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Restrictions:

28 May 1985  
Date of Agreement

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Jim Dick, psychologist at Butte Mental Health Center, interviewed by Teresa Jordan 5/28/85.

Born in the hospital in Missoula, parents didn't live there. Reared in the Big Hole, Jackson, Grasshopper Creek and also at Heart Butte. No HS in Big Hole, had choice of boarding in Dillon or boarding in Hamilton. Parents chose to send up to school in Missoula. From there, went to U. of Montana. Several ranchers went together, had a house in Missoula--kids in high school and college there; families took turns having house parents there. Jim's family were cattle ranchers. Since 1856.

Started college, zoology major for 1 year. No ethology as study (animal behavior in nat'l setting). Then English major until junior. Then changed to psychology major. Got an MA in clinical psychology at U. of MT. Went right into graduate school. Korean War time. Went into Army right after got degree.

Born August 3, 1935. Graduated BA 1956. MA in 1957. In service until Sept '59. Got masters in folklore during service at Indiana U. Went immediately to Warm Springs State hospital, worked there 1 1/2 years. Portion of that time, came into Butte Mental Health Center. Went from there to Fresno, CA, was with family service center for 5 years, eventually was director of that.

Fresno is not hectic Calif. living, but still cultural shock. Came back to Warm Springs, was there from 1966 to 1978, was director of psychology dept there. Quit April 1978, retired until October. Began present job at Mental Health Services in October 1978.

Have been through major layoffs, also through major strikes (major in sense of how long lasted.)

Strike--there is at least an implied end, a time frame. The attitude is that is isn't going to last forever. WE can tough it out because it is going to end, it's all going to be rosy someday. You see this to some degree now--sort of a denial. It's all going to be better someday because it's going to all open up again, and there will be no Zaire, and there will be no copper from other places, and its really just this very long, unpleasant strike, the layoff. Some people feel that way.

First strike I encountered here was a shock because came from area w/o strong unions and had never seen the union strength before. The first thing that really sunk home, personal involvement. Not an Anaconda strike, but rather Safeways or something. I parked to go shopping. Somebody said, are you going to cross this line? I said yeah, they said, you're a rat. All of a sudden, I was personally involved in the sense that I was angry. I'm not going to be told what to do. All the idealistic sorts of

things, support, just went and I was individually affronted. I also come from a Republican background. Never had any encounter like that when there was a Co strike, never went any place that would. Also had unpleasant encounters at Hospital when there was a strike. Could see how people you worked w/ everyday, become very different.

Talks about strikes at Warm Springs.

Have been living on ranch for 19 years, since got back from California. Not very aware of strikes at smelter or the mill, because not living in Butte or Anaconda.

Didn't really see affects of ACM strikes on patient load at hospital. Would see great number of job applications. Seemed to be almost 2 types of people, all kinds of grey areas, but one set would say, OK, this sucker is going to be over sooner or later, we'll just sit her out. And the other would say, I can't stand to be unemployed for a day, so I'll go to work. And that meant that the ones that quick went down--like this last time--to Colstrip, or in those days, to Warm Springs, quick, make application. Sometimes the applications wouldn't be processed before the Comp. was back to work, but they'd take those precautions. Other people thought, well, it's always been over before, it's going to be over again. I'm sure going to worry, but what can they do to me. Feels that banks etc. good about credit, make allowances

Really, unless it went on and on and on, people did get through it w/ their possessions basically intact, as far as house and car. Maybe recreational not that way. But the banks aren't going to repossess 1000 homes.

Q: Butte-Silver has lost 25% of its wage income since 1975. How do you feel the community has dealt with that?

See contradictory things--new businesses, new building. Where does the money come from? But there are more people on welfare.

Talks about Butte--different. Friendly, open, never question check writing.

