

BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PLACE 2645 Ottawa St.

Butte, Montana

DATE July 16, 1980

James Marshall
Interviewee

Ray F. Carlson
FOR BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMOIR No. 27

BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

MEMOIR OF JUNE MERZLAK

INTERVIEWER: RAY F. CAULKINS

JULY 14, 1980

MEMOIR OF JUNE MERZLAK

Interviewer: Well, were you born in Butte?

Narrator: Oh-Yeah.

Int: Tell me about your parents, where were they?

Mari: Well, my dad's name was Bill, ^{O'Malley} and my mother's maiden name was Mary Popovich. That way I got to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and Serbian holidays.

(Laughs) All of us were born and raised on the Parrott Flat which is where the Flat is now. I lived there until fourteen years ago when the Company bought us out. We all went to the Jefferson School. Including my kids, so that made three generations that went.

Int: Were your parents born in Butte?

Mari: Oh Yeah.

Int: How about your grandparents?

Mari: My one grandmother was born in Yugoslavia and my other grandmother was born in County Cork.

Int: What O'Malley?

Mari: O'Malley.

Int: Well, what street did you live on?

Mari: Shields.

Int: You lived right on Shields?

Mari: Oh-Yeah. Right where the ^{right} filling was. My foot, when you come up the street you go ^{right} through ^{our} front town. (Laughs) My grandmother lived in 212 Shields, we lived at 312 Shields, my mother and dad, and then when I got married I ~~was~~ lived at 417 Shields, so it was all in ^{my} a couple of blocks.

Int: Was the same neighborhood?

Mari: My husband just lived two blocks over on Gallatin. Just two blocks over from Shields.

Int: Did you go to the Jefferson through eighth grade?

Mari: Yes, when we went to the Jefferson it just went to the sixth grade. Then we all went to the grammar the Sacred Heart for the seventh and eighth.

Int: And then you went to the Sacred Heart.

Mari: No, I went to the Grand.

Jul: You went to the Grand. Did you go to High School?

Mari: Went to Battle High and graduated in 1943. Both my children graduated from Battle High, both of my children went to night grade and then they went to Junior High rather than the Grand. Because that was when the Company was buying out all the - Grand was closed. They didn't do no no farms moving we out here.

Jul: You got a good deal, didn't you?

Mari: Oh, I don't know. I had a house that was all paid for, taxes I could afford. I ended up with \$300 on my house payment, taxes I could afford. (Laughs) I wouldn't call it a good deal. But that's progress, I guess.

Jul: Well, you went through High School and then what did you do?

Mari: Went to ~~the~~ work at Owen Brothers.

Jul: Owen Brothers, like was running it then?

Mari: Guesses.

Jul: The old times.

Mari: Yeah, ~~however~~ let's see, there was Jack, Charlie and Henry. Henry was the youngest.

Jul: Who else was there? There was a man named

Bartlett.

Mari: John Bartlett and ^{Hot} Vera Price, Emmett Thompson, he was one of the bartletts, Joe Thompson was the other bartender, Catherine Kane was the bookkeeper.

Jul: Oh, yes I know them. Well, you probably visited on us.

Mari: I remember the name.

Jul: Was that a pretty good place to work?

Mari: No, (Laughs) It was during the war I never had much choice. But, I shouldn't say nothing against them because they were good to ^{anybody} ~~anybody~~ that worked there. During the Depression they carried a lot

of people and never pressed them for their bills and I imagine they lost some money but I imagine the biggest part of them paid them off. It probably took a long time. I could imagine. But when I first started working in a store things were very different from what they are now. You waited on the people.

Sub: That was kind of an old-fashioned store.

Yes: Well, it was a general store. They sold clothes and — and everything was bought in bulk. You never bought one can of milk, you bought a case of milk. And you never saw ten pounds of potatoes. You always bought a hundred pounds of potatoes. Fifty or a hundred pounds of flour. It was just a different way of shopping than what they do —

Sub: It was a holdover from the earlier times.
Yes: Oh-Yeah. And they delivered. What is something I don't know if there is any stores in town now that do that.

Sub: I don't know.

Yes: They don't even have charge accounts any more.

Sub: Yeah, that's true. We traded at Coors Brothers and later on we traded at Casarini and in the town.

Yes: Well, that was almost the same.

Sub: Guess that's all I remember.

Yes: Bill Coors Brothers was a Company store, too. They had sign-out cards on Quaker Oats Company bags. It would seem like people got paid — well, the times were paid weekly but everybody else, it seemed like they were paid monthly. Came that when you big orders — and they were big orders, what I mean. It seemed like people just bought over a month and that was it.

Sub: How long did you work there?

Yes: Well, Charlie and I got in a fight. I know

those about two years and he fired me. (Boughter)
Then he rehired me. I worked there, or, I'd say
~~five~~ years. From there I went to the Walcott. The
Christy, ~~Christy~~ Walcott. It was at 120 Walcott
where King's was. And that was an altogether
different type of a store. Everything they had was
a special. Food, speciality items and you worked
on people at Quers, where they were the most important
thing that you did. Where that customer worked in
you stayed with him. They handled things that other
stores never handled. In the way of fancy fruits and
vegetables, jams and jellies and cheese. You could
buy almost any kind of cheese there. And that was
another store where they had deliveries and called in
their orders. Big deliveries in those days. I
worked those five years, too.

Joh: Who was running it?

Mar: Matt Christy. It was a good place to
work. You had a different type of people there what,
you know, when I worked at Quers Brothers. Nice people.

Joh: Where the help were working?

Mar: Quers Brothers was it. When we first started
they would and then eventually they started. It took me
three years before they caught up with me. That's one
reason I got fired. (Laughs) For joining the union.

