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Interviewee: Marion Wheeler Scott
Interviewer: Bob Brown
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BB: Go ahead and test your voice there.

MS: Oh, okay. I'm sorry, one, two, three.

BB: This is Bob Brown. I'm interviewing Marion Wheeler Scott at the Wheeler family summer home at Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park on August 8, 2013. Marion, where and when were you born?

MS: I was born in 1925 in Washington, D.C., northwest Washington.

BB: Now of course your father and his family and your brothers and sisters were raised in Butte.

MS: Yes.

BB: Do you have any recollection, any early childhood recollections of Butte or Montana or—?

MS: I didn't go to Butte until I was 17.

BB: Oh, I see!

Unidentified voice: Hi.

BB: Hi.

MS: Because we always came up here to Glacier Park in the summertime and we drove by and we never stopped in Butte.

BB: So recollections of Montana would be of this place here at Lake McDonald.

MS: Yes exactly, yes.

BB: Where'd you go to school?

MS: I went to public high school in Washington D.C., then I went to Bryn Mawr College.

BB: Oh, Bryn Mawr?

MS: Yes.

BB: And this is a big broad question and I know, but maybe you've had a little time to think about it too, what was it like growing up as the daughter of a very prominent U.S. senator?

MS: Well it was, when I got to college it was rather difficult because my father's reputation as an anti-war isolationist senator of course preceded me and in those days the college faculty and everyone associated with it was very pro-war. And I went there in '42, so of course the war was on.

BB: Yes, at the height of that feeling.

MS: Yes, and so it created some problems, but nothing I couldn't manage. It didn't influence anybody making friends with me. Some of the professors were quite anti-, but yes.

BB: Because you think now professors as being peaceniks, so-called

MS: Right.

BB: And probably most of them in the Bryn Mawr faculty would be now for where most wars are [unintelligible].

MS: Right, yes. And it was a Quaker College and that's what Father counted on, but they still weren't as peace loving in those days and it was a war fever and added hype and so. But other than that and I was very conscious at a much, much younger age, about 6 or 7, that the FBI at that time was trailing my father constantly. I was sort of caught, I'd overheard conversations about people being kidnapped and things that I can remember as a child being afraid of being kidnapped. Because Father was watched. In fact, there was a FBI—well, I don't know what you'd call it, employee at least, who trailed Father constantly.

BB: Afraid that he might be having some kind of contact with the Nazis or something?

MS: I don't know what it was. Well, no, it was after, it was because of the Teapot Dome scandal. It went back to you know '22 and on after, but this man was called Gaston Means and he followed Father. Father finally said, "Oh, for heaven sakes, Gaston, come on walk alongside and we'll talk as we go." So he did and he became friends with Gaston Means. But I remember that, that there is this sort of threat there.

BB: How long did that go on, do you know?

MS: Oh, at least two or three years, but Gaston Means was quite a notorious character at that time, and Father found out more about him later and said he should have been more worried.

BB: Is that right?

MS: Yes.

BB: But he was an FBI agent?

MS: Well that's what Father understood at the time, yes. [Means was not an FBI agent, but was a private detective. Mostly, he was a con artist.]

BB: Your father ran for governor of Montana in 1920 and his Republican opponent was Joe Dixon. Senator Wheeler and Dixon were opponents again when your father was running for reelection in 1928. Do you remember any comments or discussion of Dixon?

MS: No. I remember Father telling a funny story or two about it, but that's all. I'm not even sure that was about Dixon.

BB: Dixon had several daughters that might have been contemporaries of yours, did you ever meet them?

MS: No, I never.

BB: There's a picture of you and your father with Gary Cooper in your father's book *Yankee from the West*. What do you remember about Gary Cooper?

MS: Well I think I was 12 at the time we went to Hollywood and I went with my father. As I recollect it was that I said I had never ridden on a train and so Father took pity on me and took me. We took the Chief Railroad [Chief passenger train was part of Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway] out to Hollywood, and we went to visit the various studios, and there was Father's friend. He knew Gary Cooper's parents in Butte and I think his father, Gary Cooper's father, was a clerk of the court.

BB: And he was also a justice on the Supreme Court for a while in Montana.

MS: Oh, was he? I remember Father saying he was a clerk of the court or something like that, that Father knew him through that connection. Then when we went to Hollywood, why of course we looked up Gary Cooper. That was the occasion of the—we went to various Hollywood sets and Father was a friend, of course, he was on the Interstate Commerce Committee, if not head of it by that time. They had influence with Hollywood. Particularly, the censor of the Hollywood movies then, was it Will Hayes?

BB: Will Hayes was also in the picture with you and your father and Gary Cooper, yes.

MS: Yes.

BB: And he was the guy who censored the movies, I think?

MS: Exactly, yes that was his job. So of course he was anxious to have Father's goodwill, should we say, and so that was how—and then of course we also met Myrna Loy who was a well-known Montana actress.

BB: She and Gary Cooper both grew up in the Helena area. Myrna Loy grew up in Toston. It would be, oh, toward Townsend from Helena.

