



ORAL HISTORY RELEASE FORM

I hereby give and grant to the BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the Society shall determine, all rights, including copyrights, to my tape-recorded memoirs, except for such restrictions specified below.

Restrictions:

Aug 12, 1988
Date of Agreement

Winfred E. Slawson
Narrator

1638 Phillips
Address

Butte, MT 59701
City, State, Zip

Mary Murphy
Interviewer

Butte Historical Society
P.O. Box 3913
Butte, MT 59701

August 18, 1988
Accession Date

Mary Murphy
Archivist

Name: SLAUSON WINFRED EUGENE Sex: M Race: W
 Last First Middle Maiden
 Current Address: 1688 PHILLIPS AVE, BUTTE SILVER BOW MONT. 59701
 Street Town County State Zip Code
 Telephone: (406) 793-7787 Birthplace: MONTICELLO IOWA DOB: 5-25-1898

Years of School: 12 Church Membership: METHODIST EPISCOPAL

Grandparents:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
FaFa: <u>NELSON, JOHN SLAUSON</u>			<u>8</u>	<u>NO RECORD</u>	<u>1892</u>	<u>1892</u>
FaMo: <u>MARTHA REED</u>						

MoFa: _____
 MoMo: _____

Parents:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
Fa: <u>FREDERIK D SLAUSON</u>		<u>MONTICELLO IOWA</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Furniture/Printer & Ice business</u>	<u>1907</u>	<u>1977</u>
Mo: <u>MARTHA ELBA KAYLOR</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>?</u>	<u>Housewife</u>		

Siblings (in order of birth):

Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>Raymond K</u>	<u>M</u>		<u>Monticello Iowa</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>Movie Theatre owner</u>		<u>1963</u>
<u>Edith M.</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>1908</u>	<u>on homestead near Hillinger</u>		<u>1910</u>
<u>Winfred E.</u>	<u>M</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Radio operator</u>		<u>Present</u>
<u>Mabel H.</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>housewife</u>		<u>(Now living)</u>

Occupational History (List jobs in order): Date of First Employment: June 1917

Position	Company	Dates
<u>Radio operator</u>	<u>Radio Corp of America</u>	
<u>"</u>	<u>Numerous ships sailed on</u>	<u>1917-18</u>
<u>"</u>	<u>"</u>	<u>1933-34</u>
<u>"</u>	<u>Nabat Packing Co, Union Bay, Alaska</u>	<u>1928</u>
<u>"</u>	<u>Stuckemacher & Co.</u>	
<u>Self Employed Owned Store Slasons Radio & TV Inc. 1060 Harrison Ave in 1930 to 1965</u>		

Spouse:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>Gladys Brisbane Slauson</u>		<u>Maple Mount</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Teacher & housewife</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1967</u>
<u>Lena Jewetta Brown, Slauson</u>		<u>Butte</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>House Maide & house wife</u>	<u>1917</u>	

Children (in order of birth):

Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>Betty Lou</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>Butte</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>Died at 23 months age</u>		<u>193-</u>
<u>Marilyn Jeanne</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>16</u>			
<u>Robert Winfred</u>	<u>M</u>		<u>"</u>	<u>14</u>			

August 18, 1988

Winfred Slauson
1638 Phillips Av
Butte, MT 59701

Dear Mr. Slauson,

I wanted to thank you again for doing the oral history with me last week. I have listened through the tape and enjoyed it very much; you really gave me a lot of good information. It will probably be sometime before I get up to Helena in order to make copies of the tapes, but I will forward ~~them~~ to you when I have them made.

I've enclosed a "deed of gift" form for the slides you donated. Please sign and return that to me. I've also enclosed another form which I would appreciate you filling out. I call it a "life history" form and it provides biographical information that we didn't cover in the interview. I'd be most grateful if you could also complete that and return it to me.

Once again, let me express my thanks for your time and your memories. I certainly enjoyed myself and look forward to being able to bring my father-in-law down to meet you the next time he is in Butte.

