



VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

JIM McLEOD

The Verdigris Project

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

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

www.verdigrisproject.org

Oral History Transcript of Jim McLeod (and Emily McLeod)

Interviewer: Clark Grant

Interview Date: November 2nd, 2018

Location: Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives

Transcribed: September 2021 by Adrian Kien

Grant: Really the point of these is just to have them on file here at the Archives. In the event, years from now, someone does some research, maybe they'll come across your story and it will help them somehow. Alright. Um, usually what we do is start with people talking about their grandparents. What recollections do you have of them?

Jim McLeod: Well, on my mother's side was the only grandparents that I remember. It was my grandmother. On the other side I never did meet my grandfather or grandmother.

Emily McLeod: You got a picture of your grandfather.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. I got a picture of him. Yeah, but that's all. I never did meet him.

Grant: And your grandmother. What about her?

Jim McLeod: Oh, God. I've known her. I mean, she used to take care of me all the time. Well, my mother worked and my grandma took care of all us kids.

Grant: Where was she from?

Jim McLeod: She was from County Cork, Ireland.

Emily McLeod: What'd you used to call her?

Jim McLeod: Nelly or Grandma. Gog! I don't know how that come up. Grandma Gog.

Grant: And where did she live?

Jim McLeod: In the Silver Bow homes.

Grant: She was Irish, huh?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. She was all Irish.

Grant: What type of food and that did she make and what did you do when you were over there?

Jim McLeod: Well, just regular stuff. I mean, as far as food goes, she never made us nothing different than anything.

Grant: Like stuff you'd find today.

Jim McLeod: Oh, just about the same stuff. I guess the same thing we eat.

Grant: Were you kind of left alone as a child?

Jim McLeod: Oh no. No, I had brothers and sisters. Got two sisters and two brothers.

Grant: Where do you fall in the line?

Jim McLeod: I was the second one born.

Grant: Did you ever get bullied by them?

Jim McLeod: No, my sister was the oldest, so she couldn't bully me. The other one was too young. We were only nine months apart.

Grant: Oh, it was one after the other.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. Then we had a long span and then Bobby was born and then a long span. And Lori was born. In fact, I was in the service when Bobby was born.

Grant: Oh, wow. And your mom now let's talk about her a bit. What did she do? You said she was working. So you stayed with her mom?

Jim McLeod: Well, yeah, my mother worked quite a bit, but she was great.

Emily McLeod: I don't drink! Don't look at me.

Grant: She drank? Did she drink?

Jim McLeod: My mother? Yeah. Oh yeah. She used to have a sip every once in a while.

Emily McLeod: Her morning coffee was a shot of [Makers?] and about that much coffee. She'd be awake until 10 o'clock. After 10 o'clock she was out on the couch, passed out.

Jim McLeod: Getting her nap in.

Grant: Where all did she work?

Jim McLeod: She worked at Diana Hughes. Where else did she work? I guess that was it.

Grant: What is that? I haven't heard of that.

Jim McLeod: Diana Hughes? It's a clothing store. It was a clothing store downtown for women. For women only. Yeah.

Grant: And how long was she there?

Jim McLeod: How long do you think she was there?

Emily McLeod: I don't know, but her sister was the head of the clerks' union.

Jim McLeod: She was the head of the clerks' union.

Emily McLeod: They all got jobs, good jobs, at Diana Hughes. [inaudible]

Grant: Were you close with your dad as well?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: And what was he like?

Jim McLeod: Great. Yeah, what's wrong? Yeah. He's good. Real good. Taught me everything.

Grant: What's his name?

Jim McLeod: Jim.

Grant: Tell me a bit about him. I never met him.

Jim McLeod: Well, he was good. He was a great guy. Yeah. And as far as me, as far as me wanting anything, I never did go without want. I mean, I had it and there, you know, I mean, he had a pretty good-sized family, but he treated all of us the same.

Grant: Did he work in the mines?

Jim McLeod: Yep.

Grant: Do you know where?

Jim McLeod: The Mountain Con. He worked them all. Mountain Con. The Stewart. Orphan Girl. Yeah. He worked them all. The company sent him to Idaho to sink a shaft down there.

Emily McLeod: He was born on the east side too.

Grant: What was Butte like when you were a kid?

Jim McLeod: Oh, it was great. Yeah. I sold papers on Park and Main. Yeah. It was good.

Emily McLeod: Your first year of school.

Jim McLeod: A year and a half at Sacred Heart. Then my dad bought a house down on Arizona Street and I started St. Joseph's in the second grade.

Emily McLeod: Tell how . . . [inaudible]

Jim McLeod: Went to school with Knievel. Him and Chucky Marsean borrowed my car. I had a 40 Chevy and it was pretty well hopped up and they drove by and they shot the windows out of Butte High. So I got picked up for it because it was my car. Yeah. So I had to have them two come up and bail me out of jail. Tell them that they'd done it.

Grant: Some friends.

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Emily McLeod: Evel was a pain in the ass.

Grant: That's what I hear. I like to hear just your thoughts in general about Butte, you know, especially in your childhood. What was different than now? What did you like? What'd you dislike?

Jim McLeod: Well, different people, I mean, we had people all over, you know, just like selling papers. You could sit on Park and Main and sell a hundred papers, you know? I mean, there was people and everybody around. Everybody around town. Yeah.

Grant: Which paper was it?

Jim McLeod: The Butte Daily News.

Grant: And did you ever get in fights with other paper boys?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: Okay. How does that work?

Jim McLeod: Well, you had to work for your corner and if you weren't rough enough, you didn't own that corner.

Grant: When do you think your first fight was?

Jim McLeod: I don't know. I have no idea. I don't ever remember.

Grant: Would you say your childhood was rough?

Jim McLeod: Well, no rougher than anything else, I guess. That's the way Butte was, you know. If you wanted anything, you had to fight for it.

