THE

VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

JANET CORNISH

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Oral History Transcript of Janet Cornish

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Jaap: So, Janet, will you tell me about...Well, why don't you tell me where you were born and then if you want to tell me a little bit about your parents' background and that sort of thing, and we'll just start off there.

Cornish: I was born on May 14th, 1951, at Edgewater Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. I was the first child. I'm one of two children. I have a brother who's about two years younger than I am. I was born to Bert and Marge Eisner. And my dad and mom were both children of immigrants. We are an Eastern European Jewish family. My father's father was born here, but the other three grandparents were all born in Europe. My dad was an attorney, although he only practiced law for a short time. He was a labor lawyer but kept his license current pretty much through his life. He instead went into my grandparents', his parents', family, hardware store business, a hardware store called Sheridan Bazaar. Which my grandparents had bought in 1936. And that store is still there today, it's under the "L" tracks near the Wilson Avenue train station in Chicago.

My mother was, her parents were in the garment industry. My grandmother was a seamstress for Katherine Scott and my grandfather worked for Hart, Schaffner and Marx and was a tailor. And they both had to take different directions when they went through the Depression. They owned their own clothing store. But it was women's clothing on the south side of Chicago, but with the coming of the depression, they lost that and went to work for others. My grandfather worked for, I think it was, the WPA, the workers program on road repair and construction.

And they always lived in this great little house, a little apartment on Kedzie Avenue in Chicago. And it's interesting that their address was 1722 1/2 North Kedzie. And over the years, it was an apartment building. I still have run into people who had relatives or who grew up either in that building or on that block. So it's a city of four million people. And you have all these connections. And that was always wonderful to visit with them and my grandmother. My grandfather passed away in 1964, but my grandmother lived until 1987.

And on my father's side, we actually lived with my father's parents until I was just about nine years old. They had a big old rambling Spanish style home with four fireplaces. It was magnificent. And Tiffany glass fixtures. They had picked it up right after World War Two for a song. And if I could go back and do one thing differently, I would have insisted they kept the house, but they sold it to someone who ultimately divided it up into apartments and it was later demolished.

Anyway, my grandparents owned the hardware store and that hardware store had really shaped me to a great extent. I grew up working after school and during summer vacations, working in the store, starting out when I was four or five years old, bagging customers' purchases. My dad believed in hard work and so I had to as soon as I could. I was sweeping floors and cleaning

bathrooms and learning how to interact with customers and learn how to make keys and mix paint. And a little bit of cutting glass and cutting pipe, although I was better at making keys than those other things. But the hardware store shaped us. And when my dad passed away in 2017, both my brother and I as part of our eulogies talked about that store.

And I think it's probably one of the experiences in my life that really shaped me. We were in what's called Uptown Chicago, which was a very, very diverse neighborhood. We had people of Greek descent. A lot of Japanese Americans. One in particular, Mr. Nagai who would come in the store and he was a survivor of the internment camps. And my dad, who was in World War Two and fought in the Pacific, had a great deal of empathy and sympathy for the Japanese American community as having interacted with the customers in our store, but also just knowing about what the United States had done during the war here at home. And there was a Buddhist temple in the neighborhood of our hardware store. And every year my dad donated all the paint for whatever repairs that the church had to undertake or the temple rather. And so we had people in the store who spoke Spanish, who spoke Greek.

We had one gentleman who was from Alsace-Lorraine who worked there, African-American, Appalachian. It was really a mixture of a neighborhood. And so I grew up learning about people from a variety of backgrounds and learning how people interact and respect each other. It was a really wonderful experience. Also, how to run a cash register. So it was really a great, great experience and one that I always cherish. And a lot of my stories, life stories reflect that time of my life. So when I was fifteen, I was a candy striper. I did that just one year at a hospital. But after that, starting at 16, I worked there regularly throughout both high school and college.

I graduated from Mather of the Stephen Tyng Mather, the National Park Service fame. The Stephen Tyng Mather High School in 1969 and went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison and got my undergraduate degree there in political science.

During my senior year, 1972, 73, my parents made a move to Nashville, Tennessee. Let me just backtrack. I had mentioned earlier that we lived with my grandparents until 1960, and then my parents bought their own home and then my grandfather died in 1961, my paternal. And so my grandmother lived with us there. So we were never quite the family of four. We always have a grandparent. Well, she passed away in 1970. But anyway, I went off to college at the University of Wisconsin, which I just really loved. It was a great experience. Not quite knowing what I wanted to study. And I simply ended up with a political science degree because that was the field that I had the most courses in.