Tape 1, Side B

Friendly, helpful. More of a drinking place than even Dillon. Lots of socialization. Lots of family bars--almost British, like pubs. Sports minded. Butte and Bozeman considered almost effete because not big on sports. Very outdoor oriented here--even 50 degrees below. More personalized here--after been somewhere a couple times, they know you. Genuinely friendly, not to get your dollar. Where else but Hennessey's can you walk in and they say "What can I do for you honey?" I kind of look around! I just wanted to buy a tie, you know. (laughs) People really are friendlier. Sounds like a pitch for the Chamber of Commerce, but it's true. Don't know where it comes from--maybe old days when

everybody employed by the same place; that's a kind of family. Lodge associations, and ethnic. And maybe environmental hazard-- if you could be killed in the mines, if you face that every day, maybe you were just friendlier, you were nicer to people. That's a grossly misused word, but there are a lot of nice people here in the real meaning of the word nice. They will genuinely do something for you. Never known of anybody with any fear. People have a great deal of innate class as regards to social/economic background. They just do. Pretty darn sensitive. I think that's because just until recently, they were all involved, really, with the same thing. And they have a little sensitivity to what other people are feeling because they can identify w/ that.

Not changing. I haven't met anyone less nice. People are more stressed--it's hard to live on \$324 a month. It's darned hard. And the fact that people aren't working and they have a work ethic, that's stressful. But I think people are holding up amazingly well as far as the nice things in life as far as being considerate of other people. It's just incredible. If we took a list of stressers, we got them all.

When a person is financially strapped, the boredom enters in. I see a lot of this with people who are depressed. They are bored. And they'll say yeah, I'm bored. So you'll say OK, I recommend that you take a trip to Las Vegas and have a good time. Oh yeah. Really. So many of the things that un-bore you are not unavailable. Even backpacking--you gotta get there, drive a non-existent car or put gas that you don't have the money for. Those things are a reality. And how much can you read or watch TV when you're pretty active? You say, go do this or go do that, I like to make these suggestions, but the suggestions have to have a basis in reality. And all of it requires money.

So much more time to fill during the day. Difficulty w/ being a house husband. The most consistent thing I hear people say is how hard it is to say to the kids, I can't do it. You can't buy an annual--annuals are 25 bucks--you can't have one. I ask, how much do your kids know what your budget is. A lot of them say, yeah, they know because we sat down and said this is what we got, which is neat. But a lot of them don't and the kids are still back in the days when their dad made \$30,000 a year. And it's pretty hard, unless you've been told...and kids really understand this stuff. And also, there is no social stigma attached because lots of other people can't have it, either. I think the most unkind thing, for the parents to themselves and for the kids too, when they try to keep it going like in the old \$30,000 a year days.

Q: What don't you like about Butte?

I will never belong. Which is important in a way. I was never a believer, but I wasn't born here or educated here and I can't name the elementary school, which is very important. So I could never be totally accepted. I am always treated kindly and cour-

teously, but you are not from here. Also, politics enter into it. I'm a Republican. Which is fine if you are from Dillon. But not so fine in Butte. I miss the beauty of Missoula or Dillon or the Big Hole in the sense of landscaping or trees-- that's not bad, but I miss it. I also feel upset when people zip through and say "Oh God, ugly." And they don't look around to where it's beautiful, probably one of the most beautiful areas of Montana, very close by. Don't like parochialism--why go to Missoula to shop? Because it's better! for some things. Just a petty little irritant. Some things are different and better someplace else. I wouldn't like to live in a city, and Butte is a city to me. I guess that says it all.

Had stereotype of Butte when I moved here-- it's one tough place. There are emotionally tough people here--I don't mean physically, or hazardous. But there really are emotionally tough, resilient people. Right across the board.

In Butte, everything on a first name basis. Deal with many agencies, can do things unofficially, over coffee or something. Very nice way to do things. Everybody knows everybody else. In fact everybody is related. You see Irish with Croatian names and v.v. Place you want to keep your mouth shut. Don't say, "I can't stand so and so, he's such an ass!" And somebody will say, he's my brother in law. You hope he follows it up with, I think he's an ass, too... (laughing) That happens a lot.

Don't get feeling for things going on under table. Rather, let's just handle this without a lot of forms and stuff. Much more effective and efficient way. As to who gets favors--I'm sure it happens. But from the amount I've seen, I'd think the trade off is well worth it. Much more is gained than the formal sort of approach.

Talks about having work done. Car, barn.

I would never dream of something written down. I look at it this way--if we shake hands on it and we say OK, then how much can they really screw you up?

