THE VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

JOHN MACK

The Verdigris Project
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Oral History Transcript of John Mack

Interviewers: Clark Grant & Ellen Crain
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Grant: OK. Very good. What have you done something like this before? No, I haven't. OK. And as anyone informed you of the purpose of this project?

Mack: Not in any detail.

Grant: OK. Basically, we got a grant from the federal government, the National Endowment for the Humanities. I work for a local radio station and we wrote the grant. And the archives are a part of it. And basically, the one component of the grant is to collect 100 new oral histories of people living in Butte. Don't necessarily have to be from here, but a lot of them have concerned people's mining background. But again, that's not a requirement. So there's no particular topic that is off limits or that we're seeking, you know. This is basically a conversation with people about their lives and about the lives of your parents and your grandparents. You know, as far back as you're able to go. And there's no time limit. We've talked with people for as much as three hours before but then some of them might be 45 minutes. So, yeah, whichever it ends up being.

Mack: I would guess it might not be in the longer framework, but who knows?

Grant: Are there topics in particular that you want to discuss today?

Mack: No, I don't. I think I could just maybe start back at the beginning. Yeah. I was born June 3rd, to be exact, of 1940. And I was the second child. My folks were John H. same initials as I have. He did pass those. John H. Mack. And my mother was Andre and that was A-N-D-R-E. Mayette. A French origin. Mayette. Mack.

Crain: Do you want some water or coffee?

Mack: So I came along in June of 1940. The family home, which was built by my grandfather, was in what they used to call the Central Butte district. It was at 721 South Colorado street, which is basically just straight down the street from where we are here. So about 10 or 11 blocks south of here. And he was a carpenter by trade, my grandfather. His name was also John H. He was John Henry. My father was John Henry and I was John Herbert. And that was because my grandfather on my mother's side was Herbert Mayette. And I'll get back to that later. But anyway, my dad should have been John Junior and for some reason, my grandfather died before I was born. So that's back in . . . I think as I recall, my dad was about 18 years old when his father died. So that would have been in about 1935. And anyway, he was a carpenter and built an up and down duplex there with a smaller third home in the back that they used as their family home, at least back at that time. OK. So in going back into Dad's part of it and his generation, Dad . . .

Grant: Your grandfather was he a union carpenter or any idea?

Mack: Back in the . . . Let's see that would have been between 1918 and 1935. You know, I don't think I ever asked my father that. I don't know.

Grant: And do you know how he died?

Mack: My grandmother was very much involved in the union movement. So I would guess that probably her husband was the same way, but I don't know that they were. Yes, I do know how he died. My dad was only 18 at the time and he had an infected tooth. And evidently that wasn't as rare as I had thought. But that's what killed him. So my father had three sisters and a brother. There were five of them. He was the oldest. And at age 18, he had to go out and start making some money so that he could help my grandmother with the rest of the family. And he did that quite well. The older family history - on my mother's side. My grandfather there was Dr. Herbert A. Mayette and he was one of the early Butte physicians and he came here from Montreal, Canada.

And we have traced . . . I've got a bunch of cousins that like to do that genealogy. Traced their family back to France. I'm not sure where in France, but they had been established in Canada for lots of years until one of them, I think it would have been my grandpa's grandpa, which goes back two or three generations before me. He was a fur trader and he worked for one of the Canadian outfits. I don't know. I should know the name. It was the biggest one there. At any rate, you'll have access to that. You probably know it. But he was a fur trader and came into Montana and did a lot of business trapping beaver, muskrat whatever else. I think beavers were the big thing. But he was the original one to come to Montana back at that time.

Crain: What was his name?

Mack: His name was Louis Louis Mayette. And he also spoke some of the native languages. So the army used him as an interpreter between the Indians that were here and the settlers. They talked about the forts. And again, you probably have that in the archives somewhere. What the different forts were here. But he helped them, you know, settling skirmishes and communications and so on with those people. An interesting part of that would have been one of his sons who was my grandfather, Herbert's father, ended up with two full families. He married an Indian gal. So there's a bunch of Mayette's that live in Montana and they're still living here. They lived up in the Flathead Lake area because that's where he had that family. He also had his other family, which consisted of my grandma. Not my grandma. My grandfather, I should say. So that was really interesting to know that they had come, you know, from eastern Canada, actually the provinces up there. Well, and then finally into the Montreal area. It was Sherbrooke, a little town there. So to migrate over to Butte, Montana. I'm not sure why my grandfather, you know, the reason why they came to this particular community. I have cousins on the Mayette side that probably have a better feel for that.

Grant: He was a doctor?

Mack: He was a doctor. And he assisted in . . . I grew up with four sisters. I also have a brother, but he's the youngest of the six of us. And there's quite an age gap between my oldest sister. She's two years older than me, so she'd be 80 this year. And my youngest brother, who just turned 60. So there's a 20 year difference. That's a pretty good range and there are six of us. He came on quite late. But yeah, he came here and I remember he was with Dr. Shields. They were good buddies. And there was Dr. Fernand DeShano. You probably remember that name, don't you, Ellen? He worked down here in the Metals Bank. In fact, he was a family doctor for some of those years growing up, along with Roger Clapp and Frank Gardener. And these are all old time Butte doctors.

Crain: So your grandfather was a doctor? French Canadian. And DeShano was French Canadian as well.

Mack: And their home was over on West Porphyry, 900 block right on the corner. Well, Al and Ray's gas station complex is right there. And the Dairy Queen is across the street. And my grandmother's house was right there on the north side of the street. It was kind of what I would call a barn appearance structure. Years later in the 70s, they sold it to Tony De Jesus. And he remodeled and did a beautiful job. Anyway, that was the family home.

Crain: That's at the end of my alley.

Mack: Oh, is that right? So what street are you on?

Crain: I'm on Excel.

Mack: Oh OK.

Crain: Then we go down the alley. It's a beautiful home.

Mack: I remember, talking about Excel, that particular block. I think Dempsey, Collette and her sister Marge. I think their family home, or at least they lived there later. I don't know if it was their family home they purchased. But then there was a Mrs. Johnson. It was kind of like right across the street from my grandma. Incidentally, Ferdinand DeShano lived right across the backyard from my grandpa on Diamond Street, the next one up. Ferdi DeShano. I always remember, he was a funny little guy. He always had on like a bow tie, I think, if I remember as a kid. Why you would remember that? Nobody wears ties anymore. But bow ties were even, I thought, kind of odd at the time.

