DANETTE HARRINGTON

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Oral History Transcript of Danette Harrington

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Aubrey Jaap: Okay, great. It's October 23rd, 2020. We're here with Danette Harrington. Danette, I would first like you to start off and just talk about your grandparents, parents, kind of the family history / background that you know of.

Danette Harrington: Okay. I was born in Butte, Montana, in the Dublin Gulch, in the house that my father was born in. My father was Daniel Patrick Harrington. My mother was Margaret Page Harrington. My grandparents were Patrick and Mary Harrington from Ireland. My father was born in 1898. My mother was born in 1907 and they passed away in the seventies and the eighties. My grandparents are buried down in St Patrick's cemetery on South Montana street. And at the time when my grandmother, my grandfather died earlier than my grandmother, and so she bought him a tombstone. And the tombstone was, it's still there, it's a gorgeous tombstone, but it cost her 25 cents a week for like three years to pay for the tombstone. So I remember that story, you know, my father used to tell it all the time and he was one of 10 siblings all raised in the Dublin Gulch. They all lived in Butte until the strikes hit. And then my father and my aunt [unintelligible] were the only two that remained in Butte, Montana.

The rest of them moved to San Francisco. So most of my immediate family was in San Francisco. My mother was born on the East side. She was born at 219 Shields Avenue. She was one of three children. She had a brother, Bud, and a sister, Helen, who was in the military. My mother was a telephone operator prior to being married. And then in those days you couldn't work for the phone company if you were married. So she had to leave that profession and then she became a homemaker. And it was amazing because all of the women in the Dublin Gulch, very few of them drove, maybe one or two because it just wasn't a thing. But the women, the ladies, the mothers up there were so close. I mean, they visited every day and they'd walk to each other's house. Everybody's house up there, basically was open to all of us. You never had to knock. You just kind of went. And if there was a meal going on, you stayed for the meal. You never had to go home. There was no curfew. We didn't have a sidewalk in the gulch. It was all dirt. And we had a dirt baseball field.

Our house was at 317 East Summit and it was up to get out of it and up to get to it. It was just an uphill house, no matter where you went, it was uphill. And my father in the wintertime used to sweep the road to get the car up and then he'd get all done with this big, huge road that we had to go down in the bottom of the hill. And then we would all go out and kick the snow back onto it. So we could sleigh ride because that was the thing to do. And, you know, he'd spend two hours taking it off. We spent about 25 minutes, kicking it all back on and shoving it on so we could sleigh ride. It was kind of a merry-go-round effort on his part. But all of his siblings moved to San Francisco, but he had one sister.

And so we used to have a lot of company from San Francisco and their family. So at one time I had 27 first cousins and now we're down to six. All of my first cousins were older than I was. I

was at the bottom of the tail of the top of that group. And now there's only six of us left and it's kind of sad to see that, you know, part of the family history become no longer. And then there is my son's generation. There's quite a few in that generation, but they have never had the contact that we had because the aunts and uncles always came back to Butte. The children never came and have not come a lot. So they're finally meeting some. So that's kind of cool. The introduction to their cousins is nice.

Where do I go now?

Jaap: So your dad was a miner.

Harrington: He was a hoisting engineer at the Anaconda Company and he was an oiler at first, the fellow that oiled the machine. And then he became a hoisting engineer. He worked at all of the mines. He worked at the Mountain Con. He worked at the Kelley, the Never Sweat, the Anselmo, the Orphan Girl. And then he was at the Granite Mountain and the Badger. So during the course of his life, he basically was a hoisting engineer in most of the mines. He hoisted the men and the rock.

Jaap: So let's go back kind of, we'll kind of go to you now. When were you born? I know you said it, I believe at the beginning, but . . .

Harrington: I was born in 1944 in Butte, Montana.

Jaap: Tell me a little bit about growing up. Where did you go to school?

Harrington: I went to school at Saint Mary's Catholic grade school. And then I went to Butte, Central, Girls' central. It was Girls' Central at that time, graduated in 1962. The year that I graduated from St. Mary's, it was 1958 and we had gotten a new school, the original school on Wyoming street - I went first and second grade, and then I graduated from the new school on the top, above the Steward mine yard in 1958. And then when I was a freshman, there was that big strike in '58 and '59. So it made it very difficult to have any kind of, you know, I guess you'd call it extra money.

There wasn't hardly any extra money at all. And my mother would save a dollar a week out of the strike benefits, so I could go to the football game and the mixer afterwards. And that was a big treat, but it was, you know, that was, she felt, it was important that I have some social life during that period of time. And I went to Central, I didn't go on to college. I started to work for Blue Shield insurance when I first got out of high school and then they were relocating. And then I went to work for the assessor in the courthouse. So I turned 20 years old in the courthouse and I retired from there. What, at 73. So I was there a long time.

Jaap: You were there a long time. That's really amazing. So was it the '59 strike that all of your dad's family left?

Harrington: Uh, no. They had left earlier. I think they left probably in the early fifties. Um, 'cause most of them were coming back when I was, you know, old enough to remember. And I can remember my brother was shot one year. All of the kids for Christmas got .22 rifles, the older kids. So the younger kids tried to be part of that, you know, macho thing. And all they

could do was set up targets. So they put up the bottles, pop bottles, or whatever they were. And then after the course of the day, it would end up that the kids could maybe take a shot with the guns. So they were setting up targets and my brother bent over to pick up a bottle. And one of the kids shot the gun and shot him in the neck. And so the kid that he was with called my mother from his house and said, "Jimmy got shot." And my mother said, "Where?" And he said up on the hill. Where we lived up on the hill, we were in like a bowl. So the hill was everywhere. So he finally got home. And the first thing she said to him, and I just remembered this story from hearing it for so long. Well, the first thing she said to him, he had on a pair of new tennis shoes and she said, "Jimmy, you ruined your new tennis shoes."

Because the blood was dripping off his elbows. And so my mother didn't have a car. So she called her brother. My dad was working at the mine and they took him to the hospital and they kind of x-rayed him and moved him and looked at all this stuff. And then they decided it was a piece of shale that got him in the neck that just missed all of the vital organs. And then the next day they found the bullet. It had come down his neck, down his lung and it was sitting at the back of his lung in a pocket. And it was there till the day he died. They never could remove it. They were afraid if they touched it, the lead would move and drop into his lung. So that was one of those great stories. He was way more of a character than I was. I can tell you, I was kind of a shy little girl where he was this outgoing kid that was in trouble all the time.

Jaap: How many siblings were in your family?

Harrington: I only had one brother. Yeah. My mother had lost two babies early in pregnancy.

Jaap: Everyone who grew up in the Gulch just has really fond memories of that neighborhood in general. Can you just kind of tell me what the neighborhood was like? The families that lived there?

Harrington: All of the families that lived there basically were Irish. When I grew up, there were only 11 houses left. When my dad grew up, there were a hundred houses, I think. But then when the fires over the course of the years, there was no fire department, no fire hydrants. So you had to wait for a tanker truck to come. And by the time they got there, that was probably five or six houses burned in the process. When I grew up there were 11 and it was all hills. I mean, everybody's house was kind of, there was nothing close to each other. So you walked, you know, up and down dumps and black rocks and the whole bit. But it was a great neighborhood just for the mere fact that the kids, we didn't go anywhere.

Of course, you didn't have to go anywhere. Everybody lived in the Gulch and there was a bar and a grocery store and it was owned by Linda Hagginbrook and her husband. And they had a swimming pool. And apparently long before I could remember, somebody must have died in the pool, so they didn't ever fill it again. So it was filled with beer cans, so we didn't have a baseball. So we used to take the beer cans. We used to play beer can baseball. And the only bad thing, you know, you crunch the can up and then you'd hit it with the bait with the bat, but then it would hit you in the thumb. So your thumbs were always split when you got hit with the can and the thumb. So that was one of our means of entertainment. And we used to go play in the hot . . .The pipes that went up, the heat pipes that went up to the Mountain Con and over to the High Ore.

And so that was one of the great places to go in the winter time because they were always hot. You could go and sit on them and spend a couple hours just visiting with your friends.

