

INTERVIEW WITH MARIAN CANAVAN

TAPE I - SIDE I

This is Mary Murphy. What follows is an interview with Marian Canavan at her home in Butte, Montana. Marian is a member of the Marian White Arts And Crafts Club and the Westside Shakespeare Club.

MURPHY: I wanted to start though by just getting some background and asking when your family came to Butte, and how long ago.

CANAVAN: Oh yeah. Well, I was born in North Dakota but my family was wise enough to come to Montana before I was two years old and I've been here ever since.

MURPHY: Did they come right to Butte?

CANAVAN: We came to Forsyth first and we were there a little while and then we came to Butte.

MURPHY: Um hum. Um hum.

CANAVAN: Yeah.

MURPHY: Did your father work in the mine then?

CANAVAN: No, no. He was a--he did bookkeeping. He was an accountant.

MURPHY: Oh.

CANAVAN: All that sort of thing.

MURPHY: Uh huh, uh huh. And um--was your mother involved in clubs in Montana then. Did she join any women's clubs?

CANAVAN: Oh they used to have lodges then. Oh--Rebekahs and all that sort of thing.

MURPHY: Uh huh, uh huh.

CANAVAN: And they were--they sort of died out now but at that time it was lodge work more than club.

MURPHY: Uh huh. So what--what year would that have been that they came to Montana then?

CANAVAN: I was born in 1905 and so that would be about 1907 we came to Montana.

MURPHY: Um hum. My, then you've really been in Butte a long time.

CANAVAN: Yeah. I love it. It's home. (laugh)

MURPHY: Did you have brothers and sisters?

CANAVAN: Uh huh. I had one brother, a year and a half younger than that. Then, the next one was thirteen years younger than I, and my sister is sixteen years younger than I, and my little brother is eighteen years younger than I. So it was just like two families.

MURPHY: Yeah, uh huh. So where did you live when you were growing up?

CANAVAN: Oh over on the westside on West Park Street, yeah.

MURPHY: Mmm. How far over?

CANAVAN: Seven hundred block. That house has since burned down.

MURPHY: Oh, the one that just recently burned down?

CANAVAN: No, years back. It was on the corner.

MURPHY: Oh, mmm. So did you go to school over at McKinley?

CANAVAN: Um hum, and I went to Butte High. I graduated from Butte High in 1924.

MURPHY: Did you go to college?

CANAVAN: No, I didn't have the opportunity to go to college.

MURPHY: Did many of the girls do you think in your class--did many go to college in those days?

CANAVAN: Oh I think quite a few, uh huh. Yeah, I was in a class with quite a few girls who went to college.

MURPHY: Did you want to go?

CANAVAN: Yes. (laughs) But I didn't. I had to go to work.

MURPHY: Uh huh. So what did you go to work doing?

CANAVAN: I worked for a shoe store. I did the bookkeeping and sold shoes and that shoe store's since gone out

because the man retired. It was Clem's Shoe Store and it was on North Main Street where that embroidery shop is now. And it was next to it where that drug store is, there was a men's clothing store and next to that was the Chequemagon Cafe.

MURPHY: Uh huh, I've seen pictures of that.

CANAVAN: Oh, that was a wonderful cafe.

MURPHY: Uh huh. Was this a women's shoe store or was it both?

CANAVAN: We had men's, women's and children's, uh huh.

MURPHY: How long did you work there?

CANAVAN: I worked there until I was married. And I came out of high school and started work there, and then I was married in 1927. So I worked about three years there.

MURPHY: How did you meet your husband?

CANAVAN: Well, I used to run around with a lot kids--we used to go with the boys from the School of Mines going to the

dances and stuff and my husband was--it was Montana Tech but it was the School of Mines then--and I met him. He was a Tech student. So I finally married him.

MURPHY: Uh huh. So that was--that's where he learned mining engineering then, up at the Tech?

CANAVAN: Uh huh.

MURPHY: Then did you get married after he graduated?

CANAVAN: Yeah, uh huh.

MURPHY: And then did he go right to work for the Company.

CANAVAN: He went right to work for them and he worked for--he started to work at the Pittsmont Mill when he was thirteen years old. Then he quit and went up to Tech and when he came out then he went to work for the Anaconda Company. Yeah.

MURPHY: So did you ever work again after you got married?

CANAVAN: No. No I stayed home and raised my kids. (laughs)

MURPHY: And how many children did you have?

CANAVAN: Three. Two boys and a girl. Now I have nine grandchildren and I just had my third great-grandchild last Friday.