Crain: Was your grandfather, was he in with the Murray Clinic doctors? Or was he independent of them? Or more aligned with St. James?

Mack: Good question. I can remember him being with Shields quite a bit. And whatever affiliation James Shields had.

Crain: That would be St. James.

Mack: As opposed to the other guys. I think you're right.

Crain: Dr. Shields was powerful with his contract with the Anaconda Company.

Mack: And of course, I do recall, you know, my grandfather, Herb, they had a little place out on Roosevelt Drive and they lived there in the summers. I don't know that that little cabin still even exists, but I do know my mom loved horses and they had horses out there. And my mom must have thought she was part Indian because she always rode bareback. Nothing to do with saddles or any of that stuff. She'd just jump on and grab the mane and away she'd go. And pretty good horsemanship. Really good, I guess. But that was interesting there. My mom had Lucille and Madeline and Jan was the oldest one and she died. I don't know what the deal was with that. She died about at age six. I think the oldest one of them was born around 1910. And my mom was born in 18. Lucille was born in 14 and Madeline in16. They're all gone, of course, but quite a . . .

Crain: Was she born here?

Mack: Yeah. All of the girls were born.

Crain: What was her maiden name? Her maiden name was Mayette?

Mack: Yeah. She was one of the daughters of Dr. Mayette.

Crain: When she was really young. Did they live with the other French Canadians out on the flat?

Mack: No. As far as I recall, they always lived on Porphyry Street. Right from the start. Like I said. And then they had the summer property at Roosevelt Drive, which I suppose with our summers they might not have spent more than three and a half, four months there. That would be my guess. But Lucille. Well, Jan, the oldest, died, and at that time, I think my grandmother, Elvina, was her name. Elvina Richer. I did research that, too. That's just spelled "richer." They pronounced it "Rich-ay". And she had a brother who was a cardinal in the church up there in Canada who got to be fairly powerful. Loranzo was his name. You don't hear that name much anymore.

But the closest we get is Larry. But all of that bunch, they were pretty interesting people, very active. I remember when Jan died at age six or seven, that the next girl, she would have been the oldest after Jan, Lucille and she married Jim Maloney. Lucille was sent on a train back to Montreal by her mom, by my grandma. She evidently was going through some emotional problems when the daughter died. So she sent this four year old back on a train. You know, I mean, think of it today. I guess they do it. But you'd make sure you had monitors, just like when the young people take flights. They pick them up and meet them and all that. I'm sure that somebody monitored her travel back and forth, but that stuck in my head that that was kind of different. And the next one down, Madeleine was her name and she married, this is interesting as far as the mining goes. Madeleine married Big Jim Kerrigan's son, and his name was Jim Kerrigan also. And he later became a dentist, but his father was the boss of the company at the Mountain Con. He ran the Mountain Con and they lived in the big mansion at the Mountain Con.

That was Jim Kerrigan. Here is a youngster, young Jim, going to Saint Pat's school. A limo would come and pick him up for school. And you can imagine this guy had a few problems, too. I mean, he was treated like a China porcelain doll or something. That's the only way I can describe it. That led to some problems.

He had some alcohol problems later in life. And in fact, actually, he died of the disease, but he was really a great guy, cordial fella. And big, big Irishman, man, he was a big guy. And as so many of them are, he was a gentle fella. His offices were above the Rialto building with Dr. O'Farrell. And Ehrlich was in there. And I can remember watching the Fourth of July parade from his window because the parade at that time used to come right down Park Street. And that was just wonderful as a kid, I remember those parades. They're pretty well etched in my mind how good they were, you know. And of course, at that time, Park Street and all the other uptown, there were no fires then.

You know, back when I was growing up in the late 40s, early 50s between, say, 8 and 14 years old. Uptown looked like a metropolis. It was that big. I'm sure it was bigger than Billings at the time. We were number one for a lot of years. That's why we had the one on our plate. The old town. And you know, so much about the archive, how rich our history is here. But I can remember that as a kid watching the parade there. I don't think any of those aunts are left. I think everybody is gone.. Lucille, Madeleine, my mom died in 96, which is already 22 years. My dad died in 98. 20 years. So they're all gone.

There are six of us. We're still hanging in. My oldest sister, Diana, is 80. She's in assisted living now. Actually, it's a nursing home. It's one step behind the assisted living. And she's at Clancy. Alhambra hot springs, it used to be when I was a kid. It's just a mile from Clancy, so it's about 50 miles from here going toward Helena, about 15 miles outside of Helena. She's been there a few years. And her son, she had three children. Her oldest son is the judge here, Brad Newman. He's my nephew. He just retired within the last two months. He's a great kid. And his sister, she's a piece of work in herself. Dava is her name and she's got a doctorate from M.I.T. and she was deputy director of NASA under Obama.

And of course, she would have done a super job, but that's political, which is a shame, you know, to think those people that have that much education and Know-How, especially in the space program, can be dismissed because we change leadership. To me, that doesn't seem right. But anyway. Dava Newman is her name. She's a great gal. She's also a full professor at M.I.T. and her undergraduate degrees are from Notre Dame. She's an impressive little thing and she's about that tall. She was an all state basketball player at Capital High. The third member of my sister's family was Lance. And he was a couple of years younger than Brad. Brad just turned 60. So Lance would be 58, maybe. He died on a snowmobile out by Elliston, flipped it over.

Crain: So how does River fit in?

Mack: Okay. Brad's dad was Dan Newman and they're from Elliston. And there's the mining connection. And they were in mining almost all their lives, him and his father and his brothers. They had mining properties. Still do down in Elliston and an area going up toward Helena and all through that area there of Avon, Elliston. Dan and my sister divorced after about twenty-five

years of marriage. They got married about 57. So say 82 or somewhere in there. And then Dan married another gal. Lisa was her name and they had one boy, River. That's where River comes in. So he's actually a half brother to Brad and Dava. He teaches here in Butte.

Crain: Yeah. He does a lot of art and he teaches glassblowing. We know River as well as we know Brad.

