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BERNIE BOYLE

The Verdigris Project

A partnership between KBMF 102.5FM and The Butte-Silver Bow Archives.

With funding from The National Endowment for the Humanities, the Montana History Foundation, members of the Butte America Foundation, and SARTA.

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Oral History Transcript of Bernie Boyle

Interviewers: Aubrey Jaap & Clark Grant

Interview Date: May 21st, 2021

Interview Location: Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives

Transcribed: February 2022 by Clark Grant

Aubrey Jaap: Alright, it is May 21st, 2021. We're here with Bernie Boyle. Bernie, I would like you to start out and tell me about your grandparents, parents - kind of your family history, the background you know.

Bernie Boyle: Wow, well this is an interesting story. My original grandparents, Jim & Rose Boyle, came here from Ireland, of course, for a better life. And Jim - he married a Boyle. Her name was Rose Boyle. Anyway, they came here. He worked in the mines, Jim, and he realized very early on that he did not want to spend the rest of his life in the mines. So he bought a three story hotel, cafe and bar down at 632 S Utah, which is right across the street from R&R Electric. And it's gone now. But I'm not sure how he got in there or how he financed it or how he bought it. Maybe I don't wanna know either. [laughter] You know, maybe somebody that - but anyway, it was quite a going thing back then. It was pretty much 24 hours. There was over 10,000 guys working underground. It was a three story hotel, like many places in Butte, where two miners shared one room. One guy would be sleeping and one guy would be working and the next guy would come home, come back, [and] they'd change the bed. And he had a cafe and he had a bar, so it was a go - it was a gold mine.

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They had eight kids. Of course, my dad was one of them. And my dad was also named John Bernard Boyle. My name is John Bernard Boyle, but I go by Bernie. My dad, they always called him Jack. And he wanted to make sure when I was born that people didn't call me Jack, that they called me Bernie. So that's - when I go for things, they say, oh your name's John? I thought it was Bernie. Well, it is John but I go by Bernie. It's John Bernard Boyle. It's confusing but - anyway, he raised eight kids in that hotel and they actually lived upstairs for a long time in two or three rooms. And they all went down to St. Joe's grade school, which is about three blocks down. They all were parishioners at St. Joe's grade school right down the street.

My other set of grandparents were Walter and Nomy Cannon. They lived at 129 W Daly. My grandfather was an electrician for the Anaconda Company for 46 years. My grandmother was a stay-at-home mom who raised my mom and her sister. My mom was Doris Cannon, Doris Boyle, and anyway, they went through a lot of strikes. He has a home up in Walkerville that he built. He was one of those guys that pretty much built it from the Anaconda Company [laughs], back then, whatever you could take home you know. And back then, people delivered stuff. It's a well, well built home up there, the garage, house and another guy owns it now. Boy it's quite a structure that he put together.

[00:03:08]

So there are my two sets of grandparents. They were involved with St. Lawrence grad school and their two kids went to St. Lawrence grade school, which was only three blocks away. And my

grandfather, I believe, had seven or eight siblings. And his dad actually died when he was one. He got pneumonia, and they grew up right across the street from where his home was. And of course Walkerville back then wasn't Walkerville today. That's for sure. It was a booming, booming area. You had all those mines working up there and a lot of people, houses everywhere and taverns everywhere. So I spent a lot of time in Walkerville as a little kid at my grandparents' house.

I didn't know my other grandmother Rose Boyle because she died actually when my dad was 18, when he was in high school. She lost a son, Bill Boyle, in World War 2, and as they tell it, family members, she was never the same after that. She kind of died of a broken heart. And I still have pictures of - they had the actual wake in the family home at 732 South Maryland. You know, that's what they did back then. They brought the body home, they put it in the corner, and people come to the house for three days. And people stayed up all night with the body. [laughs] I explain those kind of things to my kids today and they look at me like 'they had the wake in the house?' 'Yeah. They had the wake in the house.'

You know, so that's a little bit about my grandparents. And they were a big influence on my - mostly the ones in Walkerville. My grandfather James Boyle - I never had that tight of a relationship with him and of course my grandmother died, but my grandparents in Walkerville were a huge influence on my life. So that's that part of it.

Jaap: That's that part. Can you tell me about your parents?

[00:05:10]

Boyle: Well my parents are - my dad was Bernie and my mom Doris Boyle. My mom was the second daughter of my grandparents Walter and Nony Cannon. They got married in July of 1951. [laughs] This is an ironic story. They got married of course in St. Lawrence church and they had the wedding reception in my grandparents' backyard at 129 W Daly. And my grandfather actually built a bar in the garage just for the wedding reception. And I often think back at how big of a wedding that must have been, but I kept thinking, they only had one bathroom in the house. So I kept thinking that had to be just a - I mean - because you know the history of Butte drinking back then and I thought god almighty, the line to the bathroom must have been -

Jaap: I'm sure the line in the alley was longer! [laughs]

Boyle: So yeah - and then we lived for a while, a couple of years - I was just a kid - at 732 Maryland, above my grandparents' house. There was a - it was a fourplex and we lived upstairs. And then we moved down to 1948 Utah. And there was myself, I was the oldest, and then my brother Tom, who lives in Salt Lake, my sister Nony, who also lives in Salt Lake down by Tom, and then my sister Colleen, who lives here and works for the power [company].

So we were raised three blocks from St. John's grade school. We went to St. John's grade school and that parish was our parish down there. And that's - you know I - my dad ran the bar. When my grandfather died, my dad took the bar over so I spent a lot of time cleaning the bar, around the bar life. It was a - you know the bar life was a tough life. Back then, my dad used to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning to open the bar. And this is the insanity of it, I tell of it. Right behind his bar, Boyle's Bar, was the Northern Transport. Guys used to hit the road with semis driving.

Well he used to have to open the bar so that the truck drivers could come in there and get three or four shots and a beer before they hit the road. I mean - but this was accepted back then. And of course you look at it today...

So it was a good life and it was a bad life. My dad put a lot of time in the bar. Didn't see a lot of him. In fact, he also had a drinking problem and he actually died when I was 18 and my brother Tom was 16. Nony was 13 and Col was 11. So I saw the other end of it where it got him. And he tried a couple of times to quit drinking but he never could.

[00:08:01]

And then my mom took the bar over. So it was a great family life and they were great parents, but my dad just had this one demon that he couldn't shake. And so you know, so that's why I've always been - tried to be real careful for me drinking, but yeah. So that's a little bit of history with my parents. I mean, they were great parents. Unfortunately we lost our dad at 18, but my mom, you know, lived until she was 86. She was a great mom and a great grandmother. I was 18 when dad died, but she pretty much raised the other three and had to run the bar for a while, until it burnt down in 1974. So, then she worked for the Health Department down on Front St. So that's - is that enough or is there any other questions?

Jaap: Well, I think we'll touch back on it here in a little bit.

Boyle: Sure.

Jaap: Yeah, I'm sure Clark will touch back on it. Yeah, for sure. Ok Bernie, so when were you born?

Boyle: I was born July 10th, 1953. So, you know, in the old St. James hospital, which is right down on Idaho Street. I drive by there and I look at that and I think, oh my god, you know. Of course back then, when somebody had a child they stayed in the hospital for a week, you know, before the baby came home with the mother. Yeah that's where I was born. I'll be 68 this July. Yeah, I mean, I look back at that old building. Hopefully someday something can get done with that old building. You know, people are buying all these buildings in Butte, so. Well that's a little bit about when I was born.

Jaap: [laughter]

Boyle: It's hard. I don't remember much about it! I don't remember much about it. I don't remember being in St. James!

Jaap: [laughing] That's ok! Where'd you go to school? Did you already mention where you went to school?

Boyle: No I went to school at St. John's grade school. I started there in 1959. I was in first grade. In fact, one of my best friends all through grade school and high school was Pat Schulte, who just passed away a couple of years ago. And he was a big member at the KC [Knights of Columbus] with me. But, this is a story - in fact I should have brought my picture. I have a picture of my holy communion class in second grade and there was 46 kids in the class. And thought holy god, this poor nun had 46 boys and girls - and how she ever did it!

[00:10:49]

But in 1959 I remember going to first grade and I remember it clear as day. Six years old and I didn't want to go to school. I'm out in the hall crying. My mom's out in the hall crying. The nun's out there trying to get me back in - and Pat Schulte come up and put his arm around me and says, 'Come on Bernie. Everything will be ok.' And he brought me in. And we talked about that until the day he died. And so I went 8 years to St. John's grade school. And then I went to Boys Central for two years and then when Boys Central and Girls Central combined, I went to Butte Central.

But, great experience at St. John's grade school. Anybody that ever had the nuns - I mean they were tough but they taught you a lot about life. So, I mean it was an experience I would not ever change. A lot of the values I got in life today are because of the nuns and brothers that I had, and the priests, without question.

Jaap: Good. Is it hard that all those Catholic schools aren't around anymore?

Boyle: Yeah it is, you know. Because when I give tours to people at the KC all the time, I tell them 'this is where all the Catholic grade schools played all our games.' And it was called the CYO, the Catholic Youth Organization, and I said at one time Butte had nine Catholic grade schools. And these people look at me like, 'What! Nine Catholic grade schools? You're kidding me!' I said, 'I'm telling ya there was nine. Here's the pictures of them and they're right here.' And they just look at me and I say, 'But you gotta realize that Butte back then had 26 public grade schools.' You know there was all these guys working underground and the [Anaconda] Company and the [Montana] Power [Company] and things were booming in town. It was just a lot of people, but then of course the diocese in 1969 closed the Catholic grade schools and just left North Central and South Central and Butte Central. And then in 1986, they reopened Central Elementary. So the good news is, at least we have one Catholic grade school, you know.

[00:13:00]

And that's where I sent all four of my kids. And my wife was always really involved in the schools too which, I was happy. So at least Butte has one. But back then, there was all kinds of religious nuns and priests to teach in the Catholic - and then eventually, the vocations just aren't what they used to be and they couldn't man the schools with lay teachers. You just couldn't do it, you know, to keep nine of them open. But it was a great experience and we got a lot of those old pictures and sports teams at the KC. People come back and they go down and - fifty years ago - and they look and go 'oh there's our picture in basketball or volleyball or football. You know, it's kind of neat to see and I take a lot of my kids around and show them where the schools were.

It's hard to explain things that you knew happened years ago, but - it's even like telling my four boys where Boyle's Bar was, 632 S Utah. 'There was like a three story building here dad?' Yeah, there was a three story building and believe it or not, Boyle's Bar back then, for years and years, was the only place in Butte people went on St. Patty's Day.

Jaap: Really?

Boyle: That's a true story. They had a big dancehall in the back and they used to have a band. They dyed the beer green. And it was the only place in town after the parade that people went.

You can ask a lot of the old timers. I mean, there was a few people around the Uptown, but Boyle's Bar, because of the Irish tradition and the dancehall in the back, was the place in Butte that everybody went on St. Patty's Day.

[00:14:46]

Jaap: So do you have some good memories of St. Patrick's Day?

Boyle: Oh yeah. Well I never used to get to go up there, but I used to have to go up there - me and my brother - and clean that hall in the back three or four days before the event to get it ready for the dance. And then we always got shipped to Walkerville with my grandparents, all four of us, because then my mom had to bartend with my dad and stay there till 2-3 in the morning. So I never got to see that end of it, until after I turned 18.