MS: Oh, I thought Gary Cooper grew up in Butte, but no?

BB: No, the story that I remember about him was that he was a good-looking young guy whose father was a, you know, a prominent attorney and in fact Joe Dixon, the guy that defeated your father for governor, appointed his father, Charles G. Cooper, to the Montana Supreme Court.

MS: Oh really?

BB: And so Cooper was really a strikingly looking, good-looking young man and he was doing, he was ushering at the Marlow Theatre. Somebody that had some connection or other to motion pictures saw him and said, Hey, you know, maybe we can use you down in Hollywood. That's the story I remember. So he left Helena and went to Hollywood and the rest is history.

MS: Oh, exactly, yes.

BB: Your father's life in politics was at one of the most eventful times in history and he came in contact with all kinds of interesting historical political figures. I'm just curious to know, do you remember any of who your father's best friends might have been in the U.S. Senate?

MS: Well, one was Senator [Bennett] Clark of Missouri. I don't know, but he got along with all of them. Because in those days, Father said they used to oppose each other on the floor of the Senate and then go have a drink in the cloakroom afterwards. Which is long gone nowadays.

BB: Yes. Did you remember Senator Clark coming to your home or —?

MS: Yes. Father and Mother had several dinners that they planned ahead of time over the winter of friends that they wanted and influential senators and that sort of thing. So there were lots of them. But of course I was never at the table, I was upstairs.

BB: You were upstairs, yes.

MS: Yes.

BB: But you do remember Senator Clark in particular?

MS: Yes, well, I just remember him talking about...Father enjoyed a game of poker and so did Senator Clark. I remember that.

BB: Who were his chief rivals?

MS: I can't tell you that, I don't know. I know he enjoyed having fun with the Senator Pepper from Florida, because he liked to...I can remember when I was in college going over and having lunch with Father. I'd go over and work at the Library of Congress and then go over and have lunch with my father. They told me that he was on the floor one time having fun with Senator Pepper because he liked to tease and he would just he'd get out there and ask him questions and generally try and make him uncomfortable.

BB: Claude Pepper from Florida?

MS: Right, yes.

BB: Senator Huey Long?

MS: He came for dinner one time and they still tell the story, or they did. I was a little girl at the time. I can't imagine I was more than 10 or 11 at the time and [that] would have been the '30s. Senator Long said to Simmi, our Filipino man, "Simmi, take those flowers off the table, they're in my view."

So Simmi did, and I had looked at Senator Long, not knowing better, and said, "You can't do that to my mother."

BB: Because they were your mother's flowers?

MS: Oh, yes, and he just didn't do that to my mother at the table. So apparently Senator Long afterwards said to Father that he thought I'd go a long way, because I didn't have better sense than to be smart-alecky.

BB: Anything else about Long?

MS: No, that's all I remember. I've read biographies of him, of course, and so I knew more about him. Oh, but I do remember that Father told a story that he and another senator were coming home, I believe from the convention in Chicago, and so he called Huey Long when he was in Arkansas. The conversation went on quite a while and Father was surprised, and pretty soon this policeman arrived outside the phone booth and said, "You're under arrest come with me." Senator Long had just ordered the policeman to pick him up and he took him down to see

him. He wanted to see Father and this other senator and when they said they didn't have time, why he just sent a policeman and they arrested him. So they went down performe.

BB: Now Long was from Louisiana, so this takes place in Louisiana?

MS: Louisiana, I'm sorry, it was yes I'm sorry.

BB: Wow, well that sounds kind of like the stories you hear about Huey Long too.

MS: Yes.

BB: Do you remember Senator John Erickson, was governor of Montana and then he became a U.S. senator from Montana?

MS: No.

BB: He would have been a senator with your dad for just a couple of years.

MS: Yes, no I don't, I never.

BB: Al Smith?

MS: No, I was just a child at that time so I don't remember any of these people. I mean I remember, of course, I never met Franklin Roosevelt, but—

BB: Governor Roy Ayers? Governor of Montana when your dad was a —?

MS: No.

BB: And you didn't ever meet Franklin Roosevelt?

MS: No. There was a lot of talk about Mrs. Roosevelt, of course, right? I never —

BB: Well, what were your dad's impressions of Franklin D. Roosevelt? You must have heard him spoken about in your household?

MS: Oh yes. Well, Mother didn't like Roosevelt because of Father's interest in the silver— because Montana's just a silver business. She said that one time I remember that if he said he was going on the silver standard, she'd sell all our silver stock, because she didn't trust him. I can remember Father and Mother discussing it and I go to also when I was quite a bit older. I can remember Father saying to me one time, "Don't tell your mother, but I voted with the president today." So, it was that kind of—

BB: They were both Democrats.

MS: Yes.

BB: Your father was an early supporter of FDR—

MS: Oh yes, definitely.

BB: —going into the Democratic nomination. Well, what happened?