When the Kelley mine went in, that was quite an episode for all of us. We used to sit and watch all the construction, you know, every day it was just a fascinating thing to watch the gallows frames and the crushers go up, the engine room. So we watched all of that and they were good to us. The carpenters and the builders in those days, they were very good to us. And they used to make us stilts in the carpenter shop. So we'd all go down and get this great set of stilts. And then probably two days later, we would have a fire to cook potatoes. So we'd use the stilts to burn because it was the only wood in the Gulch. So we would burn the stilts. And then a week later you go down and the carpenters would say, "Geez, didn't we just make you some stilts?" And we'd say, "Yeah, I don't know what happened to them." So then they'd make us another set of stilts. They were very good to us, but hanging around in the mine yard was just kind of fun in those days.

And they had watchmen, uh, that would be, I guess, you'd call them. I can't even think of what the name of the security companies were later, but they were just, you know, fellows that were watchmen. They had a little shack and then they would punch their clock and do the rounds every day in the mine yard. So that was kind of a fun thing. They were all nice people.

And then when my family would come home from San Francisco, I was very fortunate enough to be able to go down into the mines. So one summer I went down three times and because they were doing open tours at that time at the Kelley. So my cousin, Sharon McHugh, and I would always be with the company that came from San Francisco. And then you could go down to the level where they would let you see what was going on underground. And it was truly amazing because we knew everybody, you know, it was everybody's father or your uncle or cousin or something that was working in the mines and all these people that were strangers that were on the tour would look at us like, "How do you two young girls know all these people?" Because it was truly amazing, but it was a fun thing. It was a great experience. Something that I can remember well, because it was frightening. You had to put on the coat and the carbine lamp and a helmet and the whole bit to go down the mine. So that was kind of a great thing.

Jaap: Oh yeah, that is really great. Can you describe underground for me a little?

Harrington: The level that you went to was pretty nice. It was hot. And we went to the, I guess you'd call it where the lunch room was and it was full of lockers and it had a big table and there was a Coke machine in there, you know, a vending machine, I should say. And then they take you down to one of the drifts and it was where the actual work was being done. And the miners were just toiling away in this tremendous heat and sweat, but they had a camaraderie with one another because they depended on each other for the thing. But the level you went to was really nice. I don't think it was anything like they wouldn't take you to one that wasn't rather appropriate or safe to be there, I guess is what it amounted to.

But it was nice. It was kind of just like being in a big room with drifts that went off to the directions from that room.

Jaap: So, we interviewed Shirley Trevena and Lee Whitney, quite some time ago now, but Lee talked about the noise of the mine and just the constant noise. And she's talked about, you know, that you'd be afraid when the noise stopped, because it usually meant something had happened. Can you relate to that at all?

Harrington: Sure. You know, once the mine was running and it ran 24 hours a day, and so I never really associated it with something happening, I usually figured, because my dad was an engineer and I think Julie's father was an engineer too from Anaconda Road. But I can remember when it would shut down. It usually meant for us, because we were on the upper side of the crusher. It meant that something had happened in the crusher that the conveyor belt probably broke down. And so the noise was constant because it was just that constant going of the shivs all the time. And you could hear the cables running and it was something you just got used to, I suppose, it's living like by the freeway, you listened to that noise and you just become accustomed to it.

And there was one time when a bunch of my friends and I did a very silly thing, I guess you'd call it a dangerous thing. We went into the mine one night and we got on the conveyor belt and the crusher, somehow we got in there and we rode the conveyor belt up to the ore bins. And I mean, there were these big boulders and I mean, it didn't go fast, but it was continuous. And it just was pulling the rock out of the crusher up to the ore bins. So we got up there and the gunman saw us. So they were after us. There was headlights all over the place, there was sirens. I mean, we were in big Dutch. So we got up to the top of the ore bins and there was really no place down because there was a train that they were going to load.

You know, they had the big ore cars that were underneath there. So we had to come down on ropes. There was a couple of rope things. So we slid on these ropes. Then we ran over toward Main Street and up over to Barry's house on the top of the hill. I mean, we must have ran for two hours trying to get out of the way. And one of the girls that was with us tripped on the steam pipes and knocked her two front teeth out. And so we had somebody's sweatshirt or coat or something and kind of put it in her face because she was screaming, crying, but we couldn't get caught. And I think she ended up saving her teeth, but it literally, they were just dangling. So we ended up going to the house and the gunman came to everybody's house in the Gulch looking for us and probably the county sheriff or the probation officer, I'm sure. And it was one of those things that we were just by the skin of our teeth. We escaped and did not get caught, but it was pretty, pretty dangerous.

Jaap: What did she tell her mom and dad, when she went home with no teeth.

Harrington: Well, we were all there. We had to go to her house because she was in and her father was a hoisting engineer. And so we were in under one of the beds. They kind of put us in a bedroom out of the way and put us all under the bed and gave her a towel with some ice in it. And so we just had to lay there while the parents were saying, "Gee, we have no idea where those kids are." Because I think we probably would have went to Mile City if they would have got us.

Jaap: Oh my gosh. I'm sure when they left, the police left, I think it was . . .

Harrington: It was butt ugly I think at that time. We all got pretty well grounded.

Jaap: Oh my gosh. What a story. Yeah. You really could have gotten hurt.

Harrington: And then I think I've often said too, when my father worked at the Anselmo, he seldom drove, but he would drive once in a while to the Anselmo. And so on Friday nights they had this fish and chip place that opened on Harrison Avenue. I can't tell you what the name of it was, but it was right where Grand Avenue splits there, off of Harrison. And so we decided to go get fish and chips. So we had to go to the Anselmo to get the car. So Harry and I, my brother walked up the hill and the train was coming from the Badger going toward the Orphan Girl, I suppose, and probably on to Anaconda and the smelter. So you knew when it slowed down making these corners, you could hop the train.

So we hopped the train and stayed on it until it slowed down for Excelsior street, hopped off, and went in and got my dad's car. My brother drove us down. We got the fish and chips. We timed it enough so we could catch the next train going back to the Badger. We got on the train, took the fish and chips back and brought them home and ate them. So, but, you know, hopping the trains was nothing in those days. Everybody kind of did it. Just sort of hop on the train and put your arm around the ladder that went up the side and you could hang on until the guy in the caboose got hold of you. So we didn't have a lot of toys, but we had a lot of dangerous equipment that we could get involved in.

Jaap: When did your family move out of the Gulch?

Harrington: The year was 1973, I believe. Could have been 70, I think they were bought in 73. So it was probably 74 and it was just excruciating for the people when they had to move. And I think it was hard because all the moms at that point in time were close, but very few of them drove. So they didn't have any ability, once everybody got scattered, when you couldn't walk to each other's home, it really put a big dent in that bond of mothers, you know, that lived in the Gulch because they were scattered all over. There was very few that found another house, once the company bought you out, that was in the same neighborhood. So it made a huge difference. Looking back, my mother had a much nicer home at the time, but it didn't have the feel or the bond that they had in the Gulch.

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And the homes were way nicer than anything we had up there. And I can remember when we were kids, there was a lady that lived up on Ridgely Avenue and she was sitting out in the yard one day. And she was just, she was my, not my godmother, but my confirmation sponsor. And she was just delightful. And she said to her son, one day, she said, "You know, this would be really great. I wish we could get a cabin somewhere." And her son looked at her and he said, "Ma, you oughta wished for a house; we're living in a cabin." You know, so yeah, none of us had much. It was just basic needs, you know? And most of the guys that lived up there, the dads, they were all, you know, there was one fellow that did not work for the company. He worked for the post office, but most everybody else that lived in the Gulch basically worked for the Anaconda Company.

Jaap: I think that Dublin Gulch is one of those neighborhoods where people don't talk about the displacement of people as much as, you know, you hear about McQueen and Meaderville a lot, but people don't talk about the Dublin Gulch quite as much.

Harrington: Yeah. Well, there was, you know, everybody that left at the time, I think we were one of the last ones to go, and then it was just, I can remember going to visit the lady that lived on Ridgely, Ida, and she was just a character. So I would go visit her and I'd take my mother over there. And then the other ones all just became fragmented. It was kind of a separation that was, I think they felt so bad that it made them sad to get together because they were no longer together, you know? And so it was a hard thing for them. And they were at an age where they weren't young women, you know, so I think it was a very difficult thing. My mother used to walk from the Gulch to go downtown all the time. Well, then she ended up out on the flat and could not walk uptown. So she had a new experience learning how to do the bus or wait for a ride, you know, that type of thing, take a cab. And it was a whole change of life for her.

