

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: "An Urban Removal Problem": Open-Pit Mining, Industrial Hazards, and the Disappearance of Ethnic Neighborhoods in Butte, Montana

Principal Investigator: Thomas J. Archdeacon, PhD
Email: tjarchde@wisc.edu

phone: (608) 263-1778.

Graduate Student Researcher: Brian Leech
Email: bleech@wisc.edu

phone: (608) 215-6321.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about neighborhoods in Butte, Montana's that were lost to open-pit mining development. You have been asked to participate because you either are a former resident of these neighborhoods or are well-acquainted with the Anaconda Company's operations during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The purpose of the research is to determine the effects of displacement and relocation due to industrial development in Butte. Interviews with participants will be conducted in public places or in residents' homes in Butte, Montana.

Audio tapes will be made of your participation. Brian Leech will use this interview for his University of Wisconsin-Madison dissertation research. I understand that he may use information from the tapes and transcripts in future publications. Tapes and transcripts will be deposited in the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives for the use of other scholars. Unless you state otherwise, tapes and transcripts may be used in future research, publications and presentations. The Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives will permanently retain the transcripts and, if you permit it, the tapes. This does not preclude any use that you want to make of the recordings. You will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Your participation will require one session of 30 minutes to 2 hours of answering questions about your personal experience on tape. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you begin participation and change your mind you may end your participation at any time without penalty.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

You may consider talking about mining activities, life in the old neighborhoods, and neighborhood relocation to be sensitive issues. You are welcome not to answer any of the questions concerning these topics. If you do provide any information during the interview that you would not like to be used by researchers, then please describe it at the end of this form. It will then be subject to those restrictions for use by any researcher.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

This research provides no direct benefits for participants. Nevertheless, it can reclaim the history of neighborhoods and mining techniques that are now gone, benefiting the entire town of Butte—especially the offspring and relatives of former residents of the lost neighborhoods. Publication of research based on these stories will provide a lasting memorial to these neighborhoods.

University of Wisconsin-Madison
FWA00005399

Protocol: SE-2009-0603
Approved: 9/24/2009
Expires: 9/23/2010

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

There will probably be publications as a result of this study. Your name may be used unless you state otherwise at the end of this form. If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly while using your name. If you agree to allow both future researchers and us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form. You may also choose whether or not to remain anonymous. If you choose to remain anonymous, your name will not be present on the transcripts deposited in the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, nor may it be used in publications based on research in the archives.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Thomas J. Archdeacon, PhD at (608) 263-1778. You may also call the graduate student researcher, Brian Leech at (608) 215-6321. If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320. Any questions about the storage of your tapes and transcripts should be directed to the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives at 406-782-3280.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research, and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print): Jim Michelotti

Jim Michelotti
Signature

7/28/10
Date

JM

You may use my name and you may deposit my taped interview in the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives. Tapes and transcripts are subject to the following restrictions:

Restrictions:

I wish to remain totally anonymous.

(Initials)

University of Wisconsin-Madison
FWA00005399
Protocol: SE-2009-0603
Approved: 9/24/2009
Expires: 9/23/2010

Leech: All right. It is July 28, 2010. This is Brian Leech and I am interviewing Jim Michelotti, and we're going to talk a little bit about um McQueen. So, um, just to establish some, some kind of basic facts, tell me about your family history um there and, and...

Michelotti: Um, I was born and raised in McQueen. I was born in 1944, and lived there until I went to college, ah 18 years later but ah, so ah, ah, I had two sisters—you know the usual family.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: My grandma—my grandparents both lived uh, half a block or a block away—aunts and uncles throughout the neighborhood.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: Went to grade school at Holy Savior. Um, went to high school at Butte Central um so ah most of my formative years were in the neighborhood, you know, ah, ah, McQueen was flourishing at that time so ah, I have all kinds of fond memories. It's ah—there wasn't, there weren't a lot of Italians in McQueen. Ah, there were more Croatians but ah somehow ah there were a few Italians so ah, I ended up with a lot of, a lot of friends that are still ah, good friends, so ah, yeah, the typical what you'd hear about from a neighborhood, but ah, ah, I don't want to ah bore you with any details, but ah, so I have a strong...

Leech: Yeah. Tell me, tell me a little bit more about um, you know, that ethnic mix you were discussing in McQueen and whether or not it, it was even apparent in say the 40's and 50's and you know kind of mid-century.

Michelotti: Ah, ah, I don't remember it being a major issue but ah we were sort of a hybrid if you want to call it. Meaderville was the Italian neighborhood and ah to this day we still have more ties to the Italians in Meaderville, but uh my father was very active in the, in the McQueen ah volunteer fire department, and everything revolved around the fire department or around the ah the church, the Holy Savior, you know, so, but we as a family went to St. Helena's just because the Italians were more comfortable at St. Helena's.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Um, there still was a lot of activities at Holy Savior, but ah, ah, I think that is was just a natural we go to St. Helena's. So in some ways you know, you felt like an—even to this day ah, we, you know, I had these feelings that ah, ah, we didn't belong to either neighborhood because we lived in one where we weren't supposed to live and then we frequented the other one—the, the Italian neighborhood. So like, ah, ah, I'm not, you know even though I'm full-blooded Italian. Ah, all four grandparents are Italian, and I go back...but still I'm not invited to the Meaderville reunions. I'm more—because I grew up in McQueen—I'm more involved in McQueen so if you asked me ah who, you know where I, where I feel more comfortable, I would say McQueen. But if you asked me more [ethically] where I, ethnically where I belonged—I belonged in Meaderville.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So that's why I said that I'm a hybrid.