Grant: Did you ever go to other Montana towns? Did you ever go to Missoula as a kid?

Jim McLeod: I went all over as a kid.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about the pit.

Jim McLeod: What about the pit?

Emily McLeod: When you drove the truck to Meaderville. It's interesting!

Grant: We'll get there.

Jim McLeod: I don't remember that part.

Emily McLeod: They worked at the pit. He and his friends decided they wanted a drink. They drove the trucks all the way to Meaderville and the Brass Rail. They got drunk.

Grant: The haul trucks?

Emily McLeod: They never made it back to work. They never went back to the pit.

Jim McLeod: Well, you got that story.

Emily McLeod: Tell them how you were singing your songs. You and your goofy cousin. Some guy beat the hell out of you.

Grant: We heard a little bit about that one last time.

Jim McLeod: Yeah, that happened. I was singing, "Everything's beautiful."

Emily McLeod: They were both drunk. And they came in the [inaudible]. And he's singing "Everything's beautiful" and this colored guy, this big, like he was huge. He had his brother-in-law, probably weighed 400 pounds. Just as big and tall as he was this way. And his sister, she was raised on the east side, Nina [inaudible]. And his sister used to go with one of my brothers. And then she was talking to you. And he's singing this song. And drunker than anything. And they're laughing. And that colored guy got mad. And then they went outside. His cousin ran so fast, by the time I got out there, me and Tony Delmoe, his cousin was already up here by Hennessy's. And that colored guy hit him once in the face. And his nose was spread all over his face. And his cheek. So then the big fat guy got into his car and then went on the road with the car. [inaudible] shoot.

Grant: It escalated.

Emily McLeod: Tony and I were out there. And Tony said, "You better get the hell out of here. I already called the cops." We jumped in the car. But they were from Helena, not Great Falls. That was one of his escapades.

Grant: When you were growing up, did you have a sense of Butte being an important place?

Jim McLeod: Yeah. I thought it was great. Good place to live.

Grant: Were there any drawbacks?

Jim McLeod: No. No.

Grant: When you say your dad taught you everything, what specifically? What comes to mind?

Jim McLeod: Well, everything, it's just, he taught me most of the mechanics I know. And then I went into the mines and he taught me how to mine a little bit.

Grant: Were you down there together?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Emily McLeod: He was a bricklayer in the [inaudible]. Tell them that story.

Jim McLeod: I was in Chicago and I came back to Butte and McLaughlin was looking for hod carriers. So I went to work for McLaughlin Masonry.

Emily McLeod: You worked for the leaky bucket.

Grant: Now what's that?

Jim McLeod: That was Frank Grady and Willie Mole. They had three or four different names, the leaky bucket. That was the best one.

Grant: Now was that a company?

Jim McLeod: It was, yeah. Well, them two started it. They had about three or four employees. The Leaky Bucket.

Grant: Masonry? What did you guys do?

Jim McLeod: Concrete.

Grant: Did you like that work?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Grant: Do you remember any projects you guys did that are still around?

Emily McLeod: The pit. You helped build that pit out there. Who did you work for then?

Jim McLeod: You got me all confused. I don't know where. Okay. I can't think of the company though. Yeah. We worked out there as a finisher. We did all the work around the crusher. And what do you call that? Uh, there's a tunnel that follows the ore from that concentrator over to the crusher and from the crusher over to the concentrator. We done all that work through there. It's a tunnel and poured the concrete floor in and they put the barriers in.

Grant: When was the first time you went underground?

Jim McLeod: Oh I was young. I think I was only 18. No, I was a little older than that. I was 20.

Grant: Were you scared?

Jim McLeod: No. No, it didn't bother me too much. In fact, I kind of liked it.

Grant: What'd you like about it?

Jim McLeod: Just to ride in the cage, get in the cage and they'd drop you.

Grant: How fast was it?

Jim McLeod: Oh, it was fast. I don't know how fast, but it was fast. Yeah, they could drop you from ground level down to the 4,500 in nothing flat. Just go down and bounce a little bit and then open the cage door and let you out.

Grant: And what's it like when you first get out of the cage, how do you describe it?

Jim McLeod: It would just like being out in the, like being in this room.

[00:20:37]

Emily McLeod: It was lit up?

McLeod: Yeah. All the stations had lights in them, just the stations, like 4,500, 4,400 or 4,300, wherever the station was, there was lights. But that was the only lights that there were. And you had your headlamp.

Grant: And there were tenders at every station?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Grant: And did you get to know them?

Jim McLeod: Nope. All mine was in mining. I was in either a drifter or in a stope.

Emily McLeod: What's a drift?

Jim McLeod: Well, it's a tunnel to start off. They start off with a drift. And then from the drift, they go into the stopes.

Emily McLeod: What's the difference between a stope and a drift?

Jim McLeod: Well, the drift goes straight through and then the stopes cut off of it. Just like, you know . . .

Grant: What's the difference between a stope and a raise?

Jim McLeod: Well, a raise goes straight up. And a stope, you kind of go up then go in.

Grant: You might go diagonal or something. And how do you determine where to go? Is it the boss telling you, or do you just figure it out?

Jim McLeod: No. There's a boss telling you what's there and what's making money and what ain't. But like on those drifts, they had regular drift miners, you know, that's all they do. They're hard to work with. Like, if you were a swinger on that shift and you went in there, some of them guys would work you to death. That was their main thing, making money. And they were going to make it.

Grant: And it's footage right.

Jim McLeod: And they get hot, if you weren't on your toes, getting with it.

Grant: And how long did you end up working underground?

Jim McLeod: I don't think I worked over a year.

Grant: What changed your mind or what changed?

Jim McLeod: I went to the pit. They shut the mine down, strike of 59. They shut the mine down. And I was in Wyoming and I come back and no more mining, you go to the pit. So I went out to the pit and drove.

