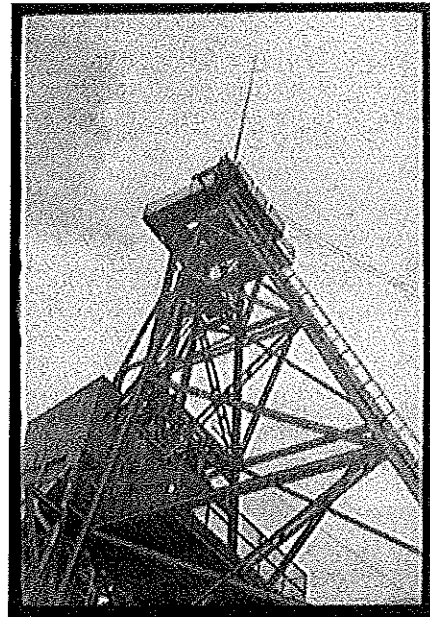
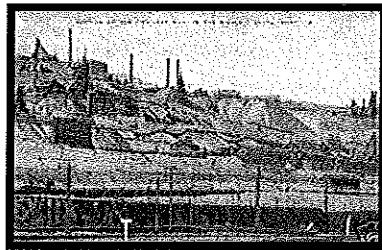
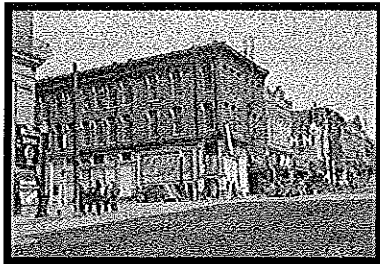


Butte History



Interview of Raymond R. Barott

Conducted

Sunday, October 29, 2006 - 12 noon

@ his home - 2700 Amherst, Butte

By Dorea A. Wilmoth

Dorea:

Okay first of all, tell me a little bit about yourself... Where you were born...

Ray:

My name's Ray Barott, I'm 72 years old. Born in Butte, here. The St. James Hospital—the old one. I uh went to St. Pat's grade school, graduated from Boys Central High School. I went to work for Anaconda Company.

Dorea:

Okay, um tell me about your parents.

Ray:

My father was raised in Elk Park on a Ranch

Dorea:

His name?

Ray:

Raymond M. Barott. And my mother was Mary McKenna. She was raised in Corktown. It's uh, North Wyoming Street above the trestle and to the east. And she went to St. Pat's school... uh, or St. Mary's School. So uh, that's about all I know there. My father went to school in Elk Park.

Dorea:

Did they have brothers and sisters?

Ray:

Nope:

Dorea:

Neither of them?

Ray:

No. Well, my mother had a step-brother, but...

Dorea:

And then they had you...



Ray:

Uh huh.

Dorea:

How did they meet, do you know?

Ray:

I couldn't tell you. That was long before my time.

Dorea:

...Obviously. So when did they... you lived in Elk Park for a while too right?

Ray:

No. I spent all my summers in Elk Park around like that up where my grandparents' place was. But I was too young, my grandmother died in 1940. So I don't remember much about that.

Dorea:

Okay. And... let's see. You... So you didn't live in this house your whole life did you?

Ray:

No. We built this house in 1960. I lived up on the corner of Platinum and Jackson. That was just below Lover's Roost. And Lover's Roost is the big stone house going up Platinum Street that you can see on the hill. I don't know how it got its name, so...

Dorea:

Okay so what was it like living in uptown Butte as a child?

Ray:

It was okay, yeah, we were close to town. It was within maybe oh 8, 10 blocks of walking. And there was quite a few kids that we all run around together and we'd go uptown. You had all kinds of places uptown though. You had shows to go to, you had milk shops where they made milkshakes and sandwiches. All kinds of things... When I was growing up there were 1, 2, 3, 4 theatres in Butte and uh, there was one that nothing, pert near but Western shows called the Park Theatre on West Par.. East Park Street. And they, it was a boomin' town, they had all kinds of places to, not really for kids to go, but uh...

Dorea:

I bet kids went there anyway.