Joh: What's the Union's Purpose —

Mar: No, it was the Clerk's Union. Then at the
Walcott we went with the Union and at that time the
Clerk's Union, that was textile clerks, drugstore clerks, it
was all in one. One union. That was fine but I thought
that we worked harder than the other clerks. Maybe they
didn't think so but I did. I thought we did. It took, or,
until 1950's before the grocery clerks got their own
contract. And more wages.

Joh: Who was running the Clerk's Union?

Mar: Let's see, Mr. Quantler, he was the first one

that I had any dealings with. Then Mayme Kaminberg I remember, was the next one. His name is Goldberg, he used to own the shoe store on Main Street. Do you remember him?

Jul: Oh, yes.

Mari: He was President of the Union.

Jul: He was not running the shoe store then?

Mari: Yeah. He was still President.

Jul: He was an employer, wasn't he?

Mari: Well, he was an employee. I can't remember who owned that shoe store. It was on North Main Street where Ralph and Rosa's —

Jul: Yeah, I know. I bought boots there.

Mari: Yeah, tailor shop is there.

Jul: And where did you go from the Waldorf?

Mari: Well, I got married, I worked there for a year after I got married until I had a baby. Then Matt's brother Mike owned the Main Gullie Market on South Main, so, I don't know how they got word that I wasn't working but they asked me if I'd like to work there. So then I went. (Laughs)

Jul: And you were there quite a while.

Mari: Twenty-three years. Then again, that was a real old-fashioned store. When you first walked in it still had the wooden floors that they had oil on it.

It had no refrigeration. And to this day I can say the only improvement is linoleum on the floors. That was one of your Main stores that took Company sign-overs. The machine of business you could believe. I never believed that they could do as much business as what they did. And when I first started to work there it was strictly, well, I would not say strictly, it was more the minority with your Spanish speaking people and Mexicans, a few Chinamen. And all the steaks-burns in town. (Laughs) 'Cause at that time there was a lot of roasting houses. There was the Metal Hotel, there was the Howard

Hotel, there was Russel, the Reynolds - McDaniel, the Superior, the Parmer, the Edison and in all of these places was a lot of miners, you know, single men?

Jul: Did they carry speciality goods for the miners?

Mar: Well, I can remember when I first went there, at the Walcott, you put up, you know, the stock. But sometimes on Fridays and Saturdays at the main Pullie you might put up six cases of tomatoes,

(Bananas) Or tomato juice or tomato sauce. At that time we were the only store that used to get fresh peppers in, the jalapenos and the Anaheim peppers and we used to have people come in and just buy five, six, seven pounds of those ^{best} hot peppers. And they carried like mustard greens and other. Most of his stock was oriented to the Spanish people. And they had such big families. There was never a family with four kids, it was a family of eight kids (laughs), ten kids. And the Indians was the same way. There was quite large families

Indians. When I first started there it was mostly

Spanish people and the Indians and ^{all of} the bachelors who lived in those hotels. Then gradually I guess we

seemed a good place to trade and more people - of course at that time Sears was opening up and Bullocks was opening up and people were beginning to move around a little better, too. Most people couldn't understand French usage - assignments weren't, you know, they thought

Oh, boy, that gives them an open charge account, you know, to buy anything they want. They didn't realize that if they used over their bills, and a lot of people run up big bills, and a lot of them used to get you, too. They wouldn't the best people in the world and if they thought they could cheat you out of a dollar they was going to cheat you. The majority of them I would say that they were trustworthy. And we had all of the girls on the line, all the houses.

Jul: You don't know what houses were forgetting then?

Mrs.: Elma because had 14 South W. Young, Mrs. Gardner had the Empire, ^{and I} can't remember Alva's had name but she had 45 and then there was another one, she had the Victoria. I can't remember her name. Come she didn't take at the store too well. And then after Elma because died Beesly Snodgrass had 14 South. Then a girl by the name of Joan took over the Empire. Then at the 45 Bonita Farnum, after Alva died, she had the 45 and then later on Joe Ferguson had it now.

Jul.: 45, that's what, 45 West Galena?

Mrs.: No, East Mercury. The Dumas Block. And those was the Beesly Seven. If you want to go further. (Laughs)

Jul.: What was that?

Mrs.: That was right across the street from John's Pet Shop. Right above the Silver Bell. There was two women, I had you see saw Mabel. She had plaining red hair. She was a big woman and she always had a great big dog with her. I got to be real good friends with Mabel. I really liked Mabel. But this other woman who lived there was Hazel and she was a ~~old~~ ^{old} as a ^{one} ^{is} ^{that} ^{right} [!] (Laughs)

Jul.: ~~What was that like?~~ (Laughs)

Mrs.: (Laughs) Sometimes she'd forget she had one wig on and she'd put another one on. (Laughs) And she had snakes, she had birds. There were the most important things in their lives, were the dogs and the animals. And I can remember once the place caught on fire and they were screaming at the fireman, "Get the snake, get the snake." (Laughs) We used to laugh because I know they never had a phone but when ~~they~~ ^{they} had a customer one of them would come up and say, "You've got a long distance phone call." That meant ^{that} they had a customer they had to go. (Laughs)

Jul.: Do you remember the Calhoun Hotel?

Mrs.: Uh-huh. By the time I got working, though,

Silvestro's home had — I remember quite a few of them that ~~that~~ lived there. Like the Grace sisters, there was Mrs. Pierce and her twin sister. I can see them but I can't remember. But they just moved up into those apartments up town after they moved them out of there.

Jed: What did those houses do, did they have a kitchen for all the women there?

Nor.: Oh, hell. And cook. Nothing was too good. A lot of people don't realize how good those women was who owned those houses. Some Christmas time it was nothing for them to give a cab driver \$500 and say, "Yes, go out and buy some toys for these kids or if you know somebody who needs ~~the~~ help, you know." And myself, I know a lot of people that they helped, like if they had some old guy might be dying, you know, they'd go up and pay for the funeral. It wasn't fancy, but like I say, at least they got something good out of their life at the end.

