

Interview

with

Mr. Al Hooper

by

Marc J. Lee

12/1/99

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Questions

for

Interview with Mr. Al Hooper

- 1) Mr. Hooper, could you please give me a little background about yourself and your work history?
- 2) During this interview, I would really like to concentrate on the Mining Museum located here in Butte. If you have the following information, I was wondering what year the Mining Museum was established, and by whom?
- 3) How and when did you become involved with the Mining Museum?
- 4) What different areas did you participate in with the Mining Museum?
- 5) Do you feel that the Mining Museum has achieved the goals that were set out in the beginning?
- 6) Where does the Mining Museum fit into Montana History?
- 7) Well that is all the questions I have for you Mr. Hooper, is there anything that you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

12/1/99

Outline
of
Interview with Mr. Al Hooper

I. Background information

- A) Birth
 - 1) Meaderville
 - a) History of Meaderville
- B) Childhood
- C) Teen years

II. Work History

- A) Working the mines
 - 1) Working for the "company"
 - 2) Job description in the mines
- B) Working the railroads

III. Formation of the Mining Museum

- A) People involved
- B) Exactly how it came to fruition
- C) Mr. Hooper's duties with the Museum
 - 1) Photography
 - 2) Built buildings
 - 3) Maintenance
- D) The tourists

IV. Talked about the environment

- A) Mining
- B) Farming
- C) EPA

V. Mine safety

- A) Mining Accidents
 - 1) Different types of Mining Accidents
- B) Causes of these Mining Accidents

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Transcription
of
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Marc J. Lee: This is an interview of Al Hooper conducted by Marc Lee at 2703 Princeton, the time is 3:05 p.m. , and the date is 12/1/99. Mr. Hooper before we begin with this interview, I was wondering if you could give a little background about yourself and talk about your work history.

Al Hooper: Well for the first thing I was born in North Meaderville, and I don't suppose you remember Meaderville?

Lee: No, just some pictures is all I have seen unfortunately.

Hooper: Anyway it was North of Meaderville. I was born near mines, had mines all around us. And us kids in those days that lived in Centerville and Meaderville close to mines we had to rustle firewood in the mineyard. And the foreman of the mineyards were able to trust us, they know us kids for we could take care, we wouldn't get hurt around them. I wouldn't let present man get in the yard now, I don't think they'd got sense enough, but us kids had that street sense ya know about the mines, picking up old wood and a piece a wood for firewood.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: I worked for some what we call leasers I was a kid instead of mowing, we didn't have lawns to mow in Meaderville. They were operating this property and this man was a brother-in-law to Cornelius Kelley that's how he had this lease. And the lease is where you, I got leases from the Company where you take a lease on some property and you mine the ore and pay a royalty to the Company.

Lee: Ok sure ya.

Hooper: Anyway these guys were doing very good and my brother and I was hanging around there as kids and they gave us little jobs to do and here we were only kids and we were doing jobs around the mine and that's money for same as kids now a days mowing the lawn. And we had to rustle enough firewood in the summer to last the winter, and so that meant we could play ball and fool around with baseball like every kid does. We had lots, but we had to get the load of wood in first.

Lee: You had to do your chores first. What years are we talking here now?

Hooper: In the teens, in would be 1913, lets see 1914, 15, 16, in there.

Lee: In there. What year were you born Mr. Hooper?

Hooper: 11

Lee: 1911. Were you born here in Butte?

Hooper: Meaderville.

Lee: You were born in Meaderville.

Hooper: They say you're not a citizen if you were born in Meaderville.

Lee: Oh that's what they use to say. Now Meaderville was that the Italian district of the...

Hooper: Now that's another mistake most people don't...I'm surprised they don't go far enough back in the newspaper though. Meaderville, when they first started copper ore in Butte, one of the biggest problems they had it was no good. We were 400 miles from Salt Lake or any city. There was no smelter, they tried to put a smelter up in Dublin Gulch and to my best knowledge it was a failure. So Clark and Daly was both shipping their ores to Swansea, Wales. By the way, when we traveled to Europe, I rode through the train and we went through Swansea, and I told my wife, I said "all them piles out there are slag, a lot of them are from Butte."

Lee: Ok sure, like the ones over in Anaconda.

Hooper: But then the cost of shipment in the United States and across the ocean was prohibitive. So I don't know which one Clark or Daly or both got the idea, they brought some Welshmen out here.

Lee: Ok

Hooper: And the Welshmen started smelters around Meaderville and then of course they brought a lot of their relatives over to work in the smelters. And so Meaderville was inhabited with Welsh. I got a lot of pictures with identification names on them. You see all of the Welsh names.

Lee: Uh huh

Hooper: They were not Italian. Well then comes the Anaconda smelter and the smelters in Butte closed down. The Welsh didn't like to stick around Butte so they moved out. And at that time, we had the Italian immigration there, so you had a lot of vacant houses.

Lee: ok

Hooper: So the Italians moved in.

