

Oral History Number: 455-001
Interviewee: Jean Dickson Jonkel
Interviewer: N/A
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Jean Jonkel: This is Jean Dickson Jonkel of the class of 1940, and I want to tape a few observations for you instead of trying to write everything I want to say in a teeny-weeny spot that I used up in the first part of what I wanted to say.

The University [University of Montana] was a very, a very pleasant part of my life. We came along at the end of the Depression, and no one had any money. The teachers were all very, very careful not to require us to have books that cost money, to the point where several of them wrote their own books. Especially among those that I recall with a great deal of pleasure was the geologist [J.P. Rowe]. I am horribly sorry to say I can't quite recall his name, but he was a wonderful speaker, and he lectured to us on the geography and natural history of Montana. He wrote a book [*Geography and Natural Resources of Montana*, 1933] and it was maybe a [unintelligible] of his writing, and I think the thing cost three dollars total. He [unintelligible] for his expertise, and most of those professors that we had, who came to Montana because it was new and different, did about the same thing. They seemed to like Montana, and they wanted us to have access to everything that they had learned about our state.

Three dollars for that book, and I wish to goodness sakes I had never left it in the library of the Carter County High School where I taught during the war years—World War Two, of course, that is. World War Two. Because it was wonderful. It had not only the mountain ranges and what natural resources they might have within their boundary, and they had a section for how Montana place-names were acquired. There were all sorts of little added pieces of information that this doctor had garnered over the years. I seem to remember that he was always the starter at the Interscholastic track meets that were held in the spring at the University for high school people—the interstate track meets. We always got it time off from school to go that the track meet, and it was a big deal. We got out of school to go, and we always took advantage of that, because I don't recall of that cost a cent to get in. Schools—various schools—participated all over the state if they could get their people there by hook or by crook.

Anyway, this man was a wonderful teacher. He had a sense of humor, and he didn't have any interfering ego with his enjoyment. He was forever telling us about odd things that happened to him in the course of his duty, and he told jokes on himself, which is always a good idea. That's a real sense of humor, if you are always the butt of the joke. When I finished the course, I thought I'd like to take some more. I looked around for another course besides the geography and natural resources of Montana, and I found something that was two credits, and it was gemstones. I thought that sounded like a lot of fun. So I took a course in gemstones from this dear doctor and thoroughly enjoyed it. He showed us all sorts of things—how to tell one stolen from the other, and all that sort of thing. The final test was a table completely covered,

completely covered, with gemstones, and we had to identify them. I thought that was a great sport. Loved it very much.

He also told some stories on himself about the gemstones. He and his wife had traveled around and had taken trips to foreign places, and his wife had gone into the local markets and she had bought several things. He'd say, "Well, you know it..." She would bring them home and show them to her husband, say what a wonderful bargain she'd found. He would say to us, "Well, I was positive that those weren't the real stones," but he said invariably...the butt of the joke was that he took some home and tested these remarkable bargains that she had and she was right. He was wrong. They were all absolutely the real thing at fantastic prices. Then he would laugh and laugh. She gotten the better of him yet. That was one person from whom I learned a lot of things that I hadn't really anticipated learning, but it was great sport. Loved it a lot.

Another one, another professor that we enjoyed very much was a little white-haired gentleman, and he was known as Psych Smith. Psych Smith had an office in Main Hall, and there was a classroom there which was the biggest sort of a theater-type classroom in the whole University at that time. It was where the Music Department held sway at that time. Can you imagine? Anyway, Psych Smith had a corner office in one corner of the top floor of Main Hall. He taught us all sorts of things about ourselves. He put the girls on one side of the main aisle and the boys on the other side of the main aisle, and then he numbered us: one, two, one, two, one, two. So that when we had tests, then we had different tests for one and two. Then, of course, the seats in the building were old and wooden and very pretty. They had high backs, and so we always kept track of where Psych was in his in his book, because he would give he would give these lessons totally impromptu. His mind was off goodness knows where, but then sometimes he'd lose his place and then he'd stop a minute. There was always some bright-eyed gentleman who would give him the next word. Then he'd get back to where he was in his speech, and he'd proceed.

