you staying?

JN: Northern.

[Break in audio]

DB: Helena—at the time that I lived there— they didn't have a real specialist in town of any kind. Oh, they had some fellows of the American College of Surgeons, they had some guys that are on the board on the wall, pediatricians, eye specialists, and some call themselves surgeons, but nobody was board-rated. You know what I mean? You know medical [unintelligible]— nobody was board rated. Out at the Fort [Harrison], they got a doctor out there, because the fort started to get board-rated people. They might have had one in town by this time.

This guy's name was [Dr. Earl] Broderick. He was a board-rated surgeon, and he performed operations on some of the doctors' wives, at least one we know of. Really a capable man. He had left the fort and come in town to practice. It's the Veteran's Administration out there, is what it was, and he was in partnership. This is what makes the story so funny. He was officing with the head of the TB Association of Montana at the time, Dr. Schultz, I believe. He was an internal medicine man.

Well, the president-elect to be, or the high counselor in it, was a fellow by the name of John C. Harrison, now a Supreme Court Justice in Montana, who was county attorney. I didn't attend the meetings. I was off Friday and Saturday. Dan had come back to work Saturday night. The managing editor, Al Gaskill, that's Bert's dad, geez, he was brutal mean.

"You hold no [unintelligible] for us."

"What are you talking about?"

Well, he said some of your big-shot friends get in trouble, and you don't tell us about it.

I said, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about." I said, "I've been home for two days."

"So this Broderick, this big-shot, and he got into trouble, and you've been covering it up."

Well, that was a goddamn lie. I hadn't covered anything up. I didn't know anything about it. Well, I was then stringing for the *Standard*, and I went down to the police station every Sunday. In fact, I was down there every day, practically. It was on my way to and from work. Coming in there was a sergeant down there who was a friend of mine—as you know, you get to know people—I says, "Hey, what the hell's this deal on Broderick?"

He puts his fingers to his lips and says, "Can't tell you." Couldn't say anything, so he waves to the next room and I walked in, and there's the whole report laying on the desk. He didn't tell me, though.

JN: No, he sure didn't.

BD: Well, I went in. What had happened is that this Broderick had a wife, and somebody he called her sister [sister-in-law, Joanne Godfrey], and they were living out in the Rimini area, which is about 13 miles from town—13 or 14—and this sister, the wife's sister supposedly, or whatever it was, had been down at Safeway store buying some groceries. There was a drunken plasterer in there buying something. His name was Boso, believe it or not, a drunken plasterer with the name of [William] Boso.

Well, the bag boy wasn't around, and he said, "Lady, I'll help you carry your stuff to the car." So he took the stuff out and put it in her car for her, and Safeway store is about five blocks from uptown where the bars are for you to hang out, and he says to her, "Well, give me a ride uptown."

Well, she jumped in and slammed the door and took off and drove wherever she went, and she went to see Dr. Broderick. She said this man had attempted to accost her. The poor simple son of a bitch, he was just in a drunken stupor. Okay, Boso finally gets uptown all right and he's getting plastered, and meantime, Broderick starts out searching the bars looking for this man, and he finds and he tells him that he is an attorney. That Boso had inherited some property and, as the attorney, he has to take him and show it to him.

Well, Boso is impressed. It's a big deal any time a drunken bum can inherit something. This is marvelous. So they go out and they get in the car and he drives him up on the old Mullan Pass road up into the mountains away and he had to get out to walk to it, and he's walking behind Boso. Boso's ahead of him, and he takes a limb of a tree and wallops him one with it.

He just beat the son of a bitch unmercifully and told him that would teach him to bother women, this kind of thing. Boso didn't know what the hell was going on. Then he ties him up with a clothesline, takes him down the road to the Rimini turn-off. He goes up to Rimini and

shows him to his wife and her sister, supposedly, and the sister identifies him as the man. They came back down, take him to his rooming house, and says if he tells anybody about it, he'll kill him. Then it gets fantastic.

Then he goes down to the police station the next day and tells them how he has removed a sex fiend from circulation. As I said, I told you it was fantastic—and that he had known of a similar case some years ago where somebody was molested, and this wasn't going to happen here. It was very justified, everything he had done. Meantime, Boso's landlady, I think it was a Mrs. Moreno, saw the guy and said to get a doctor. Well, they got a Dr. [William] Cashmore, so this is all on this report.

[Interrupted by a visitor at the door]

Anyway, Boso doesn't know who beat him. And he really doesn't know why. The doctor takes him and patches him up, and thinks this ought to be reported to the police—he told him the story, you know—and so he turns it in.

Now the story starts to mesh. Now, how the story got around town, I don't know. [unintelligible] the TB Association convention is on that weekend. Broderick's partner is president, and Harrison is about to become county attorney, so he didn't do anything about it. Geez, it must be terrible, doctor. This is what I'm being accused of covering up on. I don't know anything about it at all. The sergeant said, "That's too bad. We can [unintelligible] this thing up."