MURPHY: Oh, great.

CANAVAN: And that's the one that lives here. My grandson who lives here.

MURPHY: Uh huh, uh huh, well good. Well then (coughs) how did you first get involved with the--was the first club that you joined the Marian White?

CANAVAN: Yes. I belonged to that forty years this year and I didn't--when the children were little I didn't go to that sort of thing, you know, but when they were older, the woman who was chairman of the art class, Mrs. A.F. Rice--they used to run the business college, her husband did. She was a friend of mine and so she asked me to join the Marian White Arts and Crafts Club. So I did, and that's forty years. And that's the last thing I'll ever give up is that, that club, I love the art class so much and all.

MURPHY: So that would have been 1947?

CANAVAN: 1947 when I joined, uh huh. Yeah.

MURPHY: So for twenty, so then for twenty years from when you were married until then you weren't involved in any of those activities?

CANAVAN: No, uh-uh.

MURPHY: Was that pretty common for women?

CANAVAN: Oh yes. In fact, most places wouldn't hire married women. If you were a teacher and you married you lost your job and uh-women, sales clerks and all, they were discharged if they were married. They didn't hire married women in those days.

MURPHY: Um hum, I've heard that from several people in Butte. Yeah. Uh, um--well when you were--when your kids were little were there things like the P.T.A. and. . .

CANAVAN: Oh goodness. My kids went to St. Patrick's School and there was the parents and there were the bingo tickets, the bingo games. I went to bingo games all the years that they were in school and I never won so much as a cup of coffee.

(laughs) And each one would come home with tickets, I had to buy one from each kid, but I didn't ever win. (laughs) And there were all those things. I did a lot of church work.

MURPHY: Was there a Ladies Sodality?

CANAVAN: Uh, huh. Yeah, one of my jobs was to collect the dues. (laughs) I always got the hard jobs.

MURPHY: Uh huh. And did they mostly in the church just try to raise money for different projects for the--was it just for the school or for the church?

CANAVAN: For the church and the school, uh huh, yeah. And oh, they'd have bazaars and all that sort of thing too and the keno games and all that. But, I did a lot of that, but now I don't do so much church work. There are younger women that do it.

MURPHY: Um hum. Did you ever feel like that you were pressured into doing that because you had kids at the school or--

CANAVAN: It was expected of you to take--and then besides that I didn't mind. It was something extra to do and they had--they had music lessons for the kids and they had plays and you'd have to have costumes for the plays for the kids and they'd send you home a picture and you were supposed to make the costume

like the picture. (laughs) I made a lot of them, not only for my own but for some of the other people who couldn't sew. (laughs)

MURPHY: Oh gosh. I can remember--I went to Catholic school. I remember those raffle tickets.

CANAVAN: Ah, those bingo tickets--and I had the three of them all because they were close together. There's only three years and three months between the oldest and youngest so they were always together in school you know, which they enjoyed and which makes them such good friends now, because they're very close. And, yeah, and then in the high school. They had Girls Central and Boys Central then and there was always something for one school or the other to do, yeah.

MURPHY: So you didn't send your kids to Butte High. They went to the Catholic school.

CANAVAN: They went to Catholic school from kindergarten through college because they went to Seattle U to college.

MURPHY: Um hum. Why did you decide to send them to the Catholic school for high school instead of Butte High?

CANAVAN: Well, because they'd always been. All their friends you know, they were all together and they'd been in Catholic school all through grade school and uh--a girl who was in my daughter's first grade class was her roommate in college.

MURPHY: Really. Isn't that something.

CANAVAN: Yeah, they were--that's where their friends were you know and I liked the discipline at the--at the Catholic

schools. I think it didn't do them any harm to get a whack from the Brothers. (laughs)

MURPHY: We had Sisters. So well uh--we kinda lead up to the to your initiation into the club. Were most people from Marian White invited to join or could you just apply to become a member?

CANAVAN: Well, you could apply but Mrs. Rice got me interested in it because we were friends and she thought I'd enjoy it so that's--but you could apply.

MURPHY: Uh huh. Uh huh.

CANAVAN: And uh, at--if you're gonna talk about Marian White, we might as well start at the beginning. I have a little history thing here that I sent into Tech when we gave the endowment; they wanted a history.

MURPHY: Okay, oh good.

