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Oral History Number: 435-002

Interviewee: Mary Frances Flynn McQuade

Interviewer: Maureen Edwards

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Project: The Gathering – Collected Oral Histories of the Irish in Montana

ME: This is Maureen Edwards and I am at the Legends Parkway Assisted Living Community with Frances McQuade. I have told her about The Gathering, a project under Bernadette Sweeney where they are collecting stories of the Irish that came to Montana. Frances is the oldest living Flynn. Her grandparents came to Montana and she is a master story teller, 96 years old—is that right?

MM: Yes, that's right.

ME: So she has agreed to be part of this project. So I am going to go ahead and go through a few questions. So what is your full name Frances?

MM: Mary Frances Flynn McQuade.

ME: And where did you get all those names?

MM: I was Mary Frances as a small child and along the way dropped the Mary because there were so many Marys in the family and I married another Irishman whose mother was also a Flynn and so I have stories of their past living too in their early days.

ME: Were they connected to your Flynn family?

MM: No not that they know of. But it's strange; both of my sons great-grandmothers were Katherine Flynn on both sides of the family. That's a coincidence isn't it?

ME: Yes, so what is the date of your birth?

MM: May 2, 1914.

ME: May 14, 1914—96.

MM: Her birthday too.

ME: And where were you born?

MM: St. Patrick's hospital in Missoula.

ME: So she didn't have the baby at the home ranch?

MM: No.

ME: And who attended?

MM: Uncle Jimmy.

ME: And how was he related?

MM: He was my uncle, my dad's brother. A practicing physician for many years in Missoula.

ME: And who was your father?

MM: John Julian Flynn.

ME: And your mother?

MM: Mary Helterline Flynn.

ME: They were not born in Ireland.

MM: They were of German descent.

ME: German descent—your mother was. And then John was born in this country?

MM: Yes he was, in Missoula.

ME: And so it was your grandparents that came?

MM: Yes.

ME: And who were they?

MM: Michael and Katherine Flynn.

ME: I know Michael was dead before you were born.

MM: Yes.

ME: Do you remember hearing anything about him—why he came or what he was like?

MM: I remember stories of when they arrived in Missoula. They came— had spent about a year in Colorado where he was working in the mines and he was injured and he decided to come to Missoula and start a new life. They arrived in Missoula with a wagon, a horse and I think a couple cows and two small children. And they settled in a little log cabin on the edge of Missoula and to many years of hard work. And by just taking advantage of every opportunity they acquired a large ranch, I think about 1200 acres and they raised a family of six children. They all grew up in Missoula—were part of Missoula's early history.

ME: Do you remember anything specific about Michael? What he was like or—

MM: My grandfather?

ME: Your grandfather. Did anybody talk about him?

MM: They said he was a very quiet man. They described him as—I've heard him described as being such a hard working, honest person and very likable, but not an overpowering person. He was quiet and—

ME: Do you know why he came from Ireland? Did you ever hear the family talk?

MM: They had relatives in Missoula, the Hogan family and they had heard of opportunities in Montana and wanted to see the new country.

ME: The Hogan's were Katherine's relatives right—your grandmother?

MM: Yes.

ME: Okay, so tell me about Katherine. You did know her.

MM: I did. I remember grandma—I was about six years old when she passed away. She was a good sized lady. She always wore a big—a log house dress with an apron tied around her. She spoke with—I thought she talked real funny and I couldn't understand it, but that was because she had a beautiful Irish brogue. And she was a very nice loving person. As a little child I didn't know her too well you know, but I remember she was good to us children.

ME: Do you remember her singing songs or telling stories?

MM: I don't. Grandma was uneducated. I understand that she could neither read nor write. I didn't realize that at the time, but I understand that's how it was.

ME: So Michael and Katherine then came to Missoula and started the ranch and they had six children.

MM: Yes.

ME: So do you want to tell me about their kids?

MM: Aunt Nellie and Uncle Barney came with them from Colorado. Following their life in Missoula my dad, John Flynn, Michael, Phillip, Jimmy and Denny were born and they all grew up on the ranch and spent their early years in Missoula.

ME: What do remember about Aunt Nellie?

MM: Aunt Nellie was kind of—she took charge of things. She sort of ran things and all of her brothers looked to her for decisions and what should be done.

ME: Even later?

MM: Even later in life. I remember she liked to keep control of things you know. She never married and lived on the ranch all of her life.

ME: Did she ever have a chance to get married?