MS: I think it was just, well of course, the court-packing fight came along. Before that he managed legislation for Roosevelt and when he was on the Interstate Commerce Committee and there was some other important legislation, I can't remember it now, that he managed for Roosevelt. No, personally they got along. Father could get along with most everybody. And personally they got along, but then they broke over the court-packing plan. Then of course over the war.

BB: Yes. Those were two pretty big issues.

MS: Absolutely, and Roosevelt didn't forget, nor forgive.

BB: So Roosevelt do you think may have been vindictive towards Senator Wheeler?

MS: Oh, I'm sure he was.

BB: You know in my conversation with your father, I know your father suspected that there was some, maybe retribution is a strong word, but it had to do with Fort Peck Dam?

MS: Oh, well I can remember that the only thing I can remember is Fort Peck. They said they couldn't name Fort Peck Dam after Father. Couldn't name it Wheeler Dam because there was a dam in the South that's named Wheeler Dam. So that question was dismissed, but Father told a story that he and Roosevelt were going to visit Fort Peck Dam and I think there was a little town, mining town, or you know, builder's town. It was named Kendall, after maybe, or Burton, I'm not sure which, but after Father. So Roosevelt teased him about it unmercifully apparently, and Father said, "I didn't mind, because I knew there was a Delano coming up." That was even worse!

BB: Well I told you I met your father and one of the things I remember in my conversation with him was that he felt that both Senator [James] Murray from Montana and President Roosevelt wanted to make sure that the people of Montana were under the impression that Murray was the person most responsible for the construction of Fort Peck Dam. Your father told me that he used the term 'bootlicker' to describe Murray. He said Murray gave FDR everything he wanted all the time," and he said, "I didn't necessarily do that. He said that was the best way to deal

with Franklin D. Roosevelt. You had to sometimes meet power with power. He said, "Because I didn't always give him what he wanted, he'd need some things somewhere along the line too." And he said, "I think if it hadn't been for that strategy, that we might not have gotten Fort Peck Dam." Well, of course it was a big project during the Depression era, so it maybe would've happened anyway. But what your father told me was that sometimes if you get FDR over a barrel a little bit, that can make a difference and Murray never did. I don't think your dad respected Murray very much.

MS: No, he did not. He had no respect for him at all.

BB: What was the basis for that?

MS: I think he just thought he was not a strong character. So that would go along with what you're saying.

BB: That's what came through to me pretty clearly. Do you ever remember meeting Murray?

MS: No.

BB: He wasn't ever in your home or anything like that?

MS: Oh, no. No.

BB: Do you ever remember your father mentioning him?

MS: Oh yes, but not favorably. But I can't remember specifically anything now.

BB: Did you ever meet Eleanor Roosevelt?

MS: No, I didn't, but I heard a lot about her from my mother.

BB: Your mother had met her?

MS: Oh yes, oh yes, definitely. Mother belonged to the Senate Women's Club, so she wasn't above going to the White House. She took me there egg rolling one Easter when I was just small, eight or nine, something like that, and showed me around the White House until somebody caught us. Didn't know who Mother was and threw us out.

BB: But your mother didn't have a high regard for Franklin Roosevelt? Did that extend to Eleanor Roosevelt?

MS: Well, Mrs. Roosevelt was very liberal in her positions, and Mother was not that liberal. You know, people said things about Mrs. Roosevelt. She was a good friend of Alice Longworth, and of course, Alice Longworth had no use for cousin Eleanor.

BB: But your mother was a good friend of Alice Longworth?

MS: Yes.

BB: How did that happen?

MS: Just Washington society.

BB: Yes. She was Theodore Roosevelt's daughter.

MS: Yes. She was by way of a cousin of Franklin's.

BB: And she was a friend of your mother's?

MS: Yes, and she told tales all the time about Franklin and Eleanor. She said...No, she had no use for them.

BB: Did you ever meet her?

MS: Yes, I met her once and I was trying to think, one particular time we were up at a big rally in New York City. It was a huge anti-war rally, I think, and Lindbergh spoke, and Alice Roosevelt was there, and her brother, I believe, was there. Some way, on the stage, I was apparently on the stage with him afterwards and people came flocking up on the stage and I got separated from my parents. But I grabbed on to Eleanor, I mean Alice Longworth, knowing she was friend of the family and I thought they were all going to the same party afterwards. So I said, can I come with you? And she said, oh, come along dear, and you know, and loaded me into a taxicab with her and her brother. We headed for this party and then my folks were so upset that they didn't come to the party. Anyway, she was very kind to me.

BB: She was a character from what we know about her.

MS: Oh, she definitely was, yes.

BB: One of the stories I remember about her was that she sometimes carried a snake in her purse.

MS: Oh, I never heard that.

BB: Just to shock people you know.

MS: Oh, I could believe it.

BB: She's the one who said "if you don't have anything nice to say, come and sit next to me."

MS: Right, yes. Yes, she was that kind...she was very sharp-tongued. I think Mother admired her for that.

