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4-9-02  
(Date)

Butte, MT  
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### **Prepared Interview Questions**

- 1.) What was it like growing up in Butte before and during the depression?
- 2.) Where were you born?
- 3.) What did your parents do for a living?
- 4.) How many brothers and sister did you have?
- 5.) What was your favorite thing to do when you were a kid?

## GROWING UP IN BUTTE

### I. Growing up in Butte during the Depression

- A. Didn't know there was a Depression
- B. Father was a doctor
  - 1. treated miners
  - 2. on call all the time
  - 3. Sunday ride
- C. Mom knew everything
  - 1. Neighborhood mischief
  - 2. games
  - 3. wide open space
- D. Run Sheep Run and Kick the Stick
  - 1. Hide and Seek, Kick the Can
  - 2. School and trouble
  - 3. The nuns
- E. The nun's name
  - 1. Sister Mary the Holy Name
  - 2. Her death, nice person
  - 3. Fourth of July
  - 4. Girls wore dresses

### II. Place of birth.

- A. Born in Butte
  - 1. Baptism
  - 2. First Communion, confession
  - 3. I. C. Church
- B. First boyfriend
  - 1. Midget
  - 2. Dating
  - 3. College Professor, smart
  - 4. His name: Bernard Sullivan
  - 5. His family
  - 6. Playing on the swings
  - 7. Halloween
  - 8. Recreational time
- C. Brothers and sisters
  - 1. Four brothers, two sisters
  - 2. Mother's grandchildren and great grandchildren
  - 3. Dad graduated high school at sixteen
  - 4. Medical school, 20 years old
  - 5. World War I
  - 6. Dads brother was a dentist
- D. Graduation
  - 1. Grade school and high school
  - 2. Portland for nursing training
  - 3. Skating rinks

4. Holland Rink
5. Basketball
6. Piano Lessons
7. Bill Dee's mother
8. Month of the Blessed Mother
9. High School

**E. Butte**

1. Butte was busy
2. Simon's Dry Goods; Burr's
3. Uptown stores
4. Arsonists
5. Christmas shopping
6. Going to the store for bread
7. Milk
8. Smoking

**III. Doing things you're not supposed to**

**A. Throwing rocks**

1. Dad sewed up neighborhood
2. Look was punishment enough

**B. The wine incident**

1. Prohibition wine in basement
2. Tin sprinkling can
3. Sister tattles
4. Punishment
5. Sneaking out

**IV. Oldest brother**

**A. Brother troubles**

1. Dances
2. Lying
3. Roller skating
4. Mothers uncle
5. Hockey
6. Christmas presents
7. Best natured brother
8. Her brother Bill
9. Horse back riding

OH02-22

**GROWING UP IN BUTTE**  
**Interview of Mary Lou Kane Fitzpatrick**

**By Mary C. James**

**History of Butte: HIST 323-01**  
**James Harrington**  
**Oral History Assignment**  
**April 9, 2002**

This is an interview with Mary Lou Kane Fitzpatrick by Mary James in her home on February 9, 2001 at 3:10 PM.

**Mary James (MJ):** What was it like growing up in Butte during the Depression and before and after?

**Mary Fitzpatrick (MF):** Well, way back then I didn't know there was a depression. I questioned my parents once about finances and they told me to mind my own business because it was their problem not mine. My dad was a doctor and he was busy all the time house calls and whatever. If the miners were working he got paid. If they weren't working he didn't get paid because they had nothing to pay him with, but he was in pretty big demand. He had hospital rounds in the morning and the afternoon office hours and evening office hours then house calls in-between. Sometimes he would go as far as Sheridan. He had a friend who was a doctor there who would call him for consultations every so often. We didn't see much of him. Every time we planned a Sunday ride or something it was always with the understanding that if we would go if nobody got sick and needed him. We were second in line to do anything fun. His work pretty much came first. We kept pretty much to home and mom wasn't a great one for letting us roam over town. She liked to know where we were and what we were doing. She didn't always know what we were doing. She would tell me to not do something because I would have to do it just to make sure she knew what she was talking about. I wasn't disobedient I just was nosy and she usually knew what she was talking about. I could come home with a knot on my head from someone throwing rocks. In our neighborhood there was a family of six kids that lived near us and all of the mothers in the neighborhood could reprimand the neighbor kids if they were into mischief. They didn't have to send them home to their mothers to get hollered at. They could holler at you pretty good. I won't say we minded really well, but we had to pay attention pretty much. It was peaceful there were a lot of kids in the neighborhood so we could do things, Run Sheep Run and Kick the Stick and stuff like that. If everybody was in a good mood we could have a hot dog or weenie roast in the back lot, there was no houses. I C Church, the hall, and the tennis courts, nothing was there but wide open space, wildflowers, you could look right across the alley and see the lots. The big excursion was you could walk up the hill to Big Butte if you stayed in the front so your mom could see you and know what you were doing. And what else?