Another thing. The doors out of this room were in the front. So the Psych would take the row beginning at the front, and then on beautiful spring days, by the time he got to the back row there were obviously people who had sneaked out the door and gone about happier things than psychology.

We had a lot of dogs attending the University at that time, and one day there was a little, well, it was a little, like a fox terrier type, sleeping on the floor underneath one of the fellows that had his seat propped up a little, and the dog was right under him. The bolts in the chair fell out and this male student landed on the dog, and it was pandemonium. Absolute pandemonium. The dog went howling out the door, and the fellow got up and put the seat back together again and bolted it down. Then we could go on with our class.

Every once in a while, Psych Smith, in his fog, would come back to the front of the room after he'd taken roll, and there'd be all these people that sneaked out the side doors on such a beautiful day. He would say, "I thought there were more."

“No, no,” we’d say. “No, no, this is all there were.”

“Oh, okay.” Then he’d go on with the next bit. He had certain things that we absolutely loved. You could learn a lot about yourself in that class. You could learn if you were left-handed, right-handed, or how good your ears were—all sorts of things—what you could hear, and how your senses were shaping up, and all that. So we spent hours dilly-dallying in the lab, having a wonderful time. He had a model of an ear that was about half as big as he was. He was a small man, short. He had this big ear, and he could take it all apart and show you how the parts work together and all that stuff. Then every once in a while he’d say, “Have we had that ear? Have we had the ear?”

We would all say, “No, no. We haven’t had the ear.” So he’d trot the ear out again and go over it again with us, because it was really a graphic piece of business and we loved it.

He was known for his forgetfulness. One time his wife called up the secretary, and she said, “Is Psych there yet?” I forget—she didn’t call him Psych, but she said, “Is the professor there yet?”

She [the secretary] said, “No, no. He’s not here yet.”

She said, “Well head him off when he gets there.” She said, “I found his pants in his room over a thing, and heaven only knows what’s what he’s got on but he doesn’t have his pants on.”
[laughs]

So the secretary did as she was told. She watched out for him, and when he got there, before he could take his coat off, she got him bundled up and turned back towards his house where he could go pick up his trousers.

He was also forever losing his car. He’d go downtown and leave his car there. Then he’d walk home and wonder where his car was.

We liked Mrs. Smith. She was she was one of our most reliable substitute teachers when we were in grade school. She did a lot of substitute teaching, and she was a very pleasant little woman.

I told you we had a lot of dogs.

I noticed in the 1939...I think it is 1939 Sentinel that Jack Hoon did a sort of cartoon for the page. There’s a term for that, but I can’t remember it now. Anyway, he drew a cartoon of the ROTC marching on the...or spending their time on the Oval. He had in there a mention of Garbo [University of Montana “campus hound”]. Garbo was a German Shepherd, and a beautiful dog, absolutely gorgeous, but what she loved to do was to have you throw a rock up as high as you could throw it and then she would catch it. You know what that did to her teeth, but she kept

doing it. She would just pester students until they would throw her rock up in the air. Down it would come with a *clomp*.

Another, oh yes, doctor...Let's see, there was another big family up the Bitterroot. Anyway, he was a dentist in town, and he had a dog. One time they were going to have a community concert that night, and the dog had gone into the school to the auditorium. By that time, we had a bigger auditorium. It was the new Student Union building. Everybody thought it was great. Anyway, along came the community concert singer, and she was doing just fine and so forth and everybody was enjoying it. Suddenly, the dog got up and howled a bit, and then went home. I would imagine that the dentist, who was probably at the concert, was embarrassed. I certainly know that he probably heard about it a lot. People would tease him about that. Yes. [pauses] I think it was Dr. Porter. Yes, that's who it was.

