

Maureen and Mike

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Oral History Number: 373-001, 002

Interviewee: Charles Campbell

Interviewer: N/A

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Note: This audio consists of a talk Charles Campbell gave to an unidentified group of people. The second half of this audio recording consists of a questions and answer session. No attempt was made to differentiate among the different audience members in this transcript. They are identified as Unknown Speaker.

Charles Campbell: In the corporate world, they always are telling you how to do things. One of the things they always told us is that if you start a talk, you've got to break the ice with the audience by telling a story. The other thing was they also said if you couldn't tell a story, don't try.

I'm not a storyteller. I always forget the punchline, so I'll skip that. What I'm going to talk about is growing up in Bonner, Montana. You might say another title is growing up in a company town [Anaconda Copper Mining Company town]. The history of Bonner is pretty well covered by Gladys [Gladys Peterson], especially the school part. That's what I like best about it. Gladys and her colleagues worked pretty hard on that. I disagree with some of the things sometimes, but you see what I'm doing is presenting really a personal story of a boy aged...from about 6 to 15. The time range was the end of the '20s and the early '30s. So it started out in flapper days and went through most of the Depression.

Bonner was owned by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company [ACM]. In addition to the lumber mill, there were probably 30 houses at that time there and they were all rented to employees. The town included quite a number of facilities. There was a company store, of course, and a butcher shop, and there was a bunkhouse and a mess hall for laboring men. There was a Hotel Margaret for, well, the office staff and supervisors and visiting firemen, of course. There also was a streetcar that came from Missoula, and it circled around a building there we called the Roundhouse. The Roundhouse, at the time I was there, when I was growing up, included a bar; it included a soda fountain and a barbershop. Families who worked for the company were assigned garden plots, and I don't remember what they were—25 by 100 feet or so. They were all in an area which is now covered with logs. They store the logs there. The school was where it is now, but the whole building is gone. It was a building with four classes on the first floor and four on the upper floor, and those were the eight classes. It was also a Catholic church there and a Lutheran church. The inhabitants of Bonner were largely Nordic in origin, though there were a number of French-Canadians. There was also a couple very vocal Irish families. Occasionally in school, we'd have children of Southern European decent—Italians and that kind of thing. Their parents usually were associated with a section [unintelligible].

The town and the lumber mill occupied a valley. Most of you people have driven through Bonner, you know where it is. It occupied a narrow valley, and on the left hand side, driving to

say Seeley Lake—that's the north side—there was a southern exposure on that hill. It was an ideal place to watch the elk in the winter, in bad winters. The mountain on the other side was of much more interest to we children because it at that time was sparsely timbered, and it was brushy. It had been forested before 1900, and boy, they stripped almost everything off of it. It's now grown back though. Along the north side—the northern mountain—the river ran, and this is the river of *A River Runs Through It* fame. On the south side, the railroad track was at the foot of the mountains.

The southern mountains were where we played. They were our playground. We had all kinds of hiding games. Big kids would hide from the little kids, and we'd never find them and we'd almost step on them. It was also a place for skiing and sledding, hiking in the summer, tobogganing also in the winter. We could explore up there, and we built campfires up there and pretended like we were cooking and campfires and all that kind of thing too. The river was for swimming in the summer and for skating in the winter, and also for walking logs, which we weren't supposed to do. On the valley floor, the company provided a baseball diamond—regulation sized baseball diamond. They provided a regulation football field—full 100-yard football field—and this was enclosed by the company gardens on two sides. We also had a skating rink in winters when the river didn't freeze, and then in later years we always had a skating rink on that football field for safety purposes.

The company, of course, rented the houses very cheaply. I don't remember the prices, but they were less than 15 dollars. Slab wood was very cheap. They even had an ice wagon when I was a small kid to provide the families with ice. The company store was the mercantile-type store, and it provided all necessities and, during the Depression, even provided extensive credit to families living in Bonner. The community hall, which is what it was, was the old school house, and it was across the road from the house where we lived. It was a place where there were nonsectarian church services each Sunday morning. One of the foremen from the mill was a preacher. We had summer Bible schools there. We also had parties of various kinds—both and children and adult. I don't remember what the adult parties were because I wasn't allowed to go. The lower floor of that building, at the time I was growing up, was the less permanent housing, but much of the time it provided the office and warehouse for the Blackfoot Forest Protective Association. You fellows with forestry backgrounds would remember that.