And so then I returned to Nashville and I started applying, I had been applying for work in national parks. And finally that summer of 1973, I was able to get a job at Glacier National Park working for the concessionaire there, Glacier Park Incorporated. And I got the call that my application was accepted and it was already into the season, evidently they'd lost my application and found it again and offered me a job at Swiftcurrent over by Many Glacier. And I couldn't go right then. I was taking the G.R.E. and something. I don't remember all the things that played into this. She said, "Well, would you be ready in a week? And I said, yes. So they called back and I got a job at Lake McDonald Lodge. And so in July of 1973, I went to work in the gift shop at Lake McDonald Lodge, and that really changed my life.

I remember vividly that trip out here. At that time, in order to come to Montana, you had to go to Spokane first on Hughes Air West. We had to go to Spokane and then come back to Kalispell. And I remember we were delayed somewhat. And so they gave everyone on the plane a cocktail. So everyone was very friendly. And I was sitting...Oh, let me go back. I'm sorry that I keep forgetting things. While I was in the Spokane airport, I ran into some people while I was waiting for my Kalispell plane, a family. And just how people chat and this lady found out I was going to Kalispell and she said, "Where are you staying?" And this is 1973 and, you know, we were used to you grab your guitar and your suitcase and you can go anywhere and you don't think about reservations or anything like that. So she said to me, "Where are you staying?" I said, "Well, I hadn't really made a plan yet, I thought I would just find a place." And she said, "Well, I'm gonna call my family there. And find out what's appropriate for a young woman traveling alone." So she found this place called the Four Seasons Hotel, which is still there. I think it became a travel lodge or something else.

And so I had my reservation. I got on the plane. We had our cocktails. And the gentleman sitting next to me (we had entered into a conversation) asked what were my plans when I got there? And he said, "Well, my wife is picking me up at the airport. We'll be happy to give you a ride." Well, you know, I don't think anything in my experience growing up in Chicago would have led me to believe that was the safe thing to do. But for some reason, I knew it would be fine. And we got into the car and he and his wife checked out the hotel to make sure it was fine. And stayed there that night. And the next morning I took a bus to the Park and I really thought I had died and gone to heaven. I remember traveling along Highway 2 along the middle fork of the Flathead River and, you know, winding our way up to the Park and then at the train station, I was picked up by a red jammer and went into the Park and my whole life changed and I ended up working there for four more summers, three more summers. So four total.

At the end of my first summer, I went back to Nashville and kind of contemplated my future, wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, but spent a year there and went back for a second summer. And I had a summer romance. That's a long time ago, but it didn't go very well and I was really out of sorts. And one of my other friends said to me, "Why don't you just come to Montana and stay in Montana?" And he was a student at the university and said you could go to grad school. They have a great program in environmental studies. So I took a chance and applied and got in.

And so now we're in January of 1975 and again, fell in love with Missoula and met Jay, my husband, and we were in the same environmental studies master's program and spent the next two and a half years there. And in June of 1977, we graduated and we started looking for work and we made a pact that we weren't quite married yet. We had decided we were going to get married, but we hadn't decided when or where. And we made a pact that we would go wherever one of us found a job first as long as it was in Montana. So he was hired in August of 1977 by what was just MERDI then. It became lots of subsidiaries. And that was the time when MERDI, Montana Energy Research and Development Institute. Montana Energy Research at M.H. Development Institute. The purpose was to research a clean coal technology. And at that time, MERDI and NCAT were under the same auspices and they were the result of rather extensive lobbying on the part of Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf. And so I was not successful right off.

So we took Jay's job and we got to Butte. And I said to Jay, "We are gonna be here for two years and then we're out of here." Because I just, oh my God. It was not the way I had imagined Montana. But even though I had lived here and gone to graduate school here. I mean, I even used to tell people this is always embarrassing to admit. When I worked at the gift shop my first summer at Lake McDonald and then the last three years I was at the front desk. And when people would ask me for routes to Yellowstone, I would say, "Oh, you don't want to go through Butte." And I would route them some other way. But, you know, we quickly found a group of friends here. There were many of us who had been hired by either NCAT or MERDI at the time.

And there were so many people who were new to the community, it was easy to make friends. We also were very enterprising as a group. And most of us were, you know, late 20s, middle late 20s, just fresh out of school. Very idealistic and excited about saving the world. And we did a number of things, we started a community garden. And others were more involved in organizing it. But Jay and I participated. We had a film group. We had book clubs. We had a food co-op for a while. There was just a spirit of organizing. Oh and theater. There was something called the Butte Theater Workshop that was organized by a gentleman named Alan Goddard. I think he's still around. He was teaching in some other part of the state, but he did theater. And I was in The Tempest and Thornton Wilder's. Oh, I can't think of this other play. Anyway, it was by the skin of our teeth and we did that and we did some other experimental stuff. It was really fun. And we just formed some really nice friendships. And we joined the Butte Historical Society, which had been kind of a group of people who were really ripe for direction. They were really devoted volunteers.

