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Oral History Number: 435-032

Interviewee: Lawrence Frederick Thomas

Interviewer: Katherine Eccleston

Date of Interview: December 2, 2010

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Note: Lawrence Thomas wife occasionally speaks during the interview. She is identified in this transcript with the initials S.P. for spouse.

Katherine Eccleston: So I guess I should say that today is December 2, and I am conducting my first interview for The Gathering project. I'm here with my interviewee and so I'm just going to begin with the biographical questions. What is your name?

Lawrence Thomas: My name is Lawrence Frederick Thomas. I got the nickname of Lorry because when I was a kid we seen Lorry written on a truck from Ireland and everybody told me that's the same as Lawrence or Larry so instead of calling me Larry then started calling me Lorry and that was from when I was a kid.

KE: That's really interesting Lorry. And where and when were you born?

LT: I was born here in Anaconda, Montana down in the east end of town. The name of the street was Birch Street. All my Irish relatives also lived in the same block or like within two blocks. Do you want to know who I was born with?

KE: Well why don't we confirm the dates and then you can be free to talk about anything.

LT: Okay, I was born on August 8...I mean I was born in August, the 29, 1927.

KE: Okay and where did you grow up?

LT: I grew up right here. I was born in Anaconda on Birch Street; of course I was born in 316 Birch Street at home there. My mom was born in (word unintelligible). I'll have to tell you about my Irish and where we came from. I was born at my Grandma Harrington's house and her maiden name before that was Moriarty (?). So I went from Moriarty (?) to Harrington to Green to Thomas. That's where I stand in the Irish part.

KE: Okay. And do you want to relay a little bit of information about where you have lived?

LT: Down there in our neighborhood, in Anaconda where I was, we were more or less segregated. The Irish lived in one part, the Italians lived in another part, the Austrians or the (word unintelligible) lived in another part. So I was raised up in the Irish part down on Birch Street.

KE: Okay and most of your neighbors were Irish?

LT: Yes.

KE: Okay and what kind of jobs have you had during the course of your life.

LT: Well I'm off the railroad called the B&P railway. I was 15 years in the engine department the last 15 years I was in maintenance and during the strikes and that we had here, we had a lot of labor problems, I got a job as a carpenter and I belonged to the carpenters' union.

KE: Okay and what do you do for a living now?

LT: Well right now I'm retired. You want to know my hobbies?

KE: Yes. I'm sure that even though you're retired, you still work (laughing).

LT: Well yes. We're still staying active in civic work around here. I belong to a couple of groups called Grumpy Old Men and the Enhancement Group and we do such things in the community like help building the house for the Habitat for Humanity. We will do anything that will help the community.

KE: Okay. Any other leisure time activities or additional work that you do now that you are retired?

LT: Oh yes. Well I'm still very active with sportsman's issues. I've been the President of the Anaconda Sportsman's for a number of years and I'm still going to keep it for a while I hope, but one of our main things here. We do have a lot of good wildlife here in our area which I like to brag about. But we also have, the Sportsman's also have a campground on the Big Hole River for anybody that would like to come and stay camping. It's donations only. So we keep it up and we're real active in trying to acquire some more land for wildlife. We got some land west of Anaconda for our big horn sheep. We just picked up a piece of ground up by Stump Town that we hope to make...It's got a real good spring on it and we're hoping to make it for a fish spawning project. That's our summer project this year.

KE: Okay. Just a little bit more about the biographical questions. At what age did you first marry?

LT: 1952.

KE: 1952, okay. And currently is your partner of Irish ancestry as well?

LT: Oh yes.

SP: I'm Irish and German. I am half German. My mother was full blooded German. So I'm kind of half and half.

KE: Okay between the two of you how many children do you have?

LT: We have 10.

SP: Nineteen grandchildren, and I think it's close to eight great-grandchildren. We're having another one in February.

KE: Okay. Quite the family. Do you have any information about your ancestors as far as when they left Ireland?

LT: Yes. My grandma's maiden name was Katherine Moriarty (?) and she married John J Harrington. And when I was a kid, I guess it would be my grandpa there, he died before I was born. So Grandma Harrington, she died in 1953. She was born in 1866 and died in 1953. But what I know of more about my grandma is, on Birch Street where I was born, we had an uncle there and I think his name was Moriarty (?) too. But he could only speak Gaelic. But the trouble was, he was a little, you know, wasn't quite with it all. So we always got teased because of my uncle, because he could only speak Gaelic and he also did kind of funny things, so that's part of my story about my grandma. Also at my grandma's house, when I was a kid when they had a funeral they had the wakes inside the house so at the house that she had they had to take the front window out to take the casket in and out. Also being a kid down there, you know, when the old Irish ladies got together they would kick us out of the house because they were reading tea leaves. They wouldn't let us hear what they were saying [laughing].

KE: Oh really?