Our access to Missoula was by streetcar. As a matter of fact, there was a streetcar just about every hour on the hour from something like 7:00 in the morning until midnight at night. Our family occupied one of the houses. During the summer before I entered the first grade, we moved across the street into a larger house, which didn't have a bathroom. All the bathrooms in those days were on Silk Stocking Row. They're the only people who had bathrooms. We soon had one in our house because my father after all, among his duties, was that of town plumber. To this day, that house is really marked by two weeping birch trees in the front yard. My dad planted those trees over 70 years ago, and I helped him by staying out of the way back and forth.

I don't remember much about my early childhood. There are lots of stories though, but I do remember very clearly one incident. When I was six, we a toy called a roodaroo (?). I don't know whether any of you ever remember that thing. It consisted of a head on a stick and the head had two parts. The top part had a feather sticking out the top and the bottom part of it inserted into the lower head, which had a metal base. What you did with those was put a cap in those, and put the head firmly on the top and tap it on a rock. The cap would explode, and the top would go high into the air like a rocket. Well, there was a problem getting those caps because we had to have a permit to get them from the company store, and our parents didn't always provide us with that permission. But you want to remember now, I was six years old, and boy, I was the smartest I've ever been in my life. [laughter] I decided to write a note. I still very clearly remember lying on that front porch and writing that note. I can still see the words I wrote on that porch...on that note. It was one word, cap. It was at all various angles. I took the note to the company store, and the clerk took it, looked at it, asked me what it said, and I told him. He didn't smile. A remarkable man. He took the note into the manager of the store, and pretty soon came out and gave me the caps. You might think that the note was a success. It wasn't. My father came home for the noon dinner—we had dinner at noon in those days—less than an hour later, and he had the note and the clerk's story. I can't remember any specific punishment for doing that. I know my mother had those caps though. When I retired, she still had them in the Bitterroot. However, for other infractions like Dennis the Menace, I spent a lot of the time in the corner, often with the stipulation that I stay there until the cows come home. I also had to go to bed without my supper occasionally if I didn't get back in time—things like that. What did I learn out of that? I learned that rarely, if ever, are you as smart as you might think you are. I've remembered that all my life.

There was another guide to my behavior there in Bonner, and that was that little bird. That little bird was always...had my mother's ear, and I couldn't do anything away from the house without her knowing. Now, I previously talked about my early years in grade school. I had to dress in knickers, pongee shirt, Buster Brown shoes, and I had to carry a linen handkerchief and use it. I couldn't be like the other boys in coveralls and wipe my nose on my sleeve. There was certainly a stigma attached to that, but my mother finally relented. I guess I was in about the seventh grade, or maybe in the later part of the sixth grade, and I got to wear overalls just like everybody else.

When I was in the third grade, and the health nurse discovered that I couldn't see that blackboard, so I was fitted with glasses. They had black rims, and they were very brittle. After I got to about the fourth grade, I was always getting hit between the eyes with those glasses, and it would shatter them. This would always happen at recess, so I had my parents' permission—and pretty soon the teachers would give me permission too with my parents' consent—so I boarded the next street car, went to town, got the glasses repaired, and came back all in the period of an hour and half. That's how good this streetcar service was. Well, the upside of wearing glasses was that I started to learn to really read and enjoyed the pleasure of reading. The local library, which was a branch of the Missoula County Library, was in a room off the lobby of the Margaret Hotel. The books I remember first were about Indians, especially the

Blackfeet, and there was a man named Schultz [James Willard Schultz] who wrote some of them. Another man whose name was something like [unintelligible]. I don't know anything about these people, but I do know that I really enjoyed those books. My favorite place to read was in a porch swing on the front porch of our house. It also allowed viewing what was happening around town and especially activity of the Blackfoot Forest Protective Association during fires. At any rate, my interest in history of our area here—the Indians, the explorers, the trappers, the traders, Lewis and Clark—probably began at this time. It has continued to this day.

Other pleasant memories include monthly, sometimes biweekly, trips to visit my grandparents on my mother's side up in Victor. In the early days, we had a touring car. It was open in the summer and closed in by side curtains in the winter, but my sister and I were able to keep real warm in the back seat of that car under buffalo robes. Cars in those days didn't have heaters. My grandfather—much repeated by my mother—was probably a big influence at that time. He took great delight and laughed loudly when we kids did dumb things. Dumb in the sense of not knowing or foreseeing what would happen. An example is walking across the barnyard after he'd just driven in the cows and the calves. When we asked him why he didn't ask us to be cautious his comment was, "There's no sense telling you something you're sure to find out." [laughter] That was certainly true. Another thing he told me which I remember and have used as a guide, as a matter of fact, if you never tell a lie, you never have to worry about what you say. Politicians should adopt that one. [laughter]

Another bit of advice I got in those days came from the manager of the company store, the same manager who approved those caps. I delivered magazines and newspapers, and this was in the Depression and it was tough, really tough. The manager hadn't paid for *Collier's Magazine* for a couple of months, and it took a lot of time for me to get the courage to ask him for the money. Well, he gave me, handed me money, more than twice what he owed me. I told him that was too much. He said, "Young man, when someone wants to give you something, accept it." I would add today, "accept it graciously."

