THE VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

ANDY KUCHTYN

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Oral History Transcript of Andy Kuchtyn

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Ellen Crain: So, Andy, we'll start with you tell us your name and I'd like you to tell us if we have permission to make this public. I'd like to hear that as well as that document you signed.

Andy Kuchtyn: My name is Andy Kuchtyn and you do have permission to broadcast this on the radio or any kind of report that you need to do.

Crain: So we will make this public in our facility. So I just want you to be aware of that. Andy, you told me a marvelous story about taking a basketball hoop and that's actually how we met. Could you tell us where you grew up? How many kids in your family? What your parents did?

Kuchtyn: Well, I grew up on Park Street. My mother ran the Golden Gate Hotel. My dad was a miner all of his life. Originally, my mother came from Poland and my dad came from France. He worked in the coal mines in France when he was 14 for 5 years. He then moved to Germany which he worked another additional 5 years in coal mines. The Sisters of Charity, the nun society of the Catholic, would send . . .

Crain: Tell me, what time frame are you talking about, your dad working in the coal mines.

Kuchtyn: He worked in France, in Belgium in the early 40's. In the later 40's he worked in Germany, in the coal mines. The reason I bring this up - when the nuns brought him over on one of the boats, they were allowed to come to the US to be citizens. He worked on a mink farm in Denver and as a dishwasher in Detroit and there was an ad in for Butte, Montana, experienced miners needed. At that time if you knew how to mine at all, and this was right up my dad's alley. Mining was his game and it was what he was going to do and that's what he loved to do. That ad as small as it was, it was the biggest headline in the Detroit paper. So he came over on his own with the bus to see what this Butte was all about. Which he got a job right away as an experienced underground contract miner. Within a month or two, my sisters and my mother came over.

Crain: Did Catholic Charities bring your parents? Were they in a camp? Were they in a concentration camp?

Kuchtyn: They were in a camp. Their name was on the list and soon after the war ended they did apply to leave that Europe. They wanted to come to the US.

Crain: So were they in a camp in Poland? Or in a camp in Germany?

Kuchtyn: They were in a camp in Germany.

Crain: So were they considered the deportees at the time?

Kuchtyn: That's correct.

Crain: Wow, that's really fascinating.

Kuchtyn: So she ran the Golden Gate Hotel on East Park Street and my dad was working the mines. From then on you could see the pictures behind the hotel that I have. These were all taken behind the hotel when I was just a young kid.

Crain: And the hotel was on East Park Street?

Kuchtyn: Yes, it was on East Park. It was called the Golden Gate Hotel. The main floor, there was a machine shop and the Golden Gate Bar and a lady named Annie ran the bar. Annie did not like me because I was always a nuisance because I used to like to go in there and play the little bowling machine they had there alongside the bar. She liked the people with money, and, of course, I didn't have any money and I liked to play that bowling machine so whenever I had a nickel I'd go in there and she'd let me play the game and then run me out. But I can remember many times sleeping upstairs in my bedroom and when you laid your head on the pillow you can actually hear the jukebox downstairs in the bar because I was directly above the bar.

Crain: So your family lived in the hotel as well?

Kuchtyn: We had an office that was above the bar. And then sometimes you could hear the miners. After 2 o'clock all the bars close, but in Butte, you don't close the bars at 2 o'clock. You lock the front door. You shut the lights off advertising beer and you keep it running during the night until everybody decides it's not profitable to run the bar anymore. So you could hear the voices in the night. The miners and guys talking and laughing downstairs. I just got used to it. I got used to the bar noise and that's where I was raised. I decided to make some money in the bars. I decided to shoeshine uptown.

Crain: So how old do you think you were when you decided to do that?

Kuchtyn: I think I was 7 to 10, right in those ages there. It was like in 58, 59, 60 is when the shoeshine was great. Of course, everybody paid you in silver, silver quarters, silver dimes, silver dollars and silver halves. Unfortunately, just as quick as I had the money, I spent it. Matter of fact, Butte had one of the very last towns that had silver dollars and it was a nuisance for everybody that had silver dollars. Matter of fact they were exchanging silver dollars for paper dollars. Paper was unheard of and it was actually better to handle. Rather than have 10 silver in your pocket, weighing you down. Paper dollars were hard to get but they liked to just have the paper dollars over the silver dollars. Not knowing that in 64 everything was going to change you weren't allowed to purchase silver dollars anymore.

Crain: Andy, I'd like to ask you a question. Did your parents get married in Europe?

Kuchtyn: They got married in Europe.

Crain: And so they went together to the camp.

Kuchtyn: They met in the camp. My mother worked on a farm. My dad worked in the mines.

Crain: And then so they got married after the camp and then two children in Europe?

Kuchtyn: Yes.

Crain: Both girls.

Kuchtyn: Yes.

Crain: I just want to clarify that. So then they had the rest of their children here. Were you born in Butte?

Kuchtyn: I was born here. Yeah. And the two younger brothers.

Crain: So there's 5 of you?

Kuchtyn: Total of 5.

Crain: So you're getting paid in silver money to shine shoes.

Kuchtyn: Now what I'm telling you. I'm telling you facts. I'm not exaggerating. I'm going to tell you the way it was. I'm going to take you back to the 50's and 60's and I still have a good memory on certain things. And one of these days I won't have the memory anymore. I want to tell you there was a way to make money in Butte. Butte was, for one thing, if you notice on the main streets, all of the streets, the sidewalks are, there not a standard 8 or 10 feet. They're like 14 feet wide and there's a reason why the uptown area, the sidewalks are so wide. It's because of all the people and the miners and the businessmen that used to walk those streets uptown. They had to make them that wide. You notice in other towns, sidewalks ain't that wide. We had wide sidewalks which we still do here in the old part of the uptown area. It's because of the amount of people that once lived here. I wasn't here when there was a 100,000 people but I bet there was at least 40,000 living in the uptown area. The flats was, to live down there was unheard of. There wasn't much going on the flats. There wasn't even an Interstate that came through Butte at that time.

But going back to the shoeshine business. I did get a Wenatchee apple box. I still have the shoeshine box. And it has Wenatchee on one side. I made myself a little shoeshine box. Got some cheap toothpaste or got some cheap shoeshine polish. And when I would go into the bars, you learned really quick on where the money was at and where you can break even on a few of them. I know I always went and I would walk into the bar and scan the people at the bar and I would always look around and I would look for the cowboys that had maybe a lady of the night with them. Because they always seemed to tip and brag about the money they had. So you would approach them first. Shine their cowboy boots and sometimes they'd flip you a silver half and if

they were really wanting to show off to their girlfriend, they would throw you a silver dollar. And it was not often, but it was just that they were showing off, that they had money and then I would look at the rest of the drinkers and I would check their shoes and I would, lot of them were miners and they'd pay you and they'd tip you, but not as well as the cowboys and sheepherders that would come into town and drink for two or three weeks and then they were gone. They just come in for a while and then they're gone. But I can remember Butte uptown had a lot of restaurants, a lot of bars. Some bars wouldn't allow me to shoeshine because the Board of Trade was one of them. They had gambling slot machines in there and whenever I would walk in there, I used to, I was amazed by the slot machines all along the right side of the wall. I went into the Board of Trade on Park Street. I was immediately told to get out. Because I wasn't allowed in there.

I remember this one bar and it was where the 6 Motel is now. It was where the Butte Brewery used to make beer in the back. But that bar in the front had a big sign on the front and it said, "No Minors Allowed." I just couldn't understand why Butte, that was full of miners, wouldn't allowed to drink in that bar. It didn't dawn on me that minors were young kids and not underground miners. It wasn't until I was like 10 or 12 that it was for kids. Minors, I thought of being underground miners. It took awhile for it to soak into my head. I wasn't the smartest kid or the sharpest tool in the shed at 8 or 9 years old.