**MJ:** What was Run Sheep Run and Kick the Stick?

**MF:** It was like a Hide and Seek type something and Kick the Stick was like Kick the Can where you would run the bases. We used sticks because someone was less likely to get cut with a stick. If someone licked a can in the face you could lose a nose or something. I was 5 years old when I started school and I think my mother sent me to get rid of me. Well, I was almost 6, but I should have been kept home another year because I wasn't the sharpest kid in the class never was. We went to school with the nuns and they could be pretty strict and if you got in trouble with in school you didn't go home and tell your mother because then you got it twice as hard when you got home. I can only remember one nun that I really liked because she was nice until she slapped my hand with a ruler because I went home at recess. It was only a half a block away and I didn't

know you weren't supposed to go home at recess . I was late coming back so I got whacked on the palm of my hand with a ruler. Now if they did that you could probably sue them. It's child abuse.

***MJ:*** What was that nun's name?

***MF:*** Sister Mary the Holy Name. We all grew up. She taught fifth grade when Lou was going I think and remembered me. Shortly after that she died of throat cancer, I think it was. She was a nice little gal. On the Fourth of July the parade used to come out West Broadway to Excel (Excelsior Street). My grandma Driscoll's house was in the seven hundred block on Broadway so we could go down and sit on the porch and sit and watch the parade go by. It had all kinds of floats more than they have now and bands, clowns, the whole nine yards. It was fun. I can't remember what we would do in the afternoon. Set off firecrackers. Every Fourth of July I had a new dress made out of something fancy like organdy or whatever and lit sparklers and by the time the day was over I had a dress full of nothing but little teeny holes where the spark had caught the clothes on fire. There was no such thing as jeans for girls in back then. All the girls dressed like ladies. If you would go to town you had to wear a hat and gloves and it was just one of those things you did. You could dust things with the gloves and come up with black hands.

***MJ:*** Where were you born at?

***MF:*** I was born here in Butte. My grandma lived at 735 West Broadway and I think our house number was probably 730, it was an apartment right next door to her. I was baptized at Saint Patrick's church. Then we moved to West Broadway, farther west and I lived there until I was four years old when we moved up to Copper Street and everything else I did like First Communion and confession and all that other neat stuff I did at IC. The church was at the basement of the school till they built the big one and it used to fun. You always knew when someone got married, because when you went to church you went into the basement through a side door and there would be rice all over the place from people throwing rice for good luck I guess. The birds couldn't get at it because the walls of the porch got in the way. My first boyfriend was a little midget. I think when he got through growing he was like this at nine. When we were in seventh grade we had a class picnic out at the Gardens and we were getting on the streetcar and the conductor was a very nice man. We just got on the streetcar and he looked at me and said "That's all right honey, you don't have pay for your little brother." He was the neatest little guy. He ended up being one of the cheerleaders at Boy Central. I don't know where he went to school, if it was MIT. He was real smart. He ended up being a college professor someplace and he died when he was thirty-nine. I thought he was wonderful. I could look right over the top of his head.

***MJ:*** What was his name?

***MF:*** Bernard Sullivan. He had a big dad that was a fireman and his mom was average size. He had two sisters, a redhead and a blonde, and they were both taller than I am and

they had a brother, a midget that had red hair and Bernard's hair was blond so girls got all the size and the boy's got all the smarts I think. I don't know what happened. I can't think of the brother's name.