Talks about cow deal. Give and take in country.

Q: To what degree in your work to you see the effects of the layoff?

We expected depression, significant clinical depression, expected more spouse abuse, maybe child abuse, maybe higher suicide rate, maybe other crimes of violent homicide or physical assault. We expected more admissions to the state hospital or the stress unit, in-patient psychiatric care. I don't think we've seen that. I don't have the figures, but I don't think there has been that much direct relationship. One thing, is I don't have enough prior--for example, depression, which has always been a huge problem in the United States. How much can be directly related to I'm laid off or my husband is laid off? As far as crime rate

going up, because I don't have any money I'm going to rip off Skaggs or something like that, I don't think so. I couldn't see that much difference. People would say, our life style sure changed, or it is changing. And people would say, I feel--bored is the usual word, which translates probably into depression--I feel really bored because I don't have that much to do and I can't afford it anyhow. I feel embarassed because I am on AFDC or my benefits have run out. But as far as people jumping off buildings more, or punching people out more, I just don't think it's increased significantly.

Q: To what degree is it difficult to get people into treatment for psychol. problems here as compared to other places.

I don't think it's more difficult here. To the extent that it's not considered manly or womanly or wahtever--old idea, I can handle it myself--no, I don't think it's any more here. One thing is that the general practitioners, that is the non psychiatric positions, are pretty quick to send people in. I don't think there is a lot of hesitation. And you see people from every walk of life, every day. You get people who say, look, I'm embarassed to be here, I should have been able to handle it. But they are here. I think there is less hesitation about being hospitalized than there used to be. I think hospitalization doesn't have the connotation of "Oh wow, I'm really a twinkie, and I'm never going to get out of this place." I think it has to do with the approach--this is a problem solving situation. It's not that threatening.

Talks about method--instead of looking at everything that's going bad, give yourself a little credit for what you are coping with. Utilize the assets they have.

People really are tough.

Tape 2, Side A

Q: Any benefits from layoff?

Not many. Many problems are solved by having a job. Maybe one benefit is, it's pushed people into doing things they never would have before, realizing the potential. That sounds corny. But many times people are occupationally underachievers. For ex, I just saw a fellow, his daughter is the patient, but he had been laid off and they said OK, you should go to Vo Tech. But he said, I don't want to go to Vo Tech, so he went to Montana Tech, engineering and stuff, and it was really neat because he had a son there and they were in the same class. You know, how gross for the kid, his dad's getting better grades...I loved it. It had a benefit for him. But that's really unique.

I can't see a whole lot of benefit from being unemployed under any circumstances. Unless it's that occassional kick in the rear that gets somebody to do something--I've always wanted to but I never could. Now I can--maybe, it's going to be really tough,

but I'll go ahead and do it. You see some of those, but that's not a whole bunch.

Talking about job search skill; working for the Company.

Recently it was a good job. In the old days, it was not a good job. You know. You died, and you didn't get paid much. Things like silicosis are just not nice. But a lot of things were changed and made better, and I think a lot of people would be surprised at what people who drove in the Berkeley pit made. And what they said, the biggest hazard they had, was just driving 3 miles an hour and Jesus, how am I going to keep awake? Boring. But a good solid job. And if you were a mechanic, you made even more. I don't think people realized what they made. I'm not making a judgment about that. But it was there. And there was no question about having to seek out a job or take initiative to get one. And actually, if you were there, your chances of being advanced were pretty good by just being, doing an adequate job of what you were doing, you'd be advanced.

Q: To what extent do people believe this is "a long strike", temporary?

Some people just believe it. They are not bringing it up, it just sort of flows out. "It'll get better." "Thing'll get better." I will say things like "I think we're in trouble if you can import copper cheaper than you can produce it." but "nah, that's not true." A flat denial. Or I'll hear things like "I know so and so who knows so and so who says the stockpile is going down, and we need a lot more for such and such." It seems to me almost Alice in Wonderland. It's all going to get better. People want it to be. I think it's a fantasy, I really do. But people want to believe, because they want to stay in that house, they want their kids to go to school here, and they want the grandkids to be raised here, and all that requires, somewhere along the line, employment. And if they just keep thinking, this is all going to end and employment is going to come, then they can live with it. Hope is eternal, I guess.