Ray:

Excitement was there. Ya know. There was no, being put out cause you were underage or anything. You could go with your parents pert near anyplace you want. There was a place called the M&M that ran 24-hours a day. All kinds of gambling, anything you wanted. The Board of Trade was the same way. The Crown on East Park Street... hey they were the same way. Oh and the only thing I remember about the Crown and the M&M they had good food. That you could eat at the counter there a lot and it was cheap.

Dorea:

Okay.

Ray:

But uh, other than that, uh, there was just a lot of people that were in Butte and uptown was a boomin' place.

Dorea:

Okay. What kind of stuff did you guys do as a family?

Ray:

As a family?

Dorea:

Did you go to church, or?

Ray:

Well yeah, and then we turned around and used to go for rides on Sundays or go here or go there. We used to maybe go to Virginia City for a ride or go over to Bozeman or someplace. But it was an all day trip usually when we did that. Go from here here to West Yellowstone, from Yellowstone then down through the Gallatin and come out Bozeman and then come home the highway. But it was the old highway, it wasn't like the Interstate now.

Dorea:

And you had just the one car for the family, right?



Ray:

We had two.

Dorea:

Two?

Ray:

Uh huh. Car that we could go places in and do things that my mother had, and, uh, my dad had a truck. But other than that, uh, I learned to drive a Model-T Ford.

Dorea:

How old were you when you learned to drive?

Ray:

I don't know, hey, uh I'd maybe say, eleven, twelve. But they'd let me drive it maybe from the grocery store home was about a block and a half, so, but.

Dorea:

The grocery store where was that at?

Ray:

Down on Aluminum Street. It was just a neighborhood grocery store. Hey there was a lot of them in Butte at one time. And then you had Marcus Daly, Marcus Daly sat in the middle of Main Street up in front of the courthou—uh the Federal Building. And my dad had an office in the Original Mine right in the front. Right inside the gate. And in the middle of the winter it used to be great, you'd sit there and watch the miners come down Main Street and they'd bounce off Marcus Daly and do a circle and that, and then maybe go down a little farther. They were always hittin' him.

Dorea:

Was that part of the reason they moved him?

Ray:

Yeah they moved him in, uh, I think it was 1941. If I'm not mistaken. And yeah, old Marcus was something else.



Dorea:

So tell me about what your dad did for a living.

Ray:

My dad was an iron worker and he worked for Anaconda Company, and he eventually become foreman. And uh, he run most the hill, because of the mines and the cables. They had—the rope gang had charge of all the cables on the hill. They sewed cable for, uh, I think it was, that I can remember, the Anaconda, the St. Lawrence, the High Ore, the Emma. They were a flat cable. They were thousands of feet long and maybe anyplace from 7 to 12 inches wide that ran up and down the shafts. He had crews that erected all the steel, and took it down, put motors down the mine, cages, they changed them out, he uh, did a lot of things. My father when he retired, he was the last man that ever put horses in the mine. When he started they still were putting horses down the mine and he did that. So, but, other than that that's about all I can tell you.

Dorea:

Okay when you were a kid and you were playing with your friends and stuff did... did you like, go and play around the mines and stuff like that?

Ray:

No, huh uh... they were uptown and down on the flat...not on the flat, but down, oh really, below I'd say Aluminum Street there was no mines, but uh, no. We did different things. We threw snowballs, and got into trouble. Used to play a game called Sucker. We'd go around and get a bunch of empty garbage, go through the garbage cans and get a bunch of vegetables or bags that people's threw out and everything, put them all in a box then we'd take them down on the corner of a place called Washington & Platinum. There was a big hole there we could all get down in off the sidewalk and you'd turn around and you'd dump this box in the street. Well, pretty soon somebody'd come down, they'd turn around and slide to a stop and look at it and all the kids would holler "SUCKER" and they'd stomp back to their car and take off again. After a while another one would come. We'd play kick the can on the corners and did a lot of things. We did things that uh, oh I suppose you couldda said you could get in trouble for, some of them, but uh, we did a lot of things that we never did cause trouble though. But

Dorea:

So when you started working after school, or when you got to the point in your life when you were working, what kind of stuff did you do?

