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Frank Gary, Special-ed teacher and organizer of the 1985 Butte Memorabilia show at the Arts Chateau, interviewed in his home by Teresa Jordan, March 30, 1986.

Notes taken at time of interview; not audited against tape.

Frank grew up in Laurel, MT. His father worked for the refinery. He graduated from the U. of M. Got his first job in Billings working for Montana Easter Seals. Stayed there two weeks. He didn't like living at home, didn't like Billings. Transferred here with Easter Seals. He had had friends from Butte and he used to razz them about living here; now they have all moved away and they razz him about living here.

In college, Butte kids stuck together, and on the weekends, they went home a lot. That was different. But Frank also admired them, because they were "real friends." They were with you in the good times but also in the bad. Others would drift off. And Butte kids, even at the University, had different kinds of friends. They knew drunks, drug dealers, drifters. Others at the Univeristy knew only University people. Butte kids knew a cross section of people.

Frank's mother hated Butte. She was from Ireland, and said that the Shanty Irish came to Butte; the Butte Irish were nothing. Also, she had come to Butte to hear John McCormick sing--it took most of her savings--and he got drunk, didn't sing. She held that against Butte. Frank's family never came to Butte; they went through Helena if they were going to Missoula.

The first time Frank came here was a cold winter night. His friend lived up on the terraces, and Frank remembers the crooked roads going up there, and this small wooden house. The houses were different than he'd seen elsewhere in MT, more like houses from San Francisco. He had a pork chop sandwich for 65c. They went to Columbia Gardens--it was winter and it was closed, but they walked around. By the roller coaster, Frank started to spin around, and he remembers all the angles of the wood, how strange, mystifying everything looked. It was a wonderful evening. So different than any place else he'd been. That was in around 1967, and Frank about around 20. There were little shops Uptown. It was just different than any place else. His best friends were from Butte.

Frank had a good friend who was married and the marriage wasn't working out. He was having an affair with a married Butte woman. Frank and he were in a bar; men came up, said we don't like you messing around with Butte women, fought. Years later Frank learned that they knew about his friend because a woman had pointed him out in his high school annual. Butte people are busy bodies, involved with each others' lives.

Butte kids went to college, worked hard, didn't have much money, were not into the campus activity as much as some others. But

they were more into their own history. They had a sense of place. They didn't have the sense of competition of other kids-- Butte kids would always give you class notes; others, if you missed class, might say "tough" as if there were only X amount of A's and if they helped you they might hurt themselves.

Butte kids always got the Butte paper, kept in touch. They were always calling each other--are you going to e driving home, can I catch a ride with you?

Frank's oldest sister used to come to Butte on weekends. She had a sorority sister here, on the West side of Butte. Frank's oldest sister had always had grand designs for living which didn't include her history. She wanted something different (better) than what she grew up with. The West side was elegant.

Butte kids ate differently. Frank remembers having his first pasty. He remembers making a joke about pastys--called them pasties [like what dancers might use to cover their nipples]--the joke was not well received. Butte kids ate sweet potatoe salad, tamales. Frank just couldn't imagine Irish kids eating tamales.

Their religion was different. Most were Catholic, and most had a love-hate relationship with the Cahtolic church. They would tell war staries about Boys Central and Girls Central, about getting slapped around by the nuns. Their sense of religion was more practical, less spiritual perhaps.

They were the only only people Frank knew who would talk about labor unions. Most people didn't.

Frank was in college from 1964 to 1971 in speech communication science and disorders. He talks about the student strike over the invasion of Cambodia.

Frank remembers when he was a child the strike in Butte, around 1959. His father's union decided to take up a collection for the Butte miners. Frank remembers shopping for Christmas presents for miners kids; his mother bought canned good. Saving the Butte miners were more real to Frank than saving "pagan babies," or missionary work around the world.

Q: Do you remember reaction of Butte kids at college during strikes?

One Butte friend was politically active, in SDS. Others accepted it more as a way of life. It was impetus to stay in school. There was a strong feeling, especially among the girls, thay they were being educated so they wouldn't have the same lifestyle as their parents. Women wanted to leave; men wanted more to return to Butte. Frank had a woman friend; her father owned a bar. She loved him, but she didn't see that life for herself. Her mother was her father's doormat. Frank remembers that when her sister became pregnant and was getting married, his friend was upset--very upset. She felt her sister was going to be there forever,

stuck. Most Butte women Frank knew didn't marry Butte guys--they wanted to break away.