Jaap: Did you have thoughts during that time about the community of neighborhoods being displaced? And did you have an opinion at the time? Did you think it was wrong or did it just seem part of it?

Harrington: Well, it was part of what was going on at the time, because the story that we had received was the pit was going to come West, Northwest basically. So they needed the Gulch for the expansion because the first viewing stand was on the top of Anaconda Road. And that was long gone because they kept encroaching and encroaching on Anaconda Road. And then the story was, they were going to come West. So they needed the Gulch. And I kept thinking, how can they do that? Because the Kelley mine is right there in the middle of all that. But I don't know if they finally moved us only for safety reasons. But they had a fence around mine by then. So you couldn't get in from, you know, with kids.

And it was mostly older people, there were very few young people living in the Gulch at that time. So I'm not too sure why they . . . the Gulch is still sitting there. The Kelley, now that distillery is going in, that's everything there. We could have still been there all these years because all the infrastructure was there. We didn't have pavement, but we had sewers and electricity, that type of thing, gas lines. So that infrastructure is probably totally deteriorated now, but all of that basic needs were in there. So they could have stayed. Those ladies, you know, their children probably would have loved to relocate, but those older ladies could have lived their lives out there.

Jaap: Do you think that makes it more frustrating?

Harrington: Yeah, it was just hard. And nobody really wanted to go. And then once you relocated, you didn't have the funds to basically support your new home and your taxes. Because up in the Gulch, it was much less. It was a hardship totally. It was a good thing that was like bittersweet. You ended up with a greater building to live in, but you ended up with more expenses because it cost you more to live there. So it was hard. And my mother didn't have an income once my dad died because his pension died with him and she didn't work. So she had to wait until she received social security.

And, you know, that's one of the things I look back at and think, I didn't realize that. I was working at the courthouse, but I had no idea that she didn't have an income. So she really scraped by. My brother lived at home. I lived at home. And we paid a little board and room. Very little, I'm sure. But she was able to manage, which was very difficult. My brother may have been more aware of it than I.

Jaap: When did you start at the courthouse? What year did you say it was?

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Harrington: I graduated in 62. So I want to say I probably started there in 63 or 64.

Jaap: Okay. Yeah. So can you tell me a little bit about when consolidation happened? What was that like?

Harrington: It was awful. You know, change was awful for me. And I think having that consolidation between the city and the county, it was really a tenuous time. The city people had an attitude. The county people had an attitude and trying to mesh them together was really difficult. And once they closed city hall and moved them into the courthouse, I mean, it was kind of like the Hatfields and the McCoys because nobody really wanted the city people. And the city people were not fond of the county people. So it took several years to break that barrier. And then, you know, once it melted away, it was fine. I can remember the city was always out of money. The county basically never had those expenses that the city had at that time. So it was always, I think that's basically what they did that consolidation for. It was financial.

Jaap: I was going through some records this week and so I think it was a memo from Peoples that was like, "Okay guys, we're going to the courthouse this week." And it was like an etiquette, like "you will not have bad water cooler talk." It was really funny. Like, "Hey, we're going over here. Best behavior."

Harrington: Well, it wasn't a good time. It really wasn't. Everybody had the chip on the shoulder and “don't say nothing to me because I'll eat your face off” or something, you know? Yeah. It was really a very, very hard time and it was hard on everybody. And then once that barrier was dropped and you finally decided this is how it was going to work and it was for the best of the community, but at the time you didn't see it. It was a long, long while before that, you know, evolved.

Jaap: Did you have an opinion about the whole Butte Forward? The idea of Butte forward of, you know, the mine expanding into the central business district and that whole program?

Harrington: You know, I don't remember so much about that. I'm trying to think. What was the program that Don Peoples brought forward?

Jaap: There was the model cities program.

Harrington: Model cities. That was a tough one because they ended up with some great ideas, lots of studies and lots of decisions made to change the uptown. And I think there was a lot of true feelings that they did not want the uptown to be dissolved. And I think there was a lot of

animosity toward that move. We, being the county uptown. I was adamant that everything should remain uptown. Because the uptown was strong and very vital at that time. And then as you saw things . . . we had fires like crazy. Um, and it destroyed so much of the flavor of the uptown. And then all of a sudden you'd have all these vacant lots and it was just hard. It was a tough thing. And then I found something before I left the auditor's office and it must've been a book that was kind of like a synopsis of how things evolved after the consolidation and trying to bring the city back to some life, I think.

And I think from what I interpreted or my interpretation was that I think a lot of those decisions were very wrong. I don't know what was the driver behind them, but I think it really kind of took the heart out of the community for the uptown. And then always there was that division between uptown and the flat. It never really married those two items together to make it, you know, one. It should have been one community basically, but it ended up being two entities, I think.

Jaap: And I think it's very much like that still today.

Harrington: Yeah. It's kind of like you got a stepchild or something that you just kind of don't treat them as well or the same, whatever.

Jaap: I like putting it that way. Is it hard being uptown and seeing what you used to be and seeing what it is today and is that hard to remember what it was like when you were younger?

Harrington: It isn't hard, but I think there's things that you miss. Just the comradery of the uptown, you know, I think just the change of the Montana power, that evolution of losing the Montana Power capacity. Because I can remember when you'd go uptown at lunchtime and there would be, you know, two or 300 people on the sidewalk at lunch time. And then as the years have progressed and once the power ended up going down and they've relocated uptown, but it changed the whole dynamic of the uptown community. And I've always felt bad that like when you go to Missoula or someplace where they got that vibrant downtown, and mostly because people live in the uptown or the downtown Missoula. And I see now where there are people trying to bring some more living quarters to the Butte community. And I think that would bring the uptown back to life.

Jaap: Yeah. If you have people living uptown.

Harrington: I think you need to have people. You just can't have a business district or a commercial district. I think you need people living in the community around the businesses to keep them alive and well. You know, and I can remember going in the M&M when I was younger. And you'd go in there and there was the miners that were there every single day. They'd get off their shift, they went and had a couple of beers and it kept those places alive. And now when you don't have that group of people working anymore, and it just, I guess a lot of that flavor died over those years.

[00:30:25]

Jaap: Clark, do you have some questions?

Clark Grant: Sure. You'd said when you first went into the courthouse, you worked for the assessor.

Harrington: I did.

Grant: So how'd you get involved there?

Harrington: Nick McGrath was the county assessor at that time and he was a friend of the family. And my mother had worked for him when he was running for election. So they used to one time a year, they would do what they called the jury list. And I was laid off at Blue Shield Insurance and somehow or another, my mother was talking to Nick. And so he said, "Well, I'm going to have a temporary job that will be open doing the jury list." So I ended up going to the courthouse and that was my first job working in the assessor's office.

And what you did is you went through all of the automobile registrations and the tax roll registrations, you compiled all those names, how to cross-reference them to put them into one file. And then it took like three months, three and a half months. There was three people working and it was all manual then. We didn't have a computer at all.

So you had to basically blend all of those three sources of tax names and then compile it for a jury list to be pulled for the courts for the whole year. So that's how I started in the courthouse. Then I ended up working for the assessor, doing the tax rolls, and then Metro sewer came along and I was lucky enough to get that opportunity. So I worked for Metro sewer for about 27 years.

Grant: And doing what there?

Harrington: I was the clerk for the accounts receivable. And that was a good job.

Grant: 27 years.

Harrington: I think so.

Jaap: When did you run for auditor?

Harrington: 91. I was elected in 92.

Jaap: What made you want to run for auditor?

Harrington: What made me want to run? Probably some of the politics of what was going on at the courthouse at the time. They had brought a person in to run the Metro sewer office. And I had been running it for 27 years. They brought somebody in and he became my boss. And that kind of was kind of a slam, I guess, you'd call it. So then Barbara Mulholland was going to retire from the auditor's office and somebody said, "Why don't you run for office?" And I said, "Oh, I can't do that." And then Laurie Maloney, who was the clerk of the court at the time said, "Oh, I think you could." So during the jigs and the reels, and I had recently been divorced at that time. So probably it's that one door closes and another one opens. And so it just kind of blended into a good opportunity. And I ran against three gentlemen and won the primary and the general. So it was my first experience.

