

Interview

James Harrington

Humn 3956- Butte History

By Dustin Woodards

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The individual I chose to interview for this project was my grandmother, Doris Woodards. She moved to Butte in 1946 with Hoover Woodards, my grandfather, who came to work in the mines. Between my grandmother's and my grandfather's experiences I learned a lot about Butte's history.

Dustin: What year did you come to Butte?

Doris: 1946.

Dustin: 1946?

Doris: Yes.

Dustin: What brought you out this direction?

Doris: Huh?

Dustin: What brought you to the Butte area?

Doris: Well you're Grandpa and your Uncle Tom. Your Uncle Tom was here first, him and his wife Dorothy. He went back to Pennsylvania and he talked your grandpa into coming out to Montana and Barbara was nine months old and that was 1946. So I had four rooms of furniture and grandpa wanted me to sell it all, so we sold it all. So I sold it all and we went and got tickets for John and your grandpa and I to come out here. So anyway we got out here about four or five days later. And then we got a room at, what did that street used to be? What's that street that Harrington's used to be on?

Dustin: Park?

Doris: Hamilton Street?

Dustin: There is a Hamilton Street.

Doris: Hamilton Street, well anyway, we went and got a room on Hamilton Street. John got a room someplace else. Then the next day they went and signed up for work at the Belmont Mine. So they went to work at the Belmont Mine, then they worked on up until 1948. And Tom comes out here and decided "come on Dick let's go to Montana." "Come on Dick lets go to California." So that went on forever and ever. So, he started traveling around picking fruit and stuff like that. Anyway, I have to think. Anyway your grandpa worked in the Belmont Mine from 1946 to 1948 and then Tom came out here and he talked him into going to California. So we never got to California. We got as far as Wenatchee, Washington and that's were we stayed. And then welfare got us tickets and sent us back to Pennsylvania. And Tommy came back out in 1952. He came back to Pennsylvania in 1952 and talked your grandpa into coming back to Montana.

Dustin: So you wound up back in Butte?

Doris: I wound up back here in Butte in 1952 and your grandpa went back to work in the mines. He started working at the Travona. He worked at the Travona. He worked at the Kelly. He worked at the Leonard. He worked at the Belmont that was his first job.

Dustin: Was the Belmont Mine?

Doris: The Belmont mine was his first job. In 1948, he and Tommy started traveling and picking fruit again. They were in Spokane, Washington. I went to Spokane, Washington up to Wenatchee and I got a room there and stayed. The only thing we had to eat was pancakes.

Dustin: No Kidding.

Doris: No kidding. Well, he came in one day and he says your grandpa came in one day and he said "What do you got to eat?" I said pancakes. Then we ran out of pancakes. Then he said would you go up the street and see if you can get some credit until I can get paid. So I went up the street and the guy says I can't give you anything but the pancakes. So that's what we got. Well, I was pregnant with Danny and so anyway I decided that's the end of traveling for me. I am going back to Butte. I lived up on North Main Street in a hotel. I had food in the inn up there. I had food that I had bought because I was on welfare for a couple of months. Then I went and got food and everything, and I said this is not for me. I'm going home so I came back to Butte from Washington. Well anyway, he came back the nineteenth day of August and Dan was born the ninth of August. He came in and he said "Where's my son?" I said "You never had a son because you weren't here when he was born," and he just laughed it off. Then Tommy went back to Pennsylvania and your grandpa worked on until 1948. Then Tommy talked him into going back to California. So that time we got stranded in Spokane and the welfare bought us a ticket to send us back to Pennsylvania. So your grandfather said to me on the train, "I'll be up here in Butte and I'll send for you." I said "No you wont either your going with me." So he went back with me and we stayed in Pennsylvania. I worked at Pepperidge Farms for two years.

Dustin: In Pennsylvania?

Doris: Yeah in Pennsylvania. So then Tommy decided were going back to Montana. So your grandpa sold what car he had and we sold all of our furniture for five hundred dollars again. Then we came out here. We were here for about two weeks then we left. Then we went to Wenatchee, Washington picking fruit. I got pregnant with Teri. We came back to Butte about a year later and Tommy said "You can have that baby in California just as well as you can in Montana." I said, "No were going home." So anyway, we came and Tommy left us in Spokane, Washington and Tom and Dolly went on to California and we came back to Butte and we have been here ever since. Your grandpa worked in every mine on the hill except for the Mountain Con. He wouldn't work in the Mountain Con.

Dustin: And that was because it was too deep?

Doris: Because it was too deep. He worked in the mines until they closed and that was 1984.