Lee: Oh

Hooper: But they were never full of Italians because we were a mixture in Meaderville, but the Italians were the most yes.

Lee: The Italians were the most up there then huh.

Hooper: Ya.

Lee: Now you were talking about how what you use to do as a child. Now what years did you kind of really start working full time, and talk about any of your work history, or back in those days did you ever actually start, I mean kind of when you were young did you start working.

Hooper: When I was going to high school I was able to run this geared hoist, it was pulling rock from the ---- shaft. I was only a kid, I had no license, I didn't belong to no union, in fact I was underage, technically I couldn't even work. But I was working for these private..., but I would only work for a few hours. But it was like we made money while we were going to school, I couldn't work no regular shift. I'd come home from school and we'd do a little work around there.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: We got paid, but we were not on any payroll.

Lee: Did a lot of children do that at that time?

Hooper: No. It was against the law to.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: I mean you couldn't have a child working in Butte.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: But we didn't work that way. Ours was not like at the Bell club(?) if we went there today, maybe tomorrow we play football or something else, I mean it wasn't steady. We just went around, it was nice to get enough work in for the month to get a few bucks to go to school on.

Lee: Uh huh. Now did you go to high school here in town?

Hooper: I went to high school up in Butte High when it was over on Idaho and Park, and I graduated in 1928. I'd come home from high school and stop over at the Bell Club(?), I remember we had an old man running the hoist and Jesus here I'm just graduated. I graduated in 29. I laid my books down and helped showed him how to run the hoist. He that it was so wonderful, here's a kid, a high school kid who could run the hoist. He said you're going to be a big engineer.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: Well then I'm not working steady. Then yes, when I got out of high school and my folks wanted me to...my mother wanted me to go to Montana Tech, the School of Mines.

Lee: Uh huh. Yes.

Hooper: We didn't have enough money, the depression was on. It would have been such a hardship, so I turned it down. So I got working on the mines. I got a job on the mines. Us kids were an asset to the mining company when they hired us because hanging around the mines rustling wood and being around them we knew a lot about them, we were no green horn, we already you might say broke-in you know. We knew what different kinds of timber and what ore looked like.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: And all that stuff, we were a real asset. And then comes the depression got worse and the Anaconda Company in Butte in order to conserve jobs, for the

men they'd made a rule they'd only work so many days on, and so many weeks you'd only work a week on with two weeks off or something to spread the work. And then they'd made a rule that got me, no two in the family could work, they'd figure as long as one in the family was working, the idea to spread the work. Ya know.

Lee: Per mine or?

Hooper: Well for the whole camp.

Lee: Oh ok.

Hooper: The Anaconda Company tried to spread it, tried not to get two in the same family working, and they worked a shift on and off and that spread the work in a town, keep people alive anyway.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: And so then I rustled in the Northern Pacific Roundhouse out there's since I couldn't go on the hill. I worked three years for them. I got a picture in there in the kitchen with me on the locomotive, and that was so job, boy it was hard work. And I got the magnificent sum out at the Roundhouse of \$3.54 per day.

Lee: How many hours did you work a day?

Hooper: Eight hours.

Lee: Eight hours a day then huh?

Hooper: That's big money, three dollars and something. And on the hill it was...your wages was the minimum was \$4.00, but the Roundhouse in was only three something. But you worked hard to at that N.P. And then I had to sign a waiver and my dad had to sign the waiver because I was under age and if I got hurt or killed the Northern Pacific wasn't responsible. You know how companies do that.

Lee: Ya sure. Sure.

Hooper: So then things picked-up and I got started back on the hill oiling. An engine hoisting engineer we have to be licensed, but an apprenticeship is oiling. Oiling and greasing and taking care of the hoist and running every time the engineer gives you a chance to run until you got your three years in. And then

when you got your three years in, you applied to the State inspector to and you took an examination and that gave me my second class license. But I wanted my first class. So I asked him how soon, well he said your good now but he said why not study a little more, and come back in a few months. So I did, and then I got my first class license. We had to renew them every year. So then I was on the hoist a good part of the time. On the hoist we operated those big hoists, if you seen pictures of them, they're big and we are the ones that when you were riding on the deck brother, you were under me.

Lee: Now is this with the Anaconda Company?

Hooper: On the North Butte. I worked there and with private groups, same difference. When you stepped on that cage, you were...we use to tell a lot of the miners you're at the wrong end of the rope to get with me.

Lee: (Laugh) You were in control you their lives then huh?

Hooper: You're damn right.

Lee: Yeah.

Hooper: But you got so at first if you seen...I use to lower fifty men down in the cage and oh sure you wasn't careless but I mean it was like a surgeon like he was cutting people, you done it everyday and you were careful but you were never under any tension.

Lee: Just a routine.

