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Interviewee: Helen Hespen
Interviewer: Eleanor Wend
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Eleanor Wend: Helen, you said here in the background information that you arrived in Montana in 1907 by train and I was wondering how old you were at that time?

Helen Hespen: Did I say 1907? (laughs) One.

EW: You were one year old when you came? So you don't really remember the trip.

HH: Because I was born in 1906.

EW: Where were you born?

HH: Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

EW: Minnesota. And you say your father came from Iowa and your mother from Germany.

HH: Yes.

EW: Did they meet in Iowa?

HH: Well, mother came when she was just a baby and her folks moved to Iowa and they just met like people do—probably dances or family get-togethers.

EW: Were both their families in agriculture of some sort?

HH: Mother's folks were farmers but Dad's I think always carpenters.

EW: His father also?

HH: I don't know too much about his father.

EW: Oh. And so he was a carpenter in Minnesota?

HH: Yes. From the time she married him he was.

EW: And the first place that you came to live was Miles City [Montana]?

HH: Yes. Yes.

EW: And he did carpenter work there?

HH: Yes.

EW: Would you maybe describe where you came to live in that area, maybe what your first memories are?

HH: My first memories were just very sketchy. It seemed as though we were at the edge of town in a small house not too near anyplace else. I don't remember any trees. I remember I was out in the yard one day, and two Indians came by. There was a little fence around our yard, and of course, I was playing in the sand and dirt. They stopped right outside the fence and were looking at me, and the thing I remembered is that Mother came out and grabbed me real quick and ran in the house. I think she thought I was going to be kidnaped. (laughs)

EW: You were all alone?

HH: Yes.

EW: You were the first child?

HH: No, there was one older, but I can't remember whether he was in school when this happened. He must have been.

EW: How much older than you?

HH: Almost four years.

EW: Did your father build that house?

HH: I don't think so. I don't believe he did. That I don't remember.

EW: There's not too many trees around Miles City, I remember.

HH: No. Well, that was later on. At another place we lived there were trees, and we lived not too far from the river, just on the river.

EW: How many brothers and sisters?

HH: I have three brothers and one sister. I'm the second child. We are all about three and a half years apart.

EW: That sounds... (laughs)

HH: Yes. (laughs)

EW: While your father was involved working did your mother also work outside the home?

HH: No. No, at that time I don't think many women did. She just had us to take care of and of course not many conveniences so her hours were pretty well filled just taking care of us and making clothes from the skin out -- because I remember her mailing shirtwaists, you know, out of flour sacks (laughs) things like that, so...She made quilts and rugs, and I believe she sewed for the boys too.

EW: Did your father make your furniture?

HH: No. And I don't remember much of our furniture that far back.

EW: How many years did you live in Miles City?

HH: Well, we came from Miles City to Three Forks [Montana] in 1912, I think it was.

EW: You must have been about 6. Did you begin school?

HH: I didn't right away. We lived, again, not too close to town, and there was a round house where they serviced the engines of trains and a lot of hobos. Mother was afraid to let me go so I didn't go until I was nearly eight. She was just afraid to let me go and it was about a mile and half to school.

EW: Even with your older brother?

HH: Well, he went to a different school than I had to go, and so I wouldn't...I don't know why. But I had to go a different direction than he did. We had the first grade in a little chapel because the school was too small to take the first grade so...

EW: Did a lot of parents come to feel that way in the area? Do you remember any of your friends mentioning that perhaps they...?

HH: I don't remember any of their parents feeling that way.

EW: I was wondering how it would...if you felt different for having not begun perhaps?

HH: No, I didn't and I learned to read at home. She got me a book, and I really went sailing because I loved school. I was ahead of the class and really shown and that didn't hurt my feelings—that's a little conceited, all of a sudden—which enabled me too when I was in the fourth grade to skip a grade so I...It didn't bother me at all not having started.

EW: Did this also happen to your sister?

HH: No, because she was almost...she was 11 years younger than I, and by then the round house was moved to Bozeman and the threat was gone.

EW: Do you remember any Indians around?

HH: Not in Three Forks, no I don't remember any. The only two I saw were those in Miles City, those two were the only ones I remember seeing. There must have been many more. But those were the only two I ever saw. Jerry asked if they were dressed very primitively, and I said, "No, the man had on a black hat and a Levi jacket, and the woman had on a long skirt"—a typical Indian. They were talking in Indian, of course, and I don't know...I suppose because I was blond and blue eyes they were attracted and looked at me, but she didn't like that, Mother didn't.

EW: Yes, it might make one nervous a little. Not really sure. Did you and your brothers and sister have a lot to do around your house?

HH: No. No, there wasn't chores. Oh, did the little ones like washing dishes and making beds and later cooking because we didn't have a farm. We didn't so there was no...

EW: Did you have a garden?