Madame Arnoldson was probably the dearest person I've ever known. She really was so sweet and caring. She decided that she would give us a course on French opera. It wasn't in the catalog, but there were quite a few of us that liked opera, so she would give us a course on opera. We would trudge up to her apartment—she lived on the second floor across from the Lutheran church on the side street—we would trudge up there, and we would sit around the table and we would learn these operas. It was great sport. She would light her candles afterwards, and then she would feed us plain cider that she would get by the gallon at the Bitterroot. She would pour it in her champagne glasses, and she would give us a glass of cider in a hollow-stem champagne glass with...She would get some frosted ginger cookies, and then she would slice across them into various slices and they would be exactly like a French cookie. So we would have French refreshments. These, of course, she paid for by herself. She found a book which had the music in it as well as the operas, and I still have mine. I think the book at a local bookstore was two or three dollars. Not any more than that. I still have it, and I still love opera. Absolutely. I love the music. It is so beautiful.

Madame Arnoldson had a relative who was a sea captain, right after they opened the port of China, and she had many wonderful things in her house—absolutely gorgeous. A lot of them came from her home. Her father was a judge, and I know that he was a Southerner but I think he was in Chicago, I think, when he died.

Dr. Arnoldson had been married to a Swedish blue blood, and this Arnoldson and she parted company. He went back to Sweden, and she took her mother in to live with her. That would be...Her name was Gharrett (?), Louise Gharrett-Arnoldson. Her father, I think, about that time died. So, Mrs. Arnoldson had to gather up her mother and all her household belongings, and come and live with Dr. Arnoldson. So she had three huge plate-glass mirrors, and she had one of them sitting on top of a Bombay chest of great age and gorgeously decorated. She had all sorts of gorgeous things in her house, and she shared everything with us. She was a great woman for looking for bargains, and she did a very good job of managing with hardly any money at all. University wages at that time were not the highest. Everybody was still getting over the Depression.

But it always seemed so nice when she would light the candles, and we could sit there and listen to the music and watch the play of the candles in her mirrors. Someplace she had picked up—I guess in a Paris flea market—she had picked up some gilt and marble candles with big long prisms on them, and they would they would be just simply wonderful with light on them. The Lutheran church was right across the street, so they would save all their candles after they got burned down a little ways. They would save them and give them to Mrs. Arnoldson—to Dr. Arnoldson—and then she would use them in her candle sticks. She had another one on top of her...in the middle of her table. Her big, old, round family table that we gathered around for our seminar-type courses, and in that she had three-armed...yes, three arms, candelabra that she picked up someplace. She would light that. It was just pleasant memories all over.

One time my mother had painted in the wintertime and got pneumonia. It's a wonder she didn't die. Dr. Arnoldson was so concerned about this, and she knew what it was like to raise a child by yourself, as my mother was doing for us. So she sent over a pot of soup for my mother, which means she had to send it over by messenger. She didn't have a car, so she sends this pot a soup over. She always made soup on her pilot light on her gas stove. She invariably always had some bones cooking on that. So when Mother was in need of some chicken soup, or soup anyway, along came this beautiful big pot of soup from Madame Arnoldson. That's just the kind of person she was. Not only that, but she kept track of me. I got married during the war, Yes, during the war I taught at Carter County High School, and after the war was over I went to Alaska and taught school there for a couple of years. Through it all, I would hear from Madame Arnoldson regularly. I know that, because I kept the letters, so I have them to remind me of pleasant times.

Dr. Shallenberger was put in charge of the Placement Center for Montana graduates, and I don't think Dr. Shallenberger ever did anything halfway. As I remember, I did not have a job after I graduated, and Dr. Shallenberger was so kind. He would think of things I should do, and he would come over. I tried to dredge up a little Latin, because I'd gotten an A-plus as a final grade from L.C. Wyell (?) in high school. So I tried to take some from Dr. Clarke (?), but my goodness sakes, my translation of the Latin was pretty impossible. But he was sweet. He just laughed. He gave me a copy of my atlas—an early atlas that was a rather rare book—and I still have it. It was a fine atlas, but he said he had two of them. He'd like me to have one. So I happily took that, and it's still around here in our library.