CANAVAN: And so this little thing--I wrote it up. In 1905 Marian White, a nationally known artist, was visiting E.S. Paxson of Butte, a western, a prominent western artist and inspired by them, the Marian White Arts and Crafts Club was organized on April 14, 1905 and the two artists were made honorary members. The aims of the club are to promote a knowledge of the arts and crafts and to stimulate those who have technical skills and the furtherance of selected educational and civic projects. And throughout the years since its inception, the club has maintained a revolving interest-free scholarship loan fund. And about sixty girls were given those loans and they

paid back, interest-free, until we closed it out and went into the endowment. And it was 1983 that we uh-uh--gave what money we had for the scholarship fund, it was \$8,500.00, and that was given as an endowment to Montana Tech and each year the interest from that endowment is given to a junior or senior girl student.

MURPHY: That's great isn't it?

CANAVAN: Uh huh, yeah and they advise us to choose juniors or seniors because in the--in the freshman and sophomore year they often change and go to a different school, but those who have gone through, that's why we do it that way. So uh--I think it's wonderful because it's perpetual. It will go on and on and every year we have a girl.

MURPHY: Well that's great. Well, I had read in the early minute books that originally they had a scholarship to Bozeman.

CANAVAN: Yes, in the first few years and then--then we changed and we were giving them to the Business College. And then student nurses, but you know--then it got to the point where they didn't want loans, they wanted grants. Well, our money would soon be gone that way where with the endowment it will go on, and I think it will work better that way. But in later years they weren't so eager to have loans as they were in the early years.

MURPHY: How would you choose the girl that would get the scholarship?

CANAVAN: We'd leave that up to Tech. And they had to have a high grade point, at least a 3.5, and they are chosen by Tech. We leave that up to them and then they notify us and we usually get a thank you note from the girl, too. I think that's an excellent thing. And then uh--that isn't the only thing we do. We uh--we take part in other civic projects and give money, what we can, to Girl's State and uh--local projects that come up. And now the year, that would be 1958 I think it was, I know I was president of the club that year, we gave for them to build the Galen Chapel at Galen.

MURPHY: Okay, so in 1958 you were the president.

CANAVAN: Yeah, uh huh. We gave \$500.00 towards it. It was the State Federation of Women's Clubs and it happened that a woman from our club was president of the Federation of Women's Clubs and that was her project. So we raised \$500.00 by selling fifty-cent chocolate bars. Imagine how many that took and we didn't get the whole fifty cents, we had to pay for the chocolate bars. And we were all over--another woman and I even took a ride down to Dillon and went knocking door to door to sell those candy bars and we made \$500.00 towards the building of the Galen Chapel. That was a big project.

MURPHY: So when it--and when it was complete did they have an opening?

CANAVAN: Oh yes. The Governor was there and the--and all the people.

MURPHY: Were all the Women's Clubs represented?

CANAVAN: Yes, uh huh, yeah. Yeah, they had a big thing when they, what do they call it, when they shoveled up the dirt.

MURPHY: Oh, a ground-breaking.

CANAVAN: Yeah, uh huh. So we all went. But that was about the biggest project that we ever went into was that one, but we did a lot of--oh well, it was continuously something that we're doing in town. And then Girls State is a pet project of ours. Now the Arts and Crafts Club is not the oldest club in Butte. This was formed in 1905 and the Shakespeare Club--it's called the Westside Shakespeare Club by the way--was about 1902. Then the Homer Club is the oldest and that was about 1900, but our club is the biggest.

MURPHY: Um hum.

CANAVAN: We--when I first joined--we had over 125 members and now we're consistently down to about 65, which is still the biggest club in Butte. But it was a big club at that time with 125. And then they have the different departments--the Fine Arts is the biggest one. We have about twenty-five in that. And then the Needle Work and the Drama division and then the Music division and one they call Designers. They make all little handicraft things and all that sort of thing. Then we have the Education and Scholarship Funds. And that was--that was in uh--the Board of Directors had charge of that. The Board of Directors is composed of past presidents and since we gave this money to Tech we don't bother with the scholarship things anymore, but

that's the way it's always been handled. All these different divisions, there's something for everyone in it--the art class has grown though. It's the biggest division now so I'm proud of that.

MURPHY: Yes. Well um--how did they--I've only read the early minute books and they would hire a teacher and then they would have classes in each of the divisions. Do they still do that?

CANAVAN: Yeah, well they used to do it that way and then when Mrs. Rice took it, she was an art student graduate from an art school in Chicago so she became chairman of the--and she did the teaching and it sort of went on. But now it's more or less a self-help group--we criticize each other, constructively, of course, and then we have--every once in a while we have someone in. This year we had Christy Week give some a drawing lesson. One year we had water color lessons and then we had some pen and ink lessons. We have a teacher come in and do that. Then we all put in to pay the teacher for her. Most of it is done with the self-help criticism and it works out fine because we have some good people in there and we all love it, so we stay with it.