They had swings on the playground that you could stand on em and pumping is what we called it so you could go way high and Bernard was sitting on one and somebody was standing and doing this with the swings and fell off and flew across the playground and scraped his head on a rock that was on the playground and that was the end of that. They put an end to that. It was a wonder it didn't kill him just tore the hide off his forehead. When we went like Halloween we didn't have trick or treat, we went around soaping windows and stuff like that. We didn't have any out houses that we could knock over either. That was in the days when my parents were really young.

And Halloween parties. There was a lot of vandalism I guess you'd say, put buggies on barn roofs and that like sort of stuff. It sort of overlaps the teens when you figure well the twenties you had the depression. We had a radio, but nobody paid much any attention to it except my dad. We read a lot and used to visit. My aunts and uncles and cousins visited. My mom and dad would go to their houses and visit. People were more social then than they are now I think, well in a different way.

*MJ:* How many brothers and sisters did you have?

*MF:* I had four brothers and two sisters. I have two brothers left. Two of them died of cancer and the other two outside the extremities of old age they are doing all right. Everybody gets infirm when they're old. All of them got married. My mother had forty-five grandchildren and nobody's holding a candle to her. We're not even trying and I think she had maybe fifty great-grandchildren. Well I don't know who she'd like if she was still hanging around. She liked the ones that she knew before she died though, but there were some of them who came after. My dad graduated from high school when he was thirteen, no sixteen and went right into medical school. They didn't have premed back then. You went right into medical school and there did a year of internship so he probably was through with medical school when he was twenty and then he had to go into the army because there was World War 1 on, but he hadn't passed his state boards for his medical license so he ended up cleaning out the barn for the horses. This is what he'd tell us. It had nothing to with being a doctor. I can't think of a twenty year old kid I know now that I would submit to having him take out my tonsils or pull a tooth or whatever doctors did back then, can you? Now you have to go to premed and medical school and then you have so many years of specializing if that's what you want to do. I used to feel sorry for anyone how didn't have my dad for a doctor 'cause I thought he was more important than the Second Coming of Christ. He could have cut off my head and I wouldn't have found fault with that. Sometimes I bet he wishes he could've. His brother was a dentist who we'd go to and boy there was no such thing as Novocain in a drilled tooth. He'd have that thing smoking he was drilling so hard. I was thirteen when I graduated from grade school and I was seventeen when I went to nursing training in Portland and was absolutely miserable because I missed the bare tumbleweeds and all the big brown leaves in the winter and snow and Portland was yech. I didn't like it then and have never changed my mind. I was very lonesome all I wanted if I lived to get home one more God could take me and I wouldn't say anything. They used to have skating rinks on



all the corners like not all the corners, but every neighborhood their skating rinks that the city used to freeze and where we lived we could skate down half a block down the hill in your skates and there was the ice rink and so you could go down after dinner for an hour or so and skate before you had to come home and do your homework. Homework had to be done. You would skate until your feet were so cold you'd be almost crying then you'd go home. They had one big rink down South Montana Street down by where Les Schwab is the Holland rink they called it that you would pay to go I think it was twenty-five cents or something. They had a big horse that pulled some kind of scraper to clean off the ice in the afternoon so they could get the ice all ready for the evening shift and that was fun. Skating was my favorite pastime. I never played basketball, my mother said I wasn't big enough. Hey, I didn't see what difference size meant, but when she said something you pretty much paid attention. Sometimes you sometimes you pretty much paid attention. Fran and Shelia played basketball, but they were bigger than I was maybe by a couple inches. We took piano lessons and I hated it. I couldn't make my eyes read the notes while my hands were working the keys. If I didn't memorize it or watch my hands work just nothing would work. There's a word for that and it isn't dyslexia, but it's something else that's screwed up in your head, and people that have it are no good at math and that's what I was--no good at math. We had a really nice music teacher, who was the grandmother of that Bill Dee that has Dee's motor in Anaconda. She never raised her voice. The nun's would beat my knuckles with a pencil if I made a mistake, but she didn't she'd just make start over again. They had in May, that was the month of the Blessed Mother up at IC one girl would be elected out of the eighth grade to crown the Blessed Mother. I made it. Well they didn't vote me in first but the one that got most of the votes was a gal that went to school there but she didn't go to Mass at IC. She went to St. Pats so the nuns decided that if she didn't go to Mass at IC she couldn't be Queen of the May. So I got the second number of votes so they made me Queen of the May. It was exciting I guess when you think about it. We had to wear a white dress and a veil. We had veils for everything and the ones that you had at school were like fishnet, big course net so they didn't tear I guess. High school was all right. I wasn't crazy about that and I was never one to stay after school like some little kids that have to clean the blackboards or the erasers or something. I couldn't get out of there quick enough. The minute that bell would ring and I was out the front door I was gone --home. It was usually the same ones that cleaned, cleaned all the time. We did have a janitor to do the floor sweeping and stuff his name was Pat Kinsella. He was a nice guy, cleaned the sidewalks and did everything around there, took care of the church, and did the whole bit. He's been dead for a thousand years. He'd have to be well over a hundred if he was still alive. Now this isn't telling you much. What it's like to be living in Butte at that time. Butte was busy and you would go to town you had stores like where Thomas' was uptown. That when I was a kid was Simon's dry goods, then that closed and Burr's bought it. That was another department store, had an escalator, and then I don't if they went out of business if they closed all the Burr's stores or why they left. I was gone when they left. All the vacant lots uptown had buildings there. You had Woolworth's, you had Ben Franklin's and the Phoenix Building and Penny's and other places and little people with matches or whatever. Arsonists is what started most of them and burnt them to the ground. At Christmas when you would go shopping you could go from one store into the other and you could find anything up there. Every store had their own toy land. Christmas didn't