Hooper: But on the hoist there was a certain amount of tension. I've seen it where I didn't have an oilier to relieve me in the lunch hour, or I've got out and run up and down the yard to clear my head. See we can only work with bells, I don't know if you know it, but these things(gesturing towards the tape recorder) and radio and TV waves won't go through solid rock. And the only way we could work was with bells. And see you rang single bells and I had to go by your bells. But I could never see what you were doing and there was lots of times you would get a little gray hair cuz I was thinking Jesus maybe he's got hurt or got killed cuz I don't hear from you.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: And you got a lot of tension then and then a lot of guys give you the wrong signals. Lots of time they'd do silly things and then you know how that is. But I was lucky, in all the years I never had anybody hurt under me or killed.

Lee: You had a very responsible position then.

Hooper: Well ya. But there was some engineers that it wasn't their fault that some guy would do something stupid and then there now like...well how long do you want this one. Like when we're running counter balance we have cages going on this side and this side working up and down. Well I'm counter-balancing, you go to the twelve hundred, well I look over and see my other cage is pretty close to the thirty-two but it ain't spotted, but the bottom of the cage is probably a little higher in a station like that.(Gesturing how the counter balancing would work)

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: And as quickly as I could stop you, get you, I unclutch it, go to move it. While several times that happens to scare the hell out of you. You start to move it and you'd get a bell. Oh god you could have cut that guy in half. He's not suppose to climb out of there.

Lee: Ok sure, Uh huh.

Hooper: But they do them things and boy you think that you could cut that guy in half.

Lee: Ya it wouldn't take much would it.

Hooper: No and then lots of times we'd get them coal miners, their not known but there...not to touch the bell. We got to call the buzzy, a signal back. When you rang for the cage, if you were on the twenty-eight, you rang seven and three, that's the twenty-eight signal. The station tenors will answer one, if you want to go up your gave three, if you won't to go down you give two, if you just got full of rock you don't do anything. And then will see about picking you up when we can, but when you go get the bell, sometimes you were just lucky that you didn't kill somebody. I've had that happen, you're unloading timber on the thirty-two, and I get a bell to move to another level, something about it, I just had a hunch, it just wasn't you. So I don't move. But if I had moved, you're just walking out of the cage with a post in your hand, you've had it. That's how somebody rung a bell in another station ya know.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: But sometimes you just got a hunch or it didn't sound like your bell.

Lee: Ya you had some instincts after working there for awhile then.

Hooper: Well ya. But you see how easy you could kill somebody.

Lee: Oh sure. Ya sounds like it. Like I said you had a very responsible position.

Hooper: So every year we had to renew our license. So I worked on the hoists, some of the big hoists and we had lots of horses under us. Boy that Stewart hoist that is up there now, when you pull back on that throttle, that cylinder is seventy-two inches long and thirty-two inches in diameter. Boy when you pull them... get them old pistons going boy you got power under you.

Lee: Ya you do I'll bet. I bet you did.

Hooper: The levers are about this high ya know, about four feet high. And boy you'd pull it. And when you were coming up with rock like at that Stewart. Coming up with a cage full of rock, when I go by the five hundred the other side is going down. When I shut the throttle off now and I pull back in reverse and open my release, she's still going like a bat at of hell. You hear that choo-choo-choo. But she starts to slow, and I've got...I'm still not using the brake. And then she comes by the surface, and you see her zoom. And you wonder if she's going to stop, but geez we use the brake on last revolution, we bring the skip to a stop like that. And we're only this far from the wheel.(Gestures only a few feet)

Lee: Ya ok.

Hooper: You'd do that all the time.

Lee: (Laughs) Ya.

Hooper: And you don't want to be too slow getting up there, mine management don't like that. You want to get there on time.

Lee: Sure. Sure. What...How long did you work in the mining? What year did you officially retire then?

Hooper: Geez you know I can never think of that. It somewhere just before the mine shutdown, somewhere in the 70s, I forgotten the year I retired. I didn't have a full retirement because Hooper was a wanderer you might saw. I got restless a few times and quit the company. I operated my own mine for a couple times. Went back to the company, had trouble. Then I went for a private company in North Butte and run that big hoist, it was the largest in the United States. I run that for...Then I went back to the company. Then I went railroading for three years with the Milwaukee. I was already to get promoted, I was engineer for

locomotives, and then we come up with family life. Three forks...I had to live in Three Forks, I just had a little boy. There's no doctor in Three Forks half the time, so I made another decision, I quit the railroad. I come back on the hill. But both the Anaconda Company and the Milwaukee about folded about the same.

Lee: Oh really. Oh I didn't know that. So you're kind of a jack of all trades then. You kind of hit it...

Hooper: That's some of it. But the only trouble is kid, what is it called a rolling stone doesn't get any moss when it comes to pension time. Like there is a widow across the street, she gets a way bigger pension than me, because I only had seventeen good years in.

Lee: Through the company?

Hooper: Ya. Good years. That quitting don't get you nothing.

Lee: Ok I see sure. Sure I understand that.