Dustin: So he worked in the mines for quite awhile?

Doris: Yes.

Dustin: Was he involved in any of the mining accidents like fires?

Doris: Not that I know of, but he got injured quite a few times in the Kelly Mine. He fell six feet deep in the Kelly Mine and it just so happened that his helper was below him caught him and if he hadn't caught him he would have went on down and they would have never found him.

Dustin: That was lucky.

Doris: Your grandpa was real lucky.

Dustin: Where did you work at in Butte?

Doris: When I came back here I didn't work. But I worked at the Silver Bow General Hospital for nine and a half years, but I got injured in seventy six. The doctor pulled me off work and wouldn't let me go back to work until about thirteen years later. When I went back to work, Marilyn Keller called me back to work at Silver Bow General Hospital and I worked there until 1979 and that's when I injured my back. No, that isn't right; seventy six is when I injured my back at the Silver Bow lifting a heavy stool and I hurt my back and the doctor pulled me off and I couldn't go back to work for a long time. I didn't get to go back to work for twelve or thirteen years and then I got pulled off work that time and I couldn't go back to work until I went to work for uh. Oh heck, I can't think. I took care of ladies in their homes.

Dustin: Was that Westmont?

Doris: Westmont; I worked for Westmont for nine and a half years. Then I injured my knee and they pulled me off from work again, so I couldn't go back to work; that was it.

Dustin: So what major differences did you notice from Butte back then until now?

Doris: Dustin, there really was an awful lot of difference. Here you had a place to live; back there you couldn't get a place to live. Your grandpa and your Uncle Tom were working in a mushroom factory in Westchester, Pennsylvania, but you couldn't get a place to live. One time your grandpa and Tommy went to see this place for rent. They asked the guy how much he wanted for rent. He said one hundred and two dollars and

they said we'll take it. Then he asked them if they had any kids and your grandpa said yes we had two and Tommy had one. He said no kids allowed.

Dustin: That was Pennsylvania?

Doris: That was Pennsylvania.

Dustin: So that was one benefit Butte had over Pennsylvania you could get a place to live?

Doris: So we moved out into the country in a chicken house. When I lived in the chicken house I worked at Pepperidge Farms. When I first worked at Pepperidge Farms, I lived in downtown Pennsylvania for quite awhile. Then your grandpa decided to get another place to live. He was living with me, downtown. So we moved out and Tommy, Dolly, and them we moved down into the chicken house. That's were we lived until we left to come back to Montana. We came back to Montana and that's where we've been ever since.

Dustin: Where did you live at in Butte?

Dustin: In what area in Butte did you live when you first came?

Doris: When we lived in Butte, the first time, we lived on Hamilton Street. You could rent an apartment with a kitchenette that you could cook food and stuff like that. You have a kitchenette, you have a stove and a refrigerator and then you had a bed and chairs and that was it. That's what you lived in. So, finally, we moved out of there and moved on Galena Street. That's where our apartment was and we stayed there for awhile and that place burned down. We moved from Galena and moved someplace else until we bought the place on Oxford Street. We bought the house on Oxford Street and then we moved down there and we lived there for twenty two years. Grandpa, he worked in the mines off and on. He worked in copper mines thirty eight, forty years. He worked in the Kelly Mine. He worked in the Travona. In the Kelly Mine that's were he got hurt. We lived in the old house on Oxford Street until he decided to sell that place down there to the Montana Power. So we sold the house on Oxford Street to Montana Power and then we got a house and moved over here on Florida. This is where it ended.

Dustin: This is where you've been ever since.

Doris: This is where we been ever since. Your grandpa he passed away twelve years ago.

Dustin: Then you guys purchased land in Timber Butte Little Basin Creek area?

Doris: We bought that after we bought the house on Oxford Street. We paid \$3,200 for it. We paid \$3,200 for the house on Oxford Street too.

Dustin: Not a bad price.

Doris: That's a good price I think. That's what we paid for Little Basin Creek for all the property out there that we paid \$3,200 for. We still have the bank book where we paid for it.

Dustin: All that property out there was for mining, too, right? He bought it to mine?