Leech: There were a lot of non-Italians in Meaderville though too, right?

Michelotti: Ah.

Leech: If they—or is that not true?

Michelotti: Not true.

Leech: No.

Michelotti: I'd say it was 95 percent Italian.

Leech: Wow.

Michelotti: And it was—there were lots of Italians in Meaderville. And my, my, my maternal grandmother ah came from Meaderville.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: McQueen was sort of the upgrade from Meaderville.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: You know, Meaderville was sort of a blue collar—grew without any direction. McQueen was a very nice neighborhood and maybe once you moved out of Meaderville you were considered not an outcast, but you know, you left the, left that particular thing, but ah I would say 10, 20 percent of McQueen was Italian, and you know, five percent of Meaderville may have been non-Italian. So it was—there was strong, ah, and there wasn't any rivalry between the two neighborhoods.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I have good friends. We went down there all the time. But you know, you, you studied the reasons for St. Helena's and Holy Savior's and it goes back to World War I and the Italians were affiliated with Mussolini and all that kind of stuff. So there was some, you know, St. Helena's was built because they didn't want to go to Holy Savior.

Leech: Yeah, yeah.

Michelotti: I suspect in my father's generation and my grandparent's generation there was some, some issues, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: But I never—you know our generation there wasn't the issues.

Leech: Sure. Tell me a little bit more about your—you said you had a lot of family that lived close.

Michelotti: OK. Well, my ah, ah, my grand—my paternal grandfather lived about two blocks away on the same street and my maternal grandmother died pretty young, so my grandfather—my mother's father would come up to our house every day. You could set the clock at about 10:00. And ah he would show up and have, as I remember, some coffee and that with my mother. And then some of the days I would take a walk with him to his brother's house that was in Meaderville. And it was the typical—I mean we didn't chat. I just walked behind him. You know, he was a miner, pretty good-sized man, bib overalls, one pair of shoes in his life. Ah, we'd go down and see his brother. Ah, they would visit in Italian and I'd sit there and really didn't understand what they were talking about. Pick up pieces, you know, you were supposed to be seen and not heard and all that kind of stuff. But that was expected and I didn't have any problem with that. So that's—with my memory of my grandfather (my mother's father) who lived pretty close. Now my grandmother, who lived only about a half a block away (my dad's mother), she—ah I was very close to her. My mother died when she was young. She was 41. So I ended up being raised by my grandmother. That one was close. And ah two of her—my father's brother and my father's sister lived with her so there were three in that house, and ah so ah, like when I was going to grade school we didn't eat lunch at school. We would come home for lunch. And the school was about a block away so I would, I would go home to her house for lunch and, and she would feed me and then I'd head back to school to play on the playground. So I—I have really strong attachments to my maternal—you know, my dad's mother. She was a beauty.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So ah then you know, with more relatives another block away was one of my aunts. My dad had four sisters and ah, they all lived in, in McQueen, and his brother. My mother, my mother's family was more scattered but ah her father lived close by. OK.

Leech: Yeah, yeah. Wasn't it what um, you were moving around? Wasn't Michelotti's the like Lydia's down there? Isn't that what...

Michelotti: That's a shirttail relative, yeah, and ah in growing up when I was going to college I worked at Lydia's.

Leech: Oh yeah?

Michelotti: I was a gopher for the chef. His name was Danny [Bonninini] and ah you know, it was a good, they hired me three or four days a week and I worked probably 20 hours a week for them. And that was when Lydia's was on the flat low. You know, you, that Marlene told the story of how Lydia's became Lydia's ah when she talked about when we had the boarding houses and they were cooking for the boarders and eventually people started coming to the boarding

houses and ah, ah, you know the food was so good that the, the Italian women got hired by the Rocky Mountain and the Aro Café and the—Lydia herself sort of migrated through the Rocky Mountain and ended up owning her own restaurant. So yeah, there is shirttails there and I, and I did work there but you know, there's all kinds of ties. You know, most of Meaderville was related probably.

Leech: Yeah. I'm not surprised.

Michelotti: No.

Leech: So would you describe the neighborhood as being fairly close knit or what's the...