Many felt a real bitterness toward the company. Frank's father worked for the refinery, and had a very different view. Here, the company was considered necessary to provide work, but the idea was that there had to be a better way to make a living. Frank worked four summers for the refinery and he always thought they were fair; as did his father. His father was involved with starting the union at the refinery. He would tell stories of the early days. It was a source of pride for Frank that his father had helped start it.

Frank felt a sense of continuity in religion here--almost everyone was Catholic [as is he]. And many were Irish--in Laurel, his mother had been the only Irish. Here, they really celebrated St. Pats day. At home, Gary's would have green scrambled eggs, Irish tuna, Irish soda bread--and they'd be the only ones in town that celebrated at all. That may be why Frank is happy here.

He came here in 1971. Had a little apartment on Jackson, a four plex two blocks from work. It was a walk through flat. He thought it was fine, but a relative stayed with him and after the relative reported back home, he got an urgent call from his mother about the slum he was living in, the tenement. He loved the vocabulary here--flats insted of apartments. Even though he worked for Easter Seals, people would ask as a matter of course, "How was the shift?" Washeteria instead of laundromat. When he saw the shoetorium, he just went bananas. He loves phrases like "Tap 'er lightly." When he first heard it, he thought it meant something like don't drink too much beer. [It relates to tapping in a dynamite charge lightly.] That vocabulary is so much a part of Butte. There isn't anything similar, like "don't let a tree fall on you" in Missoula, more logging culture. Here, it had that feeling of endurance, of danger. It reflected more caring than a mere "see you later."

Tape 1, Side B

Butte is not socially stratified, or rather, people move back and forth among the strata. Very few people here have friends from just one strata. In Billings, if you are seen on the south side having a drink, you are checked off the party list.

The first week he was in Butte, his aide was this wonderful woman whom he still works with--16 years now. He had just had a bear of a week and was really grouchy. He knew she was a strong church woman. She looked at him and she said, "You know what you need to do? You need to go visit the whore house." Frank almost fell over dead--that a middle aged woman who had family would say that. But there is an acceptance of people here that you don't find all over.

One day he picked her up, they were driving to Sherman school.

They passed a woman hanging out her wash. It was freezing cold out; Frank was impressed that she was doing it. But his aide said, "she's not a good housekeeper" because she wasn't hanging it out right. Frank came to learn that there is a ritual of how to hang clothes. You hang up the sheets first--he isn't really sure of the order--but something like pillow cases next, socks last. Just recently they were talking about this at school and the cleaning lady chimed it--yes, exactly. Each knew the correct order. And now Frank sees the old lady he saw hanging her wash and thinks 'she's a lousy housekeeper.' Even though he's never been IN her house!

The first year he was here, he did a lot of running back and forth to Bozeman or Missoula on the weekends. The second year, he didn't do that as much. By the third year, he was pretty disgusted with Missoula. A lot of his friends had opted to stay there; one friend with a degree in French lit was working as a waitress. He developed a changed attitude about Missoula. It had seemed the center of the Universe, but it was a trap. So for several years he didn't go almost at all.

When you live in Butte, your friends think you're crazy. They don't understand why you like living here. Frank thought about moving at one point, but he likes the people he knows here really well; he can do his job as well here as anywhere else. Being Irish, catholic, and with a mother from Ireland opened a few doors.

The first year he was here, he didn't meet many people. He stayed home more. He was gone on the weekends and that didn't leave him much time to go out. He went to work for the school district the 2nd year. He lived across the street from a little store that carried potatoe salad, salami, great jars of olives, beer. He would pack himself a picnic lunch, and go out to the gardens. He would sit on a hill and watch. He didn't want to interact, just watch.

The Gardens were special. Going out there his first night in Butte was special. The night of the big fire, he had a great amount of sadness. He had more of a sense of loss about the burning of the carousel and the biplanes, he thinks, than about the recent death of the astronauts [The space shuttle blew up this week; seven astronauts were killed]. But the burning of the Gardens was real to him; it involved him.