Jaap: Good. What else did you do as a kid? Tell me kind of like what you did for fun and what Butte was like when you were a kid.

Boyle: Boy, you know, Butte - I remember on Saturdays, taking the bus Uptown just to come Uptown because there was so much to do Uptown. I mean, you had Hennessy's and the Toggery across the street and right down where the Party Palace is, there was a little eating place - Jimmy's something it was called. And you had Woolworth's and Ben Franklin's and - there was just - you walked around and there were so many people. It was just so much fun to come Uptown. Of course, it certainly isn't like that now. Hopefully it comes back a little bit, you know, a little bit more people. It looks like things are picking up, but that's what I used to do as a little kid. Or take the bus up to the [Columbia] Gardens. You know, that was fun. You'd take the bus up to the Gardens and you'd get off. You'd start walking up and the popcorn you could smell. You'd walk up to the boardwalk and then up to the rides and you'd ride and ride and ride. And if you knew somebody that was on the rollercoaster that was running it, he'd let you go over and over without paying.

You know, I mean, back then we used to play baseball down in the diggins, which is right down from where my - I grew up on Utah [street]. And it's that big open area on George Street. And it was called the diggins. And we used to go down there before they filled it all in and play baseball and football and all kinds of things like that. So, now do you mean with my kids? Or what I did? Or just me when I was a kid?

Jaap: You as a kid.

[00:17:10]

Boyle: Yeah. Well that's pretty much it. And then of course as you're going to school, you were in baseball and basketball and things like that. You know, you enjoyed your summers and you played with neighborhood kids. You'd play games - kick the can and kick the ball out in the street. That's the one thing that amazes me is that you just never see kids out playing with other kids like we used to back then. I don't know if you guys did a lot of that.

Jaap: I played kick the can.

Boyle: Yeah! But kids nowadays, they don't leave the house. They're either on the computer or on their phones or -

Jaap: Or on the Tik Tok! [laughter]

Boyle: I always tell my grandkids, 'Get outside! Go out in the backyard and do something! Get some fresh air.' You know, they're always on those - their tablets or... I say to them 'You're too sedentary. You gotta be mobile. You gotta move!' You know, if you're gonna stay around here in life, you gotta move. They think I'm crazy sometimes, you know.

Jaap: Yeah, every now and then you see a little gang of kids wandering around. But not very often.

Boyle: Very seldom. Very very seldom.

Jaap: Yeah. So when did you graduate Central?

Boyle: I graduated in 1971. In fact, right now we're planning our 50-year reunion. It's gonna be next September 10th and 11th. And it's gonna be at the MAC [Maroon Activities Center]. And the reason we picked that date is because - people are getting away from summertime class reunions because there's so much going on that they're going more to the fall. And we thought - September 10th is Central's first home football game up at Tech against Whitefish. So we thought we could have the dinner early enough in the MAC on Friday night and then if people wanted to go, they could go up to the game. We've already talked to Donnie Peoples and he'll introduce the class. And if people wanna stay at the MAC, they can stay at the MAC.

It's hard to believe it's been fifty years. I mean, it's just - it's just. Well, I mean I've got two kids that are already past 20-year reunions, so! You know you're getting old. Trust me. You know you're getting old - like my oldest son Dan is 41. God, I got a kid 41. [laughter] You know you're getting old then.

[00:19:36]

But I'm just happy I'm alive. I'm looking forward - we had a - now this is hard to believe. We had 178 kids in our graduating class at Butte Central.

Jaap: Yeah.

Boyle: Butte Central right now has 103 kids in the whole high school. And back then, I think Butte High had 568, so that shows you the number of people that were in town. But also back then, people had six to eight to ten kids per family.

Jaap: Yeah.

Boyle: You're lucky now if families have two. You know, they get to two and they say 'that's all we're having, I can't afford any more.' It's like you look around and you're like, you got about a \$400,000 house here and a \$60,000 truck. What do you mean you can't afford any more kids! [laughter] You know, you don't say that to them. But that's kind of the mindset nowadays.

Jaap: [laughing] Pretty nice vehicle in the driveway!

Boyle: Two's enough, so. So I'm looking forward to - there's a lot of people that are gonna come from all across the country. We only have 19 that have passed on, so that's not bad out of that many. And most of those were accidents or, you know, things like that. Not, somebody, cancer or anything like that. So yeah, I'm really looking forward to - you know hopefully I'll make my 60th. We'll see. I'm gonna make the 50th. And the thing that's gonna be kind of neat to is - of course September 11th it will be the 20-year anniversary of 9/11. So, you know, that's a big thing you know.

Jaap: Yeah it is. 20 years. Wow. So what'd you do after you graduated?

[00:21:25]

Boyle: Well I graduated in 1971 and then I went to work for the Anaconda Company in 1972 as a catskinner, which is a bulldozer operator in the [Berkeley] Pit. And I worked from 72-75. I used to work three 8-hour shifts, two weeks at a time. And then in 1975, ARCO bought the Anaconda Company, but then they shut it down - they laid off a whole bunch. I got laid off in 1975 and of course I was devastated. Because it was a good job. I really liked it and was making good money. But then, as things work out, everything happens for a reason. I worked at Stauffer Chemical for a while. I knew - I was out there six months and I knew I had to get out of there. That was a god-awful place to work. It was dangerous, the phosphorus.

So at the time I was running the Butte Babe Ruth League, and I went to Don Peoples, Sr. who was the Chief Executive at the time and said, 'Boy Don, I really can't work these three shifts out there if I'm gonna run this Babe Ruth League.' And he put me on the city, just working down at the corral and taking care of parks and playgrounds. And then in 1979, I rustled and rustled the fire department. And I got on the fire department in '79. And then I did that for thirty years and retired in 2009 after thirty years. And it was a - looking back now, getting laid off was a blessing in disguise. Otherwise I would probably have spent my whole life at the Anaconda Company.

[00:23:03]

So being a fireman, I loved being a fireman because it was a great job. It freed me up to do other things. You know, the fire department is a great service. It's a great job, but here's one of the ironic things. When I worked at the Company and I was graveyard shift and I'd be in the catskinner and I'd pull the Cat over at night at 3 in the morning. It'd be wintertime and they had heaters. I'd be dozing off and the boss would come by and he'd be throwing rocks saying 'Boyle, wake up!' Well then when I went to the fire department, and I'm working graveyard for the first time, and they said, 'Well go on in there and make your bed.'

I'm like, 'Make my bed? What are you talking about make my bed?' He said, 'Well we got a dorm in there and you gotta be in bed by 10 o'clock.' I'm like, 'You can go to sleep here?' And I tell everybody, I says, 'I went from one job where you got in trouble for sleeping, to another job where you got in trouble if you didn't go to bed!'

Jaap: [laughs]

Boyle: So I thought 'oh this is the greatest.' Because, some nights you got to sleep all night. And then I was able to be well rested to get up and - you know, at that time I was active in the KC -

and so I was able to get up and then go do stuff at the gym. And I loved working with Johnny Paull and Timmy McCarthy and just a great bunch of guys. And then I did get to work two years with Dan, my oldest son, when he got on and that was kind of a neat time.

[00:24:32]

Bute I gotta tell ya. I've been retired 12 years. That M&M fire, when it was burning that day and I drove by - oh the smoke. And those guys were up there in the basket. I just thought, 'Boy, I don't miss this.' [laughs] I don't miss this at all. You know, everything's great when you're sitting in that fire station and you're cooking and you're having a good time or you're playing cards. But boy when that bell hits and all of a sudden you're out in that street for 14-18 hours. It's a whole different perspective.

Jaap: Yeah, hard work.

Boyle: But as a career, I would never you know - 90% of our calls - I was an EMT back then too. So 90% of - I always said they call us firemen but why they call us firemen, I'm not sure because 90% of the calls were medical emergencies. 10% were fires. But they still called you a fireman. And you'd go on a lot of fire and medical calls where you'd go into homes. People would just fall, older people, and you'd go and you'd have to pick 'em up time after time. And they were so appreciative, you know, and you'd think, 'Oh boy. Poor bugger.' You know? Because you knew a lot of these people.

I remember going into a home one time and they were picking this guy up and we're putting him back in bed and he turned to me and he said, 'Hey Bernie. And they call these the golden years.' And I thought wow. That's true. That was a message I never forgot. I thought, 'Enjoy life till you can't because one day, that's gonna be me.' You know.

[00:26:08]

Somebody coming to me to pick me up and put me back in bed at the nursing home or at my house or somewhere else, so. You know, those experiences - and car wrecks. I went on a lot of car wrecks where you know, people would have got thrown up and little kids killed. And Boy, that kind of experience, when you go home, makes you realize just how special your kids are. And you think you have a little bit of money troubles, until you lose somebody like that. And you think, there's a lot of things fixable in life but one of them isn't death.

And I say that all the time because I went through that with Casey [his son who died in a car wreck]. But there's fixable things in life where you can go up to somebody, where if you get in an argument, a week later you can go up to them and say, like to Johnny Paull, 'Hey, Jesus, me and you had an argument the other night at the bar, but here I'm sorry.' You can patch that up. But one of 'em isn't death.

[00:27:08]

So that's what I learned from the fire department. One time we had a fire over on West Silver [Street], the 400 block, and Mark McCarthy, who is now a captain on the fire department, he was on the call. And we get over there and this guy - he was sitting in the chair, started the fire with a

cigarette and the whole place burnt up. He got killed. Well anyway, we got back to the station at four in the morning and I go back to bed.

So the next morning I get up and I'm having a cup of coffee. I get up and Mark's like, 'Bernie, how in the hell can you go back to bed after we dragged that guy out of that place last night dead?' And I said, 'Well Mark I'm gonna tell ya something. I've been here 23 years. And when we went to that fire last night, that guy was dead before we even got there. And when we come back to the station, there's nothing you can do that's gonna change things. And I was tired so I'm going back to bed. And believe it or not, one day, you'll go back to bed too because death becomes a part of this job. And if you can't - when you go on a call and you work on somebody and they don't make it, you can't let it eat you up. Because it did me at first. You gotta accept that death is a part of life.'

And that's the other thing I learned from the fire department - that you know, you see some real tragedies and suicides. I went on a lot of suicides where guys shot themselves or hung themselves. You know. Those are experiences that, when you walk into a garage and you're the first one there at six o'clock in the morning and the family is screaming, 'Get 'em down! Get 'em down!' And you're thinking - you can just look at him and tell he's gone. But you gotta go through the procedure of hauling him down.

[00:28:56]

Same thing if somebody has a heart attack or dies in bed. You can look at them and think, oh he's gone. [And the family says] 'Do something! Do something!' Well, you do it. And so. The other thing is, most of the guys I worked with, 80% of them are passed on too, a lot of the old timers I worked with. That's another eye-opener that makes you realize how short life is. You know, I tell this story all the time and people get tired of me telling - hearing me say this. I say, 'Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die to get there.' I say, 'Well unfortunately that's the only way you get there.' You just don't call up on the phone one day and say, 'Alright! I'm ready to go to heaven. I'm ready to take a look at it! But I wanna come back if I don't like it.'