Michelotti: Oh yeah, yeah. I can remember ah that ah we used to have ah the volunteer fire department would show movies on Friday nights, and ah then they would give us treats so we would all—you know, it was—we would go there on Friday nights and ah, then ah, my dad was a butcher, and he never hunted but hunting was really a big thing in McQueen.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So he, he would ah, every night—he had his own neighborhood grocery store and then in the evenings he would go cut up elk for different—and deer and what they would give him was roasts and steaks and so I would go with him ah you know as he, and watch him cut up unfortunately or fortunately, he never taught me how to butcher anything, you know?. But I mean, so you knew everybody. Ah, ah you know, I can remember as a young boy—my mother had rheumatic fever as a, as a young girl and so she died as a result of that. That destroys the valves of your heart, and that's why she passed. And ah, I remember walking up the street one day and I was sloshing through some puddles and this one guy named Kim [Kusun] came out of his house and said, "You know, your mother is not that—she can't be washing your clothes, so you shouldn't be doing that," and he really went after me and told me that I should not make her life any harder, and I can remember that you know people just took care of people. That's—I don't remember wakes or anything having—you know, I think my earliest recollections of that sort of thing was that they had them in the mortuaries. But I know that supposedly my grandfather, when he died in, in the late 30's, the wake was at the house and all that kind of stuff.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I missed—thank God I missed that too. But anyway, yeah, it was very close that way so we had the movie things, we had ah skating rinks like everybody has and the guys all, you know, every day you went there in the wintertime and in the summertime we had the baseball fields, and then you know, ah at that time ah, Butte had a rail system that went from ah, from Butte to Helena. And it went through, along the east ridge, and in the summertime for kicks we would, we would jump the train right behind McQueen and it would take us all the way up to the tunnel which was on top of this mountain and then we'd have lunch up there and walk down, you know?

Leech: Yeah, yeah.

Michelotti: Those were simple. It seems like we were outside all the time, you know? We didn't have any—there wasn't any fear, you know, like you have nowadays for sure, but you know, the communicating, we don't have that. We didn't have any way of communicating. When you left the house, they just, they knew you were going to be somewhere in the neighborhood, and if you got in trouble, somebody would...

Leech: Somebody would see you.

Michelotti: Take care of you. I mean, your parents knew before you got home that you did something.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: And so—and then we used to have, you know, the typical marble seasons and the rubber gun seasons, and I can remember, you know, all of those kinds of things because we lived so close to the ah, the outskirts of town that we spent a lot of time in the hills.

Leech: I'm sure.

Michelotti: Yeah, so.

Leech: Yeah. I wonder if the opposite of that um being very close also means there's always, you know, people in your business or?

Michelotti: Yeah. Well, I think ah...

Leech: It was frustrating for your family.

Michelotti: Yeah, I used to have this philosophy that, that was a great way to be with your, your ah, children, have them real close. And I, you know, at least with our complex society now, I think that wouldn't work nowadays because you know, ah, sometimes what you don't know, you're better off. I mean, it seemed like there were always somebody fighting in our family, you know? My dad's sisters, especially in the females.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: You know, the men pretty much, like—typically my dad always—he was the typical guy that when he got off work he just stopped by the club and had a beer and then he came home.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Well, I know the women—I know my mother called her sisters every day. And then I know that ah the sister-in-laws spoke, you know, were always, and if you forget to tell somebody something, then somebody left that felt like they got left out. Ah, there were always,

not jealousies, but ah, I have one cousin who I didn't get along with and we fought a lot. Ah, she was the same age as I was and there was always problems there and you know, we shouldn't be fighting. So the closeness—I mean you were there when they needed it, but it also caused ah some problems.

Leech: Sure. Sure. So um, you said, so the volunteer fire department was kind of a mainstay of the community as was these churches, churches kind of depending on which one you were going to. What did the churches do for?

Michelotti: Well, you had, typically you had all the—I remember ah, like the holidays, you know Christmas and ah, there was the May, the May crowning that was always big. Ah, we had dances I remember, you know, in grade school, sponsored by the church. Ah, I don't remember much about them but ah...

Leech: Sure.

Michelotti: The ah, my mother belonged to ah, ah, ah, Parent Teacher's Association. And I can remember, they had, they would get together and the kids were all there, you know? But it was primarily around probably the holidays when we went to church. And it wasn't—we were all altar boys. You know, the mass was in Latin and we, we knew all our Latin and we, I could still respond, you know, all the Latin, I had no idea what it meant. But ah, ah, so I think, you know, the typical Sunday you would go, go to church. Ah, ah, you know, always on Sunday and everybody visited after, and I can't remember them having social events after that, but it was just the place to congregate, you know?

Leech: Yeah. Tell me about your dad's grocery store. Um.

Michelotti: Oh yeah.

Leech: Yeah. Were there a number of other grocery stores in the neighborhood or?

Michelotti: Well, my dad's grocery store wasn't in McQueen.

Leech: Oh yeah?

Michelotti: It was ah, it was on Maryland Avenue...

Leech: Oh sure.

Michelotti: By where the town pump is, but my ah, ah, there was a grocery store in McQueen. There were 155 grocery stores in McQueen— in Butte in the 50's.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So I do have a lot of memories of the grocery store because ah I started working there like when I was 12 or 14. You know, the way it worked is, is people would call in their,

their ah orders. We would fill them and then deliver them. And I used to be the delivery boy and do all that kind of stuff. Ah, you know, my, my dad ah, never—he worked six days a week and on Sundays we went to church, then we visited the cemetery and then we went and cleaned the grocery store. That's, that was our entertainment. Sound horrible, but ah I remember you know, like you know, the meat counters in the little grocery stores. You had to take everything out of them and wash the glass. And that was one of my jobs, to ah, and I don't know if this is too specific, but it goes to show you how things have changed. Ah, but ah, so I, I took all the meat, the meat that was out and then laid inside the counter, inside the, I don't even know what you'd call that.

Leech: Yeah right.