Mack: And I don't know River that well. But I have met him and I've been around him a little bit. Contact with Dan hasn't been too solid over the years but Brad moved to Butte a long time ago. So he and I have been connected for many, many years. I helped him with his two campaigns for Judge and he did quite well. I don't think he needed my help, but it helps to have a Butte connection. It really does. Just kind of a tight knit community in that regard. I think it's still staying that way. But anyway, it's been a great, great place for me to be lucky enough to stay here. My sisters all left. Well, Deanna stayed when she was married to Dan. They were in Helena and he worked a lot in politics and so on. But my other three sisters all went to Portland, and Davis, California. Marilyn was in Portland, had a teaching career for 40 plus years, she taught, of course she loved the French with my Gram, so she taught French and Spanish. She was a great teacher.

She went to the Sorbonne and she was connected with the Florence program because of her Spanish languages and some Italian. Her two daughters are with her in Portland. They both live there and have their families and live in the Lloyd Center area of Portland, which would be across the river from downtown to the east. A real nice area. She bought one of these old houses. I think probably it was because of her Butte roots. And it's one of like the West Side mansions, actually. It's quite like those on the last block of Park Street before you get to Excel. The two on the north side, not quite that big, but three stories and huge. Well, they had two or three couples living it when she first bought it and moved into that Lloyd Center area. And of course, now those mansions have been all restored and with lots and lots of money, but they take lots and lots of maintenance, too, you know. Anyway, she's made her career there and still there. Retired. With her two daughters there to help her. Michelle, she married a guy that was born in New York and he's an airline pilot. He's retired now also.

Her name is Swanson, Michelle Swanson, and she is six years younger than me. Marilyn was three years younger than me and Michelle was six years younger. And so she married this pilot and they built in Davis. It's only about, what, 15 miles from Sacramento, ten or fifteen. And he flew out of Salt Lake all these times. He was lucky enough to get the Western flights into Butte all those years. That was one of his routes. He got to spend some time here in Butte too. Great guy. The next sister was LeAnn and she's also a teacher. And she was married to, you know the Maloney's, of course, really well. LeAnn was born in 49. I thought she was your age, but not anywhere near there. But she married Neil Maloney's and his name was Neil also. They divorced. They had one boy named Joel. And now she's married to a fella named Jim Wheeler. They've been married 30 years and doing quite fine. She also lived in Portland and taught. She wanted to come back to Montana and she wanted to be in the Flathead Lake area because my grandmother Mayette and my dad, both of them loved Flathead.

The closest she could get was Plains. Price wise, the property around the lake is ridiculous. Anyway, she got a nice piece of ground in Plains. So she lives in the hills above Plains. Been worried about fires there in the last three years. And that's one of the dangers you get when you decide to go live in nature. But anyway, she's done quite well. My younger brother, Chris, now, he's the one who is 17 years younger than me. He lives in Sunnyvale and he's a physicist. He graduated from Bozeman, which I did, too. I graduated in 62. He must've got out in 79.

Crain: What did you graduate in?

Mack: Chemistry. I would have got my degree from the School of Mines. They changed the name. They call it Montana Tech, but it was the School of Mines. And the legislature hadn't seen fit to allow them to grant degrees. And they had more programs than Bozeman, anyway. That's the politics. Some things that happened. But I got my degree at MSU. So anyway, Chris just told me he retired about two months ago, which is great. He worked for Lockheed, did a lot of the satellites. They put up many of the manmade satellites. So he's moving to a suburb of Vancouver, Washington. Just a little tiny town, Battleground or something like. Weird name. One of my classmates lives in Vancouver, Billy Stanton. We just had our 60th reunion just over this past weekend. High school reunion. And I think there was somewhere in the neighborhood of 170 or 80 with the two classes. We were split back then. I went to Christian Brothers High School, which is now, well, they don't even use it anymore. Boys' Central. There's a MERDI program that's on South Idaho Street. Right down from Girls' Central. And so the boys were at Boys' Central, Christian Brothers. Girls were at Girls' Central. And I think that lasted. I graduated in 58, so I think that lasted up to 1970, maybe before they combined.

Crain: 1969 was the first year that they combined them.

Mack: So anyway that was the high school years. And I will go back to the grade school. Let's see, maybe talk a little bit more or my dad's siblings. My dad's siblings, he had three sisters and a brother. So same numbers. Well, we had six. Five of them. Marjorie was the oldest. Then Mary Phil. And then Winnie. And Marjorie was kind of like her mother, she ended up being a family matriarch. She raised a family and they lived in Oakland. Don Henry was his name. And he worked with Milwaukie on the railroad. He was a railroad guy. And he moved to Oakland. I think I was just a little kid then because I remember they had some boys and girls. And Don Junior, he was my age.

And I can remember playing with him as a little kid. And he also became a pilot. And he got to the top of the line with Delta, being their chief captain. And then he was their trainer after he'd had 25 or 30 years flying. And he had a brother, Dick and Phyllis and Sharon and Mary, there were five of them too. All successful, and then the next sister was Mary Phil and she was a nurse in World War Two.

She ended up marrying Terry Kellin, who was a doctor in Anaconda who delivered in Anaconda from like about 1960 to 1980. He was an OBGYN down there. Great guy. The next one, Winnie. She married an Irishman, an O'Toole. O'Toole came from a family of 13. He was from Ryegate which is up out of Billings. Mary Phil had 10 children, the Kellen's. And this Winnie O'Toole, she topped her by one, I think she had eleven. I mean, you're talking big families. My dad is a

piker with five. And the other one had five too, Margie. So they produced lots of offspring. You can't call them offsprings. So lots of cousins and so on, and of course, my grandmother, the French lady. She was great. She played the piano and she could sing. And, of course, the whole, everybody loved to sing. Our family, I recall as a kid, Dad played the piano by ear. He never took any lessons. And he just had this natural ability. You know, I wish I would have gotten some of that I can't even do, you know, the simple ones - "Twinkle, twinkle little star." He could sit there and play chords and all that. But we all liked to sing. My mother had a beautiful voice, so all of us ended up singing. I can remember, I lived on Colorado Street only five years. In those first five years, I don't remember too much. I've got a brother in law that remembers, like when he was two or claims he does. I don't remember nothing from up to five, and I remember just some of the grade school stuff.