So that's that working on the fire department teaches ya. You know, I went on a lot of calls at six o'clock in the morning on wrecks from people coming up from Dillon [on the interstate]. Families. And what they would be doing is driving all night trying to make time. And the whole car would be asleep except the driver. But then pretty soon, the driver would fall asleep. And the guy would roll. Or the wife. And of course the kids would unbuckle because they wanted to lay down. I bet I was on ten or twelve of those type of things. And you just think, 'Oh my god.' They're just pressing to try and get a few more miles. And now this. You know, they've lost two kids or...

Those are the kind of things that make you just stop and say - like I went to Anaconda today with my good buddy Jim Michelotti, who you guys know up here. We went to - and he was telling me about somebody who had a heart attack and looks like he's not gonna make it. And I said, 'You know Jim, you never know. You're not guaranteed, you know. You're here today, gone tomorrow. You just - nothing's guaranteed in life and you gotta keep that in your head all the time.' We're here for a short time. A short, short time.

[00:31:06]

Jaap: Hmm. Do you remember what the first fire you were called out on was?

Boyle: Oh god, I remember it - not the first fire I was called out, but I remember working - when I first got on the job and I had been there a month and working graveyard. I kept telling the old timers, I'd say, 'Boy, I can't wait to get a fire.' 'Don't worry kid, you're gonna get a fire. It's a matter of time.' Well at six o'clock in the morning, it was down by the Scoop Bar. And what happened is, somebody pulled one of those boxes, you know, the fire boxes that we used to have. They were all over Butte at one time so that if somebody had a fire - nobody had cell phones back then - so they'd go pull the box. Well this box come in. But 98% of box pulls back then were kids pulling them and running.

So we thought, well six o'clock in the morning. So me and Connie Dennehy start going down to the fire and it's a house that somebody started accidentally. But it's - we can see the smoke roaring and Connie's like, 'Ok Bernie, now you know how to make the plug right?' 'Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah don't worry I'll make the plug. I'll make the plug.' And I'm thinking 'oh god' you know. So we pull up and he says, 'Ok I'll lay a line.' So I pull the hose off and I hook up to the hydrant. Well, one of the things you're supposed to do is clamp the hose. Because you turn the hydrant on and clamp the hose so that the guy can pull the rest of the hose to the truck and then he can say 'Ok, unclamp the hose.'

[00:32:46]

Well I forgot to clamp the hose. I turned the plug on and he's pulling the line off at the same time I'm releasing the water. [laughs] Well, he's got water all over the hose bed and he's screaming at me, 'Bernie!' And he's trying to pinch the hose like you do a garden hose, only you don't pinch a two-and-a-half-inch line that's charged. I mean we laughed about it for a long time, but the house ended up burning to the ground. But that was my first fire and it was an experience.

Jaap: Oh, well that's a great story. [laughs]

Boyle: Yeah, well and the unfortunate thing - poor Connie. Actually he has leukemia kind of like John Paull. And he's in tough shape. He lives down in Dewey and he's down to days and weeks and so - yeah. It's interesting you ask that story because it comes back every time I think about it, you know. You train and you train and you train. And when these new kids get on the job, they train 'em and they train 'em and they practice 'ok here's what we do.' But until you get a real fire where there's smoke coming out - it's a whole different situation. But the longer you're on the job the more you, like everything else, you learn.

Jaap: Yeah.

Boyle: Well, and as you know, this is where the fire station used to be. I never worked up here, but John Paull did for a short time, before they moved down. I would have loved to have worked up here because you lived up here and they slid down the pole to the trucks. See, I never got to slide down any pole because we never had a pole. Everything was on one ground floor at the Idaho station. Originally it was gonna be a two-story building, but they whacked it because of money. They were cutting money and they whacked it at the time.

[00:34:40]

So people always say to me, 'Oh you were a fireman for thirty years! How many times did you slide down the pole?' I said, 'None.' [laughter] I never got to slide down once.

Jaap: Yeah, Jim McCarthy found some film of the dorm area and when it [the Archives building] was a fire station. It was really cool.

Boyle: Oh really? Oh I'll bet it was. I'll bet it was.

Jaap: Do you have a most memorable fire you were on?

Boyle: Oh boy. Oh god. You know, I guess the most memorable ones was those cold ones where you know - people - I'm always turning the heat up at the KC and I'm always turning the heat up at my house. And people are like, 'God, you're cold blooded.' I say, 'Well listen. I'm gonna tell ya something. I was a fireman for thirty years and I was on a lot of thirty-below fires. When you get there and you put the fire out, And all of a sudden - you got all this water on you - and it starts freezing?' And I said, 'You get so cold you think you're gonna die.' When I retired from the fire department, I swore I'd never be cold again, whether it be in my own house or wherever.

So I guess the most memorable ones are real, real cold fires. There was a fire where Harrison Avenue Liquor Store is. Oh, it was a bar down there. I can't think of the guy's name, but anyway. It was like 35 below that night. Oh where else? There was a couple of other really really cold fires. I think they were my most memorable ones. Ones where it was real warm were kinda fun. In the summer, it was like, oh this is something to do, you know?

[00:36:17]

Yeah [laughs]. But cold ones, yeah. So I guess that had to be the one on Harrison Avenue, that night, 35 below. It was like, oh god. You couldn't wait for your relief to come and get you back to the station. You know, because you had ice hanging all over your coat and your boots and your hands. And you're walking around - you felt like one of those sumo wrestlers in a suit, walking around. Because you didn't dare take the coat off because that was kind of your insulation. The coat and the ice, believe it or not. I mean, you were cold but you weren't super cold.

[00:37:07]

Jaap: How did you get so involved with the KC? [Knights of Columbus]

Boyle: Well, in 1971 I graduated from high school with Steve McArthur. Do you know Steve McArthur?

Jaap: Hmm mmm. [no]

Boyle: He's also really good friends with me and Johnny Paull. We're still the best of friends today. He was the assistant director at the pre-release for years. He just retired a while ago with Mike Thatcher. But his dad Huck McArthur was a big KC member and four-time degree - fourth degree guy. And he kept bugging me and Steve, you know, 'We gotta get you guys in the KC.' So from '71-'77, he kept bugging us. And we would go up to the KC and play basketball

downstairs. And finally, in January of 1977, he says 'We're having a class Sunday and you two are coming and I'm picking you up.' I was like, 'Ok, whatever,. I'll join just to keep Huck quiet.'

So, we went up there on a Sunday - and back then, you had to dress up and the initiations upstairs were about 4 or 5 hours. And they were intense initiations, you know. It was a lesson they taught you up there. It's a Catholic men's fraternal organization and I remember being up there and there was about 45-50 guys in the initiation. And they're going through and I turned to Steve - he was next to me - and I was so mad. I was like, 'Oh my god I'm wasting a whole Sunday.' I turned to him and said, 'I'm telling you right now Steve. If I ever get out of here, this is the last time I'm coming in this place.' Well! [laughs]

Anyway, we get through the initiation and then at the end - and I did get a tremendous amount out of the initiation as I look back on it now. But anyway, you get back downstairs and they had fed us dinner and I was playing basketball up there at the time. The gym was really really in tough shape.

[00:39:01]

I mean, I grew up loving the game of basketball. All four of my boys played basketball. But anyway, there was myself, Tony Salazar, John Paull, Steve, and we - what happened was in 1975 - in 1917 when they built the Knights of Columbus, there was a hardwood floor down, beautiful hardwood floor on the gym floor. And where the weight room is, there's a swimming pool right underneath it that ran from 1917 to 1960. Well then in 1975, the grade schools had closed in '69 so they didn't need the KC for CYO anymore. What happened is, at one time as you know, Butte had a centralized heating system in Uptown Butte. And there was these giant pipes that ran to all the buildings and the Anaconda Company heated - and they had pretty much free steam heat.

But then, they stopped that and the power company made people put in their own boilers. Well, they left this old pipe, great big giant two-foot pipe, out in the front street and abandoned it. And no problems, but then what happened is - they were out digging the front street for something. They hit this pipe, which was full of water. It flooded the gym floor in 1975 and buckled the floor. Well then it sat dormant.

[00:40:28]

Well, a lot of the members wanted to sue the Montana Power Company for leaving this abandoned pipe. But because the KC had so many members, who were bigshots at the Power, those guys said, 'No, no no. We can't sue the Power.' So they didn't sue the Power. So then in 1979, there was a bunch of us that were playing down there after I joined - just half court. Half the court was fine; the other was all tore up. We decided to start fixing it.

And then just one thing led to another. We fixed the gym floor, actually, three times. We just patched it over the top before we finally realized - we were having all these soft spots. And then we finally realized in 1987 I think it was, we gotta tear this right down to the concrete and start over. We gotta haul it all outta here. And Felix Madrazo - we fixed it - we tore - it was a thirty day project from start to finish with all-free labor from the guys. And Felix ran the job. But I guess, how I got involved was probably divine intervention.

[00:41:41]

I mean, for the love of the game of basketball - I just loved the gym. When I went to the gym in 7th grade in 1965 to play for St. John's, and it was a CYO, it was like walking into Madison Square Garden. Because you played downstairs and all the parents and cheerleaders were upstairs and the place was packed. And then you had all these grade schools - Holy Savior, St. Lawrence, Sacred Heart, St. Joe's St. Pat's, I.C., St. John's, St. Ann's - playing all the games there. And I just loved the place.

I think God was grooming me in seventh and eighth grade - that later on, he was like, 'I got a mission for ya.' And the mission was to, you know - and now the gym is really keeping the place going because, you know, we had all these guys: John Paull, Tony Salazar, Steve - that every time we had a work project, they'd be there. And now, like my grandkids go in. We have little kids' basketball on Saturdays. And I don't run the program anymore. Dan & Tom [Boyle] run the program, and Matt [Boyle], and we put these little hoops up and these kids come and play for two hours, kindergarten, first and second graders on these eight-foot hoops. And to see the joy in these kids' eyes....

You know, it makes it all worthwhile. I mean I'm sorry I'm getting emotional, but...

Clark Grant: It's fine Bernie.

[00:43:17]

Boyle: I mean, I just love the building. The building does so much for the community. You know, we had fed almost 100,000 people in 12 years on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with the help of the Food Bank. But the KC gives the building. We supply all the toiletries, the heat, the lights. We've survived a shooting and a knifing in there during the feeding program. We had a guy fire a gun in the women's bathroom, in the floor. And I don't know what he was doing, what he was thinking. But luckily, each floor has six inches of concrete in between each floor. Well, where he was firing the gun was right above the men's shower room. I mean, God. Luckily it didn't - it just ricocheted off because of the cement. It would have went right through.

But Eddie Lester [BSB Sheriff] tells a story - we were talking - and then we had another guy pull a knife on somebody in there. And he says, 'You know, I've been the sheriff for a long time and we've never had any problems in Butte until we started feeding the homeless and hungry.' [laughs] And they've survived a shooting and a knifing and you guys are still letting them go in there. But you know, when you see those people on Tuesdays and Thursdays that are hungry. And they go in - and you know, we're gonna start feeding back inside next month. But they go in and give them a lunch and a pop. They no sooner hit the front sidewalk and they're sitting down eating. That's how hungry they are, you know?

It's really sad, but that's what the KC mission is. There's four virtues in the original Knights of Columbus is Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. So the first one is Charity, and the building is - like tonight, the American Legion baseball team has a bingo there. And they'll raise a lot of money. And they have a beautiful new hall now. And somebody said, well why don't they have the bingo out there? And I says, 'Well, it's kind of a win-win. I'm glad they're having it here, but I said I think they like having it somewhere where they can get a pop or a beer.'