Grant: And was your dad still working at that time?

Jim McLeod: He was retired.

Grant: Any idea, the span that he worked.

Jim McLeod: Oh, I don't have any idea about that, but he was a long time miner. Long time.

Grant: What advice would he give a guy going underground for the first time?

Jim McLeod: What advice?

Grant: Yeah. What things was he sure to point out?

Jim McLeod: Well, you just gotta watch yourself is what you got to do. And watch where you're at, and the rock you're working around. There's a lot of that hanging stuff there that just hangs. You just got to be careful.

Grant: But you also gotta move quick.

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Grant: I guess there's a balance there. What was his opinion of the pit?

Jim McLeod: My dad? Oh, I don't know. I never did ask him. I don't know. He was still mining when the pit was still going. So yeah.

Grant: So for a while there, it was both. Yeah. The pit and underground.

Jim McLeod: And by that time he had enough time in to retire. So he didn't go to the pit.

Grant: Yeah.

Emily McLeod: [inaudible]

Grant: She's saying she's the second or third for you?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, I guess so. If she says so.

Grant: Was your dad very expressive or was he kind of stern?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, I imagined it was stern. Yeah. He had his own way. He had his way, he had his own way of everything. But he raised a good family. A big family and it was probably tough in them days, you know.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about Danny, your brother. Both of you left your house [inaudible] when you were young.

Jim McLeod: Both of us left. We both went into the Navy. I was in the Navy and he was in the Navy.

Grant: When did you join?

Jim McLeod: 55, I believe. Got out in 57.

Grant: Were you overseas?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Jim McLeod: No, I volunteered. At that time you could volunteer. I don't know how it worked. We were supposed to work it out where you'd get out before you were 21. That's how it worked

at that time. Then right after that, they started that two year thing. I was on a ship, USS, and three kids from Butte come on that ship that I went to school with. Dave Sullivan and Drew Pachico and Donnie Oakland.

Grant: What was your job in the Navy?

Jim McLeod: I was a cook.

Emily McLeod: And he can't cook worth a shit.

Grant: You guys have that in common.

Jim McLeod: It's not the same kind of cooking as you cook.

Grant: Tell me about your time there. Where did you go?

Jim McLeod: In the service? Well, I was all over. I was in Japan. I was in Kushi, Japan. Hawaii. I was out there on the first atom bomb test. We'd dock in Bikini, there were two islands out there. We were right there when they'd set the bombs off. It was quite an experience there.

Grant: What did it look like?

Jim McLeod: Oh, just like a bomb going off. Yeah.

Grant: Did you guys know what it was?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. They tell you all about it before and what you have to do after, you know, which was scrubbing everything down.

Grant: Could you hear it?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. And you could see it. They give you glasses to wear. It was quite an experience.

Grant: And was that launched from the ship?

Jim McLeod: No. It was right there on the island and they let it go.

Emily McLeod: How long were you isolated?

Jim McLeod: Isolated?

Emily McLeod: Yeah. They didn't let you get off the ship or you had to stay out at sea after you got sprayed.

Jim McLeod: Well, we couldn't go anyplace anyway. There was no place to go. When we come back to San Diego, just like before you'd get off the ship.

Grant: And was that a secret when it happened?

[00:30:08]

Jim McLeod: I don't think so. No.

Grant: Pretty wild though.

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: Just the one.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. Just one.

Grant: Were you anxious to come back to Butte?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. I always wanted to come back.

Grant: What was waiting for you, your first wife?

Jim McLeod: No, I didn't have nothing when I come back. Nobody here except my family. That was it.

Grant: And that would have been in the late fifties then. And could you tell me a bit about Butte in the 1960s? What began to change?

Jim McLeod: Not much for me. There was nothing.

Grant: Just work.

Jim McLeod: That's it.

Grant: Well, what all jobs have you had then? Pouring concrete and laying brick and underground and at the pit and . . .

Jim McLeod: Driving, yep. That's all of them.

Grant: How long did you drive a truck out there?

Jim McLeod: Oh, about a year.

Grant: And then?

Jim McLeod: Quit.

Grant: Over the Meaderville thing?

Jim McLeod: No! I quit and went to Chicago.

Grant: What was going on there?

Jim McLeod: Well, I had worked for this guy in Casper, Wyoming, out of Casper. I had a tunnel job down there. He had a job out there. So I went out and worked for A.L. Jackson. They were a contractor out there. Navy pier. It was something. Whole different life out there.

Grant: How's that?

Jim McLeod: Well, it just is, you know. You live in apartments and you don't know anybody that's your neighbor. And nobody's that friendly out here. It's hard to get used to something like that.

Grant: How long did you last?

Jim McLeod: I stayed in Chicago for 10 years.

Grant: 10 years of that?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, the money was good. I don't know where it went, but it was good.

Emily McLeod: What college did you work at in Chicago?

Jim McLeod: I didn't work in any in Chicago. I worked in Indiana. What's the name of that?

Emily McLeod: Your brother just went there to go see it.

Jim McLeod: I can't remember.

Emily McLeod: What college is it? The Irish college.

Jim McLeod: I can't remember.

Grant: It's not Purdue, is it? Or Notre Dame?

Jim McLeod: Notre Dame.

Grant: There we go.

Jim McLeod: We put a scaffold up in the cathedral of Notre Dame. I worked for Patent Scaffolding. Another job. Yeah. We put a scaffold up in there and they were repainting all the murals on the ceiling. We put the scaffold up for that.

Grant: Did you do other big scaffold jobs too?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Yeah. We done quite a few, quite a few big ones.

Grant: In the big cities?

Jim McLeod: Just in Chicago. That one job was up there.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about when you went to Wise River with your dad and you were only ten. And him and [inaudible] were both drunk.