start until after Thanksgiving though. Now they have the stuff out in July. Way back then it was not until after Thanksgiving and that was plenty long enough. Things were cheap, but wages were cheap. You could go to the store and get a loaf of bread for ten cents and if you were sent, if it was me- I don't what I had against a loaf of bread, but I would hug it to me I guess so I wouldn't drop it and by the time I'd get home it was like a breadstick. I ruined it and then my mom would send me back for another loaf of bread. Our milk was dime a quart if you could get it home without dropping and breaking the bottle. They had milk delivery and nothing like homogenized milk. If you got regular milk and you had it out when it when the milkman would leave it and it was cold and it froze it would have the cream on top like two inches. It would freeze and the cream would come out of the top and it was neat. I used to like to be to first one out so I could grab the frozen cream of the top of the milk and eat it before anyone caught me. Cream is not supposed to be all that good for you now. Back then we didn't know any better. We had asbestos wrapped around our furnace in the basement and that's a no no. Radon daughters we lived with in every place I lived. They say it kills you. Well maybe it will, but other things do too. I remember sneaking cigarettes from my dad's package. We'd climb out the window in our bedroom and sit on the roof over the back porch and smoke and hide what was left in the drainpipe so nobody'd know. Well they knew we were doing it because the only time I ever ate green onions was after I had a smoke I'd take a green onion and eat it so no body could smell. I didn't think they could smell the onions cause I didn't ordinarily eat onions when any body could see me. I was not a nice child. My mother I think should be a saint for putting up with me.

*MJ:* What were some of the other things you used to do when you were a kid that you weren't supposed to do?

*MF:* Well, I'd go next door when those kids lived there. Don't go there they will hit you with a rock and sure enough they did. My dad was very busy sewing up neighborhood kids, because they were pretty good rock throwers too. Somebody was always getting cut, one of the neighbor kids and it would be our fault so they would just bring them up. They'd come up to the house and sit in the front room and he'd get his trusty little bag out with needle and thread and sew them all up and it didn't cost the neighbors anything. We got hollered at pretty good. I don't remember grandpa ever spanking us. He didn't have to. If he looked at you and said something you knew you were in big trouble. He had a keg of wine in the basement once, this was during prohibition. I don't know where he got it or why, but any way it had a little wooden faucet thing a spigot or what ever you call it and Grandma had gone to the store. She had brought Fran and I home each a little tin sprinkling can. So I was down in the basement. The basement was cement. I filled up the can with wine and I forgot to turn off the spigot so it was all running out. I was trotting around the basement pouring wine through the sprinkler thing all over the floor. Oh man. My dad found out about it. Somebody squealed on me, probably that stinking Fran, my sister the saint, and he asked me about it and I said I didn't know and I thought he was going to kill me. He didn't hit me he just gave me a dirty look and made me stay in the house. If I misbehaved I was the one who had to go to bed after dinner while everybody else go to go outside and play. I spent a lot of time in my room after dinner.