We met in Ann Cote's, the back of her, I don't know if she lived there in the Copper King mansion, but I think she did live there for a time. Ann Cote, she went by the nickname of Pets Cote. And we met around the kitchen table. And that was really the beginning of work that I would essentially end up doing for my career here.

One of the people that we met, one of the couples, we actually knew them from Missoula. The husband, John McBride was instrumental in bringing Jay to Butte for his job at MERDI as an environmental biologist. And his wife, Kathleen and I became very good friends. And we thought it would be kind of interesting to have a conference on Butte's future. And what we had observed was that, you know, we were coming at a point, we were in 1977, Jay and I had been married on October 1st of '77 back in Nashville, Tennessee, where my parents had moved. And she had been married the May before, May of that year. And so we had a lot of similar experiences.

We had just come from Missoula and now we were here in Butte and we recognized that there were so many changes that Butte was indeed at a crossroads. That the government had been consolidated. The city county government had been consolidated a couple of years earlier that it was now clear that the Anaconda Company wasn't going to swallow up uptown Butte. The uptown was a treasure, but, you know, really, really suffering. The population demographics were changing. We, at that time, it looked like there was going to be a tremendous influx of younger people because there were several hundred people, young people between MERDI and NCAT.

And so we kind of conjured up this idea of having a conference that we ultimately called Butte Beckons. And it was Butte, where have you been? Where are you going? Kind of thing. And we wrote a proposal to the Montana Committee for the Humanities, and we got, I think, something like a ten thousand dollar grant to put this conference together. And one of the things we did, we interviewed as many people as we could, college professors, businesspeople, people at Montana power. It was a tremendous effort. And we talked to all sorts of people that knew about Butte history. And we ended up formulating a conference where we had a panel and then a series of public participation sessions.

And it was a kind of an interesting time because Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf had been so involved in all of this. There were some connections that had been established that we were able to take advantage of through MERDI and NCAT. And we invited Stan Kemet, who was at that time, the secretary of the Senate, to be our keynote speaker. And he came and he delivered the speech. We had about 200 people attend the conference. And while there have been similar conferences since and more focused efforts, for me, that was kind of the beginning of the notion of creating an uptown program to address revitalization. And the results of that conference then kind of became the basis for a lot of what happened going forward.

I remember I worked for a brief time during that period for Dorothy Bradley, who was running for Congress, here in her office. In March of 1979 I was interviewed for a job with a historic American engineering record, which we called the hair team. So putting this in context. One of the couples that were very dear friends of ours, also like John and Kathleen, this was Mindy and Fred Quivik**.** And Fred Quivik had been very active on a national level in historic preservation activity. He is an architect by training. His wife, Mindy, who is now a Lutheran minister. But at that time, she had also gotten very engaged in the community and was in the process and ultimately opened a bookstore here called Butte Booksellers. But Fred had worked at NCAT, that's how they got here. And Fred was really interested in the notion of bringing a survey team here through what was then called the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, HCRS. They were a division that ultimately, you know, became more of the National Historic Preservation arm of the Department of the Interior.

But, Fred, I remember we lived in an apartment on Alabama Street, 321 1/2 North Alabama. And it was kind of a shotgun apartment. And I can still remember the day, we were all in his living room, members of the historical society and others, and Fred took some paper and hung it. There was a closet in the living room and he hung that paper over the door and was explaining the National Historic Preservation laws, the federal government, how it operates, how under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, you have to take into account the effect of actions on historic properties. And it was like, again, another moment, like getting to Glacier Park. It was kind of a moment in time that you can see which kind of then alters your life's direction.

So Fred was successful in convincing the local government here that we would benefit from having a survey team come from the National Park Service to identify our historic resources and also to formulate some ideas for the future. So he was successful in convincing the city, county Butte Silver Bow to request this. I imagine they had to come up with some money at the time. I think it was pretty substantial for us. And the Historic American Engineering Record, the HAER team, as we called it, there were two surveys, primary surveys. One was the HABS, Historic

American Building Survey, and the other was the Historic American Engineering Record. And they were similar in their missions. The HABS were more focused on buildings, residential and commercial buildings. Whereas the HAER team was more focused on industrial sites. And Butte, given it is such a significant site based on its industrial architecture, HAIR seemed to be the right fit. So I applied to be the community liaison. Here, I was only about a year and a half into my life here, but I interviewed and got the job. My responsibility was to make arrangements for the teams living quarters, to orient them to the community, to make the resources available, get space, all that sort of thing. But just like Butte Beckons, it gave me an opportunity to really get to know more people in the community. And then I ended up writing some of the economic development pieces of what the HAER team produced. And the HAER team produced a booklet, which I'm sure you have at the archives, which kind of details the history and offers an approach that's very similar to the National Main Street program in terms of how we would proceed.