Hooper: Well you will have a good one with your job now to don't you?

Lee: I hope so. Ya I hope we'll have a good one when I'm all done.

Hooper: I but I meant if you were to leave now to go to Deer Lodge for awhile and then you come back, when you come back, your new date is when you come back.

Lee: That is actually right ya. You start all the way over.

Hooper: I always seemed to be starting again.

Lee: (Laugh) That is a tough way to go isn't it? I guess during this interview what I would really like to concentrate on is the Mining Museum located here in Butte. If you any of the following information, I was wondering if you could provide me with what year the Mining Museum was established, and by whom?

Hooper: I don't have it exactly. I get you some by whom. There was a man called Ray Howe, and there was a lady I was going to have you interview she's at Rocker, called Sandy Keefe. And there is two others that was in on that, and just like in a half hour later I won't remember you name, I can't remember them now, but probably after a while they'll come to me, but right now I'm blank. I can just say Ray Howe and Sandy Keefe is the only two right now I got. There's two more involved. There was a dentist that died just three weeks ago. He lived down by,

down by, where the road goes to Salt Lake. He lived down there. What do you call that place again? Below Ramsay, Silver Bow.

Lee: Silver Bow, uh-huh.

Hooper: And there is another place, where you branch off to go South.

Lee: Ok ya I think I do remember that he just passed away.

Hooper: And that dentist if I can figure his name now, he was another one.

Lee: Ya, his son is a dentist.

Hooper: Ya, what's his name?

Lee: Ya, I'm trying to think of it myself.

Hooper: Ernie(?) I've been trying to think the whole time you were coming. He was on of them.

Lee: What was all involved? Do you remember at the time, and how it all got started? Politics...

Hooper: Mostly I think Ray Howe, and this dentist and another guy I can't think of his name. Some how they decided to organize it. I don't know what made them organize it. They organized it and wanted a... At the same time, the Anaconda company made a... One of them made a... the Orphan Girl. And they thought, uh boy, so one of them, who I don't know who now, thought we'll go ask for the Orphan Girl. So the company give em the Orphan Girl mine, which the Gallows Frame was still there, and the electric hoist was still there. And the engine room housing the hoist was still there. The rest of it was gone. And so then they had to start putting buildings up, and it was pretty tough then. I wasn't around then but they had to build some buildings, and they had to get a fence around it, get some kind of organization, and then they got a gift shop to get a little "mullah" to come in, and start getting some tourists, and then they just got some more volunteers, and then I come into the... Dave Johnson comes into the picture about thirty years, thirty some years ago, and I then I followed him. And we got into the picture and he becomes President and I Vice-President. And just the museum got bigger all the time; we got into more things, kept building more things in there to where she is now.

Lee: For those who don't know Mr. Hooper, now where the Orphan Girl mine is that is located on the Mining Museum property and they just built the Mining Museum around the Orphan Girl, is that correct?

Hooper: The Orphan Girl mine is where it is now, and there is a shaft thirty-two hundred feet...here's the mine(gesturing towards a picture). It was a mine...I actually worked at that mine for a short time too. It was a good Silver and Zinc mine, and then the Anaconda, like a lot of mines in Butte, it was never worked out. There's ore still down there, but to where it's a last ditch, and Anaconda went broke, they had a system back East that portioned the money and they decided that they did...only wanted so many tons of Zinc that year, and so they shut the Orphan Girl and the Anselmo down. But none of those things end like a factory, a mine if you shut it down, you leave it down for a long time, it costs money to start it up.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: And they never did start the Orphan Girl up for that reason. And then they went broke afterwards, I don't know. But the Orphan Girl was a mine, and the museum is settled in a real mineyard.

Lee: Oh ok, sure. Now when you became involved with the Mining Museum, were you retired at this time? Or were you still...

Hooper: No. I'm still working on the hill. And I would come over on spare time, and days off, and well I had different days off on the hoist, so whenever I had days off I went over there. Then I organized, very early in the game I decided we had so many pictures laying on the floor over there that had been donated and it was such a god damn mess, that I decided that we better same them. And then on top of that, the city and county built two of them buildings there to house old county records and one was to house all the city records. And we were walking over all those big books of records and there was one mess. And so I start crying and raising hell, finally got a too sympathetic character Fred Quivick(?) and oh Bill, oh I can't think of his name he's in San Francisco now, and they went to the government and the county, Silver Bow County, and talked, and by god we got Butte's Silver Bow Archives was formed. We got the old fire station. And I know I was up there when we first got it, it was a terrible mess as I told ya. Any way then we organized and we start moving all the papers and books that belonged to the county and the city over then. We got most of all them over there. And then that give us room to expand and then over at the Museum, I went further ahead organizing a group to preserve old Butte pictures and when I left over there, we had numbered pictures up to 5000.

Lee: That many.