Jim McLeod: Well, we went fishing. They got drunk. So they were too drunk to drive. So he put me on his lap and I drove back to Butte.

Grant: Well, that worked out though. Didn't it?

Jim McLeod: It did. We made it.

Grant: Would you say your dad drank a lot?

Jim McLeod: No. I wouldn't say a lot. He drank when he drank, but he didn't drink a lot.

Grant: And what about yourself? What do you do in your spare time after all of these years of working?

Jim McLeod: Me?

Grant: Yeah.

Jim McLeod: Oh, I just do everything.

Emily McLeod: Drunk. He worked all the time, but he was drunk all the time too. All weekend. Until I straightened him out.

Grant: What about your spare time?

Jim McLeod: Oh my spare time? Auctions. I got a buddy that picks up stuff and sells it.

Emily McLeod: His spare time was getting every junky car that he could find. And he still done it up until now. Tell him how many cars you have.

Jim McLeod: I don't know how many I had. The city sent me something about how many I had.

Grant: Really?

Jim McLeod: Yeah. I applied for something. And they said I had too much stuff. What was that over? Do you remember?

Emily McLeod: I had a friend. He bought me a Camaro and then he said, "I'm going to take your car." I was working at the M&M. He said, "I'm going to take your car and trade it in because after it's a year old, they go down too much." I said I don't want a truck, I want a car. And he come back with a brand new truck and traded my car in.

Grant: Do you like working on cars?

Jim McLeod: I did. Yeah. I can't do anything anymore.

Grant: Why is that?

Jim McLeod: Can't get down. Can't get around. If I get down, I can't get back up.

Grant: Did you imagine when you were a young man, did you imagine yourself as an old man?

Jim McLeod: Nope. No, I didn't.

Grant: What'd you think? That you wouldn't make it?

Jim McLeod: No, I figured I'd stay young forever.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about the time you went for a ride and you were out there by the Flying J. And landed on your hip. And that guy that had that car. What was it?

Jim McLeod: Corvette. I fell out of the car. Didn't hurt myself. I was limber.

Grant: Have you had injuries?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: Tell me about some.

Jim McLeod: I got a few broken bones.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about when you worked out there.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. MHD. Well, we were laying pipe, so we got a little high in one spot. So I took the pipe up and braced it with four by fours. I got under there and started scraping and cleaning and trying to drop it down. The timbers broke and the pipe come down on both my arches. Broke both my arches. But you can't do nothing with an arch. You've just got to stay off your feet.

Emily McLeod: You were working when you got your arm crushed.

Jim McLeod: When I was working for Red Simpson, I got my arm cut in a conveyor.

Emily McLeod: Tell him the whole story. How that lady come down and helped you.

Jim McLeod: The only one that was there was the woman that owned the house. She come down there and got me out of the conveyor. And I drove to the hospital, you know, two ton truck.

Grant: What job was this?

Jim McLeod: I was working for Red Simpson. He'd do odd jobs, dig basements out. He had done about everything. I was working for him. I worked for him quite a bit.

Grant: And that was a basement job?

Jim McLeod: Yeah. We were digging the basement out with a conveyor belt.

Emily McLeod: He drove from up West down to Dr. Davis who was a good friend of ours. He was on Park Street. And he drove from Excel or some place up there all the way to Park Street in that big truck. He parked the truck and then went into the office and his arm was crushed. They had to put plates here and plates here. And Dr. Davis called me at the M&M. He said, "When you're not busy, come over. I need to talk to you."

So I walked over there and I left my car there at the M&M. And he said, "I got somebody back here that you know." He's laying there on the gurney. And he says, "I gotta take him to surgery." And he said, "You gotta drive him down. I can't go right now. I got patients." He said, "You drive him to the Silver Bow General and I'll take him into surgery." And so I went and got the car and I parked, and then he come down, walking. And we got in the car and one of his drunken friends were over at the Terminal. And he got in front of my car. And of course, I was mad and I slammed on the brakes. And he goes, "Aargh! I'm dying."

[00:42:07]

And the guy. I got out of the car and I'm mad. I gotta mouth like a sailor. And so I called him everything, but a white man. And then he said, "Oh, Jesus, I didn't know! I'm so worried." He's trying to apologize and I'm trying to get him out of the way. That was one of the bad accidents.

Grant: How long did it take to recover from that?

Jim McLeod: Oh, they put the plates in. And then not long after that I was allergic to the plate. So I had to have the plates taken out.

Emily McLeod: The bolts were coming out of his arm. The plate was from here to here. And then they had bolts. He must have been allergic to the steel. So they had to go back into surgery and they took it off. They took him to Missoula.

Grant: And how was your arm nowadays?

Jim McLeod: Good. No problem. No plates.

Emily McLeod: You can't lift your shoulder.

Jim McLeod: Oh, I can't lift my shoulder, but that was from pulling out. See? Yeah, I can raise my shoulder or whatever, just like that. That's about how high.

Emily McLeod: When we went to Missoula and they were taking those plates out. They found out that his shoulder, when he was in that conveyor, had popped out. And it had been about a year after that. So his shoulder is out like this, instead of being in here. And they had to redo the surgery and put it back in.

Jim McLeod: They went in and ground it all down and then put it back in.

Emily McLeod: What about when you fell off the scaffold and the scaffold came down. That was the end of your job.

Jim McLeod: What job was that?

Emily McLeod: When you broke your achilles and the back of your heel. The scaffold. [Inaudible] and then it broke and you came down and went into the basement.

Grant: Was this in Chicago?

Jim McLeod: No. That was here.

Grant: And so what happened there?

Jim McLeod: The scaffold broke and I went down. That's when I broke both my ankles.

Grant: And it was because there was too much brick up there with you.