LT: In our neighborhood too there was a Hannin (?)—Joe Hannin's dad—he always told me when he was a kid that he owned the path to the Blarney Castle. So when I was in Ireland I went to the Blarney Castle. I didn't see no path or nothing, but I stopped in a shop and I asked the lady about it and she says "it's true, only his name was old Hanahan (?) then, but he didn't own nothing, he was the groundskeeper and his cottage is still there."

KE: Really!

LT: So that's my tie with Blarney Castle there he was the groundskeeper, not that he owned any property.

KE: And this Mr. Hannin was a gentleman from your neighborhood when you were young.

LT: Yes, yes, he was there yes. Of course in those days when my great-grandma was in...At the end when she was sick...she'd be sick pretty bad for about maybe two months or better. Then she'd suddenly wake up and she'd say, "Go to McMullin's (?) and get me a bucket of beer." So

we'd go buy her some beer and she'd be good for a month or two and then she'd slip back in and out of it. But every time she'd come out of it she'd ask for a bucket of beer.

KE: So was McMullin's a tavern or a pub?

LT: It was a bar right around the corner from her house.

KE: And what street was the bar on?

LT: Third Street. Where (word unintelligible) was somewhere right next to it. Then on the corner...Also in those days it was hard to get money. On the corner of Third and Birch was Judge Kerigan, Cub Kerrigan who was an uncle of mine, but he hired me to throw rice when he married a couple. I got ten cents for throwing rice at the couple after every ceremony. So that's how I made some money when I was a kid.

KE: [Laughing]. You didn't talk about that when I asked you what kind of work you had done earlier did you.

LT: But it was good then. For recreation we always played, what they called, college touch football. We'd throw passes at one another out in the street. We played games like "kick the can". In those days you know there was no TV or anything. Even the radios were bad. But when I say TV, it reminds me of Mrs. McCavanaugh (?). Mrs. McCavanaugh—she was a little old Irish lady. She went to Mass every morning, never missed Mass, but one day she got home and she says, "The world is coming to an end. It's going to be till the end."

I says, "Well, how's that, Kat?" Her name was Katie.

She says, "Because there's images' flying around in the air." This was the start of TV that we didn't know about it, and she didn't know about it. But that's what she thought when TV came that the images was bringing the end of the world [laughing].

KE: [Laughing]. I've never heard that one. Any other people in your neighborhood that come to mind from when you were young?

LT: Oh yes, well (word unintelligible) he owned a bar here in town called the Copper Club. He was quit a guy. He was quite a man at Georgetown Lake—that was before the subdivision. The subdivision would come in he was one of the first sign orders up there and he started naming all the different streets around Georgetown Lake, but his main thing was the Copper City Steak House. Then we used to have Ryan's Bar, that's where the Pizza Hut is now on the corner there. Another way we used to get money when we were kids was to look for whiskey bottles. This was during probation days I guess some of it, but you'd get whiskey bottles and they would always give us a nickel for a bottle. But we used to take the bottles from behind his place and bring them around the front and I think they knew about it, but they'd give us a nickel.

KE: So you were recycling [laughing].

LT: Yes [laughing].

KE: Do you know where the area that your great-grandmother came from in Ireland?

LT: Yes. As a matter of fact I got proof that Harrington come from Bearra, and Grandma Harrington, she come from Kerry, from County Kerry. When I was in Ireland we went to Kerry—couldn't find nothing, but I didn't know enough about my great-grandpa to go to the Bearra. But I have a lot of letters from a Harrington from there. And he was here not too long ago, but he give me a ditty. Want to hear a ditty?

KE: Go right ahead.

LT: [Laughing]. And I got a letter from (word unintelligible) too. Here's what he wrote. He told me this and of course he's really good at the Irish brogue. It makes it sound better. But he's got—

“Ah clearly I remember it was late in the late last December. I was walking down the street with manly pride when me heart went all aflutter and I fell down in the gutter and a pig came by and sat down by me side. As I lay there in the gutter and me heart was still aflutter a lady passed by and chanced to say “You can tell a man who (word unintelligible) by the company he chooses.” And the pig got up and slowly walked away.”

KE: [Laughing]. That's a good one.

LT: I was told by my grandma though, by my mom...She had how many sisters?

SP: She had six.

LT: She had six sisters...I mean, six daughters. Of course, they all married full-blooded Irishmen except my mom. She married a Welshman, but their first daughter's name was Theresa Brown, Angela Thomas, Helen Kerrigan, Mary Garrity (?), Ursula Hannin, and Rita Marin (?). And those were all my aunts and uncles.

KE: Aunts on your mother's side.

LT: So when we were kids we always went to their different houses to get their goodies.

KE: And were they all good cooks?

LT: Yes. But then after that I don't know what all we did, but I did join the (word unintelligible) order Hibernians. I been a member since the '50s, but during strikes and that I didn't pay my dues for a couple of years, so they made me rejoin after a few years. And I still got a lifetime member now at the (word unintelligible) order Hibernians.

KE: Okay, and a lifetime membership is for members of 25 years?