Michelotti: It was a big refrigeration unit, and cleaned it. And ah, so you know, and we used to go to the cemetery a lot, especially after my mother died. We visited that over the grave a lot. Ah, my, my, I played a lot of sports in grade school and high school, but I know very seldom that any, you know, not like nowadays you go to a game for your grandkids and there's eight or 10 grandparents and two or three parents at the game for every kid. Ah, my dad just couldn't do that. He, he had to work. The plus side of that though was we ate like kings because when the meat was in the, in the ah, I wish I could think of that, whatever it was that—the refrigeration unit that had the glass in front. It would get discolored but it was fine. So my dad would just bring steaks and roasts home all the time that nobody else would buy. So I'm a meat and pasta man. I won't say a meat and potato man because ah we had spaghetti a lot. You know, that's the way the Italians ate, but you know, the neighborhood grocery, ah grocery store, the neighborhood grocery store that my dad was involved in, ah, three families were supported out of that. Our family, my dad's oldest sister and her husband who had no kids—it was called [Contrato] Market—and then my aunt, my dad's sister, Violet who had one child. So it was supporting three whole families just out of that grocery store.

Leech: Wow.

Michelotti: Which is, you know, we didn't live like kings, but we weren't, I mean we had nice clothes and ah, we were always fed. So, and I think that was the case with most of the grocery stores, you know? One of the jobs I had was to go pick up produce every other day, and fresh produce and fruit. And that was you know right there in the center of Butte. It would be, it would be brought in by train, and then I would have to go—they'd place an order and I'd go get it and bring it back to the grocery store. And all, you know, those groceries stores, you know, you've heard that before, but they, during the strikes and during tough times, everything was on an accounts receivables basis so they kept a lot of families afloat, so. Yeah, and then we, well, you know like I say, they had the neighborhood grocery store right in McQueen and ah, I don't remember going there much but ah, when, when, when the bread man used to deliver groceries to [Ciserinis] it was called, they had day old stuff and they would—Twinkies and that kind of stuff—they'd give it to us or whatever. That was a common occurrence. So.

Leech: Yes. What other kinds of like local stores and things were there in?

Michelotti: In McQueen? Ah, ah, one of my favorite stores was ah an ice cream parlor that was right across the street. And it was called Neddy's and an ice cream cone was a nickel there, and on my way back to school I used to pass that and get in [inaudible]. Her husband and her ran this little ice cream parlor. His name was [Echilo] and ah, her name was Neddy [Echilo] and Neddy [inaudible] crazy around this little thing. So they had the ice cream parlor. Ah, McQueen didn't have that many barber shops. Meaderville had a lot of barber stuff, shops. Meaderville had a lot of grocery stores, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: They had four or five, ah. McQueen had a shoe shop—I remember that—for repairing shoes.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: The [Treaches] ran that, and if you talk to Rick, he'll tell you more about that. Um, McQueen didn't have many businesses. It was a real residential community.

Leech: A residential community.

Michelotti: Where, ah, some of the neighborhoods—all the neighborhoods had grocery stores. But then some of the, you know, some of the neighborhoods—I don't know where you bought clothes and that. I think my mother used to go up to Hennessey's, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: The uptown was the key place to go for any of the services that we would use nowadays. Ah, I'm trying to think if there was anything else that McQueen had that—I don't think so. It was, it was predominantly residential.

Leech: Yeah. How, how, tell me how else did you feel like McQueen was different from Meaderville since you had a foot in both places you go were interesting people?

Michelotti: Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, Meaderville was the place to go for entertainment. It had all kinds of bars and all kinds of restaurants. Ah, it was thought more of an entertainment community than a residential community although there were close to probably 1,000 people in Meaderville too, but they lived, you know, ah sort of scattered in, in different parts. Ah, there was a mine in Meaderville—a big mine called the Leonard Mine. And a lot of people from McQueen worked in the Leonard Mine too. So McQueen was sort of a oh—I could get in big trouble for this but—I won't say a step up, but it was a place to get away from the entertainment—get away—you know, it would be comparable to Vegas nowadays, in living away from the Strip—you don't want to be any part of, you know? Or getting away from where you worked, you know? And ah everybody kept their yards and everything where, in that wasn't the case at all in Meaderville. Although, you know, every, whenever we went out it was straight to Meaderville, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And the family, you know, all the brothers and sisters and cousins and everything, they'd go to the Rocky Mountain or to the Aro and have a big meal and spend the whole evening down in Meaderville and then head back to McQueen.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So, ah, I'm not sure, if you know, if you talk to the Meaderville people, they definitely were very comfortable. It was a residential community, but the rest of the world, the rest of the neighborhoods felt like Meaderville was the place to go to—and there was—I was trying to think if there were any bars. There weren't very many bars in McQueen. You really had the club and that was it. The club had a, had a auxiliary building where they had meetings and all that. Then they had the fire engine. But the big difference was the residency versus the, you know, what I spoke of, yeah.

Leech: Right. Yeah, and I've heard other things like just because McQueen was newer, McQueen's houses tend to be nicely painted and Meaderville's weren't and.