But anyway, we did a lot of singing. Dad would play the piano. And we all sang and my older sister Deanna took the piano lessons and Marilyn did, too. And they wanted me too. And I was too busy with the footballs and all the rest of it. I do kind of regret that even now. I wished I would have learned to play piano, I still stay involved in the singing at Saint Ann's choir. And we have another group called New Wine Singers. And Betty Carpenter is kind of the head of it and I sing with her, too. So that's been quite rewarding to do that for the last 25 or 30 years. But anyway, we all sang and I can remember in the Montana Standard, had to be maybe I was twelve, so be in the early 50s, we were the Musical Max. And I think probably in some of my old stuff I should have got that paper that showed that. We should have just pushed that a little and been like the Osmonds and made a buck or two out of it.

Crain: And then your parents lived on Colorado Street.

Mack: Yeah. And then we moved to Argyle Street. That's where I was going before I got sidetracked. Keep me on track. I get lost. So we moved there when I was five. And I can even remember who we bought the house from. It was Dick Raymond and he and his brother, good friends of my folks and their wives. Dick and his brother Don had Raymond's Fireside Lounge, and that was one of the really great nightclub restaurant entertainment centers in Butte. But this was a little tiny one bedroom house at 2229 Argyle Street, and we moved there in 45. So another one of my sisters would have been born, Marilyn. So there would have been Marilyn and Diana and me and Mom and Dad. And the only bedroom was the folks'. And this is not unusual in Butte. A lot of them had homes just not like today. That was a nice little home. It was kind of like colonial style, but it had a living room, bedroom, kitchen and a bath off of there. And then a little room where there was a ladder, not even stairs. A ladder went up to the upper loft, the upper portion of the house. We put that ladder up and then it was just kind of bare flooring up there and it was a slanted roof. So not too much headroom.

And the girls. Marilyn and Deanna were there upstairs. It was their bedroom area. And I just had a little daybed at the bottom of these stairs in this little extra space. You couldn't call it a den unless you wanted a bear to live in there. It could be a den then. That was my bedroom, you know. And then as that progressed, Michelle was born in 46 and Leanne in 49, so I'm still in grade school at the time. And I remember when there was my mom and those three girls, I had to wait to get to school to go to the bathroom. There was no time. And all the women had one bathroom. I'm exaggerating. I get in there once in a while. Anyway, that was a pretty cozy, tight

little house. And, you know, we got by. It was no problem. I remember in about 1950, Dad wanted to just finish that. So I remember helping him. And we must have had a carpenter, I don't remember who, to help us, to put the stairwell in. We finally put some stairs in there. And then knotty pined the sides and put some tiles, asbestos tiles for the roofing. So and I still, all I had was my daybed. And it's funny because I still sleep better on the couch. Maybe that kind of wore off.

Crain: So you said grandfather was a carpenter. He didn't help?

Mack: He died before. He must've been like 38 or something. But it was in 1935 or 36 when he died. And so then Dad and Mom got married in 37, so he had to still kind of help his sisters with his mom, you know, to keep them going. And it was funny, he worked for the railroad too, Milwaukee, I think, and then he ended up working for Montana Power. And just as a clerk, I believe he started as a clerk. And then he studied law through LaSal at night and he got his degree and passed the bar. And they put him into claims and injuries and stuff like that. Any lawsuits involving, you know, from powerline damages or whatever. And then he got into the oil and gas leasing.

So he worked there his whole career. And of course, that was back when guys took jobs and kept them for life. He ended up with almost 50 years of service, was with [inaudible] company. And I remember as a kid growing up, I was really glad that he had a job at Montana Power. They treated people like extended family is how to describe it. Really pretty nice organization. But yeah, I remember Dad did that, studied his law degree at home and then passed the bar. And wouldn't you know it, after I finished my college and so on, and I came back and went to work for Montana Power.

I was in the marketing division and I decided to study law, too. And I did it the same way he did. I went through LaSal and I got through it in two years. I didn't have that much of an interest in it. So I never did take the bar exam. I thought that it was kind of not the best degree to have. So after working there ten years, Diane and I moved to Missoula and I went to the U for one semester. Law school there in 1968. But I didn't like the library end of it. You know, your type of the business. I wasn't really interested in digging through all that stuff. So anyway, I left and came back to Butte. I guess I kind of missed Butte.

Whatever the reason, I didn't stay there. I was kind of thinking, well, I've already been through most of this and I'm really not interested. So I did some other things after that. Anyway, I got married in 1961. Nice little Italian gal, Diane Masola. We got married in 61, so this year on the 19th, which is nine days away, will be 57 years. One of my buddies, Dan Sullivan, and he said, "You know what marriage is, don't you, Jack? He called me Jack. He says it's a life sentence without parole, no parole." But we don't have any children, so we've been instrumental in raising nieces and nephews. Both sides.

Crain: How did you meet your wife?

Mack: It's kind of funny. We lived at 2229 Argyle. She was a McQueen girl. Her mom was a Lisolovich. That name is about that long, right? I lived at 2229. The bus route came up Wall

from Clark Park and came over Wilson. Farragut is here and Racetrack fire station is here on Grand. Just to tell you about where it is. Her mom had either rented or bought a house on the corner of Farragut and Argyle on the other side of the street, right there. I think Eddie Rademacher and Patty [inaudible] are maybe they're still there. Anyway, the bus would come to my corner. She'd catch the bus to Butte High. I'd catch the bus to Central, Christian Brothers. So this would have been sophomore year, I guess, and I used to run down to the next corner on Wall Street and catch the bus there so I could save a seat for her. We met just because she was a little neighborhood girl and I kind of thought she was kind of neat. So I saved a seat for her. Somehow we survived those first six years. So, actually, I put another six on that 57 year anniversary because that's the only girl I knew from 15 years old on and no children. We're still completing that life sentence with no parole. Anyway, it's been great.

Crain: So you graduated as a chemist.

Mack: I did. Well, there's a little reason, I guess, or at least you've got to get a job, right? Anyway, when I went to Bozeman, my last year, I joined ROTC, Air Force ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps. The initials are there. And I had talked with the recruiters and had a plan all set out. That I would do my four years and I'd have four more years and I was going to get my law degree and so on through the Air Force. And that was all set for my last year of school. So obviously I passed up any job interviews, whatnot. I was all set and I came to realize in May, we were going to graduate just a month later. It's funny they wouldn't have picked up on this before. At the time, I wore glasses that were about that thick. I've had cataract surgeries, which has allowed them to reduce the content. I got corrective lenses in the areas where the original lenses were so that it allowed them to make less of a correction. But anyway, I have these real thick glasses and I thought maybe that might have been a tip off to these recruiters. But evidently it wasn't. So I came into Butte to do my physical for the Air Force in May.