One, Bonnie Sorenson, she died. Well, Bonnie had lived at the store for quite a while so I felt obligated to go to the funeral. (Laughs) The only two people were me and the madam from one of the houses. (Laughs) They come up to shake hands, "I'm sorry." (Laughs) We went to laugh. For whatever we used to hire high school boys. First we'd have to write a letter to their parent explaining to them that they would have to go into ^{your house} places, ~~you know~~ that they would be approved of so we wanted ~~them~~ their permission before they went home and said, "Hey, me, I just returned to the cab house." (Laughs) ~~They~~ ^{we} had this one kid, he was funny. He said, "I betcha I'm the only kid in town who goes from St. Patrick's Church to the cab house." Matt would say, "Great so you don't get the others mixed up." (Laughs)

Jed: You don't have any idea how many girls there were on the line, do you?

Nor.: Oh —

Ed.: It varied, didn't it?

Nor.: It did. Yes, at Edna's there wasn't as much

Pastor's

Turnover, Dr. Mrs. ~~Bastons~~, as what there was at 45. It seemed like 45 had a bigger turnover in girls. They'd come and they'd go. He says there'd be six or ten at each one of the places.

Pastor's
Dad: before was Mrs. ~~Bastons~~.

Mrs.: At the Empire Hotel, on the corner of Palace and W. 42nd St. Up above where Jean Sorenson's —. ~~It~~ She was another one. They can say what they want about Jean. She had the filthiest, dirtiest mouth and I liked her before she wed it. There was one woman that was a call girl at 45 and if I was to pencil for out to you, you'd call me a liar. Because you'd never know by far how or by far actions. Her name was Sandra. She lives in Florida now. But she almost looked like a minister's wife. She was a Jewish girl. Like I say, if I was to tell you that, you'd have to say, "Oh, you're kidding." She said, "But she was. And I know that she would with quite a few of the prominent men here in town. 'Cause some times they used to like to talk. We used to have one, when she was sober — she'd tell you what a hard life she had, you know, working in these places and then when she'd come in there drunk she'd tell you that she went to there — that she was born and raised in a convent and her family was well-to-do. She was completely, she'd forget that she'd told something different when she was sober. I can remember a lot of times when they'd come in the store, some times they'd come in in their working clothes — do you remember Doctor Carter, an ophthalmologist here in town?

Dad: I remember the name, yeah.

Mrs.: (Laughs) He was getting turnover and in comes this girl in this real flimsy outfit. He was putting the turnover in a bag and he supposed there all over the floor. (Laughs)

Sub: Not all of those houses had call girls, did they?

Max: I'll say they did. And at that time you never saw real young girls. It just here - well, it's been two years since Jim worked there - that you saw real young girls in those houses.

Sub: The ones that's been taken over.

Max: I'll say so. But Ben used to tell me, she says a good where'd she go to death in those college towns, anywhere. (Laughs)

St. (Laughs) \ But's true. What else do you remember about them?

Max: The call girls?

Sub: Yes. You're the first person I've talked to who had the opportunity to know these people.

Max: Well, I can never say anything bad about them. If you find their way of life and I've got nothing against them like I say, they always paid their bills. And they were good to wait on. They never demanded extra service or anything.

Sub: What about the Chinese, how many Chinese were in that area, do you know?

Max: Outside of Danny Wong and his grandfather and the Ross and the Hems, there really ^{isn't} that many Chinese when I worked there. There was a real skunked up man, we used to call him Grandpa, I don't know if I ever knew his name. He was mestizo, somebody beat him up. And like I say, it was a shame 'cause he was so frail he could've had protected himself if he wanted to. And then we used to have ^{the} ones that owned the laundry over there on Congress Street, I don't remember their names 'cause they didn't come in too much.

Sub: Did Danny Wong buy for the Public (Cops) at the Main Public?

Max: Well look, he used to buy his vinegar there, in great big gallons. At one time one (Laughs) got away from him, it was slippery, and it ended up down by John's (Paul) Shop,

almost through the window. (Singer?) Danny's grandfather was a ^{real} nice person, too.

Jul: I think he's the one who started the Pein.

Yes: I just remember Danny working there.

Jul: I talked to Danny. I recall interacting him and I got the impression that he grandfather started it.

Yes: Then there used to be an herb doctor. If you go by there — the last time I remember — there was a shop of tea.

Jul: I remember when he had the window full of herbs and tea.

Yes: I don't remember what his name was either but I imagine Danny could tell you. I can't think of any more Chinese people who talked there.

Jul: Did you ever go out on strike?

Yes: No. Had a lot of problems with it. When Matt Christy owned it his two daughters worked there and there was me, so I was the only one that was in the union. So they agreed to pay me anything that the union wanted and when Johnny took over there was three or four of us but he agreed to. It was kind of hard to go out on strike when you're holding ~~somebody's~~ ^{somebody's} sign-overs on, so you have to think of how kind because they never had money to go anywhere else. Probably she would give them credit or they never had the money to go to Safeway or those places.

Jul: What did ~~she~~ that have to do with you? What was the manager of the store, would it?

Yes: Well, like I say, his business department on sign-overs. The ~~sign~~ majority of his.

Jul: Oh, you mean you didn't want to check him down.

Yes: Yeah. That was the majority of his business, was credit business and it was from the sign-overs. And now of those ever complained about the way you had the clerks make. Maybe because they have forms but we worked some they worked right alongside of you. But I can remember mornings, I have to go to work at seven-thirty because they'd be lined up waiting for their checks. Some of

then would be sick, some of them would be drunk. Some of them would be pregnant and sick. (Laughs)

Rob: And what did you do? You cashed the check and took out what they owed?

Her: They got the checks. They never saw their checks. What price were the stuff and then you took out what they owed and they owed everybody.

Rob: And then you gave them the balance.

Her: Yeah, and sometimes there would be a balance.