[00:45:27]

And I said, it's a win-win for them and it's a win-win for us. The place will be packed. We'll have a good ring-up. The average age will be about 70 so we don't have to card anybody. [laughs] So it's a win-win! It's good, wholesome. And that's what the building does. The building is really the icon of Butte, you know. It's a great, solid building and they built the whole thing in 1917 for \$125,000, labor and materials. I mean, which is incredible. You can't buy *any* house for \$125,000, so.

Jaap: No, not right now especially. No, it's so great. I think it's a great building.

Boyle: Well, you know, and it's a good lesson you know, like the M&M was an icon in Butte. There's a lot of icons in Butte and the KC is one of them. And boy, could it catch on fire one day? Yeah. would it burn to the ground? No. It wouldn't burn to the ground. I can tell you that. It's steel beams and concrete. But, could it wreck it? Yeah. Because there's enough fuel and false ceilings and - you know fire - we only have \$500,000 insurance on it just because that's all we can afford. And if - like me and Frankie O'Connor were talking. He's our Grand Knight.

If we had to put what it would take, insurance-wise, to replace that building, every nickel we'd take in would go to insurance. I mean, it's just the way it is.

Jaap: Yeah, and I know your building is, I'm sure, not alone in that.

Boyle: No, there are all kinds of them in Uptown Butte, yeah. You know, the Y[MCA] was built in 1917. The Mother Lode Theater about the same time, the Masons about the same time, so there was really a boom of building. So reading back, when I came up here a couple of years ago, one of the things that hit the KC - after it opened in 1917, it was really the crown. It had a swimming pool and gym. The hall upstairs - there was no bar until the late 40s - was one big giant reading room. So, there was no TV back in 1917, so people would come in and read and send their kids downstairs. But then in 1918 the pandemic hit, so they had to shut down and it really hurt the KC.

[00:47:54]

I was reading back there - they sold all these bonds that they thought were gonna get - to pay it off. And they struggled. And so they basically have been struggling financially since they built it. And so now we went through it again and it was a big blow to us down there because we had to close two St. Patty's Days, which is our biggest day of the year. You know, we usually take in anywhere from 14-15 thousand [dollars] on St. Patty's Day. We pay a lot of bills. So we had to survive that, plus all of our regular - we couldn't rent the hall out to anything. And so our business just went pffft.

But we survived it! You know, like everybody else in Butte. But who would have ever thought that we'd ever have gone through another pandemic.

Jaap: Yeah it's so bizarre. I'm really curious to see how I look back on it. I don't know.

Boyle: Yeah, you know, and I know Father Beretta read up on the first one. And you think back - and he was telling me how back then, the churches were telling people, 'Oh, don't believe in it.' Oh yeah, and now they were told the opposite, you know. You couldn't go to St. Pat's or I.C. - if you don't put your mask on, Father Beretta would say... So the church was the total opposite,

but back then they didn't believe the medical. They thought people were - they thought medical people were trying to stop people from going to church. 'There's nothing wrong. There's no pandemic.' It's ironic how -

Jaap: Yeah, the public reaction was very similar to what it is. I mean, it's not - how we're reacting today is not really that unique, you know?

[00:49:40]

Boyle: No, not for some. Yeah.

Jaap: Yeah. Clark, do you wanna ask some of yours? My mind just went pfft.

Grant: Sure. Bernie, I wanna go back kind of to the beginning a little bit and just touch on some stuff that you brought up. You were pretty upfront about your dad's battle with alcoholism, something I'm familiar with myself. Was he open about that at all?

Boyle: Uh, oh yeah he was real open. You know, back then there really wasn't the treatment there is now. I mean, a couple of times, he went to Warm Springs for a couple of weeks and my mom would run the bar. But here was the problem back then, and as I look back on it - he would quit for two or three months, but he always had to come back to running a bar. And he'd be good for a month or two. Then he'd always fall off the wagon. So he didn't have another job to go to or that, you know. It was too late to change careers. Plus, somebody had to run the bar.

But I tell the correlation - I got a terrible sweet tooth. Terrible sweet tooth. I love sweets. But I said, it'd be like me working in a bakery and saying I'm gonna quit eating sweets forever. Well it ain't gonna happen! Because what would happen is - he'd be back bartending and he'd be there late at night, 11 or 12 o'clock at night. And back then, guys would come in and say 'get everybody a drink and get yourself one.' And if my dad said - and sometimes he did - he'd say, well no, I'm good. 'Well I ain't buyin' unless you're having one!'

And that's the way a lot of - you can ask a lot of old time bartenders. That was what they did back then. They'd come in and say 'get 'em all a drink and get yourself one.' No I'm good. 'Well I'm not buyin' unless you're havin' one Joe!'

[00:51:37]

Well certainly, after a while, my dad would say, 'oh well maybe I can have a couple.' But there was no 'a couple' with my dad. And he went from being - he was the greatest guy in the world sober. He was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde when he drank. I mean, he came home and you know, we were one of those families - he'd come home and he'd raise holy hell with my mother. And we went through those nights, you know, where he'd wake us all up and then we'd have to go to school the next day. And there was times - you know I'm not telling you anything that I haven't told a lot of people, but then there would be times when my mom would take all four of us kids and we'd go to Walkerville with my grandparents for 10 days, 2 weeks. And he'd keep coming up trying to talk my mom into coming home. Sure enough, sooner or later, she'd say, 'Ok. Get your stuff. We're going back home.'

And then we'd go live with other people in town. We went through that about 10 times. And I can drive around to all the houses in Butte that we used to stay with different friends [in] and I think, oh god I was there in fifth grade for about two weeks. My grandfather would come down from Walkerville, pick us up on Broadway Street and then take us down to St. John's grade school. And then when we were done with school, he'd pick us up and take us back to either this house or up to Walkerville. And my mom got to the point where she didn't wanna go up to her mom and dad's because she was embarrassed.

[00:53:03]

So she's start going to Rob and JuleAnn Lee's house and different families. But I will say one thing for my mom - she took her vows serious. For sickness or health, till death do us part. You know, I mean, he died when he was 44. And my mom just died in 2014, so I mean, she was 41 at the time. Me and my wife have been married 41 years, 42 here coming up. But I look back on it and I think, god my parents were only married 20 years before he died. You know?

So she didn't have - but there's hundreds of those stories in Butte. You know, Butte had so many taverns and... I love having a couple of beers, but the lesson I learned from my dad's drinking - and I was always harping on my kids because on the other end, my wife Peggy Salazar, who grew up with 15, her dad Max Salazar also had the problem. So I'm always telling my boys 'you got the bad genes on both sides guys.' 'Yeah, yeah I know dad. You've told us about 50 times.' Well I'm just telling you fifty-one! [laughs] You know?

They all like to have a couple, although Matt quit drinking which I admire him. But Dan and Tom like to have a couple and I got no problem with it you know, as long as they just have a couple.

Jaap: Yeah.

Boyle: But then on the other hand, I lost a son, Casey, and his best friend Kyle, and they were 28 at the time so they certainly were grown men, but. You know, they - Kyle's girlfriend dumped him. He called up Casey and wanted him to go with him to drown his sorrows, and the rest is history.

[00:54:59]

You know, they went to The Scoop. They went to Maloney's. And then they went down Main Street, turned left, flying over Park Street. You know, and there's not many people in Butte, Montana who can never say they've not driven when they shouldn't have driven. I know a few. But there's - you know so I've seen both sides of it. It's...it's something that - thank god things are changing for the better. People gotta get a designated driver. They just have to.

Grant: How did things change in your household once he died?

Boyle: Well you know, it was tough on my mom because back in 1971 when he died, then she had to go run the bar. The bar was really struggling for a couple of years before that financially. And when he died, financially she was a lot better off because she had a \$10,000 life insurance policy and then she got Social Security. She got it for her and the three kids that were under 18.

And they were able to get it up to when they turned 18 and then if they went to college, like my brother Tom, he got it even after then.

So life changed. You know certainly we missed him but we didn't miss the - I'm not gonna sugar coat it - we didn't miss the drama that went with him. You know, when he came home, you know, when he was the knucklehead. [laughter]

[00:56:39]

But we missed him. And I remember going over to visit him. He was a veteran and he went over to the Fort. And he had gone to the Fort a couple of times and he always came out of it. So I remember when he went over there and I thought, oh he'll be ok. And my grandmother was down at the house taking care of the other kids and I got up that next morning after going over to see him. And they came downstairs and she said, 'Your dad died last night.' And it was like, whoa. What?

When somebody says the 'died' word, you know it just kind of strikes you. It's like when somebody calls you up and says 'did you hear about so-and-so?' No what happened? 'Well he got killed in a car wreck last night.' And you think, oh wow. So I mean life changed for us, but it is what it is. Certainly there's all kinds of those stories. As I look back, reading [about] miners. God, you hear all these stories that so many miner guys died when they were young, either died in the mine or died - drank themselves to death.

There's so many kids that pretty much raised themselves. Or their mother had to take on two or three jobs to raise the kids. You know, that's part of Butte. But the good thing is my mom - she only ran the bar for a couple of years and then me and another friend, Jerry Williams - do you know Jerry? He used to be a cop here in town.

Well we decided to take it over from her because I didn't want my mom running the bar. [laughs] Here's how ironic it is. We were 20 years old. So we're taking over, leasing the bar from my mom. And the drinking age was 18 at the time in Butte, in 1971. Well believe it or not, and I tell this to people, it was a lot better back then when it was 18 and it wasn't the forbidden fruit. Because, you know, when it was accepted and, oh yeah they'd come down and have a few drinks. But nowadays, when it's the forbidden fruit, these kids coming out of high school are not gonna wait until they're 21 to have a drink.

Jaap: No. [laughs]

Boyle: And the ironic thing about it is - you can bartend at 18. You can come in and gamble at 18. You can lose \$3000 in the machines...but don't come in and order a drink! You know, I really think it should be at least 19. Kids can go to war at 18. They can vote at 18. But they don't have enough sense? I think it - but it was 19 and then - I don't know if you guys know this but 10 or 15 years ago, the national congress or whatever was trying to get all the states to go to 21. They said 'Montana, if you don't go back to 21, we're gonna cut your highway funds.' Well they're like, oh god we can't lose our highway funds, which is probably true. You can't fix the highways! So they raised it back to 21.

[00:59:52]

And that's what me and John Paull were talking about the other day, how much fun we had at the Loading Zone. We changed the name from Boyle's Bar to the Loading Zone. We had more - kids talk about it to this day, or guys now, or girls - how much fun was had at the Loading Zone. We had a juke box and pool tables in the back and people coming there from Butte High and Butte Central. And so, you know, I'm hope I'm not ragging on here.

Grant: Not at all. That's what we want Bernie! [laughs] I also wanted to ask you a bit about, as a child, your connection to the church. Can you tell me about that?

Boyle: Yeah well, going to St. John's grade school - the nuns boy. I mean they were good teachers. There's no doubt about it. You had to make your first communion and - when we went to St. John's grade school, the school was connected to the church and you walked through this hallway to get to the church so you never had to go outside, ever. And the gym was downstairs, but anyway I remember all the - taking us over to the church during Lent and you had to do the stations of the cross. I mean, they really - I'm a big Catholic. I believe faith is one way you get through life.