I remember going to Dr. Keller. He was down in the Medical Arts building. Thomas was in the same office with him. I don't know if you remember those names. They were two really good eye doctors. Keller examined me. And he asked about my plans. He was the Air Force examining doctor. They subcontracted that, I guess, is how you describe it. Anyway, he said you can't qualify for the officer program, because of your vision. Basically you're blind without your glasses. Oh, that's nice. And he said not only can you not qualify for the officer, you can't qualify for the military. You can't get in the military, period. So, yeah. This is May the 11th or maybe 15th, even. And school's getting out. I don't have any . . . no job. No nothing. And, you know, her and I had lived. We got married just before we went to Bozeman in 61. I graduated 62. So we were there for that fall and this was just next spring. So here I am, no job and nothing so scrambling around.

And again, the family organization, Montana Power, Dad talked to his guys and pretty soon they said there's an opening in Billings. They called it the new business department, basically sales and marketing, and so nothing to do with chemistry. I started there and her and I took a little U-Haul, moved to Billings, lived there, and we were there two years. I worked there under a fella named Bill Hedapole. He later became one of the officers of the company, moved to Butte. But anyway, I stayed with that until I got transferred to Butte with the same division. I came in here and I stayed there for ten years up until about 68. Then I decided I'd already done my LaSal law

school study from 64 to 66. And in 68, I got that idea. Well, if I want to be a real lawyer, better go to U of M. So I left Montana Power and went to Missoula, only stayed there about a year. She was working split shifts for the phone company down there. She'd worked here in Butte. Those were pretty good jobs back at that point in time, the telephone operators. I can remember in 61 or 62, there was a big strike at Mountain Bell, and those gals were walking the picket line over here on West Broadway. I'm sure that's in the archives.

But anyway, with her split shifts and me going to school and us never seeing each other, that made part of that decision to give up on the law school thing and came back here. That all took a turn. I came back and didn't want to work for Montana Power anymore. I did come back and start again with them because I could keep my tenure. And, you know, that was kind of ingrained in me that I wanted to stay there my career, but I didn't have a very good boss. So I decided that was enough. And I went to work in the insurance business and ultimately, after a few years of that, ended up working for Blue Shield. A Butte guy hired me there too, a Walkerville guy named Tony Malani. He was one of the vice presidents and that was where my career was. And I came back and was located in Butte as the manager for half of my career there and half a year as a consultant, just working group health insurance contracts.

So I had Montana Power and the school district and Montana Tech, a lot of the bigger accounts. It was a good career. I enjoyed it. So anyway, that was my career. I retired. We were Blue Cross/Blue Shield by then. We merged in 1986. Butte Cross was going bankrupt, so we bailed them out. Merging two big companies like that is fun too. There's lots of spots that have to be accommodated and so on. But anyway, got through there from 85 to 2005. So it was good. No complaints. We had our offices at the Metals Bank building, the old one. Well, we had it there for a few years, we were all over the place. We were in the Prudential building, too. I think that was their last location. But our headquarters was always Helena. And Great Falls was Blue Cross. With the merger, it became Helena. Consolidated, moved everything to Helena and became Blue Cross / Blue Shield of Montana. And now that company has since been sold to a Big Blue Plan from Chicago, Illinois.

Grant: Do you have memories of the brothers?

Mack: Oh, yeah.

Grant: What can you tell us about that?

Mack: I can remember. They were disciplinarians. They were pretty good guys, really. There used to beat the hell out of us. There's no other way to say it. They called them leathers. But actually, they were strips of heavy duty leather with metal inserts. Pennies was one of their favorites. They'd take one strap and cement pennies all the way in it and then glue the next leather on there. And then another one on top of that. So they'd end up with a weapon about that long and about like that. And you'd get smacked around with that. They weren't too discerning about where they might use that? Supposed to be the hands and the rear end. But you'd get whacked on the arms, the head, neck. But it was better than if you challenged them and wanted to go down in the handball courts. They had a couple of pretty good boxers. So they could tune you up that way too. Those are the horror stories. They were actually pretty good guys. But some

of that did happen. And especially if you wanted to think you were tough. Wasn't that the case in Butte? You're always tough until the next tough guy gets a hold of you. And the next one gets a hold of him and on and on. There are a lot of war stories about the brothers, but they were excellent teachers. And I think for the most part, they were pretty caring.

Crain: Did you go to St. Anne's?

Mack: Yes, I went to St. Anne's. Maybe that's why the brothers were so difficult. We had nuns. We had the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, BVMs.

Crain: They were the Sisters of Charity of The Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mack: OK. A couple of the Butte ones went a long ways. I remember my classmate at Central, Joe McCarthy. He died early. His sister, Mary Ellen, was the head of the order. And this one that just passed away just the last week or two is a good friend of my sister's. Sharon Feeney was another. I mean, there were a lot of them that went . . . and the same way with the males. You know, we were encouraged to seek a vocation in the priesthood, more so than the Brotherhood. But in fact, one of my cousins became a Catholic priest, Father Bill Lowney. Yeah, but there was a lot of, I would say, pressure to really research or look carefully and see if a vocation was for you. St Ann's, we had eight grades. It was a really small school and I went there in the 40s. My second grade classroom was in a house and up Kossuth Street a couple of blocks from the school. I remember that they called it the Ryan house.

Then the other buildings were all really old. Then they started that expansion. They had classrooms, probably in the early 50s. So they continued to add on to that school. And of course, they built that beautiful new church in 1967. Our church was at the end of the school on Farragut Street, on the south corner, there. They use it for funerals and some small gatherings now, mostly funeral luncheons. But I remember having the nuns. I remember Sister Mary Emma, who was our fourth grade teacher, and she introduced us to kind of really learn math. They used to like to pull on your ears. The nuns did that with the boys. I don't know what they did to the girls. But they'd pull on our ears, pull our hair.

Grant: Is there like a biblical justification for that kind of discipline? Where in the Bible does it say hit the kid on the hand with a leather strap?

Mack: I don't know. It must be in the addendum or something. But, you know, in looking at that and looking at today's world where you can't even frown at the kid or you go to law court. I mean, it's absolutely flipped way too far the other way.