BB: Yes. Your dad was involved, of course, in the court-packing battle with Justice Hughes, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. There might even be a reference in the book *Yankee from the West*, this is kind of an old memory, that Hughes came to your house in Washington, D.C., and Senator Wheeler and Hughes had this discussion about—

MS: No, I think Father didn't know Hughes well and because I can remember he was sort of hesitant about going to Hughes' house. I mean it wasn't that they weren't—

BB: Oh, so he may have gone to Hughes's house, maybe that's what I heard.

MS: Yes, I have a feeling because the way that came about. The way the letter from the Chief Justice came about was that my sister Elizabeth was a neighbor on Quaker Lane in Alexandria of Justice Brandeis. It was through Justice Brandeis that he went to the Chief Justice, Justice Brandeis did, and got the letter saying that they were current on their work. Because that was what Roosevelt's theory was, that they were not, or that was what he was presenting, was that they were not current, they were a bunch of old burn. This letter came out very clearly that they were not, that they were current with their work and on schedule.

BB: Was that the letter, there was some kind of a hearing and your father was there and the testimony played out and then your father dramatically read from this letter?

MS: Could have been. That would've been the letter, yes.

BB: Because it was a powerful letter and it said exactly what he needed to have said at exactly the right time.

MS: Yes.

BB: I remember something too about Truman or some other senator came up to your father afterwards, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, Bert, that was so typical of you. You know, to set that thing up and then drop the hammer at the perfect time. That might have been the letter we're talking about here.

MS: Oh, I think it was, because then the letter I know afterwards, was given much later after Father's death even, I think my brother Edward gave it to the court as a historical document or whatever.

BB: Harry Truman?

MS: Of course, he was eager. Sort of got his start to fame through Father who put him on a well-known subcommittee, chair of a subcommittee and that's where he sort of got some notoriety and whatever.

BB: That was a war preparation committee?

MS: Something like that, yes.

BB: So he was a member of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee?

MS: Yes, and Father appointed him to the subcommittee.

BB: Well, your dad must have known him real well.

MS: Oh he did, yes. I didn't know him, but he did, you know. He worked with him constantly.

BB: And he must have had a pretty favorable impression of him? Did you ever hear your father talk about Truman at all?

MS: Oh yes, I think he thought he was, well he liked him and you know. I don't think he thought he was a particularly strong person, but you know.

BB: What kind of a poker player was he?

MS: I don't think Father played poker with him.

BB: Because you know you read the stories about how Truman liked to play poker with some of his—

MS: But I don't think Father played poker with him.

BB: I see. Bess Truman?

MS: Mother knew her very well of course through this Senate Women's Club, but I never met her and I never met her daughter. Mother saw her, and of course she didn't like Washington and stayed as little as possible. She really hated Washington.

BB: Bess Truman did?

MS: Yes, Bess Truman. She was happy when you know they had a problem when they renovated the White House and so she was very happy to get out of the White House to go across the street to live. So that she wouldn't have to attend so many formal affairs and all that sort of thing.

BB: There are a couple of names here Marion that I didn't know that you'd know that are...Thomas Corcoran is the first one. He was from Butte, Montana.

MS: Oh, was he really?

BB: And he was an early-day prominent lobbyist, who was pretty well connected—

MS: Tommy the Cork.

BB: Tommy the Cork, yes. I just wondered if certainly Senator Wheeler would have known him?

MS: He knew him very well and I knew, actually, his brother Howard, and Esther Corcoran. My husband Bob and I got to be good friends with them, but I never knew Thomas Corcoran. But Father did, they were good friends.

BB: He was a bureaucrat of some kind, I think, for a while in the FDR administration, but he was also a lobbyist and a lawyer.

MS: Yes, he was a lobbyist and a lawyer.

BB: A guy that knew how to get things done. Your father had the reputation for being the same thing and because of the Montana connection I thought—

MS: Oh yes, they knew each other very well.

BB: And then the next one would pretty much fit that same description, James Rowe also was from Montana.

MS: I didn't hear as much about him, but I know Father knew him.

BB: Some other names of prominent senators during that period of time that would have been known to your father, I'd just be curious to know whether you have any insight into—

MS: Well, of course, the Vice President Garner, he knew.

BB: Oh, Cactus Jack?

MS: Oh yes. And we have a picture at home, when I took over the folks' house, of Vice President Garner toasting Father with a glass of milk. Because it was so unusual for him to—

BB: Garner said of your father that he had the most single important senatorial attribute: guts.

MS: Oh really? Father had admired Garner, but Garner had a habit of getting the new members of Congress, inviting him to play poker then just cleaning them. So Father never played poker with him.

BB: Oh, because he was known as a pretty shrewd poker player?

MS: Oh, he was always a very good poker player. Of course these poor youngsters, newcomers to Congress, were so overwhelmed with their awe of him that they didn't play good poker.

BB: You know, Garner lived to be very old. I think close to 100 years old

MS: Did he really?

BB: Yes, he died I think sometime in the '80s or maybe even the early '90s.

MS: Really?

BB: I wonder if your father continued any kind of a friendship with him after they both left Congress. Do you remember that?

MS: I don't remember. He probably did.

BB: Probably did to some extent, I would think.