You had no way of checking to see whether they had worked enough. In fact we had this one guy used to come in after work every night with his hair still wet from taking a shower and feeling a hundred and never worked a shift. Stupid those and argue that they made a mistake. "So help me, I worked six days, you can call them up." You call up, he never worked at all, and in the meantime he's run up a \$200 grocery bill. (Laughs)

The biggest part of them, like I say, were these men who worked in the mines who lived in these rooming houses and then in the late 1950's the Company brought in a lot of Southern people. And that's where our trouble began. The first customer I worked on she says, "Put it in a poke and I'll take it home." I say, "What?" She says,

"Put it in a poke and I'll take it home." I said, "I don't know what you mean." She says, "Put it in a bag and I'll take it with me." (Laughs) They were the people who used Pinto beans and biscuits. But I'll tell you, I can see why the South was in such a shape if all of them were like that. Fiddy! Fiddy, dirty, they could care less. I never met a good one from there. The rest of them didn't matter but there, oh! Oh, and the shoplifters! They'd steal your blind, and argue! Never took a thing. And in these days you couldn't approach them in the store, you had to catch them outside.

One time I chased a guy close up to the Riatts Theater for a job of maintenance I says, "Are you

going to pay for that?" He says, "No." "Had it had to me," (Laughs) He just did a couple weeks ago, I don't know if you saw it in the paper. His name was _____ he'd steal anything. He didn't care what it was, ~~he~~

a lot of out-of-town, they used to call them booters. They'd steal some place from another town and then they'd bring it here and sell it. You could get anything, and what they could get they'd go out and steal for you. All you had to do was put in your order. (Laughs) One day I was talking to a clerk, you know, between us and I said, "Gee, I've got to get a new nightmaster. Mine's worn out." And this, his name was _____, he was standing there. Pretty soon he comes in with a great big box and he says, "How much will you give me for it?" "What is it?" "A nightmaster." I says, "What did you get it?" He says, "I stole it up at Keweenaw." (Laughs) And there was another one, his name was _____.

One day I was sitting on somebody and I says, "I would you to watch this. He's going to steal something. You're going to be my witness." So I waited and I says, "Keith is there anything else?" "No." "You sure?" "Yep." I says, "How about those six cans of smoked oysters you got?" He says, "I know it." I says, "Either you give those to me or I call the police." "Whatever you want." "Well," he says, "I'll make a deal with you. You call the police and arrest me and then," he says, "I'll see you for false arrest and well split the money from the insurance company. They're always thieving."

He even had an Eskimo. He was a goofy as they come, too. I think that he stayed too long in the igloo. (Laughs) I don't know how he ever got to Butte. One time we had an Agent from the F.B.I. I don't know who they was looking for but they had him taking them for, oh, six, seven months. I don't know why they did it, he never made no secrets about, you know, trading.

Q: You mean it was a sort of an investigation?

Man: Yeah. For some reason that we never did find out, they never did say. And then one time one of our best customers paid ^{his} bill with a counterfeit \$20 bill. And when he gave it to me I says to him, "Well, did you believe that it wasn't right. Oh, the Treasury agents come and he was the most obnoxious person there was. We had several dealings with the F.B.I. but whenever they'd come in they always waited until you was through writing on the customer and then they'd tell you who they was and show you their stuff. This guy didn't. He just come in and he says, "Is your name Marshall?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "Did you take this" and gives me this phony \$20 bill. I says, "Yeah." "Well, he says, "Any fool would know it was counterfeit." "Well, " I says, "Maybe if you'd know the circumstances you would know some one doubts about it." He says, "Well, tell me about it." I says, "Well, it's a real good customer. I even remembered at the time that it looked funny. "Well, he says, "What did you take it for?" I says, "Well, why would I take it? I'd know that man for years. I've never known him to be anything wrong. "Well, did he question me? Did I know any of his friends, where would he and his check? I said, "You'd have to ask him. I don't know where he'd call his check. As far as I know it'd have to be the bank. "Well, he says, "That's what a lot of counterfeit things do, they get all innocent looking paper ~~to~~ ^{and} split with them for passing it." But I says, "I don't think this man would ever do it. You know that I had to go to a class for six hours and he showed me nothing but different counterfeit bills. And to this day if it ever got a hand in it I don't of hold back. (Laughs) From taking it,

I don't like those hotels. I used to feel so sorry for those people. To think that they'd have to live in those places like the Reynolds - The Donald and ^{the} Richards. The Doyle was one of the nicer places and the Howard was

vice - but like Russel and the Reynolds - the Deasale, SE!
One bathroom to a floor and just nothing but one room.
Used to think that people just had to - Well was the only
thing they could go home for. No wonder they drank. I
would too. And stayed in the bars. There used to be -
well, there was Henry Spencer and Joe Brangard,
Fredley Sepland, they lived in the Doyle and one
time I saw the cops berry up and go over the street. I
thought, Well, I'd better go down the street and see what's
happening. Here they got in a fight over a bottle of wine.
Well, they were trying to take them to jail. They put one
in and the other crawl out. They started counting
money, they was short one. They ~~started~~ ^{were} running upstairs.
Here was Fredley Sepland with his head in the oven.
He was going to commit suicide 'cause they took his bottle
(laughter) from there was Betty Billie Jarni. She saw
the Doyle Hotel for a while. She had a brother by the name
of Roy Flood and he looked about like Greed or a
fall head. (laughter) and he had a friend, his name
was Marie Skelton. One day Billie called me up. She
said, "Come on down, I want to show you something."
I says, "What?" She says, "You've got to see this show."
So I go down. Here's the two of them, stark naked,
running through the halls chasing one another. Billie
says, "I can't stand it no more. ^{you got} ~~me~~ going to call the
cops." So she called the cops and the cops come. They
knocked on the door, when they opened the door have
come Marie and she takes a curtain and she says, "How
do you do?" (laughter) The two of them as naked as a
blue jay.