Well, that job ended in about October of 1979. And so there was a job that had opened up, as a result of the HAER team. And I think some of the momentum that was created from Butte Beckons, Don Peoples, who was then the chief executive, decided it was time to create an urban renewal agency in Butte and I applied for the job, or at least I was, you know, in line for it. But John Cote, who was Ann Cote's nephew, was offered the job, you know. And he turned it down. I didn't know any of this was going on. And one night in early November of 1979, we were at dinner and the phone rang and it was Don Peoples. And he said to me, "Why aren't you at work?" And I said, "Because my job ended a couple of weeks ago." And he said, "I want you there tomorrow" which was a Thursday and, "you're going to be the new director of the Urban Renewal Agency in Butte."

And so I showed up for work. And in the meeting with the people I was working with . . . they only had $10,000. I don't even know if they had that much money. And they said, "We want you to come to work for us, but you're gonna have to find your own money." So I wrote a grant to what was called the Old West Regional Commission. It was one of the predecessors to what became the Economic Development Agency. You know, federal E.D.A. And we got a grant. I got a grant for $20,000. I think I had $11,000 the first year and $20,000 the second. And then they said to me, "We want to create a tax increment financing program." And, of course, I had to learn really quickly what that was. That was another watershed moment because that ended up being my career - doing that kind of work. So we learned and we got an urban renewal plan adopted. And I worked there from 1979 to about November of 1988 and then another year or two beyond that on a contract basis.

So then some parallel things going on during this period. We got to Butte. And while I had never been particularly religious, I did grow up in a Jewish family and attended religious school and was confirmed and wanted to make at least some connection, but didn't know how to get a hold of anyone. So Jay and I went out to the cemetery one day and I wrote down names of people on the headstones, and then I went back and looked in the phone book. And one of the couples I called was Stan and Norma Gronfein. They're both gone now. And they asked me to go see Avrin Canty. And Avrin was Dave Canty, who has participated recently in the Archives program on the Jewish community. And Avrin was kind of the lay rabbi. And we went to his clothing store, which at that time was on Montana Street, and he invited us to come to services. And so we came and we joined subsequently. And I sing. And the lady that had been the cantorial soloist

was getting towards the end of her career. I mean, it's a volunteer position. So I became the cantorial soloist. And I also became the temple's secretary. And did that. Both those things for about 30 years.

When people would ask me (I just got a phone call the other day), people would call all the time, asking me, you know, either they had had family here and we're coming back to do research. And very often I would refer them to Ellen and then they would sometimes come to Butte from all or four corners of the world, and I would take them to the cemetery or to the site of their ancestral home. It was always very, very interesting. But we also got calls from people who are interested in moving here. You know, "I'm a doctor and my family and I are interested in coming to the community. What do you have to offer in the Jewish community? What time does your Sunday school meet?" All those things? I would say, "Well, there's 30 or 40 members. We have a visiting rabbi once a month, but we'd love to have you."

And then I try to explain this about Butte. I said, "In Butte, if you want to see a play, you have to be in a theater group at that time." If you want to have any kind of amenity, you really have to make it happen yourself. And if you want to have a Jewish community, you have to be very active. And more often than that, they'd say, "Oh, that's very interesting." And then not come. Because they wanted to pay, you know, dues and in paying the dues to that religious institution felt that they would be entitled to all the services that went with it. So that was that.

The other parallel . . . and so anyway, but it's been a while, that's been a really wonderful experience to be part of a Jewish community, which was, in fact, a labor of love. When I was 44, so that would have been in 1995, I had my bar mitzvah. Which is where you read a portion from the Torah. And it was very fun to do that. And I did that with two other ladies at the same time. So it was kind of fun.

So we have the Butte Silver Bow Urban Revitalization tract and we have the temple tract. And then the third tract was parenthood and our children. Daniel was born in 1985 and Leah was born in 1987.

And I always like to relate the story, because when I worked for Butte Silver Bow, everyone was a little miffed because not everyone, but many members of the community, because I was not a Butte native and I got a fairly prominent, not well compensated, necessarily, but prominent job. And that I loved, but also had a higher profile for a long time, and I think people thought, "Too bad she's not from Butte." And I shouldn't have said I wasn't well-compensated. I was compensated in lots of different ways, you know, just the experience and the people I worked with.

Jaap: But not a big budget.

Cornish: Not a big budget at the time. But people were envious of that. And I think they translated that into some resentment. But when Daniel was born, I remember taking him up to the courthouse. I was still working there. And all the ladies that had not been very communicative. All of a sudden, because I had a baby who was born in Butte, I had passed some rite of passage. I was all of a sudden OK with everyone. And then when Leah came along, Don

Peoples said, "You know, Janet, we don't really want you to leave. You can bring her to work." So having become parents gave Jay and I a position in the community that was quite different than before.