And to run for office is a whole new ball game. It's different today, but when we were running, you were never home. You were out in the community all the time. You were going door to door. My two sons were excellent. I think they were hoping I would never do it again because they were exhausted. But they worked well and I had a great team of people. Um, everything we did, we did ourselves. I made my own signs because I didn't have any money. So we had our workshop in the garage at my house and we used to make the signs. The kids were busy painting the signs and making a stencil. It was a real family effort, I guess. And so it was a good experience. It teaches you how to work a room. When you go out to get people to ask you to vote for you, because that's not an easy thing to do. It's very difficult to ask somebody to vote for you.

Grant: Why is that?

Harrington: It's just awkward. You know, you can go up and schmooze and have a little bit of a conversation. And then before the conversation is over, you know, you just have to ask, "Would you mind voting for me? I'd appreciate your vote," that type of thing. And it's just awkward. The hardest thing is to ask for money. And I went to a seminar one time down at Fairmont, and it was put on by the Republican party, but anybody was allowed to go and they taught us, they critique your presence, your mannerisms, your speaking, all of this stuff. And they said in one of the things that you should be proud to ask people to support you. Well, that's awkward too. You know, that's really awkward to ask somebody to give you, "could you donate five or $10 to my campaign?" And those are very difficult things to do. But in the end you have a fundraiser. You end up with a good group of people, a good team of people that work for you and with you and help you with the whole thing. And it turned out to be a great experience. It was fun.

Grant: Can we go back to your job at Metro sewer and just get kind of an overview of what they do as a department and what you did there?

Harrington: Well, when Metro sewer started, it was an assessment on all the properties in the city and the county of Butte. And so we had to go through and figure out the size of the lots, the mill levies that we assessed, the properties were gauged on the square footage of the lots. So the first mill levy, the bond went out in 1965. The second one went out in 1967. So therefore everybody that had a piece of property, whether it had a dwelling on it, or whether it was a vacant lot, everybody paid universally the same amount of money per square foot for their piece of ground. So that's what I did is we went in and we basically looked up all of the sizes of the lots, the size of the block, the ownership, and then we assessed it accordingly and had to convert those numbers into the tax role.

So that went out with the taxes every year. So then I had special accounts that everybody that paid it, you had a choice of paying it for 20 years with no interest or a choice of carrying it for 20 years with interest. So that's what I did. I took care of all of those accounts and it was quite involved actually. Because you had to keep changing ownerships every year. Because the property would turn over. The monies never changed, but the ownerships changed. And then if there was a building say you had a block that there was nothing. And then all of a sudden something was built. You had to go down there and have some kind of determination. Was it commercial? Was it a carwash? Was it a dry cleaners? That type of thing. And those were assessed a little differently for maintenance. So that's what I did for a Metro sewer.

Grant: Wow. Sounds like a lot of work.

Harrington: It was. It was a great job. A lot of stats, you know, a lot of stats, you did a lot of numbers all the time, so it was good.

Grant: And no computers until later.

Harrington: No, I don't think I ever sat in front of a computer until I became elected. We didn't have computers in the Metro sewer.

Grant: Hearing about the assessment of all these properties. It makes me wonder about the destruction of neighborhoods in Butte. What effect did that have on the tax base?

Harrington: It had a huge effect. Other than when they took the Gulch. The 11 houses that left the Gulch relocated to . . . No new houses were built at that time. So they went into a thriving neighborhood or a neighborhood at that time. But when they did take like East Butte, when they took down around Coochies and Shields Avenue where the new treatment plant is on the edge of the pit there, all of those people, they all moved at one time. Also, they went before we did, I think. I think they left. That East side part was done. Meaderville and East Butte was gone before the Gulch was. And then most of the people from Meaderville and East Butte went up to Golan Heights. Because the Anaconda Company had a lot of houses out there.

And a lot of the people, when they left the early part of East Butte, they went to the drives because those houses were all owned by the Anaconda Company. So they just built those developments and then people were, it was like a trade. You didn't have to go shop for a house. You could go look because "We've got six. Do you want to come look at one of these homes?" And that's how they did it, but we had to go look for a house. Because there wasn't a development going on. And so that's how the ladies in the Gulch got so separated because they didn't have a development where they could all go into the same neighborhood. But I think it really affected the tax base because when I did Metro sewer and we didn't have much of McQueen. We probably had Meaderville, but not McQueen at that time.

And East Butte down on all of those little streets down there by the McGruff Park. Those were all assessed. So then those things kept getting eaten up then that part of Metro sewer and your tax base evaporated.

Grant: I mean, do you think those effects of the loss of that tax base are still bothering or still affecting things in Butte today?

Harrington: No, I think it's probably stabilized. I think the tax base is totally restructured and then they come up with a lot of the districts that they brought in where they, I can't even say, URA's they come in and they've done some bond issues to renovate some neighborhoods and make things a little more moveable. So I think the tax base is probably healthy right now. Because the assessments have gotten much greater than it ever was in the older days.

Grant: The pit overall, um, when you take into account the loss of tax base versus the jobs it created and so on and so forth, in your mind was the Berkeley worth it all?

Harrington: I think it was worth probably the jobs that were created with the pit. The danger was less from the underground mines. I think the crafts were still very much in need. You know, on Anaconda Road, they had the boiler shop and they had the blacksmith shop. Everything that the mines needed underground was made by the Anaconda Company.

And then once all of that hard, you know, type of tool was no longer necessary, when it became truck driving and big shovels, that changed that whole factory. So the boiler shops and the blacksmith, only were, you know, doing maintenance versus creating or doing any kind of blueprinting to build things because that whole dynamic changed. So I think job wise, probably not as creative as it was when it was underground, because truck driving and shovel operating are not as . . . it isn't that it isn't manual, but it isn't as precise, I guess, as creating tools. That type of thing for specific work.

Grant: I really wish I could go to Meaderville.

Harrington: Yeah, it was great. I was never old enough to go out and party, but it was a great party, little community. We went to dinner there every Sunday. Nick McGrath and my mother and my aunt and my cousins and I, we'd go to the Arrow Club. And every Sunday, that was our big deal. We'd go to dinner down there. And then we'd come up and the kids would go to the show and my folks would go to the Empire Club for a couple highballs. Then we'd get out of the movie and go over and meet them. And then we'd all go home.

Jaap: What was your favorite meal from the Arrow Club? Do you have something you wish you could order today?

Harrington: Chicken and spaghetti. And then if you were really kind of flush, you could go to the Rocky Mountain. And the Rocky Mountain had great porterhouse steaks. Yeah. So it was a little . . . The Arrow was owned by the Grosso's. And I can't think of who the guy was that owned the Rocky Mountain. But high-class joints, you know, just nice.

Grant: I wanted to ask you a little bit about the position of auditor. Could you give us a summary of that work?

Harrington: Okay. The auditor, when I was the elected auditor, I replaced a lady that had been there for several years. And Katie Murray had been prior to Barbara Mulholland. And then there was a guy by the name of Joe. I can't think of his name, but there was a gentleman that was the auditor at one time. And the auditor was, when I was first elected, the auditor basically had been what the consolidation, one of the things they did was they kind of took a lot of the duties away from the auditor's office. When the auditor's office was very healthy, it paid all the bills for the courthouse.

It made all the checks because all the timekeeper, and it was kind of like the watchdog for all of the finances and anything that was paid, went through the auditor's office, had to be scrutinized, had to be verified and all of those things. That was all done by the auditor's office. And once the consolidation came through, they created the beginning of the finance department. And so that kind of bled that away. So by the time I left, the only duties that were primarily left for the auditor's office, where you could have the ability to review any expenditure for Butte Silver

Bow, you had all the power to examine every expenditure, make sure that it was validated, make sure that the proper paperwork was done. And the payroll. I distributed the payroll, petty cash funds, that type of thing. So you could still do the examination. And what you did that for, it was to make sure that every step had been completed so that the bills were validated and true.