LT: Twenty-five years, yes.

KE: Okay. Have you ever held any offices?

LT: Oh yes, I held every office except President. Which a lot of these guys don't know that, but...I was even Master of Ceremonies one St. Patrick's Day. I made everybody mad because I shortened it up so much that I didn't go through the routine. [Laughing].

KE: Oh, so you were a man of few words. [Laughing]. So one of the standard questions—and you can answer this any way you like—what does your Irish ancestry mean to you?

LT: What it really meant to me...I don't know just...We were always it seemed like nothing ever bothered us, no matter how poor we were or how things were. We always got along, and all my aunts and my grandma, they always seemed to have something to eat. Like my grandma in the old days, I can remember Depression days. We'd always have soup and she'd send me to the market to get a bone. It usually was a knuckle bone or a knee bone of a steer or something. That's how she made her soup. And then we always had corn meal to eat in the morning and we had corn bread. We had corn everything (laughing) made out of corn. But it was always...nobody was mean or anything that I know. We just had a good time, especially on the Cutler side. The Cutler side, they were all big people. And I can always remember around the park a couple of them were sitting on the bench and I guess the heaviest one come and sat on the end of the bench and they all...the bench broke and they fell down. All they did was laugh. And we did have a Cutler reunion one year. We had 272 relatives there at the Columbia Gardens in Butte. That's all I remember. I'll probably remember a lot when you leave.

KE: (Laughing). Did either your parents or grandparents have any stories about when your great-grandparents came over from Ireland where they first settled? Did they come right out to Montana?

LT: No, they didn't say much except the only real Irish word I can remember from my grandma. She used to always say...She called me Larry, my Irish grandma called me Larry. She says, "Larry what you need is a new pair of bróga. Why don't you get some bróga?" (Laughing)

KE: So she said bróga instead of shoes.

LT: Yes.

KE: So you really don't know if they came directly to Montana or if they—

LT: No, they came to Michigan, from Coppertown, Michigan, in (word unintelligible) something like that. That's where they got married.

KE: Okay and so they came out here to Montana from there.

LT: No, they didn't come from Ireland to Anaconda, they went to Michigan first.

KE: Okay. Is there anything...Well, this might not be applicable, Lorry, but do you know anything about the name. Were their names always the same because you always here those stories about how immigrants came from the old country and their names kind of were adjusted or as far as you know.

LT: You know, I just read that last night and my brother Donny, he (word unintelligible) on name changes. I hadn't come to see how they got the name, but I was told and this book told that that they give me the name—they showed me the name, I should show it to you—Bowman or something like that. But the English, when they started to changing everybody's name, they named this particular guy Smith and I was informed that that was how we got the names—from the English. Changed our names to the colors—Green, Browns and Whites. So maybe that's why my dad, grandma got the name Green.

KE: Okay.

LT: I just got done reading that about how they changed the name. It says in there some English clerk that doesn't know anything changed the name. (Laughing).

KE: And just to kind of follow up...a follow up question on names. Were there any traditional first names or nicknames in your family?

LT: Well, yes, Cub Kerrigan. Of course they called him Joe Pat. No, they didn't really have any on my side, except me for Lorry.

KE: Yes and that's a very interesting story. For such a large family it's kind of unusual given that Anaconda has so many nicknames. Yes.

LT: Well yes, I shouldn't say this, but maybe I will. Doopey. Doopey Fitzpatrick. He was one of our County Commissioners at one time. You know Frank Fitzpatrick?

KE: Yes.

LT: His dad.

T G Oh, do you know where the nickname came from.

LT: No, they probably gave it before we were born. (Laughing).

KE: Okay.

LT: But that's the only one I can think of. Cub, Kenny—

KE: You mentioned someone named Cub. So that was a nickname, but what was his full name?

LT: George. George Kerrigan.

KE: Okay.

LT: And then we used to sing his name K-E-R-R-I-G-A-N spells Kerrigan. (Laughing). That's one of the songs we used to sing on the corner.

KE: (Laughing) Okay. On to your childhood. We've talked a little bit about your childhood, but do you have any other particular childhood memories of Anaconda.

LT: Well, I have a lot. You know my dad was the superintendant of Anaconda. He did all the maintenance in town here. So I was on a lot of jobs with him. In those days if you had a blocked sewer he'd have to go out there and unplug it—him and his gang—but sometimes it's happen in the evening time and he couldn't get anybody so he'd get me and my brothers. We put the sewer rod in the sewer line and then he says pull and we'd have to pull, but oh, what a yucky job. (Laughing). But my dad took care of the streets of Anaconda. He was well known. He could get along with anybody. Especially he could get along with the Italians. For some reason they really all liked him.