MURPHY: Yeah. Are most of the women who are in it now, have they been in it for a long time?

CANAVAN: I am the oldest one in there. I've been there the longest so I'm automatically chairman. (laughs) Make the coffee and all that.

MURPHY: Oh that's how you get rewarded.

CANAVAN: No, we have new ones every year it seems because we keep building up all the time. Some have been in there fifteen, twenty years though. I've been in forty though. Not that I've improved that much in forty years but it's fun.

(laughs)

MURPHY: Well did you start out picking the art classes? Is that what your first interest was?

CANAVAN: Oh yes. Mrs. Rice got me into it and so I was her pupil at the time and then we went on and as the years go by--I have a pretty good eye. I can criticize constructively the others, when they need help, and you don't get to stay there forty years without absorbing something you know. So it works out. And then I also have charge of the drama division.

MURPHY: Oh. Now tell me about that.

CANAVAN: And we put on a play every year.

MURPHY: You do?

CANAVAN: Uh huh. We uh, uh--put on a little play every year and it's fun.

MURPHY: How do you--are they plays that have been written or do you put those together?

CANAVAN: No. I have a catalog and I send away for plays. Always have to pick the royalty-free ones, 'cause we can't afford to pay royalties when we don't take in any money for putting it on. (laughs)

MURPHY: Yeah. Uh huh. So what kind of plays have you done in the past?

CANAVAN: Well we do--oh, little one or two act plays, and all women. Sometimes if there's men's parts, the women will take the man's part and do it. It's fun.

MURPHY: And do you do the performance just for the club members?

CANAVAN: Just for the club, uh huh, yeah.

MURPHY: Now how many people are in the drama division?

CANAVAN: Well, it depends on--there are five that I can always count on and then if I find a play that I like that has seven or eight I go 'round begging people to get in and it works out. But it's fun.

MURPHY: So do the different divisions meet separately?

CANAVAN: Yes. Uh huh. The art class meets every Friday and the general club meets twice a month on the first and third Thursdays and they always have a program. Um, the members are assigned in the year book the dates that they will have the program, then that person has to go get something. And it's usually very interesting. We have some good programs.

MURPHY: So what kind of things make up a program?

CANAVAN: Well, we have speakers. Not long ago we had, we had uh Driscoll from Driscoll's Pharmacy come and give a talk on generic medicines and all that and he was very good. And we've had people come from the Art Chateau, the woman came and gave a talk. Then we've had different ones with demonstrations and

we've had several travel ones with slides and all that. It's always an interesting program.

MURPHY: Do they--in the early days it seemed to me from reading the minutes, that women in the club themselves, gave programs. Like they would study up on some topic in art or and do that. Was that happening by the time you joined?

CANAVAN: No. When I joined they had a program committee and they would--but that was hard work. You know for a whole year to get the programs and they did it before the fall meeting started so that it could be printed in the year book. Well, that was an awful job running around all summer getting programs ready and then reminding them (clock chimes) that afterwards that they were to come on a certain date and do a program and all that. So now they just put the name of the person in the year book and that person's supposed to do the program and it's much easier and we get a greater variety because everyone has different interests and we get a great variety of programs that way. And if you see your name in there, you know you have to get a program ready so it works out beautifully.

MURPHY: Yeah and it's not that the women themselves do a report. They arrange for someone to be the speaker.

CANAVAN: They arrange for something to be done. It makes the programs very interesting and nice. And then the other divisions--uh now the needle craft may send their members home and then the designers meet in homes and the drama we practice up at the Y and the art class is at the Y.

MURPHY: Um hum, um hum. And then in the art show that you have every year does every division show it's work? The needle work and the--

CANAVAN: No, the needlework has its own show in December and they present their work and the designers usually go in with them. And then in the spring the art class has its show.

MURPHY: Do you sell your work?

CANAVAN: Some of them do. I never have because my kids grab everything. But uh, several of the members

_____ sells a lot, and of course, Marilyn Mason sells a lot and Jerry Campana sells a lot. They are well known around town.

MURPHY: Um hum, yeah.

CANAVAN: Yeah. But there's no--no reason why we can't sell it if we want to, if somebody will buy it. (laughs)

MURPHY: Well my impressions from the early minute books, was that it was very prominent women in the community that were members of the club in the early days, and by the time you joined in the '40s was still the case?