Doris: Yeah, he used to mine out at Little Basin Creek, too. He used to dig ore out there. He never got any money for it. He never got nothing sold or anything. One guy came by and asked Grandpa if he would sell it the Little Basin Creek acreage. Your grandpa was willing to sell it to him but he said there is a partner. So, Charlie Grant, he was the partner and he was willing to go along with grandpa and then he talked to your Uncle John. Uncle John he talked to the man. He asked the man how we know you're not cheating us. From that time on, the man never came around no more. He never talked any more about selling. We've had it ever since. Well anyway, I had Barbara in Pennsylvania; I had Dan in old St. James Hospital. The old St. James, it's gone now. I had Teri in Community Hospital; I had Carol in the Community Hospital; and then I had your dad in Community Hospital. It wasn't like it is now; it was all community and the copper company paid for the hospital here. Yeah, the Anaconda Company, they paid for the hospital. And then, I guess, they sold it to the St. James Sisters of Charity. That's what it is today.

Dustin: Was there a big population difference from when you arrived in Butte until now?

Doris: I'll tell you Dustin, you couldn't get through the people. There were almost two hundred thousand people here in Butte when we came. They had slot machines; they had all kinds of gambling and everything and your grandpa and Jim Will, they started a restaurant on South Main Street. They did that for awhile, then business got slow, so they gave it up. So your grandpa had a slot machine in the restaurant and he took the slot machine and he hid it in the restaurant; if its still there today that would be a miracle. He was going to take it out of there and take it home. He never got around to getting it. He never got around to taking it home.

Dustin: The flats never even existed at that time.

Doris: All that's built up here; the flats was nothing but desert, all desert. We came in 1946 it was all really, really interesting to go uptown because there were so many people you couldn't walk between them. You had to walk between them to get by. There was Penny's; it burnt down. There was Hennessey's; they had a big building. They sold clothes. They closed down and they moved out of town. I think it was to Missoula. There was more that I can't think of right now.

Dustin: It was just a whole different experience from when you arrived here until now.

Doris: Oh, I'll tell you experience. You got a big experience when we first came here. John worked in the mines until he moved out from Main Street when Tommy and them came back to Montana. Tommy, Marge, John, and all of them moved to California. John quit the mines; he went to California. He worked in the mines for about twenty five years; he quit and decided to go where Tommy was. Tommy and John are twins and Jean and Joe are twins. So John moved out and left everything to your grandpa.

Dustin: And that included the land at Timber Butte and Basin Creek?

Doris: All the land at Little Basin Creek belonged to your grandpa at the time, before he passed away.

Dustin: And that was over five hundred acres?

Doris: Yes, that was over five hundred acres. I have eighteen and a half acres at Little Basin Creek where it forks in the road and then I have forty acres on the east side and I got sixty acres on the left side. You know where the house is?

Dustin: Yes.

Doris: I have sixty acres up there; all of that belongs to me. The house, the sheds, it all belongs to me.

Dustin: You do own quite a bit up there.

Doris: Your dad, he owns sixty two acres down at the gate. The reason we got the twenty acres that belonged to John because John, he called me one time and he said, "Do I owe you anything," and I said, "No you don't owe me nothing." As a matter of fact he owed me \$9000 which I wouldn't take. So, anyway, he went and called a lawyer, Bill Gaegan, so we wrote it up and he signed the deed over to me.

Dustin: That was a nice gift. So, did you like your experience in Butte? Did you like it more than back east? Or would you prefer to be back east?

Doris: Sometimes I wonder if I would like to go back east. I went back east in 1983 and I visited with Oscar, your grandpa's brother, and Marge. They lived in Delaware. I went and visited my sister in Maryland, she's gone now. She passed away about six months ago. Then I went to Michigan and visited my mom; she was sick at the time and my sister, I visited her. My sister, Opal, I hadn't seen in a long time. I hadn't seen my sister for 47 years. It was a long, long time that I didn't see them and I didn't see my brothers for a long time. But, at least I got to see almost all of them before they passed away. Then I came back to Butte and I've been here ever since.

Dustin: So Butte has been your home for the most part.

Doris: Yes, Butte has been pretty much my home. If I go anywhere else, I am going home to Montana.

Dustin: So you have enjoyed it out here.

Doris: Yes, at least you had a place to live out here. So we got a house and your grandpa decided to stay and told Tommy we're not going to California.

Dustin: He wanted to stay because he was a miner and wanted to work the mines?

Doris: Yes, what I would like to do is take pictures of the head frames of every one of the mines your grandfather worked in.

Dustin: That would be a nice tribute.

Doris: Yes, it would be a nice tribute. It really would be and we really enjoyed being out here. We had our downs and outs, but we got along.

Dustin: Thank you very much for taking the time to give me an interview.

Doris: Anytime, if you need anymore information just call me.

So in conclusion, I thought this interview gave me better knowledge of my family's background and some insight on Butte in its glory days. I thought this assignment was very educational and worth the time it took.