MM: She had a man friend once, an attorney in Butte. I remember one time he was coming on the train from Butte and Aunt Nellie drove a big Buick and she told Helen and I with her to meet the train. Why, I don't know. And Helen and I were seated in the back seat. We were just watching their every move you know. And this is kind of funny—his name was Morris English [sp?] and he brought a big box of candy which I sure he had intended for Aunt Nellie, but when we got to the ranch he gave it to Helen and I. I think back now probably hoping we'd get lost, but that only endeared us to Morris and we never left his side (laughs).

ME: So what happened to Morris then?

MM: Eventually we quit hearing about him. I think it just didn't develop into anything more serious.

ME: And father or brothers didn't have any ideas about him or anything?

MM: No, no. we really never heard much about him. We probably wouldn't.

ME: Not the kind of thing they are going to tell you.

MM: No.

ME: So the next one then was Barney and Barney was born in Colorado also.

MM: Yes.

ME: And so what do you remember about Barney?

MM: Barney moved to California as a young man and spent most of his life there. In his retirement years he moved back to Missoula. Uncle Barney was so much fun. He had such a sense of humor. It was just fun to talk to him. I remember he had little nicknames for all of us. He'd notice our habits and he had little nicknames for all of us kids. He was full of funny stories.

ME: He was the story teller?

MM: He was. He was really fun and he was an undertaker.

ME: Was he successful in his work?

MM: I think he was during his working years, but he was retired when I knew him.

ME: And who did he marry?

MM: He married Aunt Cecil also another Flynn and they lived in California. I didn't know Aunt Cecil well, but I used to see pictures of her and I remember she used to send us big bundles of funny papers so that was really fun for us to get these big bundles of funny papers. We always looked forward to that.

ME: She never came back to the ranch?

MM: No, not that I know of.

ME: And why not?

MM: Well they did live in Missoula for a while before my time. They had a little boy Stanley who was drowned in a little creek that ran through Missoula. He, as a small child, wandered out in the yard and was drowned.

ME: And that's why they went back—do you think?

MM: Maybe, I'm not sure.

ME: So Barney and Cecil and the next one is your father.

MM: And Barney and Cecil had Tom also. Our cousin who we got to know, who visited us in Missoula a lot as a young boy and we knew him.

ME: So your father—he was the third child.

MM: Yes I believe so.

ME: So tell me about your father, 'cause I know you know a lot about him.

MM: As a little child, I was very close to him. He was just so good to me in so many ways. I just looked up to him and I thought there was nobody like him. I didn't realize this so much at the time, but he was such a good-hearted man. I remember I grew up—as I got older—I grew up in the depression time. And I remember it was very difficult for people to get loans at the bank. And so many people would come to papa and ask if he would sign a note so they could get money to exist on. And he was glad to do that. He never gave what he could spare; he always gave what was needed. He was just a good-hearted person through and through.

ME: What did he do with his life?

MM: He stayed on the ranch. For a short time he went to Business College, got a little training. But he spent most all of his life on the ranch and ran the ranch after my grandparents were gone. I think helped make the ranch a success because they went through a lot of very hard times. And he later became interested in politics and he was in the State Legislature for a few years and County Commissioner for many years. I'll tell you how he and my mother met. My mother was a student at Sacred Heart Academy and the Knights of Columbus was offering a prize for Irish history and so ma entered the contest and papa was there when she was awarded the prize for winning. He decided she was a pretty smart little gal and so he hired her to teach the Hellgate School and she taught school a couple of years. They were married a couple of years later and then I came along.

ME: Now how did she know about Irish history?

MM: I said to mama once, "How come you knew enough about Irish history?" because she grew up in a German family. S

She said "Oh, you know I flattered them a little bit," you know. (laughs)

ME: Well I want to talk more about your parents too, but let's go down to the rest of their brothers and sisters. So next came Michael after John right?

MM: I'm not sure if it was Phillip or Michael.

ME: Phillip, no it was Phillip.

MM: I have many memories of Uncle Phil. When he was just a young boy he became mentally retarded and the family kept him at home and just took care of him. He just wandered around

the ranch, but as a young girl, I really got well acquainted with Uncle Phil. He used to come and get me every day to help him do his chores. We used to rake the yard and pick apples, feed the pigs and do all those things and he used to go to town every once in a while and he'd bring bags of candy home. And he'd hide 'em and so he'd hide 'em upstairs under his bed and they were treats for him and I. When there was nobody around he'd go up and get me some gumdrops or something. And Uncle Phil was later, as his condition became worse, they decided he had to go to Warm Springs for his own safety and I remember the day that he left we all went out to the front gate to say good-bye to him. And he took me aside and gave me a little—kind of a pouch—and he said, "This is for you. Go hide it."