Jim McLeod: Well, I had two tongs full of brick and bad timber, bad plank. The timber broke when I was walking across it. Down I went.

Grant: Any idea where that was?

Emily McLeod: It was a house you were building.

Jim McLeod: I don't remember where we were at though.

Grant: How many years did you lay brick?

Jim McLeod: I didn't lay brick. I worked with the bricklayers. I was just a hod.

[00:45:56]

Emily McLeod: [inaudible]

Jim McLeod: I worked quite a few years at it. I can't remember how many.

Grant: And there was a union for that, right?

Jim McLeod: Yeah. Well, the labor's union is part of the HOD carriers. The HOD carriers used to have a union by themselves, but they dropped it and went in with the laborers.

Grant: Did you go to meetings?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: And was that at the hall over here?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Grant: Did you ever go upstairs?

Jim McLeod: Upstairs? Yeah. Okay. But I was a president of the union for quite a while. Quite a few years.

Grant: Of the laborers?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Grant: What was the local then? Is it 1686? or curtain?

Jim McLeod: We were local . . . I can't remember what it was. We had a local number all by itself at that time. Then they started combining everything and it's 13 something now I think.

Grant: The president of the union.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. It doesn't mean that much. You were just there when they opened the meetings, you know.

Grant: Was it ever contentious? Did you have arguments?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. All the time. Yeah. That's why they had the meetings.

Grant: What did they argue about that?

Emily McLeod: You guys were going to build the Columbia Gardens or something. And all the laborers got together. They had a contractor that was going to do it from out of town. There were over a thousand cars up there, and trucks. And guys screaming to fight.

Jim McLeod: Non-union contractor.

Emily McLeod: I was there too. I went with him.

Grant: The arguments, they were with contractors, not internally. What were the arguments about usually?

Jim McLeod: They were non-union.

Grant: And that's what it would be is you guys would be picketing or fighting against non-union contractors. Didn't people in Butte know better than to hire non-union?

Jim McLeod: I don't know what that was all about, you know, I don't know.

Emily McLeod: They even had a union for the finishers. He was a finisher and a member of the finishers' union. That was [inaudible] the head of it, right?

Grant: Did you like being part of the unions?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Yeah. It was good. Yeah. And for a good reason. You were getting paid what you oughta get paid.

Grant: Do you think people are worse off nowadays without them?

Jim McLeod: Without the union? Oh yeah. Yeah. They can work you for nothing. Yeah. And nothing said about it.

Grant: When did they start to go away in Butte?

Jim McLeod: Boy, I don't know.

Emily McLeod: The seventies. I was in the women's union.

Grant: The protective union?

Emily McLeod: You couldn't work in any restaurant, any bar unless you were in that union. And they were strict.

Grant: And you also met at the hall, right?

Emily McLeod: Our hall was across the street.

Jim McLeod: In the Miner's union building.

Emily McLeod: I was for the union all the time. I'm very much for the union. Because most of the time you got [inaudible]. Especially if you were somebody that didn't have an education and you are down there working as a waitress or a cook, you got \$2 an hour, you got nothing. And most of those ladies all had children. Even myself, I had been raised by myself. The unions were

sort of strict. You had to wear that stupid little button. And I didn't like that button. So I used to get in trouble. They used to try to fine you for not wearing that button. But then I got up in the union hall, I wanted to fight all of them. And I told them that I am not going to wear their damn button.

Grant: Yeah, 'I pay my dues but . . .'

Emily McLeod: I pay the dues. I am a union person. If somebody come in there and they wasn't union, I would go to the union and turn them in. But I [wasn't going to wear the button.] [inaudible] That's just my way.

Grant: How many pickets do you think you went out on? Did you do that a lot?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Quite a few. Yeah. Yeah.

Grant: Is it enjoyable?

Jim McLeod: Well, you had to be there. You had to get something out of it, you know? Yeah. We picketed the prison. They had non-workers down there and we went down there and picketed them. That was quite an experience.

Grant: How'd that go?

Jim McLeod: It was something else.

Emily McLeod: Tell him how you were working at the prison with Bonnie.

Jim McLeod: We built a library down there, inside the prison.

Emily McLeod: And that guy that had eaten that lady, he was down there in the prison where you were working.

Jim McLeod: They let him out and walk around every day. The man-eater! The human-eater.

Grant: What?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, he ate their fingers or something, didn't he?

Emily McLeod: When they caught him . . .

Grant: What? I never heard about this guy.

Emily McLeod: Was it here? And he got this lady and killed her and he ate most of her body. But when they caught him, he had her fingers in his pockets. That's what he was eating.

Grant: Holy shit. And this guy was walking around while you were down there finishing concrete?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, he'd get out and walk around every day. They'd let him out. That was his time to walk.

Emily McLeod: Tell him, you got the creeps when he was around you.

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Well, anybody would, yeah.

Grant: Well, what was going on with the picket then at the prison?

Jim McLeod: Uh, what the hell was it? Well, they had a non-union contractor come in there. I dunno what the hell they were doing. They were doing something. Setting precast is what it was. They put the run on him and they had a union contractor finish the job.

Grant: So pickets were effective.

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah. Yeah. They still are today. And they got one down in Triton.

Emily McLeod: I picketed down at Perkins. That was another union thing, that they brought in their own . . . They didn't want the waitresses or anybody in the hotel industry that was union. So I was down there. Of course, I am sort of mouthy.

[00:55:15]

Grant: Oh, wow. Okay. And you picket even in the winter.

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: So do you have a flask?

Jim McLeod: No.

Grant: Something to keep you warm?

Jim McLeod: No, I didn't ever.

Emily McLeod: He never drank on the job. But on the weekends, when you get that check, you wouldn't see him until Sunday morning.

Grant: Well, there you go.

Emily McLeod: How about when you wrecked the truck?