Every Christmas we always had more wine than anybody would like to have that we could drink. So, but also the Irish would also take care of him. They'd always bring the bread and that and...Oh, I forgot to tell you too about my Grandma Green. When we were kids and we were eating, she always made pasties. Irish pasties. The Irish pasties—a lot of people don't know what they are, but they are—it isn't a little hamburger like it is today, it was always little pieces of meat with potatoes and onions and pieces of meat and so forth. But she always had a big crust around it. So going through some of the reading in Butte cookbooks, I found out why that she had to big crust around it. Because in those days that's what the miners had and their hands were dirty so they'd eat pasties holding on to the crust and then they could throw it away. So that was the Irish pasties deal.

KE: That's interesting.

LT: That part I know real well.

KE: So you mentioned playing kick the can. Were there any other games you played when you were young?

LT: Well, kick the can and college football they called it. But when we were smaller we played what they called Cowboy and Indians. Which in those days all it was...we'd get an inner tube, make them (word unintelligible) and then we could stretch them on a wooden gun with a clothespin and we'd hit the clothespin and the rubber would go shooting at you. I'd try to kill one...I mean, I shouldn't say kill, but hit one another. But it was pretty dangerous, because then we didn't know, but a couple of guys got their eye put out because of it. But that's only a game, but when we played grade school football it was always down in what they'd call the Superfund site now. Down on the East shores, and then we went to St. Pete's and mostly all the kids at St. Pete's were mostly all Irish kids and we did take the state championship football team in 1944, Class B.

KE: Okay, well you answered the next question. It says "What kinds of toys did you play with as a child?" So you played with wooden guns—

LT: Anything that you could make use of that's what we did.

KE: Okay and that's the next question. "Who made your toys?"

LT: Mostly ourselves. Well I imagine our dad helped us. Somebody had to cut out the pistol type for the rubber guns.

KE: True.

LT: But we got so we could do it ourselves. Of course in those days too we tried to make scooters. We got an apple box, put a handle on it and we used our roller skates. That's another thing we had a lot of roller skating. Another game that we played—we played handball a lot at the K.C.'s building. The K.C.'s building was where the high school is now. There used to be a big board back there and we played handball. One of the games there—which you'll never hear again—we played cigarettes. The way it worked—say they named me Old Gold and when I'd hit the ball I'd holler "Lucky Strike" and whoever was named Lucky Strike would have to hit the ball. Chesterfield, Phillip Morris and we'll never hear those guys anymore. (Laughing).

KE: I have never heard that. That's really unique. (Laughing). And so this was an outdoor game?

LT: Yes it was an outdoor game it was right in the back. The K.C.'s had it. The Knights of Columbus.

KE: Okay. I've never seen handball played outdoors. I've always think of a court. What about in the winter, anything in particular you remember in your childhood?

LT: Oh yes, in winter we always ice skated. Ice skating was the main thing, tobogganing, we also tried hitchhiking on cars was the biggest thing for us guys when we were small, especially the cars going up Birch Street. You know you got to climb the hill? We'd always hook a ride on the bumper, that's how we got around—hitchhiking on cars. (Laughing). Skiing. Yes we tried just about everything in the winter time. As a matter of fact the winter was almost more fun than summer.

KE: Okay, when you were young, who were the popular sports figures that you might remember.

LT: Well of course Babe Ruth was a little older. Really in those days when we were real young all we had was the radio so we didn't really follow up on sports until we got in to high school. I mean for many people. Of course then it was Notre Dame and it's still Notre Dame.

KE: I see. Were you on any sports teams?

LT: Yes I was on the football team. I played a little baseball, not much. Oh and another thing we did when we were kids we really was out in the (word unintelligible) Park for swimming and in those days there was no heated pool. It was right on the creek. We walked over to this park and we'd swim over then and then another thing—I forgot to tell you, that's bring back memories—Warm Springs Creek. We always went to Warm Springs Creek on an inner tube and we'd go to what they'd call the 145 pole mark. We counted the poles from Anaconda and go up 145 of them and float down on an inner tube on Warm Springs Creek.

KE: So were these telephone poles?

LT: Yes they were up in there. So anyway we did that and then when we were a little older we got so we could fish. We could fish Warm Springs Creek. Warm Springs Creek was always good for fishing and it still is. And the trouble today is, in my opinion, the kids don't get out enough and they are missing a world of an opportunity. All they got to do is walk three blocks and they'd be able to fish. You don't see too much of it anymore.

KE: Right, but that's something that—

LT: We didn't have TV or nothing. We made our own deal. And I guess that's how I got interested in the Sportsmen.

KE: That makes sense. So when you were growing up what was your home or your house like.

LT: Oh, that's another big story. When I was growing up every house that we moved in to...my dad and I even when I was as little as I was, we had help. We didn't remodel it. The only way we could keep the cold out—we'd bum cardboard and we'd put cardboard on the ceilings, we'd put plastic on the windows and I can tell you every house except the last couple. We moved in, it was so bad they tore them down. Two on Third Street and one on Oak Street. (Laughing). You didn't know that eh?

KE: No. So in your immediate family—the house where you were growing up—there were your mom and dad and how many kids?