Uncle Phil and I always had secrets so I ran in the house and hid it right away. Well, Uncle Phil was in Warm Springs probably a year or so and we got word that he had passed away. And so I remember I took the purse out, showed it to mom and there was about almost \$100.00 in small bills and silver dollars. I think it was his savings for his life that they gave him for doing little chores. And I remember mama said we have to have masses said for Uncle Phil, so we did. They put the rest in the bank for me and I think it was probably just a few months later the bank went broke as many of 'em did about that time and I lost my big inheritance (laughs).

ME: Oh, Phillip sounds like a good-hearted man.

MM: Oh yes.

ME: And how about Michael now?

MM: Uncle Mike was a lot of fun. He was always just like the others. He was so good hearted and I want to say this about all of my uncles. They were very loyal to each other. You know, they were good to each other. You never heard any discord among them. They always seemed to be proud of each other and were always good to each other. I can remember that. And they were good to all of us kids, my nieces and nephews, there were about five or six of us around my age.

ME: And they all lived on the ranch?

MM: Jack and Jean and I were the only ones that lived on the ranch at that time. But Mary and Katie and Helen came down to visit a lot.

ME: And where did Mike live?

MM: He lived in Potomac.

ME: And that's Mary and Helen and Katie's father.

MM: Yes. They lived in Potomac and they lost the ranch up there. When they got to high school age, to give you an idea of how the family always helped each other, Aunt Nellie said to send the girls down—they could live with her and go to the Academy. And I remember papa used to take us all to school, Mary and— we'd meet him at the Court House—we'd line up in the Court House. I bet they got sick of seeing us all lined up there waiting for papa every night. But he went out of his way to take care of them too and see that they got to school.

ME: What about Bud—the youngest of Mike's?

MM: Well, Bud was younger.

ME: So he was schooled out of Potomac then?

MM: Yes. He was just a baby when I first remember.

ME: So what happened to Mike's place in Potomac then?

MM: They did lose it and I remember papa's always way of helping people, he—I remembered helped Uncle Mike financially, but it wasn't enough to save the ranch.

ME: So then they moved where?

MM: They moved downtown. They lived in town for a couple of years and then eventually moved out to the ranch and built a place.

ME: So they were near the ranch also.

MM: Yes.

ME: So Barney was—Nellie was on the ranch, Barney was in California, John was on the ranch and—

MM: And Uncle Denny lived on the ranch.

ME: And Denny lived on the ranch. So that was quite a bit of—

MM: Uncle Denny had worked in town often; he didn't work on the ranch. He was Deputy Sheriff for a number of years and he worked for a grain wholesale place, bought and sold grain so he lived on the ranch, but he wasn't always there.

ME: And who did he marry?

MM: He already had Kate, another Irish girl. Aunt Kate was such a nice person. She was a trained nurse and that's how she met—she came out to the ranch to take care of Grandpa Flynn and she and Uncle Denny got acquainted and later got married.

ME: And so the boys that you talk about growing up with—those are their boys.

MM: Yes. Jack and Jean. Jack and Jean and I were—they were a year or two years older than I, but we were just inseparable as little kids. We spent every day, every hour of the day together. In the cold weather we played outside. We played in the big ditch and played in the hayloft. When the weather was bad, I remember we'd sit around our dining room table and we had an old phonograph and we'd play these old records over and over again. I remember one of 'em we considered to be very sad and we'd all break down and cry when we played that record (laughs). And we had—mama used to buy painting cards for us and we'd paint pictures and played games and we always had so much fun then. Mama always had a big plate of homemade doughnuts or oatmeal cookies or something for us and we had a little party and every day was a celebration for us.

ME: What about some of the stories that you heard when you were younger? Beside Uncle Barney, did anybody tell you stories?

MM: Uncle Barney and my husband, Ray, became close friends and Ray loved the stories about his early experiences and I think he went through a lot of hard times, but good times. And like I was saying Uncle Barney had such a good sense of humor as all the Flynn's did, they all had a wonderful sense of humor.

ME: Frances, Sheila told me one time that you described the Flynn men and women. Do you remember what you told her?

MM: Who?

ME: Sheila said that you had a wonderful quote about the Flynn men and women. You said of the Flynn family, that the women are strong and the men were charming.

MM: Yes. All the Flynn men were easy going and they were more interested in leading a good easy life. But they didn't have a lot of ambition. No ambition to make a lot of money. And I think in each case their wives were kind of the backbone of the family. I remember that was true for Uncle Barney. Aunt Kate was a nurse and mama was a school teacher, Aunt Lizzy worked and they were always kind of the backbone of each family.