Michelotti: Yeah, and there was no organization, you know, street-wise, to Meaderville. It looks like McQueen was all laid out ahead of time. It was almost like one of these ah, ah, neighborhoods nowadays where they go in and put the curbs in and all that kind of stuff. So I think there was some, some sibling rivalry because McQueen was sort of thought of as you know, the nice neighborhood, where Meaderville was the—but Meaderville was the place that everybody wanted to go to. People wanted to get out and things like that.

Leech: Sure, sure, sure. Yeah.

Michelotti: And that was true—I was trying to think, you know—my generation that wasn't true because we stayed in McQueen and did all the things kids did. Kids from Meaderville stayed in Meaderville and did all the things kids did. But my father's generation and my mother's generation, they were the working and the ah entertaining and all that kind of stuff. So they, they viewed the two neighborhoods extremely different than we did, you know? If you asked somebody—my generation which neighborhood you're from, they'll tell you, you know, they're from McQueen or Meaderville. And I'm not sure, you know—my grandmother—if you'd asked her that questions because she, she lived in both of them.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: She probably wouldn't distinguish the two too much except that she liked to go to the Rocky Mountain Café and have dinner.

Leech: How different did they feel from say, just you know, being an uptowner—being say just on the east side—which is just kind of ah both residential but it was close to, close to uptown? It wasn't as far away from them.

Michelotti: Yeah. I think ah, the uptown was viewed almost like going to Seattle.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: From McQueen, you know? You just didn't do it. Ah, McQueen had a baseball team and when they played you went to Clark's Park and that was a, that was a major trip, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: To watch them play.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Ah, you never left the neighborhood unless you had a reason, and you just didn't. You know, if you had a game or of you had ah—it seemed like you just—I can remember now that you mention it though like on Saturday nights ah, where my grand, where my father's mother lived, everybody ended up there, and you would eat there, and that's what you did, and ah so you stayed right in the neighborhood. You just didn't leave.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I mean, there was no reason to.

Leech: Right, right. Well it seems like it was kind of its own self-contained?

Michelotti: Yeah. And you know, like this neighborhood where we live now. That was the rich neighborhood, you know?

Leech: Right. The west side.

Michelotti: That was the west side where the Montana Power people lived and a few doctors and everything else. The IC parish was considered a rich bed. I have friends who are from St. Pat's Parish, and they, they view, ah like even when we played, ah, in the parochial leagues—we didn't have very good uniforms. McQueen—they sort of had hand hand-me-downs where these neighborhoods up here had warm-ups and everything, you know—they were considered the rich kids.

Leech: Sure.

Michelotti: It didn't—you know, it didn't make any difference I mean, but at least there was, there was a class that way—a class of societies.

Leech: Right, right. And I mean would that have been, you know, the Flats was busy developing at the time. Was that just a totally different world from being up near the hill?

Michelotti: Ah, in high school the uptown was the key place to go. I mean, you know, the drag, the strip, the drag was up there. Everybody went uptown. Ah, I would say in the 50's and 60's ah, the uptown was the congregating place other than Meaderville which was the entertainment place, you know?

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: Ah, the Flats I think became more prominent in the 70's and 80's and that sort of thing, you know, when Harrison Avenue started growing and all the, all the Wal-Mart's and all that kind of stuff. Ah, but my dad ah eventually went to work for Buttry's, and ah that's because the major chains came in and forced all the neighborhood groceries to close. Well, you know he...

Leech: When did he start working for Buttry's? I mean, when did he close down the shop?

Michelotti: His last 12 years of his, his working life, so let's see, he was born in '06 and ah, so I would say that, that took place probably in the, in the late 60's, early 70's.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: And then you know the big chains came in and closed the Buttry's and them down so it was just a sequence.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: Ah, but you know recently we visited Italy, and ah most of the cities back there are still like we were in the 50's. I mean, you know they have the general shopping areas and the stores with the, that you have the storefront and then you live above it and all that kind of stuff.

Leech: Sure.

Michelotti: So it was just a simple life. It was ah—you know, nowadays, you know like, everything is a lot more complicated—I mean, transportation, communication, and all that. You think you'd be closer, but you're not, but ah yeah. I ah, two of my best friends are still my best friends, and you know typically I lived at one end of McQueen, one lived in the middle, and one lived at the end of McQueen, and we would end up at somebody's house in the process.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And that's where we would spend most of our time.

Leech: Right. So, tell me, you ended up leaving the area after high school essentially?

Michelotti: Right.

Leech: So after you graduated?

Michelotti: When I went to college.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Yeah, but it was still here. I'd come home to it.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And in the summers—for a few of the summers—yeah, for most of the summers, I and McQueen existed. That would be in the, ah, let's see, mid-60's.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I went to college from '62 through '66. So McQueen was still—you know, I went to Carroll and Helena—so I would come home to, and my house was still in McQueen.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: But then, as soon as we got married, ah, I was trying to think, yeah, I spent one year in Butte teaching at Butte Central, and then we moved to Seattle. And after that, then McQueen, you know, was gone.

Leech: Yeah, yeah. Tell me about—I mean you played—went back and forth and had lots of relatives still in Meaderville and McQueen. What was your perception of how they felt as, as the kind of open pit operations developed and grew into those areas?