CANAVAN: Well yes, because you had to have people who were interested in these things that they're doing and not everybody is you know but we did have a big membership--125 people were in. But now so many women work and all that we don't have the big membership that we used to have. It's about half of what it used to be.

MURPHY: Hu hum, yeah.

CANAVAN: But no they're all well known women and with the Shakespeare Club. It's called the Westside Shakespeare Club (laugh) because that was the prominent people in town.

MURPHY: Hu hum. So were there--like in the Arts and Craft class would there have been like wives of miners?

CANAVAN: Not, no, not too much uh uh.

MURPHY: Was it mostly women who lived on the Westside in that club, too?

CANAVAN: I think so. Uh huh, yeah. The first president was the wife of a doctor, Dr. Gunn. And, yeah, it was mostly professional people's wives.

MURPHY: Why do you think that was?

CANAVAN: Well, their interests. Maybe they had a little more time, could be.

MURPHY: Uh huh. Do you think there was ever any snobbishness in the club?

CANAVAN: There wasn't ever snobbishness in Butte. Butte is not a snobbish town. (laugh) No, Butte's never been snobbish.

MURPHY: Uh hum. I know because I've read (Mrs. C. coughs) I've been reading some articles on women's clubs and they talk about how most of them were middle-class clubs, or upper middle-class clubs and so it--you don't know whether that's just because they were women who had enough leisure time to join or whether there was sometimes some informal kind of exclusion of the working class women.

CANAVAN: No. uh uh, no if--if a woman had talent we didn't care where she came from or what her husband did. (laughs) You know if she were interested and had the talent she was alright.

MURPHY: Uh hum, uh hum, how would you decide what kinds of civic projects to take on?

CANAVAN: Usually that's (clears throat) you usually get letters asking--you know they send it to all the clubs. We usually get letters asking for things and then we sort out what we want to do from the requests that we get.

MURPHY: Uh hum. And were there some projects that you would just not work on--that seemed inappropriate?

CANAVAN: Oh, not very many because usually they're all worthwhile. Anything that we get letters from and we've given to the Fourth of July celebration thing and we gave to the-- (End of Tape I - Side A)

çPatti B. resumes transcribing where Margaret S. left off.

TAPE I - SIDE B

MURPHY: Okay, so in giving to Our Lady of the Rockies was there, you know, with a lot of discussion in town as to whether that was a Catholic project, or really nondenominational, did that cause any discussions?

CANAVAN: All of those discussions came up but we sensibly talked about that it was a good thing for Butte. It worked

out just fine. And then we usually give a little something for the Fourth of July things. The Y. We pay rent at the Y. And then years ago we bought new window blinds for the room where we meet. We do little things like that extra for the Y, too.

MURPHY: Hm-mm, hm-mm. Now, in the early days, I know the club was active in trying to get art into the school curriculum. By the time you were a member was that sort of by-the-by?

CANAVAN: Yeah, that was, everything was all worked out then.

MURPHY: Hm-mmm, so you really didn't have much contact with the school system.

CANAVAN: Oh, no, we don't have much contact with them now. Hardly any, except for Girls State, we do give to Girls State. And then, sometimes we have programs from the high school. The music students will come to give a program and that's nice always--

MURPHY: Yeah, I saw in the paper that you're going to have the drama club give a little play or something like that, I think?

CANAVAN: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah. And then they sang, the group sang at our Spring luncheon, from Butte High.

MURPHY: Uh-huh.

CANAVAN: They were beautiful, yeah.

MURPHY: Oh, I'll bet.

CANAVAN: Yeah.

MURPHY: Well, um, do you find yourself in the women that were brought together in the club, did you form friendships that carried over outside the club?

CANAVAN: Ohhh, my goodness, yes. Uh-huh, yeah. My best friends are in that club. All through the years. Uh-huh, yeah. And, that's how I got into the Shakespeare Club. Somebody I knew. Now Shakespeare Club was a little different. They had a limit of twenty-five members and there was always a waiting list.

MURPHY: Ohhh.

CANAVAN: But someone in the club asked me to join, it was Olive Dibbs (?). Now we're down to five members..... (laughter)
Our waiting list has twenty, but no names.

MURPHY: So there was no limit in the Marian White club.

CANAVAN: Oh no, because we met in the, the reason for the Shakespeare thing was they met in the homes. Not many people handled even the twenty-five. So that was the reason for that, whereas with the Arts and Crafts club, we meet up at the Y and there's room for all.

MURPHY: At the Arts and Crafts club would you have like teas and, you know, again in the early minute books the way that they would raise money would be to have card parties or teas or something.