Grant: She's reminding you of all the car wrecks.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. That's because she's hot on them. Yeah. Weber had a job down there and Tommy McGuinn was the boss, uh, and I had the concrete crew, so I had a pickup and I got drunk, made a U-turn. Where was I at?

Emily McLeod: Second Street and Montana.

Jim McLeod: Montana Street. I was making a U-turn on Montana Street. And I got hit. The cop that picked us up, I knew him pretty good, Charlie Case. He says, "Get in the car, Jim." So he run me up to the hospital. They ran me to the hospital and he gave me a ride home. Well, as soon as I got home, the phone rang.

Emily McLeod: You got home and sobered up and then you said, "I'm hurting."

Jim McLeod: Yeah, okay, and then we went to Boulder and then she got the call.

Emily McLeod: We got an emergency call in Boulder saying that I better get him back to Butte. So that morning I was mad at him. My son was little and I said, "Go jump on your dad." So he was jumping on him and he said, "Oh no, don't do that. I hurt." I sent him in there to chase him and get him out of bed. Then he said, "I'm so sore, let's go to Boulder and I can soak in the water." So we get up there. And he was already getting undressed and he'd take my son with him. And I went in the women's. And I got in there and they said there's an emergency call for you. So I didn't have clothes on and I had to go out there.

Grant: Had they done an x-ray or something?

Emily McLeod: St. James called and said he had a broken neck that we gotta get him to the hospital right away. So we're up in Boulder. And I am driving and I am sort of nervous and I got a lead foot anyhow. And I must have hit every bump and hole and he was going "aargh."

Grant: Broken neck!

Jim McLeod: Yeah, broken neck.

Emily McLeod: We get to the hospital. And that's when they put him in a room and put a brace and everything on him.

Grant: And was it high up in your vertebrae?

Emily McLeod: It was down right in his neck. They don't know why he didn't die. Because you break your neck and that's it.

Grant: Yeah, most of the time.

Emily McLeod: Then he had to go for like maybe a month after that having to hang it.

Grant: Like traction or something.

Jim McLeod: Pull your neck up.

Emily McLeod: Then he went back to work.

Grant: Do you live with pain now? Are you in pain?

Jim McLeod: A little bit. Yeah, not my neck, my shoulders. Yeah.

Emily McLeod: Your legs. Your heels. If he don't wear a good pair of shoes then his legs really hurt.

Grant: You seem to me to really embody that Butte Tough. You know what I mean? What do you think of that phrase?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, it's probably right. Yeah.

[01:00:00]

Emily McLeod: And he never was fat. He was built like you. You know, not skinny, but not fat either. When I met him, he was like maybe a 130 pounds.

Grant: Oh, wow. 130.

Emily McLeod: Until after I got him . . .

Grant: I pretty much hover at 180.

Emily McLeod: That's where he usually stays at, 180. And now he's over 200. Because he never had no butt. And his legs are so skinny. He always looked like a Cambodian baby with sort of a potbelly. And little scrawny legs. Now, it's because he can't breathe. The air is in his stomach. He has to be on oxygen 24 hours.

Grant: Did you ever smoke?

Emily McLeod: Yes, you did when you were drunk.

Jim McLeod: I had a few when I was drinking, but I never did smoke.

Grant: Sure.

Jim McLeod: You know, pretend like something's going on.

Emily McLeod: I even brought some weed home one day and told him to smoke this weed. But he wouldn't do it.

Grant: Oh really? Why is that? Not interested?

Jim McLeod: No, I just didn't want to.

Grant: What about drinking nowadays? Do you have a drop now and then?

Jim McLeod: No. I don't really care.

Emily McLeod: He's got 45 years in him.

Jim McLeod: Not drinking.

Grant: Not drinking. Okay. That's a long time. Yeah. Longer than I've been alive.

Jim McLeod: Yeah. It's a long time.

Emily McLeod: But he had to spend 30 days in Galen.

Jim McLeod: Well, it was either that or one year in the pen.

Grant: Oh, over what?

Jim McLeod: Drinking. 13 DUIs.

Grant: 13? Here in Butte, all of them?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, I think all of them were here. Weren't they?

Emily McLeod: You know what he'd do? We always had cars. I had my car, but he had a truck and then he had about 20 cars that he had. And we lived on Franklin Street. He used to think the Anselmo and the Butte hill would be the place to put all of those junky old cars. He'd get drunk and forget where he left the car and then he'd come home. Get a ride. And then he'd go back and pick up a car and then go back to a bar and then pass out in the car. Most of the cops, that's when we had the dirty cops. And they were nice guys. Well, some of them weren't that nice.

Grant: You probably went to school with a lot of them.

Emily McLeod: And it's like, they'd take you home. But then they piled up all of those tickets. And they threw his butt in jail. And then I said, "OK, that's it. I'm leaving. I'm taking the kid and getting the heck out of here." And then he said, "I'll behave, if you just go talk to the judge." So I had Moe [inaudible] come with me and we went and talked with the judge. What judge was it?

Jim McLeod: The drunken judge, McCormick, or whatever the hell his name was.

Emily McLeod: Well, who was it?

Jim McLeod: I can't think of his goddamn name.

Emily McLeod: Anyhow, me and Moe went up there. And the judge said that if he spends 30 days in Galen and then he won't have to go to the pen. And he won't have to pay this huge, big fine. So I said to him, "Make up your mind. What do you want to do?" So he went to Galen.

Grant: And that was the end of it?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, I got out. I went up and seen them. Put my thing up on the computer and he said, "We will erase everything on your charges." So he cleared my record. That was it. No problem.

Emily McLeod: He had a heck of a time when he had to take a test and get his license because he had a DUI in Chicago.

Jim McLeod: And that one, it took me . . .

Emily McLeod: It took almost six months . . .