Michelotti: Well, at first I think they tried to hold out, you know, but then.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: It was obvious they were fighting a losing battle, you know, and ah, so they ended up ah selling out. You know, they'd give them the best buck for their house. They knew they had no choice. My dad—the house I grew up into—moved over to, over by St. Ann's and my dad sold it to the company, and I can't, I don't have that information. I don't know what they sold it for, but anyway he ah then ah, a guy bought it and moved, you know, like most of that. They were either moved or buried. Ah, I think there was, there was some permanent scars because of that, you know? People felt, ah, like nobody should have—we should have held out and everything, but it was inevitable, you know? I ah.

Leech: Why do you think holding out didn't work? I mean.

Michelotti: Oh, I don't know. I mean, it was a choice between a job in most cases and survival; and the choice between ah starving to death maybe, you know? Because the one thing I, the one thing I came to realize when I was in Italy and I was able to go to my grandmother's

house, my father's mother and my father's father's house which was built in 1700. And I mean this is gorgeous country. It's, it's a lot prettier than what we have here now. It's at the base of the Alps, and all I could think about is why would you ever leave this, you know? You had to be starving to death to do it.

Leech: Yeah. Sure.

Michelotti: And so the analogy there is, why would you ever sell out, you know? Everything was pretty comfortable, and the choice was that if you didn't, you know, you have no future, and you'd starve to death, I guess. That's the only reason I think people finally, you know, gave into the company. They just knew the writing was on the wall, and if they didn't do it, they were doomed.

Leech: Yeah. I mean, did it make people angry at each other?

Michelotti: Oh yeah.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I'm sure that there's....

Leech: Those who wanted to sell and those that didn't for a while and.

Michelotti: The first ones that went were hated, and probably cast, castigated, I guess, and everything else. I don't know. I can't imagine what kind of things went on because these are very strong people.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I mean, and they didn't care, they wouldn't hesitate to come up and tear into you, both brutally and physically, and I think that went on.

Leech: Well, I'm sure it made a difference that there were so many people who worked for the company who lived in...

Michelotti: And you know, we were on, we were kids and were on the exterior of that, but I'm sure that there were—you know, my father's mother's generation—there were people that probably still don't speak to each other because they felt like that they should have never given in, you know? So yeah, we were in—we missed all that to a certain degree. Ah, we missed the problems that exist because the fathers stopped at the club every night and then came home, you know? The mothers, the mothers were there. You, that was of difference than today.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: And that's a big thing, you know? Ah, but other than that, we, we were sheltered from all that stuff.

Leech: Sure, sure. Tell me about, you know, you were involved in this McQueen reunion, and tell me about how that came about and what does...

Michelotti: Yeah, well I think, I mean, McQueen will always exist. There's no doubt. And so will Meaderville, and so will the rest of the neighborhoods. Ah, and ah, any chance we have to ah resurrect that we do, you know, and ah, I, I have found that either people—there's two types of people—people who like, who like reunions and like the past, and then there are people who really, and I have cousins that ah could care less about McQueen, you know—it's, it's, ah, I don't know, and the people who have the deep roots are the ones that will always have the reunions and always participate and that kind of stuff. Ah, I don't, you know, it's almost an animal, animal instinct. Because when I was in Italy and went in those houses, I could feel some kind of a, of a, something that, you know, you just can't describe, that says this is, this is important ground, you know? And ah, I think that any time you lived—were born and raised in a neighborhood and ah been there 20 some years—it just has too much of an effect on you not to. You know, it brings people back. I mean, when I was growing up, it was 60,000, 70,000 people, and when my father was growing up, it was 100,000 people, and mother. So there's a lot of people that love to come back here, you know, and ah, and I feel that it's probably that animal drawing that nobody can really describe. And you know, it was a fun time in our lives. I mean, you don't have all the problems that you have. You know, we have so many stories that we constantly share and ah so, you know, your youth is, is a good time.

Leech: Yeah, yeah. Um, I'd be curious. When was the first McQueen, you know, like East Butte reunion?

Michelotti: Ah, 2006, was it?

Leech: Yes.

Michelotti: Yeah, 2006, and then we had the one in 2009.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And now there's going to be one in—every three years I think they're having them.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I think they're having them. Yeah, and ah...

Leech: I was amazed at the number of people when I was at the last one.

Michelotti: Yeah. It was amazing.

Leech: There was maybe close to 400 people I would guess.

Michelotti: Yeah, yeah. It was, yeah. Oh yeah, you know, they're, you know, someday—I don't know if my children will keep, keep its memory going—that's probably, I think that's questionable because they have no ties to it. Ah, two of our oldest sons ah.

Leech: Do they come to the reunions?

Michelotti: Oh yeah. They like to go to the reunions. And I have found with my sons that ah, of the four of them—well they're all sort of, you know, I think they think it's important because I place an importance on it. And I always tell them—I says, "Well, you know, if something happens to us, at least grab the computer and a lot of the pictures that we have in this office here because, you know, they're collectors in a lot of cases." Ah, but ah, yeah, I don't know. They have no idea what it was like. Ah, you know, I can still walk the streets and that's, I'm fortunate that I have the memory to do that, I guess, you know?

Leech: What, ah—I'm curious. Why do you think, you know, it seems like there's been like, you know, the McQueen reunions started in 2006 and then they had the east side reunion maybe like 2004, or something.