*MJ:* Did you ever sneak out of there?

*MF:* No. I didn't have the nerve. It was my saintly sister and my sanctimonious brother that usually got me in trouble. Which brother was the sanctimonious brother? Jay.

*MJ:* The oldest one?

*MF:* Yes, he could get into trouble himself and that was different. I was supposed to stick up for him but he didn't return the favor to me. We had to keep certain hours like if there was a dance or something and we were supposed to be home by midnight. Well he didn't get home at midnight and if he wasn't home I was supposed to tell my mother he was he was taking Madeline home and he would be right up. Well he was lying, because he was taking Madeline home but he wasn't coming right up. You have to know him to love him. He was something else. He would tell tales of what things were like when he was a kid but at the same time I was a kid and I think he's lying. I don't remember the things he's talking about. Of course I'm too polite to say so, if he wants to believe what he's saying I'm not going to interfere. He was only a year or so older than me but he sure thought he was pretty good. I didn't think he was that big. He was a pup. He told me once when I was out roller-skating I was holding onto the fence. I was about four Let go of the fence you'll be all right. I let go of the fence and out goes the feet and I come down on the back of my head and almost knocked myself out. It made me sick to my stomach. I can still feel how it hurt and this was a way long time ago. My mothers uncle used to call him up when he would find out that Jay made me cry he would call Jay up and say he was Jerry Murphy who happened to be our chief of police and if he didn't treat his sister better he would be in big trouble. I don't think he paid any attention. Nobody ever got him into trouble for picking on me it was some of the other stuff he got into that he got in to trouble for. Off hand I can't remember what it was. Well not keeping hours or something. We had our hockey games and way back then nobody ever beat anybody with a hockey stick. If you watched them you had to watch where the puck was going so it wouldn't hit you in the head. Sometimes they could sail it pretty far but they had intra-mural hockey games with the freshman. They had two or three hockey teams. It was kind of fun. My brothers all played hockey. Big deal on Christmas when they'd get a new hockey stick. It didn't cost much then probably couldn't afford it now. We had a bicycle Fran and I got it for Christmas, but everybody rode it. Whoever got there first got to use the bike got to use the bike. Usually it was Jay. I would have sold him if someone would have given me a nickel. One of the worst birthday presents I ever got when I was five. I got a new baby brother. He was born the day after my fifth birthday and he was a little stinker. He ended up being the best natured brother of the whole pack, real mellow and very kind and was a good friend, but he's dead now and I don't have too many friends left. That was Dick and if you made him mad he would throw anything he had in his hand at you if it was a knife if he was playing with anything sharp or a rock or whatever. Then once he connected then everything was all right. He got into the basement one day he was working on some kind of a little motor and had gasoline on his pants and his shoes caused some kind of spark on the floor and caught his pants on fire. My mother had some clothes soaking in the laundry tub in the basement fortunately he hopped in that and put the fire out but he burned his leg from knee to his ankle. The front of his leg was a mess. Good thing he had

a doctor dad who could smear the whatever. It took quite awhile for that thing to heal up. I felt sorry for him but it was the only time I did cause it hurt. I don't remember Bill getting into trouble like that but he was kind of a mope. He didn't talk much. He ended up being a doctor too. Being a mope didn't have anything to do with him being a doctor. In our yard there was a rock garden in the front. Bill was letting a kitty ride in a wagon ride down the grass and he ran right down the grass and ended up in the rock garden and I think he bumped his but nothing happened. And another day we were going horseback riding and my mother was driving us we were going to Brown's Gulch and we turned a corner, I don't know why Bill was fiddling with the door when the door opened and he fell out so we couldn't go she was worried for fear he got killed or something. We couldn't go horse back riding and I was going to kill him myself for spoiling my fun cause we had to take him home and stay home while she soothed his ruffled spirits. It wasn't that I loved horses it was just something to do. He ended up with a brain tumor way long time ago and don't know if that caused it. Well he might have had cancer but I don't know what causes that. It never interfered with the way he walked or the way he thought or anything.