Ray:

Well I worked for my father on the rope gang for a while and I worked at the place called Columbia Gardens, out there as a general handyman, I finally got an apprenticeship as an electrician on the hill, and hey that was a good education. You learned to wind stators and armatures and everything and everybody thought I was foolish, but I liked it outside, I'd rather go climb poles so I ended up getting the line gang and we used to do all the moving of the cables and the pit building new power lines for them down there, and um, oh all kinds of things that was required electrical. And uh, after that I ended up, I got a job at Montana Power, I stayed there for eighteen years, that's where I'm at now, I'm retired.

Dorea:

Okay, I remember you telling me and Tawna a story one time, about, when we went up to the Speculator memorial, and you told us a story about how you had gone against your dad and driven something you weren't supposed to or something like that, I want to hear that again.

Ray:

Called a grasshopper, it was a machine that was run like a cat only it was on tires and it was a big crane like a big wrecker and it was built for picking up things. We were unloading iron with it and the fella that was running it he used to let me run it now and then and I did pretty good when I was on the flat or something but my dad told the fella "don't you let him drive that down the hill tonight." Well I finally convinced the fella, Walter's son to let me drive it down the hill, well I went down this one hill and one clutch stuck on me and didn't release. Run it down over the bank and, threw me off of it, I was lucky the snow was deep, it run up on my leg and stopped. I sorta got in a little trouble over that but...

Dorea:

One of the hazards of having your dad be your boss.

Ray:

Yes it was. He was very unhappy with me. But we, uh, oh we always seemed to get along. There was times I know he'd like to fire me, I know that, but he never did. His bark was always worse than his bite. But that was about the way things went with us. But I usually got more than one chewin'-out though because, hey, he'd do it on the hill then he'd turn around do it again at home. But I lived through 'em and that's where I'm at today.



Dorea:

Okay you got married and had kids and stuff so kinda give me a brief synopsis of that part of your life.

Ray:

I got married and...

Dorea:

How old were you?

Ray:

Oh, twenty. And I had three children, a daughter Marla, boy Bob, daughter Sandy. They all grew up to be pretty good kids I think. Sandy's in Texas, and Marla's in Spokane, Bob's over in Oregon, raising quarter horses, so which hey, I guess he likes it.

Dorea:

Yeah, so okay, tell me about like okay, some of the changes that you've seen Butte go through from when you were a kid to now.

Ray:

I don't know, I've seen, the Uptown Butte go to hell. It hasn't got the stores that it used to it hasn't got the people that it used to, it hasn't got things going on like it used to. Uh, the pit come along and uh, it shut down a lot of mines, it put a lot of people out of work uh, then it uh just kept getting larger and larger, then they finally shut down all the mines. They flooded 'em. And uh, it's uh, it's a sad place because you know there used to be so much going on and now there ain't nothing anymore. There's nothing there really for kids to do, that I know of. Maybe if I was in their generation you'd find it, but mostly all ya hear about kids now is kids and dope. And the bad things in life that they do, but you can't really blame the kids because they don't have no place to go and hang out and enjoy themselves like I did when I was a kid. They used to have big bands that come to Columbia Gardens and the music was great, but they don't have that no more.

Dorea:

Tell me about the Columbia Gardens a little bit. What was it like to work there?

Ray:

Oh marvelous, great, it was uh, they had water line that run from Elk Park, you'd turn around some days it'd be broke. It was build with wooden pipe. And you'd end up havin'



to go up there and dig it all up and find out where the leak was, and repair it. Then they planted a lot of flowers that you took care of them in the greenhouse and got them out for the butterfly and that that they had down below. They used to have uh, oh, there was a candy/popcorn stand on the corner of the pavilion there and the candy was always cheap, buttered popcorn was cheap. Next to it they had a hamburger joint, that you could buy hamburgers and cheeseburgers and that going up the walk, uh . Then you went to a place called Panisko's Aquarium, er, that ain't the right word but he had all these different games that you could play, ducks floating around and you'd shoot them down...

Dorea:

Arcade?