CANAVAN: Oh yes, uh-huh, yeah.

MURPHY: Would that still continue?

CANAVAN: Oh yes, we had big card parties when I, oh, maybe thirty years ago or so. We had huge, big card parties.

And teas and all that. But now we don't do that so much anymore. We find that, well, the younger women don't come into the club because they're working, and some of us are getting too old to pack around rummage sales and, oh dear, we had rummage sales. And you'd get so dirty, you know, packing that stuff in and out. No, we don't do a great deal of that anymore.

MURPHY: Uh-huh, so apart from, like selling the candy bars and having rummage sales, what other ways did you used to raise money?

CANAVAN: Oh, card parties were a big thing. We could make a lot of money on a big card party. We could make ~~three or~~ four hundred dollars on a card party.

MURPHY: Really?

CANAVAN: You had a big hall and lots of tables.

MURPHY: So the club would organize that and then anybody could come to play?

CANAVAN: Then we'd go sell tickets for people to come, sure.

And we'd, sometimes it was a luncheon thing, and sometimes we'd serve coffee and cake and we'd have to prepare all that stuff. But, we made good, we made lots of money on that. But I hated rummage sales worse than anything. (laughter)
Usually you'd get, rent some empty building and it'd be cold in there, there'd be no heat on and all this old stuff. (laughs)
No, I didn't like those. I didn't like the card parties. Well, we haven't, we, teas lost out, we didn't use those very often.

MURPHY: I always think of those as a more time-gone-by kind of thing.

CANAVAN: Yeah, no, I, we didn't have teas. Usually teas were things that they did in people's homes and we didn't do that in later years. But we did have those card parties.

MURPHY: Well, now, tell me about the Westside Shakespeare Club.

CANAVAN: Well, the Shakespeare Club as I said was formed about 1902. And it's strictly a book review club. And when we had twenty members or so, we used to meet twice a month. And a person gave a review, but now that we're down to five, we each have to give a review about three times a year to fill it up twice a month, so we only meet once a month now. And usually it's the reviewer's choice what type of book she would like to review. And we have a little coffee and a little dessert and then we have a book review. And it's a very pleasant afternoon, but it's the same problem. We don't, we can't get new members because the younger ones work. And it's most enjoyable because each person has an hour to review a book and that's just enough to whet your appetite so that you want to go read the book yourself and you get an insight into different books, different types of books, it's a most enjoyable afternoon.

MURPHY: Well, is the theme of a lot of your reading to do with Shakespeare or is that just when it originated?

CANAVAN: That's when it originally started out, but no, one program a year, we have Shakespeare Day. And give

some readings or some of his sonnets or something, and make a program of that. But otherwise, usually we go into the contemporary authors and that's what people, bestsellers and all that.

MURPHY: Uh-huh, so when you joined, did you have to wait long to get in?

CANAVAN: I had to wait a little while. Eileen had a little pull, and she got me on the list early and I belonged to the Shakespeare Club about thirty years.

MURPHY: Mmm, mm-mmm, mm-mmm. And how would, how would that work to get in? I mean, people would invite you to join and then you'd be on the list, and then would it go by when you were invited or would there be a kind of free for all?

CANAVAN: Oh, I don't know how they did it, but they voted on you, I know. After I got in, I saw they voted on you. And if you were elected, they sent you an invitation to come, otherwise, you didn't hear from them. (laughter)

MURPHY: So were there people who weren't invited to join that you recall?

CANAVAN: I don't recall anyone because as a rule, we, somebody in the club knew the person and could vouch for her and all.

MURPHY: Or, they wouldn't have been invited in the first place.

CANAVAN: No, uh-huh.

MURPHY: In that club then, people didn't just apply to join. You had to be invited?

CANAVAN: Well, uh, maybe if a person had an interest, she might ask somebody how go about it and then this somebody would put her name on the list. That's the way it worked.

MURPHY: Did they actually vote with the box with the black and white balls? Did you have one of those?

CANAVAN: Not in Shakespeare Club. Arts and Crafts club used to do that, though.

MURPHY: They did, uh-huh?

CANAVAN: Uh-huh, but they quit that maybe fifteen years ago, they threw away the box. (laughter)

MURPHY: Did anybody ever get blackballed?

CANAVAN: Not that I know of, I don't remember any black balls, but they did do it that way. It took forever because if you had a hundred people at the meeting and everybody had to march by and drop a marble in the box it took half the afternoon. (laughs) But, no, we don't do that anymore. We have a card: "so-and-so is applying for membership and is sponsored by so-and-so," and everybody says, "Yes, that's fine."