We always had - well, this was before it was
fashionable, you know, to rise together. We always had
somebody that was Mrs. So-and-so. The next week would have
another one that was Mrs. So-and-so. We used to have to guess
how a number so we could look them straight. (laughter)
We had this one, he was, I wouldn't say that he was,

what would you call, pure-blood Mexican but he was
part Mexican. He thought he was quite the ladies man.
He had at least one or two a different wife. Now
when they'd move out he'd put them down as their bill.
He collected income tax on all of them. This one day this
woman come in and she said, "Jim Mr. —" She
ordered three groceries and I says, "What's this for?" She
says, "Jim Mr. People." "Oh? O.K. sign your name."
Bob come in after work and I says, "You've got a new one
living with you now," and he says, "No." I says, "A Mr.
People come in and brought some groceries." He says, "Are
you sure?" I says, "Yeah." So I didn't see him for a
couple days and he come in and I says, "What's the
new one?" He says, "That's the real Mr. People." I says,
"What are you talking about?" He says, "That's my one and
only wife. I had to marry her when we was in school and
I took off and left her. I went home after work that day
and she says, 'Well, here I am.' " He says, "What do you mean?"
She says, "I never bothered you for eighteen years. I missed
your bed and never asked you for a penny. Jim getting old.
You're taking care of me now." He says, "Didn't you ever get
a divorce?" She says, "No, I never got a divorce." (Laughs)
So he had to work them all out. He was real nice,
though. I liked him.

De had Vic Anna ~~was~~ ^{is} his still around. He was
something else. I could say that he's not mentally
retarded but that's really something wrong with the man.
Although he never bothered us in the store he's been known
to be real cranky. He'd come in with some of the darndest
things to give you. If he liked you he was fine but if
he didn't like you he was awfully mean. He always
asked me for a job. "Well, Vic, there's nothing you can do."
Well just would have and I says, "Go, I need somebody
to clean my garage. Would you want to come up?" "Sure,"
he says, "I'll come." So I went up and get him. No come down
and, boy, we could have had a dance in the garage. We

could find nothing but we could have had a house. So
at no time I could see Mexican food for him. I
thought, Well, that's what he likes so I'll cook some. I
say, "Come on, Vic, it's time to eat." My mother was here
and he says to my mother, "You want to go to lunch?" My
mother says, "Sure," so he takes my mother to lunch and
leaves me sitting here. (Laughs) The next day he
decided he was going to come and clean up the yard
so he come on the bus. He told the bus driver where he
wanted to go and the bus driver said it was two bits so
he says, "O.K." So he comes and he cleans the yard, does
a real good job. Well, he decided he'd come the next
day so he gets on the bus and the bus driver says, "Fifty
cents." He said, "Fifty cents? I just give you two bits."
Well, the guy says, "On Thursdays it's half price." Well, he
wouldn't pay him the fifty cents so he called a cab.
(Laughs) He could tell the cab driver where we
lived. I guess he rode around 'til it was about
twelve o'clock by the time he got here. He cleaned
up our car and he cleaned everything in
the neighbor's yard. (Laughs) My boy come in, my son,
and he says to my mother, "Vic's cleaning the alley." My
mother says, "Yeah, I know." Well, he says, "You'd better
go out and stop him 'cause he'll be down on his knees
crawling in another ten minutes." He cleaned all the weeds
down and everything he found he threw in the yard.
He didn't care. And he took a share to one of the other
girls. He'd go to a flower shop and he'd buy the biggest
plants he could find and give to her. All Christmas he'd
buy a case of oranges to give to her. He'd give around,
too, but, like I say, if he liked you he was fine. If
he didn't like you he could tell you.

Now there was a small restaurant, I don't know, on the
corner of Mercury and Main. The guys were over George
Fales. Dorothy Melick, they used to own the Tony.
Remember where the Tony was, next to the Park Theater?

Well, after they tore that down he opened up this restaurant on South Main and the food was good if you could stand who sat next to you. Ah! One morning I was in there and I says, "George, I smell gasoline." He says, "Yeah, I put it on around the cracks to kill the cockroaches." (Laughs) He could have blown that whole block to hell.

One time my mother come in ~~to~~ I was down there eating lunch. Nobody else would eat there from the store except we had they treated me real nice. I always wanted what I ordered so I figured I would get personal. They only had one steak knife. (Laughs) And this day I ordered the steak sandwich and my mother come in I says, "I'll down. Do you want something to eat?" She says, "Well — just the Dorothy realtor over to the guy next to me and he had a steak and she says, "You're through" and hands me the knife, leaves — worked it or nothing. My mother left. But they was real nice. Like I says, if you could stand the people and I can remember one lady come in there, her name was Mary Jackson and she had a few dollars and she got mixed up with this one hotel. Well, she finally did break away from him but then she got mixed up with this other one, I can't remember his name. She had a ~~great~~ ^{big} wedding at the Euclid Hotel. You should have seen how nice it was. She paid for everything.

One customer, his name was Floyd Coulter, ^{and he} was a hypochondriac. ~~of the thought to look some more this~~ ^{Some time since} you said somebody had, Floyd did to. I don't know how he could be so sick and live. But he did and he could drink. One day he used down to the Salvation Army and got a pair of crutches. And we wanted him come up the street. He come running up the street until he got to the Silver Dollars and then he put the crutches and he goes — (Laughs). You there was Ed Reynolds.

A lot of people used to call him a Cornish Jack or something

like that. He was a miser. But he was always predicting the weather. So one time, it was the middle of June, and he happened to look up and he says, "Oh, look! There's sun dogs. It's going to snow." Well, he be darned if it didn't. (Laughs) So we made such a big issue out of it and we really ^{hardly} have never carried it as far, but we told him the guy from the El Sullivan shows wanted him to tell about his experience. And the poor man, he would not and bought a new suit and he was saving up money to go to New York to ^{get} on the El Sullivan show. (Laughs) That's all we get.