ME: So that was true in your own family also.

MM: Yes, it was true.

ME: Now your parents were married in what year?

MM: 1912.

ME: I just have a quick thing to put in here and see what you think. Dave Emmons wrote a book about the Irish in Butte and one of the quotes from the newspaper at about that time—early 1900s—was an advertisement saying the Irish should marry the Germans because the Germans know how to work and the Irish know how to play.

MM: True (laughs).

ME: So that was pretty right in our family too then.

MM: Yes that was right.

ME: And then the names in the family. They are all Irish names. It seems like they repeat over and over again. Would you think those are from family names back in Ireland?

MM: Probably so. I hear stories and I hear about other families that had those same names that repeated over and over again. And they were in my husband's family too you know. They had the same as the Flynn family.

ME: It would be interesting to see if they were all connected.

MM: We never knew of a connection. They weren't from actually the same town, but their names were alike and they were so much alike. I have to tell you a little story about Ray's grandmother. She was a typical old Irish lady and when Ray was (unintelligible) his parents got a divorce and his dad was raising the four boys and the old grandmother, his maternal grandmother, was so good to them and Ray had the terrible misfortune of being in an accident and he lost his sight when he was 11 years old. He was blind for a couple of years and he had to quit school. He went through just a sad terrible time, but he said his grandma was always there for him and his dad worked long hours on the railroad so he was left alone except his grandma helped him out. And Ray said that his grandma took him to specialists all over the country—not all over the country, but to a number of big cities where she'd hear there were eye specialists who might help him regain his sight. And they always went on the train. And Ray said of course he wanted to regain his sight, that was the main thing, but he said as a little boy the thing that worried him so was his grandma chewing tobacco. And he said that when they were on the train he was so worried that everybody would notice that his grandmother chewed tobacco. But he told lots of stories about her and she must have been quite a character.

ME: So your parents had five children. You're the oldest. Tell me about the rest of the family.

MM: Johnny—two years younger than me. Elmer—George Elmer and Kathleen and Pat.

ME: Okay so what do you remember about Johnny when he was a little boy? Did you guys get along?

MM: Yes, really well. Johnny was kind of a timid little boy. I remember when we went to grade school he was very shy and he had his own interests. He liked to collect butterflies and do some things like that. But he was a nice little boy, we were near the same age so we played together a lot.

ME: And you got along well with your cousins?

MM: Yes, very well.

ME: And then the next one was Elmer. And what was Elmer like as a child?

MM: Elmer was such a cute little boy. I remember when he was born. I have told the story before.

ME: And we want to hear it again.

MM: Do you? Papa came home and said, "You have a new baby brother." Jack and Jean and I were playing out in the yard. We were so thrilled. Papa left and so we were sitting there and we were kind of wondering how Elmer got here you know—the baby.

Jean said—World War I was just over and Uncle Jimmy had been in the war, and he said, "I think he was one of those little German kids—orphans—we were hearing about on the radio." We thought that sounded right. Then Jean further speculated knowing Uncle Jimmy's great importance in the war effort. He said, "I bet Uncle Jimmy had his pick of the whole bunch." (laughs) So we know right then and there Elmer was special and Elmer was a special person all of his life. I felt very close to Elmer. He contributed a lot to our family.

ME: What was Elmer like that made him so special to you? What did he get from his parents?

MM: He was easy going and very kind hearted and hard working too. He quit school at an early age and got married very young. But he just worked so hard and he was—I remember mama telling me many times how indebted she was to Elmer that she said they never could have held things together if it hadn't been for Elmer. That he helped after my dad died. He helped her hold things together.

ME: He took over and helped things.

MM: Yes. And he spent his life mostly on the ranch.

ME: Now what I remember about him were his stories. He had a great sense of humor.

MM: He had a great sense of humor.

ME: Can you think of anything that he used to tell stories about or talk about?

MM: I remember one little thing I thought was kind of funny. When Jim was a young boy he wanted to go over to the ranch to visit and I remember Jim was about 12 or 13 years old and so he was going to Spokane with some friends to a ball game and he was supposed to get on the bus and go to Missoula. So it was his first trip and I was so worried about him. I said, "Now don't talk to anybody in town. Don't talk to any strangers. Just go and sit in the bus station." And so I was worried about him.

That night I got a call from Elmer, and he said, "I just wanted to tell you Jim got here. He's fine."

I said, "Oh, thank goodness."