The other anecdote of a story that goes with that is when Daniel was about nine. He played touch football with the YMCA. And to me it was hysterical. Picture the Dallas Cowboys and Tom Landry in his suit and tie, walking back and forth along the line. I don't know too much about football, but anyway. Or, you know, the dads who come, mostly dads who come after work to watch their kids play football. And they're still in their suits. It was a very formal kind of thing. And playing football is another rite of passage in Butte. Daniel played for a year and he tried regular football. But that really wasn't for him, he ended up in the soccer program. But anyway, that first year when he played touch football with the YMCA was really quite noted. And I remember the next day or two being uptown and people approaching me on the street with the phrase, "I see your son is playing football." So, again, I had passed another watershed. Another tick. So and then, of course, you go to school events. And up until that time, most of our friends were transplants like us. But having children and going to activities and school events, sporting, theater, music lessons, our friendship base really broadened.

And so that two years that I promised Jay in Butte had really now extended quite a bit longer. And we'll be celebrating our 43rd wedding anniversary in October. So it's been a long time that we've been here. That was happening from the late 70s through the late 80s. And then about 1988, I decided I wanted more flexibility, and I felt at that time that it was ready for someone else to take over the directorship of the Urban Revitalization Agency.

But I continued to work for Butte-Silver Bow on contract for a while and then moved on and started my own business called Janet Cornish Consulting Services, and then Margie Seccomb, whom I met at the business incubator where my office is located. She and I formed a company called CDS of Montana, Community Development Services of Montana. And so I started the firm in 1987 and I'm still doing it. Margie went on and she's now the director of the Human Resources Council actually. But we were also able to do a lot of good work in the area of housing and poverty related projects. But then I started to get calls from other cities who were interested in doing urban renewal programs, industrial development. And so I started helping communities set up those districts with tax increment financing provisions. And that's really been the heart of my professional work since that time.

My husband worked at MERDI until 2012, and that's about when they had to make some reductions in force. And then he went to work for Pioneer and still is there. So he's been at Pioneer for about eight years.

And we lived in that apartment on Alabama till 1981, and then we lived in a little house on Mercury, and then in 1986 we bought our house on Caledonia, where we live now. And that's been fun. That house was owned by Reno Sales. We've learned some dark things about that family through reading some of their very sad life, lost their children. And we've donated a lot of those materials to the Archives, a lot of those pictures. And there's more stuff that we haven't yet gotten to. But one of the interesting things we found were a series of Christmas cards that at the time were done like really fancy postcards that were between the Sales families and many

prominent citizens at the time, you know, Hearst's and others that exchanged Christmas cards. And those are part of the things that we donated to the archives.

Jaap: We have conversations about that collection. There's like different teams of Reno. Was he bad? Was he? All these different thoughts of his life and him. It's interesting.

Cornish: Yeah. If you read the deed, the title to the house, there's a lot of details about the family and probably things that are, we've surmised, it sounds like it was very unhappy. We have a portrait we think is of his wife in our house. That's one of the things Daniel found in our attic. We have it kind of to honor her.

I do know this from common knowledge that Reno Sales was a bit of what we used to call a red baiter, where he was sure the whole world was going to be falling to communism and kind of a Joseph McCarthy view of the world. And the fact is, there was at one time some of that paraphernalia of that communist fear, paranoia at the mining museum.

And so I'm trying to think...So now our children, Daniel is married and his wife Courtney Reichart. He and his wife live in Seattle. He's finishing up his residency in family medicine. And she is a chemist. And they're probably going to be going to Washington University in St. Louis within the next couple of years. Courtney is going to teach. Daniel will practice medicine. And then Leah is married to Brett Hosheid and they live in Bozeman. And Leah is a family practice nurse at the Bozeman Deaconess Health Clinic. She's a nurse navigator, which is someone who follows patients after they've been to the emergency room or hospital or have long, chronic issues like heart disease and diabetes. And her husband works for a company called American Coding and Supply. And they're doing well. They have a house. She's expecting our first grandchild in July. But each of our children has a dog. So we have grand dogs and we have a dog and a cat ourselves. We always have, you know, creatures living with us. So I don't know what else to tell you.

Jaap: That's great. I know Clark has some questions. I'll let you do your questions, OK?

Grant: OK.

Cornish: Oh, sorry. I probably talked too long.

Jaap: No, you're perfect.

END PART 1

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START PART 2

Cornish: I wanted to add one other thing that was very critical to my life. I should have mentioned it. In 1991 I decided that I wanted to teach rather than do. Teach rather than prepare grant proposals. I had been fairly successful, but I didn't want to make that my life's work. Grant

writing, grant proposals are an effort that can be rewarding, but when you're working with non-profits or small local governments and they have to pay you, whether you get the grant or not. I wanted work that was successful. That's why I worked more on urban renewal and growth policy planning and that sort of thing. But I thought it'd be fun to teach a seminar in grant proposal writing. So I approached Montana Tech and they said, go for it. So I was able to offer the class and Montana Tech handled the billing for the people who were taking it and offered continuing education credits. I just loved doing it. I did the sessions here. I did them as whole semester courses and seminars. I did them at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell. I did them for the Forest Service and the state of Montana.