Cordially,

Mary Murphy
Directory

Tape Summary

Tape 1, Side A

Winfred Slauson: born Monticello, Iowa, May 25, 1898
In 1907 family moved to North Dakota and filed a claim for 160 acres;
was prairie land with nothing built on it; within a year the Milwaukee
Railroad came within about half mile of their homestead; went
to watch them lay the track, done by horse & wagon & scraper

had come to Dickinson, N.D. by train in the spring; Dickinson was
about 75 miles north of homestead; had come there with two or three
other families from Monticello; all traveled overland by buggy,
horse and wagon to claims, a two-day trip

town of Hettinger was $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from homestead; town consisted of
one or two shacks & some tents; later had a city lot sale

first year planted some crops and had small harvest; only threshing
outfit available was "old-time" one driven by horses hitched to cir-
cular windlass; "an ancient thing, but it worked o.k."

that year a prairie fire burned their land; had fire breaks plowed
around house and buildings so those were saved. "I can still see
the fire coming over the hill from the south. It was going probably
faster than a horse could run; just a wall of fire coming. Mother
placed us kids out in the garden, which was quite a good-sized
plowed area in case the fire would jump the fire breaks. I was
supposed to stay under a tub--a washtub--to protect us, but I couldn't
stay in the tub. I got up and looked and saw the fire."

that year went to school in Hettinger; built a schoolhouse and had
a big party with a basket sale; by next year town had grown rapid-
ly, land was well settled; built a school about half mile from
Slauson homestead, so went to the country school the second year;
maybe 12-15 students; at Christmas time wanted to have tree, but
were no trees anywhere, so took a ladder, wrapped cotton around the
rungs and used it to hang presents and lights

were four Slauson children, older brother, older sister, Winfred,
younger sister; that second winter older sister got "typhoid pneu-
monia" & died; family moved back to Iowa in February 1909

family stayed in Monticello for several yrs, but in meantime older
brother and some others homesteaded in Black Hills near Spearfish;
in 1913, mother, sister & Win went to visit; went on a camping trip
up in the Black Hills, about a dozen of them

"I saw a radio station alongside the road when we were driving up
the little dirt road to where we camped up in the Spearfish River.
So I was interested in it and we stopped and I was able to see what
a radio station was, which changed what I was going to do later in
life. Because I became involved in radio after I got back home."

discusses recent trip to Black Hills and change in country

radio station was owned by construction company building a tunnel
through Crow Peak; was Homestake Mining Co, on a water diversion
project

radio station saw in Dakota was a spark transmitter & that's what Slauson built when got back to Iowa; by late 1915-1916 had acquired "a good outfit" & could talk all over central U.S., easily up to 500-600 miles by code

when WWI started had to dismantle all equipment; couldn't even leave it in place; was easy to get amateur license but to get a commercial license to be a commercial operator had to know all the technology; besides learning to operate using the key and the signal and the Continental Code, had to know theory; takes a lot of studying; didn't have to take a test for amateur license

before got a license used his initials, "WS" as call letters, then because was talking at such distances had to get license and call letters were 9AMI in 1916

How did learn to put radio together? subscribed to magazine QST, an amateur radio magazine; it had a lot of information, and would get acquainted with other amateurs and exchange ideas. "So you gradually grow until you get the knowledge of what to do and how to use the code and everything. It's a lot of fun."

wasn't too expensive to build a radio; equipment was much lower priced than equivalents today

(start looking at QST magazines; thinks first issue came out about 1916)

no store in Monticello that sold radio parts; he sent to J.J. Duck Co. in Ohio for parts; were a few other hams in Monticello; one friend got interested in it a year or two after Slauson started; worked together, communicated across town; third friend lived out in the country about 7 miles on a farm, he didn't have power to run heavy equipment that town hams did, so he used a spark coil from a Ford and could talk to friends in town in code

while he was at sea didn't monkey with amateur radio; in 1928 worked for cannery in Alaska as radio operator and fixed it so could pick up amateur band and talk to people in Eugene, Oregon where had been living; talked to a friend there and gave messages back and forth to girlfriend whom he later married in 1929

in Iowa farthest he talked to people was in Gulf area, though he was often heard farther away