Mrs. Weisberg taught German, and I thought for sure I was going to flunk that. I asked my good friend Walter Neil King about that.

I said, "I don't know what's wrong, but I just can't get this German."

He said, "Well, you don't have to flunk it," he said, "you sit right next to me." Of course, Walter never got anything less than an A.

I said, “Walter, there's a difference between what you know and what I know, and I am not going to copier paper at all ever, ever. Ever. But Mrs. Weisberg saved me. She had the poems of Heinrich Heine, and they weren't guttural and didn't bother me at all. They were simply gorgeous, especially if they were sung. They were out of this world. She also got us a book to read about that time, and it was by a tenor, a very renowned tenor Leo Slezak. He was so funny—everything he said was funny—and he didn't take himself very seriously. I remember yet one of his jokes. He was singing someplace and it was *Lohengrin* [opera], I think, and the swan-boat was supposed to be there at a certain time. The darn thing wasn't there when it was supposed to be. So, he quickly said, “When is the next boat due?” which amused me very much. I thought that would be very great in such a serious opera. Want to know when they're going to send the next boat around. [laughs] I still chuckle about that, and I still have that book. Yes.

[long pause]

Doctor Shallenberger was so sweet. He tried so hard to find a job for me. The thing of it was, he would drive over to see me. He would drive over to see how I was doing and try to think of other things. He had a little dog. While my husband was going to school, he had little dog—a little fox-terrier type dog. He always told the class that it helped him correct papers, because by that time, after the war, it didn't...They didn't know if Dr. Shallenberger should be having a dog in his classroom, but the dog was there and it was great. One time a dog got me in serious...Well, not me, but the whole class in serious...I was taking US history in the back of...

No, I want to start with something else. Let me get to that, I'll get back to that. Burly Miller [J. Earl “Burly” Miller], I think, was absolutely the best lecture I have ever heard. I took English history from him, and he made it come alive. He really did. I was just enthralled with it. He had a cane, and he would walk around the whole room and look out the window and sight down the cane at various things on the campus. It wasn't busy at that time of year anyway. I don't think anybody ever cared about Burly Miller sighting off across campus with his cane while he lectured. He was just the world's best, and I was thoroughly enjoying it when the University in its...what shall we say, cheated us by moving him over in administration. I thought, my gosh, when they've got a man like that who can just charm anything...I don't care what. You don't pay any attention to anything, but what he's telling you and you still remember it. I still remember things that he talked about. I was crestfallen, because Burly's replacement was the only professor I ever had that I didn't think was great.

I thought, he's a dud. He mispronounced every French word he ever said. He had some sort of an accent. I don't know what it was, but it wasn't much good. I didn't really care for it. So he was let loose on English history, and that's when I noticed...that's when I noticed that the fellow in front of me, who happened to be [unintelligible]. I didn't even know he'd been there before, but he must have been, was Bill Lazetich, and I watched him and discovered that he is ambidextrous. He used to write down notes with one hand, and then I think he wrote a letter home with the other hand. I thought, oh my stars, the man is ambidextrous! Good grief! Pull out a college yearbook of 1939 said he was the best athlete the University ever had. Well, you

stop and think about it. There's an ambidextrous person can use both sides of their brain. They're not limited like the rest of us. So he could throw with either hand, kick with either foot, and so forth. Whatever he wanted to do, he could do with both feet. So he ended up—a I discovered on, but I wasn't a bit surprised—I discovered at the annual awards convocation that Bill Lazetich had earned every athletic letter that the University offered—every one. I wasn't even surprised. So he was awarded a blanket, I think, at that awards thing. But what a deal to have an athlete with that capability. That's fantastic. So he won scholastic honors, as well as every athletic honor that was ever given too. I don't suppose they ever had another one like that really.