[01:01:20]

Me and my buddy Pat Shea have a lot in common. We both lost a kid through an accident. And they both were drinking, no question about it. But Pat, you know, he just went down this spiral. Me and John were talking about it and saying, 'god, you know, Pat's just gotta get back going to church. He's gotta believe that Keegan's ok. You know, he's waiting for him.'

But he just never would snap out of it. So I guess what I'm saying is, my faith got me and Peggy through the misery of Casey. And then when I went to Boys Central - I went two years to Boys Central - and the Christian Brothers. You know, it was all Christian Brothers at Boys Central and they ran a tight ship. And they're the same way - they not only taught you but there's strict discipline and they taught you a lot about faith. I still have brother McCormick who's back in New York now at a rest home. He's from Butte. And when my dad died, he kind of mentored me a lot.

But he's 95 years old and dying back there. But when he was 17 years old, he left Boys Central high school to become a Christian Brother in his junior year. And he went back and finished school back east and then became a Christian Brother and came back to Central and taught. I look at all these guys, these priests - Father Beretta and Father Haffey - that devote their whole life to...it's a big sacrifice you know. They give up getting married and having kids. And certainly there are some knuckle[heads], some bad stories where priests are bad or this or that. But it's a tough life. You know, the nuns taught me - I can remember just about every teacher I had at St. John's grade school.

Every nun you know.

Grant: Ok, can you share some with us?

Boyle: Well, Sister Mary Erna. Had her in eighth grade. And Sister Mary Jamesina in fifth grade. This is a true story; I'll never forget it. November 23rd, 1963. I had to go to the bathroom in fifth grade and I come back and Sister Mary Jamesina is crying and I'm like 'Sister, what's wrong?'

Well this is when they shot John F. Kennedy. And she's like, 'They just shot the President.' So then pretty much - they make an announcement and everybody gets to go home.

[01:03:51]

And then the rest is history. For four days, people are glued to the TV. And that's the kind of little things you remember. You know, teachers you had in first grade and second grade and third grade. They only had one lay teacher at St. John's. It was Mrs. Clague. In fact, her son Dennis Clague is the county attorney. And she's still alive. I see her in St. Ann's church all the time. She was my third grade lay teacher.

And you know, St. John's, Boys Central, and Butte Central had a big influence on my life. And that's why I tried to stay active, real active, in the church. You know, I know my boys, when they were in high school, every Sunday I'd say, 'Well get dressed. We're going to church.' And they hated it. [laughs] And then when they got old enough - it's kind of satisfying to me now. Tom is back and making his kids go and he's seeing the value of it. You know, you gotta have faith that there's a better place. There's a bigger place for us all.

I often look back. A lot of times I go out to the cemetery to see the graves. And you think of all the people buried here in town. You see all these old photos. I like to watch old photos on TV. And 50-60 years ago, you see these groups of people at sporting events and I always think, wow...all those people are gone. And where are they?

And how many people since the beginning of time have died? Well you think, the good lord says 'I've prepared a place for you.' And you think 'it must be a heck of a place because there's a lot of people up there!' [laughter] And so I'm weird. I talk openly about that. I firmly believe that, you know. I'm definitely in the fourth quarter of life. I'm hoping I'm in the beginning of the fourth quarter, you know, because I'm 68.

[01:05:54]

I've had family members die at 40. I've had people live until - my mother-in-law is 89 and still going. She's a remarkable woman, Virginia Salazar. She's buried three sons, two of them accidents, and one kid drank himself to death. And she's never whimpered once about it. So she's kind of my example, you know. [She] raised 15 kids and she's buried three grandkids. And she's just - well anybody that's raised 15 kids - and you'd have to see their house, how small it is. And she cooked all their meals from scratch. She sewed all their clothes because they didn't have the money.

Nowadays, if somebody needs something, they just go buy it. Or they go to Wendy's. Yeah, for the Salazars to eat out was like once a month. Yeah.

Jaap: While we're on that topic, do you mind if I ask how did you meet your wife?

Boyle: Well that's a funny story. I went - Steve McArthur was living up on Caledonia. And he was having a New Year's Eve party in January of 1977. And I went up there with Tony. I ran around with Tony Salazar and Steve McArthur - Johnny Paull was up there and a bunch - but anyway. Tony at the time was married to Vicky, his wife. And we get up there and Vicky had invited Peggy and so we get up there and they introduce me. And later on, she left and Vicky

said, 'Well Peggy would really like to go out with you.' And I thought, oh that's nice. God almighty, I thought, well that's the first girl that's ever told me somebody wanted to go out with me!

[01:07:51]

So I thought about it and I thought about it and I thought about it. And then one day I thought, well maybe I'll call her up. So I called her up and asked her if she'd like to go to the movie with me at the Fox. And I remember the movie. I took her to *Oh, God!*. I said, 'Would you like to go to the movie with me and see *Oh, God!?*' 'Sure, sure!'

And I take her to the movie and she doesn't tell me until like three weeks later when we're still going out that she had already seen the movie! [laughs] So that's how we met and we pretty much were inseparable ever since then. She was at Tech at the time; she was a sophomore in OSHA. Her dad Max, who was a miner, but at the time he was a head safety guy over in Helena because he was real active in the Democratic party. And he was one of the big shots in the miner's union. Of course, back then there was a lot of miners. And he wanted her to go into OSHA, which she really didn't wanna go in. Her love was cooking and she wanted to go into Home Ec.

But she finished OSHA and then we got married in 1979 and had Dan, Tom, Casey and Matt. Then after four boys, she said 'well I guess I'm not gonna get a girl. I'm not gonna have eight boys.' She wanted a girl real bad, so we kept trying. So that's how I met her and what's ironic is - you know, I knew her brother Tony and her dad Max and her mom. And Virginia is just the salt of the earth. Everything happens for a reason. I had a crush on this other girl for a long time, but now that I look back on it, I think, you know, God had a plan. I wasn't meant to go with this other girl. I was meant to meet Peggy. Maybe she was meant to meet me. I was supposed to be involved at the KC. If I'd have went with this other girl, I never would have been able to do the KC thing.

[01:09:56]

At the time, it doesn't make sense to ya. But as you get older, it starts to make a lot of sense.

Grant: I'm glad to hear that.

Jaap: That's really sweet.

Grant: Bernie, so many things have declined in Butte and I think the church is one of them. Overall, like you say, the closure of so many schools and the churches themselves - I just want to get a better sense of the role that the church played in people's lives in Butte. You know? Back then.

Boyle: Well I think you gotta realize - back when all these people were immigrants from Ireland, Italy - when they came here, one of the most important things - they'd work in certain mines and live in certain areas and never had cars. They walked to work and so they wanted to have a school and a church. They were coming from Ireland and Italy, Catholics, big Catholics. I mean their number one goal was to build a school and a church. I mean, St. Mary's parish was St.

Mary's parish and everybody knew everybody and they walked to church and school. And then St. Lawrence was the same thing. And so it was big, big, big. And you had all these vocations.

Back then, it was pretty much accepted that every family had to send one daughter or son to either be a priest or a nun. I mean, that's just the way it was. I had an aunt, Sister Mary Brenda Boyle, my dad's sister, who became a nun. And she was a tremendous lady after my dad died, helping us. But she was the principal of St. Raymond's, which was when St. Mary's and St. Lawrence combined - they were downsizing - they combined the two schools and called it St. Raymond's. And they brought her back to be the principal of St. Raymond's.

[01:12:01]

But then what happened is - the reason for the decline of the schools - financially, certainly, but vocations. They just didn't have enough Sisters to - you gotta realize - they could run a school with eight sisters because they hardly had any - the only money - they gave them money to feed them in the rectory and they didn't believe in...

Grant: A wage?

Boyle: Well yeah, they didn't believe - they believed in teaching and Christ and...money wasn't a big thing to them. You know, it just wasn't part of their life.

Grant: You had said earlier that a lot of the values you carry even today came from your Catholic education.

Boyle: Oh yeah, without a doubt.

Grant: What are some of those?

Boyle: Well, I guess...you know. When I go to bed every night, I say three Hail Marys and I say that same thing a lot of alcoholics [the Serenity Prayer] - 'God help me accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.' And then I say a little prayer to my aunt Sister Mary Brenda Boyle. And the main thing is [to] treat everybody like you'd be treated.

When I have my grandkids with me all the time and if we drive by somebody and they're homeless and they got a sign, I pull over and I say 'here Hunter, give this guy this money.' Because I'm trying to teach him that this guy is no better than me or you. You know, he's created by the good lord like me or you. This guy's hungry. Maybe it's not true. Maybe he doesn't need the money, but you gotta think that well maybe he does. And if he's hungry, he's hungry. I certainly got an extra \$20 bill. And then you try and teach those kids - treat everybody fairly, like they're a human being that's created by the good lord. And those are kind of some of the things that I was taught.

This Brother McCormick who had a huge influence on Johnny Paull - you can talk to him and Steve McArthur - well at Central, he would always get gym for us and we'd play basketball. But he had this strict rule. You didn't swear. And he would let you say three things. 'Jupiter.' You could say 'Jupiter.' And if you were really mad, you could say, 'Jumpin' Jupiter!' Or you could say, 'Shadoosky!' And he was dead serious!

[01:14:47]

And if you swore in front of Brother McCormick, he would read you the riot act. When I worked at WATCH, there's a sign on the wall that says 'vulgarity is nothing but a weak mind trying to assert itself forcefully.' And when you stop and really think about this, Mike Boston who was out there, it's true. I work around so many guys that every other word is 'F this and F that' or even worse words. And it's like - they're just trying to....

I don't like bad words, you know. Have I said 'em? Yeah. I've usually said them when I've gotten really mad at one of my boys. [laughter]

[01:15:33]

I guess those are some of the values I learned from the church. You know, I went - and a lot of people don't know this but - I had back surgery 14 months ago. But in 2012, I was having all this pain in my gut, and I had stomach surgery in 85 so I thought some of it was coming from that. And I went to Dr. Pat McGree. And this is back in 2012 and I was hurtin'. I was like - but now at the time I know it was my back but I said, 'Pat I am in - boy, I'm in pain.'

Well anyway, he put me on methadone. He put me on one little tablet of methadone, one little tablet a day! It was like an aspirin. He said, here try this. Oh my god I thought, for two years, it was a godsend. I mean he put me on this methadone and took my pain away. And my back, my knee was bothering me at the time, my belly. And I thought well, you know. I can manage it. I can manage it. I can manage it.

Well then one pill turned into two. And then in 2015, we lost Casey. And then it got to the point where I tried to get off these stupid things and I couldn't get off of 'em. I ended up - in August, right after the basketball game, the fundraiser for the Boyle/Bergman Scholarship in 2018 - August 11th, John Paull drove me to Great Falls. I spent 37 days up in Great Falls getting off these things at a treatment center.

And it was an old rectory of nuns up there, where this treatment center was. And anyway, downstairs was this huge chapel and I would spend a lot of time in the chapel. Well anyway, I remember thinking, 'Wow. This faith I had, and school...' I remember going to that chapel and thinking, 'Somehow I just gotta keep going every day and get out of here.' Well, I did. I got out of it after 37 days.