(looked at QSL cards; "QSL" int'l heading means "Please respond"; talked about different cards & broadcasters associated with them; heading on one of them "A card a day keeps amateur radio night hawks gay"

in amateur radio always talked in code; used to talk a lot to Australia & New Zealand; most notes on QSL cards in re to quality of signal; don't talk very long; had cards from Philippines, Malaya, Hawaii, Chile, Nicaragua.

"It was exciting and you'd stay up all night sometimes just to talk, you know. It was hard on your health." to get Australia it was best to be up late at night; seemed like the signals carried better

(Howard)
 about 15 words/a minutes in code was fastest Slauson transmitted;
 talks about H.F. Mason, was a radio operator, worked for QST; was
 from Seattle (still lives there) ^{technical ed}
 Slauson saw him about three yrs. ago, first time since 1928; had been
 up at Point Barrow listening for Englishman trying to fly across the
 Pole;

family lived in Montana from 1919 to 1923; worked a lot of small
 stations in Montana; in Bear Creek set up his outfit; left ranch
 that family had outside Bear Creek in 1923 and went to Seattle;
 started working on ships

during WWI was a radio operator on board ships in Gulf of Mexico;
 got his commercial license in Chicago then rode Illinois Central
 train to New Orleans and got a job on a small passenger ship going
 from Florida to Havana; later got job on ship going to Mexico;
 importing sisal to U.S.; later got on a lumber schooner going to
 Central America, carrying mahogany logs; loaded logs at Belize
 and started out into lovely weather, a day out they got into 2½
 days of storm; logs were on deck tied down by chains, but waves
 broke chains and logs wrecked the ship which began to sink; Slauson
 took photos from lifeboat with his Kodak; the cat was the only cas-
 ualty

sailed on oil tanker Taurus from Galveston to Tampico, Mexico; once
 a year went up the east coast ^(NY) to go into dry dock; heard submarine
 reports on the radio every day; one day rescued an English boy who
 had fallen off ship

worked on fast freighter owned by Luckenbach Co. for about a year

when visited Mason discovered he'd held same job in Alaska cannery,
 even slept in same bunk; Mason later went to South Pole with Admiral
 Byrd, was in charge of radio

father bought a ranch near Bear Creek; showed picture of station in
 Douglas, Wyoming that ran with a friend; (looked through picture al-
 bum; were pictures of cannery) cannery job was mostly keeping watch,
 only sent a few messages; pictures of Panama Canal & of various ships
 was on, Havana, Progresso, picture of box cars & Mexican families,
 Tampico, Galveston beach; Iowa home, father, rock quarry

friend who made spark coil radio in Iowa also became ship radio op-
 erator; later shipwrecked off Nova Scotia, only ones who survived
 were in radio shack

has picture of Bear Creek showing spot where set up radio station;
 pic of bringing poles into town for aerial; had station in a garage;
 was an amateur station, got election reports for 1920

(Most of this side of tape is discussing pictures in photograph album)

rec'd presidential returns in code very clearly from powerful stations back east (doesn't remember which) wrote down results on paper and passed it to someone who took it down the street where lots of people were gathered waiting for returns; no where else in Montana was getting them that fast; were not many, if any, other amateur stations in Montana for several years; one came in to Red Lodge 6-7 years later