Crain: But you were earning some silver so that's pretty good.

Kuchtyn: Yeah.

Crain: So where'd you to school?

Kuchtyn: I went to school at the Sacred Heart School on Park Street, East Park Street. Then the church was on East Park, but it was across the street and closer to the hotel. I was a troublemaker. My dad didn't mind what I did. He didn't really care what I did. But my mother always worried. At that time you didn't have to worry about your kids. If you left your house and took off, they didn't worry about you like they do now. We didn't have cellphones. We didn't have any computerized stuff. The biggest thing was watching cartoons on Saturday morning on a black and white TV set. You know Casper and Batman and stuff. But the parents never worried about kids like they do now. And they didn't have to check up on us. I was always amazed by the fires. Butte had a lot of fires. There was always a fire going on. And whenever I seen smoke, I would head towards the fire. I didn't care where it was in Butte.

If I seen smoke, for some reason, I wanted to watch the fire. I guess I wanted to see the bricks come crashing down on the sidewalk and the flames and the black. It just amazed me to sit there and watch a fire from close to the start of it until there was no fire left. Then at times I had the Butte Police Department would take me and bring me back to the hotel late at night. Knock on the door and they would say, here's your son and he was at a fire and he didn't know how to get back to the hotel. I knew the area around the hotel, but sometimes when you take off looking for these fires, you didn't know how to get back. So I had the chief of police used to bring me home and knock on my mother's door. He said, Here's your kid. He was all day watching a fire. But I was really amazed that the fires. I was so amazed that I accidentally burned part of our hotel

down, playing with matches in the polish. They had bottles of polish in this room in the back. I think I was trying to make a wick out of some of the polish and I accidentally caught the shed on fire. I ran out and didn't tell anybody. I hid. After burned the whole back of the decks of the Golden Gate Hotel burned to the ground and every fire truck in Butte was there.

My mother knew who did it because I am the one that always liked to see fires and I wasn't around to watch this one. So when she went later in the day, she went to her bedroom, she could see my tennis shoes hiding underneath her bed. She said, dinner's ready when you're ready to come out from underneath the bed. She knew. She didn't have to. She didn't beat me or nothing, but she knew I accidentally started the hotel on fire. But those were the good old days. I just loved fires. I don't know. I thought I was always going to be . . . As a matter of fact, this archive building used to be a fire department. I used to go up and talk to the firemen up here.

Crain: Oh yeah. It did.

Kuchtyn: You'd go up and talk to them. They'd give me an apple or a pop or something.

Crain: So you burned - you burned just the back of the wooden . . .

Kuchtyn: All of the back. I burned the whole thing down. I was surprised how much burnt. I really never told anybody for years. I kept it really quiet. I think my mother did too.

Crain: Yes. You learned a lesson there, I hope.

Kuchtyn: I did start another small fire, but it was put out. And my mother ended up burning her hands putting the fire out. It was in her bedroom. The curtains. Playing with matches again. I can tell you another thing is, when I was . . . I was such a nuisance, my mother decided to lie about my age and get me, they didn't have kindergarten. I was five years old and I was nothing but a troublemaker. She just wanted me out of her hair. So she lied about my age and she got me in first grade at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. During the year, if I even got a 'C', that was like an 'A.' All of my grades were F's and D's. I didn't know how to write. I didn't know nothing. I didn't even know what I was doing at school. I didn't like it. I was really having trouble.

I wasn't getting any help from home, being my mother was Polish, my dad was French and stuff. I never got the help other than my older sisters. Towards the end of the year, the nun had a parent-conference talk with my mom. And she says, Andy is just not picking up. He's having trouble even zipping his coat to go out for recess. When he goes to the bathroom, we have to zip his pants, because he couldn't zip his pants. In those years, the zippers were really bad. They were cheap and they were bad. It was hard to zip. But I remember nuns zipping my pants.

Crain: You were five.

Kuchtyn: I was five. Anyhow, the nuns had a conference with my mom. They said, I think we're going to have to keep Andy back one year. He's just not getting with the program. My mother says, Oh that's OK. He's only five years old. He's not six. I want him to start learning. I was going to tell you at the end of the year that you should hold him back. It was just to get him

out of my hair and get him in school. That was the whole idea. It really bothered me for a few years that she held me back. Until I found out that all the kids in my grade were the same age as me a year later. That's when it quit bothering me. She told me that she did it on purpose. But it surprised the nuns. It surprised everybody. I know that one day I lit the Sacred Heart. I was walking towards the hotel. Me and another kid, he was little older than me. We decided to light all the candles in church. All those little dang candles that they have. Well, of course, I liked fires. So we went in there. There was nobody in that church.

He lit all the ones on the right and I lit all the ones by Mary. I think there was a total of 70 little candles and I made sure every one of those candles . . . And we ran out of that church. I didn't know that the priest was in the confessional behind the curtain, watching the whole thing. When we got out of that church, he went left and I went right. I went towards the hotel. I had about a block thinking I really got away with murder. I went upstairs in the hotel, went into the office, talked to my mom, see what was cooking. There was a knock at the door about two minutes after I got in. It was the priest that was at the confessional.

He said, Mrs. Kuchtyn, your son was caught lighting all of the candles in church. But I am only going to charge him for the ones he lit. He lit a total of 72 candles. That will be $7.20. So she paid him. They knew each other anyhow. But I thought I was getting away with murder, but I was being watched the whole time. So she had to pay for that. Somehow, she got it from me. I'm not sure if I had to shine extra shoes or something. I'm not sure what I did to pay her back. But that was another incident that I still remember like it was yesterday when I lit those candles and how I got caught.

Crain: Did the other kid get caught too?

Kuchtyn: I can't remember. I don't know. I can't remember what happened there. I'm sure that the priest knew both of us. He was going to go there next.

Crain: So you went to Sacred Heart and did all of your brothers and sisters go to Sacred Heart?

Kuchtyn: They did. I'm thinking maybe the youngest brother, I'm not sure. I'm not sure when the school closed down.

Crain: Sacred Heart closed down, I think in about the mid-60's, about '63, '64. Does that sound about right?

Kuchtyn: I graduated from Sacred Heart in '65. I graduated from high school in '69 from Butte High. I remember they'd keep the seventh and eighth grade in the same room. Sixth and fifth, third and fourth, first and second. So that the teacher would teach half the class and then she'd go to the other half and teach it. So you had two grades in each room at the Sacred Heart school.

Crain: So it must have been in the late '60's because it was closed by '70.

Kuchtyn: I think they tore down the school. That's when I stole that basketball and that hoop. I was in high school. I think I might have been a sophomore. They were tearing down the school

so that had to be around ’67. They were tearing down the school and they were scraping out the metal. When I went up there, the east side of the playground where the boys played. On the west side is where the girls had recess. I remember that fairly new backboard and hoop that they just recently put in when I was going to school there.

As they were tearing down the school and they quit that night, I decided to take and steal the pole, the backing and the hoop and just drag it out of there because I knew they were going to junk it up for scrap metal. So I took my mother’s ’54 Chevy and I went up there and I pulled it down with a chain and I drug it down the alley, down Ohio street and behind Curtis Street was where we lived. We lived in a log cabin after. I remember dragging it down late at night. I was afraid the cops were going to catch me because I was dragging the pole down. There was a bunch of sparks coming off the pole.

And the thing was like 30 feet long, you know, dragging this pole with a chunk of cement behind it and the hoop on the front was hooked to the trunk. One of Tony Canonica’s little caravans is what it reminded me of. But I did get it there and I still have it. That’s what started this whole interview. I came up to the archives to see if somebody . . . It would be kids my age that once played on that playground that would enjoy seeing that it was intact. It’s still in good shape.