Hooper: Ya, and then we got them organized there like, we got one were talking about now, one on the Butte Fire Department, and the Police, and then one on each mine, then we got them on downtown Butte, and all that, we got them pretty well organized.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: I just hope to hell that they're going to keep them that way, cuz there was a lot of work put in em.

Lee: Now was that your main participation in the Mining Museum?

Hooper: Oh it was one of them main... Well yes that was the main, but I organized Tuesday night for the work on that with volunteers and I got my volunteers. Then when I retired I started to work up there every Saturday, and I brought in two buildings. And all the rest of that stuff, I personally got a crew to bring in two buildings there from the mines. And we worked on sidewalks and buildings, all that stuff, I built all them. I'd do that on the side, but on Tuesday evenings was related to the photography.

Lee: Ok.

Hooper: And then of course it worked out sometimes I had to work special both ways. To get...

Lee: To get it all done.

Hooper: Um huh.

Lee: Ok.

Hooper: We have a very good collection up there, if you want to go up on Tuesday night. There's a crew operating it now, hopefully there operating it.

Lee: They still take part in that old practice that you started then, they do it on Tuesday nights?

Hooper: Ya. Ya and the sad thing is Dave and I, Dave had thirty years in, me twenty-five, and then I had to go to the hospital for this heart deal, and then I come out of the hospital and management changed up there. Some of them we put in, and then we both... Dave and I was asked to return our keys. ...hell out of myself,

gee or throw them at your goddamn face, I put them doors on, I put them locks on. So if that's the way you feel I'll do it. So Dave and I was thrown out. I knew eventually that we would have to leave for our age. But I didn't think that we would be thrown out. But we were.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: But on the other...then we start...Dave and I...I have so many people I put on so many slide shows, I been on TVs so many times, I'll be on TV tonight. And then I figured I could get enough people in town to re-establish myself, but I realized that I can't do it in the mean time. I said Dave were too old, we'd have to get all those board of directors. And like yourself, it's hard, you go approach you and chances are you'd refuse me from a director. It's quite a job to build up another set of directors.

Lee: I bet it would be.

Hooper: And get a president, and a secretary. I said Dave we just can't fight it, we just might as well take it. Cuz I said neither one of us, I know a lot of guys that I'd like to have president up there, but up some of them won't take it because they don't want it.

Lee: Yeah. Is there a lot of politics involved up there then?

Hooper: No. But to run a big business like it takes some time.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: Now we had over \$600,000 in CDs(Certificates of Deposit) when I left up there, Dave and I left. I understand that they're down to about now. Cuz of course we had all volunteers and now they don't. These two that got rid of us, that got themselves on nice salaries.

Lee: Oh they have paid positions up there now then.

Hooper: ...\$300 that they created. That's why they had to get rid of us.

Lee: Oh really.

Hooper: I wouldn't have gone for a paid position.

Lee: Sure, ya. Especially after putting in all the time, and all the years as a volunteer.

Hooper: Anyway ya. But you can see... And at different times...the best of it is one of those...Dave to, when he got in, one of the directors I purposefully thought was good, got her in there, I thought boy...she was good, she got rid of me.

Lee: (Laughs) Guess you never know sometimes.

Hooper: No.

Lee: Another question I have for you is do you feel that the Mining Museum has achieved the goals that were kind of set out for it in the beginning?

Hooper: Yes. Definitely. It was...in fact it was done very good until just recently. It has dropped quite considerably because...and then...especially Butte people are made because they have to pay admission now. For years while we were there, you never paid admission.

Lee: Ya I recall that. Ya.

Hooper: And Butte people...a lot of people...that turns a lot of them off. So no it has dropped, it has dropped considerably yes. Of course some of that is due to other attractions in Butte, and to the country as a whole.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: In fact next year, if they are going to close, which it looks like they'll have to, Glacier Park on that road building. That's going to cut a lot of tourist traffic that goes through Butte.

Lee: Yes it...ya. Uh huh.. You proud of everything that happened out there?

Hooper: Yes. I'm proud of everything we did. And I use to talk to a lot of tourists there, and they thought it was so good because we use to tell them, walk around. And they walked around, you could take all your time you wanted and everything. You looked in the windows and you could see everything. And a while ago...in fact I've heard quit a few people come back again and they ask for me, so it must have been. But um, oh ya, I like dealing with the tourists and we had everything. Really you could take three hours to really see the Museum, even now.

Lee: Yes it does. To really absorb it all.

Hooper: And then you don't really get right down. No, everything was good and then the last few years we did everything, Dave and I. If something go wrong in the building where they had the ladies clothes, we'd go in there...or where ever some work had to be done. There was always lots of little things that you had to keep doing.

Lee: Sure. A lot of upkeep.

Hooper: I built that print shop down there, and we had a good printer but he died, Bob Rule, he was a good printer. We sold a lot of prints...we printed the Orphan Girl book out there on our own. Did you ever get a copy?

Lee: No I never have, no.

Hooper: It's a nice story, the Orphan Girl and the museum.