MURPHY: Now, you were saying in the Westside Shakespeare Club that that was the Westside.

CANAVAN: They called it the Westside Shakespeare Club.

MURPHY: And the Westside in Butte has a reputation of being--

CANAVAN: That was the elite, the westside, yeah. But Shakespeare Club has lots of schoolteachers.

MURPHY: Oh, now that's--

CANAVAN: Lots and lots of schoolteachers belonged to the Shakespeare Club. And well, right now, of our five members, three were teachers.

MURPHY: Oh.

CANAVAN: Eileen Davis and Gwen Mitchell and Madolyn Love were schoolteachers.

MURPHY: Now, would that be women who then, was it still at that point that you couldn't be married and work, so were these mostly single women, or--

CANAVAN: Mm-mmm, yeah. And when we had all those teachers, the meetings were in the evenings, then when we got down to the last teacher who retired, Gwen Mitchell, we changed it to the afternoon because she could come in the afternoon then. So, now we meet in the afternoon.

MURPHY: Oh, that's interesting.

CANAVAN: But we have lots of, I would say that two-thirds of the members were teachers.

MURPHY: Did they seem to choose more serious books or did you ever notice any difference?

CANAVAN: Well, it depends on the person's personality. You know, with some people, now this one woman in there has no sense of humor whatever. She doesn't see a joke or anything, well, she's very serious. And there are others, Eileen has a wonderful sense of humor, she can always do things that are interesting, and sometimes really funny. It depends on the personality. Everybody, that's why it's interesting, because

everyone has a different viewpoint and chooses a different type of book. And that's what makes it interesting. To have all this variety.

MURPHY: Did you feel like you were really getting extra education?

CANAVAN: Well, I've always been an avid reader. I've read this since I was, before I went to school I learned to read. I've always been a reader. So, to me that, books are my treasures. And, yeah, our house was always full of books. So, it was something I wanted. Because I think the greatest pleasure is in reading.

MURPHY: Yeah, I love to read, too. In the Marian White club then, was it mostly married women since you joined?

CANAVAN: Yes, uh-huh, mostly married, uh-huh.

MURPHY: And like yourself, women whose children were grown up or at school?

CANAVAN: Yeah, uh-huh, I think that was the case and, yeah, that's the way it worked out. And then with the Shakespeare Club, of course, we met in the evenings so that gave a chance for the teachers to come.

MURPHY: Mm-mmm, mm-mmm.

CANAVAN: But Marian White has always met in the afternoons, so it's a different thing.

MURPHY: What did your husband think of your club work?

CANAVAN: Oh, he thought it was great. In fact, I belong to Toastmistress Club.

MURPHY: Oh, uh-huh.

CANAVAN: I belonged to Toastmistress Club for fourteen years.

MURPHY: So, you joined the Toastmistress, what, fourteen years ago?

CANAVAN: Or, it was more than fourteen years. I belonged to it for fourteen years, and I quit about nine or ten years ago because I'd been in for fourteen years. I thought I had everything I could get from it, and I gave everything that I could give for it and it was time to move on to something else then.

MURPHY: Now, in Toastmistress, that was to practice public speaking, right?

CANAVAN: To practice speaking and writing speeches and all that sort of thing. Yeah, I enjoyed it while I was in it, but I thought enough is enough.

MURPHY: That's enough, three clubs at the same time going.

CANAVAN: It kept me out of mischief. (laughter)

MURPHY: Well, do you think for some women it was maybe their one opportunity to get out of the house and--

CANAVAN: Well, of course, if you wanted to get out of the house, that was your sole purpose, you could go play cards and you know, play bridge or something like that. Personally, I hate bridge. I, all the time I'm playing I'm thinking of something far more interesting I could be doing, you know. But, a lot of people just love to play bridge. And there were always bridge clubs. So, it's whatever your interest is to do that.

But I don't know as much about the history of Shakespeare Club as I do of the Arts and Crafts Club, because I wasn't in it in the early days. Eileen Davis has all the minutes books and all that, though.

MURPHY: So, for the Shakespeare Club, though, you were saying, you would go to each other's houses and have dessert and would people really try to make something fancy or--

CANAVAN: Oh yes, oh yeah, it was nice always. (laughs) And now we have, we used to have lunch.

MURPHY: Oh.

CANAVAN: Then we decided it was too much, so now we just have dessert. And it's easier for us.

MURPHY: I can imagine if you had upwards of even ten people, that would be an awful lot of work.