[01:17:38]

What happened is, after 10 days, I thought - they put me in detox, which they put you in a room and they slowly wind you off these pills, these pain pills. And I thought I had it, you know, because I missed my grandkids so bad and my kids. Well, I decided to come home before I should have come home. So I called Matt. Matt was furious with me. I said, 'Matt, I need you to come up here and get me.' 'What do you mean you're leaving!' I said, 'Well, I'm gettin' outta here.'

Well, so I left. And he come up and got me and he hardly even talked to me on the way home. Well anyway, I get home. I couldn't sleep for three days. They said 'the worst is about to hit ya.' I thought I was - I thought I had it licked. Well anyway, I went to Mike Thatcher and said, 'my

god I can't sleep.' I mean, I never went back to the pill or anything. He said, 'Well, I can take you and put you out at where Ray Johnson is and you can hang out out there.'

Well I couldn't sleep and then Peggy was furious at me and I went and spent one night at the Rocker Inn. I ended up going back to Great Falls for 27 more days, but I guess - I went down to this chapel at the treatment center every day and looked up at the cross. It was like - this is where the old nuns used to pray that lived there. And I thought, I just gotta get through this. And I prayed, prayed, prayed. And so it's faith like that that got me through that, got me through Casey, and you know, that's what I try and instill in my boys is - I always say, 'Don't wait for six strong men to take you back to church one day.'

[01:19:19]

In other words, you're gonna go back one day, for your funeral, but don't wait for six strong men to haul you up to the door. You don't have to go every day. You don't have to go every Sunday. But at least show up at Christmas, at Easter. You know? And acknowledge that, you know - I think everybody believes that there's a better place.

I do these intakes all the time on these guys at the pre-release. I work three days a week at the pre-release. And it's an eye-opener. I do these intakes. I'm doing an intake on this kid yesterday, on this kid named Hunter, and he's 21. And I said, 'God Hunter you don't look like you're 16.' I said, 'Ok, what's your charge?' 'Criminal possession of dangerous drugs.' I said, 'Well what were you taking, meth?' 'No, heroin.'

I said, 'When did you start using heroin in Great Falls?' He says, 'When I was 14.' I said, 'Who in the hell got you started on heroin at 14?' 'My dad.' I mean, you know, dead serious. I said, 'Where's he at now?' 'Oh, he ODED (overdosed) and died.' I'm like - I said, 'When did you get caught?' He said, 'Well I used it from 14 to 21 before I finally got caught.' I said, 'Well how were you paying for it?' 'Well, stealing. Breaking in.'

But one of the big things when you ask them all these questions - one of the questions - there's height, weight...religion. You know what 90% of them say? None. Well, I say to 'em - that might be your problem right there. You know, you gotta have a little bit of faith about something. You know? You don't have to be Catholic, but go to some pastor. Go to some, somebody.

[01:21:12]

You gotta believe there's a better place. If your dad died, you know, you gotta believe that we're gonna all join him one day. And I tell people all the time - I have no doubt I'll see Casey again one day. You just gotta have faith. I mean, that's what gets me through life, you know. So.
[pause]

Grant: I think - I wanted to ask you Bernie, just about - you know - I think it's clear your spirituality goes deeper than any church, any building, any organization. And the diocese has made a lot of decisions that have negatively affected Butte. What do you make of all the things that have come to light with the Catholic church? Has it diminished your faith at all?

[01:22:08]

Boyle: Well I mean they certainly - I mean yeah. They've had some problems. There's no question about it, you know. I mean, and they've had some priests that have misbehaved and things. The diocese has made some decisions, but I've also - you know - I have some really good friends over in Helena, Father O'Neil and the new bishop. I've gotten to meet him. He came down to the MAC center [Maroos Activities Center] and he met with a bunch of us that are real active in Central.

This guy from North Dakota - he talked to us for about three hours. But anyway, I remember the bishop coming and saying you know, 'Hey, I'm totally supportive of keeping as many churches as we can open here, and Central, and this and that. But you gotta understand something. I just got here to take over for Bishop Thomas and the first thing they tell me is - by the way, you got an \$8M debt you gotta pay back.' And he said, 'How'd you like to have that dumped on you when you first get here?'

And a lot of it is from priests that, you know, they've had to - and he said, 'Now, when somebody says they wanna be a priest, we gotta screen, screen, screen.' Because, back 50 years ago, they took anybody. You know, and the problems with some of the people they took that they shouldn't have took. And they caused nothing but troubles. But you know, that's everywhere in life. I mean, one of my best friends was the doctor Pat McGree. I would have never - the day that somebody told me about that, I said no way. I said, you got the wrong guy. Then we come to find out it was true. Wow, you know, so.

I - I don't know. I'm still a big believer. Every Sunday, going to church for us is really important because we go to 11 o'clock mass at St. Ann's. They have a thing up there now where little kids go up and get a blessing, and then they go out back and they learn some different Bible things. And then we go to breakfast after so it's a big thing.

[01:24:33]

You know, I see a lot of my friends on Sunday that - Sunday is just the day for them, you know? One of the commandments is to keep the sabbath holy. You know, just keep it holy! That's all. I tell everybody all the time [that] there's a simple set of rules in life. You know, that were handed down - the commandments! They're pretty basic, you know!

Grant: It is, it is. [laughter] Well Bernie, you mentioned the MAC there. Tell us about that project, because that was quite the ordeal wasn't it?

[01:25:10]

Boyle: Wow. Well yeah, that - there isn't one time I go in the MAC center that I don't think 'this is a - this is a miracle.' Because - here's what happened. This was way back. I was the president of the booster club in 2001 and Tom was just getting out of high school I think. And anyway, they changed the girls basketball season from Fall to the same as the boys. So all these teams around the state were saying, 'Well we don't know what we're gonna do. We only have one gym. There's no way we can play the boys and girls teams at the same time.'

And Butte Central was like, 'We don't even have a gym! So if you think you're in trouble!' [laughter] So that's really when it got started. Don Peoples and Jim Kambich - I was the head of the booster club - they called me up one day and said, 'We'd like to talk to ya.' They hauled me

up to MERDI, right up here, and said, 'What do you think about Butte Central building a gym on the East side?' I said, 'Great idea. But how are we gonna pay for it?' [laughter]

You know, because at the time, Central needed more classrooms down at the elementary and the nun was claiming she didn't have enough room. And so, she got wind that we were trying to build the MAC center. And she says, 'Well don't - we can't build a gym until I get more classrooms.' And so then Don and Jim says, 'We'll give you the land down here on the East side.' Dennis Washington donated all that land to Continental Land & Trust, pretty much turned it over to MERDI, which is a subsidiary. 'We'll give you all this land.'

Harp Cote and Jerry Sullivan put all the financing together. Don and - we met for two years. Had a lot of meetings. Tommy Walsh - this is an ironic story. Tommy Walsh of Walsh Construction - a year ahead of me at Central, 1970. Tommy - do you know Tommy? Little short guy? Only child. Uh, Walsh Construction.

[01:27:25]

Well anyway, he got word that we were trying to build a gym. And his mom and my mom were really good friends. So one day my mom says, 'You know, Tommy would really like to build that gym.' I said, 'Oh, he would?' 'Yeah he'd like to build that. You should give him a call, his mom said.'

So I called him up. I said, 'Hey Tommy, I hear you would like to build the gym for central.' He said, 'Yeah I would Bernie.' So we met with him, me and Donnie. So we met with him and he says, 'Hey, I've made enough money in construction. I know how to build things. I know where to buy toilets. I know how to do this thing right. And I don't wanna make any money.' And he says, 'I'll give you \$200,000 right off the start.' And he did. He gave us \$200,000. And we had all the guys on the committee, 30 guys, make their pledge. And pretty soon, we had like \$750,000 and we were like, wow, we can make this thing happen.

And Harp and Jerry Sullivan, with four banks - Jerry put all the financing together and - originally it was gonna be a 1200 seat gym right next to where Cinz Bar is. Just north of Cinz Bar is where the original MAC center was gonna go. Well then Tommy Walsh said, 'Let's - I don't want you guys coming back and saying 'this thing isn't big enough for tournaments.' Let's build this thing right the first time and get it done with, so you can host tournaments and it's good for the town.' So then they moved down to where it's at now. All the grass and the football field - and he fulfilled his pledge.

[01:29:10]

I mean it's a beautiful facility and it's all paid for now, which is a miracle. Central has slowly been able to pay it off. And it brings tournaments to town. It hosts other events. It's gonna host our class reunion. I mean, it's a miracle - Butte Central never had a gym for 100 years. And to finally have that! I mean, Tom - when he played football at Central - he lifted down at Central in a tiny room about this big. Well now they got a weight room - you've seen their weight room, haven't ya?

Grant: Yeah.

Boyle: I mean, it's like going from a Volkswagen to a Cadillac. [laughter] I mean, these kids that are down there lifting today - they don't know how lucky they are. And the gym - and the beauty of the place - you can have the basketball team out practicing in the gym, doors shut, and an event out in the lobby, and you don't even hear one basketball bouncing. And the view down south is incredible. So I tell everybody - the good lord built it. He just showed us all how to do it.

[01:30:18]

You know, things come in threes. Here's three things that happened to me - three different things to me. For 30 years, I worked at the fire station on Park and Idaho. I'd get off after 24 hours. I'd walk up the street to the KC because I swamped the KC. I'd go up there and clean. And across the street was Butte Central. So those three things were really important to me in life.

But then, on the other end of it when I retired, I got hired from Mike Thatcher down at CCCS. And so I'm down there at corporate training. Across the street, we're building the MAC. And then unfortunately, the third thing that happened to me was losing Casey up on the corner. So, when they say things come in threes, that was my three. And I never thought I would have an impact like I did on the East side of Butte, Montana, because I never even grew up there. That was Sacred Heart [parish] down there that was on Park Street. But now looking back on it, wow, and they say things come in threes. I got it twice!

Grant: What is it about sports that appeals to you Bernie? Because if you go in the KC, that's what you see a lot of right away. You know, building the MAC and everything.

Boyle: You know, sports teach you a lot of lessons in life. I played basketball - Matt Lupke, who's the head coach at Butte high now - he plays basketball with Dan and Tom. Last night, he was down there and he was saying, 'Oh, did you ever play here Bernie?' I said, 'Yeah, I played here. I played here about 40 years at noontime. And then at night I played.' I said, 'I love the game of basketball.' In fact, that's why I had that back surgery because, I said, I played too much basketball. I should have quit when I was forty, not fifty-five. But I said, if I had it to do all over, I'd still be out there running.

[01:32:16]

But sports teach you a lot in life. Competitiveness, working hard - I had so much fun playing down there with different guys, noon ball. We started this four-man basketball league down there that is really really popular now. And you meet so many other people. We'd have teams coming over from Anaconda. And you'd meet so many different people. And you know, sports - Tom, when he played at Central and football, and then he went to Carroll and then he was on four national championship teams. And I tell everybody - me and Peggy got to go to Savannah, Tennessee - but one of the lessons I learned when Tom was a sophomore and we went back there the first time and they won and it was a big deal - but about two hours after the game, we're waiting to get on the bus with all these other people. Gotta go back to Memphis and then fly back to Butte. It cost me about \$1500 to get me and Peggy there to watch one football game.