Grant: Do you think you've benefited from that kind of disciplinary environment?

Mack: Oh, I don't know. Accepted it. You know what I mean. But that happened, if you were disciplined at school and you went home and let your folks know what you did. I mean, we were brought up that way. You got it again at home. So, maybe they weren't out of line, too. Their methods were, some of them, a little excessive. I would say that. But the only time I ever got that

is when I mouthed off. I had a tendency to do that. I guess they thought they could beat it out of you.

Grant: What about with your nieces and nephews, you know, nowadays or grandkids, you know. Do you discipline them?

Mack: No, not at all. No. And I don't know. I didn't have children, so we didn't do anything that would have prevented us from having children. That's a bunch of negatives. But that part was positive. But no, we just never had any. And we talked about adoption. And I wasn't in big jobs at first. But, I mean, I didn't make much money. There were times, you know, especially after I left Montana Power and was digging around in the different insurance businesses . . . She had a nice job with . . . nice job . . . She worked her butt off, worked hard. She worked for Charlie Lessie down at Pommier Cleaners. She did all of that work for a lot of years. She stayed in that business for more than 40 years. And you were mentioning union affiliations. They had a dry cleaners union that did absolutely nothing for them except take their dues.

And that was a bad side of that, because other dues paying people, you know, like electricians and like any of them in the Teamsters, they got good results from being a union member. They got good pensions, health care, all of these things. And with her union, they didn't get anything. But anyway, going back to her job, she loved it. Charlie Lessie, he was a real character. His mother was Madame Pommier and right from France. And she was really close with my grandmother over on the West Side. Like you were mentioning that French community. I remember DeShano, Drew Bellebus was another French name, I remember. A Madame Poitras. I think you spelled it P-O-I-T-R-A-S. I used to love to listen to my grandma speak that French. When you hear a Frenchman speak, doesn't it? [inaudible] Anyway. So I remember lots of those things.

Crain: They used to say that Madame Pommier would only talk in French. That she would only hire french people.

Mack: I'll be darned. Well, I don't know, Charlie was maybe a little different. He was . . . He must have been. You know, you heard a black Irish, Charlie is living proof that there's black French. He was as dark a guy. I mean, honest to God. But what a character. He was a big, huge, like a big old bear. Just a great big guy. But he just had a heart of gold. He was just a dandy anyway. And his daughter Bonnie, Di and Bonnie became really close friends. Bonnie was beautiful, too. She had that dark olive skin, ended up being an airline stewardess and married my classmate, my buddy Ray Martinich, who just died within the last year. And Smoke was a legend here in Butte. He was my backdoor neighbor for 30 years until he died. I'm on Kossuth. He was right next to me, his house faced west where mine faced north.

But we had a back fence and Smoke was a great guy. And then his kid Ray was my classmate and he married Bonnie. He was in Vietnam. He was a navigator and he was a pilot also. Anyway, I think of them often. He's part of the story too. They had a couple of kids and they're part of our extended family. And their kids grew up there and they come to grandma and grandpa's all the time. And his boy went into the Secret Service. And he was George W. Bush's private

bodyguard. And Secret Service bodyguard for the term that George had in the White House. Interesting stuff.

Crain: Your wife also worked in the phone company?

Mack: Yeah. Early on she did. And then when we got married, she worked at the dry cleaners, started with Charlie. And then when he closed, she went and worked with Dave Miccarelli, at Unique across from Butte High School. He sold it to Fran Dorran. She worked for Fran for a while. And then Fran sold out. And then Diane went and worked the last 12 years of her career for Bill Reynolds at the Vogue on Harrison Avenue. So she had tons of years.

Crain: We don't have a dry cleaners anymore. It's interesting.

Mack: No, it really is. Persnickety was down there in that Albertson's mall, and that was the last one. And they did a good job.

Crain: And now when you go to East Ridge, they send your dry cleaning . . .

Mack: They send it out. Yeah. It used to be a huge business. I mean, not just in Butte, but all over. I bet you there were seven or eight dry cleaners in Butte. I can't remember . . . Star Cleaners, Unique, [inaudible], Monarch. The one down where. What's his name sells hot dogs there. There was one little dry cleaner in there on Cobban Street across from Fran Johnsen's. I forgot the name of that. There was one there, too. They were all over the place. Oh, there was one where Radio Engineering is on Montana Street. So anyway, that's interesting.

Grant: I'm curious about the Rialto, that building.

Mack: Oh the Rialto?

Grant: Yeah, the interior of it. What was it like?

Mack: Yeah. It had marble. I remember it had a lot of marble. The theater was the main floor. There was a jewelry store on one side of it. But the second floor was much like the original Metals Bank building. It had business offices on the second floor for sure. Like I said, Dr. Kerrigan and Dr. Erlick and O'Farrell were in there. I remember we used to sneak into that theater. We'd leave the exit door with a stick in it. Just so it wouldn't close too much. And then we could get in through the exit and go watch a movie. Movies weren't that expensive then. I think they were two bits.

Crain: I remember you could bring in pop bottles and they'd take them.

Mack: Yeah, you could get a free exchange. Yeah. Yeah. Well, we had the American Theater, which was across the street. We had the Park Theater, which was only three doors down from the Rialto Theater. So there were two right there. And the American Theater there where the American Candy Shop was. Then the Montana Theater had where the Mother Lode is now. That was the Beau Theater or Fox. I think it was Beau first. I remember all those and I remember

riding the busses. And then we used the tokens back then. Remember tokens? They weren't very expensive either. Probably. Nickel. Dime. Fifteen cents. You could exchange your money for. You could put money in too. Well we rode the busses. We rode the busses to the Columbia Gardens. I remember going up there on Saturdays. Thursday was kids day up there. I remember doing that.

Crain: Do you remember, did you take the bus to school?

Mack: I took the bus to school. Yeah. You'd get off by K's Ice Cream Store, go to Butte High, on Park Street. Well, yeah, we took the busses a lot.

Crain: Now was that a city bus or did you get on a school bus?

Mack: Oh, no, no. City busses. No, we didn't have any private transportation for Central.

Grant: Was it just while watching the parade that you thought Butte resembled a metropolis, or was that all the time growing up?

Mack: Oh, no. Most of the time. Yeah. No, it was. We used to love to come uptown.