LT: Oh, my mom and dad and I had six brothers and one sister. And all of my brothers—all of us we served in the service. And my sister—she didn't serve in the service, but we really miss her.

KE: A couple of interesting questions—at least I think they are interesting—do you recall where your mom might have shopped for groceries?

LT: Well in those days JC Penney was open, five and 10 cent store—what'd they call it—Ben Franklin store. Anyway we had a couple of hardware stores, and we had a meat market. That's another funny thing about the meat market and my brothers. There's one butcher there and he was...What was it? Kelly? Yes Kelly or John (word unintelligible) they'd know me, but they didn't know my brothers. So when my brothers would go in and get some meat. When they'd leave they'd say put it on my bill and they'd say, "Okay, Lawrence." So I got stuck with a big bill. I couldn't figure out why or what was happening. They knew me, but they didn't know my brothers. (Laughing).

KE: When you were growing up did you kids have chores that you had to do around the house?

LT: Oh chores! Oh yes, I always...I had to help cut the wood for firewood. I had to help bring in the coal. I had to split the kindling.

KE: Did you mom cook on a coal and wood stove?

LT: No my job was—I'm the oldest of seven—my job was to hang out the clothes for her. I got to make some friends with my neighbors because they'd see me out there hanging out clothes. Especially the McGuire's.

KE: So were the McGuire's like immediate neighbors? Did they live next door?

LT: Yes immediate neighbors.

(Spouse speaking) I lived next door to them. I was in and out of his house all through school and that. He had no time in the day for me. I was just like a sister.

KE: Right. You talked about the kids going out to (word unintelligible) Park, but did your—as a family—did your family go anywhere particular for outings or those types of things?

LT: We always went out to (word unintelligible) Park. We always had family gatherings out there and Columbia Gardens in Butte when they...I remember once, not all the time, but we got to go there once in a while. Great place.

KE: Did your family own their own car?

LT: Yes, as far as I know my dad always had a car. Well not for a long time, of course we never did, we walked everywhere. Of course the kids never believe you, you'd tell them how deep the snow was and how tough it was, but it's true. I used to walk from Oak Street down to St. Peter's every morning, come home at noon, go back at noon and come back in the evening.

SP: I had my first prom with a formal and it was winter and snowy and we didn't have cars so we walked clear down to the Coffee Cup to eat and then back again. We didn't have cars.

KE: In the snow?

SP: In the snow.

KE: And you said earlier that you graduated from St. Peter's High School?

LT: Yes, the main priest there was Father (word unintelligible). He was a great priest. I can even still remember his sermon. His sermon was about the crash of '29. (Laughing). That's what he talked about. I can remember that.

KE: He talked about that a lot?

LT: Yes, then right after that was Father Moroni (?). Father Moroni—do you want to hear a poem I can remember he preached about?

KE: Sure.

LT: You probably won't like it. (Laughing).

KE: Well, that's okay. It's your interview. (Laughing).

LT: The only one I can really remember of his sermon and this had to be it. "Martin Luther was a friar whom the devil did admire. He broke his vows and married a nun and that's how the Protestant religion begun." (Laughing).

KE: (Laughing) That's very interesting. So was the parish priests at St. Peter's also the head of the high school? Did they teach in the high school as well?

LT: No. It was strictly the nuns.

KE: Okay, and then you mentioned when we filled out the questionnaire that you had served in the military, so do you want to just kind of repeat that for the purposes of the interview.

LT: Yes, well right after graduation I enlisted in the Navy. I went with a few of my fellow friends. It seems like for some reason or other they didn't make it. One of my best friends, his name is Bernhard Morris (?), he couldn't make it past the physical but he was one of the star athletes, but he couldn't pass the physical because he had one leg shorter than the other and he didn't know it. And so I got in, so after the war if you weren't in the service in this town you more or less had to defend yourself and I was always his backup man saying that he did join or tried to join and couldn't make it. So that left me all by myself going into the boot camp and right out of boot camp everybody went somewhere, but I got sent to the (word unintelligible) unit in Coronado all by myself so I was all by myself there too. So then, I was in Coronado when the war ended with Japan.

KE: Okay, when you were growing up what kinds of traditions or celebrations do you remember, particularly anything that you celebrated with the Irish community in your neighborhood.

LT: Well Christmas is the main one. Of course we had to go to every wedding and we had to...Being Catholic, we had to take everything that came along.

KE: So typically when you were young, how did your family celebrate Christmas?

LT: It was always the best day for...Well, of course, the turkey. It was turkey or a big roast for dinner and we always had and still have mashed potatoes and rutabagas. That still goes on.

KE: Really, so you remember having rutabagas. That was kind of a tradition you remember from your childhood.

LT: Yes, we always had rutabagas. As a matter of fact we always found out that we'd have it the next day with rutabagas and potatoes mixed together was the best dish.

KE: Oh, that's interesting. I've never heard of that. So your family grew up in St. Peter's parish.

LT: No then we went to St. Paul's.