HH: Mother had a big garden. I don't remember any of us kids helping in it until later.

EW: Did your brothers ever help your father with his work?

HH: No. As soon as they could they found jobs away from home. My oldest brother started working on the railroads when he was about 17...He didn't finish school. I think he only went through seventh grade. He was very shy, introverted. He had a bad time at school so he just quit and went to work. Then he left home when he was 17.

EW: Was it difficult socially to move into Three Forks? Do you remember how you made friends and who...Did your family belong to a church?

HH: No, I don't remember any difficulties. Let's see, there were three neighbors not too far about two block away, they had children. You know, children always manage to play hide and seek or things like that in the evening so socially that way there was nothing. Mother didn't belong to a church. She was confirmed in the Lutheran Church when she was young but she sent me...I don't remember any boys going, but she sent me to the Methodist Church for a while. I felt a little out of place because I didn't know what they were talking about. Sort of in deep water so I didn't go too often. (laughs)

EW: You didn't read the Bible in your home?

HH: No. No.

EW: Were there a lot of books?

HH: Not a lot but there were some, and we had a library which we could use from earliest times and there was a school library. I read everything I could get my hands on. (laughs) I loved reading. I loved stories. I loved school, I made friends in school but we didn't live close to them because except these three families and they didn't happen to be in my grades.

EW: What kind of social events brought the neighbors together? Did you have hay rides and...?

HH: No, we just played. I don't think Mom and Dad socialized at all.

EW: I was thinking perhaps...

HH: You asked if she worked. When I was 13 she did. She went to town and worked in a hotel—a chambermaid.

EW: The hotel that's in Three Forks now?

HH: The big one, yes. That great big Sacajawea. But she didn't work there very long. Dad was in Spokane at that time. He went wherever he found work.

EW: Really.

HH: Yes, he'd go from one place to the other, and so during the summer she...I was 13 or 14 then. During the summer, she asked if I could wash dishes there, and they let me. So she wrote and told Dad I was working. Oh! You'd have thought she'd have let me go clear to the dogs. He wrote back and a real sob story how she wasn't taking care of our daughter...

EW: The daughter shouldn't have to go to work?

HH: The daughter had to give up her job. (laughs)

EW: Did you enjoy the notion of working?

HH: Oh, sure. I loved it. Anything to earn a little money. (laughs)

EW: Yes. Did you find that...that you babysat?

HH: No, they didn't have too many of those things. You know, they have so many more things

now than they did then.

EW: So there wasn't a lot that took people out of their homes? But your brothers did work during...?

HH: Yes, whatever they could find. For a farmer, they'd help hay or chores.

EW: Did their money come back into the family, or was it their money?

HH: It was their money. They never did pay very much. I don't remember what they did with it, but I'm sure it didn't come back in to the family.

EW: Interesting that your father went so far away at times because that would leave your mother very alone—

HH: Right.

EW: —with the whole family.

HH: Well, Dad was a very independent man—stubborn. When he would work for someone else and they would ask him to build a cabin or a cabinet or a room a certain way, he would do it his way instead of their way. So he ran out of work after a while, you see. He had to go. Mother told me this many years later. (laughs) She said he just worked himself out of jobs, and she didn't realize that until they'd been married a long, long time.

EW: Sounds to me, maybe, that perhaps he had an art in his carpentry that was important.

HH: I don't know. He was thorough. He was neat. But instead of consulting with them and saying wouldn't it be better if we'd do it this way, he would go ahead and do it his way. Then there would be bad feelings and harsh words and so that was why...He didn't go too often. That's the only time I remember him being gone.

EW: For a while. Did you have much music in your home? Did anyone play an instrument?

HH: Let's see, my oldest brother got a violin when he was about 17—1914 or '15. Dad didn't have music, but around that time he bought one of those old-fashioned Victor phonographs with the column shaped speaker and several records. Oh, we just thought that was heaven. That's the only music that I can remember our having, and we would get a record—they were these round cylinder records—and we played them endlessly. Mom sang.

EW: I was wondering about singing.

HH: Very. She was very musical, but she didn't have any instrument.

EW: But there was then singing. Did she teach you songs?

HH: She didn't teach them to me, but I would listen to her sing and then I would sing too.
(laughs)

EW: Can you remember how you celebrated holidays and birthdays?

HH: Oh, yes. Before the holidays every Saturday night we would go to a picture show. We would all walk and go—our family as a unit. Then on the Fourth of July in Bozeman [Montana], they had the Sweet Pea Carnival. I don't remember how we got there. We must have gone by train because we had no car. We went up there and had the parades and watched everything involved. I don't remember whether there was a circus after or not. But I do remember the parades.