Grant: Was it just the sheer population or what characteristics?

Mack: Oh, just all the different buildings, all the different services. There was a place called Greasy Gus's. There was a little slot window. And you could get hamburgers for a nickel.

Grant: Was that on Mercury and Main?

Mack: It seems to me it was more on Wyoming, and below Park Street. I'm not really sure. It might have had a couple of different locations, too. But yeah, it was just a hole in the wall. And Greasy Gus's, they called it. Yeah. And we had the Moxham Cafe uptown. That was a Greek fella. Gus Drakonus. Does that sound right? But anyway. Oh yeah. We had Greens Cafe, the [Schwami?] Cafe. I can remember all of them. They were still here.

Crain: Would your parents take you out to dinner? Would you all get dressed and go to dinner?

Mack: Not often, you know, trying to raise them kids. And again, didn't have any extra money for that. What we did on weekends, our weekends, were to go up to my grandma's on Porphyry Street and the Anaconda Lawney's would come in and the Kerrigan's were right down the street. The other sister, the other daughter of my grandma. Lucille, was the Anaconda one and Madeline and my mom from the flats. And we'd all meet at my grandma's and have our dinners up there. I'm sure we went out to dinner. I can remember, you know, later on going to the Chuckwagon, Bill's Chuckwagon Cafe. But it wasn't a nightclub or anything. Although we did go to one out across the road from the Rocky Mountain . . . Tino Grasso ran it.

Crain: The Arrow Cafe.

Mack: That's it. Yeah. We'd go there for chicken because that wasn't totally expensive. And I think we did Lydia's. And again, their prices were, back in those days, two or three dollars. Which was . . . It was some money, but not like today's prices. But we'd go to Gram's. That was the thing, all the time. We'd go on a lot of picnics. We would go on picnics to Pipestone and to Gregston's Hot Springs, which is now Fairmont. We went there a lot. Pipestone had a nice one. We would go down to Silver Star, there was another hot springs there. There's another one down on the way to Dillon, called Biltmore. And I remember going to that. So our outings would be to those. Picnic was probably the Sunday thing that we would do. Most of the bigger events were always at my grandma's house. Christmas and New Year's and Easter and those things were always at my grandma's, all the time.

Crain: Favorite food she would prepare.

Mack: Just the ones I remember most were the breakfasts, Crepes Suzettes. Yeah, flapjacks. Roasts always on Sundays. Mostly roast beef. She made some chicken dishes, stews. All of those were really good.

Crain: So did you work? When did you start working as a kid?

Mack: Let's see. I was probably either in sixth or seventh grade. Paper boy. I had a paper route from then all the way through high school.

Mack: I also worked at Montana Power in the auditorium. I was an attendant. I let the people in and out. They had their meeting room for different groups of people and so on, and they'd have me, little boy, guard the door. I'd have to clean up after they were done. Clean up all of the trash that was left. I did that. And the meter reading during all the summers, did that. And worked at grocery stores, I worked at Lynn's Superette for Lynn Erickson, which was just a block below St. Joe's church on Arizona.

Crain: What did you do for him?

Mack: Box boy, bagging groceries, stocking shelves, just a regular supermarket clerk.

Crain: Did you ever deliver?

Mack: I don't think so because I didn't have a car. I didn't have a car until maybe junior year. I'm trying to think. Either junior or senior. I bought it. My folks went on vacation somewhere. Maybe at Flathead. For whatever reason, I stayed home that one week. Maybe because I had the paper route or something. But at any rate, I tried to buy a car. I did buy a car, a really beautiful 46 Ford Coupe, powder blue. And I just fell in love with it, you know, being 15 years old. I bought that. The guy sold it to me. And of course, my dad being an attorney comes home. "You're not keeping that car, Bud" He called me Bud. He was Bud. So I was Bud, jr. "You can't have that car, Bud. You're not having no car." I said, "Well, but, the guy sold it to me. It's mine. I bought it." "No, no. You can't buy a car as a minor. Do you know nothing yet kid?" So he canceled that transaction. That got negated. The guy probably got an earful.

Grant: When the pit started to open up, you would have been a teenager, I guess.

Mack: Let's see. Yes. 1957 or somewhere in there.Yep. I would have been like a junior in high school.

Grant: Was there much talk about that in town? Did people kind of stand by passively as they began to tear down neighborhoods?

Mack: Well, that took a long time to get to that stage of it, but just initially kind of went along with it. Of course, the underground mining had been receding tremendously, even before they decided to do that part of it. I don't know. I mean, the jobs were already gone, so I guess maybe they viewed it as a way to keep some jobs. I think that was my take on it. Yeah, 57 was the earliest for that. Pretty soon I was out of the picture, another year and I graduated high school. Although, I stayed here. I went to the School of Mines my first year. Then I went to Gonzaga and then I came back to the School of Mines and I planned on finishing there. But then because of the fact that they didn't have all those extra degrees. It was basically metallurgy, mining, engineering. Nothing like chemistry or math. They didn't have any degrees there. We only had 300 students though, back when I went to school and one female in the whole damn school in 1959. We had some fellas from Iran, some fellas from the other Arabian countries.

We had quite a few Canadians. A lot of Canadians came down for the mining. But only 300 students. You could name the degrees on one hand - petroleum was going, of course. Petroleum engineering, they've had that field up there for a long time. But it was mostly mining and metallurgy was the niche that they had. They couldn't grant degrees in English. And of course, there was nothing with computers or any of those areas. And yet I got pretty good rounded education with chemistry. I went the final year to Bozeman and most of the courses I did take up here. I didn't have to take a bunch of extra courses down there. Pretty well rounded to fit there.

Grant: Bozeman in 62. What was it like?

Mack: Oh, man. It was like a cow town. Anaconda had as much action as Bozeman. Anaconda was more fun to go to than Bozeman. There was nothing there. The college. We lived in the married student housing and those things have been there since, maybe they put them up in World War One. They were horrible. They were really bad places. The heat didn't work. The water dripped. Anyway, we were only there just that one winter. We were out of there right away. Bozeman was really a cow town. Their population wasn't even twenty thousand, and I'm sure it wasn't in 1962. Look at it today.