And I was thinking, you know, this game today - yeah it was a great day. I know they said it was for the national championship but, you know, any way you look at it, it was just a football game. It was just a game. And as time wears off, you forget it. And the most important things in life really are your family and different things. And if somebody's sick, that's a big deal. But the

good thing [with] sports - and all four of my boys were lucky enough to play basketball at Butte Central and a couple played football - but working hard. You had to get up at six in the morning and go lift weights - Tom had to do that. And it just - you gotta get along with your teammates. And you gotta keep your cool on the court. Then you meet other kids and you know, some athletes that play sports are known as a hot head, and other kids are - you know, when the game is over they just go shake hands and everything's - it's a game. It's just a game. And I tell people that all the time.

[01:34:31]

I'm a big Packer fan but I'm disgusted with Aaron Rodgers because I mean - here he is, he's got his feelings hurt. Well what about the other 52 guys on the team Aaron? And the other thing is - if he plays football for the Packers this year, he makes \$44M dollars. It's like, are you kiddin' me? For 17 home football games, and you're all mad because you got your feelings hurt? Because the Packers didn't ask you should they draft this guy or? And now he's making this whole drama. [laughter] I mean, that's the way I feel. I asked Butch Harrington - do you know Butch? The cop? He's the meter maid that walks around town.

Grant: Oh, yeah.

Boyle: He's a die-hard Packer fan. I said to him, 'Butch, what do you think of Aaron?' 'Let 'em go!! If he wants to go, let him go!' I said, 'That's exactly the way I feel Butch!' He's a great quarterback, but he's not much of a human being. I said, he's throwing the 52 other guys on the team underneath the bus. Somewhere along the line, he got out of whack. And that's you know, sports. The great thing about - you know so many of my boys are great friends with kids from Butte High and that's the way it should be. Even when they played against them at the Civic Center for one night, they wanted to win. And after they lost, they probably didn't talk to them for a week. But now they're best of friends, you know. That's what sports teaches ya. I really believe that.

Grant: Holds a lot of really valuable lessons.

Boyle: Yep.

Grant: I wanted to revisit this topic of fires in Butte, something that I try to bring up with everybody we talk to. And I gotta say, the M&M really was my first big fire Uptown, you know. I felt like I was connecting, in a way, to all these stories from the 70s. I don't know. Is it unusual for a town to burn as much as Butte has? As a firefighter...

[01:36:34]

Boyle: Well, I think if you look around - I mean we have so many buildings that are real old. And you gotta realize there's a lot of vacant spots. But at one time there was a building in every single spot because space was premium in Butte back when - you know, when people built up where they live - you see all these houses right next to each other because there was only so much space. You worked in the mine and if you needed a house, well ok there's a lot over here. You can build it right here but you gotta build it in here. And you have all these old buildings, but back when the Anaconda Company was, you know - they got rid of things by - all of a

sudden, one night, something caught on fire. Or if a business was struggling, all of a sudden, one night, something caught on fire.

You know, hard to prove, but it was a lot easier to burn something down if you had insurance on it to come out financially, than to walk away from it. You know, I was talking to this Mike, who's the head guy at Butte-Silver Bow on ordinances and this and that the other day. And he's trying to become a fireman, believe it or not, at age forty-something. And he's in tip-top shape, but anyway, he was saying to me, 'You know Bernie, if we'd have enforced a few more ordinances at the M&M, we might still be going in there for a beer.' In other words, what he meant is, if we'd have made her clean that fire suppression, you know, where the grease went up, clean that out a little better like we should have...

But people, you know, they back off different businesses because certainly places are hurting. Hopefully we don't have another fire for a long, long, long time. Because boy, when you see - you look in there and you can't even recognize anything inside there. Not one thing.

[01:38:35]

And it's sad. I see the paper and I'm glad she's gonna do the Music on Main.

Jaap: Yeah.

Boyle: She must be going to use her liquor license and try and sell. And it'll help Maloney's. So, we'll see what happens, you know.

Grant: What about that, though, when you were a young man and the Uptown was on fire. How did it affect you?

Boyle: You know, when you're a young kid back then and you saw it burn, it was kind of a neat thing back then. You saw the big flame and the bigger the flame, the more you thought it was kind of cool. So I really didn't pay attention to it until I got on the fire department. Fire is a terrible thing. And I tell this to people all the time, you know, the good lord created fire and it heats our homes and you cook on it. You go camping and you start a fire, but when fire gets out of control, it can kill. It can do so much damage. The water and smoke, a lot of times, are way worse than the fire. And boy, you look back at a lot of fires, like when San Francisco burned down, you know after the earthquakes. I mean, they didn't have the equipment a lot of times back then.

When the fire was up here, they certainly didn't have the equipment and the ladder trucks and technology they got now. Yeah you just - and I also tell people, 'Boy, you got smoke alarms in your house?' 'Well, no. We did, but we took the batteries out because it kept going off.' It's like, you know, when you go to sleep, you lose your sense of smell. 'Oh, I didn't know that.' 'Yeah, you do!' So in other words, if your house catches on fire and your smoke alarm don't wake you up, you're not gonna wake up. So fire - you know - we got about 8 smoke alarms in our house. Yeah I mean, it's - back then they didn't have smoke alarms.

You can go back to the Archives and read about all the old fires where poor little kids, you know. They'd find them in closets because - when we used to do fire prevention, we'd tell the kids, 'Hey, if you ever wake up in the middle of the night and your house is on fire, you cannot

go hide in the closet. You can't hide from the fire. You've got to get outside where it's safe.' And that's where a lot of little kids think they can go hide. Because they play hide-and-go-seek all the time, my grandkids do. You can't hide from the fire. You gotta get outside.

[01:41:13]

You know, they didn't have smoke alarms back then, so by the time the kids woke up, they were choking and coughing and...So yeah. Fire - it's a bad thing. And we live in this great historic Uptown Butte but most of these buildings aren't sprinkled. And they're old buildings and there's a ton of fuel. You know, that's what we used to call - the older the building, the drier the wood and the more fuel. That's what the M&M was. It was 1890, so all those timbers were so old and dried out. And that grease - when that thing got rolling, there was no stopping it. It was a streeter. They call it a streeter.

Grant: Why's that?

Boyle: Well, you go in and you try and knock the fire down, and finally if you can't, you say 'hit the street. This is a stretter.' In other words, get outside. Everybody's safe. Let's just put the thing out. You know, it's gone. She's gonna have to rebuild. Get outside. That's what we used to call a streeter, where you stayed out in the street until the fire was out.

Jaap: So can you hear when like a building is gonna collapse? Does it make a noise?

Boyle: Oh yeah.

Jaap: I mean, I know it makes a noise, but like before.

[01:42:30]

Boyle: You certainly can hear. Me and John Paull went to Colorado Springs, I think in 1973 or four. We went down - a bunch of us from the KC were in a couple of motorhomes. We went down to watch Notre Dame-Air Force. Came back - we got called out to Perfection Auto & Springs fire. It was a body shop right above Naranche Stadium, right - there's a vacant lot there now on Aluminum & Main. And it was burning. I remember getting called down there and we had the hose on the outside. And all of a sudden, you heard this rumble. And everybody - a couple of old-time firemen said, 'Run!' And what it was - it was the bricks. The wall was starting to - yeah, you could hear the rumble before it actually collapsed. And so you can - you only get a few seconds though.

Grant: Bernie, you had just touched on very briefly that it was in the Anaconda Company's interest for the Uptown to burn, and that's about where that story usually ends. You know, because nobody has any evidence.

Boyle: Well, you know. You've heard the stories that at one time, Anaconda run the legislature in the State of Montana. That's how powerful they were. I mean, all the decisions were made on the sixth floor of the Hennessy building. That's where all the bigshots were, from the Anaconda Company. And if they sent somebody to burn it, they paid the right price to make sure it was burnt. And back then, they didn't have the technology to figure out where fires started, like they

do now, that they can almost pinpoint where it started, and they can take samples and see if there's an accelerant. But back then, it was undetermined. 'Undetermined.'

Grant: And then it turns out it was Moon Lebreche...[laughter]

[01:44:32]

Boyle: Yeah. Oh well, yeah. Well and the night the Columbia Gardens burnt - I don't think it's any secret that they wanted to mine down there. And it was a lot easier to burn it down than tear it down. Let's see, you don't remember the Columbia Gardens and you don't?

Jaap: I'm not old enough, no.

Boyle: Well, it was unbelievable. It was such a neat place to go. You know, when you own it, you can do whatever you want, like John T. Shea says. [laughter] And they did.

Grant: Well maybe on a more positive note - I just have a couple more questions Bernie - you know, the KC project. You've demonstrated such perseverance there. What keeps you going on that?

Boyle: Well, you know, we have this 50 Club. In 1979, we started fixing the gym up. We didn't have any money so we started this 50 Club. And every time somebody donates 50 bucks, they get their name on the wall or they give in memory of somebody. And we give 'em a shirt or a sweatshirt. And in 42 years, it's raised almost \$300,000, fifty bucks at a time. Well that's over a quarter of a million dollars.

[01:45:53]

What keeps me going is that I just - I guess I'm...When me and Peggy first got married, I was spending a lot of time at the KC. And of course we had kids that were little. And she was really upset, 'Ah, you're going back up to the KC!' Well then as I got older and I'd be sitting around the house, she'd be like, 'Aren't you going to the KC today?' So you know, we both - I just enjoy going over there and doing what I can. I can't do what I used to be able to do. I used to love going over there and paint and clean and fix whatever I could, but ever since my back. But it's good now. I still wanna keep doing it because it keeps me going. But it's good now because Dan and Tom and Matt are really interested. And we have other younger kids that are interested, so that I know - I've done my part.

When I was there, we had guys like Fleury McClafferty who was Joe McClafferty's dad, who was the CYO director. And the CYO director was the guy that organized all the games - football, basketball, volleyball for girls - for the nine Catholic grade schools. So you had Dan Harrington, Fleury McClafferty, Navarro (I can't think of his first name). They were the CYO directors. So people come up to me all the time, you know, at the KC and I say, 'I'm just one of the guys that is doing it for a certain period of time. And when I can't do it anymore, somebody else will do it.'

But the building is so rock solid that it's gonna be there for a while. We've gotta start doing some work to the brick and the outside, the cornice. I know I talked to you about the paint. We gotta upgrade the kitchen. But the whole place is in conduit. It's solid as a rock. Steel beams

between all three floors, six inches of concrete. The roof! Have you ever seen the roof in the place? I mean, the timber in the attic is incredible. It could last for a long time.

I really enjoy just going there. Like tonight, we'll have the American Legion bingo and it'll be a great crowd and it'll be a good little ring-up for us at the bar, so it'll help us. It'll help them raise some money. People come in there. And then we'll have some kids downstairs playing basketball. And then we'll get some people after the bingo that will go see some pictures. 'Hey, you gotta come see the pictures downstairs.' You know, we have about 1400 old pictures down there. We have about 800 Catholic school pictures and about 600 public school. I like to keep putting up pictures. People are always coming to me, 'Hey I got this picture, you know. Would you put this up?' 'Sure, just give me the original and I'll get it blown up and I'll give you back the original.' And I just kind of like being the middle guy.

[01:48:56]

And now that I'm retired - I work three days a week at the pre-release - but boy I know one thing. You gotta keep going in life. You can't just sit in your front room. I've seen too many guys retire and kerplunk. And then 10 years later, they kerplunk again. But the second kerplunk is the end.

