

Interviewer: **Christine Trafford**

Interviewed: **Allene Trafford**

Christine: Allene, where and when were you born?

Allene: I was born in Butte, and it was December 11th 1949, and I was born to Allen and Mary Frances Trafford (my mother's maiden name was Harrington, and I am currently 56 years old. I was born at Murray Hospital, and we came home to a house on the 1100 block of Lewisohn and lived there until I was 4 years old. The 1100 block of Lewisohn is quite a hill. I've had quite a few experiences that I don't really remember but have been told about. There was a time when my older sister and I, she was only 18 months older than I was, and we were very, very young, and she released the break on the car and we took a wild ride down to the bottom of Lewisohn Street.

When I was 4 we moved out on to the flat, and that was 1954 to St. Ann's Street. And out there it was my parents, my older sister Sharon, myself, and by then a younger sister, Gayle, who was two years younger than I. It was all new out there, the 2700 block of St Ann; new houses, new families, new people. We were the beginning of the baby-boom generation, and pretty much everybody had big families. Ours turned out to be 6. Across the street was the Newman family who only had three kids, but eventually they moved away and a family named Thomas moved in, and they did have 6 kids. One of those kids is now the bishop of the diocese of Montana, George Thomas.

We also had a nice young man in the neighborhood who was a dwarf, which confused me terribly, whose name was Pat Setzer (who would die in a car accident at the age of 27). At the time, I didn't understand. The only thing we ever saw that concerned dwarves was a new movie that was out called Snow White, so I thought dwarves were fictional. Living now in a politically correct age, I know that he was not a midget, he was a dwarf and a wonderful, wonderful man. In fact, I just got a letter from his sister yesterday, whom I still keep in touch with. Mom died a few weeks ago and Pam's mother died one year ago. Our mother's were very good friends on St. Ann's Street. Pam reminded me in the sympathy letter of the time when we were both little girls, and smoking was very common back in those days. Mom and Dad had a pretty gold cigarette case, not real gold, probably bronze, and it was always on the coffee table in the front room. Cigarettes were neatly arranged in the cigarette case and the pretty matching cigarette lighter was next to it, which I got from your Grandma's house when she died. So you always had cigs to offer people when they came in. Ashtrays were scattered around the house here and there because Dad smoked all the time. Mom never did but Dad did.

Pam and I got ahold of some of the cigarettes and my mother saw Pam and me, we couldn't have been much older than six and seven. And we were trying to light a

cigarette out between the houses. My mother saw us and thought it was pretty funny. She called Pam Setzer's mother, Julie. Julie didn't think it was funny. So anyhow, Pam got called home and punished quite severely and I really didn't get punished at all. And I never did smoke. But smoking was very common. The ashtrays and the nice little coffee table cases of cigarettes always out on the table – everybody would remember that.

Christine: So Allene, why don't you tell me a little bit about what your father did for a living?

Allene: Dad, when he married Mom, he worked for his father. They had a grocery store on N. Montana St. 107 and 109 N. Montana St. Then Dad – he had been in the Marines in WWII and came back and worked for his dad like I said but that didn't last long before Mom wanted him to get a job working for someone other than his family. So he worked at Safeway for a while. After that his family asked him to come back to the grocery store and work there again. At that time small grocery stores were going out of business and bigger grocery stores were coming in that eventually became known as supermarkets. We didn't have supermarkets in those days and when they became supermarkets they were still pretty small compared to what we have today that really are *super* markets.

First thing Dad did was go back and he told his family they had to do something different. They had to start doing prepared food. So he got into the prepared food and catering business, and they got out of the grocery business. And it was Dad and his brother and that worked out for about five years before they had a fight and his brother moved to California where he still lives to this day. He's in his late 80's I think and is now suffering from cancer. That would be Merle Trafford. And Dad went it alone and had a very successful catering business which he retired from in his fifties because he caught himself on fire accidentally when there was a grease explosion when he was alone one day at his shop. He got badly burned and wasn't able to work for a long time after that. There was talk of amputating his right arm as it was burned so severely. Thank goodness he didn't let them do that. His doctor at the time was Dr. Gardiner, a good doctor but Dad couldn't afford it and the arm turned out to be scarred but quite useable in later years.