Grant: Are there any aspects of Butte Silver Bow expenditures that were particularly complicated or, you know, always getting into trouble or anything?

Harrington: Not in my day. I had an issue, I think probably with, I think it was car licenses that were kind of. When I first went in there, when you went to get your car licensed in the assessor's office, before the consolidation, everything was assessed according to the fire district, your house taxes, your automobile taxes. So if you lived in Centerville, you might pay a lesser tax overall, then you'd pay out on Harrison Avenue. So every fire district was different. So the Ramsey fire district and school district somehow, or another, the numbers got mixed up. So I worked with the legislature, auditor from the state of Montana, and we went through and rectified that.

But in the older days before I was the auditor, they had really found some fraudulent things that were being paid. And a lot of it was at that time, there was a big thing through the health department. There were some things that were done without the proper procedure. So then they had to back those up, and that was the object of the auditor's office, was to make sure that if something was out to bid or if something was purchased that had had, you know, more than one amount of money. And then during the years, um, I think, I'm trying to think who was the finance director at that time, but they changed the bid process. At one time, you couldn't buy anything over $3,000. Then they upped it to five without having a bid and then they would go, they jumped it up. I think probably when I left, it was close to $12,000. I think you could buy a purchase without having to go to bid.

Grant: Interesting. It doesn't sound like the auditor makes it any easier to make friends.

Harrington: No, no, no. And everything you do is kind of on the QT. It's kind of like a secretive thing. If you're investigating an apartment, like if there's any kind of embezzlement going on, it's really a quiet process. It isn't anything with the red flags. So you, you kind of maneuver and go through the back doors to check things because you don't want to show your hand until you have the evidence to make any kind of an accusation. But there's usually a little murmur that's going on somewhere. And so I was involved in a couple of those, I guess, three or four of them that I can think of off the top of my head.

And it doesn't make for friendships. It really doesn't. And they think you're targeting them for a purpose other than the real purpose, which is - it's not your money to fool around with. It's taxpayer's money. Yeah. You know, and that's one of the things that really bothers me with, I guess you'd call it, government. People want to run it as a business and government is a service. I mean, whether you have money coming in or not, you have to plow the streets. You have to pick up the garbage. It's a service. It is not a business. Like, you know, pizza hut, it's a service. So you have to find ways to provide the service regardless of the income.

Grant: Thank you for saying that. We see where business people and government has gotten us. Anyway.

Harrington: Well, it's that fine line. You know, it's that code of ethics that nobody seems to . . . We used to go to a seminar over in Helena all the time. And one of the things that . . . I still have one someplace, and it was a little blue pamphlet, and it was the code of ethics and it was pretty precise on what you could do or what you couldn't do. And now you look at the stuff that they're doing. The Hatch Act, I mean, it's being abused. The abuses are terrible and nobody knows the difference. And that's the sad part. And that's what I said, you know, once you leave something that you've done for so long. And you knew at the top of your head, this was wrong. You can't do that. Now all of those people that knew those things that were wrong are no longer there. So people are coming in and making up their own rules and they're watering down all of the systems that were black and white, and they're becoming gray to the point where they're becoming invisible. And that's a worry. That always worries me.

Grant: Having worked so much with taxation, I'm just curious if you could share your thoughts just generally on taxation as a mechanism of government. Are you in favor of taxation?

Harrington: I am. I think we need taxes to provide services to the counties. We need taxes to have the police departments, the fire departments, those services are very necessary. And unless you've got something that's a control to be a leader or a stop, you've got to have those services provided. Otherwise, I think, you know, if it was all basically leased out to individuals to run privately, private business, they keep saying you could do it better with private business. I don't always agree with that. You know, we had the county hospital at one time. We had the airport at one time that was really, you know, they made money and then they turn them over and they become private entities and therefore it changes the atmosphere of those types of services.

Grant: What about the atmosphere at Butte Silver Bow itself? Can you just describe for us the culture of this county government, as you knew it?

Harrington: The culture that we had was absolutely fantastic. I was so lucky. We had a great camaraderie. We had great friendships. When I was first there, and I don't know if it's still true today, but when I was first there in the assessor's office, when we would be overwhelmed with work, they would send people from another office. If somebody had a slack time and the clerk and recorders, or somebody had a slack time in the treasury, they would send somebody over to help. I mean, it was just a common courtesy. And so there, I might have to go do a couple of days with somebody else's business. You know, it was just a helping hand. And I can remember we had a guy come in named Tom. He came in with a folding machine. Tom Conley. And he came in with a folding machine. It looked like something out of a big robot that he brought in and the rumor was this folding machine was going to take everybody's job.

You know, you're not gonna, nobody's going to be folding assessments. We're not going to be stuffing envelopes. So we really resented Tom and Tom turned out to be a nice guy, but it had nothing to do with Tom. It was what he was bringing to the table, which was going to eliminate all these jobs. And so this folding machine, it was just a monstrosity and it made all kinds of noises. It kind of looked like the chocolate factory with all this stuff flying out of it. It was just hysterical. And it turned out that the thing was broken more than it wasn't. And so as a result, I think the folding machine finally went by the wayside. But it was quite a thing. And I can remember poor Tom, just a nice, nice guy. But he came in with that, you know, black hat that he's just going to wipe out the whole courthouse. So that was a funny thing. And then when I was

first there also all the printing was done in the addressograph department, which is now the budget department and that whole corner was in there. And there was a lady by the name of Theresa Quirk and she sat at a machine that made these little plates. And it was like, I suppose, that they have at printers. So she would type all of this stuff that was on these little plates with your name, your address, the block of the edition that your house was on, the lot that it was on, the district that it was in. And then it had these little tabs on the top.

So every time she ran something for the tax books, there were these big, huge books that wouldn't even fit on this table. And the machinery was just this clumpidity clump - talk about noise at the mine, the noise in the addressograph department was hysterical. Between the addressograph machine pounding and Tom's folding machine, that corner of the courthouse sounded like it was a factory instead of an office. Yeah.

So I think taxes are a necessity. I think we're privileged to have the freedoms that we have. And I think it takes a structure of some kind to keep it in law and order or keep it on the up and up. So I'm in favor of taxes, not abundant taxes, but I, you know, moderate taxes, I guess.

Jaap: So I have a question that's kind of timely for right now. So you worked under a number of mayors and chief executives during your tenure. Do you have any that are particularly memorable for good or bad? If you're comfortable saying that.

Harrington: Probably bad. My brother used to say to me, you know, every time a new one would come and he'd say, do you think you can get along with this chief executive? I always had a contentious . . . well because we were looking at what they did and what they spent and some of their practices. So I wasn't very popular with any of them. When I first went there, it was under, we had a system of three commissioners. It was before it was consolidated. So we had three commissioners and that was kind of a fun time.

There was some characters that were the commissioners. And then McCone, I think was the first mayor, or the first chief executive and then Don Peoples. And he and I had a contentious relationship. And then the last one, I guess, was Jack Lynch, not the last, but last one that I had trouble with was Jack Lynch. We didn't see eye to eye at all. I've got along with most of them, you know, tolerated, but never had much of a relationship with any of them because of the position.

Grant: I wanted to ask about the fires. You mentioned the fires uptown. A subject that really fascinates me because it had such an impact on this place. I've just wanted to hear your recollections. If you ever saw fires or just what it was like to be living here when that was going on.

Harrington: I am a firetruck chaser. So yes I did. Yes, I did. We used to go to the, I mean, it was a big thing. I can remember where the parking shop is on Broadway Street, when that big hotel, that whole block went from the hyper building on over to the pre-release building, which is right there. And I remember watching that fire. I remember when the Penny's block burned. I remember when the block across from the Montana Standard, wherever it was when it burned down. I remember going to those things, and I think when you live on the hill, you know, you see a lot from the flat, but when you're on the hill, you have an access to be able to get there

quickly. I've been to a fire before the fire truck actually, which isn't a good thing. I don't do it as much anymore, but I used to do it when these guys were little. I guess at that point in time when I was younger, it didn't seem to be as, I mean, it was an awful thing. I don't think there were ever many lives taken in these big fires. They were suspicious, I believe. I think people always had rumors going that there was a reason for them. Nobody ever validated what those reasons were, whether it was to change the landscape of the uptown to make it move someplace. I don't know. That was always a rumor, but they were devastating because it interfered. And some of those businesses never came back.