He lived Uptown. He remembers waking up to find his apartment full of smoke--it was the night of the J.C. Penney's fire. In the building, there was a lot of confusion, fright. People went up on the roof to watch for embers. Frank had a feeling of detachment. But he walked Uptown to take a look, saw a woman he knew, another speech and language therapist. She was helping her husband move his goods from his store because they were afraid it would burn; Frank helped, and then he was involved, he shared that sense of urgency.

In Butte he had his first real meetings with Jewish people. Had had had Jewish roommates at camp in Wisconsin, but they weren't very involved with the culture. Here he would be invited for Passover dinner. Most of the people were quite elderly; Frank would be the youngest at 22. It was a tradition to hide a present for the youngest; he would search for the present. It was a tradition never to take the top piece of bread so that there was always some bread. The women would talk about shopping while the men did all the praying. That came as a shock to Frank; for Catholics, the women were usually of the strongest faith. That was actually not true in Frank's family. His father never doubted anything.

But he liked meeting different people with different ethnic roots. He loved the kids. The Butte kids were rougher than kids he had known elsewhere, more tumble. They had an honor code; they didn't rat. But up in the N side where Frank was teaching, Walkerville, kids still respected teachers. They were really rough--you'd read about them in the paper--but they were no problem in school.

There has been a change in the value of education. When Frank first came education was still the key to a better life. People gave up a lot so that their kids could go to college--and then they graduated and couldn't get jobs. Frank's family had said, we don't care what you do, just go to college first. His sister wanted to be a hair dresser; they said, fine, go to college, then you can be a hair dresser. But kids in Butte were pushed to go to college so they could have a change in life style.

And that meant they would move away. Fathers didn't want kids coming back to work in a supervisory position, bossing, not being in the unions. Some pressure not to return came not only from the kids but from their parents. Parents wanted better jobs for their kids, but not within the Company.

Butte people are "real" people. They seemed to know the value of work. It didn't matter what you did; it was important that you did your job. The garbage man was as good as anybody else; people would work hard for what they got.

Some houses around town are shabby on the outside--but are wonderful on the inside--warm. There is always enough for another in Butte; people here still entertain with food more than anyplace else Frank has ever been. He remembers going to his first Butte wedding--there was dancing in the afternoon. Lots of drinking. Old people were dancing and drinking. He remembers two old women dancing together. Such a gusto to these things. So much food. Weddings had been little mints and nuts and wedding cake to Frank before. He would ask, how can you afford it? They would say, we bought the booze, but friends brought everything else. People did it because they wanted to. In other places, Frank had sensed a feeling of obligation--like bringing food after a funeral. But here people brought food because they wanted to. There was a real sense of sharing.

At work, one day a week they have a salad bar. Everyone is assigned something to bring. The older women always bring tons. If it is their turn to bring carrots, they bring enough carrots to last all week. Younger people, bring a certain amount--maybe 73 carrot sticks for 24 people.

Food is a real important part of the community. And Butte people eat more at functions than anyplace else. And if an event is not going to have food, nobody comes.

Here, you are introduced to people by "She is a good cook" or "he is a good cook." Not just that, but she makes good povitiza; or he makes good sausage.

Frank remembers the facination of going into what was left of the ethnic neighborhoods. Dublin Gulch, Anaconda Road.

Several years ago, he started reading Butte history. From that, he gets a sense of where this sense of community comes.

When Frank thought about moving, he judged places by Butte standards. They didn't measure up--tradition, sense of history. He likes to collect books. He has a book inscribed, "this book was tossed through the window of the Miners Union Hall on the day it was ramsacked." Where else would anyone take the time to write that?

Ethnic sense is much weaker now that it was 16 years ago when Frank first came. Dulbin Gulch with it's little houses, narrow twisty roads, is gone (N. Main); Meaderville is gone. Frank came from a railroad town but the railroad was away from the houses; in Butte, the train almost went through some people's back yards. He had a friend who grew up on Woolman; they said if the engineer looked out his window, he could tell what they were having for dinner. That's how Butte was.

Tape 2, Side A

Frank remembers the different ethnic grocery stores--you could get olives here, filo dough there, sausage. In other towns, you went to Safeway; Super Save. And the neighborhood bars were so different. No matter how bad the neighborhood, the bar was safe. Neighborhoods had bars, grocery stores.