Then, you look at 1939 and see how those athletes were dressed—football uniforms for instance. The *Sentinel* was bewailing the fact that their center got a broken leg. He was out—I forget which game it came in—but one of them the center had a broken leg. It was hazardous. They didn't have padding. They didn't have any sort of protection. It's a wonder. It's a wonder. I remember one time, at a football game that somebody running hit a yardage marker, a line marker. Hit it, and he went out of the game on a stretcher. He didn't even graduate. I was going to look up and see if that was Paul Sakash (?), and I didn't find Paul Sakash anyplace. So, it must have been that he had to go home, because he landed on his back on one of those markers. Dear me. It was hazardous. Yes. Hazardous.

Madame Arnoldson came to my wedding. Bless her heart. She looked lovely, and I heard from her until she died. [unintelligible] I don't know. I told you she had three big mirrors—gilded mirrors, gorgeous—from her home which was in Chicago, because her dad with a judge. One of them was over the fireplace in what is now the president's house, was then N. J. Lennes' house. So, she loaned out the other mirror to...I can't, I think that went to the newspaper man. Yes, it did I think. I was trying to think it was Mrs. Turney-High, but it wasn't. Well, after—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

[speaking to someone else] Yes.

I often wonder whatever happened to all those things that she had. She had three trunks full of Paisley scarves, Paisley things. She had another...Well, maybe it was only two, I don't know. She had two, three...yes, three trunks full of art. Let's see, she had picked up etchings in Paris, along the [unintelligible]. She had those three etchings. She had postcards of all of the museums in Europe. Those she had still picked up when she and Arnoldson—Dr. Arnoldson—were married. In her house were two oil portraits of herself, done by the same friend but years apart. One of them was just she was sitting in a chair holding a fan, closed fan, in her hand, and the other one was with her Ph.D. robes from the Sorbonne in Paris. I would have thought Madame Arnoldson left a daughter, and I don't know what in the world she did with all of Madame Arnoldson's stuff. I'd like to know, because she had a lot of very expensive stuff. I know Walter King used to admire a Grecian vase that she had, one that was blackened and sort of terracotta colored with figures on it. Walter thought that was absolutely great. Madame had a little phonograph that folded all up into a little box. It was one of the marvels, how that thing...She could bring that to class so we could have music anytime we wanted, or any time she wanted to show us something, because she'd had to take a degree in music because Southern women didn't go in for anything other than womanly.

A southern gentleman's daughter would have to...the only thing that he thought was fit for her to take—her father—was music. If she would take music, then he would be just delighted. So she took music, and she taught music. She taught music in girls' schools, and she played a lot. She had a wonderful violin. Had a fantastic tune. Absolutely. Amati, Amati. It was around the time a Stradivarius, but his violins were of a more of a sweeter sound, [unintelligible] sounding instrument. Instead of letting her play her beautiful, gorgeous-sounding instrument, Dr. Weisberg had her playing a viola of dubious vintage. I always thought what harm would it have been to let that woman enjoy that precious instrument? That's the only thing I know of, what happened to Madam's vast treasures. I suspect her daughter sold them. I really think so, but what harm would it do to have given one of her portraits to the University? That I can't understand. Maybe it was done and I just didn't know about it, but I never heard anything about it. If I did, Walter King didn't tell me anything about it. We wondered about it.

I think I'll get back to when the dogs, the campus dogs, got a whole classroom full of students in a jam. There was another spring day—Montana is lovely in the spring—but we had U.S. history and it was a required subject. You had to take it whether you wanted to or not, and it was taught by my old nemesis—the fellow that replaced Burly Miller and couldn't pronounce anything. Well anyway, he was holding forth, and we'd had our three jokes. This fellow was my advisor one time. We'd had our three jokes, and we were...This fellow had three jokes that he told to every class he ever had, and they were spaced out and they weren't funny, particularly. I mean, everybody loves a good joke, but these weren't really funny. Anyway, here we were sitting to this man going on and on about United States history, and we had to be there.