He said, "But Frances, I don't think Jim's ever going to be a bishop."

I was thinking back—I was kind of boasting about him being a good little altar boy.

He said, "When he was in Spokane he got a tattoo." (laughs)

ME: Jim's your son.

MM: Yes, I thought that was kind of funny. Elmer was just to matter of fact, "He's never going to be a bishop." (laughs)

ME: You said that Uncle Barney gave you all nicknames. Can you remember some of them?

MM: I remember he called Katie (unintelligible) 'old granny'. I can't remember what the others were, but Ray used to tell me about him having little nicknames for us.

ME: And when you guys were little, did you have nicknames in your family?

MM: They called Jim—Pius. They called Kathleen—(unintelligible) but that was kind of after my time. When I was living at home, I don't think they did.

ME: So the younger girls were—they were quite a bit more young than you were? They came later.

MM: Yes.

ME: Okay. So your cousins—you spent a lot of time with your cousins. Did all of them come back? Was it a close family?

MM: Oh yes. Katie had married. Helen and I were—in fact I would say with all my cousins we were the friendliest little kids. I never remember having so much as a disagreement with any of them all through the years. And I remain close friends to each of them up until their death. I remember when I was first married all the cousins used to come and visit me in Moscow. They'd come on the weekends and we lived in a—we were always so glad to see them and Ray thought my family was the greatest. He was just always so glad to see them. We lived in a little one bedroom apartment, and I remember we'd always give our company our bed and Ray would say, "Now, I'm going to roll out that damn (unintelligible) it makes a good bed." As a matter of fact it never did. He always slept in the chair all those times 'cause he was tickled to have them come and he had such a good relationship with them. They came for a couple of years until they kind of got other interests you know and moved away. But Jack, throughout his life, used to come no matter where he lived. He'd come and visit me two or three times a year. We'd sit up all night and talk and tell stories and laugh. And the same way with Jean, we were very close. And Katie—I was very close to her too.

ME: That was the older (unintelligible).

MM: Yes.

ME: How many cousins were there all together?

MM: Thirteen of us all together.

ME: Thirteen in your generation? And were you all close like that? Were the others close too in different ways? I know they are different ages.

MM: I think probably it was different—times were different I think when the younger ones were growing up. They had different interests. When Jack and Jean and I were young we used to go to all the country dances and do a lot of goofy things and (unintelligible) said they never did anything like that.

ME: She missed out. What about religion in the family? Were there some that were real religious and some that weren't?

MM: Yes. Maybe there were a few rascals, a lot of saints (laughs). I remember Jean was always very religious. Mary (unintelligible) I think was more religious. But we all went to church regularly and no matter what the weather was we went. I remember going to church in a cutter when I was just a little kid. And then the snow was deep and papa would have to take the horse down to the feed trail during mass. That's the lengths we went to, to go to church.

ME: And you always went?

MM: We always went. I never remember missing, we might have, but I remember that was so important.

ME: Right and what about religion in your daily life? Did some of the family say the rosary a lot?

MM: Uncle Mike's family did. I remember when I used to go up and stay with the family I'd hear Uncle Mike and Aunt Lizzy saying the rosary and I thought that was wonderful. I wish it would brush off a little bit on my family (laughs).

ME: How about holidays?

MM: Oh, holidays were wonderful. Uncle Mike's family usually came down and I remember we'd always rush out to visit them at the gate. I remember one year they had an old touring car you know—it had—they weren't sedans and I remember Uncle Mike—Aunt Lizzy was holding Bud and had him wrapped up in a blanket. Uncle Mike helped the girls out of the back seat. They were in a big fur sack and he pulled 'em out one at a time. And we always made—mama went to great lengths to make things nice for Christmas. She always had so many nice treats.

ME: And now I want to ask, because your mother is German and your father is Irish. Where did your holiday celebrations mostly come from?

MM: I think mama maybe had more influence. We always waited until Christmas Eve to decorate the Christmas tree. And we had real candles on it and it was so dangerous that you'd light the candles and you'd have to sit and watch every minute so the tree wouldn't go up in flame. And we always never got a lot of gifts 'cause you know times were so tough, but we always had good Christmas'.

ME: And what about birthdays?

MM: One of the pictures you sent me was one of my birthday parties. I think I was about seven.

ME: Did all of the Flynn children have big birthday celebrations?

MM: No not really. It wasn't—not too much. Just with our own family we had a party for each of us.

ME: How about music when you were little? Do you remember? Did they have record players?