Grant: What's it like to watch them burn?

Harrington: A little frightening? It depends, I suppose, on the age you're watching a fire. Probably when you're younger, you're looking at it and thinking, "Wow, this is something." Then when you get older, you have a different aspect of what it's actually doing. The thing that it's ruining. The devastation. Will it be rebuilt? Will it not be rebuilt? So I think the older you are probably the more reality you have with the destruction of a fire.

Grant: What do you think the overall effect has been of those fires in the uptown on Butte?

Harrington: Oh, I think it changed, probably a lot of the . . . some of those buildings could never be replaced. So there's still a lot of big holes on the uptown. The vacant buildings can be restored, but once they're destroyed by fire, you don't replace them because there's just no money to replace a building like that. And even if they put, you know, the conditions on it that it has to blend in and it has to do this, it still isn't what the old buildings used to be.

But then you think of the old buildings too. They're so hard to retrofit this day and age for the new modern, you know, entities that you need for hooking up all of your computers and stuff. Basically, newer buildings, if you could design them and could afford to build and look like the old buildings would be great, but that's a big money ticket.

Grant: Were there particular buildings that when they were gone, you really felt the loss more than others?

Harrington: I would say probably the Pennies building, because that was a building where I think we all frequented quite a bit. It was right kind of in the heart of town. And you know, every one of the little stores on Park Street that went - the Diana Hughes, all of the shops that I would have been involved in, shopping and going, the Grand Silvers, those types of things, they were all part of who you were when you went downtown. And once those were gone, they never really brought anything back to replace them. I can remember, you'd go over Park Street and you just kinda went from store to store, store to store.

And it was great. It was like being in a big city. And then once those things were gone, those little blank spots were never replaced again. I think the first one that did the replacement was probably the American Candy Shop that became quite a nice building. And then they had the shoe store that was next door. And that was probably a nice addition to Park Street, but those things were far and few between.

Grant: How about demolitions, if not an outright fire then have you seen buildings come down?

Harrington: I want to say the ones that I can think of off the top of my head, it'd be on East Park Street, the lower side of East Park Street. There was like a two or three story building there that had been vacant for years and the roof kind of gave way and there wasn't much salvage to it because the wall's bowed. I want to say probably East Park Street, mostly familiar with me right now. The lower side got pretty well chewed up. I can remember the Rialto building when I was a kid. I used to go to the dentist or the doctor up there and the medical arts building, which is where the Montana Power building is now.

That was a gorgeous building. And when that side of the street went, when Spill-Ems and those couple of bars, the Main Street and the whole bit, the hunters' store on those corners. I mean, it was a great block. And the other side of the street had cafes and the whole bit. It was fun to go downtown. They had the Saturday night shopping for Christmas for the four weeks of Christmas and it was just a metropolis of people and fun. And it was nice. So those are great memories that my children never experienced, but it certainly was good for me.

Grant: Since that Butte is seemingly gone forever. What do you hope for, for Butte in the coming years?

Harrington: I would like to see young families start coming in so that maybe all of that feeling of community can be restored. There's a lot of my generation still in the town, but you get to the point where you've gotta make way and pray for the younger generations to come in. And I think they're so much more educated and so much more talent than the average, you know, that we were, we weren't exposed to a lot of stuff. The younger generations are now being exposed to so much. They've got great ideas. They've got ambition. And I think that's what keeps the community alive is the ambition and the desire to continue on and just try something. We've got some gorgeous buildings that could still be retrofitted and converted to a great business district, a great residential district. And I think those would be beautiful things if they could become a reality.

Grant: But in your childhood, you got to hop trains.

Harrington: I did! And hook cars. I hooked a bus once. That wasn't a good thing either because when they would shift the diesel smoke would come out of the back and then you'd go home. And my mother said, "Have you been hopping cars?" "Cars? No. Why?" And she says, "Well, you're covered in diesel smoke." Okay. It was quite a trick when you could get the bus, you could get the bus on the corner of Copper. Right up here on Copper. When it slowed down to go up Main Street and then it would go west on Woolman.

So we would hop it up here on Copper. Hook it. Ride it around over to Woolman and then it would go up Montana Street. We'd get off on Montana and Woolman. So it was fun. Terrible on your shoes though.

Grant: I wanted to go back to the beginning again where we started. Just thinking about Dublin Gulch and the houses are gone, the schools you went to are closed, I don't want to dwell on the negative, but I'm just curious how that makes you feel.

Harrington: You know, it's kind of sad. The memories are fantastic. And when I first left the Gulch and moved to the house that I'm living in now on Mother's Day. I don't know if it was a memory of my mom or what, but I used to go to the Gulch. We'd go over to the Gulch. I'd take the kids and we'd go to the Gulch. We did it not too long ago. And we had to roll under the fence because it's all locked off now for the company. But, um, I used to go over and walk around and I did it a lot by myself, I guess, just trying to find some comfort, I guess, or some piece of what it used to be.

And at that point in time, when I would go by myself, I could walk over and go through the Gulch. You can get the high road and go up to the Badger, up where the Granite mountain Memorial is. And it was just beautiful, I guess it was a day to reflect on the memories and the relationships that you had when you lived there.

So I know you can't go back, but you can certainly cherish those wonderful feelings and memories of where you were raised. Because I think your roots are there, you know, and it's just one of those things I still get. I was up the Gulch. I had company here about a month ago and I took them up and we sat in the mine yard at the Kelly. And it's just a nice feeling. And I'm trying to explain to them where their great-grandmother was born.

[01:05:22]

And the house that I was born in and trying to give a, I guess you'd call it, a picturesque description. And you're looking at this mine dump, it looks like Sarajevo up there, you know, and I'm trying to give them this gorgeous picture in their head of what it used to be. And it's not easy. You know, I've got the feeling, I've got the heart, I've got all that stuff. And then they look up at this dump and think, "Oh really?" You don't know what they walk away with in their head, but I'm so busy trying to make this warm, cozy memory for them. And it isn't an easy thing to do.

Grant: What about during high school? I just wanted to hear a little bit about your life then.

Harrington: High school was a hoot. Nobody had a car. None of our group had a car. So we walked from the Gulch down to Central every day. Well, we'd go to mass at St. Mary's at eight o'clock. Then we'd leave there. And then we come out and we go through the courthouse walk by the jail and through the courthouse, the shortcut to Central. In my class we had 98 women in our class, 98 girls, and most of us have stayed pretty close through those years of those that stayed in Butte. And some that have not. High school was great, great competition with Butte High. Girls didn't have sports in those days. We had a gym class, but there was no female sports whatsoever. I think we had Bert Vanmiel would come over. He was a gymnast that moved here from, I think, Finland or Sweden or something. And he lived next to the YMCA on Park Street. And so he would come over and I can still see him.

He was a gymnast and he was excellently built little guy. And, he'd say, "Bon tu tui, girls," you know, and we would help to show the medicine ball, but I can still see Bert go, "One, two, three." It was just a hoot and we'd all giggle at poor old Bert, but he was down trying to teach us a little bit of, you know, I guess you'd call it exercise to remain healthy. And then he had that big medicine that he would throw around the gym. And, he was a delight, absolute delight, but that was the only activity we had. We had more sports in grade school than we had in high school.

There was very little in high school. Grade school we played basketball and volleyball. And then when we were in grade school, not high school, but grade school, seventh and eighth grade, they had a tournament at the IC church and it was for all the Catholic grade schools.

And I can remember Jim Michelotti saying one day, he said it was like going to the NBA. It was just, you know, you think you were at the final four or something. It was so exciting with all these grade schools. And every grade school had to support one of the half times or in between games. So you had to have cheerleaders or, somebody would come out and sing and I can remember we went up and sang one year and it was deplorable. We were awful. They didn't throw tomatoes at us, but they should have. But it was a big thing. It was a big thing in our lives. And then in high school you had the tournaments.

