

Oral History Number: 037-001
Interviewee: Harvey Connole
Interviewer: Dale Johnson
Date of Interview: September 5, 1978

Dale Johnson: This is an interview with Harvey Connole on September 5, 1978, at the University of Montana. First, I'll ask a little bit about yourself. Did you grow up in Butte? Are you from Butte?

Harvey Connole: I was born and raised in Butte.

DJ: What did you do there then before you went to work for Mr. Clark [William A. Clark]?

HC: Well, we worked for Mr. Clark mostly while we were going to school, and my brother and I would switch off. He was going to school. If we held job between us, when...like going out for football, one would take care of it for the other, something like that. Then I was engineer at St. James Hospital for, well maybe, 15 years. Engineer at Continental Oil for about six or seven, then I sold Buick cars for Curry Buick (?). And I ran an apartment house in Butte.

DJ: Then when you retired, you went to—

HC: I went to Las Vegas about 13 years ago and worked at the Sahara Hotel and rented apartment out for Frank [unintelligible], who originally is also from Butte. And I retired about two years ago.

DJ: Now, you worked for W.A. Clark, Jr.? Or did you work for the old man?

HC: The old man was there when I was there. I seen all the Clarks when I was in the home.

DJ: And did you work in his house, or what they called the castle?

HC: I worked in his mansion, which is the Clark's mansion. Now, that's on the corner of Granite and Idaho Street.

DJ: Now, this one that's a museum now?

HC: Yeah, right.

DJ: Okay. Well, if you'd like to relate your experiences then.

HC: Well, the only thing that really impressed me outside of the just everyday life...the Clarks only came up there maybe once in every two or three years for maybe two or three days at the most of the time. But to change his will, he had made an appointment to go to court to adopt

George Pell (?) as his legitimate son and would change his...everything that was legal would probably go to George Pell after that. He went to the courthouse, and they refused to change it because he had been drinking. So they brought him back to the home, and I was there because when the Clarks were there, we had a very close in case they wanted anything. The housekeeper when upstairs, and she come back down and she said, "He's asleep. I think the rest would do him better than if I woke him and gave him some soup." But an hour or so later, these two lawyers came down the back stairs, which was...I don't why they took the back way because it was so much harder. They had him in between them, and they each had one of his arms over their shoulders. They said, "We are going to take him up to the lake." I'm sure to Swan Lake where his summer home was there.

As they were leaving the building, there was a colored cook—a woman that used to help Annie Harrington (?), the housekeeper—and as he was going on taking him out the door, she said, "You better take a good look at him because you'll never see him alive again," she said.

So he was put in the Packard, and that was a touring car. And the next day we got word that he'd died and he never go to change his will. So has always kind of bugged me, knowing this and being there when I seen and heard this remark of this old cook.

DJ: This was in 1934? Is that when he died?

HC: Yeah, it was about 1934, yeah. But it seemed that nobody contested or question it, because they were all getting something out of it even the old housekeeper got 25,000...it was like 25,000. I was probably the only one standing there that...I was just kind of young at that time, but I would have questioned it that I remember it. It's always been in my mind what happened with that.

When I hear about how they handled Howard Hughes, it just makes me think that maybe a few others handled that way.

DJ: Was the house open all year round?

HC: Oh yes.

DJ: People working there all the time even though the Clarks were only there a short period?

HC: Always had the housekeeper and we took care of the furnace. Just two employees all year round. Then if we had word that the Clarks were coming, they hired about three or four people to clean up the walls and shine it all up—get it ready for them if they were coming. But it was open all year. Sometimes it might be open two or three years, and they wouldn't even come up. But he kept it open all the time.

DJ: Did old W.A. Clark spend much time there, or was he usually out in California too?

HC: Yeah, he was usually down there, but I had seen...And they were very nice people. I mean, every time the Clarks came through—it was the senator, junior or the third—they'd all stop and talk. We were just taking care of the furnace, but when they left, we would always get approximately a month's wages as a tip. When we started, we got 35 dollars a month. Then one day Junior went through and he says, "How much you get?"

We said, "30."

He said, "It's 50 now."

Next time he come through, he said, "What do you get?"

We said, "50."

He said, "Well, now it's 60."

They were very generous people.

DJ: Was W.A. Clark, III, was that the son of the junior?

HC: That was Junior's son. He was killed in an airplane accident when he was about 32 years old.

Unidentified Speaker: You didn't tell them who George Pell was.

HC: George Pell was the one that was going to be adopted. What I believed at that time and what I heard, that he was actually the son of W.A. [Clark] Junior, by his French maid. He looked just like him. He was the spitting image of—

DJ: Was the French maid, was she employed at the mansion too?

HC: No, she traveled with him.

DJ: Oh, she was with him, okay.

HC: I used to take him for a ride in my car because I'd take her and then her son was about 10 or 12 years old then. I would take them for a little ride then and bring them back. I mean, in the later years, in the '30s probably.

DJ: And then they sold the house after?

HC: Well, that was another deal that didn't look too good. Hansen Packing, at that time, was in the red. I don't think anybody would have bought it, but Clark's lawyers bought Hansen Packing Company at that time. Then after the Clarks died, then they sold Hansen's and the Clark...the [unintelligible] was in the deal with the Clarks. It ended up then, the nuns got it. I don't know how. Now, it's a museum. But it was sold with that inventory. Everything was just turned over.

DJ: I haven't been through the place, but I understand it's all the original furniture is there.

Now someplace I ran across recently that the house that's a block or two from there was W.A. [Clark] Junior's house that was referred to as the castle.

HC: I believe that was his brothers. I'm not quite sure. The Masonic Order bought that for a while.

DJ: Yeah, I think they still own that.

HC: But we never had anything to do with that, with the old senator or Junior or the third. Maybe I'm wrong, but I always was under the impression that it was W.A. Junior's brother that was home.

US: [unintelligible].

HC: Well, the kids, you know where they keep the Paul Clark (?) home? Now, that was another one of Clark's...a relative, brother or something. Paul Clark. Paul was also...there was enough money left in that estate to take care of that. It's still running I think.

US: When he died you got the good pick of stuff?

HC: Oh, as everything was sold, the old housekeeper said, "Is there anything you want?" Well, I didn't know the value of anything at that time. I know there was a gun upstairs and a sword of W.A. Clark's—a Masonic sword—and his poker chips, and I asked for those by mistake. The box still hasn't gone and my brother's son has the sword yet with W.A. Clark written on it. I should have asked for some sterling if I'd had any sense, but I didn't. [laughs]

DJ: Butte must still a [unintelligible] at the time?

HC: Oh yes, yes.

DJ: And Clark still owned the amusement park...Well, he had sold that, I guess, to Anaconda Company. Did he have any holdings in Butte, do you know, at that time?

HC: Well, when I worked for him, he had the Clark Mill too, besides the mines. But it went as a package deal—the mill and all, the mines—to the Anaconda Company. That's why he bought

Hansen's when it was...when he was out and not in, he bought Hansen's...He didn't know he bought it, I'm sure. It was handled legally through his lawyers. I think that was kind of a scheme, too.

DJ: Was the summer home you mentioned on Swan Lake, was that the old man's place too? Or was that W.A. Junior's?

HC: I couldn't say whose home that was. They would go up there, but I don't know who actually was...was Senator or Junior's. Junior was...I imagine it'd be more Junior's because Junior threw his money around a lot more than the old man. Somebody once said to the old man once, "You don't tip like your son."

He says, "He has a rich father, and I don't." [laughs]

[End of Interview]