Lee: I've read the short synopsis that up there at the Mining Museum that talks about the Orphan Girl.

Hooper: Ya. The Orphan Girl was quit a mine, I worked there. The Orphan Girl was a cool mine, I've talked to some miners and they use to, contract miners, and they say oh every once and a while they said we'd to get tired of the hot boxes, but they paid the money they said. The Orphan Girl didn't pay much money on contracts. He said we come down there for a month to cool off, and then we'd go back to the hot one. See on the contract system, all the miners worked on contracts. The foreman's... but each contract was different depending on how hot the place was, how dangerous or what kind of rock it was and everything all contributed to make a price.

Lee: Ok sure.

Hooper: And the better looking places the price wasn't as good, the harder places then the price was up. Contracters, oh boy, they made big money. We had...Contract miner bought a new car every year, new furniture usually every year. They had...they made big money. That's what built the town.

Lee: The contract miners?

Hooper: Oh sure and the mining. You can say what you want about Butte right now. But you got to have something you can't manufacture. Mr. Sullivan, if you remember him, his was mayor here a long time, he found that out, you manufacture in Butte. You can manufacture shoes for instance. We could ship a carload of leather down to San Francisco for one price, make it into shoes and

Jesus they're terrible. And the guy living next door to Los Angeles, he can beat you because he don't have that shipping rate.

Lee: Sure ya. So far from it.

Hooper: So in Butte and Montana unless we fill Montana up like California get millions of people here. You got to forget manufacturing unless you can manufacture something they can't manufacture in Denver or Los Angeles. You got to have something.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: But most of the people including yourself, wouldn't want to see millions of up.

Lee: No, no. Nice and small is fine by me. Nice and quiet.

Hooper: Ya but you see you can't have both.

Lee: No you can't, can you. You can't have it all.

Hooper: And then there is...Whatever like Montana there is lumbering, and all the things that we have to...there is very little manufacturing in Montana. Everything is got to be mined. In mining, were set for mining.

Lee: Ya.

Hooper: And actually what tickles me, at a...arsenic...look at the Madison river is loaded with arsenic, and it is the best fishing in the State.

Lee: (Laughs)That's something isn't it.

Hooper: I often wondered if you added arsenic to some of the other rivers, whether it would improve the fishing.

Lee: Make them a little better huh.

Hooper: Ya. Cyanide in it's state don't last long, cyanide...I've become a Sunday chemist and all, cyanide rapidly disappears if it...it don't last long. Do you know that there's seven hundred square miles of a...it was in our paper or U.S. News or Time, that's dead. And it's dead from solutions coming down the Mississippi River. Scientists got that...and that's from that stuff that they put on farms. What do you call that?

Lee: The pesticides.

Hooper: Ya.

Lee: Probably that DDT

Hooper: Ya. And so you got seven hundred square miles that's getting bigger, not from the cyanide, not mining, now that's all farming. So obviously there putting too much of that on the ground, if that much can go down the river.

Lee: Yeah they must have been then huh.

Hooper: Haven't you read about that seven hundred...

Lee: No, I haven't, I didn't see that.

Hooper: Seven hundred square miles is a good section of...

Lee: Yes it is, that's a good chunk of land.

Hooper: Well it's water though.

Lee: Yeah, yeah. I guess the last question I really have for you is where do you feel that the Mining Museum has fit into Montana History? Where would you kind of place it in Montana History?

Hooper: Well we were, let's see...I've been to a lot of Museums, the one up in Phillipsburg is really nice, but the...but they got a good mining museum, but no a Butte, other than...we can't compare with the Montana Historical Society, can we? That's out.

Lee: Yeah.

Hooper: That's too big, so were talking with the rest of the state, and the mining I would think would be equivocal, so...we are an original mineyard.

Lee: Yes it is. And I'm sure a lot of people might not know that.

Hooper: Well I know that, that's why I want to get the word out, but that's that new bunch that's in there now. They don't see eye to eye about...We tried to get that out when I was there. Ya, so that's one thing that made it a good museum. You didn't create a mineyard, you're in a mineyard.

Lee: Uh huh. That's on the original property itself.

Hooper: The original property.

Lee: Ok. Well that's probably all of the questions that I have for you Mr. Hooper, is there anything you'd like to add before I conclude this interview?

Hooper: I think I've added too much, haven't I?

Lee: Oh no.

Hooper: I like Butte, and I'd like to see Butte pick up but I realize unfortunately to make Butte better, unless we go back to mining, there's nothing for Butte. There's actually...if it wasn't for mining. Butte would never be here. There was no reason this area, I love it for myself, but you know you've been here for a while, we don't have enough forests here in Butte for lumbering, were too high for farming.

Lee: Yes that's true.

Hooper: And now we got that two highways, North, South, East, West, but we didn't. There was no reason to ever bring them there originally. If it wasn't for mining, and when the first railroads come to Butte...Montana come to Butte just for the mining end.