Then Christmas—they carried on the tradition of Santa Claus filling your stockings and so on and so forth. I remember the first time that I found out that there wasn't one— Santa Claus. (laughs) I was so disappointed. We had gone to this show, and I don't know how Dad got all these bags and put them in the dark kitchen. We went on through the kitchen and into the living room, and for some reason I ran over into the kitchen...to get a drink I think. There were these bags. I could just barely see them, you know, but I just knew what was in them and I didn't say a word. I didn't let them know I'd seen, but it was such a letdown. But then not too long after that I entered into it too and helped fool the little kids. (laughs)

Then Easter—they had the eggs dyed and hid them all outside in nests. For our birthdays, I don't remember ever having a party, but we had a cake and celebrated that way and we had gifts.

EW: Did your mother bring in German traditions?

HH: The only traditions she probably brought was the German cookery. Because they stopped speaking German when we children were born.

EW: Really? I was wondering...

HH: Yes. They spoke English entirely. Once in a while when they didn't want us to hear something they were saying they would say it in German.

EW: Your father also spoke German?

HH: Yes. But that didn't last very long, I think they just quit entirely because there were no other, I suppose, no other families that spoke it. I don't think Dad does...did as much as Mother anyway because her folks were both from Germany. His, I suppose, way, way back were too,

but I don't know. I think just his father I have a record of coming from Germany.

EW: Did your brother go on to school? Your older brother?

HH: No.

EW: No.

HH: He went out to the coast and he worked whatever he could find in the timber or....He followed a girl out there is really what he did. (laughs) One of these neighbors, they were Bohemian and their...Talking about music, they had an uncle who had an accordion, and oh, in the evening he would sit out on the porch—about as far as from here to over to that house—and play that accordion. It was just like the Pied Piper. All of us kids would just go and sit and be entranced. Oh, it was just wonderful. But when they left, we didn't know that Lloyd admired the oldest girl, but apparently she wrote to him when they landed out there. I don't know how long she wrote, but when he went that is where he headed. I remember Mother seeing him go—he took the train—and to keep from crying she went outside and pumped water real savagely out of the pump so that nobody'd see her. (laughs)

He was gone for two or three years, and when he came back he was a man. He had impetigo all over his face, and he had left all of his clothes. She had rejected him, and...(laughs) Oh, dear. He wouldn't tell us anything about it so then he started working on the railroad, and that's what he followed until...It must have been '38. He was up in Kalispell country working in the sawmill up there and until he...No, he didn't retire...until '42 he went to the...he joined the army and went to Alaska. Then when he came back he apprenticed as a cobbler, but he just took whatever he could. He'd never married. He's almost a recluse.

EW: I was wondering because I know you said you went to a teacher's conference, and I was wondering if he had influenced you in his education.

HH: No. No.

EW: But you were very independent in that.

HH: He was the only one who didn't. No, my brother just younger than I just finished high school but he didn't go onto college either. I got a scholarship. I was salutatorian, and I got a scholarship to Dillon. It's probably the only reason that I went because only the wealthier family's children went to college and we were not wealthy.

EW: Was is unusual for women to go to college at that time?

HH: It seems as though out of my class only two went. One was the daughter of the Montana Power man—an only child. She went...Let me see. I can't think of another one. One did go to

nurses training.

EW: Do you remember when you first started thinking about perhaps becoming a teacher?

HH: I think it was just sort of out of the blue because the scholarship was for a specific place—Dillon—to teach. I had no idea that I wanted to, and I only taught a year because I didn't think I was doing a very good job. I didn't think that my kids were learning anything.

EW: It only took one year to become a teacher?

HH: You could go to school a summer and teach that fall. Then the next summer you had to go again. You could go to school forever, and while I was teaching they instituted the requirement that you had to get a degree—it was only two years—but you had to get a degree from Dillon.

EW: Eventually?

HH: No, before you could teach.

EW: Oh, before. Did you have to take a test—a teacher's aptitude test or anything?

HH: No, you took, let's see...methods of teaching, and you practice taught right there—regular classes, third and fourth grade. You took history, English, and you were observed while you were practice teaching. They let you teach. I think they had some pretty poor teachers that way. (laughs)

EW: Did you go to high school in Three Forks?

HH: Yes, yes, I had all my schooling there.

EW: Can you talk a little bit about environment that you can remember from the high school years? Were there parties? How did you interact with the people who went to school?

HH: We had a girl's basketball team, which was at that time a little unusual. I played a little—not much—because it involved coming after dark in practice. It was a mile and a half/ I didn't stay with it too long. We had parties, not often, class parties. I was invited to several of my friends' places for dinner, and I don't remember ever having them to my place which is bad. (laughs) I had one girlfriend who lived on the same side of the tracks that I did, and we just bummed around together and...

EW: Was that a division?

HH: Pardon?

EW: Was that a division? Did the tracks divide the town as it does...?