MM: We had an old phonograph and mama played the piano. I remember her playing just a few pieces. I remember, "You wore a tulip and I wore a big red rose." We'd stand around and we'd just think that was the greatest.

ME: And none of the others played instruments that you can remember?

MM: I took music lessons when I was about seven years old, but I didn't practice. I was completely without talent (laughs). And it was a waste. But I used to have to ride to town with the school teacher and take my music lesson and come home with pa.

ME: And what kind of songs did you guys sing? Do you remember songs from when you were little or was singing not much of a thing?

MM: No not really. I don't remember that.

ME: And you don't remember any Irish songs in particular or anything that—

MM: Oh, I remember papa used to try and get me—this is funny because I just didn't have no talent, but I manage to squeak out a couple Irish songs and papa thought I had a great future. He asked me to play this one song over and over and it was terrible (laughs).

ME: Okay, here's a big one. What did your family do on their vacations or for outings?

MM: We went to Lolo Hot Springs every year for vacation. For about a week we rented a cabin and had a good time. And we went to Plains. We'd go on the train or sometimes the family would go in the car. I used to go down to Plains and visit when I was little. That was fun.

ME: Now that was your mother's family that was in Plains?

MM: Yes.

ME: And they had relatives the same age as you?

MM: I had a cousin Marie (unintelligible) who was about my age and I always had a good time. Aunt Hilda would take Marie and I to dances when we were early teenagers and we thought that was a real lark.

ME: What about getting to Plains. Did you go by car? You said you went by train sometimes and sometimes by car? Did the family all go?

MM: We'd go by the train or sometimes they'd drive to Plains.

ME: On the houses that you lived in—do you want to tell me what the houses on the ranch were like and where everybody lived on the ranch.

MM: Well, grandpa of course had the old house and he and Aunt Nellie lived there after grandma passed away. Aunt Nellie and Uncle Barney lived there. And we lived next door. My family lived in town for about a year when I was little and then they decided to build a place on the ranch. And I remember it was always a little sore fight with mama—they had plans for our house and she said Aunt Nellie looked over the plans and said that they didn't—one of the rooms didn't need to be that large. So it was made smaller (laughs).

ME: So Aunt Nellie had a bit of control?

MM: Yes that's the point I was making. But Aunt Nellie was wonderful to us kids. She did so much for us and you know she was really good to us. I don't want to down play her at all.

ME: Absolutely. So your dad ranched. And so how did he make his wage or how did you—?

MM: The ranch in those days was not making a lot of money so we had a living on the ranch, but he got very little money and I remember when he was elected to be County Commissioner he got \$150.00 a month and we thought that was a huge salary.

ME: Well during the depression that would have been.

MM: And I remember when papa died. Elmer was working at the brewery and he came home to help mama and I remember that first of all the little kind of a—just a little place in back of our house and then they moved to a house up a little further—an old farm house. But he worked for many years and he worked for very little money. You know because the ranch just didn't make a lot of money then.

ME: So a lot of them lived there, but some of them had outside jobs?

MM: Later on Mary got a job in town and you know they were able to manage a little bit better, but they went through some very rough years helping mama out.

ME: Now Aunt Nellie was Irish and your mother, Mary, was German and they lived right next door to each other. How did they cook differently? Did they have different foods or was it pretty much the same?

MM: They were similar because they all cooked things that were grown on the ranch. We cured all of our own meats and we had—mama raised a big garden so we—I think our family lived a little bit better in that respect 'cause we had a big garden and mama was very ambitious about that.

ME: Did Aunt Nellie have a garden too?

MM: Not much of one.

ME: Do you remember what Aunt Nellie made? Is there anything that you remember specially that she made? What kind of a cook she was?

MM: I remember she burned things a lot (laughs).

ME: Mom remembers that too. And how about your mother, what kind of a cook was she?

MM: Mama was real good—cooked a lot of old—like made wonderful boiled dinners. She made a lot of fancy things too. For instance every Christmas we had Lady Baltimore cake which I thought was just the last word. And years later I had told that story and so to surprise me one year Lizzy made a Lady Baltimore cake for me for Christmas.

ME: Oh wasn't that nice.

MM: Yes.

ME: And Lizzy is your granddaughter.

MM: Yes.

ME: So that's quite a few generations down.

MM: Yes.

ME: What chores did you have to do on the ranch when you guys were little?

MM: Well, I had different interests than most of the kids. I didn't—I liked to cook and I didn't go out hiking. I didn't feel very close to the animals. For instance I would never pick up a cat and pet it or a dog or a chicken. It just wasn't my thing (laughs).

ME: So did some of the others do that on the ranch?