CANAVAN: Well, we only served lunch after we had afternoon meetings. Because when they came in the evening they would just serve 'em something like, you know, coffee and tea, or a piece of cake or something, as an evening thing but, when we started to meet in the afternoon we started out with serving lunch. Well, I think it's about seven or eight years ago we decided not to do that anymore, just to have dessert. But we get some elegant desserts.

MURPHY: In the early days that you were in the Shakespeare Club, was it, did they ever, like choose a theme for reading that year, or was it always just up to whatever--

CANAVAN: It was usually up to the person who was reviewing, except on Shakespeare Day, and then we all had to do something from Shakespeare.

MURPHY: Did, does this mean you had to do a little performance, or--

CANAVAN: No, read something. You could read the sonnets or you could take a section from a play and just, and then one year I had some slides. I'd been to England and I had been to Stratford and I had some slides that I took so I showed the whole, instead of reading something and that was interesting to them.

MURPHY: Oh, I'll bet. Well, did the Shakespeare Club ever put on performances of Shakespeare?

CANAVAN: No, just read the plays, no, we didn't go into that part of it. And I'm not ambitious enough to try that in the Arts and Crafts drama group either. (laughter) No, I wouldn't attempt that. Well, I think that's about everything I can give you.

MURPHY: Okay, I just wanted to ask two other questions. Were there, like, were there women like yourself and Eileen who were in several clubs?

CANAVAN: Oh yes, uh-huh, yeah. And then a lot of people, a lot of women belong to various lodges, too. And yeah, they belonged to different things, just not one. But Arts and Crafts Club is my, that's my favorite.

MURPHY: Did those clubs ever get involved in politics in Butte?

CANAVAN: No, we tried to stay away from, there's no use going into things that disrupt your club, you know? Because each one, I never talk about politics or religion to anyone. Everyone to his own liking and just leave me alone, too.

MURPHY: So, 'cause there would have been Republicans and Democrats and Catholics and Protestants in the club.

CANAVAN: Oh sure, there would have been friction. Uh-huh, sure. So, we don't go into anything like that, that's wise.

(laughs)

MURPHY: So, let me just check my notebook and see, I think I got everything. (pause) Like when you would have the general meetings, would most of the members come pretty regularly?

CANAVAN: Oh yes, we usually had a pretty good turnout and we'd serve tea and coffee and a little refreshment, piece of cake, or something.

MURPHY: So, in a general meeting, how would it run? Can you just describe how it would go? Is the business meeting first?

CANAVAN: Uh-huh, we meet at 1:30 and we serve the refreshments first, tea and coffee and roll, and the members take turns bringing that too. Once a year you bring something. Then we have the business meeting and then we have the program. So it works out, a nice afternoon.

MURPHY: Yeah, that's really neat. And the only other thing I wanted to ask you, is a little bit about politics,

but not Butte politics. Did the, I know in the early days, that the club came out for suffrage, involved in women's suffrage. Like in the '70s, were they involved at all in, like the ERA, or anything in the women's movement?

CANAVAN: No, not too much, that was more like politics, you know. We didn't bring those things out. Of course, our feelings were towards a little more-freedom for women, but we didn't declare ourselves.

MURPHY: So, the club wouldn't take a stand on that though you might talk about--uh-huh.

CANAVAN: Oh sure, just like all women do. No, the club didn't take any stand on it, though.

MURPHY: Well, Marian, do you consider yourself a feminist?

CANAVAN: Ahh, in some ways. Now, I never regretted that I stayed home and raised my children the way I did, because I was there when they came home from school. The door opened, "Mom, I'm home." Well, if I weren't there, I don't know what they would have thought, because I always was. (chimes) And I took an interest in, I went to all the football games and nearly froze to death a lot of times, you know, took an interest in all those things, for my children. And now that they're grown, they seem to appreciate it, because they always mention things like that. No, I don't have any regrets about staying home and minding my own business, which was my family at that time. And I'd never missed the vote since I, the first time I registered, so I do my civic duty and I think I have as much

freedom as any other woman. I can do pretty well what I please except to go out at night and get mugged! (laughs) And so, no, I have no regrets about the way my life was spent. And my husband was very good. Anything I wanted, I had. No questions asked. So, no. Maybe things were different with some people, but I'm satisfied with mine.

MURPHY: Mm-mmm, well, good. Well, thanks very much for talking with me.

CANAVAN: I don't know that I did you much good.

MURPHY: Oh, you did.

END OF INTERVIEW

50 MINUTES