HH: Sort of, sort of. The main part of town was on the south side of the tracks and just residences were on the other side. I don't know which started first. I think the main part of town did. Of course, where the railroad was the shops were right there. There were dances every Saturday night. There were dances that we went to, everybody. There was a hot springs up the Madison River; we went to that a lot.

EW: Did you drive there?

HH: I usually got a ride with someone else, yes.

EW: Someone drove?

HH: Yes. And Trident, which is only seven miles from Three Forks, was an unusual community. The whole community there gathered together like a family and did things. One of my classmates lived there so I was included in those activities quite a lot. I went with her and we went over to Boulder Hot Springs when the big plunge was there and we went to Helena to the hot springs -- the town just wonderful things together—everybody did. Outside of that I can't think of any high spots.

EW: Did you meet your husband—?

HH: At a dance.

EW: At a dance?

HH: Yes. Well, it's called "old town." The old town of Three Forks was about a mile from where the main town is now, and they used to have barn dances there. All of us gals and boys went there and danced, and we had come there from up here. He wanted to meet me, and so that was it. (laughs)

EW: Is that town still around?

HH: The "old town?"

EW: Yes.

HH: Well, there is just a little cluster of buildings. The Dunbar...Al Moltz place now was the Dunbar place, and it was the nucleus of the town because Selma Moltz's father and mother and their father and mother were two of the first families that ever went to Three Forks. It was in their barn that all the dances were held.

EW: Was it with fiddle music?

HH: Sometimes, mostly there was one band that had a saxophone and drums and a piano. The fiddle music was more for the square dances. Bob went to those. In fact, he played for many of them where there was just a violin and he played banjo.

EW: That was your older brother?

HH: That was my husband.

EW: That was your husband. I was wondering if he played music at that time.

HH: Bob? Yes. He played from the time he was about 14—taught himself. First thing he had as a musical instrument was a mandolin, and then he graduated from that to a banjo, a concertina. After we were married he got a saxophone and clarinet. That was how he spent his evenings.

EW: Wow.

HH: Right.

EW: Did he sing also?

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

HH: I forgot one thing that we did for social...The whole town would get together and go places—our town, now and then—not like Trident did. I remember this one time we went to the Morrison Cave. There were older people and younger people...

EW: Morrison Cave?

HH: Which is now Lewis and Clark, and we had...There was no trail or anything. You climbed up this steep, steep mountain and climbed down this hole. There was nothing like it. Have you ever been in it?

EW: Yes.

HH: Okay. There's nothing like it is now. I never fainted in my life, but I came close to it that time because the sun was beating right against that hill and we were climbing up there. We had our lunch with us, and it was, well, about this time in the morning, I think. When we got up there, all we had when we went down the cave, all we had was carbide lights or flashlights, just rope ladders and wooden ladders, but that was a high too. That was when I was a teenager.

EW: Did you wear pants?

HH: Yes. Knickers.

EW: Knickers?

HH: No jeans. They didn't have any jeans. I wore overalls, too, but I wore knickers on that, you know.

EW: Did your mother ever worry about some of the places that you went to?

HH: I'm sure she did. I think was Dad was more concerned about me getting in trouble than she was. I was 15, and there was a girl 19 who had a boyfriend. She took me to Helena with her one time, and she wouldn't take me to the dance. I had to stay in the hotel room right across from the dance hall, and I could watch her but I didn't go. Dad didn't like that a bit. He just knew I was going completely to the bad by running around with Melva. But Mother said it was all right. She wasn't all that permissive but she just...She told me the facts of life and—

EW: Did she?

HH: Yes.

EW: At a young age?

HH: I think it was about the time I matured that she took me aside and explained what she knew I had to know and then gave me a book to read. My dad just didn't think I should go places.

EW: I was wondering about rodeos. Were there very many rodeos in the area?

HH: There were. I can't remember, though, how old I was when I went to my first one.

EW: And horseback riding, did you go?

HH: Just now and then on somebody else's horse.

EW: You never had a horse?

HH: No.

EW: Did you ever have any animals?

HH: We had a dog several times. We had chickens and a cat or two. A cow...

EW: When you were going to school in Dillon, where was Bob?

HH: He was in Belgrade. I had met him on my 18th birthday which is in September, and we were engaged when I went to Dillon but I thought I should teach at least a year to prove that I could, so he was living here in Belgrade.

EW: Did he like that notion?

HH: I think he thought it was all right. I lived in the dorms, worked in the kitchen. I did babysit there. Anything I could get to do because my scholarship didn't amount to very much—48 dollars or something like that.

EW: For an entire quarter?

HH: Yes, yes. So I had to earn my way, but things were so much cheaper then that 48 dollars paid my tuition then, I think.

EW: What year would that have been?

HH: 1925. The fall of 1924.

EW: And where did you teach?