MS: He met him when he first came to Washington and admired him, but he did not like this habit of his poker playing.

BB: You can see some other names, Carter Glass, he was a senator from Virginia.

MS: I think he had a seat in the Senate next to Father's or something. He was blind, of course, and Father said often he would find him seated in his chair. Then it was embarrassing to try and—

BB: To try and move him over to where he needed to be. Reed Smoot, from Utah?

MS: No.

BB: Joe Robinson from Arkansas was the majority leader for much of the time your dad was a senator.

MS: Yes, I know he knew him, but I don't—

BB: Don't remember much about him, never was at your house or anything that you know of?

MS: No.

BB: We've already talked about Senator James Murray, anything else?

MS: Vice President [Henry] Wallace he knew. Of course, again he didn't have too much respect for him, but his son was out here he was a checker down here at West Glacier with my older brother Edward. They were good friends and he used to come up to the house, Wallace the son would come up to the house quite—

BB: This house?

MS: Yes, the cabin yes. Then I knew Jean Douglas, his daughter. She was I think a year or two older than I, but I knew her. After Bob and I got married we used to see something of them when she was married to Leslie Douglas.

BB: Because of the connection here and to Montana?

MS: Just because of the family connection.

BB: The family connection, yes. Your father was regarded as one of the most liberal members of the U.S. Senate.

MS: Oh yes.

BB: But he didn't end up that way.

MS: No.

BB: Now Henry Wallace, of course, was an extremely liberal figure during his day and age.

MS: Yes.

BB: And I wonder, you mentioned here earlier in our conversation, that your mother wasn't as liberal. Do you think your mother was a kind of a conservative influence on your father?

MS: I'm sure so, yes. Whereas Father didn't carry a grudge, Mother did. I mean she was so loyal to Father that, you know, if somebody said something nasty about Father, she was not ever their friend.

BB: She would never forget?

MS: Whereas Father passed over, you know.

BB: Well, I think your father was a very good politician. I mean with politician skills—never burn any bridges.

MS: But he didn't carry a grudge and I think you know probably also figured he'd get even sometime.

BB: So getting back to Henry Wallace then, your father and Henry Wallace I think might even have been rivals somewhat. There was some talk of your father, if Franklin Roosevelt hadn't sought a third term in 1940, that there were people who were supporting Burton K. Wheeler for vice president or even president in 1940. As it turned out, "Cactus Jack Garner," John Nance Garner, no longer was vice president after 1940. Wallace got the job, your dad didn't, so there might have been some rivalry there because your father of course was considered much more of an independent thinker than Henry Wallace was.

MS: Oh, there was talk of it, but Mother, I found out later, had a clipping service. Father said after Mother died, he said "Well if I'd known she took a clipping service and I'd read some of it, maybe I'd have taken it seriously."

BB: Because she couldn't read all the newspapers so she just got the clippings of things she was interested in?

MS: Well, [clippings] about Father.

BB: Yes sure, yes.

MS: About the campaign and all that sort of thing, but he didn't know and she didn't show it to him apparently, because he said he didn't know. Afterwards he told me he didn't know.

BB: Charles Lindbergh?

MS: Well, of course, they saw each other awful lot over America First. My brother John was head of the Los Angeles America First chapter there. Mother again didn't care much for Lindbergh because she thought that—there was that big trial you know, when the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped, and she felt that he wasn't favorable enough to oh, Hauptmann was it?

BB: Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

MS: Is the man who was—

BB: Convicted of the kidnapping.

MS: Convicted of it, yes. And she felt that that trial was run too hastily or something.

BB: Kangaroo court?

MS: Sort of, yes. You know they felt they had to do something about this horrendous kidnapping, but she never admired Lindbergh the way other people did.

BB: What was the basis for your dad's "America First" philosophy?

MS: Well, he just simply believed we shouldn't go to war.

BB: Well he was brought up a Quaker. Did that have anything to do with it?

MS: Could've, could've. No, he was a peace-loving man and, for instance, we never had guns in the house and everything and he gave me a hard time one Christmas because I'd gotten water pistols for my children, my boys, for Christmas. It was a thing with him, you know.

BB: He felt that wasn't a good influence for those little boys to have guns?

MS: No, absolutely not.

BB: And he never owned one as far as you know?

MS: There's one over your head that I found when we moved into Mother's house, but it was way up on the top shelf of the library there. Somebody must have given it to him, because it's apparently never been used or something and it's an antique. Somebody probably, not knowing that Father didn't like guns, gave to him. Because I never knew he had it. I was astounded to find it when I was cleaning that shelf up there, to find this gun.

BB: Was it loaded?

MS: Oh no, and I don't have shells for it. I brought it out to a gunsmith here and he looked at it and told me that it was quite an antique.

BB: Well it's a Derringer, I can see it.

MS: Whatever, yes. I don't know anything about guns obviously.

BB: Well that is interesting. So his feeling against war, his pacifism was probably pretty fundamental to his philosophy.