The Silver Dollar is a neighborhood bar, from that tradition--but its a bar of Butte transplants, people who have come here recently. It is a meeting place for young people who have lived elsewhere. And there you will see all strata--people from Silver Bow homes out dancing; doctors out dancing. In other towns, you wouldn't find those people mixed.

Q: What is your memory of the layoffs?

Frank didn't know many people who worked for the Comapny, and a

lot that were hired were only temporary. He had a friend who worked setting charges in the pit while he was waiting to go to meditation school.

Butte has a tolerance for its strange people. But it's better to be from Butte if you are real strange (than to be from someplace else.)

This is the only place Frank has ever heard something like, after a woman leaves a group, people say, "You know, her father crossed a picket line."

Frank remembers being told about one of the local madames who went to church, who did sick visits. He said something like, I bet the men she visited felt better right away. His joke wasn't accepted; it wasn't funny.

There is an underlying conventionality in the Butte society. People in Butte care what others in Butte think about them. They don't care what other towns' think about them. In Billings, you might be concerned about how Missoula views you. Not here. They worry about the people they know.

It is amazing that two newcomers, Judy Jacobsen and Kathleen McBride, could get elected for the legislature--and Kathy was for abortion. But people were voting for them because they LIKED them. They went out and met people. Kathy wrote, answered letters. They signalled a new age of Butte politicians when newcomers could be elected.

Some of the politicians didn't like the change from the way it had always been. But Judy is better at playing softball; K plays more hardball. Judy is more traditionally feminine in getting what she wants--I can charm your vote out of you. Very different styles.

Kathleen would have been elected in the last election but Pavlovitch is just one hell of a nice man. That's hard to beat. For many, it would have felt like they were voting against him to vote for K.

Pavlovitch is rather homely. Frank remembers Mrs. Pavlovitch telling the story of campaigning for her husband in the Colonial Apartments. She called on Milka Piskolich. She answered the door, said, "I aint voiting for him, he's the homliest man I ever seen," and shut the door.

People joke about Butorovich being Sheriff--the Serbs are trying to take over. We'll give them a few, but if they get too many, the Irish will have to beat them down.

There are blacks and Butte blacks. The Butte blacks, those who live here, grew up here, are fine; but pity those coming through town. Not that same feeling in Missoula for instance--blacks are blacks. There is respect for the black families that made it,

but also the fact of their membership in the overall community. That is Butte.

Q: What are some of the changes newcomers brought?

Lots of newcomers helped revitalize the Uptown. Now you hear things from oldtimers like, "isn't it sad when people from Butte stand in the way."

The infusion of young blood into the Uptown it good. People who live there say it looks better than ever. A whole generation bought the Butte Forward movement, and they have trouble dealing with the fact that Uptown has survived. About Butte Forward--Frank never thought there was a sufficient indication from the AMC that they were willing to do it. Anaconda bought three schools uptown, built one to replace them on the Flats--it was cheap. He never thought they would commit what was needed to make a new business district. The whole thing was annoying to Frank--it was a time when "New was great." Yet there was a feeling of loss, of anger. Frank thinks that maybe some of Butte's old supporters were her worst enemies. They wanted a shopping center like Great Falls or Billings. You would hear, "have you seen the shopping center in Great Falls?" Frank thinks that has changed. Seeing the renovation blows their minds. The Uptown mural helped to change the idea of what could be done.

About work--Butte is further ahead in special education than the rest of the state. There are more classrooms for it. It comes from that sense of taking care of your own. Butte likes to do that. The Mark Staples concert--they just love it. Butte people love other Butte people. Frank thinks that if a flow of consciousness poet from Butte became famous, he could fill the Fox Theater for a reading, and people would applaud, they would love it. There is a lot of adhering to old values here. There must be more tap dance teachers per capita here than elsewhere in Montana.

And there is the more traditional-type family here. They have problems dealing with long haired teachers.

Q: What affects of the layoffs did you see in your kids?

Frank saw more mothers alone because the husbands were working at Colstrip. Saw more mothers who were the breadwinners while the fathers were at home. So many men would rather stay home than work at a \$4 job; so the wife works the \$4 job. At the Company, you made good money, and you had a sense of what you are worth from what you made in the past. It is difficult accepting less. Yet it's difficult to see the wife working. Most came from homes where the mother didn't work--except for widows or divorced women--and to see it change so quickly is hard.