HH: It was out of Whitehall, a little place called Bone Basin. You went through a little town called Renova. Shortly before I went there, there had been a murder right at this little store at Renova, and it always gave me the chills when I went by there. Some kid had held up the store keeper and got nervous and shot him. So from that little store we had to go back in the hills about two miles, I think, or three, really in the country.

EW: Is it still there?

HH: The schoolhouse? I don't know. The girl at whose home I stayed lives in Anaconda, and I don't...I never thought to ask her the last time I saw her whether the school house was still there. From her house you had to go on up the draw about three-quarters of a mile, and I had to leave early and start my own fire. The other two kids came over another little knoll that was just like that, sort of, and the school house was down in the bottom. I had three pupils. Should I put that on my tape? Three pupils—a seventh grader and a third grader and a first grader. So, I had to teach all three grades, and my third grader had never learned to read from the first and second grade. Oh, he was real bad off. Nice young boy, but he just never learned to read so I spent lots of time with him. The seventh grader was getting ready to take...At that time you'd take county exams to see whether you were ready for the eighth grade, and I worried myself silly over that. That's why I said I didn't feel as though as though I'd been a good teacher, but I don't think I probably was. (laughs) I played with them at recess and we'd have...I had all my plans—written out plans that I had studied in Dillon. A young couple there that lived on above the school house they had a little baby, that was some of my social life there. The house where I lived wasn't modern. They just had a bucket of water in the house, and you bathed in the little basin, a hand basin and sponged yourself off. (laughs)

EW: Was there any electricity?

HH: Not there.

EW: I wanted to ask you if you remember when the first time you had electricity.

HH: In my own home after I was married.

EW: After you were married? All the time you were growing up you didn't have it?

HH: No. We had first kerosene lamps and then gasoline, you know, that you'd pump up. They were real bright. The lights would be so much brighter than the kerosine lamps. But it was after we were married because after I left and my other two brothers left Mother and Dad moved. Well, Dad had already left. He left Mother, and so she and my sister moved on the other side of town in a little house and they had electricity.

EW: Did your mother have to work then?

HH: Yes, she worked in restaurants washing dishes and she made rugs and she took in washing.

EW: What sort of rugs?

HH: Hook rugs—hand hooked rugs—and then later braided rugs. I had a rattan. She was very understanding about children growing up and having to do your own thing. She wasn't a woman's libber but she understood that you had to do certain things. She wasn't very communicative. She wished she could be, but she wasn't.

EW: You never really felt that she said to you, you should get married—that that was the path?

HH: No, no. But when I wanted to date, she said, "I think that's all right. You know the pit falls."

EW: It sounds like she didn't fail too much in communication.

HH: Well, I mean, she wished that she could gab and talk and be very effusive, but she couldn't. She let us know what was right and what was wrong. Her communication with the girls particularly was okay, but with the boys she couldn't...She felt she couldn't. I thought she did all right.

EW: Where did your father go?

HH: From Three Forks he went to Deer Lodge, I think. Oh, I forgot to say way back there when he had worked himself out of all the places to get carpenter work, he decided he would go in mining. This was before he had left. So he went over on the Jefferson River and built a sluice box. Built a cabin out of ties and panned for gold, and he just knew he was going to strike it rich. I remember I was torn between the two of them. He was sure that she didn't love him anymore because she had gone to work. She didn't love him anymore she wouldn't have gone to work so it got him feeling sorry for himself. So I remember this friend of mine who lived on the same side of the tracks would...I'd bake him a cake, and then we'd walk over to his cabin and clean it up for him and have the cake. I don't remember whether we took him other food or not. Then after I left, my brother...Two brothers—there's one younger than I and then the second one. We were all very good students except the oldest one, and Don, this third boy, wanted to go to college. He was the only one of us who wanted to go to college, and the professor at that time arranged that he would get a job where none of the other kids could because he said he is a brain and he needs to go to college. So he got him a job in Trident when men weren't getting work. This was in '32 when the Depression was really bad. So every paycheck he could get, Mom would put it away for him. Dad wasn't making any money so Mom said, "We haven't any money for groceries."

"You've got money," he said, "Use that."

She said, "I'll not do that. That's for him to go to school and that's it. That's it."

"Well, if you can't use that money then I guess we're just out of luck."

She said, "Well, if you don't want to support us, why don't you just get out."

He said, "Well, I'm sorry you feel that way. Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

So he just left. It was that sort of thing.

EW: It was over money.

HH: Really and non-support. So then he went to Deer Lodge and mined, but he never did strike it rich.

EW: Was he mining gold?

HH: Trying to.

EW: You were married at this time? Around this time?

HH: Yes. I was married before Don graduated from high school, and I was out of the home.

EW: Did you get married right after that—your year of teaching?

HH: Yes. Finished in May and married in June.

EW: Where was your first home?

HH: About two blocks down the street here. (laughs) Right here in Belgrade. I've lived here ever since, and I have no desire to leave. Perfectly contented right here.