Later years at the Bonner school were overshadowed really by the economic situation, the Depression. By this time, the Great Depression was certainly coming, and Hoover had just been elected. Times were getting bad, and Hoover's public works programs were beginning to be used. My recollection of those times is that my father worked part-time, and the only reason he worked part-time was because he was part of the maintenance gang at the mill. He was on the steamer and plumbing gang. Many of our neighbors had no jobs at all. The men hunted wild game to feed their families, seasons being...they paid no attention to seasons, and game wardens paid no attention to them either. They had fished—caught a lot of fish—and they often caught a lot of white fish which they smoked. Those smoked white fish were really good. They brewed beer, and that tasted like medicine. [laughter] An occasional one would drive bootleg liquor across the Canadian border and bring it into the States. Another two or three of them drove supplies into the maintenance people in Butte. They were scabs because the miners were on strike at that time.

My most vivid memories of those days are the building of what was called the Hoover Trail. I have never even seen this referenced anywhere else. Unemployed men from Missoula dug this trail using picks and shovels. They arrived by streetcar and went home the same way. The grade on the hillside of that trail was ten percent, and supposedly it was supposed to be...supposed to provide access and be a supplier. I watched these men work from the front porch of our house, and I'd see them come back in the evening and I generally wasn't out early enough to see them go to work, but they were really a sober bunch. There was never a smile. Some of them were emaciated. They looked grim. They were having a tough time. No longer is that trail visible because now that slop is all forested by young trees. I don't know where those trees were planted or finally developed after 100 years or about 80 to 90 years naturally seeded or not.

Really a highlight of growing up in Bonner, though, was the Boy Scouts. The reason for that were the two dedicated leaders. I don't like to put names out in this, but I will in this case because many of you who've been around Missoula very long has heard of Grant Higgins. Grant Higgins was the scoutmaster and his assistant was Seth Space (?), who worked in the office with him. They were a good team because Grant focused on the more physical activities and Seth on the less physical activities; although, they both taught us scouting principles and all that sort of thing. All of the boys in Bonner and Milltown, nearby a mile away, and Piltzville, a mile away, and in Finn Town across the river, had the chance to join Troop 5. And many of them did. However, very few of them really stayed in scouting very long. Almost everybody, when they reached high school age, would quit. We met in the abandoned bar in the Margaret Hotel, which was quite an interesting place at the time because it had the back bar mirrors still in place. I don't know...I wonder what ever happened to them.

The older scouts, and most of the scouts as a matter of fact, were more interested in the physical activities than advancing in scouting ranks. Those boys were the ones we really counted on for the spring track meet. Now, the scouting district in Missoula would sponsor a track meet each spring, and the Bonner troop was pitted against all the others—all the Missoula troops—and they really showed well. The Bonner boys won many of the track events, and we who were less athletic would win the first aid and signaling and that kind of events. My scouting days were really pleasant except for one instance, and that instance involved a first aid contest. The reason is that the director of the Missoula scouting district—I don't know whether it should be council or district—had visited our troop in Bonner. He was a small man, and he sneered. Everything was a sneer. He compared our troop, of course, to the Missoula troop, and he was really, in my mind, nasty about it. We didn't have uniforms in Bonner. After all, this was the Depression. [laughs] A lot of those boys were damn lucky to have food. Actually, he was the first person I ever met that I consider obnoxious. Anyway, at this one track meet, our first aid team consisted of three members. The case they gave us involved a person in an accident who had an upper-body wound—and I don't remember where that wound was now—and a lower-arm wound, but each wound was spirting blood. That meant to us that they had severed arteries. So my two companions were working on the upper-body wound, and I was left to work on the lower-body wound. But you see the spirting blood, I had to stop that blood. I couldn't

stop the blood and bandage the wound at the same time. So what I did was press the...there's a pressure point in your elbow, if you know your first aid, which will stop an artery. So I was holding that until I got help from my companions there. Well, who should come by at that time, but this director? Along with this, the chief judge. The director broke out laughing and told the judge to look at me as I was apparently doing nothing. The judge was a little smarter man. He asked me what I was doing, and I told him. We knew that our team had properly and rapidly treated our patient, but boy, were we discouraged. We didn't know whether we were disqualified or what. We were—