KE: So did you move from the eastern end of Anaconda up to St. Paul's parish?

LT: Yes, we moved to...We only went as far as Locust Street—Oak Street, Locust Street.

KE: From Third to—

LT: After they tore down every one of our houses when we moved.

KE: I see. When you were young, do you remember St. Patrick's Day as much of a celebration?

LT: No not so much until we got in high school. I do remember—and this is why I try to say it every St. Patrick's day—when St. Paul's...I went to St. Paul's grade school, you could hear them come down. I don't know who they were. The high school—they'd sing "Mrs. Murphy's Chowder." What the heck, they had another one they used to come around and sing. But anyway, I always remember "Mrs. Murphy's Chowder."

KE: Okay. Have you observed many changes in the way an Irish holiday like St. Patrick's Day has changed over the years?

LT: Yes the only thing I can say now is we are losing our singers and our story tellers. When I was growing up or even going through high school there was always somebody who'd sing a song or tell a poem or something like that, but now you know if you get anybody to sing you got to more or less twist their arm. Then they're not very good guys who could tell a good poem or recite a poem. It's too bad too. I have one good friend, his name's Terry Caulfield. He could recite poems and he'd only do it here at the house. For a singer, every Tuesday night I used to have Joe (word unintelligible) he'd come here at the house every Tuesday night and sing Irish songs for us. I remember in the old days in the 50s, all those guys, they'd really recite some good poems. One good guy I can remember...Do you want me to tell this one?

KE: Anything you'd like, Lorry.

LT: His name was (word unintelligible) he was right from Ireland and when you joined a (word unintelligible) they'd make you. They'd sit in the kitchen so they asked me to sit with this Mr. (word unintelligible). He was right from Ireland. So I says to him you know when you get out there they're going to ask you to sing a song or say something. I says, "Can you sing?"

He says, "Yes." So when he got out there finally it was a mixed deal—women and...So he started up and he started singing "Mother McCreedy." Couldn't carry a tune in a basket. Everybody was moaning and groaning. But he looked at me and I went like this to him...I gave him the thumbs up, so he sang another song, another poem. Then everybody was kind...About the third poem I gave him the thumbs up again and then he stands up and sings another verse. But what happened was, his fly was open and he was singing "Mother McCreedy" with his fly open, and everybody started hollering and laughing. It turned out to be the best song of the night (laughing). I'll never forget that.

KE: Oh my goodness, (laughing). Were you a member of the Hibernians when they had the original hall?

LT: Oh yes, I even did some work over there.

KE: What do you remember about that original hall?

LT: It was in the high school days, they used to have...St. Paddy's Day they'd have two—one with modern dancing and one with old time dancing. I remember old man Hayes. Have you ever heard of him?

KE: I have.

LT: Yes, well Mr. Hayes he played the fiddle and that and, oh man, he was good. We would rather go there in that hall and dance than the other one. Then of course we always had a real good guy by the name of "Bully" Brennan and Cy McKittrick. Especially "Bully" he'd like to have one too many, but he was really the...Oh, I don't know, he was one of the main guys in there for making the evening bright and happy.

KE: Oh, one of those life-of-the-party people.

LT: Yes and so was Cy McKittrick. Those are the guys that could sing. I have to tell you about the Bully Brennan. Bully Brennan was a big man. He had a big cowboy hat and I kept saying to him "I'd like to have your hat."

One day he was feeling good, and he says, "Here you can have it." So I put it on and it come down to my nose. (Laughing). But he'd belong to what they called the Norkey (?) gang in those days. The Norkey gang used to meet right here behind my house. There used to be six cabins behind my house here and they'd meet there. I says to them, "What is your favorite song? What'd you guys sing the most?" I thought that it'd be an Irish song. Can you guess what it was?

KE: I don't know.

LT: "The Old Strawberry Roan." They'd sing "The Old Strawberry Roan", and not too many guys know the words to that anymore.

KE: So they preferred cowboy tunes over Irish tunes? Why were they called the Norkey gang?

LT: They liked to pass the bottle around.

KE: Oh, (laughing), okay.

LT: They were always in trouble, but that was in those days.

KE: Let's see. One of the questions on the list talks about describing the neighborhood in which you grew up. Is there anything in particular you remember about your immediate neighborhood when you were young?

LT: Well, like I said, we were all Irish down there. Well, I said Birch Street. Birch Street in this town is known as goose town. So we were all in that one area. There was the Hannin's, the Cumming's (?), the Harrington's, the Green's, the Kerrigan's—they were all down there.

KE: Do you remember anything about what the houses looked like?

LT: Just like they are today.

KE: Just like they are today? The houses and the streets—

LT: I'd have to tell you, there's another house they tore down, the one that I was born in. They moved that one up to the Eight-Eighty Ranch. It's still there. It's an antique house.

KE: Okay. In your view, how do you think Anaconda has changed over the years? Say, from when you were young in grade school and high school?