MS: Oh yes. Though his mother was a Quaker, his father was Episcopalian. His mother was a Quaker and she died when he was quite young, well when he was in high school I guess. She was a great influence on his life, so his Quaker influence was there all the time.

BB: And he wasn't a military veteran?

MS: No.

BB: And in fact there's quite a record of his not allowing the war protesters during World War I to be persecuted.

MS: Oh exactly, yes.

BB: So he's consistent pretty much in that regard.

MS: Yes. When he was a U.S. Attorney, a lot of those cases came to him, I can remember. I can't remember his name, the man who was Attorney General at that one time, and—

BB: Palmer.

MS: No, there was somebody else.

BB: Attorney General of the United States?

MS: Well, either that or he was in the Justice Department at that time. He was later a senior partner with Covington and Burling Law Firm. He told me once when I met him, when he was in his early 90s, and he said he knew my father then because he was one of the few district attorneys that he felt he could deal with, that would deal with him justly. You know, carefully. No, Father always told a story that this man came up to him in Butte, when he was district attorney, U.S. attorney, and said "Oh, I want you to arrest these Germans, sir." Down there having meetings in this church basement down there and they're subversive and you should, you know, arrest them all and stop that foolishness. Father said, "Well, if I start arresting Germans I'm going to start with your law partner." He said the man never bothered him after that.

BB: Because his law partner had a German name probably?

MS: Yes.

BB: Jeannette Rankin?

MS: Oh, yes. Both Mother and Father admired her. I think she was up here once, but I was young and I don't remember her at all. Wellington Rankin was the same way. Wellington Rankin owned land over in the east side of the park. I know he was up here once. I think we went driving, but I don't remember him.

BB: Well, he was considered sort of a political ally of your father's, along with Governor Sam Ford. Rankin and Ford were Republicans and of course Wheeler was a Democrat, but there was some good feeling between the three of them—that's what you read in history at least. Do you remember ever meeting Rankin or Ford?

MS: Well I met Rankin, yes, up here one time, and that's how I know. We drove over to the East Side to see his, Wellington Rankin's land over there. Which is over D side of the park.

BB: Had a lot of ranch land, he was a huge landowner.

MS: Yes, and that's what Father told me, but I don't remember the man myself, even though I went with him.

BB: I remember we, just a minute ago, we talked about Lindbergh. Did you actually meet him?

MS: Oh yes, I met him at this meeting in New York, I'm sure.

BB: Where you were with Alice Longworth Roosevelt?

MS: Yes.

BB: But you don't remember aside from just meeting him?

MS: No, he didn't come to the house.

BB: What did your folks say about him?

MS: The only thing I know is my mother was not enthusiastic about him. So it was not discussed, shall we say.

BB: Did you ever hear your folks discuss Jeannette Rankin at all?

MS: Oh yes, and as I say they both admired her. Knew her well and all that sort of thing.

BB: Your dad lost, in somewhat of an upset, the Democratic primary election in 1946.

MS: Yes.

BB: You would have been old enough to probably be somewhat involved in that.

MS: Well I wasn't involved, but we were all just stunned, of course, by it. Mother was concerned that there might be a little retaliation or something like that, but you know other than that—Father was back in Washington so I don't remember the folks talking about at all.

BB: Well there's a story that, you mentioned that Franklin Roosevelt was a little bit vindictive and that he may have encouraged at different times both Jerry O'Connell and Mike Mansfield to oppose your father in the Democratic primary. Do you remember anything about Jerry O'Connell?

MS: I remember the name, of course.

BB: Yes, he was a congressman for a while from Montana.

MS: Yes, but I don't know. Could be, could not be, I never discussed it with Father.

BB: Okay, and then Mansfield?

MS: No. Again, Mansfield was a professor, I believe, and I don't think Father had too much respect for him, but I never heard him say anything awful about him or anything like that.

BB: When I talked to your dad, your dad said Mansfield was a pretty shrewd player of the political art, but he said, "I'll tell you something, he never took a chance. He never took a risk. He never took a risk for any principle that he had." That was I guess, in the early 70s. I don't know, Mansfield had the number of years left in his political life when he made that comment, but that was his impression and I got the impression you did, that there wasn't a close relationship between your father and Mansfield.

MS: No, but when I worked on the Hill for Congressman Keating of New York, when I was—

BB: Who became Senator Keating?

MS: Yes.

BB: And he was a Republican.

MS: Yes. I was married and out of a job and so my friends in the newsroom up in the Capitol recommended me to Keating, who needed somebody to do research and write canned speeches for him that sort of thing. So I was on the elevator one time with Senator Mansfield

and so I gathered up my courage, "Senator Mansfield, may I introduce myself. I'm Senator Wheeler's daughter."

He said "Oh!" He couldn't have been nicer. He said "Oh, somebody I should have met a long time ago." That was his comment, and then the elevator got to his floor.

BB: Well he was very kind and had good skills and was friendly. But I know your father at least told me he didn't think he was necessarily someone who took risks and made strong statements.

MS: No, I don't think he thought he was a forcible person, let me put it that way.