[Break in audio]

—just up the Blackfoot a little ways. We hiked into [unintelligible] Lake in the Bitterroot. We hiked into Grey Wolf Lake in the Missions, which had at that time the remnants of a little tiny glacier left there in the [unintelligible] there. Our first camp in the summer was at Marco's Flat (?), which was between the first and second bridges in those days. We'd always get infested with wood ticks. Unfortunately, we had to take a spotted fever shot, and boy were those sore-arm shots. I'd have a sore arm for a week. I wouldn't be able to raise it a lot of times after having one of those shots. We also visited the site. We camped near an old log clubhouse that previous generations of scouts had had up Johnson Creek. The rats had taken over that building, and we weren't even allowed to go in there. The summer before I entered high school, I went to the Boy Scout camp at Seeley Lake. I had quite a good time there. The assistant scout master did a number of different things for a number of us who were young—the younger scouts and really willing. For instance, he took two of us to Placid Lake for a week on each of two summers as a matter of fact, and we explored, swam, fished, basked in the sun, and all those kinds of things. On one of those trips, one of the boys got hooked with a fish hook. It wasn't me. I might have hooked him. I don't remember that. [laughter] Anyway, the barb went into the skin, and we couldn't back it out. What were we going to do? The assistant scoutmaster gave us a choice. We could either take care of it ourselves, or we could go to Missoula and have a doctor do it. We cut it out with a razor blade, using the most sanitary procedures that we learned as Boy Scouts, and the wound healed beautifully. I later learned that the way you take out a fish hook is to twist it and pull it until the barb comes out of you. Then you cut the barb off and you can back the hook out, but there was a problem there that I still wonder about. To this day I wonder whether or not the way we handled that is more sanitary than just backing the hook out.

Another thing this assistant scoutmaster used to do was to call... get a bunch of willing scouts together late Saturday afternoon, and we'd go have a mulligan stew. The scoutmaster bought the steak, would take it to the site and build the fire and braise the steak and have the stew pot ready. Meanwhile we the kids raided our family gardens—remember we had garden plots—and took the vegetables to be stewed. I don't remember, but we must have washed it before we put... [laughter] Anyway, we had to wait two or three hours after we got there with the vegetables to eat, but boy, were those stews good. All they had for flavoring was salt and pepper and the natural flavors of the ingredients. I talked with my own kids about that one

time. One time I made a mulligan stew on a campout with my mother and father and our two kids. They laughed and joked because it took so long. They'd lift the top off the pot and look in and say, "Oh, that looks like soup," and that kind of thing. But when it was finally ready to eat, it must have been really good. Either that or they were hungry. They ate ravenously and joined the end of the line as fast as I could serve the stew. I didn't even get a fair sample of that stew that I worked so hard on.

A special bonus that we got from this assistant scoutmaster was the fact that he took three of us, four of us, who were willing and taught us to play contract bridge. I can still remember Culbertson's rules a lot better than the simplified Goren rules. When we didn't have a foursome to play bridge, we'd play mahjong, but I don't remember any of the rules of that any more.

Now, it was time to enter high school. That's when I began to learn about people with different attitudes than I'd ever encountered before. Boys from the area surrounding Missoula at that time were assigned Home Room A-200. Home Room A-200 was across a corridor above the gym and the shop from the main schoolhouse. All of these guys seemed like pretty good kids, but boys from the surrounding Missoula were mostly boys...Well, I'm getting mixed up. Across the corridor when I enrolled in various classes, I found out that unless you were a star athlete you weren't even recognized or acceptable. I had trouble figuring this out. It seems that there were many cliques from the different schools of Missoula, and it was especially true in mathematics class where most of the boys seemed to be from one school. One of them was a boy who, with a couple others, we'd a lot of fun with the summer before, but he wouldn't even recognize me. Thus I learned that some people were far superior to others. At least, they thought they were. There were the privileged and the unprivileged. In later years, I learned what my problem was. Problem was I came from Bonner. In my mind, I questioned what to do about this situation. It soon dawned on me that these superior people were not particularly smarter than I was. I also realized that my goal in high school was to learn as much as I could so I could go to college. That was instilled in me at an early age.

