

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

BUTTE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final typescript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at the University of Montana. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publications, or for other related purposes.

* * * * *

I, Helen B. McGreevy, have read the
(Interviewee. Please print)
above, and in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit the University of Montana the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to the University of Montana.

Helen B. McGreevy
Interviewee (Signature)

April 16th 1950
Date

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

University of Montana
Missoula

BUTTE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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I, Mary Murphy, in view of the historical
Interviewer (please print)
and scholarly value of the information contained in the
interview with Helen McGregor, knowingly
Interviewee (please print)
and voluntarily permit the University of Montana the full use
of this information, and hereby grant and assign to the
University of Montana all rights of every kind whatever pertaining
to this information, whether or not such rights are now known,
recognized or contemplated.

Mary Murphy
Interviewer (Signature)

April 16, 1980
Date

Name: McGregor Helen B Sex: F Race: W
Last First Middle Maiden
 Current Address: 1139 W. Mercury Butte Silver Bow MT 59701
Street Town County State Zip Code
 Telephone: (406) 733-3020 Birthplace: Butte DOB: 6-12-1903

Years of School: College Church Membership: Presbyterian

Grandparents:	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
FaFa:						
FaMo:						
MoFa:						
MoMo:						

Parents:	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
Fa: <u>John Daniel McGregor</u>	<u>1862</u>	<u>Mapleton, Canada</u>		<u>veterinarian</u>	<u>(1900s)</u>	<u>1956</u>
Mo: <u>Laura Berger</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>Malade, Idaho</u>				<u>1952</u>

Siblings (in order of birth):						
Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM DOD
<u>Jean</u>		<u>1908</u>				

Occupational History (List jobs in order):			Date of First Employment:	
Position	Company	Dates	Dates	

Spouse:	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>NONE</u>						

Children (in order of birth):						
Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM DOD
<u>NONE</u>						

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Helen B. McGregor (1903-)

Helen McGregor was born in Butte in 1903. Her father, the veterinarian for the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, lived to a ripe ninety-four, and Miss McGregor gives every indication of at least matching his accomplishment. She has a striking presence, bright, direct blue eyes, white hair, and she is deceptively tall since she is very long-legged.

She grew up in Butte, attended the Garfield grammar school, graduated from Butte High in 1921 and won a scholarship to the University of Montana at Missoula. She studied speech, drama and economics. She was active in the debating teams both in high school and college, though her first choice would have been to study medicine. She was a speech teacher in Butte for many years, retiring in 1969.

Miss McGregor never married and does not regret that decision. She is a determined, eloquent woman who does everything she sets out to do. She is still active in the National Teachers Association, in a consumer health group and on the local library board. She says she might move to a warmer climate in twenty years, but right now she is too busy.

BUTTE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TAPE INDEX

Interviewee: McGregor Helen B.
 Last First Middle
Date of Interview: April 16, 1980
Place: Butte
Interviewer: Mary Murphy

Context of Interview: Miss McGregor lives in a lovely home at the very end of West Mercury Street. I had finally been able to catch her in between her busy schedule. She is an eloquent, elegant lady, who was most concerned to give me more than "just her story". We talked for about three hours and I would have stayed later had I not supposed to have been home cooking dinner for a bunch of people. She has a wonderful sense of humor.

Tape # 1
Side # 1

Father was trained at U. of Toronto as veterinarian. Came out West with two carloads of livestock, and decided he'd rather stay out here than go back to teach at the university. Sent for his own horses. Always felt a vet should use a horse to get around, so they had no car until Miss McGregor graduated from the University. His family originally from Scotland.

Mother's father fled from Poland, didn't want to be in the army. He came down to the Panama isthmus, walked across and came up the California coast. Mother's mother left a widow in England. Was recruited by the Mormon Church to come to America. They crossed the country in covered wagons to Salt Lake. One came north, Lee Mantle, became a state senator. His younger sister became Miss McGregor's grandmother. He used to move material from Idaho to Virginia City, then moved into Butte. Mother was youngest child in that family.

Mother and father met through oldest sister. Mother taught for a while, then was married. Miss McGregor had one sister. Father was the only veterinarian here, worked for the Company. He took care of all the livestock underground, even before the ACM became the Amalgamated.

Father learned to drive, but never would. She & her sister would take him. Animals were pretty well off. She never saw a blind horse or mule. Her father developed a canvas sling to lower the animals because he was quite shocked with the way they had been doing it.