And I just was having a ball and I started doing them on a fairly regular basis. In 2001 I was approached to teach a course in professional writing at Tech, and I did that and then for most semesters since 2001. So for the last 19 years, I've taught at least one and as many as three courses a semester in business writing and technical writing. And I've done intermediate writing in composition, but mostly business writing and technical writing. And I'm doing that. I continue to do that. And I love teaching. It gives my life a schedule because my consulting work I do as needed. But this is where I know I have to be, not too early in the morning, but I have to be there. And I love interacting with that age group and teaching writing. It's been just a wonderful experience. So my life now is a mixture of consulting to local governments, primarily, and teaching at Montana Tech. So I wanted to make sure I included that because that's a really important piece of my life.

Grant: Well, maybe I'll just go backwards. We can go from where you just left off back to donating paint to the Buddhist temple. That was fascinating. I was curious about the early URA. And if there were explicit strategies or guiding philosophies within the local government. Just elaborate more on how that department functioned.

Cornish: The guiding policies of the local government were primarily focused in revitalizing uptown Butte, but as there is now and there was then, this conflict. There were actually two conflicts. One conflict was do we preserve or do we redo? And, you know, do we remake? Do we tear down and rebuild? And being a champion for historic, when preserving historic properties was a difficult road to take. But what helped a great deal was that Montana Power had decided at that point in time to invest in uptown Butte and to take the renovation route. We were trying to foster the use of historic preservation incentives like tax credits and other things and goodwill, but generally speaking, you know, it is easier to build new.

So when you're trying to talk to people . . . and we had tried in the urban renewal plan, you have to do a plan in order to use the tax increment financing tool. And we wanted to include a great deal of design review. And the council wasn't quite ready for that. So we emphasized...the philosophy was more the carrot rather than the stick. So as we were able to get more money in, we could say, if you renovate your building accordingly, or fix up your facade in a respectful way that reflects the history of the community, then we'll help you financially. So it was a slow go, but we actually were turning the tide. So that was one conflict.

The other conflict was the people in the community felt that there was a competition between economic development on the flats versus economic development uptown. And one of the crazy

things I did was along with Chuck Richards, who owned Richards' and Rochelle's Men's Store. He and I decided...He was the president of the (I don't know if it was) the Butte Uptown Association at the time, but he and I decided to protest the decision by the Chamber of Commerce to move the Fourth of July parade off the hill and down to the flats.

And so we showed up. We drove down to the Chamber's office on Harrison and showed up in Beverly Brothers' office to complain. And she was really put out about it and reported it back to Don Peoples. And I was called in. And I remember I didn't get into too much trouble. But, you know, he told me that, you know, members of the local government can't be harassing citizens.

And another thing that happened was (and we were successful in this) on Granite Street, Granite and Excelsior on the northwest corner are twin houses. And the home at the corner was owned by Angie McLernon. And she wanted the house. She had begun arrangements and I don't know how far along it was, but to have the house moved to Bozeman. And so the alarms were raised and we went to the council. And, we, I think it was the historic preservation community, but, you know, as the director of the Urban Revitalization Agency, even though it was outside our border, we felt it was a really important issue. And we asked the council for an injunction, essentially a temporary ordinance to stop it. And that's how we got our historic preservation ordinance. And the council did support that. And over the years, it got more moderate, but it was enough to stop. And she had a lawyer and, you know, but I was fearless. I think that when you're 27, 28 years old and you're running an agency, you're much more fearless than I would probably be now.

But the policy of the government was, I really felt that while there were always a few people who were not as supportive, I always felt that Don Peoples had my back, and the county attorney, Bob McCarthy, had my back and helped me negotiate through some difficult times. There were times when I wanted to put a paper bag over my head. At that time, you had reporters that were my very, very active. You know, I think we really benefited from that. We don't have that anymore. And, you know, someone would stop in my office every day and sometimes I would express myself incorrectly. Sometimes the reporters would get it wrong and it would be a lot of embarrassment. And I got in trouble once for . . . I ordered new garbage cans and I went over the ten thousand dollar limit by mistake for not going to public bid. And so I thought I was going to end up in jail. And Gary Rowe, the budget director who also had my back and Don Peoples figured out a way to return one of the garbage cans. So I stayed under $10,000. But we called that garbage gate. There's some other interesting pieces of that that I won't share. But at any rate, I was in Chicago at the time at my brother's wedding.

Jaap: So everything's lighting up here.