Also instilled in me was the fact that I could earn my own way. As an example, there were two neighbor boys whose father was a section foreman who'd their way through the forestry school. Some of the foresters probably know of them or knew them. Lanky Spalding (?) and Alfred Spalding (?). I know they were both in Missoula area for a long time. At any rate, what was I going to do about this situation? I decided that, while I was never one who had a goal of winning friends and influencing people ala Dale Carnegie—that was never a major goal for me—so I concentrated really on learning what I could and graduating from high school. I got through high school all right, and my record was good enough to go to Montana School of Mines and get through there without much trouble. When I had learned how dumb I was after working five years—that's dumb in the sense of being ignorant again—my application at Stanford was accepted. My education since then has taught me that I know very little, and what I don't know is the voluminous and what I'd like to know is a lot more than I ever will know. So right now in my old age, I just learn for the pleasure of learning, just for the hell of it.

Well, it's time to end this, so finally, in spite of being poor, of limited contacts with a diversity of people, of limited knowledge of what we were missing—as I later learned as Hollywood publicized these things in movies—growing up in Bonner, Montana, in a company town provided a rewarding experience.

[Applause]

Unknown Speaker: How many of those company houses are still standing out there?

CC: Oh, there must be 20 of them still.

US: About how many were there total?

CC: There were about 30 at time. Some of them have been torn down, some of them burned down over the years, and I don't know really the status of them now. I guess they sold them to company employees. As far as I know. I really don't know though.

US: Physically out there where were those Victory gardens during the Depression?

CC: The Victory garden...Well, you go through town, and you know there's the big vacant area where the Margaret Hotel was and been torn down. There's a row of houses along that road—that was Silk Stockings Row down to the left—and behind that is where the 100-yard football field was. Our house was down the road a ways, and we were on the other end of the football field. It was right out of that door, and it had the gardens on two sides. So it was in back of the houses towards the mill. The bunkhouse was across those gardens and the bunkhouse's mess hall, and the workers shop was across those gardens from the other side. But all of that nowadays is where they're storing logs. The logs used to always come in on train and be dumped into the river. When they started bringing them in by truck, they dumped them and they have all kinds of means of picking them up and moving them now. They used them all.

US: Those first group of houses beyond the school on the right hand side as you are going up there, do they still belong to the company?

CC: The ones that are set back from the road?

US: Yeah.

CC: As far as I know of, they're privately owned now.

US: I was a very good friend of a girl who lived in one of those houses. So I also [unintelligible] and went a number of times swimming with Grant Higgins. I thought it was a neat place to grow up. I mean I envy people that grew up in Bonner.

CC: [laughs] I know a lot of people that do. My wife thinks that she missed a lot growing up in [unintelligible]. You see, we were all poor. We didn't know any better. We enjoyed it.

US: How many of the high school-age boys and girls went to high school, and how many did not go to high school, roughly?

CC: Well, all of them went to high school, and most of them probably finished by the time I finished high school. Before that time, of course, there were a lot of them that never finished high school, but Gladys can answer that better. Didn't most of the students who graduated from Bonner school at that time go into high school? I don't think there were exceptions.

Gladys Peterson: In your age group, sure. It was required that they attend until 16, I think.

CC: Yeah, that was the laws.

US: The author of that book of those Indian stories that you read, was that a friend of Charlie Russell's? James Willard Schultz.

CC: I really can't tell you. I remember reading those books and really thinking they were wonderful.

US: He wrote a lot of Indian stories.

CC: Yeah, this guy's name was Schultz, one of them. I remember that, and I remember some years ago seeing maybe it was in a Dover catalog [Dover Publications], a whole collection of those, which I should have bought just for the hell of it because I really enjoyed those. That other guy, if I recall, I liked his stories better, but I can't even remember his name really.

US: Would you comment on Milltown a little bit? Who owned the mill in Milltown, and was there a school in Milltown? Did the kids go to Bonner?

CC: Milltown was owned by, let's see, Clark?

GP: Clark.

CC: Was that the Clark mill?

US: Yes.

CC: Yeah, that was the Clark mill, and the Daly mill was the Anaconda Company. The Clark mill was sold to Anaconda...oh, when was that? About 1928, sometime in there. The kids from Milltown and Piltzville and Finn Town or Platt (?)—now it's West Riverside, it's all been renamed, more gracious names—all went to the same school.

US: Bonner school?

CC: Yeah, the Bonner school, and I think they still...

GP: Yes, the Bonner school actually expanded. It was no longer in that white building near the railroad tracks beyond the houses. I don't remember exactly, I think it was 1907 when they put up a building in the area of where the two churches are now. I think Clark began the mill in Milltown around 1912, so there were a lot more people moving in there, and they actually had to add onto the Bonner school. A question I wanted to ask, Chuck, is I know that there were so many children coming to the school who couldn't speak English that they were put into a room—a first grade room—where they had to learn enough English to go into the regular classroom. I was wondering if that was still going on when you were there.