They let her go down even though regulations forbade women in the mines. Doesn't think it was a superstition that kept women out of the mines, but rather the idea that women belonged at home and not anywhere else. Tells a story about mucking one night in the mine. Always a friendly feeling.

Often helped her father with his work. He died in 1956, age of 94. Many changes took place in his lifetime. Often brought dogs & cats to the house, they'd clean off the kitchen table and go to work. Usually worked out of the livery stable where he kept his horse.

She was born in 1903. Mother taught in the old Franklin school. She graduated from the first Butte high on Park St. Miss McGregor went to Garfield school, quite a cosmopolitan school: Chinese, Korean, Jewish Orthodox, Austrians, Serbians. The few who didn't speak English were always helped by other students. Everyone could read. All different groups got along beautifully. Butte was made up of minorities. Sheeny, bohunk weren't derogatory terms.

Went to the new junior high. Had brought in teachers from the east. Unions objected to their printing dept., had to get rid of it. Graduated from high school in 1921, from the university at Missoula in 1925.

Talks about Henry Stanley organizing movement to let boys come to high school in overalls. She & he in the same class. For graduation they went down and bought bolts of voile in five pastel shades, so all the girls were dressed very simply.

Butte has occasionally been Republican, but mostly Democrat. I.W.W. became very important. Younger people didn't take as strong a position. She looked at them a little with wonderment. Once in high school during St. Patrick's Day wore an orange sweater. Thought she was very dare-devilish.

Tape # 1

Side # 2

When she was a freshman went out for debating, was up for alternate. Told her they couldn't hear her up in the balcony. So she said that she was going to learn so that she could be heard in any building in Montana. She was tall, thin, scrawny, started running to build up. In her senior year went out for extemporaneous speaking. "I can out talk any boy in high school." At the contest it was her and three boys and she was selected to represent the high school, became the state winner. Bozeman offered her a scholarship, but was more interested in English, thought they had a better course at the university. Was offered a scholarship there and got into speech work as quickly as possible. Couldn't get a degree in it, but took speech & drama.

Her first choice was to go into medicine, but her father said she wasn't physically able to take it. Although she doesn't know why. Was on the women's debating team, but when they went out of Missoula only men went because they couldn't afford a chaperone, the coach was a man and couldn't let an unaccompanied female go along. It was convenient for him because he turned his classes over to Miss McGregor. Taught speech in high school for years and years.

Knew practically everyone at the university. Were a few women professors in the English Dept. Were 5 or 6 national sororitites.

Thought it would be nice to come back and teach in Butte, but when came home were in another Depression, so she went up to the school of mines to pursue her studies in economics. Also wanted to take more debating under Professor Scott. Got the first gold letter in debating they gave. Only up there for 2 months, got a call to substitute. Started teaching 6 & 7 grades, then 8th. Hated arithmetic, but was sent up to new junior high and head of science dept.

Had a program on the air. Loved high school students. One summer taught at Western College and wanted her to stay, but she "favored her own." Keeps in touch with many of her students. Thinks students need an opportunity to talk and she was willing to stay around with her door open. Could always try new things, worked several summers for the state developing new courses.

Had a class in stagecraft, built their own sets, made costumes. Wasn't any community theatre in those days. She never wanted to act.

Didn't allow married women to teach up until very recently and the few that were married kept it under wraps. Same rational that didn't want women in the mines. If you were married you had a job at home. Or in a family you should only have one worker. One of the teachers in high school was married but never went by her husband's name. Miss McGregor retired in 1969. Like that up to the sixties. Miss McGregor was never married. "I am just as I am." Never regreted that, she's done everything she's wanted to do. If someone told her "you can't do it because you are a woman, so I went ahead and did it." "Maybe I'm easily satisfied," "I never felt that I was bound to a home." Doesn't like housekeeping--the hum drum.

Family always supported her, never pushed. She thinks she probably surprised them all along by being what she is. Wasn't any pressure, but definitely go ahead and get an education and if you get one, make use of it.

Butte was a lively place but a very safe place. Never once did anyone say or do anything to her when she would be out at night taking her father around.