Juli: You seem to have had a hard for making friends.

Mari: Well, I don't think I'm better than anybody but there's nobody better than me. I love people.

Juli: Obviously.

Mari: Like Bill Rogers, I never met a person I didn't like. And sometimes it used to get me in trouble. (Laughs)

I can never say that any of those people were ever anything but nice to me at the store. And a lot of them borrowed money from me but every one of them paid it back. On my birthday ~~to buy me a drink~~ ^{the person who borrowed} to buy me a drink, you know. They were really nice to me. I miss them very much. They'd come in and tell you a sob story. I know, this one guy, I must have paid for a hundred haircuts for him. He always needed fifty cents for a haircut. "Oh, gee, all I need is two more bits and I can go get my haircut." "You know, if I'm getting kind of long, O.K., Marjorie." "But none of them ever, you know, tried to beat me out of anything that I ever did for them. You know, Marjorie. In fact, there's another couple, they always send me a card on my birthday. Always. Christmas card. Like Mrs. Sterling. She always sends me a Christmas card. It might say "Happy Easter" or "Happy Valentine's Day." (Laughs)

Juli: Yeah. She's quite a person. Does those many cards in that neighborhood when you were there?

Mari: Well, there was Mrs. Sterling, there was Quil,

and her and her, Brown and Bruce Brown and the
Porter but that's about all. You need to be a couple, I
believe their name was Harris, that need to come from
Aurora or one in a while. Really, there wasn't, You
was two families of Browns.

Jah: They were related, wasn't they?

Nas: They could have been, You was the Brown
and the trying to think what his brother's name was. ~~Was~~^{was},
His Brown was my basketball coach in grade school.
His brother, was, I know that there two worked in the
mines but the rest of them, like that one ^{Fenter} man, he cleared
James's for years and years and years. Fenter. And there
was ~~James~~ I don't know, he would have stepped out of
the sky because he just wasn't — she, he was strange,
he was the most miserable person I ever met. He argued
about everything. He always used to say, you know, "in
the big town, Chicago, and he used to say, "in Ole," or
something like that, you know. He'd do it like this and
he say, "forget about it. If you don't like it here, go back
there. Everything was so bad out here. Down town," he
say, "you can get it cheaper than that." And then there was
Ollie, that worked for John's Ford Shop. He was a great big
guy. He was real nice, too. I could say nothing bad
about any of them.

Jah: No. Well, look at Bonnie. She's a broken-down
old woman. She's a nice person.

Nas: Well she, she used to be a janitor. She
used to clean the Metal Bank barber shop. I used to
laugh. After she moved down on Maryland she used
to send her order in but she'd send it by mail. She'd
put the order in the envelope and then she'd forget
something and she'd write it all over the envelope.
(Laughs) But I really liked Bonnie. She was — and

they said she helped a lot of people. That was colored
people that was needed a place to stay or something to eat,
she was right there to help out. Anything she had she

shared.

Juli: She's a good person.

Mari: Yeah. There used to be another couple I used to like quite well, too. ~~He~~ ^{There} was Fred and Esther Richards. They used to run Hughes Gas ~~Stores~~. They were real nice, too.

Juli: Does they bleed?

Mari: No. Like I said, there really wasn't that many colored people.

Juli: No, I guess not. There used to be ~~but~~ ^{all} the ones down around, say, ^{around} 1930. There were quite a few.

Mari: I went to school with one colored kid. His name was Webster Sells and at that time I think Jim and Bruce Brown were the only two colored kids in the system. You know, in the school system. I can remember at the Grant we had a couple Chinese people, the Kieris. They used to lease a couple desks up from where the General Heart Chapel used to be. His dad was a tailor. There was a big family of them. But they left during the war, too.

The Silver Dollar was down in the 200 block on South Main Street. There's like a body shop or something there.

Juli: I remember when it used to be open as a bar I guess some whites used there.

Mari: I did, (Laughs)

Juli: Indians did.

Mari: They had good music. Real good music.

Stacy Hammer, she was quite, Oh, way younger than her husband. They traded at the store for a while but she left, and the daughter name was Renee. If you get a chance to talk to Mrs. Foster you might ask where they moved. They left Battle, I know. Renee must have been, oh, seven or eight years old when she left. But there was like the Carl Inn and the Silver Dollar and the Davis and Russis, the Rox, boy, they used to be open 24

knows a guy. (Laughs) It was a good neighborhood.
Like I said, I was never afraid down there. And it
would surprise you when the cops would pick up somebody
for robbery or something and find out they were wanted for
robbery somewhere else, too. 'Cause you'd think, Oh, he
was such a nice guy. (Laughs)

Fridays and Saturdays used to be a big time in
Butte, especially down there, I think that's what turned
the town, too, when they started mailing the checks.
You know, before when they used to have to go up and pick
up the checks, at least they stayed up town. Maybe they
didn't spend too much but at least they spent a couple of
dollars up town. And I really think that was what started
frustrating Butte, was when they started mailing the checks. It
seems there was a lot of families that ~~were~~ ^{were} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~it~~ ^{it},
~~but~~ when they got the check rather than the husband ^{pick it up and} ~~have it~~,
you know, gambling and drinking on the way home.

You know, it's funny, too. Like your Mexican people,
they were good family people when the Indians, they would
care less. They just wanted for the dollars to go out and drink.

Juh: It's like one of the Indians — give them four
interviews with Indians at the Indian Center.

Was: Oh, did you talk to Caron Perry?

Juh: Oh, ~~she~~ ^{she} speaks, yep.