EW: Jerry said something about your spending some time in the Gallatin Canyon?

HH: This was in 1932. See we were married in '26, and this was in '32. Bob had a garage first when we were...before I married him. Then two or three years after we were married things began to get kind of bad, and he had a lot of credit and people weren't paying their bills so he closed the garage and opened a battery shop which was smaller and the overhead was less. He did minor repairs, and then that...nothing. There was just no business. We were buying this house, and we let it go back and moved up into the canyon. Up into a cabin that we had built when things weren't bad just as a summer cabin and a hunting cabin, and lived there from about May to November. That was primitive, too, but fun. (laughs)

EW: What sort of things did you do around...?

HH: During the week he would cut down dead lodge pole pines clear of the other side of the creek way up a mountain at about a 45 degree angle and skid them down. Then between the two of us we'd drag them across the creek, and he'd set up a saw—buzz saw, a circular saw rather—and he'd cut a load of wood and take it to town, get our groceries. He'd sell that—

(Break in audio)

HH: He would sell that load of wood for five dollars. That same evening he would play for a dance, either around the valley here or up about...around Livingston, one of his jobs was. Then with that 11 dollars he could buy our groceries that we needed, and he'd come back very early in the morning, like two or three o'clock. That was what we...that was our living. We were up on a little plateau, the cabin was, and for pastime we would pack rocks and make a little rock fence around this three-quarters of an acre and beautify it. I loved it. I just loved it up there.

EW: Did you have any children at that time?

HH: Yes, they were both born.

EW: Oh. And did you have a garden?

HH: No. No place for a garden.

EW: No place. So you had to buy all of your food from town.

HH: Yes, and our milk. We had a very good time. The whole church group came up several times—pot-luck dinners. We had company come. They thought it was wonderful up there just like we did. I suppose, we decided to stay there during the winter, but one of the men in the big store which is now Payless store, came up and wanted Bob to come down and run the filling station right across the street from the store so we came down in November.

EW: What church did you...?

HH: Well, practically from the time we were married, we started going to church. I did. Then not too long after that, he did, too. I was the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian minister was the one who married us, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Got involved with the Women's Association and Sunday school.

EW: Yeah, I was reading that you mentioned your activities in the church. Is this young people's group also with the church?

HH: Yes, yes.

EW: You did teach?

HH: Yes, Sunday school. Superintendent of the Sunday school one year. President of the Women's Association for three years, and now I'm not teaching anymore but I am the financial secretary of the church—counting the money and banking it. The treasurer spends it. I was treasurer for a while too, but I don't like that nearly as well. Too many correspondence letters to write.

EW: Did you plan the number of children that you had?

HH: No.

EW: No. Did you want more than you had?

HH: I really didn't. I'm kind of a nervous person. Maybe you don't think so. I didn't. The same way as with my teaching, I didn't think that I was doing a very good job of being a mother. I worried about the children a lot, and I was short tempered and—I think I was. Bob didn't think I was, but I did. He wanted more, but I didn't really.

EW: Where did you have your children?

HH: When Betty was born there, I had an osteopath for a doctor, and they wouldn't allow them in the hospital so there was a big house up on South Fifth, I think.

EW: Here in Belgrade?

HH: Bozeman.

EW: In Bozeman.

HH: It was a woman nurse...no, Doctor Fishly. She let osteopaths come in there, and so that's where...Both of them were born there.

EW: Now, he did the delivery? She didn't?

HH: No, she just managed the...She was a nurse, really. I said Dr. Fishly didn't I? It was her son in law who was Dr. Fishly.

EW: Oh. Well, was she a midwife?

HH: She was a nurse. She wasn't there when the baby was born. Just he was.

EW: Just he was. No real assistant?

HH: If there was, I don't remember.

EW: Was that a good place? Would you have preferred to be at home or...?

HH: Very. It was very nice. She had fixed it up. It was a very small hospital. There were four rooms.

EW: Is that house still there?

HH: I have no idea.

EW: That's intriguing. I have never heard of that place. In fact, I don't think I've ever heard of such a house.

HH: Let's see. I just can't think where it was. It was South something. I can see it, but I don't really remember it. While I was there another...two other people that I knew had babies at the same time. The one was from near Malborrow [Maudlow?]. The baby was born prematurely, and they kept it there for two months in a shoe box.

EW: A shoe box! (laughs)

HH: The baby was only about 12 inches long. That was her incubator, was a shoe box. They put her in the incubator, and she was the most beautiful little girl you ever saw but apparently being born prematurely and in the car. Her sitting on the head, really, to try to keep it from coming out must have damaged the brain because that child wasn't all right, but she was beautiful. She was just like a wax doll. But her mind...her brain had been damaged.

EW: Not handling.