It was great to go to the tournaments. Butte High and Central would have really competitive football, basketball seasons. Mixers. They had mixers every Friday night after the football games or Saturday night, which was the Central mixers were at Boys Central, which is the business development center. So that's where our dances were. And then Butte High used to go to the Miners Union Building. They had the youth center in there. So it was basically an uptown thing. The stadium is where all the games were played. We never had a car, so we'd leave the dance and go to the Big Butte Tavern up on Empire and Excelsior because they would let us in and you could get a burger in the back. They had a little cafe in the back, so we would go there because the kids we ran with were from IC and St. Lawrence. So we'd walk up to the there, and then we had to walk all the way over, back home to the Gulch.

Grant: Is that Sam's now?

Harrington: No, it was on the other corner across from Sam's. It was on the East corner where the vacant lot is.

Grant: Did it burn?

Harrington: Yeah.

Grant: Damnit.

Harrington: It was a great little joint. It was good.

Grant: I'm curious about the academics, you know, in Catholic education, in Butte at that time, was it a good education?

Harrington: Yes, it was. I can remember when I went to Central, I believe the tuition was $10 a month. When I went to grade school, it was a dollar a month. And those were hard dollars to come by. But Central was $10 a month when I went to school. And we didn't have any, you know, extracurriculars. I think basically you took the four solids and maybe something, I don't know what it was typing or something. It wasn't necessary. But yeah, the education was good. We had nuns. The bulk of the teachers were nuns and found out that in grade school they were scary and in high school, they became human, you know, you could relate to them that they weren't robots or something. Yeah. So in high school you learned that the nuns were really just people under that habit and they were pretty decent people.

Grant: Did you ever consider joining?

Harrington: I did. I did. Which was silly. Um, I don't have the temperament for it, but I thought about it. And it was kind of one of those things. I can remember for graduation when you're trying to decide what to get for graduation. In those days, luggage was the big thing, because everybody was going away. And so everybody wanted luggage for their graduation present, so they could go away to college with their new luggage. Samsonite, I think was the big thing. And so I asked for black luggage because I was going to go to the convent and my mother looked at me like, really? So she knew darn well, I wasn't going to go. So then I toyed with the idea of being an airline stewardess. I was interviewed for that. And then when it came right down to it and I had to go to Salt Lake to go to the training, I couldn't go. I couldn't leave home. But yeah. So pretty silly.

Grant: You mentioned your mother. I had on my list here, I just wanted to hear more about her and it sounds like she dealt with major loss with, you had said that she had lost two children.

Harrington: You know, they were, those ladies were tough. I mean, they really were tough women. They took a lot in stride. They never complained. She ran the household. As I said, she never worked after the phone company. She was involved though. She did a lot of things with the YMCA. She took safety - red cross training. Yeah, so she did the red cross training and she became a lifeguard type person. Got involved in that type of stuff. She was very involved in politics, worked every election. The first time I voted was up in the St. Mary's . . . the big old voting machines and she was a judge.

So she was the lady that took me in and showed me how to use the machine. And so that was kind of nice, but she was always involved in politics. Greatly involved. They had a Catholic council for the St Mary's parish and she was involved in that. And then there was a group that was called the Northside Ladies. They had a shop or a building that was right below the post office or the federal building now. And so she was involved in that. They were always doing something very involved in fundraising for the Catholic schools. She was out doing that all the time. She was busy. Walked to town every day. And then my father would get off shift and she'd go to Safeway on Granite Street. That's where our Safeway was at that time. We'd leave Hennessy's go over to Safeway.

And my father would be in the Butte Brewery over on Wyoming street. And so then he would go in and have a beer. We'd put the groceries in the car, we'd go over. My mom would have a high ball and he'd have another beer. And then we'd go up Anaconda Road and go home. But that was a ritual, you know, a couple of days a week. Because you didn't buy a lot of groceries at a time in those days. You kind of would buy for maybe two days at a time, if that. Well, then that was her social life, going downtown and she knew every clerk in every store and always had a hat in layaway. And she was pretty classy. She wore big, honking earrings, always wore a hat. She was pretty classy.

Grant: You say she had a hat in layaway.

Harrington: A hat in layaway. Always had a hat in layaway. And usually the hats were in the Grand Silver. It had a little hat shop in the back. And so she would always have a hat in layaway

or she'd have a set of earrings and hunters in the Main Rexall Drug or something, you know, little earrings set of some kind.

Grant: Where do you think that strength came from? I assume she was a Democrat.

Harrington: She was.

Grant: So is that a trait of Irish Catholic Democrats in Butte? They're just tough?

Harrington: I think they probably grew up with so little and they worked very hard for everything they had. And nothing came easy. I think she was strong because, well, I know she was strong because her father was a bootlegger. Yeah. So they had a still in the basement. And so they had to take turns, sitting up all night to watch the still, that was part of the family job. And so she and my dad dated for 10 years and my mother said she really never knew if he liked her or if he liked the still. So she was tough. Her mother, I think she lost her mother at a fairly early age. I never knew my grandparents because both sets of grandparents passed away in my memory. My brother knew them, but I didn't know them. He was six years older than I am.

Jaap: Your parents dated for 10 years.

Harrington: Yes. My father was the last one at home and he wouldn't marry until something happened to his mother. So he dated my mom for 10 years. Yeah. And so she always told the story that she didn't know if he liked her or if he liked the still. Because he'd get a high ball when he went down there.

Grant: Did they ever get caught?

Harrington: No.

Grant: Alright. And the dang assessors never got on the revenue?

Harrington: No. The revenue never got them. Yeah. Yeah. So, and I don't know how long that went on, but it was a long time. Yeah. But you know, she was funny because she knew all the neighbors down there. And all the years that we would go to Shields Avenue and it was kind of like, "Oh, there's where my house was 219 Shields." And there was never a house there all the years I knew it. But I knew exactly where it should have been. You know, at McGruff Park on the West side of the street. But she would say, "Oh, there's 219 Shields." And I don't know, do I do that with the Gulch? We do become our parents. Unfortunately.

Grant: I wanted to just continue. Speaking of parents, your dad, did he talk about work with the kids? Did you have a good understanding of what he did every day?

Harrington: Yeah, I did. Well, I used to go visit the engine room all the time. And he was amazing because he always brought something home from work for you, whether it was a leftover couple of grapes out of the bucket or a piece of chalk because they used to mark the big wheels in the engine room with chalk. So I always got a piece of chalk, but I used to go to visit the engine rooms in those days quite a bit just for something to do in the summer. I used to go to the Badger because I would bring food up for the rabbits. They had rabbits in the yard up at the

Badger. So my mother would send me up with a little bag of carrots and some lettuce or something for the rabbits. So it was just something to do. You'd walk up to the Badger from the house and go over to the engine room. So I knew, you know, basically all the engineers, because they're all friends of my dad's. My mother said he drove or he worked all night long because those big chairs that they sat in, they have these big pressure things for your feet. And then these big levers that you did.

So she said he would run engine at night. That his legs and his arms would be moving at night. And it was quite a responsibility. And he kind of had a breakdown after the 1959 strike because he was on the chippy up at the Mountain Con. And he was bringing the men up from the bottom and they had to stay. And one of the other engineers did have a breakdown. They called him Dooney and he was on the top. And then the other guy was at the 3000 or something. So they went from the bottom to the three and then from the three to the top. And the earthquake was pretty scary.

Grant: Oh, there was an earthquake.

Harrington: So they didn't really know if they were going to get everybody out or not. And I can remember them talking about that.

Grant: Did he ever have an accident?

Harrington: No, but I think one of his oilers had an accident with one of the shiv wheels, I think. But no, he never had an accident. I think he was 42 years as an engineer. And I think his retirement was $119 a month. 42 years and it died with him.

Grant: Why did he stay when everyone else went to California?

Harrington: His mother I think was still alive at the time.

Grant: Oh and that's why he didn't want to marry. Okay. I was just hoping I had one more here on my list and maybe you have more, but, say someone has never heard of Dublin Gulch. I was hoping you could just give kind of a quick summary of Dublin Gulch.