BB: Then during the Vietnam War period, when he took a stand against the Vietnam War or somewhat of a stand. I guess it wasn't as...but I supposed that required some courage.

MS: Yes.

BB: How was your dad...Your father was alive, certainly, during the Vietnam War?

MS: Yes.

BB: Do you remember where your father stood on the Vietnam War?

MS: Oh, I'm sure any war he was opposed to.

BB: Yes, but you don't have much of a recollection?

MS: No.

BB: Anything else on that 1946 defeat?

MS: I don't know, I heard people up here saying that they thought that Father took it too much for granted and he didn't get out and around the state enough. Which could have been true.

BB: Leif Erickson was the guy who defeated him.

MS: Leif Erickson, yes. He thought that Erickson sort of rested on the laurels of a former Governor Erickson. That people mistook the two names when they filled out the ballot. He blamed that factor.

BB: I asked you about him earlier, but he was pretty early in your...I mean you would have been quite young when Erickson was governor and then a U.S. Senator. That certainly could have

happened. Then of course, Mansfield defeated the fellow that defeated...Leif Erickson beat your dad in the primary and then a guy named Zales Ecton defeated—

MS: Oh right, yes.

BB: Did you know Ecton?

MS: No, I know the name though.

BB: Yes, and then Mansfield defeated Ecton. So that's how that all worked out.

MS: Oh really, was that the way it worked? Yes, okay.

BB: Yes, that's how it played out. Just really quickly, curious about Keating, was that any reflection of your political philosophy or did you just need a job?

MS: I just needed a job and he was a liberal Republican. It was interesting, he had a group of young Republican congressmen there, they were all sort of freshmen, and they used to meet occasionally. Budge from, was it Massachusetts or whatever? He was in that group I know, but they just would gather for drinks or something once in a long—you know, once a month maybe or something. I never met any of them, so I was out of there by that time. I mean in a sense it was 6 o'clock and I was supposed to leave at 5 or something, so I never hung around.

BB: Now he went on and was elected to the U.S. Senate; did you go with him into the Senate?

MS: No I was pregnant and had Randy by that time, so no, I quit.

BB: Sam Rayburn?

MS: No, I didn't know him.

BB: John F. Kennedy?

MS: No, Father, of course, knew Kennedy because they're both from Massachusetts. And he knew his younger brother Bobby quite well.

BB: How would he have known Bobby quite well?

MS: Well, Bobby was very active in politics and there were lots of rumors about him, but I know he knew him personally because there was a picture, I think, of Ethel Kennedy with my father or something. So they knew each other socially.

BB: What were the rumors about Bobby? I mean what are you talking about?

MS: Oh, that his language that he used to prominent governors and stuff.

BB: He would cuss them out?

MS: Yes.

BB: Did you ever meet Kennedy?

MS: Not to my knowledge. He was in the Congress when I was up on the Hill, and I know he drove a pale blue convertible Cadillac, which I envied. I saw it parked on the street there by the office building.

BB: He was kind of a flashy young guy it sounds like?

MS: Oh yes, well, he had money and you know.

BB: Yes. Lyndon Johnson?

MS: No, I didn't know him.

BB: Could you ever hear your dad talk about him or your mother or anything?

MS: Oh sure, oh yes. I don't remember what he said about him.

BB: Because they would have served together I'd think. I mean Johnson was a fairly prominent congressman, and then, of course, he came into the Senate about the time your dad left there though I think.

MS: Yes. So no, I don't remember any comments about him.

BB: Do you know if your dad was ever in the White House during the Truman administration?

MS: Oh sure, yes.

BB: Probably not in the Roosevelt administration, at least very often?

MS: No, he went up to see the President, because I can remember Father's quoting Roosevelt and saying, "Well you know B.K., when you get angry or unhappy about something you can get up and walk around the room, walk it off, and I can't do that."

BB: Because of his paralysis?

MS: Because of his paralysis. He also said something to Father one time about it, he said, "Well, you know, Burt, you and I both know where we come from." So they had a lot of common.

BB: Meaning what?

MS: Well, he thought some of these young guys didn't have any principles or something.

BB: Oh, I see. It wasn't their origins that he meant, it was that you and I level with each other.

MS: Yes, but I think it was also origins too somewhat. Because, although they couldn't have been different. Father came from a very poor family and Roosevelt came from a very wealthy family. Personally they got along, but as Father said, he couldn't tell any of that to Mother.

BB: Richard Nixon?

MS: No, I never heard Father say anything about him. I'm sure he had opinions.

BB: Anybody else you can think of that would be a historical figure that I may have not asked you about that I probably should've, that you dad might have known?

MS: He was he was a good friend of Senator Nye's.

BB: Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota?

MS: Yes. I can remember going to dinner there when Mother was out in Montana, actually building this cabin. Going to dinner to Nye's and Father, typical of most fathers I guess, didn't bother to introduce me. Somebody there at the dinner table, I was 22 by that time or something and it was long dress, and so I guess I looked older than my age. He took him aside and he said, "Burton I don't think it was very wise of you to bring that woman with you."

After that Father introduced me. "This is my daughter Marion."