Crain: So did you move? When did you move from the hotel?

Kuchtyn: We moved from the hotel, I think it was right before the earthquake of 19 . . .

Crain: 59?

Kuchtyn: 59. She managed the hotel and then she moved to the hotel that was right across the street from Sparky’s restaurant right now. There was another hotel there, but she didn’t manage that one. And then we rented off Tony [Canonica] the trailer on Montana Street in ’59. We didn’t stay there very long in Tony’s place. It was pretty rough. All of us got bit by bedbugs. Stuff like that. I don’t think we lived there but six months when we moved to Idaho. Idaho Street. Then the top of Arizona. 318 N. Arizona is where we lived. And I was still going to school at Sacred Heart.

Crain: That would have been in a different parish at that time.

Kuchtyn: That was the Saint Mary’s parish up there, but I went to Sacred Heart.

Crain: You just stayed.

Kuchtyn: I remember sneaking into the mine yard at the Kelley. I used to go up there. They had the ball bearings. They had steelies that were really valuable when you were a kid. You could trade one steely for 10 marbles. I remember going up there and I was trying to beat these ball bearings out to get the steelies out of them. One of the miners said, Just come with me into the shop. I will just press them out for you. He gave me a bag of them. I couldn’t even hardly carry them out of the machine shop. They had a shop where they worked on different equipment for the Anaconda Company. I remember playing on the dumps, playing in the water, that leach water

with the lead and the arsenic and everything in it, but I'm still alive today. I don't think it really bothered me much. I worked for the Anaconda Company and Montana Resources until 2013.

Crain: When your dad went to work here, did he go to work as a contract miner?

Kuchtyn: He did. He loved it. The guy never missed a shift in his life.

Crain: What mines did he work in?

Kuchtyn: He worked mostly at the Kelley. Then he worked at the Con. Those were where he spent most of his time. My dad was actually the last miner that actually bulkheaded off seven of the mines in Butte. What I mean by bulkhead is when the mines went down, the shafts were visible for people to get near or kids. And if you fell in one of those shafts you would drop hundreds of feet down the shaft. He would cement and bulkhead all of the heads of the shafts and his last bulkhead, believe it or not, was over at the Belmont over by the senior citizen. When he done that, he was transferred to the primary crusher. He didn't like surface work. He retired at 61 or 62. Mining was his life. When they flooded the mines, it took everything out of him. You could see he really changed.

Crain: You worked as a shoeshine boy. What other jobs did you have?

Kuchtyn: [Long pause] I sold the afternoon paper. I would get the afternoon paper, it was where the Irish Times is now. In that alley, I would go in there and these papers were heavy. I was young. It was in the 50's. My corner was the Medical Arts Building corner. I sold the afternoon paper. I would purchase twenty papers at two for a nickel and I would sell them within an hour and a half at that corner. So my profit was 100 percent. All the kids had their corner. For some reason, it seemed like it was one of the hottest corners uptown. It was easy to sell papers. I sold them for a nickel. I bought them for two for a nickel.

I carried them in my wagon, cause twenty papers, I couldn't carry them. There was a lot of news then. I remember getting beat up a few times by older kids that took my money, came home broke. My sisters decided that they were going to be with me. So they escorted me. They were there. It took me an hour and a half to sell papers. It took my sisters a half hour or twenty minutes to sell the papers and sometimes they got big tips. As a matter of fact, they wanted my corner and said, No. I want my corner back. It was easy to sell papers for a nickel.

Crain: That was a busy corner.

Kuchtyn: But a nickel candy bar was a Hershey bar. It was big. It was not a 1.2 ounce candy bar. These things were like 4 ounces. It took all you could do to eat one of the Hershey bars. They were thick and big for a nickel.

Crain: So you went to Butte High School?

Kuchtyn: I went to Butte High, graduated in '69. I was good friends of Marty Judd who ran Charlie Judd's bar. If you look at some of the old pictures of the Halloween parties that Charlie

had there, you would see me sitting on the piano with Marty Judd, Dan Docent, Jim Docent (they called him, Chico), but I always had the plaid shirt on. So if you seen the kid with the plaid shirt, I think for some reason my mother bought them four for a buck or something. I got to where I really hated plaid for a long time. Matter of fact, my wife once bought a plaid pantsuit and when she had them laundered, and I never told her this, but I'm telling it now, I got rid of it. When she went to look for it, I told her, I don't know where it's at. I haven't seen it. Must of misplaced it. I had to get rid of it because I did not like plaids. When you wore it everyday, you got tired of plaid.

Crain: So . . .

Kuchtyn: Another thing is, I think in order to appreciate Butte, I think you have to leave Butte for awhile. For some reason, all I can tell you is that when I was a kid, when I grow up, I'm getting the hell out of Butte. The streets ain't even squared. There's dumps everywhere. There's dirt, dust. Everything's dirty. Some of the streets come to a triangle. I says, This is not the way a city should be a city. I didn't really care to be in Butte. I never really appreciated it until I went to the service. When I went in the service and I was stationed in San Diego, Seattle, San Francisco and then after that I went to Vietnam.

Crain: What branch of the service were you in?

Kuchtyn: I was in the navy. I was in the Philippines, Midway, Hawaii. I tell you when you go to all these countries that I would probably never been to unless I was in the service, there's no place like being raised in Butte, Montana. Large towns are OK, but they just weren't for me. I was raised here. I feel good living here in Butte. I don't think there's a better town to raise kids other than Butte, Montana, even today.

Crain: So you went to Vietnam, how old were you? Did your number get pulled or did you go sign up?

Kuchtyn: I had a hard time. I didn't want to. I was a Catholic. I didn't want to kill anybody. I didn't want to tell anybody that I didn't want to kill anybody. I was pulled on the ping pong balls where I would have to either go in the army or the marines and get drafted. When I found out the ball that they pulled was the number 62 which I would have been drafted. So I joined the navy. I just didn't want to do any hand-to-hand combat but I wanted to serve the country. I had a hard time telling anybody that for a long time, but I don't mind telling anybody right now. This is the truth. I just didn't want to take anybody else's life.

Crain: I think that's very honorable.

Kuchtyn: I also like to sleep at night. I don't think I could sleep in a foxhole with one eye open and one eye shut. I respect the marines and the army and the individuals that were on the lines. I think that's the reason why a lot of them are having problems now, post-traumatic, what happened years ago. It gets to you.

Crain: How long were you in the navy?

Kuchtyn: I was in the Reserves. I was reserved for a year and a half. I went active for two years, then I was out. Since I went to Vietnam and I was on the gun line, I didn't have to do my whole six years. It was up to me if I wanted to stay in the reserves or stay out. I decided to go back to work for the Anaconda Company. My job was saved in the Anaconda Company. Being that it was a huge strike when I was gone, when I came back the pay went from $20 a day to like $32. I says, Holy Smokes, this is good money. I am going to just work for the Anaconda Company for awhile, but I'm going to find something better than working in the concentrator.

Crain: So, Andy, how old were you when you first went to work for the Anaconda Company?

Kuchtyn: I just turned 18. It was in the summer. I joined the Anaconda Company July 7th of 1969. That was my first day at the smelter in Anaconda. That night I swore into the naval reserve for six years. The same night. For some reason, I decided that when I retired, I was going to leave about the same date. I left on July 11th and the reason why I left on July 11th is a year before I retired I married an individual at Stodden Park. Him and his girlfriend wanted to get married and they wanted me to marry them. I said I couldn't do it, I'm not a priest. They said, they went up to the courthouse and said a person could marry a couple in Silverbow.