Jim McLeod: To get it cleared. So I had one in Chicago. It never got cleared.

Emily McLeod: And now he's not supposed to drive because he's got oxygen.

Grant: But are you still driving?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Grant: There you go.

Jim McLeod: They said I'd pass out, but I kind of doubt that. Maybe I would, but I don't think so.

Emily McLeod: I don't think he's ever passed out . . . well, he passed out when he was drunk.

Grant: Don't we all.

Emily McLeod: Tell them about when the bar across from the M&M burnt down. And you were directing traffic. Drunker than a maggot.

Jim McLeod: I don't remember that.

Emily McLeod: What was the name of that bar? I used to run over there.

Jim McLeod: Where the empty lot is at.

Emily McLeod: There was a bar there. And when it burnt down, all the firemen were there, and of course, they knew him. And he's out there directing traffic. He didn't know what the hell he was doing.

Grant: What about the fires, Jim? Did you have any thoughts on that when it was happening?

Jim McLeod: I didn't know. It was just a fire.

Grant: But I mean, a lot of Butte burned, didn't it?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah.

Grant: Did it make you sad or mad or did you care?

Jim McLeod: Oh yeah, just one of those things that happened, I guess.

Emily McLeod: When the [board of trade] burnt on Broadway. The one that Charlie [inaudible] had. And I know how that burnt down.

Grant: Oh yeah?

Emily McLeod: Not accidentally.

Grant: It seemed like a lot of them weren't an accident.

Emily McLeod: And Charlie got money for that being burnt. But they all knew how to do it. That's how a lot of those places got burnt down. They told me the secret of it, but I can't remember.

Grant: Was it electrical?

Emily McLeod: No. There was a bar up here, it was [inaudible] bar. And they started that on fire. I don't know if it was a mix of lye and something else. And that's how they burnt that one down. The same with the Board.

Grant: The Board of Trade, yeah.

Emily McLeod: The one on Broadway, not the one on Park Street.

Grant: Jim, from where Butte was when you were a kid, how does it compare now? Do you think Butte is better off? Are the hard times over?

Jim McLeod: No, it was better then than it is now. You know, everything was better. I'd say.

Emily McLeod: Me too.

Grant: And what happened?

Jim McLeod: I don't know. I don't know.

Emily McLeod: Once the bars went down and the mine went down, Butte went down.

Grant: Do you think Butte's decline is over?

Jim McLeod: It's over. Yeah. It can't go down no more. We got the pit and that employs a lot. There's quite a bit of employment around here, so I don't, you know, I don't think nothing will ever change. I don't think it'll get better, but I don't think it'll get worse either.

Grant: Okay. It's kind of stabilized. When you say it was better back then, do you mean economically?

Jim McLeod: Yeah.

Grant: What other ways was it better? You know, do you feel you had more freedom?

Jim McLeod: No, it was just better. That's all.

Emily McLeod: The people were different.

Grant: How have the people changed?

Emily McLeod: People weren't like they are now.

Grant: How are they now?

Emily McLeod: There's a generation that's coming up. I'm not saying that all of them are coming up, but the biggest majority are brought up in a home that the environment isn't very good. And most of the children are on drugs. When I was young and they smoked pot, it was just weed that you were burning, not the flower like they have now. I only smoked it a couple times. Because it didn't do nothing for me. But the weed now is totally different.

Grant: It's pretty powerful.

Emily McLeod: So I think that's what's making this . . . and then they make that other crap. I don't know if they shoot it or drink it.

Grant: What's that? Oh meth? Meth is a whole other thing.

Emily McLeod: And we didn't have that when we were kids. I was raised where there were a lot of bars and alcohol and everything.

Grant: But it wasn't that stuff.

Emily McLeod: But those people never bothered you and you never bothered them. People were totally different. They weren't nuts.

Grant: Yeah, everybody is crazy nowadays.

Emily McLeod: Those guys that went up to Brown's and shot those poor goats. And they took the heads and put a cigarette in that one cow's head.

Grant: What's with that?

Emily McLeod: You know, if they're doing that, what would they do to some person? So that's my theory.

Grant: Yeah.

Emily McLeod: I got my own theories. I'm raising a grandchild. He's 24. And he smokes cigarettes. And he probably tried pot. I'm not going to say he can't do it, because I think they all try that. But he's a good kid. He don't get in trouble. My son, he was like his dad, he worked all the time. From the time he was in high school, he worked all the time. But he went to school. And we didn't make him. That was his choice. And he drank. So he got DUIs that probably paid for two or three cars. But you know he had him as a father and me as a mother, so he had to come out a little bit . . . But my grandson, his mother didn't really, I guess she loved him. But you know, after they got divorced, that little kid was left in the middle. His dad worked all the time. His mother, she had boyfriends. He had girlfriends. But I always had him. And I still have him and he's 24. I'll die and he'll still be at my house.

Grant: What else would you like to touch on, if anything?

[01:15:32]

Jim McLeod: Nothing that I know of.

Grant: You know, usually what I ask people near the end of our conversation is what you hope for, for Butte. You know, do you have any hopes for this city?

Jim McLeod: Just that everything goes good. That's all. I think it will.

Emily McLeod: No. This city will never go again. The city will be just like Whitehall.

Grant: Like Whitehall. I mean, a lot of people in government here, you know, they're concerned that Butte is not growing like Missoula or like Bozeman. My opinion is kind of, I don't want it to grow like those places, you know? How do you feel about it?

Jim McLeod: Yeah, you've got the right idea there.

Emily McLeod: Do you want me to stay here in Butte? But if you went to Bozeman, Missoula, Helena, you could go, you could advance someplace. Here, there's no, you don't get up that ladder.

Grant: I don't want to be up that ladder.

Emily McLeod: Well, I love Butte. I'm going to die here, but it's never, ever going to be the same.

Grant: As it was.