(look at more photos); tells story about he & his brother fishing without license

came to Butte from Oregon in 1929, worked for General Electric Supply Corp. as a radio technician and serviceman; traveled quite a bit; got married in Oregon in Aug. and came to Butte in February and lived here ever since;

friend at Rocky Mountain college recommended Slauson to GE & GE wrote and offered him a job; weren't many jobs available at that time, work was pretty scarce; job was not selling equipment, but servicing dealers; was laid off a couple of years later, so set up his own business, using contacts had made with various dealers; had little store right across the alley from house; bought the house he is in in 1934

started selling some appliances as well as radio & serviced radios; wasn't a really good business; not many had money to buy radios; lot of people already had radios & had to buy tubes & batteries; "I made a living at it, I didn't make a lot of money, but that's all we had to do and could get and we were fortunate to be able to keep going. A lot of people didn't get enough to buy food in those days. Cause it was really tough. Then the WPA started and that helped out a lot."

would people buy radios on time? "Not any much in a contract but you might get part of it now and maybe hope to get the rest next month or so." If they were dependable, you could give them some time. Radios weren't such a high price in those days. The small ones, I think most of them came under \$50, but that was quite a bunch of money in those days."

never got up to see Craney's studio when it was in Shiner Building; Craney did used to come into GE Supply, but Slauson never did get in to see station; S. wasn't particularly interested in broadcasting; had worked in broadcasting station at Eugene, Or. for while, until they went broke; worked there as operator

didn't carry a lot of brands, was principally a GE dealer; in later years sold some Admiral, Philco, both good brands;

when he got into the radio job in Butte he quit amateur work altogether; did miss it, but was so busy didn't want to worry about amateur radio, staying up at night, etc. "It's very tempting to sit longer than you're supposed to...you could lose your health in fact if you stay up all night and try to listen to stations."

didn't join the Butte Radio Club because wasn't involved in amateur radio while in Butte; club still meets, about a dozen older people

recalls one woman, Winifred Dow, who was an amateur, never met her; was back east; called women operators "YLs": young ladies; was in Washington one time with some radio friends talking on the air and made contact with girl named Winifred; only one he recalls talking to

didn't notice if women were involved in decision-making about buying radios for the home; generally men would buy
couldn't comment on whether people bought more radios after KGIR began since he wasn't here prior to its beginnings;

two biggest radio dealers in Butte were related to Slauson's boss at GE; naturally got more business; Slauson really sold mostly parts & accessories; made housecalls to fix broken radios; "I made housecalls for a dollar a call. And you know there's a wealthy old attorney on the West Side, I sold him a tube and he complained I added a dollar on for service charge. Can you beat that? He sure was cheap."

retired in 1965, sold his store; built new store building in 1941; (shows booklet daughter put together for 90th birthday with some of her reminiscences)

set up an intercommunications outfit between house and store; baby used to sleep in crib in back bedroom, had transmitter hooked up right next to crib & receiver in store: "you could hear every breath"
wife used to come over to help in the store when Slauson had to go out on calls; wife's name was Gladys; she didn't know anything about radio; had been a schoolteacher although didn't work after were married

always had radio in home; showed cabinet radio still has & tuned it in

(Lena brings in tea and cookies)

Slauson never interested in working as broadcaster, just as technician on commercial station; once he got in business preferred that to being operator working for someone else;
had two "7" licenses, 7AY was one of first, although he wasn't the first to have it; a man named Jesse Ives in Seattle owned it first then gave it up; then had 7ZG; Z call is a special license by which can use a bigger aerial & had more privileges; had to have more knowledge

radio: "I was crazy about it. Boy, you can get too crazy about it. It's fascinating...I think sometimes I overdone on it, listening too much and spent too much time at it. But when you hear a signal, you get quite a thrill out of it if it's a long way. For example, one time I called CQ and got a call answered, the station a weak signal-- I could read it, though--the call was AQE. It was a boat down near the South Pole. I forget the name of the boat, but I remember the

Tape 2, Side A, cont.

Slauson-6-

call letters, AQE." when rec'd a signal like that all talked about generally was status of signal; generally don't want to talk too long because maybe someone else is trying to make contact

has been to a few radio ham conventions, but not any of local ones; discuss magazines & QSL cards a bit more

END OF INTERVIEW