I told the gal I didn't really want to do it, I said I don't think I'm competent enough to marry. She started to break down and cry. I was just joking with them and they were serious. When I found out they were serious, I went up to the courthouse, found out you can marry them and I did marry them. When I married them at Stodden Park. Between Stodden Park and my house which was a half mile, I told my wife when I got home I am leaving work a year from today.

Crain: What year was that?

Kuchtyn: That was in 2013. I left on 7-11. It was kind of a good day. We used to have 7-11 stores in Butte. It's a day you won't forget.

Crain: So you started at the smelter and signed up for the reserves on the same day. How long did you stay at the smelter before you left?

Kuchtyn: I tried to transfer to Butte. At that time, I couldn't get into the Butte operation. It took six months to go from the smelter and then transfer to Butte. I wouldn't have to take the bus ride back and forth. I worked straight nightshifts at the smelter because I was going to school during the day and then working at the smelter, straight nightshifts.

Crain: What were you going to school for?

Kuchtyn: Electronics.

Crain: Was that at the Vo-Tech?

Kuchtyn: That was at the new Vo-Tech that was next to Butte High School. I started the program and then after a year and a half I had to go into active duty and then I came back and finished the program at the Vo-Tech.

Crain: When you came back from the reserves, you went back to work for the Anaconda Company again?

Kuchtyn: I did. Thinking I was only going to work for the Anaconda Company for awhile. I'm just going to get my feet started. The pay was good. I'm going to find something else, but then I got married. I bought a house and I'm still thinking I'm going to leave. I'm not going to work like my dad. I'm going to have a good job. Then we started having kids. My vacations went from one to two to three to four weeks. I thought if I work somewhere else I will have to start all over and I really enjoy my time off with my kids. So I decided to stay with the Anaconda Company.

Crain: What was your job?

Kuchtyn: I worked steelworkers 6002 was in Anaconda Company, 6001 local was in Butte. I worked as a steelworker. I ran a thing called the dredge. It's for all the discharge from the concentrator. It goes to this pond then you pump it back up to the concentrator and then to the Yankee Doodle pond. It was a boring job. It was an eight-hour day job. There was two of us on the dredge. I got really bored. I could read a Louis L'Amour book at work. I knew bosses couldn't walk on water so once we took the boat out to the dredge. There's no way they could check on us. There was two of us. I said, I think I'm going to go back to college. I got a degree from Montana Tech, working on the dredge for the Anaconda Company. On that dredge, I got an Associated Arts degree from Montana Technology, just studying and doing my homework on the dredge.

After I got my degree, I was transferred in the operations to the float and the grinding floor and then in '83, the Anaconda, the smelter shut down in '80. It was a bad day for me. I felt a loss because I heard the news on KBOW. I was out archery hunting. That the smelter was going to shut down for good. We went on strike July 1st. Around September 15th, they made the announcement that the smelter would no longer exist. I thought me being in the Anaconda union, I wouldn't have a chance after the strike was over, not even have a chance to go back to work at the concentrator. I made it, they did call me back. There were a lot of early retirements that a lot of the men took between Butte and Anaconda. So I worked until '83 and that's when the whole place shut down. In January, I remember that the Anaconda Company that they have to have the Columbia Gardens because of the molybdenum and the high copper near the Gardens and if the town gave up the Gardens, your men would be working for many years past the year 2000. It'd be always an open pit and there'd be plenty of work for anybody that wanted the job, but we have to have the Columbia Gardens.

The town had to give up the Gardens, they could fight to keep it and the pit started to take the Columbia Gardens. Then after that there was the accidental fire. No power in those buildings, but somehow the whole place burned up. It was a bad time for the city of Butte. 1983 in the summer, they said, June 30th was the last day that the Butte operation was going to exist. The mines were flooding at the time. The pit was filling up. They shut the pumps down in 1977 when ARCO

took over the Anaconda Company. In ’83 I thought I could do several jobs. I didn’t want to leave Butte. A lot of guys went down to Wyoming to work in the coal mines. I didn’t want to have two sets of bills, being out of town away from the wife and kids. Living in one hotel, working, making better money and then her by herself raising the kids. So I decided to bite the bullet. I was always one to pay my bills as I got them. I never had credit other than a loan on the house. I always paid my bills. I took a lot of really, not the best jobs. I broke sidewalks up for the city of Butte. They had small amounts of money for the sidewalk program. I worked at the Civic Center swamping floors, sweeping and cleaning. I did all of these side jobs.

I made small amounts of money. When they opened up in ’86, I went to Montana Resources. I became a production boss. In ’97 I became a general foreman. I had my own crew. I had my electricians. I had a total of 44 men, four bosses that worked for me and one electrician. The money was really good. The profit sharing. The 401k. It was why I retired early rather than work until I was 66.

Crain: So MR closed the second time?

Kuchtyn: The second time, they kept me since I was a general foreman. They kept a few of us on payroll to be security guards. It was a day-by-day, week-by-week. I knew the money was going to run out. Six months after the shutdown, they laid a bunch of us off at the same time. I interviewed at ASME. I got a job there. I was really surprised by how quick I got a job. I thought you’d have to be interviewed two or three times, but the first interview I had there, as I was being walked out the individual told me, Andy don’t tell anybody but we’re hiring two and you’re number two.

But be surprised when they call you tomorrow. That’s how quick I got that job. It was in the product finishing rooms. I worked with a lot of female girls in these product finishing rooms. I had never worked with women before because I worked with guys all of my life. It was different for me, but I had a really good time over there. When I first started and they found out I was a general foreman at the mines, they alienated me away from them. I had to eat my lunch by myself. A lot of those employees felt threatened by me working in a product finishing room. They felt threatened that I might take their supervisor’s job. If there was a position open, I would be next. I sensed that in the first two weeks.

So I went over to their table at lunch time. I said, I’m not here to take. I know you guys work really hard and you work really hard to get supervisor jobs. I’m not here to get a supervisor job. I came here to do my job, not to take a position that you guys worked hard. I’m not here after your higher paying jobs. I’m just here to work my day’s pay. The next break I was invited to their table. After that we were telling jokes and everything was nice and calm after that. They didn’t feel threatened anymore. They hated to see me leave. They even threw a party when the mine started up in ’86. They threw a big going away party. They said, if I ever was out of work to look them up again. They were really good to me. I left on good standing from ASME when I left.

Crain: You left ASME to go back to MR. I’m surprised by that because, I told know. Tell me why you made that decision.

Kuchtyn: My manager called me at work. The plant manager was Charlie Pelogii. He said we're going to start back up. He said I want you back and I want your crew back. On the phone I asked him, what's the guarantee that the mine is going to stay running and not surprise everyone like it did in 2000. He said, Frank Gardner said, there's no guarantee. He said, we'll give everybody, it's a week-to-week. I want you to tell as you're calling your crew back that there's no guarantee. So if they have a good job, they gotta make a decision.

So I called all of my guys back and I got about 50 percent of them back. The other 50 didn't want to take that chance. They had jobs or were out of town working. They didn't want to take the chance of working a week or two and getting laid-off and not having nothing. What lured me back in was I was a general foreman and I was doing pretty good on pay. You gotta remember when I first started I was a steelworker. After I was on the dredge I was even a janitor at the concentrator going to school to finish my degree. But I went from just being a common laborer to actually being a general foreman just running the place on weekends and nights. I thought that was as far as I would go. I always wanted to get into HR, Human Resources, but my age was catching up with me and I didn't think there would be an opportunity.

But they paid me well. They had a good 401 program and they also threw in an extra week's vacation. That really lured me in. Anywhere else I would have to start at two weeks. Montana Resources didn't take any of our benefits away. They bridged over the time we had with them before along with the new time that started in 03. I just couldn't turn down the four weeks of vacation right off the bat, because I was getting up there. I was 53 when they called me back. I told them that I needed 10 more good years and I got the 10 years I needed.