HH: Right. And trying to hold back the delivery.

EW: Were you nervous?

HH: Was I? You mean with my own children? Sort of. Sort of. I vaguely knew what was going to happen because this doctor that I had had was also a good friend in his life. He had briefed me, so the night before she was born I woke up about one o'clock at night and I felt these pains and so I got up. I had some ironing that I hadn't done. (laughs) Very quietly I got out of bed and went into the kitchen and finished my ironing and timed my pains. They were about eight minutes apart. Towards morning they got a little closer, so I woke Bob up and told him that I guess this part of it is about to start. He called Doc, and Doc said, "Well, you better get up to the hospital." They called it the hospital, and I went and the blessed pains quit during the day.

One of my neighbor friends came up and took me for a ride, and we had some ice cream and I thought, oh, I don't want to go back home, so I didn't. I stayed there, and they started a little but not real. So I think she was born about one o'clock that night. By then I was so tired I didn't...I don't remember too much about it.

EW: You didn't have any anesthesia or anything like that?

HH: I'm sure I did because he said just breath deep and I just don't remember her being born so I'm sure I did have. But with Bob two and a half years later there was no fiddling around. He was born right away, and there was no need for anesthesia either.

EW: And so you remember?

HH: I remember every bit. But I wasn't scared. I didn't really know what was coming. (laughs)

EW: Had you read anything?

HH: Oh, yes. But, you know, some people just say it's so terrible, and some people say there's nothing to it.

EW: Everyone has their own experience.

HH: Everyone has their own experience, and it wasn't excruciating. But they didn't tell you, like they do now with this natural childbirth, to relax and let the pains come. If you can do that, your pain is much less. You aren't working against your labor.

EW: Exactly.

HH: Otherwise when you're pushing when you're not supposed to be pushing, you're working against the baby and your natural...What do I want to say?

EW: Gravity?

HH: Yes.

EW: Was there any time that you took...that you worked outside the home or brought in money?

HH: Very briefly. I don't remember whether we had been married a year. It was before either child was born. There was a man downtown here who took grain samples from the farmers and sent them in to be tested for protein. I worked in his office for a little while. It was just really a service more than...I got a little pay, I don't remember what. Then when I was pregnant with Betty, I worked in the telephone office—just more...more to do it. I didn't have to, but I didn't

seem to know what to do with all my time so I did those two things but that's all.

EW: You didn't desire to get back to teaching?

HH: No way. I substituted once or twice but I didn't...I just felt inadequate as a teacher. They made me nervous.

EW: The children you taught?

HH: I just never felt as though I was capable. I feel more capable scrubbing somebody's floors.
(laughs)

EW: Did you vote?

HH: As soon as I was old enough.

EW: Did your parents vote also?

HH: That I don't remember. I'm sure they did.

EW: Your mother voted?

HH: I'm sure they did, but I don't remember it.

EW: It wasn't a big issue for them?

HH: No, no.

EW: Do you remember the first election that you voted in?

HH: It was for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

EW: Do you remember your thoughts with regard to that?

HH: Not really. I wasn't too involved in current events and history was my Waterloo in school. I didn't fail it, but I didn't like it. I got passing grades, but everything else I excelled. But I just didn't like history. Consequently current events are history so I didn't pay too much attention. I had read about Roosevelt, and he sounded like a pretty good guy and so at that time we voted Democrat. Then after he had run for his fourth term, we changed to Republican.

EW: Were you aware of women in politics at all? Had you heard of Jeannette Rankin?

HH: Yes. She was the first woman. We heard a lot about her, and I thought, who would want it?

That was my reaction, who would want it?

EW: Why was that? Did you frown on that?

HH: It just seemed to me, I think, that there was so many other things a woman could do. That is not a woman's lib idea, is it? (laughs)

EW: Oh, don't worry about that, whether or not it is. It's interesting—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2]

EW: Did you think that she [Jeannette Rankin] was probably dealing with it well?

HH: Oh, everything we read about her was very complementary and she was doing an excellent job from all reports and by then I was getting a little more interested in current events. I never was politically strong, I mean one way or the other, getting real involved. I know some women who are. They listen avidly to the news and everything that's reported. I didn't. I don't know where I was at whether that was just neglect on my part or whether I just didn't enjoy it or...

EW: Did you know any women personally who were involved in politics in the area or...?

HH: Not then. Later when Helen Johnson [Jackson?] ran for the representative, I knew her and I thought she'd do a good job.

EW: Do you still feel that women are out of their element in...?