Emily McLeod: As it was.

Grant: Yeah, it was a big city, right?

Emily McLeod: It was huge. And every generation that came . . . the Italians, the Austrians, they all lived on the east side. And a few Mexicans, not too many. And we all lived together and we all were like the same. I mean, nowadays, it's not safe. If you went to school, when I went to school and you met a friend that went to school with you, you would know him right away. And you'd be friendly. People nowadays aren't like that. You could go to school, like even my son's generation, he's still friends with some of his friends that were in school, but the biggest majority of them all left. And he left too. He went to Chicago. When they blew up New York, he was down at the bottom of New York. He was working down there. And so he was always gone. And so that little boy didn't have this dad all the time. But my son always had his dad. I mean, he worked at different places and out of town, but he was always here. And I never left him and I was always there and we were a family. You don't see families anymore. Unless, you go to their house when they're having Thanksgiving or something. A holiday. We ate at the table. The kids don't do that anymore. They watch that telephone. Or they're watching TV. When we were kids, you sat at the table and you didn't do anything but eat your dinner. And clean up your mess. Nowadays, they don't do that. Girls don't iron. My daughter, I made her learn how to iron.

Grant: I learned how to iron in the military academy. They teach you there. And I enjoyed that. I like the size of Butte, you know. I've always grown up in small towns. The biggest town I ever lived in was Tulsa, OK. Anyway, I like small towns. I got to say, I really prefer Walkerville. And now I own a building up there with a friend of mine.

Emily McLeod: When I was young, my aunt lived in North Walkerville. And her kids were raised in Walkerville.

Grant: That can be a mark against you with some people.

Emily McLeod: You had to go on the bus, because I lived on the east side. You had to ride the bus up to Walkerville. And it'd turn around up above. Then there was a walk that went all around that mine, a wooden one. And you had to run from McGuff. She was down there and she was like a man. And then we had the Colnago's and they live on the corner there. And if you went past there, they'd be throwing rocks at you.

Grant: Everybody I've met up there is very friendly, but we've been working on a building up there and laid a lot of brick this year. I've never laid brick before this year. I mean, we must have laid 3000 just on the parapet and we're just hiking them up this staircase we built with tongs. Eight to a tong. 16 bricks, every trip. It's like 36 steps up to the roof. A lot of times I've thought about reinforcing some of the planks and hearing your story, I think I'm going to.

Emily McLeod: Do you like bricklaying?

Grant: I love it. Yeah. I've done a lot of masonry, poured concrete. Did that in Tulsa. My brother had a company. And so I don't miss that. That's why I went to college because, you know, they said, "I'll either be the best hand they ever had or they'll run my ass back to school." Because I had dropped out of school and started with concrete, but anyway I went back to school in Missoula.

Emily McLeod: I wish my son would have gone to school. He's got a lot of him in him. But he's got some of me and he's a hard worker. But at the pit, he works down there now. He used to be a laborer. He does welding or whatever. And like when the trucks get wrecked, he has to take them apart and put them back together. Like they said, he can do anything. But you know, he doesn't go for being a boss or anything. Because he says he just could handle being the boss because he's hot tempered. He's got a real hot temper. Sort of like his mother. His dad wasn't really. When he worked, he was ornery, but he never really got mad. Jimmy gets mad if something doesn't go exactly the way it's supposed to be. He will put it together but takes a little bit of swearing and a little bit of hollering.

Grant: Some stuff, you just gotta cuss it otherwise it's not going to go.

Emily McLeod: But otherwise, if he would've went to school, he probably would have got a good education. But he didn't want to go to school.

Grant: You know, that's another thing that's changed in this country is when you go to school now, college. You come out with debt. You know, I owe the University of Montana, like \$70,000. How am I ever going to pay that? You know, they send me these bills. It's like, "You missed your \$900 payment." There's no way I can pay that back.

Emily McLeod: I've got a little friend that I work with at the pasty shop. She's going to Tech. But her mother is a beauty operator. So she don't make that much money. They depend on, they have to pay for all her bench or whatever where she's working. Unless you have a building of your own. You probably get screwed that way too because it doesn't pay. She works hard. We worked at the pasty shop. She was the nicest girl. The boss had a grandson that worked with us. And he accused all of us . . . not . . . if he had accused me, I would have punched him in the nose, broke a few things. He didn't accuse none of us. But he was talking. He was saying that this little girl was the one that was stealing money.

And I mean, they were the stupidest people. She would come in and take the tally at night and take the money that we took in. And then instead of taking it with her and putting it in the bank, like you would, and then left a few dollars there so you could have change in the morning. She'd leave it there. And they had the dumbest places they'd put it. They'd put it in the salt. A salt can. And then sometimes they'd put it in a drawer with the aprons. So his grandson was doing the stealing. They found out that he was stealing all the money. And now she works over there at that new restaurant. She works at night. On West Park. That new steakhouse. She graduates next year. She's going to go away and leave town. She said, "Where can you work here?" There's nothing here. And she was born and raised here. And it's sad. Like she said, my family is still here, but I have to leave to go to work.

Grant: I just made my job out of thin air and the job that I wanted, this radio station. I built it for nothing. And I waited tables and stuff while we built the radio station.

Emily McLeod: And that's like my son, he loves it here too. He worked in California, Reno, New York.

Grant: Well, if he's got a job at the mines, he's probably doing alright.

Emily McLeod: He still belongs to the union, though, up here as a laborer. He worked a long time as a laborer.

Grant: I thought it was all non-union out there.

Jim McLeod: Well, it is out there.

Emily McLeod: . . .cash money.

Grant: Oh, the profit share.

Emily McLeod: He put half of that into so his son could go to school and his son didn't go to school either. And he's a laborer down in Missoula, 20, 40 miles out of Missoula.

[END OF RECORDING]