Crain: So you got married.

Kuchtyn: I got married. I had five boys and one girl.

Crain: Who is your wife?

Kuchtyn: My wife is Debbie. She's from a family of eleven. Her maiden name is Cunneen. [Laughter as he has trouble spelling her maiden name.] Do you know Pat? That's the youngest of the brothers.

Crain: And how many kids do you have?

Kuchtyn: I have five boys and the one girl. We didn't want to have that many kids when we first started. I actually only wanted one boy and one girl, but after the first boy. We decided to try it again and we had another boy. I said, we gotta have a girl. There's gotta be a girl somewhere. My wife has to have a daughter to take care of her when we get older. That's the way I thought about it. So we had another boy. So we didn't talk about it, but we knew that was enough. Since we didn't talk about it we had another boy. So then we started discusses this. Hey four boys. That's enough for today's world. Look at the money I'm going to spend on education, on these kids when they get older. I don't think I can handle this. We finally got a girl. We didn't practice birth control. My wife didn't want to take anything. She was afraid it would make her fat. That's what they said, if you take birth control pills. Before we even got serious, we had another boy.

So we did something after that. I'm not going to tell you what we did. But I can tell you, I didn't have the nicest truck. I didn't have the nicest car or house. I always paid for everything I got, but we raised all those kids and we sent all of them through and they all got a degree from college.

Crain: That's really great. That's a major accomplishment with five kids.

Kuchtyn: Six kids. And I paid for all of it.

Crain: My math skills are not very good.

Kuchtyn: I made sure that none of them had a bill, except for my daughter. She went to Missoula to become a pharmacist. I told her I would pay just the tuition if she would have finished her college here, I would pay that much and not nothing extra. So she ended up with a few debts that she's still paying. I know I spent a quarter of a million dollars on tuition here at Montana Tech. At least. Plus my wife has three degrees and I got one. It was all through Montana Tech. We got a lot of degrees. I never used my degree. When I went to become a general foreman, like I said, the pay was good.

Where else can you work ten minutes from where you live. I mean the mine is right in Butte. You don't have to travel 30 or 40 miles. It's right here. In the case of an emergency, you can leave the mine and be home in 5 or 10 minutes. Not like other jobs where you're 50 or 60 miles away without any contact at all. It was nice. The mine was nice to be where you lived. It might not be nice now, but it was nice at the time. It was really convenient. I knew my wife and my kids were really close and I could get to them if I had to.
Crain: So I want to ask, did your parents speak English? Did you speak a language. Did you learn French or Polish?

Kuchtyn: I just know all the cuss words. I know all of the cuss words, you'd ever want to know. My dad never missed a shift in the mine, but my dad drank. He drank a lot, but he always managed to work in the mines and never miss a shift. Sometimes he was kind of rough on us. He roughed us up a little bit. He didn't physically beat us up a lot. I had a few marks on me. I probably deserved it. It wasn't the best. He did drink a lot. Sometimes when he mixed his beer with whiskey, he . . . he never . . . he didn't remember what he did the next day. He never learned how to drive. He always walked.

Crain: Is your dad still alive?

Kuchtyn: No, he had what you call WPW, Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome. It's a heart condition which I inherited off my dad. I didn't know I had it until '97 when I had to go to Billings to have a burn section of my heart out to eliminate the second pulse of your heart. I had one that played possum when it pumped regularly. It was throwing me way off. It's the type of thing where you see kids collapse on the ball field and they can't start their heart again. They just die of a heart attack. That's WPW. My doctor in Billings says it's like you hit a lottery. He says 1 out of 40,000 people would get it and he says it's like the whole town of Butte and the only one that got it is you. You are so lucky to have this. That's what he said. But he said, we'll take care

of you. And he took care of it. He burned it out during the operation I had in Billings in ’97. I don’t have to take any medicine for it or nothing.

Crain: And your mom?

Kuchtyn: My mom . . . You see my dad spoke seven languages. When the mines shutdown for a strike, I think it’s Goodrich in Butte. It’s where the fire department is on Montana Street now. It used to be a tire center. Currie’s Tire. They wanted to hire him because he spoke seven and he wrote and printed really clearly in seven different languages. They wanted to hire him as a translator because they dealt with the foreign products of buying and selling both. But my dad just wanted to work in the mines. That’s what he wanted to do. He never felt that he could sit in an office. My mother - Polish. She learned some German. My mom and dad both learned German. But I think Polish, German and English for my mom. But my dad was six or seven languages that he spoke and wrote clearly.

Crain: So Clark [Clark Grant], do you have any questions?

Clark Grant: I was curious, considering your fascination with fire and having sold papers on the corner by the Medical Arts, did you see that fire?

Kuchtyn: I did. Yep. Kind of interesting that you brought that up because I met my wife at a fire. The Medical Arts Building fire. I was introduced to her that night. I was going out with her sister, her younger sister and I was introduced that night at the Medical Art Building fire. And I married not Nancy but Debby. We’re good friends. We see each other. They live in Wenatchee and we live here, but that’s exactly where I met my wife was at the Medical Arts building fire. I never even thought about that until just now.

Grant: And so where did that fire start? In the basement? Upstairs?

Kuchtyn: They thought it was between the Sportsman bar which was next door and the Medical Arts. I don’t think they really knew exactly that it was . . . It burned in between the firewall and the Medical Art Building. They thought it was in the big thing. I remember when it first started there was very little smoke coming out of it. They thought they could put it out. It’s sort of like the shock of 9-11. When you don’t think a building is going to collapse. You think you got control and then you got nothing. All of the sudden when the roof started to black and the fire came up to the roof, they knew there was no way they could put this fire out. It was too huge. It smoked for a long time. It didn’t seem like they were. They knew they had a fire to put out, but they thought they could control it. They had no idea the whole thing was going to burn the way it did.

Grant: Did the walls collapse?

Kuchtyn: Yeah, I waited there because I met my wife. Then I went back to the fire and to watch the walls kind of fall into Park Street. I watched that when I was a kid and I watched it that day too. JC Billings fire, the library, I watched those walls come down. I always had to be there to watch the bricks fall down onto the street or into the fire. Then I called her quits that night and

went home. I was always at fires. I don't know what was the deal with fires. I am surprised I am not a fireman.

Grant: Did you ever think of being a fireman?

I did. I thought that was what I was going to be up until when I was in the service and I got out. I put in for a fireman. For the Butte. I think you had to be 32 or 35. Your age had to be 35 or younger. You couldn't put in if you were older than that. I took the test and I was out of the service. I really wanted to be a fireman. I think I got the thing called the 10 point system where you get an extra 10 points because you're in the service. Sort of like the government jobs at the post office. I took the test. They didn't add it on.

For some reason, this was 32 years ago, they did not add the points system that I had been a fireman. I went to complain to one of the commissioners that was on the board. I went to tell him about why the point system wasn't for these two firemen. I did not know that his son was one of the ones that got hired. I was told by one of the policeman in Butte that you did what? You went where? He's the new fireman. He got hired. I didn't know it was not for public news yet. I went to the wrong guy complaining about the 10 point system.

Crain: Was Sy Holman on the commission at the time?

Kuchtyn: Sy Holman? No. Sy Holman was around in the 50's. There was Tony the Trader. I remember Tony the Trader. My mother would buy all her . . . The miners in the hotel, sometimes they left her with the bill. Sometimes they'd steal the beds. So she had to go to Tony the Trader's and buy another brass bed. It was either $10 or $12 for a brass bed. They'd always steal the dresser and the brass bed. So she'd have to go up. It wouldn't be the bed springs, it'd be the headboard and the tail because they were brass. They always take those.

Crain: Salvage?

Kuchtyn: Maybe that's what it was for the brass.