Was: There was a guy, when he was ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~best~~ ^{best} ~~guy~~ ^{guy} in the world but when he was drunk I would have
killed him. (Laughs) I was talking to him. He's on the Alcoholics
Anonymous program now. "Being a real good job, he says, "I would
be long I'll have every Indian in Butte drinking Community
Milk." (Laughs)

Juh: Well, you see, one of them, I don't remember what she
told me that he was half-breed or mixed blood and the full
bloods were on the Reservation when he was a kid would
have him around because he was past white and then
when he moved away from the Reservation the whites
didn't really want him around because he was past Indian.

The only time he felt like a man was when he was drunk. When he was the King of the whole place.

Mat: Oh, but they used to be awful when they'd get drunk. You know, what used to bother the most, they'd come in and take a few kidneys and start eating it. I'd have to throw them out because other people would get out. *(Laughs)* But Carson and I are real good friends. But even with his whole family that traded those, they're all nice to me. Now Liba has sister works with alcoholics, too. Yeah, I like Carson. He has a brother out in the Creek. Elsie. And Elsie had the best sense of humor that you'd ever want to see. He'd try anything. He'd say, "Carson told me I would have a couple caskets of cigarettes." "Now, Elsie, you know that Carson didn't tell you that." "So help me, June, he did." Carson used to say, "Don't give him five cents." *(Laughs)* When when the Indians come into all of that

money, they were paid off, Elsie was in Spokane at the time, he just drank and drank and drank until they found him in an old hotel room half frozen. Well, I guess he's ~~started~~ ^{starting} to get his speak bad now but I really don't think he can walk or anything. Elsie was good, too. One time Elsie saw the cops were going to give me a ticket for overtime parking. The only nickel he had, he ped it in the water. They were going to ~~put~~ ^{throw} him in jail. *(Laughs)* We were always calling the cops for something down here.

Family arguments. We used to have family fights there in the store, too. One time this young girl come running in in her fancy nightgown. "Oh," she says "he's going to kill me! Not going to kill me!" "Oh?" "My husband." "Why would we an apartment underneath that second-hand store there on ~~Neversay~~ Street, get boys and that. I said, "Sit down and I'll call the cops, right in the big windows. Don't you go says, "June, I think you'd better get her away from the windows." *(Laughs)*

~~After~~ After you leave I'll probably remember a dozen other things.

Art: Well, we could have that. I haven't heard so many funny stories since I don't know when.

Her: That's what I miss about the store. There was never a dull moment there. It's funny when we all get together. We start reminiscing about different things that happened up there. There one guy, John, I can't remember his last name but he was a big belly, that's all he was. One day I had his groceries all in a box and he was drunk. I says, "John, let me deliver those groceries." "I can pack it, it will be easy." With that he went to put it up on his shoulder and he dumped it right on top of my head. I had eggs, cottage cheese — (Laughs)

Then there was another old guy used to come in and his pants was always open. I used to say, "God damn you, I'm going to get a goddamn pair for you." The other girls used to say, "Gee, his pants are open." I said, "Well, tell him. Don't tell me." (Laughs)

We had another, oh, it's an awful thing to say but this one clerk, she had a weak stomach and I don't know what was worse, the smell of the customer or Quercia going, "Up, up, ^{Running around with} ~~the~~ the air freshener. So, I thought, I've got to do something about this so I put a can of Right Guard and a bar of Dial soap in her order. When she got her order she called up and she said, "Gee, I got a can of Right Guard and a bar of ~~Dial~~ soap that I didn't order." "Gee, I said, "I don't know who it belongs to so you might as well go ahead and use it." She says, "I don't use it." (Laughs) I wanted to say, I know it. (Laughs)

But every time Dick came in Quercia used to say, "Gee, I can't smell on her." She said, "She turns my stomach." Like I said, I didn't know what was worse, Quercia going "Up, up" or running around with the air freshener.

(Laughs) Some of their names, I guess, were really bad. This one Dick came back and said, "Gee, I held my breath for twelve minutes. When I took the groceries in."

You know, you wonder what happened to all of these

people. You know, like with all of these letters addressed up.
Foot of the people who used to live upstairs over the Nevins
Bank building. Like the Loggatt Hotel, Pennsylvania Hotel,
you know whatever happened —

Pat: Some of them died off.

Mrs.: We used to have a lot of them in the Pennsylvania
Hotel. I hope I never get old like that where you don't
have nobody or nothing. Like I said, sometimes you could
blame these people for smoking 'cause all they had to go to
was this one room, the front walk and that was it.

Pat: Well, right, I don't know how they got ahead of it.
You know, it was the tail end of a lifetime of blessing their
paycheck.

Mrs.: I guess what they don't know they didn't know.

There was this — she's still around town, her name is Alice
Dunover — a little short woman and she's quite a rascal.
Now, to hear Alice talk she came from a good family. She was
marital and her daughter died when she was quite young and
from what we could get from what she used to tell us, she was
from Texas. But she was an awful bitter person and you
wonder why she'd come so far away from where her roots
was, to come to Butler. But you don't see these old guys
like you used to. Well, there's nothing for them to do here.
They used to work in the mines and now there isn't —

John: I don't know where they would be if they're not around.
I see a few sitting around up at the library, up around
that country, how long it'd since you've seen her hand
on the street?

Mrs.: Yeah, that's true.

John: At one time you could hardly walk up the street
without somebody wanting two bits, and that's gone long
ago.

Mrs.: Two bits doesn't even buy a glass of beer
any more. My husband used to get mad. He'd be walking
up town with me, you'd have to stop and talk and then
you'd have to give them a dollar (laughs) We used to

have one guy, his name was Sanders. He was a young
kid and it was a shame to see - to watch a life just
to live just for drink. He'd be sober maybe for five or six months,
He used to borrow money off of us. We used to say, "All right,
you've got to pay us for every dollar, you've got to pay us
two bits" and he ^{belonged} used to. We used to put it in underneath
the counter, you know, and he'd say, "How's the pot?" "Well,
we've got five dollars." "Well, he give you six if you'll
give me that." (laughs) Like I say, for the money that I
need to lend and not one of them ever - of course I
used to tell them, "Don't you live owing me money, cause I'm
going to catch up with you sooner or later."