MM: Yes, the others were all—I remember (unintelligible) kind of bothered me. I remember when they butchered I use to just get sick. I just couldn't stand it. I remember I didn't like milk or cream 'cause I always thought it was too close to the cow. So they had to buy evaporated milk for me (laughs). I was a problem kid.

ME: And then at school—did you go to Hellgate School at all?

MM: I went to the grade school there.

ME: And all of the family did? All of your brothers and sister?

MM: Jack and Jean and I went there. Jack and I graduated together. And then we went to the Academy after that.

ME: So Hellgate School—you went there and your mother—she taught there, but before you were born.

MM: Yes.

ME: And then Aunt Nellie and the boys all went there. So it was kind of a bit of a history.

MM: Yes it has a long history.

ME: And then what about the cars on the ranch. Do you remember when the cars started?

MM: I remember one thing, my first recollection of a sedan was—I was going to ride to town with the school teacher for my music lesson and she had a brand new sedan and I had never heard of a sedan even. I remember I came home and I said we have to get rid of the old touring car. I described the sedan to them and told them how it was all glassed in and wonderful. I remember Papa said, “Oh, it sounds too dangerous. It will never catch on.”

Mama said, “I don’t think I can get my breath all cooped up like that.” But a couple of years later we did get a sedan.

ME: Did your family do traveling at all when you were younger?

MM: Mama went to California to visit Aunt Eva and my dad went to a few political meetings and things like that on his own, but we never took long trips. Only just to Plains.

ME: Now this is kind of a weird one, but do you remember when your grandmother died?

MM: Yes.

ME: What was her funeral like or the wake or whatever they did?

MM: They had—she was laid out at home and that was my first experience seeing a dead person and I remember Papa said, “Go kiss grandma goodbye.” I was just shaking all over. It just scared me so bad, and to this day I still kind of have an aversion to corpses ‘cause it scared me so bad as a little kid.

ME: And they had the wake in the house itself?

MM: Yes.

ME: Did they have everybody come that night?

MM: I think so. I don't remember going to the cemetery for grandma, but I do remember the people coming.

ME: And what about your uncles. That was a later generation. Did they have the wake in the house too or did they have it in a church by that time or mortuaries?

MM: The later ones I think were at the mortuary. I remember when Aunt Margaret passed away; I remember I went for her funeral. It was in the mortuary. And Uncle Jimmy—that was a nice picture of Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Margaret that you gave me.

ME: Yes, in the car. Now Mike and Kate must have started the plot, the Flynn plot in the cemetery right, the St. Mary's cemetery. Where did the statue come from?

MM: Grandma Flynn sent to Italy for that.

ME: Your grandmother?

MM: Yes. And that was an unusual thing. You know it's a big cross and she said she sent to Italy for it.

ME: Was that when your grandpa died?

MM: Probably, I don't know when it was.

ME: Well that was kind of a nice thing.

MM: Yes.

ME: And all of the family was buried right close together. They just expected it I guess.

MM: Yes.

ME: Is there anybody that is not? Was Barney buried in California or was he there. I think he is there.

MM: I know he was buried there. I just don't remember his funeral. There is a few things that just kind of go by the wayside. I think because I didn't like funerals. I blotted it out of my mind. Incidentally I'm going to be cremated.

ME: But you're still going to have a funeral aren't you? You're going to be cremated, but are you going to have a funeral?

MM: Probably, but surprise me.

ME: You're going to come home and be with Ray though, right next to mom?

MM: Yes.

ME: So the last question, maybe this won't be pertinent, but do you think being Irish or having Irish grandparents—do you think the culture and the traditions passed down—do you think that made you kind of how you are?

MM: I think it does. People tell me that they think I have a lot of Irish traits.

ME: Like what.

MM: I'm not a drinker or a fighter, but—

ME: Oh but everything else. But you do like to tell stories.

MM: Well I try.

ME: Well I thought this was great. Is there anything you can think about that you want to talk about?

MM: One thing I want to leave with you of the old—that generation—how kind hearted, how loyal they were to each other. I'll have to tell you my funny little story. Uncle Denny and papa had a little misunderstanding once when they were building something and didn't agree so they got mad at each other and so they weren't speaking for a little while. I remember at Christmas time, I was just a little kid and papa stuck a pint of whiskey in a sack and he said, "Bring this up to Denny so he'll have a drink on Christmas, but don't tell him who sent it." (laughs) It kind of shows that their heart was in the right place, but they didn't want to be—

ME: Did they finally get back together again?

MM: Oh yes. It was just a temporary thing that I remember. There was never anything like that among us kids. We got along so well.