So, the next morning, I went up to the sheriff's office. Now, you know the police and the sheriff don't get along. They have jealousy, especially out here. So I go into the sheriff's office. "Where's [Sheriff] Dave [Middlemas]?" He's downstairs. I have the run of the place pretty well, so I went downstairs, and here is a goddamn big tree limb with a note on it that's bloody and hunks of clothes on it. I said, "Is this what he did it with?"

Sheriff looks up and he says, "Yeah."

I said, "Jesus Christ, isn't that terrible." Can't get anyone to do anything, either. I says, the police are covering it up. "Jesus," Dave said, "there ought to be some way of getting this story out." I said "Dave, I've got an idea." From what I understand, and then he told me some more about it. I said, "Where is Boso?"

He said, "He's up in the hospital. Poor son of a bitch doesn't even know who hit him."

Well, I said, I think we can write a story if you're willing to go along with it. So I wrote the story, which went something like this: Gave the guy's name, he's in St. John's Hospital, brutally, though not critically, beaten by an assailant whose name was unknown to the victim. True. Then I went on and told the whole story of what happened. Not Broderick, but how this guy

met him and [unintelligible.] The paper is on the street at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. At 5:00 in the afternoon, the County Attorney filed charges against Dr. Broderick. We were an afternoon paper, and when I hear about it, I said, "I want to save that story for our paper."

The next day I went up, I got the charge, and went back to the office and wrote it. Meantime, the reason I'm telling it to you, giving you the background is to show you the connection. Ok, Broderick, because his being one of the few board-rated surgeons in town, had become a very good friend of [Norman] Jeff Holter, an atomic scientist [worked in atomic testing at the Bikini Atoll]. Who's the old—he was a scion of the A.M. Holter family, in fact running the thing, or liquidating or something. He was a director or the First National Bank.

Through his friendship or something, because Broderick had a long list of credentials, he had gotten—Broderick had gotten a number of loans from the First National Bank in [unintelligible]. Ok, now the son of a bitch is thrown in jail, the loan won't be much good. I'm putting two and two together there. So Holter goes down to [Fred] Heinike, who is president of the bank, and tells him the sad story. Taylor B. Weir, the attorney with the firm of Weir, Clift and Bennet or Gough or whatever. I forget which one, but Weir was still running it—was president of the Montana Records Publishing Company, which was the dummy company owned by the Fairmont, they owned most of the stock in the Independent Record, or 85 percent of the stock, or whatever. He was also on the board of directors of the First National Bank.

Meantime, Broderick gets Rankin, Wellington D. Rankin, now dead, who was a good friend of Heinike, a business associate—they did things together, no particular friend of Weir's— and they get Weir to agree to kill the story of Broderick being charged with assault. I had written the story.

Meantime, the telephone call had come back with Al Gaskill, the managing editor, and Weir—we couldn't run the story. I said, "Look, you know Sid Cooney real well, he's another doctor in town, friend of T.B. Weir, why don't you work on him. I want—"

[Break in audio]

But he explained to him what the facts of it are. Now, by this time, Weir is scared. He thinks the guy is off his nut. I suspect he was, and that is not a professional judgement, but, you know, the guy is off his

rocker to do anything like this, and Weir is afraid that if the story runs, that he'll come up and attack him.

Of course, he is bemoaning the fact that what his two friends have got him involved in, so he calls up Shorty Dye, tells him he can't run the story, and Weir is scared. Shorty Dye, who was then the editor, tells him, "Now, look, I'm running this paper, you aren't, you're just hired to get us out of trouble when we get into it and forget it, we're running the story."

That's where it sits. This is no company policy, you know what I mean?

JN: How's it hurt Anaconda?

DB: So anyway, we ran the story in the afternoon edition, in the mail edition... it was set in type and running, and oh god. The mail edition consisted of 300 copies or about that, that went to Townsend and White Sulphur Springs, that's all. But you know how mailers are inclined to cheat on the mail run drives. They're inclined to cheat. So, they always ran maybe a couple of thousand instead of 300 so they would have a running start, so they could go home earlier, you know, just typical of what they will do. They do it to every client in the country, I'm sure, they'll do it if they can get away with it.

Meantime, Shorty gets a call from James H. Dicky Jr., telling him he has got to kill the story, God almighty, no, no, no. Look it, Weir just called and he's frightened for his life. He says if that story runs, he's going to quit being a director of the Montana Power Company, he's going to quit his railroad job, he's going to quit the whole works.

He says, "Shorty, you've got to leave that story out, and you've got to go back down and talk him into not quitting." Shorty told me this. Shorty goes down the street. Here's the guy he just told to go to hell a few minutes ago...Now, he's got to get out and talk him into staying with it. So, the story was pulled out of the home or final or whatever you want to call it, that the good old [mailers], they've cheated him.

In paper routes in town that day, one side of the street the story was in and the other side it was out. There were actually fist fights took place about whether we carried the story or not. They both had proof. Well, the *Standard* in Butte, they ran the story the next day and we carried it the next day, too.

Can you imagine it? It was fantastic.

JN: How goofy can you get?

DB: How goofy can you get. Well, that's all of that story.

[End of Interview]