Ans: Well, you were obviously a friend.

Max: I don't think they considered me a friend.
Ans: If you'd been a Skyball, you know, wanting your
interest, wanting to be paid right on the nose, they'd either
have stayed away or they'd have cheated you.

Max: A lot of those people have a lot of pride, too.
They got their check on the third of the month and they paid
their grocery bill. They might charge the rest of the month
but they always - I don't know, was it seems like
everybody's out to beat you. But like John and Dave used
to say, if the ones who worked every day would pay their bills
like the ones that was on Social Security, we wouldn't have
a thing to worry about. They paid their bills and then what
was left, then they -

Ans: Just like Bowser does today.

Max: Yeah, I don't imagine she worked too long
under Social Security, that she gets every week.

Ans: She couldn't get every week, no.

Max: You know, I worry about her now. There, too,
'cause her neighbors avoid the bus in the world, and they
might think that she's got a couple of dollars and she hate for
them to hurt her.

Ans: Yeah, I'd hate to see that, Don just below her
a fence or two. There's usually some kind of Ruppia type hanging

out there. They don't seem to bother anybody but you don't know.

Mar.: Do Bonnie's bones still clatter?

Jul: (Laughs) It's been straightforward up since — the first time I was in there I had never seen anything quite like it.

Mar.: Was that little house was so cluttered that —

Jul: Well, this joint had a path opened from the door back to where she was sitting, if you were careful where you walked and everything was piled with boxes.

Mar.: Yes, she kept everything.

Jul.: Everything. But it's been straightforward up, sorry since that first time. A little more orderly. I don't know who did it. She could do it.

Mar.: I think a nurse came.

Jul.: That could be. She has some young women I met there once who were delivering her groceries.

Mar.: That's probably from the W. House.

Jul: You know, there was another old lady, she was in the garage. Mrs. Oton. She talked with the store. Her birthday's always the fourth of July. I always send her a card. She's so cute. She used to say, "Mind you, everything's getting so high, how am I going to pay my taxes on the house?" "Mar. Oton," I said, "If I was 95 years old that would be the last thing I'd ever worry about, how to pay my taxes. When you're going to get the house, let them worry about paying the taxes." "Oh," she says, "I wouldn't die letting somebody else pay my bills." (Laughs) You know, she gave piano lessons up to a couple years ago. She was in a wheelbar and a wheel chair. She was a pretty old person. And I think one time she told me she'd been a widow over 60 years. Her husband died within a year after they were married. She was related to Leipheimer, I don't know how they're related but she told me once she was related to Leipheimer.

His Vincent Barge, he was a little Mexican, he ~~traded~~ there all the years that I did and he always spelled his name for me because he said I never knew how to spell his name. From the first day that I ~~traded~~ there, "What's your name?" "Vincent Barge, B-A-Y-A. Yes, you know yes?" "All that store you signal every slip that you got, so you couldn't come back and say, ~~that you~~ didn't get it, 'cause you'd say, "Well, you signal it." For 23 years he spells his name for me. (Laughs)

~~That~~ ^{His man} came from the South, they brought them up here in the winter time, of all times to bring them up was the winter time. He come in one day, he says, "This is it. If hell is as hot as that mine is I'm working in, the changing my way of living, right now. "But, like I said, it was a shame to bring them up in the winter time 'cause it was one of our coldest winters and they'd freeze to death. They never come up prepared for, you know, our climate. But they didn't last long, either, you remember when they built those houses up on West Main Street? And out here off of Taylor Avenue? Well, Pete Groves was telling us once, he says, "You should have seen what they did to those houses. If you'd deliberately took a sledge hammer and tried to knock them, you could do it because it was just total destruction."

He says one day they got a call, a woman called up and says "There was something wrong with their stove, she couldn't light it." And I says, "You don't have to ~~the~~ light it, it's electric." Here she had some wood underneath the burners. Trying to make a fire like that. They were saying, too, they'd go back to Alabama and Kentucky and those places on a ~~week~~ weekend just like we'd go to Louisiana. Drive all the way there, near stop, and then turn around. But they'd take the plumb line, the torrets and the bottles and anything they could steal,

back there with them. (Laughs)

Another who used to trade there was Dixie Hinkel, they says at one time she was a call girl and one of the most popular in Battle. She got TB and she was down in Yellow for quite a while. She was funny. She'd call a cab. She lived in the Howard and she'd call a cab to take her to the Silver Dollar across the alley. (Laughs)

And what was her name? Grace Peyton. She always claimed she was the granddaughter of the guy or the people who owned Quaker Oats. She swore up and down that she was a granddaughter. She was another mean one. She was fine as long as she liked you but if she didn't like you, she used to pack a cane and she'd hit you hard if across the street.

And we used to leave the Smiths. He was six foot tall and she was a little woman and they'd get in a fight and they were both dead. They'd get in a fight and they'd be screaming and hollering at one another and pretty soon she'd get mad and she'd haul off and she'd hit him in the stomach. (Laughs)

~~And~~ The people that owned the restaurant, she got cancer and she died. I always liked Dorothy. She was a lover. ~~She says~~ At one time I asked her, I says, "Dorothy, do you have any family?" She says, "Nope. When I left that part of my life was closed. I've never gone back. I've never heard from them. I don't think they know where I am 'cause I've never ever wrote anything to show them."

So, after the funeral George comes in and he gives me \$20. I says, "What's this for?" He says, "Well, Dorothy always says if there was anything left after her funeral, she wanted you to have." And I says, "No, take and pay for the flowers and that." He says, "No, everything is paid for. This is what's left." So he gives me the money. I says, "What were them I get from any of my relatives." (Laughs) I don't think of anything else. That's all.