Q: Are possibly the stages like what Kubler-Ross describes for dying?

I think some people are very fatalistic, they have reached that stage. This has happened, whatever happens is going to happen. We are not literally starving. But I'll go day by day. If I make it, that's neat. I made it through today. I think at first there was real anger--why me? How come? This rotten thing happened to me. It doesn't help a lot to think it happened to 3500 others, too. That's wonderful. I don't care. And then I think comes some real soul searching. And then there comes a stage "Oh well, perhaps there will be spontaneous remission of all unemployment symptoms and it will all be really great." And I think God, you know, let's look at this realistically, that's just NOT going to happen. And I'll probably eat crow someday, which I will be very happy to do.

But it will always be here. That's my feeling. (laughs) That's such a typically Butte statement--it will always be here. 'Course it might be 150 people.

Q: What would come after the oh well stage?

The reality. And how long can you say oh well, it's going to get better? Of course, that's individual, it's probably pretty directly related to the assets, how much you've got to get you through.

Talks about people's roots, their tenacity here.

And people again are just plain tough. And I guess tenacity is a portion of being tough, resiliency and things. And amazing changes in life style that people cope with. Just amazing changes! From the middle class, economic middle class to way below poverty level. And God! People say neat things like--Oh, I saw so and so when I got my cheese. Or "it was really gross, I had to go talk to so and so up at Welfare about my food stamps, I mean, she gave me a hassle." And laugh--really get the humor out of the whole thing. That's another thing. I think this place has a higher than average sense of humor. And most of it is self directed, wonderfully self directed, which is a way to keep things in perspective. Granted, it's serious--this isn't neat. But still, if you can laugh about the things, see some humor in it, you're doing OK. And people do. Black kind of humor. I hear these wonderful stories. I appreciate things about the bureacracy--catch 22 things.

Talks about stories.

People can see the humor, and they don't follow through with the urge to kill, which is handy. They give vent to it in appropriate ways. I'll even hear kind things about some people--like a clerk, well, she had a bad day. And I'll hear things like, right now this is about to kill me, but in 5 years, it will be funny. And they really mean it.

Talks about storytelling as way to handle stress (though doesn't tell specific Butte stories; does tell ranching stories).

Tape 2, Side B

Q: What traditional role do you see women playing in hard times here?

There's still a bit of the man provides, women do budgeting, involvement w/ schools, dealt with teachers, kids, bills--changing because men home more. But women did that, and often worked to. He gives her the check, it is her job to cope. And if she doesn't cope, the idea is that she isn't managing well.

Also, in a lot of the ethnic groups around here, the women were



the real power traditionally. It might be a macho society, drinking buddies and all that, but the women still controlled things. Made their...got what they wanted, in ways we might consider today subterfuge. Powers behind the thrones. And they controlled lots of the purchases--subtley.

Q: There just aren't the number of high paid industrial jobs that there were. Perhaps more jobs traditionally held by women, fewer traditionally held by men. How hard is it to adjust to sitn where major check now comes from the woman?

So hard to say, because it is so individual. I've heard people say, I don't care if she's working, I'm not vacuuming the floor. I have literally heard that. Other people handle it with a good deal more grace, but are quite unhappy about it. We need her check and I'm sure going to do my share at home. I think maybe sometimes the women too feel uncomfortable with that role. This is, I think, changing, with womem who are in the professions-- both engineers or lawyers or something. But occ will hear woman say, I haven't worked in 23 years and now I have this job, thank God--but with some discomfort about it. Especially where there are children at home.

Discomfort with role change, because it was pretty traditionally entrenched. There was trouble when women went to work in the smelter, in the pit, at the prison.

Q: Any increase that you can detect in violent sex crime?

I don't think so. You hear more about sexual abuse, but I really don't think there is any greater number, you just hear more about it, and more reporting.

Drinking might be heavier. Younger. We see a lot of kids that are almost diagnostically alcoholics. I don't know if that was there and not caught so rapidly because people are more alert, school couselfors, parents.