Windows were all open in the back around. It was in the old chemistry lab, and it had theater-type seats going down from the top to the bottom. The windows, of course, were at the top around, and they were open and there was a nice breeze. There's a dog sleeping there peacefully. Suddenly, the dog gets up, yawns loudly—and I mean yawns loudly—and proceeded to walk out the door. Upon which, since it was practically the time to leave anyway, all the rest of us—the whole class—got up and walked out. I admit it wasn't a very nice thing to do, and the teacher did not think it was funny. So we had the most interesting final exam in that U.S. history I've ever had, and when I looked at it, I thought it's revenge. He's getting his revenge on us. [laughs] I thought to myself I'd have done it again. I knew he didn't have any sense of humor, but really. [pauses] I really didn't care where he got all these questions from. It didn't bother me a bit. [laughs] It was still funny. It would have been funny if he could have justified asking some of those questions, since we were supposed to know U.S. history and most of those questions didn't have much to do with it. Life plays funny tricks.

My husband had gotten out of the Army, and he had planned on going to Wisconsin—University of Wisconsin—and taking a course. But that summer the man, whose course he wanted to take very badly, was killed in the fire in Wisconsin so he had to go to the next best. So we missed the Sand County Almanac by one summer. He went to the University of Minnesota, which he thought had the next best course, and he got so discouraged. He was a bone-headed football player, who didn't have to do his chemistry. My husband George thought that was the pits. Why didn't he have to do his chemistry, and everybody else had to do their chemistry? He didn't even have to take the test, this boy [unintelligible], and George was getting really hot under the collar. He was just about to call the whole thing off. I said, "Why don't you go to Montana? You'll like it there." I said to him.

So that summer, instead of quitting school, he applied to go to Montana. At least he got to meet Dr. Arnoldson, because she's still all over the house, or her home I should say. George got to take classes he enjoyed. Although there was one time his friends stopped him from shoving a [unintelligible] right out the upstairs window. But he did like Montana. He loved it. A cousin of mine took him trout fishing.

In due time, he and I both got a master's degree. His very favorite teacher [pauses] was his advisor for his senior project. He was working on birds, and he worked on a chukar partridge. Really got a slide of the last chukar partridge taking off from the crate, and even though George had an excellent dog to work with, he never found those cotton-picking chukar partridges again, because they're apt to fly off. George kept in close touch with his advisor—the rest of the advisors. Neither one of us have ever regretted going to Montana.

George's little brother went to Korea for that Korea fracas, and when he came home he came to Montana and is still here...Still there, I should say. So, whereas our children grew up far away, there are still Jonkels in the Montana alumni books.

[long pause]

I think this is all I wanted to say.

[pause]

Oh, one other thing I thought helped me a lot. I decided to take a course in the history of art. It was a two-semester course, and I only took one quarter. [unintelligible] got me up to the ancients. Practically, the modern ones, you might say, but I never regretted that course, because it taught me a lot of things about art and it has enriched my life tremendously.

[long pause]

We lived at the faculty housing at the University of Montana [at Fort Missoula], and I taught school for a year at Target Range. [long pause] We learned a lot from those gentle souls: Norman E. Mary Taylor, Carling and Arline Malouf, and their families. [long pause] Philip Wright. [long pause] Philip Wright remained a friend of George's the rest of his life. [long pause] The Maloufs and the Taylors, yes, and even Fred and Johnna Henningsen were good friends. We loved those old Fort-houses. They've been torn down. They're the only historic things that were there. They were thrown up to protect the railroad from the Nez Perce Indians, and they were historic. They should have been saved.

I'm sorry I didn't get at this earlier, but I had an abscessed tooth and had to go back into the hospital and get it out of there.

Thank you kindly for everything you've all done for me and mine.

[End of Audio]