"The men were a hearty group, but treated women with the greatest respect. Even down in the so-called red light district... the women were extremely well-dressed." Theatres were well attended, finest plays stopped here. Could go and see the elite of the city and there wasn't an eliter bunch. There was a social elite, but had so many single men that weren't conscious of that. Never felt the dominance of the single men; they were a transient group, always in and out. Once brought in miners from the south, didn't like it. Another time brought in blacks. White men didn't like working with them and they didn't like the climate. Never had many blacks in Butte, also never had any difficulty.

With the unmarried miners, often someplace looked better. "Maybe looking for that elusive vein that they could have of their own and become a millionaire. That always attracted a certain number." Remembers a cafe on Park St. lined with shelves of lunch buckets, labelled with their names. Had the big boarding houses. Dorothy Block lasted the longest on the corner of Granite and Wyoming.

Tape # 2
Side # 1

On E. Broadway could get Finnish food, in Meaderville out-of-this-world Italian dinners. Little cafe run by two English brothers, the Worths, served pastys. Welsh had a church on Aluminum and Dakota, wonderful choir.

Family had Presbyterian background, wasn't fanatically religious. Had a big Chinese section. A lot of gambling went on there up through the thirties and forties. 2 or 3 Noodle Parlors, one ran in partnership with French teacher at the high school. Has been told that there was an underground connection between the buildings in Chinatown. There were 2 or 3 well-established tongs. On Aluminum St. near them were several Chinese who were goldmining in the southern part of town. When she was a youngster they all decided they would be gold miners, has a scar from a pick she got too close to. Didn't find any gold, "not even a copper penny."

Jerry Murphy was quite a person. Did a lot for law and order, ran a tight ship. Never came in too close contact. Wasn't a lot of crime. Now doesn't think it safe for any woman to walk the streets after 11:00, would never have hesitated. Change came with young people becoming more argumentative about a great many things. Butte was never that big a city. As attracted more people change just melted into the community.

Among themselves perhaps the men were rough. But they weren't vindictive. "Rowdy, yes. Noisy, yes. But decent, yes." That permeated them. Very heavy drinking. Can see where people who had no ties, who worked hard, who felt they were on a par with people in the bars. Mining was hard work. As they walked down the hill, the bars were very tempting.

Has been more talk about the red light district and the high school. Never was a big fence. She's not sure that having a well-patrolled red light district might be better than having it scattered all over. Kids walked through the district, but she doubts that the women were interested in attracting high school students, they didn't have enough money. A lot of the women were accepted as a very kind group, they did a tremendous amount of good. The straightlaced ladies of course didn't accept them. But they stayed and didn't make a pretense about mixing with people. People knew who they were. They paid their bills right on time, were very willing to share.

Butte has had a lot of economic ups and downs. Able to survive because people helped each other. Had soup lines, difficult times. Every time had a big strike so hard on the people striking, went so deeply into debt, had their own depression.

Has been fear in the past that if you don't go along, might not have a job the next time. Up until the last big strike noone said anything to her father. If it was a long strike, took the horses out and put them to pasture. Talks about the 1946 strike. After strikes children would call each other names, like his father was a scab, etc.

1946 first time they said anything to him when he went up the hill. Had known practically everyone, used to take care of widows' cows. Horses in the mines till that last strike.

For a long time there was the hope that the deep mines would again open. When the realization came that only with the Pit would there be a Butte, people accepted it. Knows it would cost a tremendous amount to reopen the mines. Character of town had changed with the departure of the miners. Also a lot of fathers who were miners don't want their sons to be miners. A good underground miner doesn't get scared. As easy to get hurt on Park St.

Tape # 2

Side # 2

Some peculiar sanitary conditions. Five doors down from them didn't have any inside plumbing for years after they moved here. Took a long time until there were city regulations for housing or sanitation.

Flu epidemic hit hard in 1918. Washington junior high was used as a hospital. Amazing how many people survived, no one expected anything of that magnitude. No one in her family was taken with it. "God looks out for fools and children, and it's been a long time since I've been a child."

Didn't feel that people took the Depression as a personal failure, it was just one of those things. Maybe felt like, could I have done something? Tremendously large section who were reticent about taking relief and many who suffered because they were so proud. They belonged to that generation, "I'll get by." Never heard of the women's CCC camp.

Hasn't yet felt she would like to live anywhere else. Maybe in 20 years would go where the winters aren't so severe. Has too many friends here, too many things to do. No members of the family in Butte. Right now is nat'l officer for teachers assoc., member of consumer health group, does legislative work for retired teachers, is on the library board. "Have to keep going...can always sit in a rocking chair and rock yourself to the grave."