ME: Well it has been an interesting group of people hasn't it?

MM: Yes, it really has.

ME: All right, well do you think you have said everything you wanted to say.

MM: I would think so. I don't know.

ME: I hope all of your grand kids and your great-grand kids will have fun remembering this.

MM: Yes.

MM: Aunt (unintelligible) used to have a party out at the ranch. Uncle Jimmy was kind of an instigator too. They used to have—he had an orchestra leader friend that would come out and play and bring a few of his orchestra members and they'd play. And Jack and Jean and I were just little kids, but we got to line up on the couch and watch the festivities. I remember the music was loud and they'd get up and do all these old dances. They were do-se-do-ing and going all over the place and everybody—different ones got up. Aunt Margaret was from Ireland. Aunt Margaret was such a pretty lady and she was all dressed up in a gorgeous dress I thought at the time. They cleared the dining room and Aunt Margaret did an Irish jig and I thought that was just about as elegant as you could get. Aunt Margaret would dance and everybody sang and the (unintelligible) would come out with big platters of sandwiches and a wine bottle you know and they had a lot of refreshments. Not hors d'oeuvres, the great big ol' sandwiches. And then I remember the party would go on and on and I remember Jack and Jean and I would get so tired, but we didn't want to miss anything and we'd stay up. I remember towards the end of the evening everybody lined up and they played follow the leader to (unintelligible) band. They marched clear through the house. Around and around, everybody was singing out loud and the music was loud and we thought that was just the last word to see something like that. And I remember they just marched around for a lot of time. The party would go on and on. Sometimes they'd stay most of the night. A few people I think would stay and stop off at mass.

ME: They'd go to mass in the morning?

MM: Yes, they needed to. But those parties were really something in the old parlor that was all decorated up.

ME: Did you go into that parlor much when you were little?

MM: Only on occasion, it was kind of for special.

ME: What did the parlor look like?

MM: Well it had the piano. I'll have to tell you something funny too. When Jack and Jean and I got to be older we were teenagers and Aunt Nellie went to California. So we decided to go party at her house. And we had a few of our friends. We didn't have any grand orchestra, but we had music and there was all kinds of dancing. I remember the Charleston—everybody was doing the Charleston and the slow waltz and all those funny kind of things. It got kind of rowdy

and I remember there weren't a lot of kids, there were just a few of our friends, but we had so much fun. The music was loud and we thought we were reliving the parties that friends used to have. Then I remember the party was over and next day we got work that Aunt Nellie was on her way back from California so we really had to scramble to get the house in shape. Get is cleaned up for her (laughs). I remember one funny little—somebody had spilt something on one of the lace curtains in the parlor. And it got wet in some way and I remember the next day I was—in an effort to try and clean it up I was trying to press this curtain out to make it look new and I made an imprint of the iron on the curtain (laughs). And we were desperate so we put the chair up in front of that and hoped nobody would ever see it.

ME: Do you remember a similar story like that about your mother's china closet? Do you remember that story mom would tell about the glass getting knocked out? I think Elmer knocked out the glass and so he knocked it all out.

MM: He knocked it all out so nobody would notice. I remember that well.

ME: So Aunt Nellie only kept the parlor open for special occasions?

MM: Yes, she had a couple of parties every year with the neighbors and a few of Uncle Jimmy's friends.

ME: Where did she get the dog that used to be in the parlor? The plaster dog.

MM: The story was that Uncle Barney rescued it out of a burning building or something and brought it home.

ME: And what about the old bell that used to hang up outside? The dinner bell. Do you know where that came from?

MM: I don't remember where it came from. I don't remember hearing that. But his baby died. He wrote this poem about his little baby and it was real sad. I remember.

ME: That was Uncle Jimmy?

MM: Yes.

ME: The only one they had?

MM: Yes.

ME: And then Stanley drown in the ditch and then Jimmy died as a stillborn baby. Those are the only two that you know of.

MM: Yes, I think so. Uncle Barney's Stanley and Uncle Jimmy's baby. Jimmy and Aunt Margaret got married at the same time as Uncle George and Aunt Helen did and so I acquired two new aunts on the same day.

ME: Oh, for heaven's sake.

MM: I remember that.

ME: Were you close to Aunt Hilda?

MM: Yes, really. I used to go and visit her a lot. I used to go down there any help 'em out during thrashing. I was supposed to be a worker, but I don't think I did much work. But Aunt Hilda was awfully good. She took Marie and I out to dances and things and that was kind of a lark for us.

[End of Interview]