Grant: You talked about the Gardens and the Pit expanding. Isn't it Sacred Heart where the famous picture was taken of the haul truck backing up to the church?

Kuchtyn: That was Saint Lawrence. That was in McQueen. They dumped right into the roofs and the brick. Debris was coming out of the front windows onto the sidewalk. When you could see the haul trucks above dumping. I know where the spot is, I know exactly where the church and the school is.

[Inaudible question]

Kuchtyn: The thing about the Gardens. I remember when we used to go to the Gardens. We'd take Park Street down and we'd go, the pit just started on the left. There'd be ponds and creeks everywhere. And you'd drop down before the Gardens. There was a root beer stand and you could get penny root beers. My mother would say get me two nickel root beers and five penny

root beers. And the five kids in the ’54 Chevy. It was like 15 cents for us all to have a root beer before we went up to the Gardens. I remember the smell as we went up to the Gardens. The birch trees. After a light rain, that smell of the Gardens. That birch smell. That evergreen. Every once in a while, you’ll smell that when you’re somewhere else. When you’re out archery hunting or somewhere, it brings you right back to the Gardens, to when you were at the Columbia Gardens. That birch smell. Especially right after a rain. I get a whiff of that every once in a while and it takes me right back to my memory of the Columbia Gardens. I even wrote that down. Birch after a light rain.

Crain: The Gardens were a wonderful thing.

Kuchtyn: I know that years ago. There was a lot to do. You know, black and white TV. Not a lot of stuff on TV. When I lived up on Arizona, we had rock fights. You threw rocks at each other. You picked a team. I remember it up on the copper dumps. It’d be like 20 of us kids on a Saturday. The two umps would pick the team players. We’d hide behind the rocks and the boulders and we’d throw rocks at each other. I got this one. I ended up in the hospital. That one hit me. I got another one here from an ax that came across my eyebrow. But these are from rocks and fights. If you did that now, you’d be in Warm Springs. I got hit a lot. They always aimed for me. Every Saturday afternoon was a rock fight. Play war.

Another thing is, my dad used to get out of the mine. My mother would have a dinner and we’d go up to Elk Park Campground. We’d eat there or go up to the Columbia Gardens. But after a miner comes out of the shaft and he takes his shower and he got in our car, it’s called a miner’s sweat. If you didn’t know what it smells like, it smells like a wet sock in your boot that’s been there for a long time. But what it is, it’s the sweat from the headband of their hardhats. I call it miner’s sweat. I used to smell it on my dad. He’d take a shower and then get in the car. You could smell that miner’s sweat, that labor sweat. Every once in a while at the concentrator when we were digging out a junction or something. It was the sweatbands that they had in their hardhats. You could smell that in the older hardhats. It reminded me of my dad when he’d get in our car, because he never drove. My mother had to pick him up.

Crain: When did your mom learn to drive? Do you remember her learning to drive?

Kuchtyn: She bought a ’54 Chevy. I couldn’t find a picture. I took it into Sparky’s and I showed them the 4th of July parade going down Park Street. And I showed him his building. I think it was Curry’s Chevrolet. They sold new and used cars. She bought a ’54 Chevy there. It was a demo for $1750. It was a standard, three on the tree, stick clutch. She learned how to drive that. We took that ’54 Chevy to Canada during one of the strikes. It was in ’58 or ’59 and then we took it to Wisconsin, Green Bay to see the aunt over there. They had a big dairy farm. But she pulled a little Shasta trailer with that. We were gone for both summers. She did it. She had eighteen flat tires on the Canada trip. I remember the road up there was all gumbo, dirt roads. Eighteen flat tires. They were all like a bias-ply. You’d hit a sharp rock; you got a flat tire. They all had inner tubes in them. They’re not the radials. She had a lot of patches on those inner tubes. Going up into Canada.

Crain: That's pretty unusual at that time for the woman to be the driver and not the man. It's interesting that she did that on her own.

Kuchtyn: We left my brother coming back from Green Bay, Wisconsin, bringing the trailer back. She didn't realize until, after we stopped for gas, until we were about 30 miles away. She happened to turn around and Rick, my brother, wasn't there. She unhooked the trailer right on the highway. Unhooked it right there on the two lane highway, made a cookie and went back to the truck stop. My brother was sitting there with a melted ice cream cone, sitting right there in front of the gas station, waiting for someone to pick him up. He didn't leave. He just stood there shocked that we abandoned him.

Crain: He's probably not over that.

Kuchtyn: He brought that up the other day. He's still not over it. He's not over something like that.

Crain: Did none of you guys say to her, you're leaving Rick behind?

Kuchtyn: I think I knew, but I didn't want to say anything. I was a troublemaker when I was young. I didn't want to say anything to my mom. I think I wanted to leave my brother because we were all sharing a bedroom. One less kid. I get my own bed maybe. I think I was thinking like that. It really was a cutthroat game in those days. I remember smoking cigarettes. I know my mom used to chew me out because when we ran the hotel, my dad would drink with a couple of guys in one of the rooms. They would fascinate me. Most of the guys, the miners, they all chewed because they were underground. You can't smoke in the mines. So they all chewed tobacco. But on the surface, a lot of them smoked.

My dad smoked Camel non-filters and he chewed Copenhagen in the mine. I remember going to one of their little drinking parties in the hotel. I don't know how they did it, but they could blow circles with their cigarettes. And it would come right at me. They were trying to show me how to do it. So I was smoking a cigarette. I was like six years old. I was trying to stick my tongue out, trying to get that smoke circle going. At the same time my mom opened the door. She ran everyone out of that room. She chewed my dad out. She chewed me out. As far as smoking, I did smoke. I wasn't a smoker until I got in the surface. When I got on the ship, I went to the ship store and I asked for chewing gum - Juicy Fruit. That was my favorite gum. The guy at the little store on my ship, it was a destroyer.

He said, you dummy, we don't sell gum on the ship, because when sailors throw gum down it sticks to the metal and people step on it. We sell cigarettes. You are going to have to learn to smoke if you're going to be on this ship. So everybody smoked. Cigarettes were cheap. It was a dime a pack. When you're out past the three mile boundary, it was cheap. When I came home, my sea bag was full of Camel cigarettes and Copenhagen. There were no clothes when I came home on leave, it was all tobacco. I asked my dad, Can you handle that much? He said, You could freeze cigarettes and Copenhagen, and then when you need it, you can just thaw it out like bread. So my sea bag was full of non-taxed cigarettes and Copenhagen. You know, you get those rolls of 10 Copenhagen cans. It was like $1.20. He just really enjoyed having all of that when I

came home. I got caught. I was trying to smoke circles and I just couldn't figure it out. I even tried it in the service on watch. I just couldn't. They were so good at those circles. I don't know how they do that. I might go back to it one of these days.

Crain: I don't think your heart surgeon would approve.

Kuchtyn: Another thing is, you can go to Montana Theater and you can use, get six caps off Coca-Cola, off pop, to go see a matinee. They had a big barrel. You give them six. You throw it in the barrel and then go watch a double feature at the Montana Street Theater. That's where Lucy Ball once performed at Montana Street. When I was in first grade, well, Kindergarten, I was walking home back to the hotel and behind the alley, Tom Powers, he was the mayor of Butte, MT. He's a nice guy. I always liked Tom. He had a little store on Broadway Street. He was the mayor of Butte. He was watching a German Shepherd. When I was walking down past his house, headed toward the back gate of the hotel, these kids opened up the gate and they sent the dog after me. Just a bunch of older kids. They let the dog out.