Ray:

Yeah. And he had things that you'd throw circles over; he had the 3 bottles high, the pint bottles and you'd throw at them and that. Then there was a couple places next door to them that was empty, that was locked up. I got in there one night when I was a watchman. I opened it up and looked and there was barrels... barrels and barrels and barrels of postcards. And I'm sorry I never ever took any of them, because they would be a relic today. They had the roller coaster, they had the merry go round, they had the biplanes, then they had pictures of the animals they used to have there. That was before my time I don't remember none of the animals, but I guess they used to have bears and lions and everything up there at one time. But uh...

Dorea:

So what was... how did Butte react when the Gardens closed, when they were gone?

Ray:

Oh I don't know, I think that uh, a lot of them really thought it was a sad deal, which it was because they were gonna do so much and move it so many places and everything and do this with it and do that, and they haven't done nothing with it. Uh, part of it is out by the old ski club out there, and it's fallin' in, and uh, then they turned around and they had a fire and it burned up most of the horses and everything. But there's an outfit here now, a group of people that are uh, carving horses and puttin' them back together and they're gonna put a carousel I guess pretty soon. I don't know where it's going or what they're gonna do about it, but that's what they claim anyhow. But uh, no the Gardens was a fun place. Some of the things you seen in the playground at night was very interesting.

Dorea:

Any specific examples?



Ray:

No, no. Because there wasn't that many lights in the playground and uh, it was a solitary place really that you could, I don't know, go and enjoy yourself. So. Up in the upper end there they had a big pavilion up there that had a big barbeque outside, big stove you could cook on and everything. But all good things come to an end I guess.

Dorea:

So what kind of things did you do for fun when you were older?

Ray:

What do you mean?

Dorea:

Like you know when you were 18, 19, 20?

Ray:

Not too much, I played with my horses quite a bit. We had horses and we kept them in a place south of Butte. And uh, I used to walk from, uh well it'd be now, was Platinum Street to uh, Hanson's, when it was running and get my horse, and I'd ride over the top of the hill where the Copper King is at now, and go up over the top of the hill and go meet another friend of mine that had horses over there. And then we'd take off and we'd go ride up where there's all kinds of houses now, there's... so, uh, other than that, hey. It was good, I uh, turn around and I used to have a boat. I kept it at Hauser Lake, on Friday night when I got off work I used to go up to Hauser and pull my trailer up and I used to spend the weekend up there all the time. But that was the bad part about it—my dear son he'd go up during the week and I'd end up having to work on the boat all weekend. Because he turn around and did things he shouldn't have.

Oh yeah, used to go hunting all the time. Take the trailer out in the hills and stay. But them were the good days. When everything was goin' on around here. But that's about all I know.

Dorea:

Okay so, in uptown Butte there was a lot going on. Were there a lot of different newspapers in Butte when you were younger?



Ray:

Uh, the only two newspapers I knew in Butte were the Butte Daily Post and the Montana Standard. The Butte Daily Post was where the Irish Times is at now, it was the newspaper there. And they moved it from Galena and Main Street to the new Post building up on Granite Street. But uh, there weren't none of these little papers like there are now.

Dorea:

So, um, did you ever work... did you ever have a paper route or anything like that?

Ray:

I used to deliver papers, yeah. I had

Dorea:

Was it pretty common for kids your age to do that?

Ray:

Oh yeah, uh huh.

Dorea:

How much did you make?

Ray:

Well it depended on how many people paid ya. You bought your papers from them and you had to pay for them, but then you had to go door to door on Saturday and collect on them...

Dorea:

So you had to be a little collection agent...

Ray:

and if people weren't home you didn't get paid. Or if they just forgot about ya you didn't get paid. So it shorted your pocket, not the Standard's. So, but uh, there was the red light district on Mercury Street was in the Post when the Post printed the paper, so you'd come up from the basement of the Post and you'd turn and you'd go down into the alley and you'd sell papers there. Walk through here, and hey, some of them girls when they bought a paper, hey they were good, they tipped you well for the paper or anything. Uh, when I worked for the Power, they repaired stoves and every now and then you'd get a stove call to 14 South Wyoming or Mercury Street or one of them, hey they were always



polite and never ever... the woman would ask you if they bothered you, that uh, she'd move 'em. But uh, no they were always good and they were well-tippers too. You'd always come out with a five or ten dollar bill for yourself. But them were good jobs, good days. But, so... But

Dorea:

So did you know my grandfather Dell very well? Dell Wilmoth?