Cornish: So it was very interesting. So I made some big mistakes. I hope that they helped me or have continued to help me in how I interact with communities around the state and help them make decisions. But the policy of the government, I would say, was very supportive. We went through a period of time where we had one set of developers. There was a gentleman named Matt Lang who came into the community and he won. And we gave him the key to the city. He renovated city hall. He was going to do something with the Montana Theater, which is gone now, and where Park 217 is. But he turned out not to be . . . Again, this was in the paper, so I don't think this is libelous. But he was thrown in prison for some kind of bad acting and financial

thing. But that was significant. An outside investor coming in to do some investment and the government was very supportive. So I think the early years of the URA were . . . exciting because we were heading down a path where we were all of a sudden . . . by the third year we had over a million dollars in our fund because of Montana Power's investments. And as you know, tax increment financing derives its dollars from new tax money that's paid above and beyond what was being paid a certain point in time. So you're reinvesting property taxes that have accrued from new development in infrastructure and public services to historic preservation, economic development to support the district. And so I became very adamant that this was a good way to go. And I felt like the local government was really on board. But when it came to this exception, when it came to a specific property where there was an economic potential for a new build, there might have been more support for demolition than I would have liked to have seen. But I think overall, there was a commitment. I don't know if that answers your question, but I think . . .

Jaap: I find it interesting. I feel like even with today's historic preservation, they're not Butte born. Almost everyone I can think of is not Butte born. Why do you think that is? Do you think it's coming from the outside . . .

Cornish: I mean going back to Chicago now after, you know, leaving there in 1970, '69, essentially, and now going back and seeing . . . I didn't pay much attention to the buildings when I was growing up. And now I went, you know, Chicago is one of the most magnificent cities architecturally and historically. And as much as I mean, you talked about Mrs. O'Leary's cow starting the Chicago Fire, but you don't really think about Lewis Sullivan. And although I went on an architectural tour, I've been on a couple now going back to visit - one on the river and one through downtown, and I'm just blown away. And I think it's because it's hard to appreciate things that you grow up with.

Jaap: You don't see it because it's been there all the time.

Grant: In my own grant writing I struggle to articulate the link between community development and economic development. If you would give us your take on that. How do you link the two?

Cornish: Community development and economic development? I throw economic development into a subset of community development. Community development is really broad. It has to do with exactly what the words say. You're creating livable communities, sustainable communities, affordable housing, opportunities for human interaction. Good schools. Good public schools. I'll make that clear. I'm very much a supporter of public schools. Communities that offer a variety of opportunities for work and that's where you get economic development. Cultural enrichment, access to recreation and access to good health care. I think that's the realm.

And in order to achieve community development, one of the pieces of that is, you know, and you can always make the argument, you know, what is the basics? You know, what is the most fundamental thing? And economic development enables you to do all those other things. So it's a subset of community development, but it's the key to having the investment through taxpayer dollars and people engaging in commerce to enable you to get all the other things. I think the

other fundamental relationship is infrastructure. And I've been disappointed. A lot of the presidential candidates haven't emphasized that as much. Infrastructure is, to me, in order to have all those things, you have to have good delivery systems and also in order to be more green and sustainable, you need to have good transportation and delivery systems. I think that that's really at the heart of it, how we get from one place to another, how we heat our homes, how we, you know, communicate. I think all of those, to me, that's the basis. And then that enables economic development. It enables cultural enrichment. It enables all the things that we do. But you have to have that relationship. So, again, I'm kind of talking in circles. But that infrastructure relies on investment and you can't have the investment without the economic development. So the link is that economic development fuels infrastructure, which in turn fuels the quality of life and sustainable communities.

Grant: Do you think the infrastructure in Butte is one of the primary reasons why they consolidated in the 70's?

Cornish: My understanding was just that we are such a small county and duplicating services for that size of a county did have a whole infrastructure, both of services, infrastructure and a physical infrastructure supporting the county. As well as having a physical infrastructure supporting the city and many parts of the city, the old city limits were well within the urban center, the urban area was larger than the city limits. So you are really on top of each other. And I think financially it made sense. I think that the infrastructure certainly is what drives, ultimately drives, all that and managing it efficiently, I think, was achieved and is continuing to be achieved through the consolidation.

Grant: Do you have any sense as to why Walkerville held out?

Cornish: I think it was more just their own sense of self-identity.

Grant: I'm always fascinated by that period of Butte history. I'm glad you brought up the H.C.R.S.

Cornish: Yeah, H.R.D.C. Human Resources Development Council?
Grant: No the study of the . . .

Cornish: Oh, the H.A.E.R. team, historic American, H-A-E-R, and the H.C.R.S.