CC: I don't remember it at all. No, we all seemed to be in the first grade together and...What the heck was that teacher's name? I think Nolan (?) was the second grade teacher, who was the first grade? Anyway, we in general considered her mean. She made us behave. [laughter] That's how we judged teachers.

US: Did they still have corporal punishment when you were in school?

CC: Did they what?

US: Did they still have corporal punishment when you were in school?

CC: Oh yeah, yeah. Bill Aiken (?) was the principal.

GP: Superintendent.

CC: Superintendent or whatever, and he had a paddle. I never got paddled fortunately, but I was awful close at times.

GP: They had corporal punishment there until a state law changed that. What would you say, about 15 years, 15 to 20 years ago? Fifteen maybe, and it was used.

US: Wasn't the rule if you were a teacher in class that the teacher had to send the student down to the principal, and he did it.

GP: Well, only if the kid was out of hand. The teachers didn't do that. No, they didn't do that.

US: They used the ruler and rapped the knuckles pretty well when I was going to school.

CC: Teachers used to rap knuckles, I know.

GP: There was one teacher there—in fact, she was the woman I replaced when she retired—and she would take the fifth graders down to the room where they kept their cleaning supplies, and I don't know what she did in there. I don't know if she paddled them or what, but it was some form of corporal punishment. Those kids still remember it. I met a man last fall at the MEA-MFT conference at Sentinel High School, and he had been in her room. He's now a teacher, but he said he went down there to that room. But he had a lot of respect for her. He said she was a very good teacher.

US: Gladys, do you remember what year it was when they stopped the [unintelligible].

GP: It was because of the law, and Jack Demmons was the principal and superintendent.

CC: That was way, way years and years back when I was...20 years.

GP: Oh, yeah. This was, I'd say, 15 years ago. Maybe that was a state...It became a state law.

US: You came across thinking that the company town and the company store in particular were paternalistic, I had heard stories about how the Anaconda Company just really took advantage of the workers in the company store and I suppose in other ways.

CC: I know, I've heard those stories, but they weren't doing it when I was there I can put it that way. There was no...whose song is it? Tennessee Ernie Ford. "I gave my soul to the company store." [*Sixteen Tons*] There was none of that at that time.

GP: There were a lot of oral history interviews done by Jack Demmons who had been a superintendent. He was superintendent in 1976 when we put the book out, and the people who were interviewed really had an affection for the Anaconda Company. One reason was that even though they didn't work full time, they gave them jobs as Chuck remembers.

US: One reason I ask is, I've been in the change houses in Butte, taking students on trips down in the mine, and to hear those miners talk, they just hated the company's guts. They acted like it anyway. They talked like it. Man!

CC: Yeah, that's union talk. They got the union in Bonner there, I think, it would have been about 1945 or '46, sometime in there, and that completely changed the town. It no longer was a company town. Butte was a company town. I worked in those mines and I listened to those miners and I used to go to miners meetings for entertainment. That's where you really want to hear how bad the companies were. But as far as the company town when I was there, I can't think of a better, really a better place to grow up. They provided us with all of the facilities we needed and then some, and there were a lot of them we didn't even know about, of course, but we didn't miss them. We enjoyed it. Personally, I feel I had a good life there. I'm very thankful to the Anaconda Company because they put me through college. They insisted I work even on

[laughs] Christmas holidays when I come home from school. I tell you in that mill, when it was 20 below, it was cold. But they always had a job waiting for me. If you were willing to work, they'd help you through school. That's all there was to it.

US: Talking about discrimination there, the feelings against the kids from Bonner?

CC: What?

US: Talking about the feelings against the kids from Bonner at the high school. [unintelligible] was in my class and in a lot of my classes and I never thought of her as being from Bonner, but she was a real thorn in my side because she was always the smartest one in the class and I had a hard time keeping up anywhere near her.

CC: No, you ought to ask Noel (?) about that sometime because there was a certain girl that she got very friendly with the first week, and then the girl saw her get off the Bonner bus and she never spoke to her again. It was real interesting really.

US: I don't think I was even more than vaguely aware that she was even from Bonner. [unintelligible] situations.