Mom had six young kids at the time and wasn't able to go down there and work and the shop just closed. After that, Dad did pick up some work doing odd jobs. Eventually he had a disabling heart attack and retired for good at the age of 54. I had been working with Dad in the food business and eventually I took over the catering business.

Back to my childhood. I didn't just try smoking cigarettes. I went to Saint Ann's School and was taught by BVM's, and I found out at the funeral of my mother recently that there is only one BVM left in Butte now. (2006). There was a whole lot of them when I went to school. The whole school was full of them.

Christine: And what exactly are BVM's?

Allene: (laughing hysterically) Listen honey, they are nuns. Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Back to Saint Ann's School. It was growing as fast as that area of the Flat was growing. The kids in the neighborhood were divided up between Saint Ann's and

Whittier School. Whittier being a public school. My sisters and brothers and I went to Saint Ann's and when we'd come home from school we had a rule that we could only eat snacks until 4:00. After that Mom wouldn't let anybody eat because she said we had to wait until dinnertime because if we ate after 4:00 she said we would be too full to eat dinner. So it worked well because if anybody was caught eating, my brothers and sisters always told on each other. Always.

My grandmother would come out and visit now and then. Kate Harrington. She didn't really like to but she would make the trip out. Mom would go get her. We'd take long walks in what is now the 2900 block and beyond of St. Ann's Street, Kossuth, Moulton and Nettie. There were no houses there at that time so we would go out there with Grandma and build a little fire and roast hot dogs. That's all filled in now with houses way beyond Continental Drive. Grandma died in 1963 so that was a long time ago. Late December 1963. Just like the song.

After dinner we'd go outside and play games. We'd build snowmen in the winter. There wasn't many places to sled out on the Flat so we didn't do a lot of that. But we did play a lot of games – No Bears Are Out Tonight, Kick The Can, Hid and Seek. The whole neighborhood played together. We all knew everybody. Tons of kids. At one point there were 32 kids we figured that lived in that one block area. Aand we were all between the ages of twelve and two that were able to go out and play. Everybody knew everybody. We were all safe. It was a good neighborhood. Of course there were no televisions when we were very young so that helped get us outside to play.

Then in 1963 we moved back up to the 1100 block of Lewisohn St. and in my opinion I believe that Butte is very much two different cities. I moved into a place that gave me culture shock. Even though I was 13 when we moved back on the Hill and that is a time of change in a young person's life, I wasn't prepared for the change of going from "NO Bears Are Out Tonight" and Hide and Go Seek" to "Hey, ya wanna go throw eggs at cars tonight?" Or "Lets go walk park St. and see if we can get picked up?" I mostly just didn't go out unless it was with someone who could protect me like my good friend Neice Gallager. Which distressed my mother because Neice was a little on the wild side. Annette Sullivan and Raelene O'Keefe were the good girls but they weren't as much fun as Neice was. That would have been in the early 1960's.

The Hill kids didn't ring doorbells. They would stand outside and call your name until you came to the door. Out on the Flat the kids would politely ring the doorbell and ask for you.

Back to Saint Ann's Street. In the mid-fifties I used to be able to lay in my top bunk bed and watch the big trucks begin to excavate the hill that became the Berkeley Pit. As time went on, and the hole got deeper I couldn't see the trucks anymore but I could always hear the low grumble and roar of the trucks as they carried their ore day and night.

As time went on the trucks got bigger and so did the Pit. When we moved back up to the Hill in 1963 I could still hear the same sounds and took comfort in that sound.

Christine: Tell me about the Columbia Gardens. Did you ever go out there?

Allene: Yes. We were always at the Gardens. And I didn't even see it in it's heyday. I can't even image what it must have been like for my grandparents when there was a

small lake, a zoo and the roller coaster was a three-decker instead of the two-decker in my time. There was nothing like it. It was a place you could go and think you were in a whole other land. They were deciduous trees in the playground areas but the whole area was surrounded by fir trees and forest.

The upper area had cowboy swings, huge metal slides, swinging umbrellas, picnic tables, water fountains and merry-go-rounds.

The lower area had the pavilion, brilliant flower gardens, the boardwalk with vendor stores and arcades, the carousel, the biplane ride and of course, the roller coaster. I can still hear to this day the clack-clack-clack of the roller coaster cars as it made it's way to the top and then the huge first drop that would leave your stomach in your mouth. All the rides cost a nickel. Those were the days.