Lee: Yeah. And so if it wasn't for the mining, Butte would never have been created.

Hooper: And these bunch of kids who want to get rid of mining, ok. I say let's go, but let's go all the way. Let's go back to the stone age, only it wouldn't be good for me, now I just had this valve put in my heart and I wouldn't want no...one of those doctors with stone tools cutting me up.

Lee: (Laughs) No you'd want the technology.

Hooper: But if you are going to date mining, then you got to...This one woman she...I told her that's the way you feel, that's good. But I said when you go home tonight, why if you and your husband feel you don't like anything with mining, I said load everything that's metal in your house and load it in your truck and go dump it in the pit. Why? Well I said you don't want mining, you can't have the results of mining.

Lee: That's true.

Hooper: I said boy if I felt that way, was an EPAer, I would go the whole limit.

Lee: Yeah. Practice what you preach then.

Hooper: That's right. You're not going to do it, are you?

Lee: Oh no. No I know where my bread is buttered.

Hooper: Now one more thing about...there's one thing though bring up...Those who have been writing about mining in Butte, unfortunately are the ones that don't know it. It's like they have a hatred of mining. Now I've got, of Jesus, I've got all the stuff down there. And you'd be amazed how the number of men that got killed in the mines is...automobile wrecks now has already top the mines. In the 1930s, I think the automobile...I got that downstairs...Uptown in the courthouse the corner's records...automobile wrecks and killings went a way ahead of mining way back there somewhere in the late 30s.

Lee: In the 30s

Hooper: And they're way ahead now. Look at this year, it's a hundred and something, eighty-eight in the state now.

Lee: Yeah.

Hooper: And your mines could never...and then most of the accidents on the mines, regardless of what others say, was because they were foolish. Now the miners, the contract miner, when you cross at a tunnel, let's say you break in here, that's all new ground, and you advanced five feet. And the first thing that you're trained to do, and suppose to do, you got a big steel bar, you want to make sure there's nothing loose, to come down on you. And if you don't and you go under it in a hurry and it comes down, then you're out in the marble orchid. And you...well then a lot of guys up in the stoop, you're up above your main level, and you got a rock up there that's loose, you can tell it and feel it, it's like a tooth. But it won't come down, you can bar on it, usually you can hit it with a bar and if it's got a rummy sound, ya know it's loose. And if it's solid, you can tell by the sound ya know.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: And anyway, you worked on it and you got that rock, and you can't get it down no way, and so you and your partner want to make a decision. Well that

looks like it's not coming down, the hell with it, lets go under it. And that seems awful from twenty-one hundred, then it comes down. And that's funny how that worked, but it's happened. Because they shouldn't have...there was no reason for them to be clobbered with a rock there because they were suppose to protect their own working place. You can't have someone else do it.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: And the big thing about it the company rule was when you found something like that, you were suppose to make effect, you were suppose to go down on the cell, which is climbing the ladder down, and get a truck and go out to and find yourself a stall, they got them underground somewhere on the level. And get the stall in there and hoist it up, and then maybe have to saw it cuz it all takes time. And then you could gradually work that stall under there, and then once you got it under there and wedged it, then you got. Or another way you can shoot timber out here, with five by tens out this way on the drift, and you can slide them out and then lag over and your protecting yourself with a roof until you get out there. But they don't take time, your not getting the round in, and unfortunately under ground to make money you've got to get the round in . You see you got to drill your holes and you got to blast, and you got to blast at quitting time. And then when the other shift comes on, they got to muck, but if you don't, and you got half a round blast in, the other shift comes on and they can't blast until quitting time, your contracts screwed because you drill the rest of holes, you'll sit on your fanny then because so it's necessary to get your round in.

Lee: Sure.

Hooper: And then lots of times...then you'd be surprised, now on the block cave system, we got all them statistics down there, how many was killed with locomotives, and it seems them crazy locomotive motormen if they'd look down they could see your head, they see your light bouncing, they know your running. So they don't make no effort to stop. And then they coincidentally caught up with you, or you couldn't get a place to get off, or you tripped. And then there's another one. You'd be amazed in the Kelly Block, how was killed by those locomotives.

Lee: Oh really. Ya you wouldn't think that.

Hooper: And then they were supposed to ring their bell before they come to a door. You have to have lots of doors underground and in drifts in order to get the air to go in when you needed because otherwise you at short circuit, you wanted forced air. So you have to have doors. And say you and I were just walking up to

this door, and all of the sudden the motor hit it, we don't hear no bell, geez the door comes back on our face, and can even knock us down.

Lee: Sure

Hooper: There was a lot of that happening.

Lee: A lot of deaths that way.

Hooper: And then a lot of motormen forgot that the door opened the other way. And you run into it, and see they weren't protected like a locomotive. You were sitting there; you had no frame around you. I know one guy who broke his pelvis and died that way. He went backwards into a door.

Lee: Oh.