Ray:

I knew who he was. I didn't know him personally or anything about him.

Dorea:

Until your kids got married?

Ray:

Yes. Uh, so. But uh, he seemed like a nice guy to me.

Dorea:

He worked for the company for a while, right?

Ray:

I guess, I don't know. You're gonna have to go to your mother to find that out.

Dorea:

She paid attention...

Ray:

You think so?

Dorea:

No. A little bit. But um, so tell me about like, your high school days, stuff like that. When you were that age, did you go out driving around with your friends, how did you spend your time?

Ray:

Not really because you didn't have a car of your own. It ain't like today...



Dorea:

And yu probably couldn't borrow dads.

Ray:

You walked and uh, hey it wasn't, like I said 8-10 blocks to be uptown. There was several of us in the neighborhood that'd turn around, go uptown, go have a sandwich or a milkshake on a Friday night or something. Then they used to have places where they used to have kids dances on like Friday night or that. They uh, turn around and they'd have kids dances and maybe charge ya twenty-five cents, or fifty cents to get in. and uh, then the Legion, up over where the Miner's Union Hall is now they used to have one there. The had the Legion was above the old library at one time, on Broadway and Dakota. And they used to have a big dance on Saturday night up there. But they really didn't allow you in if you weren't old enough because they had the booze and everything there. But that's about it, that's what we did when we were young in high school.

Dorea:

And there were four theatres uptown?

Ray:

Uh huh. There was the Rialto, the Park, the American, the Montana and the Fox. There was five that I can remember.

Dorea:

And how much would it be to see a show?

Ray:

Oh hey. Most it'd cost ya is, I don't know, twenty-five cents, fifty cents. But hey you could go see a show and have your popcorn and everything. But. They had a theater down on Harrison Avenue and I don't remember it. It was gone before... well maybe it wasn't gone before my time but I never got down there.

Dorea:

So you built this house in 1960?

Ray:

Uh huh.



Dorea:

And when you built it...

Ray:

No, 1956.

Dorea:

Oh, okay. So when you built it, there weren't a lot of... the neighborhood wasn't here?

Ray:

No. No there was nobody. There was nobody east of me for 3 or 4 blocks. North, there was the house across the street, and uh, then all vacant lots. But...

Dorea:

How long did it take for this area to fill out?

Ray:

It's filling all the time. Ya know, it don't matter where you look, there's somebody building something. South of here from maybe Bayard, State, Floral, Edwards, that was all considered Floral Park. And uh, come Christmas or that you'd always wanna take a ride out through Floral Park and see all the designs, all the things that people had put up and built. And it was quite a neighborhood; it was a really good one. But now it's more or less all the same, so uh. Different clientele of people.

Dorea:

So the weather in Butte... You're pretty used to it.

Ray:

Yeah and I hate the cold weather.

Dorea:

I must get that from you.

Ray:

It uh, I've seen it get to 70 below. And uh I don't like it.



Dorea:

Something you've gotta tolerate though, living here.

Ray:

That's right. I wouldn't... I'd rather see the snow than I would the cold but it don't work that way. Ya know, uh, the cold comes and then the snow comes. Uh, but uh, I put up with it this many years but I guess I'll have to put up with it the rest of my life.

Ray McMillan (friend of Ray) is also present during the interview:

Well we don't have snow like we used to

Dorea:

No it's October and it's still warm out there. Window's open. That's mind-blowing.

Is there anything else that you think is important about Butte and your time here?

Ray:

Not really. It's uh, I don't know you could probably find somebody that could tell you a lot more about it than I can.

Dorea:

It's nice to have everybody's perspective.

Ray:

So I can't tell you much more, I guess we'll...

Dorea:

Wrap it up?

Ray:

Okay.