These men develop a survivalist attitude--they hunt, cut wood, fish. Bring in these prehistoric, basis supplements. But they get insurance for their family through the wife's job.

Hear more, when you ask kids what their fathers do, say "nothing." Few men do housework.

Tape 2, Side B

Q: What hurts Butte?

The same as what makes it great. Butte has image problems. It has a tough reputation, yet the people who live here like that, add fuel to it. It has a generation of businessmen who are afraid to take chances, who have experienced decreases in population and have had to survive, who have a survivalist mentality. Butte people don't like change, they like the way things were. They cling to their own traditions. People don't want to take chances. For instance, McDonalds coming in. Frank doesn't know if it was so much the union problem as the fact that Butte people are not used to having hamburgers for dinner. A mother who would take her child to McD's for dinner is not much of a mother.

A lot of women don't want daughters going into bars in Butte-- though they know they do in Missoula.

Frank has a friend with a cantankerous husband. She is invited to parties--but women her age don't go to parties without their husbands; it is more that way here than elsewhere. And Frank thinks that the pressure comes more from her family and friends than from her husband; he would probably be glad to see her go, have a good time.

It's amazing how people know other people's families. A little girl plays hooky--"Well, her mother played hooky, and so did her grandmother."

The library used to be run as a private social club. If they knew you, you got the books. New arrivals would come in, they would go only to people who were known; newcomers couldn't get books. Some people said, enough. We've got to clean this place up. But some people resent it. They say, "I know the library is running better. But I liked it the old way."

When the Gardens burned, many said it was arson. When people moved out of their homes as the pit grew, they had to move so they just did it. They had a basic resignation. But when the Co. closed and left, they had a feeling of desertion. You gave up your neighborhood and then they deserted. We were used, we didn't fight, and now we're victimized. Frank likens it to rape. At one point, women were counselled not to resist, to just let the rapist have his way. But the women felt worse later because they hadn't done anything. He wonders if that's what happened here--they passively accepted, and now that the Company is gone, they haven't dealt with their feelings.

Butte is a hard drinking town. Frank moved here from a culture

where no one drank. Everybody does here. If you don't, you're the odd ball.

Q: What about the "Butte renaissance."

There is a renaissance in Missoula and Billings, too. Butte is coming into its own. The potential was there, and now obstacles have been removed. Butte Forward is gone. New people, ideas are here. The Company was going for so long, it died a slow death. When it was finally gone, there was shock. But now there is the realization that it is not here and we can move on. It is hard to start a new relationship when your spouse is in Warm Springs. But now people have mourned it, and are ready to move on.

People thought the Company would always be there; they thought Hennesseys would always be there. And then Boom. Overnight, it was gone.

Talks about Hennesseys.

The effects of the shutdown are not as great as we thought they would be. There were not that many young people laid off-- because they had already been laid off. The Company had been closing down for a long time.

The longer the mine is closed, the more people remember the good things. Like Renoir's chauffeur. They don't talk about the men who were killed.

Frank went to Frank Little's grave on the cemetery. It is covered with cement in the paupers' section. Someone had written in mud, "We will never forget." He was fascinated, wondered who had done it, where they came from.

Butte has a great sense of history, passion, violence, love. Emotion run stronger here. They have lived through a lot. Only survivors have stayed.

Q: Some say that the best have left, that there has been a drain of talent and intelligence.

Frank wonders if the ones who left melted into society easily because they didn't have as strong character. He notes that lots come back. There are all sorts of stories of the Butte people who leave good jobs in California for worse ones here because they want to raise their children here. He thinks Butte people have a love-hate relationship with the town. And until you understand that, you can't understand the people.

Entertainment is a self-help affair. You want films, do it yourself. Organize a film forum. The community theater here is very popular--even among those who travel to New York to see theater.

Butte has always been immature in religion. It has just begun

to mature. The priest was still God when F moved here. He still is to the older people.

Frank didn't like Our Lady of the Rockies for a long time. But he got excited about it when it was going up.

The Special Olympics have been held here the last four years. people will buy a raffle ticket in this town with their last dollar to help somebody out. Frank wonders if he would do the same.

There are benefits here for this, for that. "Let's have a benefit." If somebody has trouble, we're going to help them. Sell raffle tickets, have benefits--and even a minor tragedy can have a benefit. It doesn't have to be something big.