Harrington: I think the heart of the Gulch were the people. It wasn't necessarily the landscape, because it didn't have much of a landscape. I mean, it was just a whole kibosh of houses. It just sat on a plateau. Wherever they could get a house to stay standing is where it ended up. And there were only two basic streets in the Gulch. There was Summit Street and Ridgely Avenue. It was just a community of, or not a community, really, it was just a neighborhood of great people. And I'm sure everybody has the same feeling about their little neighborhood. But the Gulch to me was special. I mean, it was your whole life. I never left the Gulch until I was in high school, to speak of.

You know, you never went anywhere to meet friends. You never had to worry about going out to somebody else's house. Once you went to high school, then you find out that other people lived in other places. But up until then, I didn't know that. Every summer we went to Pipestone for a vacation and everybody in the Gulch went at the same time. It was insane. You know, if there was somebody who didn't like during those 12 months of the year, you ended up spending two

weeks at Pipestone for vacation and it was all the same families. Everybody went at the same time. So it was almost like they were family versus neighbors and they all enjoyed one another immensely. And we had one family that used to go to Elkhorn for vacation. And I used to think, I wonder how much money you've got to have to go to Elkhorn because we only get to go to Pipestone. But we did that for years.

And our eighth grade picnic was at Pipestone for St. Mary's school. And I think probably several years after that, Central's picnics were at Pipestone. And then for graduation picnic, we went to Boulder Montana. So that was kind of, that was really out of the box, big time. But the Gulch, it was just a neighborhood that I I'm so happy I grew up there because there was just something special about it. And the people were special. There was just something unique about them.

Grant: Is there anything we missed? Anything glaring?

Voice: Couple of stories I was thinking of Butte, you touched on the train and stuff like that.

Harrington: I've been very lucky as far as having a community of friendships with people that I've had for a long time. And being in the courthouse, as long as I was there. I mean, that was a family of friendships at the courthouse. I've been very fortunate. I think running for office, put me places where I didn't know I wanted to be. The people that I have been supported by most of my life, my family's been very supportive. My friends have been excellent. I suppose it's that same atmosphere that my mother grew up in that everybody was there when you needed them. And I've been very fortunate to have that experience in my life too. So I have a lot to be grateful for. I've got a lot more to be grateful for than not.

Grant: I don't know why this just occurred to me. Do you have a favorite drink?

Harrington: Favorite drink?

Grant: We've asked a couple of people that.

Harrington: I used to like a Manhattan every once in a while. Well, sure I'll have a Manhattan. Over the last probably 20 years I developed a taste for beer, which I never did as a young person. I always felt that if you drank beer, you missed the whole night because you were in the bathroom. So I always drank something that you could, you know, it was a little more stable. You could spend the night dancing and having a good time. And beer wasn't the ticket for me in those days. But I think probably a beer. I'm not much of a wine drinker. I buy a lot of wine. I don't have a very good sense of wine. So I always have a bunch at the house, but I never drink a lot of it. But I will do vodka once in a while too. I'm not fussy. I'll drink anything.

Grant: You mentioned quite a few bars that aren't here anymore. Did you have an old fav?

Harrington: Oh God. I think I spent 19, 20 and 21 at the IT Club in Rocker. And the Rumpus Room was a great bar to go to. And then the El Mar, Raymond's, they were all dance clubs, but that's what you did. You went out and danced. These guys go out nowadays and nobody dances. I mean, just go out and socialize, but we danced. You could go out and a lot of them had a happy hour. You'd go to happy hour. And for $4 you could get blasted. Yeah, it was great. So a lot of happy hours, but a lot of dancing, every place we went was dancing and it was great fun. So a lot

of good dancers. Then we'd go to the Pekin afterwards at two o'clock in the morning and my father would say to me, when I got home, "Don't tell me that chinaman let you stay there till four o'clock every morning." "Well, I'm sorry. But he does." Yeah. So we would always go to the Chinese, to the Pekin afterwards. And then we'd go to a place on Front Street, Martha's was there. We'd go to Martha's which is now a pot shop. And there was another one on the other side that was a good little place.

So before the ones that were out on the flat - Fred and Milly's and all those places came along later. But when I was first going out, it was the Pekin and Martha's. But yeah, the IT Club was a great place to go. They were so good and people were good. The bartenders were very good to you, even if they knew you were underage. If you weren't causing a problem, you could sit and have a good time. So they were very good to us. And there was a bartender at the IT Club. His name was Bill McMeekin. And then once I became working for Metro sewer, he was anti Metro sewer because he had a lot of property. So Bill McMeekin and I went lots arounds at the courthouse, not at the bar. Because he was quite a property and he didn't want to pay all those assessments for vacant ground.

But it's been a very nice ride for me. And the bars were great. You never had to go far. I mean, you could walk downtown. The Lost Weekend was on Main Street. I never did do that much. I used to go every once in a while with my brother. The Goodwill up on Montana Street, used to go there once in a while. The bars in Walkerville were great bars to go to. They had a good dance club up there. So it was just fun. You always went where there was music and there was music everywhere in those days. Not so much like my mother and them experienced. They never had the dance halls, the winter garden and the gardens, but, but we had some pretty good bands that played around in town, local bands.

Grant: Like the Renegades?

Harrington: Renegades. And the Yaks from Anaconda. The Yaks were good too.

Grant: The Rumpus Room was that in the Rialto? Like on the Main Street side.

Harrington: It was down on the bottom. There was something about the room that just did something to you. You'd go down the steps and by the time you'd go into the tunnel to go into the back and you became a whole different person. It's just made you snaky. I don't know what it was. It was amazing. And this is not a good story. You probably shouldn't leave this one in, but we were down there one night and there was a group of us and the lady from the . . . Beverly Snodgrass was down there and she was the local Madam. And she was, uh, and not in very good shape. And so somehow or another, we ended up with her little bag of money and we timbered the bar on Beverly Snodgrass. So that probably wasn't a very good thing.

Jaap: People loved Beverly for it afterward I'm sure.

Harrington: Yeah. Timbering the bar. Never had done that my whole life.

Grant: What does that mean?

Harrington: Bought a drink for everybody at the bar.

Grant: Buy a round. Okay.

Harrington: Timber the bar. So some good times. Rumpus Room was a great place. We took my father down there one time because he liked Kovacich. So I don't know if it was his birthday or something. So my brother and my mom and dad and I went down. And my father looked like the guy on the mush box. I mean, he was tall and he was slim and wore a hat, suit all the time.

And so we get down to the Rumpus Room and we didn't go in the front door because it was closed. So you had to kind of snake around to the back door. And so we got in there and Kovacich was playing and they liked my dad. So, Dooney finally said to my brother, he wouldn't, he had his hat on his lap. He wouldn't put the hat down. Because he said, "Is there a backdoor in this place?" Harr said, "Geez, I don't know if there's a backdoor or not." And he said, "Well, we ought to get the fire department down here. You can't have a joint without having a backdoor in it." But he was a wreck. He didn't like being down. And there was a backdoor. I don't know where it went. I never used it. But he was a wreck. But he wouldn't take the hat off his lap because he was afraid that he had to get out of there quick. And he wasn't going without his hat.

Jaap: Oh that's great.

Grant: Thanks for that.

Harrington: We used to go to Dugan's on Sunday. We'd go to mass at St. Mary's at nine o'clock and then we'd go to Dugan's on our way home. Because my father only drove usually one day a week. So we'd come down Anaconda Road, went to St. Mary's church, come over to Copper Street, and went over to Dugan's. George and Marv Perry ran Dugan's at the time. So if there happened to be a body in there, we'd sign the book because he wasn't coming down during the week. And if there wasn't a body there he'd sign a blank page. So we could make sure that his name was in the book just in case somebody died during the week and he couldn't get there. But we went to Dugan's almost every Sunday after mass.

Grant: Well, I thought maybe Dugan's was a bar.

Harrington: No. It's a mortuary. Yeah. And George Perry and Marv were great people.

Jaap: I don't know if I have any other questions. Danette, that was great. Do you have any other questions? Unless you have anything that you think of that you want to close with or anything.

Harrington: I can't.

Jaap: Thank you for sharing what that is. That was really wonderful and fun.

Harrington: Okay. Well, thank you for having me do this. I think they're valuable to have all of this someplace for the days to come.

[END OF RECORDING]