HH: No, I don't because I do believe that...I do believe that a woman adds the other side of the picture. In the meantime I think that I've come to the conclusion that men don't do as much thinking about certain aspects of a situation and a lot of times a woman will bring that part to it. I've changed my mind quite a bit. I don't think I would like to see a woman president though, I don't know why. I guess I wouldn't want this country to be a matriarchy. (laughs) The Indians are matriarchal. When our daughter was in Kansas, I got acquainted to—Bob and I both—got acquainted with an Indian woman, and she said the Navajos, particularly the women, are the heads. The men are just around, she said. (laughs) They're just there for procreating reasons. (laughs) The women own the sheep and they take care of the business. They do the butchering, they do the weaving of the wool, they do everything. It's definitely a matriarchy, and I don't know if that's good or not. I think men shouldn't be robbed of some of things they do. Do we want them to be just followers?

EW: Yes. I don't...

HH: I don't like that.

EW: No one should really be robbed of their half—

HH: No. I don't think so.

EW: —of their share in this life.

HH: I think Bob says as well as anything in our marriage, he said, "I don't think there should be a boss." He said, "I think it's a partnership and one should contribute just as much to a relationship as the other." This is the way I think about our country. But I do like to see men

leaders if they're good.

EW: Did your daughter go on in school?

HH: She went one year to Missoula. Took music. She was very musical. She had Bob's talent there. But she didn't care about it. So then she went to work. Went to California—San Francisco. Office work. She's very good. Then she came back here and worked for Mr. Markel. When she got married, they went to Illinois—Wheaton—and she worked in an office there until he was through school. Then she said, "Now I'm done working. It's up to him." But she's working in the home. She makes all their clothes, she cuts all their hair, she bakes from scratch—everything. She's not just going along for the ride. She's contributing very much, but she said, "I don't like to do things like you do. I don't like to get out in the garden." Well, Steve, there, doesn't want anybody in his garden, he was the gardener. But she definitely believes that a woman's place is in the home. With times the way they are, I think it's very necessary much of the time that a woman, if she wants to, should be able to work and contribute.

EW: During the time that you were up in the Gallatin Canyon in...did you know a lot of women that were working?

HH: At that time, not too many were. I think that was when I was about 23 or 24.

EW: Even though the economic situation was...

HH: There were teachers. No. Teachers—there had always been women teachers, and there had always been stenographers.

EW: Can you remember any particular friend or woman who you acquainted with who seemed to have a dream or an aspiration that was very different from the normal point of view such as teaching or nursing?

HH: Can you give an example?

EW: Well, perhaps one who wanted to be a doctor or a politician or to...or maybe just to be a rancher? Or ride in a rodeo or be a miner? (laughs)

HH: I can't think of any. I can't think of any.

EW: I just asked because I figured if you did remember...if you did know someone like that you would remember.

HH: Now, the first one that was close was Helen Jackson.

EW: Was she from?

HH: Well, she taught school here, and she met the man she married here. He was working in the fountain. She was the first one, really, that I knew closely that wanted to enter politics, and she was very good.

EW: Did you work for her on her campaign?

HH: Did I? No. That doesn't appeal to me. Why? Am I neglecting something? (laughs)

EW: Not necessarily.

HH: But I wonder why I don't. But I just have no desire. I'll vote for them, but I don't want to work for them. I'm off balance there some way.

EW: Well, you put your energy in more of a...well, you've put your energy into the church and into the community in a less...in a less political way but more socially, socially...

HH: Right, and I love to help people. My role, I think, is behind the scenes. I prefer behind the scenes work. Calling on sick people, taking older people who can't drive places, things like that, I love that. I feel that there's a service that's for me.

EW: Did you ever consider, perhaps, nursing? Did that ever cross your mind?

HH: Now that you mention that, I told Jerry one time, I said, "In the back of my mind, I think I would have liked to have been a doctor." I never would have dreamed of doing it because at that time women didn't. But I think I would have liked to—a doctor.

EW: Yes, I said nursing, maybe, because I was thinking of back when you would have been contemplating possible...

HH: Because I don't know whether its empathy with someone who is sick or hurting strikes a real sympathetic cord. I might have become too involved in my patients if I'd become a doctor but I really felt I would have, but it was just unheard of in those days.

EW: Did you go and help your friends when they were sick? Do you remember going out and...?

HH: The first person I went to see was a woman old enough to be my mother and she was sick. I was coming home from school one day and what prompted me to go I don't know, but I went in her place to see her, just to call on her and tell her I was sorry that she was sick and if there was anything I could do. Well, there wasn't. I nearly wrecked myself. She was lying on a cot up against the wall, and it was dim in there and there was the cellar door open right near her bed. I just simply walked right there, and I scraped my shin here until it still hurts. But she says there wasn't anything I could do, but she was so appreciative of...I didn't even know her very well,

but she was so appreciative of me coming, just stopping, you know, the thought. I think that was the first time I was...

EW: Then through your church work and...Have you continued?

HH: Yes.

EW: Have you ever been involved in the community with any libraries or setting up a library since you read books?

HH: No, no. I love books, but I've never even worked in one.

[End of Interview]