CC: She had entirely different roles than I did you know, and she was out to win friends and influence people. I remember even after they were married and up in the Powell (?) area farming, they attended Dale Carnegie courses and all this kind of thing, and that's still their goal. That's their principle interest in life. It just never appealed to me, but I certainly don't want to downgrade it at all. I guess I'm me, and I found out I'm different, I guess. But that's all right. I don't have to worry about it anymore. [laughs]

US: The thing that always intrigued me so much that you touched on was the logs in the river. Driving by there, it was just fascinating to see them come down the river, or the workers...what do you call them? The fellows that would direct them into the ponds.

GP: There was a green chain. That was pretty low down.

CC: I don't remember what...There was a name for them all right. They were the guys that put the logs around with the...

US: Call them river pigs over in Idaho, the guys that worked the log drives.

CC: They didn't have log drives. I saw the last log drive in Bonner there when I was, oh I don't know, 10 or 12. Last time they drove logs on the river. You see, they had the railroads. They got that railroad in pretty early. I don't know...The guy that talked about railroads should have talked about that—the railroad they had up there.

US: He mentioned, he also mentioned that [unintelligible].

CC: Yeah, the Milwaukee Road built...finished a railroad about 1913. It went up as far as McNamara, but you see there were all kinds of logging roads in the Potomac Valley, for instance. When they had those logging roads, they didn't have any others. Well, that's quite a story really. They laid those tracks right on the ground. They disassembled the engine and put the parts up in winter. Reassembled it up there. They took the tracks and everything else up to McNamara's Landing in the winter. The horses aren't [unintelligible] pull sleighs, and they didn't have a decent land [unintelligible] at that time anywhere. They'd pile all those logs there at McNamara's Landing, and in the spring high water, they'd push them all into the river and down they'd go. It was quite a sight seeing those logs go down the river, and these guys with this just great big...what we called it was a [unintelligible] boat—some kind of a boat that had a big, high prow. It was built for that purpose. It was real interesting. There were probably even more sophisticated—

[Break in audio]

CC: Boy, they did anything but. They were always two or three kinds of meat, and several desserts, all kinds of potatoes and various vegetables that were available. They ate well. They worked hard though.

GP: I was telling Chuck—we were discussing this on the phone the other evening—about some picture that are in the archives [K. Ross Toole Archives and Special Collections] at the University [University of Montana] about those crews. These men may have been living up there in a train, or bunkhouse, up there somewhere.

CC: Usually, what happened is that they cut the timber, and they'd haul it out in the winter as I remember. They'd haul it to the river in the winter, and they'd do most of the cutting then too. After the log drives, they'd have about three months off, and the loggers would go off and spend the money in the bars. But they worked hard for that period of time in there. I don't know, must have been eight or nine months.

US: How big was the camp? How many men did they have up there at one time?

CC: I really don't know, Jim. But that camp was the last one the Anaconda Company had up there, and they were beginning to haul logs in trucks. That started in the late, well, about by 1940 they were beginning to haul logs in trucks. Then they had a big logging truck in [unintelligible]. If you go to Bonner route, you know where [unintelligible]. Let's see, 14 miles I think.

US: It's beyond the big bend.

CC: No, it's not that far. It used to be 14 miles. It isn't on the new road, and they had a big depot there with all the logging trucks so they'd be close to the railroad.

US: [unintelligible]?

CC: What?

US: [unintelligible].

CC: No, [unintelligible].

[multiple individuals speaking; unintelligible]

US: Chuck, do you know when the streetcar was built from Missoula to Bonner? What years would that have been?

CC: Exactly no, but it must have been in 1910 to '12, in that period of time.

US: I think I heard once it was originally horse-drawn.

CC: I don't know. I know they had horse-drawn cars on rails in Missoula.

US: Yeah, wasn't it even true in Missoula?

CC: But I don't remember them...If they were drawn by horses, there wouldn't be [unintelligible] because we had the electric motors. I remember the motorman having to get out, put the trolley on track all the time. He didn't like to do that in the winter, but every once in a while you had to.

US: I know that the last year that they had streetcars running in Missoula—I don't know if this is the same in Bonner too—was 1932. I was five years old, and I rode the last streetcar with my mother in the Missoula, not in Bonner.

CC: That would be about right.

GP: That car is being refurbished. It's taken years to get that done, but eventually it's going to be back at Fort Missoula.

US: You commented that they always supplied work for you—the company did when you came home and so forth. What'd they pay you?

CC: What'd they pay? Well, when I started working I was in high school, and a day laborer at that time was 60 cents an hour. No, it wasn't even. It was 60 cents for workers, but the kids

that worked in the box factory got 48 cents and they played around a lot. But if you were willing to work, you'd get 60 cents an hour. I often wondered when I started working there how a man with five kids could support his family on that amount of money.