Grant: Yeah, I am in the process of writing another grant to the Department of Commerce for the Carpenters' Union Hall where we reside, our radio station. I'd like to put an elevator in the building and the H.C.R.S. came up with a design for an elevator and for all kinds of seismic protections. So I saw your name in that document. It's a fascinating document. And I'm really glad that it exists. So that I have a starting point. So I'm curious, as you look back on your career in preservation in Butte, do you feel you built meaningful things that now the baton has been passed on to subsequent generations, do you feel good?

Cornish: I do, yeah. It's hard. There's different kinds of people. I see myself more . . . That's why I love consulting, because I like to start things and set things up, but I'm not as good as a

maintainer. So I get . . . I want to do something else. And so both the opportunity to teach every year, I have different students and different interactions. And then the opportunity to help communities all over the state has really been nice. But I really feel good about being at a point where being an initiator of the tax income and financing program here and these various districts and being a bit of a rebel at the time when it seemed to be the right thing to do. I sort of am kind of proud of that time, but I'm also thrilled. I can't say this enough. I love the work that Karen Burns is doing. Christin Rosa. I think that seeing how they've expanded and continue to uphold that whole notion of focusing on uptown Butte. I was fortunate enough to be able to do a little bit of mentoring. But just watching that, it's kind of like your child and watching your child grow up and do very respected work. I'm just thrilled. I am proud of my time and thrilled for the people who are engaged in it now. And very happy with what they're doing.

Grant: Did you see a lot of painful demolition?

Cornish: Yes. One of the worst things though was a fire. In 1979, 1980, on Granite Street. There were three buildings. There was a great stone building in the middle. It was the lawyers' offices on one side.

Jaap: Copper block. The Intermountain building was in there.

Cornish: And there was a cafe in there. And I think that's how the fire started. That was the most devastating. That was so beautiful. The Intermountain building and the Copper building were so beautiful. The Montana Theater was hard. That place had the best acoustics. I stood on the stage once and sang and it was really magnificent. But I don't feel as bad about that. Only that we really couldn't save it. It was hard. It was hard. But I felt really caught in that one. Well, I had friends who were calling me and saying, "We've got to save it." And I didn't feel like I could. And so I was caught between my colleagues who were advocates for preservation. And the reality that Mountain Bell was going to locate there and create a lot of investment for the uptown and the resulting taxes would enable us to preserve other buildings. That was my dilemma.

I will say this, while I am an advocate for historic preservation. And I really do believe that those spaces are so much better than any other space. I mean, like this room we're in right now has such a calming effect. We live in a house that's 110 years old. I love it. But any time you get to be an ideologue about something, you can end up losing your perspective as to how you can best serve your community. And I'd like to have historic preservation, always be part of the conversation, but more and more I appreciate a variety of different perspectives. I've kind of come back from the brink just a little bit. And I'm still an advocate, but I don't want to become a zealot.

Jaap: I don't know a better way to put it, but you can spread yourself too thin trying to save everything and sometimes you have to let a little go, too.

Cornish: And also, you have to be sensitive and inclusive in your approaches. And if we end up alienating people by what you're doing, you can sometimes shoot yourself in the foot. So a part of it is you can't save everything, although that's not necessarily my philosophy. I think we should try to save everything. I think there's something of us in everything. That's why I say I'm

not pulling back from my passion for it. I'm just not going to say that just because someone else doesn't feel that way that he or she is a bad person.

Jaap: Exactly. Yeah.

Grant: Just to continue a little bit on this preservation trend a little bit. Did you have much involvement with the historic preservation plan of 2013?

Cornish: No, I did the first one, though. Yeah. And I didn't like the second process.

Grant: Why is that?

Cornish: I'm going to say it this way. We came up with a three pronged approach. Really two prongs. Historic preservation, economic development and reclamation, so three things. The path that we were on to look at the mine yards, the Mining Museum, all the different constellations, we call them, uptown Butte was looking at interpretation and access for the public was really important. And the newer effort was more into building monuments. They were talking about building statues. And it was less . . . and I have to say, I didn't read it real well, but my interactions with them felt like they weren't getting that ultimate context. So that was somewhat troubling to me. Maybe another way to say it is I thought we should have built down that plan, updated it. Maybe that's what they thought they were doing rather than what appeared to be more of a new effort. I don't know if this is true, but I don't feel like that the 2013/2014 plan has been made part of the general plan and consciousness of the community, but I don't know that for sure because I'm away from it.

Grant: I think I'm fairly involved and I've lived here for six years and just discovered it this week. I'd never really heard of it.

Cornish: I might be wrong, I said this is mostly based on impressions rather than.

Grant: Most of the action items are left undone.

Cornish: Well, speaking of this, this is awkward. Lee Whitney contacted me if I would facilitate a CPR strategic planning session. They've just gotten a grant to do a redevelopment program, and I thought we'd be done by 12:15 . . .

[END OF RECORDING]