Michelotti: Yeah.

Leech: They haven't had one since as far as I know. And then they had these Meaderville reunions started up. I'm wondering why you think these have kind of started to happen certainly more often. I mean, you know, there was no, no kinds of reunions say, you know, even since the 70's when. And I'm kind of curious. Why? What do you think are the reasons why they've become so popular or as in this case, McQueen? Why did people make [inaudible]?

Michelotti: Yeah. Well, I think East Butte and Columbia Gardens had the first reunion. Then McQueen combined with them for the next reunion. And then Meaderville had a separate reunion. And then Meaderville's having a separate one again this year. Ah, I think they're trying to have one that has all four of them. But anyway, ah, I think it's, it's our generation that's, that's creating reunions.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: I don't think ah my father and mother's generation would ever do it.

Leech: Why?

Michelotti: Ah.

Leech: Because I, I think I agree with you because obviously they didn't. So I'm curious, why?

Michelotti: No. Ah, I don't know. You know, I haven't thought that through very well, but I think it has to do with the energy it takes ah, and several things come to mind. One of them, you know, they do require a lot of work and we're capable of doing that. But I'm not sure their, their

memories of McQueen are as good as our generation. I mean that, in a lot of ways ah my father and mother's generation—those were hard times. They, you know, I think that they ah, you know, they experienced a lot, a lot of the ah—I mean it would be like—would I ever have ah, a reunion of the west side now where I live? I don't have any desire to do that.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: For whatever reason. And I think the reason is because there were good and bad times when you're adults. But when you're kids, there's always good times.

Leech: Always good times.

Michelotti: And the people that are putting these reunions together were all kids, you know?

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: That I deal with anyway.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Some are a little bit older, but most of them are in their 60's and 70's and they had nothing but fun in the neighborhoods.

Leech: Right. Sure.

Michelotti: I mean, and they, I think ah, the ah, as long as that generation is around, they'll have reunions.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Ah, you know, it's funny because our oldest son, ah, had his first reunion of just his close friends this year, and he's 43. And he's never had an interest in doing that. They all went to Austin, Texas, heaven forbid, about 10 of them. And I thought, "Why all of a sudden is he interested in doing this?" Well, it's because these are guys that he had, were friends in grade school, high school, and junior high.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: You know? And I think they just are, have reached the point now where they want to get together and remember.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: And so once you get in your, once you've been out for awhile in the cruel world and that, you start wanting to—I don't know if that's come up with other people, but I think that's why our generation does it.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: Ah, my folks, the reason my father's generation doesn't is because why would he, why would to a certain degree? He worked 70 hours a week. He, his wife and one of his children died when he was in ah, you know, in McQueen. You know, he, I mean he has good friends and that sort of stuff, but most of them are gone now, you know? So, that's probably the—you know, I never thought of it that way, but I'm sure, you know, compared to what we deal with now with ah all the complications that you have as, you know, with ah health and divorces and everything else—there's, those aren't as good as times as they were when we were young.

Leech: Sure, sure sure. Um, when did you end up moving back to Butte?

Michelotti: I came back to Butte in 1972.

Leech: Hm. Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: And ah, was working for IBM, and then, you know, at that time you moved around a lot when you worked for IBM. And ah, they had scheduled us to move to the east coast and we had three kids at the time and ah, they were starting school, so we decided we—I, I ended up going to work for Montana Tech, and they were just starting the computer.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: So that worked out good.

Leech: Yeah. So you were around probably for the end of the Columbia Gardens, which seemed kind of like a larger community?

Michelotti: Just at the tail end of that.

Leech: Event to me, but then these neighborhoods disappeared, and certainly it seems like it was a major event for the people who lived there, but maybe not as much for the rest of Butte—certainly nothing like the Columbia Gardens.

Michelotti: I think that the people who lived in the Columbia Gardens ah—it was traumatic for them.

Leech: Yeah, sure.

Michelotti: But ah, you know there are pluses and minuses to what went on with the Columbia Gardens. When the Columbia Gardens was there, that was the place and the only place. And the park, the park system in Butte changed dramatically after that.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: And, you know, you ended up with a lot of parks in a lot of different parts of Butte as a result, so yeah, it was sad and I remember the Columbia Gardens well.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: Ah, and I would love to have it here.

Leech: Was there a lot of protest when you moved back here from people in the neighborhood?

Michelotti: No.

Leech: No? They were just sad?

Michelotti: Just sad that it was—it was again one of these inevitable things that people accepted, I guess, you know? It was no different than, you know, my ah, my, my grandmother that I was closest to ah, left Italy when she was 21, and she had a two-year-old, and traveled by train and stagecoach and all that kind of stuff. I mean, she would have probably love to stay there, but she just accepted it. And I think the people here are very accepting and to a certain degree. I don't think that they're wishy-washy by any means. I think that there was a lot of objection to it, but you know, I think they accepted it because of the progress it brought with it, and things like that. Yeah, I don't, I don't have a strong feeling, ah. I think my father's and mother's generation had a stronger feeling towards the Columbia Gardens than, than we did, although we went to dances out there and.

Leech: Why do you think they had a stronger feeling?