LT: It's changed so much (laughing). First of all I guess we're getting old, we don't recognize too many people anymore and of course everybody kicking the bucket. What really changed is when the smelter shut down. That really hurt us. That really hurt our community. And they left us with that big Superfund site and I don't know how our town is going to survive. Except I was at the Court House the other day and I told them I think we might call this the hub of recreation. And I really believe it, because right here we got wilderness areas, we got mountain lakes and the flats over here. We got hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, we got ATVs, we got everything you want right here. We got the best place in the world. Well, I tell you we live in the best place in the whole world right here in Anaconda. That's what I feel about Anaconda.

KE: I can tell that you have a very warm spot in your heart for Anaconda. Do you have any particular sayings in your family?

LT: Well, of course you always...I should tell you this. One of them we always say is...One of our houses we lived in was on Maple Street, there used to be a hospital here on the corner of 5th and Maple. That used to be a hospital. My grandma moved in there, and we'd go there. I know they say the Irish are kind of known for being about spooks or ghosts. But there was a little old lady that came in the porch, and you'd open up the door and ask her to come in—they'd disappear. Strange things would happen, curtains moving and all that stuff, but nobody would believe us. But my Grandma Green would always say, "All they're here for is to say a prayer. They want a prayer from you, the poor soul. So all you got to say is 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, I put

all my trust in thee' and it'd help them." So I guess that's where we got that. I never read that in a book, I got it right from my Grandma Greene.

KE: Oh, that's really interesting. Any particular expressions that you have noticed that your family might have used? For example people talk about people from Butte and Anaconda having particular, you know, "how's you go" (?) or—

LT: Well we still got "how's you go" (?) or "tap 'er light"—take it easy. They always accuse us of saying "Andaconda" instead of Anaconda. I always say "Andaconda". (Laughing). "Okay, pard" is another word. If you didn't know a guy's name, you'd see a guy and call him "pard" and say "Okay, pardner." "Okay, sister," "okay, brother"—you'd get by without calling anybody by their names.

KE: Right. You have told the story of your mom and the pasties with the big crust and the mashed potatoes and the rutabagas, any other particular specialty foods or recipes?

LT: Well, my mom used to make...What'd you call it? Upside down pineapple or something. That was the main dessert. I don't know how she made it, but it was always good is all I can tell you. (Laughing). The other thing though, you know my mom died when we were young, so my dad raised all eight of us by himself. He'd work, come home and make dinner, go back to work then he'd come home and eat supper.

KE: Was your dad a good cook?

LT: Yes, well he was put in an orphanage when he was a kid. Yes, they made him a cook or broke him in as a cook.

KE: Oh, was it a local orphanage?

LT: Great Falls.

KE: In Great Falls, oh wow!

LT: And my grandpa he lived in Gardner, Montana and on the Cutler side they lived in Cook City. I know all those countries up there around there. But they were the real old timers up there. Nobody knows them anymore.

KE: Does your family have any particular keepsakes or mementos, you know things that might have belonged to your parents or your grandparents that got passed down.

LT: Not really. If my mom had anything she might have gave it to my sister, but I don't know.

KE: What about photographs?

LT: We got so many photographs, big mistake in those years though. Forgot to put the names on the back. So we'd go through them and we can't figure out who in the heck is that, you know (laughing). But we have stacks of photographs of all of them.

SP: I have old pictures on the German side, my mother's side, but my dad's side, his folks died young so—

LT: Of course, I got the family tree and the boss has her family tree.

KE: Okay. So as far as the family history goes, you have actually this family tree and you had mentioned that a Sister or a nun had put that together?

LT: Yes, Sister Robinson, she wrote...Oh, there's a big paragraph in here about how she wrote all the music. You want to take a look?

KE: Okay.

[Spend time looking at papers]

LT: These are all Moriarty's, the Harrington's, the Green's. We were married into the Murphy's. There's so many relatives in here I forgot myself (laughing).

KE: So Sister Mary Herbert Robinson, was she a relative?

LT: Yes.

KE: And how was she related to you?

LT: Well, I don't know. Like they said, somebody married somebody and somebody married somebody and so on down the line.

KE: Okay so she was related to you through the Moriarity family? And she had a bachelor's degree in music.

LT: Yes, read what she did.

KE: Wow. National Catholic Music Educators Association, Music Conservatory—a very accomplished woman. Very much so.

LT: But I would give her heck today if I could talk to her.

KE: Why is that?

LT: Some of the songs are dull. (Laughing). You know that.

KE: (Laughing). In your opinion, you'd rather have a lively song.

LT: Yes, well, the Irish, you know.

KE: So you mentioned it briefly, but is there anything you'd like to talk about as far as your trip to Ireland?

LT: Oh yes, okay, my trip to Ireland. Did I say this before?

KE: Well you mentioned about Blarney Castle, but I just wondered if there was anything else.