Jaap: More final.

Boyle: So my idea is I just gotta keep moving. I just gotta keep going, you know.

Grant: That's a good attitude, yeah.

Boyle: I feel very fortunate that - you know I see people all the time - that the good lord somehow pushed me in the direction of the KC and the KC guys have kept letting me do what I do and running the gym. You know, a lot of times - this is a funny story. When Tom was a senior at Central and he was playing basketball and Molly McIntyre was a little girl. Well anyway, I went down and got her some popcorn and brought it up and I gave it to her. And her mom says, 'Did you tell Bernie thank you?' Yeah. 'That was nice of him to do that.' She turned to her mom and said, 'Well he owns the KC mom.' [laughter] I thought, oh my god. I says, 'No, I don't own the KC.' In other words, I own it so I was rich. [laughter]

Grant: One of our jokes nowadays is that Matt, your son, owns the KC. We always joke about that, 'Oh Matt Boyle? He owns the KC doesn't he? And the Carpenters Hall.'

Boyle: Well, he might be the next one - between him and Tom - although they might kill each other over a certain decision because they don't get along. When they're playing basketball, it's like, oh god almighty. You ever seen them play basketball together?

Grant: I haven't.

Boyle: Oh god. After the game, Tom will say, 'Why didn't you pass me the ball? I was down on the block and I was wide open!' And then Matt squawks back. They're like oil and water.

Grant: Well that's actually my next-to-last question. I wanted to hear more about your children and grandchildren. Just talk to us about them.

Boyle: Well, Dan is a fireman and Tom works for Clearwater Credit Union. He couldn't have took that job at a better time because he's doing refinancing and mortgages. People are moving here, calling him - and he's on commission. I was telling somebody today at breakfast in Anaconda, this Frankie Marini who used to teach at Anaconda Central, and he's in his eighties now and just put his wife in the Beehive. And here's a funny story. Three weeks ago, we're at the M&M eating - me, Jim Michelotti and Chunky Thatcher - and we're sitting there eating and Frankie comes in. And he's all upset and his kid - he come down and is talking to us. He said, oh he just put his wife in the Beehive.

[01:51:50]

So we're down there today and I said to him, 'God, you know Frankie, you were in the M&M three weeks ago. They're really looking at you. You could be a suspect.' [laughter] He got a big kick out of that. But anyway, gettin' abc. Dan's a fireman. Tom's at Clearwater Credit Union and he's working on commission. I was telling Frankie today, 'You're always worried about your kids, you know.' I'm always worried about my kids and if they make enough money. I'm always trying to help them out. You go to breakfast and I gotta buy, I gotta buy.

So the other day, Tom's like, 'Dad, I can buy breakfast.' I said, 'Tom, I got more money than you got.' So anyway, I'm asking him, I says, 'Well Tom, how you doing in this mortgage thing?' He says, 'Dad, well this - now that I'm on commission I'm really - things are good.' So anyway, he says, 'I'm projected to make 160 this year with commission.' And I'm like, 'That's it! I'm not buying breakfast anymore!' [laughter] Jesus, I worked 30 years on the fire department and I didn't make \$50,000. And Frankie says, 'Isn't that funny how you worry about your kids?' And I says, 'No question - he can buy most of the breakfasts from here on out.'

[01:53:10]

But anyway, Matt's, you know, doing good. Him and Patty Burt and JD started that business. And I should have invested in it is what I should have done, if I had any sense. But I didn't. But they're all doing good so I'm happy about that. And all five of my grandkids live here. Mackenzie is one of Tom's stepdaughters, him and Christie, she's in 8th grade at Central. And then JT's a second-grader and Hunty is in kindergarten, Tom's kid. And then Dan's got Madison, who's in first grade, and then Benny who's in preschool.

But I feel fortunate that they're all here. You know, these people that have grandkids and kids that live elsewhere - for a while there, Tom lived in Fernley, Nevada. And he taught at Central for six years, and he's a real sharp math teacher. But anyway, he would have stayed at Central forever, but you can only make so much money there unfortunately and that's the way it is. But he went to Fernely, Nevada with my brother-in-law to coach football and teach math down there. Well it was a rude awakening for him. He wasn't there three months and he realized, 'oh I made a big mistake. These kids down here - they don't care if they learn math. Their parents don't care if they learn math. What am I doing here?'

So he ended up finishing the year and then he was driving back and forth to Reno dealing cars while Christie finished beauty school. But anyway, that's one of the reasons him and her decided, 'you know, we gotta move back home. And I wanna put my kids in Central.' So it was - I only went down to Fernley, Nevada once and I thought, 'oh god, this would be terrible. I'm

gonna come down here all the time, so see my grandkids, you know?' So I just feel fortunate they're all here and you know - grandkids is a whole different chapter in life. You know, you have your kids. And when you're raising your kids, you can tell them what to do and this and that. When you have grandkids, you can only do so much. It's great when they come over for two or three hours, but then when their parents pick them up, it's like 'ah.' Me and Peggy like our peace and quiet, you know. She watches TV upstairs. I watch it downstairs at night.

Do we love the grandkids? Yes, but for about 3-4 hours a day! [laughter] So yeah, but - I only have the five. I was talking to Pat Schulte - and god Bob Schulte, Pat's dad - he had like 33 grandkids, 14 great grandkids. I was like, "Bob, how the heck do ya - what do you do at Christmas time? And how do you afford it? And do you have like a list of where they live and what their names are? And what about their birthdays? Do you buy them each something for their birthdays?" 'Oh yeah!' I said, 'My god, that's gotta be expensive.'

Grant: That's a part time job right there.

Boyle: Yeah, but there are families like that where they got 30 grandkids, great grandkids. That's Peggy's mom. She's like that. You know, with 15 kids, she's got so many - she's got grandkids, great grandkids, and great great grandkids.

Grant: Damn, yeah. Virginia! Well Bernie, I'm just curious - are you optimistic about Butte's future? I mean, you've lived here a long time, seen a lot of things change.

Boyle: Oh yeah, I'm really optimistic. I'll tell you why. You know, I think Butte is such a great place to live. I was watching that Wooly Geist a couple of weeks ago and they were talking about the pandemic and how people can work from home on the computer, and all these cities that are 'zoom cities.' And one of them, it said, was Butte, Montana, where it's beautiful and the mountains...and I'm like, you gotta be kidding me. Wooly Geist just talked about Butte, Montana? It's 9 o'clock in the morning on channel 6?

[01:57:22]

And this Jeff Riggs just bought the Baptist church down here. And he joined the gym. Do you know Jeff Riggs? He moved here from Three Forks. He played basketball at the Bobcats with Mick Durham, who he grew up with in Three Forks, Well, he came and joined the gym because he wants to start playing basketball. But he told me he bought the baptist church up there. He's gonna make it into living quarters. And he's got guys down there roofing it. He's got Joe Schulte down there doing work. He's got all kinds of - I thought, this guy must have some dough.

But he said, 'I got that building for a heck of a price.' And that's what's happening now. People are coming and buying some of these buildings. And you know, that's what we need. We gotta get this Uptown Butte reenergized. And it's gonna take money. I never wanna see it to be like Bozeman or Missoula. My son Dan, the fireman that lives at 106 Milky Way, right across from Rickey Park. They have a nice simple little house and did some work in the basement. A realtor comes to Dan and Ashley and says, 'I can get 360 for your house,' \$360,000. 'Well, if you can get 360 for our house...

Well sure enough, she had this couple from Bozeman - the guy was working here. SHE's pregnant in Bozeman. They're trying to get a house in Butte because they can't afford a house in

Bozeman. Every house that they come and made a bid on, somebody outbid 'em. So when she brought them to Dan's house and said 360 - and they toured and says, we'll take it.

[01:59:00]

Well, so now Dan and Ashley gotta move in a couple months. So I think, you know like Bozeman, what's happening in Bozeman where the average price of the house is \$700,000 - it's driving people here. And the pandemic thing is driving people from big - you know, we have this guy Ryan Buckles who moved from California. He's a supervisor at the pre-release. Sold his house in California - had to get outta there, too many people. Had to get outta there. Came here, bought a house here, and he still has \$100,000 in the bank. Bought a beautiful house out by the country club. He says, 'I thought I'd never own a house like this.' Well they're selling the house in California for this price, coming here - and so it's all kinds of these stories. And then, what's going on out there with the malt plant and that whole area - you know, we're slowly...

They're looking at building electric cars - this guy Jack Standa - he's the new head guy at MRI. He just moved here from Colstrip. He walks into the KC about a month and a half ago. 'Hey, I saw online you gotta gym. I live up a couple blocks there. I was thinking about joining.' 'Ok.' So I take him down and show him the gym. 'Oh yeah, I'd love to join.' So he comes upstairs and I sign him up and say, 'What do you do?' 'Oh I work at the mine.' 'Oh, what do you do down there? You drive truck, or what do you do?' 'Uh no, I'm the head guy.' [laughter]

I'm like, 'What! What do you mean you're the head guy?' 'Yeah I just moved here from Colstrip.' He must have been a sharp guy, you know. I said, 'Well, wow. What do you think the future is?' He said, 'Oh god, the price of copper is \$4.60 or something now.' You got this - they're talking electric cars. Electric cars are gonna need batteries. Batteries are gonna need copper. Hey said, 'Bernie, the future is really good. Really good. The only problem is we gotta find - waste. We're having trouble finding a place to dump the waste.'

[02:00:58]

But they hired more truck drivers. They bought more trucks. They're paying a ton of taxes in Butte. Hopefully - I said, 'How long will the mine run?' He said, 'It could run 15 more years. Maybe 10-15.' So during that window, before that thing shuts down - because, you know, the taxes they pay. Because someday it's gonna shut down.

Grant: Yeah. You think the roads are bad now!

Boyle: Then you're gonna have that giant hole. And you know, so. I think the future's great. I mean, we take Uptown Butte for granted. You know, and I tell people all the time that we take buildings for granted. There's no other place - every building in Uptown Butte is different. People come in the KC and they're just like, 'Oh my god. I've never seen a KC like this.' And I tell them the story. We are the only Knights of Columbus this side of Seattle that has a three story building. Most Knights of Columbus meets in church basements.

[02:02:00]

Back in 1917, this was the kind of money that was around. These guys built this three-story building back then. You know? And I said, 'We're the benefits. So we gotta take care of it.' You

know, and that's the same thing with all these Uptown buildings. I think it's a great place to live. We take it - you know, you take things for granted until they're gone.

Grant: Until they burn down before your eyes.

Boyle: Like the M&M. Like, me and John Lappin - we went to the M&M three times a week for breakfast. We loved going in there and seeing Selena [Pankovich]. I loved looking at the old pictures because I'm really into old stuff. And now it's gone. And it's sad. It's really sad. [pause] She'll rebuild, I think, but it'll never be the same old M&M. But she'll have a better building and you know, it'll probably be way safer. It'll be sprinkled. It'll be handicapped access. It'll be brand new. So...

Grant: I hope so. Well that does it for my questions. You good?

Jaap: Yeah. Bernie, thank you.

Boyle: Well, I hope I didn't bore you to death.

Jaap: No, you did not.

Boyle: I think it's great that you guys do this.

Grant: Ahh, we appreciate you sharing, yeah.

[END OF RECORDING]