Michelotti: Just because it was ah, it was just such a great place to go. You know, if, if they did anything at all—like I said, they'd go to Meaderville maybe once every two or three months. They probably went—they went up on to the Columbia—I can remember going to picnics up at the Columbia Gardens a lot with the family. I remember going to the reservoir, you know, when the whole family got together. I remember the neighborhood, ah, picnics that they had up at the Shamrock, which is up by Basin. Those were big events back then. I mean, you know, it's sort of like ah, we're planning a trip to the east coast in the fall, and my wife has been planning this for six months or something, and so, and then we're going to Oregon next week, and all, and all the family's coming with us. Well, I think the Columbia Gardens in Meaderville and ah, Shamrock, were very similar to us going to Oregon and to the east coast now, you know?

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: Because our kids can go—you know, they're constantly going full blast—I mean, transportation's so easy, but ah, so the Columbia Gardens, I think, was special in the sense that, that was, they took away a place for them to go that they could afford to go to.

Leech: Hm-hmm. Sure, sure.

Michelotti: And enjoy ah a special day or something like that. But, you know, our generation, hell, it's a lot different because you're flying across the world or going to the east coast or the west coast...

Leech: Right, right, right.

Michelotti: And all that kind of stuff. But, yeah, it was sad, you know, and I will always have a special place, ah, ah, but now, you know, it's so easy to get everywhere, it doesn't matter.

Leech: Any final thoughts you have about McQueen or your [inaudible] neighborhood project—is there interest in that?

Michelotti: Oh, it's sort of like what you said, you know, the more you've, the more you uncover, I'm sure when your dissertation is done, it's [gonna] be the tip of the iceberg for somebody else, you know, to investigate ah. I don't there's ah, you know, I'm thinking of the people that, more people—ah, I don't see a lot of people who benefited from McQueen being destroyed.

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: And I don't see a lot of people benefited from Meaderville being destroyed. They were worse off in the long run, but somehow ah, I think the company benefited from that.

Leech: Sure.

Michelotti: And the majority probably survived because of that but you know.

Leech: Did it turn more people against the company you think? I'm curious.

Michelotti: Ah, I don't, I think what it did, is it ah, it made a bunch of people just leave Butte, and they wished they didn't ever have to. But they didn't have any choice. Ah, I don't think that you know, they've ever, you know, I can remember at one time when we moved to Seattle, I ah, I thought, "We probably will never come back to Butte." And we were sort of sad, but we just accepted that as, as progress. You know, I was getting a new job in a new field and all that kind of stuff and, you know, ah, I remember my uncle never went back to Italy. But he always said, "I wish I'd have never left."

Leech: Hm-hmm.

Michelotti: You know? And so, you know, my thoughts in that is that they were forced to leave Italy because they were starving to death.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: They were forced to leave Butte because they would probably starve to death or they needed new careers. You know, I think—I don't know—you end up being more ah, like you accept, you accept all this stuff to a certain degree because of progress.

Leech: What do you mean by "starve to death in neighborhoods?" I'm kind of curious.

Michelotti: Well, I think if the Pit, you know, the company, you know, if they didn't let the company do what they wanted to do, they would have been without jobs.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And, you know, even though my dad ran, you know, a neighborhood grocery store, ah, in the long run the people who were supporting him worked for the company.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: And so it was just a domino effect, you know? The company controlled, ah, controlled everything because—and I don't think it's that way now—ah, Butte's gotten a little bit diversified, but ah, back then, I mean, everybody worked for the company, you know? And ah all of the peripheral stuff was for the company, so they dictated, ah, and people accepted that because they didn't have, you know, any choice. Ah, just like, I wish, you know, I wish my father's generation was around that could speak to that. You might—when you interview Stella—Stella Speer (she's in her 90's)—you almost have to find the people in their 90's now. She might give you—because they had a beautiful home in McQueen and they ended up—they have a beautiful home now (her husband's dead now)—but she may be able to give you some insight into, you know, why they moved.

Leech: Interesting.

Michelotti: Yeah. I, I go back, I go back all the way to Italy though and say, "You know, why did you ever leave this?" I—of all the places that I've been—and I haven't been that many places, and I certainly enjoy the way we live now, ah—if you ask me, "Where would you move?"—I would say I would probably move back to where my family came from.

Leech: And where is that?

Michelotti: It's north of Turin in the Alps. It's a province called Loc Anna Anna Bassi, and ah, you know, there's a bunch of little cities up there and ah just beautiful country and a simple life.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: In fact, one of the places is called Costa del Monte, and they ah, about 10:00 everyday, you see all these old Italian guys sitting out in this plaza talking to each other, you know? That's their retirement, I guess.

Leech: Right.

Michelotti: But, I'm sure if you asked somebody, you know, "Would I go back to McQueen?" Ah, I don't think I have that strong of ties to McQueen.

Leech: Yeah.

Michelotti: I mean, I would love for it to be there, but ah, they have, I think you're asking me, "Do you want to go back to your youth?"

Leech: Hm. Interesting.

Michelotti: And that's ah—I'd probably say, "Yeah, I wouldn't mind going back to Butte." I'm not sure I'd want to go through all the things we've gone through. Yeah. I don't know if I answered that very well.

Leech: Oh, it's great. Thank you. All right, well [inaudible]

Michelotti: No, that sounds good.

[End of Audio]