LT: My great uncle Hannin, he'd always say he owned the path going to the Blarney Stone Castle. So when I went to Ireland we went to look for it. I didn't see no path. We went to the Blarney Stone and after kissing the Blarney Stone we went to a novelty shop. So we asked the lady there, I says from my information I was always told old man Hannin owned the path to the Blarney Stone Castle. She says, "It's true. His cottage is still there, but he was just a groundskeeper." And she says to me, "Why do you ask? You're a native." Boy that made me feel good. (Laughing).

Another thing though, I seen...of course, I was interested in a sign that says "Lorry" and I have one here. I took a picture of it, but I didn't take my picture with me in it. I wanted to steal the sign, but they wouldn't let me. But it was a truck broke down with a flat tire so I went over and talked to the guys and they asked me how I liked Ireland. I told them I was a little bit disappointed. He says, "You know you're right." He says, "Everybody comes over here and thinks Ireland is like it is back in the '50s and '40s, and it isn't that way no more." I was disappointed, but—

Our trip to Ireland was really great, I really liked it. We found a grotto. We don't know where we were, there was no city, no nothing just a nice picture of (word unintelligible) and a cave site. Plus when we looked at caves, we'd find (word unintelligible). Then we went down the road and there was nothing but a water pump. So I says, "Well, we might as well get a drink of water as long as we're here." So we got there and pumped and I don't know what it was for or nothing, but we water pumped.

One of my favorite ones was...Of course, we were always lost when we were in Ireland. We went to a bar, and why I didn't buy this...I asked the guy his name and his name was Kelly. Of course I thought of Jack Kelly here. He says, "How would you like to buy this?"

I says, "What is it?"

He says, "An egg timer."

I thought, egg timer? Probably wished I would have bought it from him. (Laughing). We really got into a couple of good music pubs, pubs that had good music. As a matter of fact we got one of the CDs here.

What stands in my mind—in the bar the guy was singing and playing the drums—there was a little girl in a wheelchair in the street out in the alley. That guy was looking at her and I was too, and he was giving me the big high five. That was really neat.

KE: Okay, when did you make your trip to Ireland?

LT: When was that? 2002 I think. Yes we went with Johnny Thomas. Johnny was the driver, and we rented the car. We got along real good except, being a carpenter I seen them putting straw on the house...We were going down the road and I told him to stop, but he was going too fast and there was just too many cars behind us. We couldn't stop. I wanted him to turn around, but he wouldn't do it, but how I wish we went and talked to that farmer and see why he put straw and how they did it.

T G Oh, he was thatching the roof.

LT: Oh yes, we was on the bus and we...Anyway, we were going down Thomas Street, and I asked the lady if she'd give me the history of Thomas there. She sang...what do you call that..."cockle shells and silver bells." She sang that for me. Anyway I was on top of the bus and there was a whole group of kids or people with these big Irish hats. You seen them here on St. Paddy's Day, the big Irish hats. That's why I don't like them. She says to me...I says, "Oh boy, look at all those Irish people."

She says, "Pay no attention. They are nothing but troublemakers."

So I says...Anybody I see wearing a big hat I think troublemaker. (laughing)

KE: You think they are a troublemaker. When you spot those big tall hats on St. Patrick's Day you know who to stay away from.

LT: Then another Irish deal I have to say...St. Paul's Church—we did the altar there, you know. But we didn't put on the hardwood. They got people from Missoula to do that but I had to make sure that they left a hole for the electrical outlet, so I went over there and one of the guys was right from Ireland. So I says to him, "You know, we're going to Ireland pretty soon," and I says, "I got my Irish card. Do you think I'll get a free drink?"

He says, "You might get a free drink, but you'll also get a black eye." (Laughing). I'll always remember that saying. Of course the roundabouts there. And Guinness. I can drink it there

when we went to the Guinness's Brewery. But today I just don't like Guinness beer. I'm probably one of the guys that don't.

KE: I hadn't thought about this, but do you recall either growing up or maybe just through family lore or talk that there were any like home remedies your mother might have used or your aunts might have used.

SP: Did you use the goose? Goose to put around your neck. You take the grease and you put it on a rag and you put it around your neck. And it was to get rid of a cold.

LT: Goose grease. There's Vicks VapoRub on the bottom of your foot. Of course it's no different today, they told me to put a bar of soap for the (word unintelligible) in the bed. (Laughing).

KE: Yes, that's interesting. So in addition to any home remedies, what about any particular superstitions that you have or your brothers or your family?

LT: Yes, of course the same old one. Don't go under a ladder, and of course, we still got the black cat. Another one though is—and I really kind of believe this—if a bird hits your window and died that meant there's going to be a death in your family. Did you hear that one?

KE: You know my grandmother had a problem with birds, and I often wondered if that was particular to her or if that was pretty common.

LT: That was one of the superstitions.

KE: Well, at this point anything else that you'd like to say?

LT: I'll probably think of more. (Laughing). That's good enough. That'll keep you busy for a while. I hope you get an A on your project.

KE: Okay, well thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed.

[End of Interview]