The dog started to run toward me. I started to run toward the hotel and I got as far as the back gate, the gate opened out into the alley and when I done that, the dog got a hold of me. It ripped the front of me like a rag doll. My whole front was completely tore. They took me to the hospital and it was the old Saint James Hospital. Down by Saint Patrick's Church. They were sewing me up and Tom and Patty and Julie and Pat and Tom, the mayor's wife. They were all there talking with my mom in the hallway. I remember my mother saying, don't worry, Tom, it was just an accident. Don't worry about nothing. In those days, you didn't sue anybody for anything. Tom went downstairs and he paid for the whole hospital bill. We didn't know about that until I was discharged a day or two later and found out there was no bill.

He covered the whole thing. That's the way it was. I remember Tom Powers' daughters being on the commercials of the Ed Sullivan show, the Butte local commercials, wearing different Thomas Apparel dresses and stuff. Julie and Patty used to model their dresses. It was the commercials of the Lawrence Welk show. I always had a crush on Julie Powers. I took her to a show when I was young. I was like nine or ten, maybe eleven. We went to the Rialto Theater which is right across the street from the new Montana Power, the US Bank. We watched a show about Mars, landing on Mars. I remember that because it wasn't until five or six years later that I found out we landed on the moon. The moon? I mean, we've been to Mars.

The moon is nothing. For all these years, I thought we had already landed on these other planets. I thought that was a real show. I thought we actually landed on Mars when I watched that show with Julie Powers. I never did tell her that. That's how kind of naive and stupid I was. I didn't want to ask anybody. But when we landed on the moon, I said, what's the big thing? We landed on Mars. The moon is next door. I didn't tell my kids this. I'm telling you everything because this is sort of on my bucket list. This is something I wanted to get out. I don't care what people think about me. I already worked hard for my money. I'm not out to be interviewed for a job anymore. But it's something I like to get off my shoulders and I think I did it today.

Crain: We got some great stories. Very good stories.

Kuchtyn: I can tell you another one. When my mother ran the hotel, the Safeway store across the street. It's an archery shop now. Comic books were 12 cents. Batman, Robin Hood, Casper, Archie. I wasn't the most honest kid. I always thought of how I could, without stealing the comic book, how can I get that 12-cent comic book? It didn't take me very long to figure it out. Pop bottle refunds were 2 cents a bottle. Safeway would put all their empty bottles on the depot on the back by their door. When a new comic book was in the front as you go through the Safeway store, I would see a new one and I would immediately go to the alley, grab a six pack of pop, bring it up to the front, refund it in for 12 cents and get a comic book at the same time. I done that for a long time.

Crain: I think you were a pretty smart kid.

Kuchtyn: It didn't take long to survive in Butte. It gave me a good education. I didn't know how lucky it was to be raised and live here until after I left. When I came back, naw, this is the place you want to be. You wouldn't want to be anywhere else but right here.

Grant: I was curious about the ship you were on.

Kuchtyn: It was called the Henry B. Wilson. It was a guided-missile destroyer. I got the American flag off the ship. It's on display in my downstairs of my house right now. I'm thinking about giving it to the state of Montana, sort of like the backboard and the hoop and stuff like that. I'm thinking about giving the stuff to where it means more. There's a significant reason why the flag on this ship is worth looking into the history. What happened in the Gulf of Tonkin, we fought the longest ship-to-shore battle since World War II. We got involved in some really heavy fire. We were told to go in there, because they were unloading ammo from small boats on the shore and putting them in these tunnels.

They told us to go in there and just shoot what you can to get them scattered until the heavy cruisers come in there and the planes to finish the job, before they had all this ammo put away. I was on lookout when we were headed in towards this area. We had just finished doing surveillance up in Russia, up in Siberia. They had Russian ships that were doing training and we had these special binoculars. They were 100 power, mounted on tripods. Those were still left on our lookout. So when I was on lookout, I happened to look at the shore that we were getting close to. I noticed that on some of the higher mountains there were these flat concrete with the slit in the middle of it. They were moving their big guns out.

When they moved their guns out, when I was looking at this hill, the barrel cast a shadow against the concrete. When I looked at it the first time, it wasn't there. When I looked at it a second time, I seen that. I notified the captain on the bridge that there was something different with the two mountains on the left. He came up and looked at and immediately went to general quarters. It took three minutes for the shells to get to us. We were shooting five inch at them. They were 60 lbs. They were shooting eight inch. Their ship projectiles were 650 lbs. They shot shrapnel, Willy Peter, and penetrating. 560 rounds is what sonar picked up. Our guns jammed right away. We were just circling around. Of course, their propaganda said they sunk our ship when our ship smoked black. After general quarters, I didn't realize how serious it was. When you're young and dumb, I think that's why when you're in the service, everybody wants to be a hero and

nothing bothers them. You do things that you normally wouldn't do when you're older. That's why younger people are sent to battle over older people because they know better. They know what will happen if you really get injured. Younger kids, I didn't sense it at all when I was young. But when I talk about it, it gets to me right now.

Makes my hair stand. We fought the longest ship-to-shore battle according to our captain. I looked at the flag when I went back up on lookout and it was all tattered and ripped and black. I asked the captain, can I have that flag. We should put a new flag up. He said, Andy, I'd love to give it to you, but we got Lieutenants and officers that are probably going to want that flag. They're all asking for it. I said, OK, no big deal. I went on watch at midnight. I had the 12:00 watch until 4:00 in the morning. I was running the helm. I was steering the ship. They took me off of it for a few minutes. They presented the flag to me. They folded it up like you do at a funeral and they presented it to me. The captain stayed up just to present it to me. I asked why. He said, You seen. We went to general quarters.

When you seen the canons coming up, we didn't see them. You seen it. You picked it up. We went to general quarters earlier because of you. We might of had some fatalities because everybody was out on the decks and stuff. And they shot shrapnel at us. Their shrapnel would come close to contact and burst. He said, they could have taken out a few people. There's another reason, all of the officers are asking for that flag. He said, I could have one good officer, if I give the flag to him, I could have a lot of enemies. I thought about it and I said, I can't give it to any of the officers because they would look at as favoritism. I am giving it to the sailor that seen the canons. He says, he asked for it. So he gave it to me. So I have the flag at home.

Guided missiles. Every time we went into the Philippines, we were changing out seven or eight missiles for different missiles. I always wondered why they did that. The chief petty officer that was close to retirement, he said, Andy, some of those are nuclear missiles. When you go to the Philippines, they might be taking nuclear missiles and putting regular warhead missiles on our ship. It's a game. The only person that knows which ones are nuclear is the president of the United States, the captain, the XO and the Vice President. Nobody else knows where the live. You gotta have so many nuclear missiles on ships that are out at sea, in case something happens on land and you can't get back in.

You have to have so many nuclear missiles, and you have to have so many on land. So many in missile silos. So they moved these missiles around so you don't know which ones are nuclear and which ones are dummies. So every time we came to the Philippines we were moving them, taking them on and off. I couldn't understand. Especially, when we didn't use any. Why are we doing this? It's because of that.

Crain: That's an interesting story.

Grant: That's whole different rock fight.

Kuchtyn: When we went to general quarters I was in Mag 1. It was below waterline where you load the powder cans and the bullets up to the gun mounts, Gun Mount 1. When the shrapnel hit the side of our ship, it sounded like a thousand people beating the side of our ship. I had a Petty

Officer in tears. They were worried. They'd never been through something like this. People were shooting at them with these projectiles. They tried to open up the hatch because they wanted out. You're not supposed to open it up during the alarm that went off. General quarters. They couldn't open it. After general quarters, I went up there and I spun it with one hand and it was free. What happens is when you're in officer school, what they do is when you go to general quarters, you go below the water line.