BB: Well I think Nye had a reputation for being kind of straight-laced.

MS: Well, this was his second wife, and he'd met her changing her tire. She was marooned on the side of the road with a flat tire apparently, and he very chivalrously stopped and changed the tire for her. One thing led to another, and Mother always laughed about it and said, "Well, I'm safe that way. Your father would never stop."

BB: Did you, this again Marion probably a little bit far back, but he's also a Senator kind of in this neighborhood. William Borah?

MS: Oh yes, everybody in the West respected Borah. I mean Father spoke of him with great admiration. He was a hero to all the young, aspiring politicians. When Father got into the Senate I know he looked up to him tremendously.

BB: Now Borah was a Republican, but a progressive Republican, like your father was. They probably saw a lot of issues the same way.

MS: Well probably, he just admired his courage and his stance on things. He admired him.

BB: And the same might be true of George Norris?

MS: Yes, I guess so.

BB: Remember him? He's a similar kind of a person I think that your father might have admired in a similar way.

MS: I think he was more right wing than Borah was perhaps, but I mean he had a reputation that I remember as being very right-wing.

BB: No, we might be thinking of...because he was the Tennessee Valley Authority guy.

MS: Oh really?

BB: Yes, he even supported FDR.

MS: Well, no then. I'm wrong on that.

BB: One of the names I mentioned earlier on was Reed Smoot from Utah, he was very conservative.

MS: I know the name, but I don't [know him] yes.

BB: A guy named [Joseph] Mahoney from Wyoming that was in the Senate a long time when your dad was there.

MS: Oh yes. I've heard all the names and heard Father mention them, but I just don't remember him saying anything particularly about it.

BB: How would Burton K. Wheeler, how would you want Burton K. Wheeler to be remembered?

MS: I guess certainly as a progressive person, and you know he ran with [Robert] La Follette, as his vice president [in 1924]. He admired La Follette greatly. He used to tell stories about that campaign which were funny.

BB: Do you remember one?

MS: Yes, one of his things was he used to take an empty chair up on the platform and say, "Well, that's the stand our president takes on this issue or that issue and have you ever heard of him taking a stand on this or something?" That was one of the gimmicks he used.

BB: That the empty chair is there.

MS: The empty chair business, yes. That was one he told on himself. I think also, he said it was interesting that Joseph Kennedy loaned him a car during that campaign to get around Massachusetts with.

BB: Loaned your dad a car?

MS: Yes.

BB: Really?

MS: Yes.

BB: That's interesting, isn't it?

MS: Yes.

BB: And your dad campaigned a little bit in Massachusetts because of his roots there, I'm sure.

MS: Of course he did, yes. That was part of the deal, because La Follette, of course, being from Wisconsin, why Father had both Massachusetts and Montana, so he had—

BB: Now that was in 1924, before you were born?

MS: Yes.

BB: But La Follette lived some years afterward and then—

MS: No, not long. [He died in 1925.]

BB: Well then, he was replaced in the U.S. Senate by his son, who they called 'Young Bob'. Do you remember him?

MS: Yes. The only time I ever heard any comment about Mother didn't [unintelligible]. He committed suicide.

BB: Young Bob committed suicide? [In 1953]

MS: Yes.

BB: Oh, I didn't know that.

MS: I think so. His widow was out here and stayed with us for a few days after that. Mother knew her through, again the Senate wives, because I can remember I took the boys up to Avalanche [Creek] fishing.

BB: The senator's kids?

MS: Yes.

BB: Aw, that's sad.

MS: Yes. That's the reason I'm named Marion, is Robert Marion La Follette.

BB: Robert Marion La Follette, yes.

MS: So that's why it was his, you know. Because Father had run with him. I was born in '25 and I think he died, I was born in April and I think he died in May or June or something like that. [June18]

BB: Oh soon [unintelligible], okay.

MS: Yes, shortly afterwards.

BB: And your father certainly would've wanted to have been remembered as a, you would want him to be remembered as a man of principle and courage?

MS: Oh yes.

BB: Very forthright?

MS: Yes, and his independence. Mother always said that she hoped that when their campaign was coming up that somebody would get really nasty with Father to start the campaign. She said then he'd put on a good campaign.

BB: Because he'd rise to the occasion? He was a fighter when he needed to be?

MS: Yes, he was a fighter.

BB: It sounds to me like your mom might have been somewhat of a fighter?

MS: She was very positive.

BB: She sounds like she was a tremendous influence on your dad and a great helpmate to your father.

MS: Oh yes. She was very, very loyal. Of course, there was that famous quote, then I'll quit, famous quote of Roosevelt's "B.K.'s alright, but it's that Mrs. Wheeler's the Lady Macbeth."

BB: Was that ever published? I've heard that too.

MS: I think it was, and Mother said, "Yes, it's true." I take great pride in it. So there.

BB: Any closing thoughts, comments?

MS: No, I don't think so. We've covered most of it.

BB: Okay, well thank you very much, Marion.

MS: You're most welcome.

[End of Interview]