US: Did the company provide any services to the workers like with medical services and stuff—

CC: Not at that time, not that I know of. No, they had no way to do that. I know that if people needed to get to a hospital in Missoula they'd get them on the train or, in later years, take them in a car and that kind of thing—in emergencies. But there was no regular medical care.

US: What happened if you got sick...injured, I mean?

CC: If you got sick, you called a doctor. Back in those days, the doctors used to come to houses. There were doctors coming to Bonner all the time. I remember that. I had scarlet fever there once, and the doctor came out and quarantined us. Old Doctor [unintelligible].

US: But I mean if the worker lost his arm and couldn't work.

CC: I can't really answer that. I don't know. I remember a few real accidents when men were killed, but the company had some kind of compensation they paid the family. It wasn't very much, and it wasn't...there was a lump sum as I remember, too. But they did do that. They had that kind of insurance for workers.

US: Just as we were talking about logs in the river reminded me that several years ago [unintelligible], a suggestion was made to build a restaurant over Rattlesnake Creek. There was a big stink obviously. It's a big stink about anything in Missoula, and there was some big effort to find out if Rattlesnake Creek was a navigable stream. It was a legal point. Over at the University library [Mansfield Library] we got in there, and I don't know how we did it or where we found it, but we discovered that at one time in the past somebody had floated logs down the Rattlesnake Creek, which made it a navigable stream under federal law.

CC: I wouldn't doubt it.

US: And that was some point that they made about that restaurant.

US: Because [unintelligible] up there.

GP: There was one poor family—since you were talking about poor people—who lived as the expression was used is “up the Blackfoot.” Jim and I had an experience of going up to see where the two remaining sisters of that family were living.

US: [unintelligible]?

GP: I wasn't even going to mention the name. You had it wrong anyhow. We went out there with Jack Demmons and his mother, Aafje [Aafje deWit Demmons], because they both grew up in that area—Aafje and Jack—and they knew these ladies. I'm just guessing, it might have been eight miles up perhaps.

US: [unintelligible].

CC: Just beyond the second bridge. Not quite to the first bridge. It would be about...Oh, it'd only be a couple miles up there really.

US: Seemed like longer than that.

US: They were living in between the highway and the river.

GP: Yes, yes. But it was back quite a ways. Jack would drive up there quite a bit because he knew these two elderly ladies, and they weren't in the house. We couldn't find them, and yet we knew they had to be home. They were located on top of the...must have been a wood pile, it wasn't coal. A pile of wood. They were both up there tossing this stuff down. Anyhow, they came down, and we went in and visited with them and saw the inside of the place. Needless to say, it looked very old fashioned. One was a widow, the other had never married. Jack's mother told us of the one that had never married. This was a very large family, and that one had pulled the plow without a horse. Her back was very bent over. They had a real rough time, but the father in that family, speaking of "was everybody happy with the Anaconda Company," the answer is no. Their father was a Wobbler, if you remember what they were. World workers—

US: International Workers of the World. [Industrial Workers of the World, IWW]

GP: I think that would have been post-World War One or about that time.

US: 1913.

GP: He got figuratively shot down fast. I don't know if he kept a job there or not, but that was going on in Butte and Anaconda, too, and they all got shot down fast.

US: I'll never forget when we went back there to see those ladies and [unintelligible].

GP: It was a big old house.

US: There was a huge pile of wood, stacked up, and they used the firewood for the stove in the winter. One of these ladies—I don't know how old she was then—

GP: Oh, in their 70s.

US: —chopping that wood [unintelligible]. It was unbelievable.

GP: One thing about Bonner is—I don't know when the Lions Club got going out there—but I understood that they were helping those two ladies. Looking in and giving them whatever assistance they need. That was—

CC: I know one of them was in the Village Healthcare when my mother first went in there.

GP: Oh, I know where you mean.

CC: That was in—

GP: Missoula Manor.

CC: No. We took her out of there, about '88, '89, we put her in, she was in the Village Healthcare for a while and her roommate was one of those ladies. She was still alive about 1988—one of them. The younger one. I remember them. They were always working in the garden or something. We'd ride by on our bicycles and that kind of thing, go up the Blackfoot camping with family. They'd be out there in the garden. I don't remember pulling a plow, but they were doing everything else by hand.

GP: I think that Chuck has probably given us quite a good picture of growing up in Bonner, so let's give him a hand and say thank you.

CC: Thank you. I expected people to go to sleep. [Laughter] What I was going to do when I—

[End of interview]