Water supply in Butte. Is the reservoir up north. When aunt first came here was a big spring, she understands there were several that people got there water from.

Lake Avoca, had dances there. Were people that were going to swim and got killed. At one time in Butte there was a polo team. Was a curling club. Father was on both teams. Describes curling, from Scotland, played on the ice. Stones were made of granite, about the size of bowling balls. Anaconda had a team, were teams in Canada, the nearest in U.S. was in Duluth.

Some of the nicest people you'd meet in Meaderville served great Italian meals with wine they made right there. Whole trainloads of grapes came to Butte during Prohibition. Lot of bootlegging in Meaderville. Had special places which didn't advertise as restaurants, but could call up and arrange a dinner, Ma Janino(?) There were many many of them.

Father took care of the wild animals at Columbia Gardens. She never was much of a dancer, but went to the proms out there. Went to football games.

Miners Union Day was almost bigger than Christmas. Each mine had a group in contests, then went into first aid teams.

"Any time that any type of work develops so that man manually becomes less important to the machine he works brings about tremendous differences. That took place underground rather/gradually, but it took place very definitely." Company decided to have a program in all the schools about the danger of playing with blasting caps. First sent out the mining engineers who nobody understood. Then went to Assoc. of University Women. Finally asked her and her speech classes. Could see in all these things how man depends less and less on his own hands. Program went on for years.

The Junior League had little historic pieces, that her classes put on the air for years.

Father was one of the judges at the horse races.

See my great-grandfather.

INT: Looks like he's right off the boat from Scotland.

NAR: No, I'll tell you, that was taken in Scotland. And here's his son.

INT: Look just like him. Well, what did you do during the fire?

NAR: I was driving truck while the mine was closed down. Then they started the Sarsfield Tunnel. Do you remember that? It used to be out on the road to Helena, up the Woodville Hill. They had a headframe up there and they were sinking the shaft and running a tunnel to go in and hole the shaft and a fire started in that place too. The fire started in June and then of course I had no job other than just messing around up there and they were calling for volunteers to go down the mine (Granite MTN) and I was one of the first ones, a young punk kid, you know.

INT: That a picture of you in the helmet?

NAR: This one here is. Here it is right here (newspaper clipping) Read that last paragraph right here.

INT: Not a nice job carrying bodies up.

NAR: Well, I tell you, its surprising, you forget about you're handling human beings bodies, its just like you're handling a bunch of cardwood. you get excited and forget they're human beings, all dead, of course. All but one. Manus Dugan, the fellow that got these fellows up into a stope, the third or fourth floor, and the rest of them all got saved but Mangus went down on the sill again and couldn't get up the ladder and he passed away and died. He got up about the second floor and fell back. And then, for about the next three or four days, well, you know, the story about Manus Dugan, don't you, He was that shift boss, or I guess he was an ex-shift boss, anyway, he got these fellows up in the stope and had them bulk head themselves in and they were there two or three days. So he went out and made a trip around and he was going up to tell them that it was clear, that they could get out and he never got up. He dropped back down on the sill and he died and the rest of them stayed up there for a little while longer and finally got rescued. Of course, I heard they were up there. One of the fellows came out to the station and rang the bell for the 2400 and we thought everybody down there was dead. I can't remember that fellows name but anyway, we got le and z, isn't that the 2400 (bell), I think so. And, I'm an old engineer, you knew that, didn't you? Don't you remember that I ran the hoist up at the ---

INT: During the strike? (1934)

NAR: During the strike for 6 months and never made a mistake.

WELL, you know. Do you want to hear this story. Somebody will kill me. Well, anyway, I had bought a new airplane and was going to take Romer Guenther, we were going to fly down to Mexico City, in the new slip I had already gotten. So, I went out to the drinking fountain one afternoon to get a drink of water and Mr. Hobbins was there and he said "Ramsey, we were talking about you at the meeting yesterday" He said, "We all decided that if you could fly an airplane you could run a hoist." I said "That's the silliest thing I ever heard of." So he said, "Well, I'll send Mr. Linforth out to see you tonight" So Linforth came out. You see, George Vivian lived with us for a while. Anyway he came out there and LInforth came in and he said "Say, Mr Hobbins sent me over here and he said don't come back until you get Ramsey out there and Vivian too if he wants t " He was going