Officers tend to those doors and they put a wrench in it so you can't get out. If that compartment gets hit, what they found out during World War II, a lot of ships sank because people opened all the doors and the ships went straight down. It was like Swiss cheese. They're willing to sacrifice a few bodies in one compartment that is taking on water than loose the whole ship. So when I went up there and spun it, the two guys that tried, they were big guys, they looked at me and they couldn't believe it. I opened it up with one hand and they couldn't do it with a wrench, because the officers were trained to dog these. You won't see in writing or any book. The guy that told me that was a retired chief. I asked him about that.

He said, I can't really tell you, but I'm going to tell you anyhow, something that's not written down. Officers that go to training school are told on the ship that everyone of them has a post during general quarters. You put a wrench where they can't open it to get out of that compartment. Officers tend to those areas. It's to keep everyone else alive on the ship. It makes sense. It's bad for the people in that compartment. It keeps the ship floating. He told me that then it makes sense. You'll never see it in writing. It's a verbal thing that is brought down.

Crain: Very scary. Well, Andy thank you very much for coming in. [Reference to some of Kuchtyn's photographs that he brought in.]

Kuchtyn: I always liked dogs. Even though one ripped me apart. I got one now. A lot of those pictures are taken behind the hotel, below Broadway Garage. Broadway Garage is still there, but that's taken right behind it. That's the hotel. That's the room in the office.

Crain: That's a great picture. The first communion picture.

Kuchtyn: I tried some of the father's wine. Like I said, I was a troublemaker. You had to pour so much in the chalice and serve it. I drank some of it once and it's got to be the worst taste and bitter wine you ever tasted in your life. When I took some out and the other two servers, we all drank some. We looked at the bottom and notice that he marks the bottle on the side and it was down about that far off the side of this Galo wine. So we ended up going to the faucet and poured water until the line got up to the mark. We put it back in the cabinet. So we added water to it so he wouldn't catch us. We always looked and we always thought about how we could get away with something. I tell you what I never took anymore after that. It was terrible wine.

Charlie Judd's. Kids go out and buy cigarettes and beer for their parents in bars in the early 60's. I used to go to Charlie Judd's. Esther Judd, she ran the bar during the day. I stopped and a couple of kids wanted to buy some OlyOly beer [Olympia], canned beer. I said, I could probably buy you some beer. I says, I'm on my way to Charlie's because my dad always liked quarts of Great Falls Select or Butte's quarts of beer. I made a mistake when I went to see Esther at Charlie

Judd's. She said, What do you need? I said, Ah, my dad needs a couple of Great Falls Select quarts, because he liked a bottle of beer. He liked bottled beer that was the thing. He wants two packs of Camels and two packs of Copenhagen and a couple of six packs of Oly canned beer. She says, Oh, he wants a couple of six packs of canned beer?

She bagged it all and I gave her the money. I stopped and gave the kids a six pack of Oly beer and I went home and gave my dad the rest. He looked in the bag and said, "Something's missing. Where's my Oly beer at?" Esther called my dad. She said, "Your son ordered canned beer and I know you do not drink canned beer." He said, "Don't do it again." "Why, Dad?" He said, "If you do it again, Esther's not going to give you any beer and I'm going to have to go over and get it. Don't do it again." So I got caught that time, buying canned beer. If I'd bought quarts of beer . . .

Crain: I used to go to the store and get cigarettes for my mother. But my husband always talks about going to get beer. Quarts for his dad.

Kuchtyn: The kids could go and get it all for their parents - cigarettes, Copenhagen and booze. It was nothing.

Crain: No one ever questioned.

Kuchtyn: Nope. Nobody batted an eye.

Crain: I always thought it was a really bad thing when they took away the beer machine at the golf course down at Stodden. They had a beer vending machine. Some conservative caught wind of that and made them take it out. You used to be able to go in there and get a beer. You could put change in it and get a beer and then they took that out. I said, Well, I want that beer vending machine here at the Archives. That's a great fundraising opportunity. They said, Well, kids get into it. It was really funny because Lee Whitney said, Well, they're outside. They're getting some exercise. What's the problem?

Kuchtyn: There you go.

Crain: This is just a couple of years ago. The beer vending machine.

Kuchtyn: Saint Mary's church. When we lived up on Arizona, the church was really close. They had an ice skating rink behind the church that they always filled up with water. Maybe not right behind it, but one block over where the trestle was. They used to have games. They called them the East Side Games. There were 5 or 6 kids and one kid made all the decisions and that was the Games. Those kids got a hold of me one day and they made me walk across that slush. It was like 20 below zero and I remember them saying I had to go down on my knees and crawl across it from one end to the other. They had all rocks. If I got up, they were going to pound the heck out of me. So I did that.

By the time I got home, the back of my heels were frostbitten. We had these cheap tennis shoes on in those years. It's been starting to bother me here these last few months. I feel that heel on my left starting to bother me. It had to be when I was a kid and I lost the feeling to my left heel

when I was young. Certain shoes. Hot paten leather or hard leather shoes that go close to the back of my heel. Tennis shoes. Sometimes I fold the back down like a slipper and walk. My tennis shoes at home are like this, because this foot. But these shoes are good. I'm just breaking these in now. I remember crawling across that. It was 20 below. My feet. I couldn't feel my feet at all. I know I frostbit them. It was like a dead section on my feet. But those are the things you did when you were a kid. That's the way it was.

Grant: You took some licks.

Kuchtyn: I got pounded. When they used to dig waterlines out on streets, I got thrown into the pit. They hammered me with rocks. I covered my head.

Crain: You're kind of a big guy. Were you not a big kid?

Kuchtyn: I was young and these kids were older. On Broadway where that little restaurant was I did something really bad. I almost killed a guy. As the alley goes right across Park Street going South. There used to be a gas station there with bays. Right up at that brick building, I found a tire sitting on the sidewalk. I said, I'm just going to roll it down the alley and when I pushed it down the alley it was going down the alley from Broadway going straight down it was going to hit Park Street and these cars were going back and forth. I happened to look and there was a guy working on a car. I didn't realize it until the tire was bouncing and gaining momentum. I said, it's going to kill that guy!

Why did I do that? But at the same time the guy was bent over. I was yelling. I was a block away. A Volkswagen was driving by and it hit the side of the Volkswagen, went up in the air and I ran. I don't know what happened. It didn't kill the guy. I went back to the hotel and looked through the window and the guy was still working on that car.

Crain: Well, you were a kid.

Kuchtyn: I was a kid. I was young. I was young and dumb.

Crain: Well, Andy, this has been a great session. Thank you very much for coming in.

Kuchtyn: Yeah, you betcha.

[Continues talking about people they know in common.]

Crain: Do you know my husband? Gordon Crain.

Kuchtyn: I know Gordon Crain.

Crain: He was in the same class.

Kuchtyn: He graduated in '69. I know the name Gordon Crain. I don't know what he looks like but I remember the name. Have you been to any reunions?

Crain: I have. And he has.

Kuchtyn: I have been to the 10 year, but I didn't go after that.

Crain: Well, you know Marty is moving home.

Kuchtyn: Marty Judd?

Crain: Marty. His wife finally got sick of Utah. Really sick.

Kuchtyn: I mean he did good. He worked for Coors in Denver and Bud in Salt Lake.

Crain: Oh, he's made millions selling beer in Utah.

Kuchtyn: Isn't that something.

Crain: He bought a piece of property down on the Blackfoot and he and Betsy are going to move home to Montana.

Kuchtyn: Oh, OK. Cause I haven't seen Marty in 30 or 40 years. I seen him at the 10-year reunion and he told me to come to Denver. He wasn't married. He says, I got a six-bedroom house. You and your wife and the kids can stay there for the weekend. Come on down. I didn't see him since high school. I saw him ten years later and I haven't seen him since.

Crain: He's good. We see him. They have a place at Georgetown and I see Marty quite a bit.

[END OF RECORDING]