Hooper: So there was a lot of those accidents were unfortunately were caused by the men themselves. The same people that are out now answering their phone and driving eighty-five miles per hour.

Lee: (Laughs) Ya isn't that something.

Hooper: The same ones that are underground.

Lee: Yeah that's sad.

Hooper: It is sad, but to think when and...you'd be surprised the Company every year had the United States...what to do you call that outfit, come in and give first aid training. I use to take it, it was kind of silly in a way, I thought for home though, cuz on the job I was in the engine room by myself. I wasn't likely to ever have to use it. But you'd be surprised how many miners wouldn't take it cuz they said were helping the company. I tried to tell them, Jesus your partner gets clobbered down here or something happens wouldn't you like to know how to save him.

Lee: Sure. Help him out.

Hooper: Suppose you go to a picnic and your son nearly gets drowned, do you know how too artificial respiration. But I lot of guys wouldn't take it.

Lee: That's hard to believe.

Hooper: And it was free. And they had it I thought set up good. All Mondays was the same. Mondays was tourniquet, artificially bleeding. And Tuesdays I think...Thursdays, so if you had to miss a Thursday you could catch it next week.

Lee: Oh ok sure.

Hooper: And then you got your...you'd be amazed who many...I think everybody, including you, well you have it don't you as a fireman, first aid?

Lee: Yes I do.

Hooper: Don't you think everybody should have first aid?

Lee: Oh I do. Not only to help somebody out, but maybe they could help me out.

Hooper: That's right. Tom Roberts was a boilermaker up there, in the shop, he was the only one in the shop out of twenty-five men that had training. He said ya know if anything happened to you guys, I'm trained to take care of you, but he said if something happens to me, what's going to happen.

Lee: That's exactly right, isn't it.

Hooper: Ya.

Lee: Ya that's too bad, nobody to advantage of that opportunity they had then.

Hooper: Ya. So...a lot of the accidents, if you studied them carefully, like a guy that's been clobbered with a rock, it was against the company rule, you shouldn't have gone under it.

Lee: Uh huh. Just stupidity or?

Hooper: Ya then a lot of them was caught, I know I've done that mucking at home, and even underground myself at my own mine, your mucking into a pile and I see that rock on the pile about the size of your head, and ya know I should get my shovel and pull it down, but lots of times I don't know its crazy, you just keep shoveling in, all of the sudden the bank comes down, breaks your leg.

Lee: Uh huh. Yeah.

Hooper: You're bringing that on yourself. But you'd be surprised how many did that to. And then if you read all the accident records the number that got cut with axes, chopping, and that could happen anywhere, carelessness there.

Lee: Sure. That's the word I was just going to say.

Hooper: But those that got clobbered, there's no way that the Anaconda...any mining company couldn't make your place...when you enter your place of work, you're the one that suppose to make it safe. And then oh they took pictures; I've seen some of the horrible places that guys didn't have the floors. You have your floors that are a vacant spot underneath you; you had your floors all nice. Well after a blast a lot of them get shook around and boards missing. You're suppose to floor all that nice before you start barring down cuz you start barring down here and step back quick to avoid a rock, you step into a hole.

Lee: Oh really.

Hooper: You'd be surprised how many was hurt that way.

Lee: Uh huh. You've probably seen a lot of injuries in your career then, didn't ya?

Hooper: Yeah I didn't see lots of them, but I pulled lots of them up. But I've studied more...I'd like to see mining go again cuz one thing...well your better you don't have that either, but most jobs, mining...a shift boss could only see you twice in an eight hour shift.

Lee: Oh that was it.

Hooper: I know the first time I was underground for a while...and we felt great that we were just young kids down there and we were trusted, and we were learning. We had to learn up here(gesturing towards his head), cuz you don't have somebody leading you around like on surface. You got to figure it out. It's something to be earning a man's...to be doing a man's job down there on your own.

Lee: Uh huh.

Hooper: And you won't see your boss until quitting time, or close to quitting time, and see what you done.

Lee: Yeah. You had to be careful and take care of yourself.

Hooper: And that was one of the things we all like mining for, there is very little supervision. Well you don't have any.

Lee: Do we? Yeah we have yeah.

Hooper: Not close though do you?

Lee: Just depends, just depends on the situation, but usually we do.

Hooper: You do?

Lee: Yeah. It just depends on the situation but we usually do. That's the way you won't though. I mean we work as a team hopefully.

Hooper: Yeah. In other words like if you don't have a fire for a long time you're just sitting up there playing cards or do anything.

Lee: Or you know we do a lot of different trainings, just practicing it case we do get something so we can hopefully be ready for it. Well I just wanted to thank you Mr. Hooper the information you've provided to me has been fantastic and just like to...

Mr. Hooper: Well I'm glad to help you.

Lee: I appreciate it.

Hooper: And don't forget...you going to work tonight, you'll have that Columbia Gardens tonight.

Lee: Yes I'll watch that tonight.

Hooper: Ya I want to get that corrected to.



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