We go down there. She's got a cousin that still lives there. We go down and maybe try to help him out with some stuff. I hate to go there. The traffic down there. You know, it's funny, with the exception of Butte, they haven't made any plans for traffic. Missoula is hard to get around in. Bozeman is almost impossible. Billings used to be somewhat, you know, and I lived in Billings for a couple of years. I enjoyed it. It was fine, but I was glad to get back to the mountains. It's way too flat for me.

Grant: You said earlier, just a short time you were in Missoula in '68 there. And what did you do other than, you know, your professional activities? What did you like to do for leisure in Missoula? Anything in particular?

Mack: You know, I don't even remember any leisure moments there. We were on such a tight budget. We'd get five bucks a week. We'd go have a pizza and a beer at the Heidehaus. That was our entertainment for the week. but it was only a short - I wasn't there even a full semester. I worked in Missoula with my career. I had most of western Montana for a few years when I was with Blue Shield. I was trying to run most of the western half of the state. And so I would travel from Yellowstone Park clear to Superior and, you know, take care of the contracts with the teachers and the counties and many of those types of groups all through western Montana. So I got to see a lot of them.

Not too much in Missoula. I had an uncle that lived there so I would go there, visit him from time to time. And of course, we always went to Flathead Lake as children. My dad had a friend and he also had something to do with the newspaper. He was a Kerrin. I think his name was Ed Kerrin. Anyway, he had a summer home on Finley Point and Dad did some legal work for him. Of course, they were friends. Anyway, this would have been in 1946 or 47 when I was just six or seven years old.

We would go up and open up that cabin for the Kerrin's, first part of the year, in late May or early June and drive up to Finley Point. And I can remember Dad and I, they had lake water. They had a piping system with the pump. And the thing that took the water and we'd roll that out into the lake and hook up all these links of pipe and then try to get that pump started in that little pump cabin, little pump storage area. Sometimes it would take Dad three or four hours to get that thing started. We'd have to get the water going. We'd have to get the bats out of the cabin. And they had a glassed in porch and they had a bunch of beds. There were like cots for extra sleeping accommodations.

And one time I remember it had to be like a chicken hawk, a bird about that big, flew right through the window and killed himself and landed on the bed. Had to clean that up. But all the bats on the back porch. So basically, Dad did all the work for the Kerrin's to get that thing going and ready for their use for the summer. We would go there every year. That was our vacation. One week in early June at Flathead. And I can remember as a kid how cold that lake was. Oh, that was like jumping into a tub of ice. Never did change. Jump in Flathead Lake, If you go by some time and be prepared for a shock. It's cold. I don't know what the actual water temperature is, but it's cold. You know, it's so cold that it makes you ache. That's pretty cold even in the summer. Well, with the really warm weather, it might warm up 10 degrees or so, but it's still cold. Natural, deep, deep lake. It's a couple hundred feet deep in spots.

Crain: So do you golf or fish?

Mack: I have done a lot of fishing. I don't anymore. I still golf a little bit. I played golf after I turned 50 maybe. I started to play a little. My dad liked to golf, so I would go with him when I could. He played at the Country Club for a few years. And, of course, raising the five kids, he

didn't play all that much. He was always working, doing something. And kids' activities of this day. I don't have kids, but I see how overwhelming the schedules are. You got to have a whole separate life to take those kids to do all their stuff. I noticed that, too. I mean, talk about being independent and playing on your own. As a kid growing up. There were three neighborhoods. There was Greeley and St. Anne and Whittier when I was growing up as a kid.

And I lived closer to Greeley. So I played with the Greeley kids. Bobby Werley, who you may know, he ran the Dairy Queens for a lot of years. And the Haff's, one of them became a mining engineer. The other one worked as a lineman for Montana Power. They were my buddies. And they were all Greeley kids. So the St. Anne's kids, I saw them when I went to school. But if I went to play, I played with these guys. And we'd play games like at night after [school]. The only time we had to be home and like in the summers was for lunch and for dinner. Otherwise, you're on your own. We'd play Kick the Can and 40 miles at night. And a game of 40 miles would start after dinner at 6:30. And, you know, you might not get home till dark at 9:30. In 40 miles, you might not see another person. That's the craziest game, it was like, you know, hide and seek on a statewide basis.

You'd go and they'd never find you. I often wondered what the hell the purpose of that game was. Maybe just to keep you walking or hiking or whatever. It was a strange game. Kick the can was fun. Boot the can all over the neighborhood. We raided gardens and, you know, did some stuff.

Crain: Did you go camping with your buddies?

Mack: Yeah, but not until after I got married. No, I don't think we did any camping as just kids. I don't remember that. We played a lot. We played baseball. We played all of the sports. We built our own golf course. You know, talking about golf. It was all empty ground from basically the Racetrack Firehall clear up to Continental Drive. That whole area was mostly empty. I lived on Argyle and St. Anne's school was down six blocks and there were not too many homes that I'd go by getting there. A lot of empty lots and especially going to the east. There was nothing up to Continental. I don't think Continental was a street until maybe 1965 or something like that. So yeah, we built golf courses. We flooded our own little areas for skating rinks. And of course we had Clark Park, which was a beautiful skating facility. I remember they had a little warming house with some benches you could sit on. It had a big pot-bellied stove. You'd go in and take your mittens and your gloves off and put them on there and let them cook and dry out.

Crain: So did you skate?

Mack: Yeah. I was a speed skater. All the kids were at the time. All the grade schools had teams for speed skating. We'd have competitive meets. Even the Catholic schools would compete against Emerson and Greeley and Whittier.

Crain: I just catalogued the Smithers' Winter Carnival. They called it the Winter Carnival. That Bob Whirley was a hell of a skater.

Mack: He was. And you know he never did get any bigger than that, but he'd go like the wind. He was good. Martin White, who was just a couple years behind me. He was the best. Freddy Bud. Bobby McDonough was one. He went to the Olympics. And Marvin Dunn lived right across the street from Clark Park. And I was just three blocks up, right straight down my street, Argyle. McDonough was on that corner and Clark Park is right there.

Crain: So did Bobby McDonough go to the Olympics?

Mack: I think Bob did, yeah.

Crain: And did Martin?

Mack: Martin went. And of course, his sister went. Sylvia.

Crain: Judy Martz.

Mack: Judy Martz.

Crain: So it's interesting. You spent a lot of your time at Clark's Park, I bet.

Mack: I did. And then with the baseball. I loved that. We had the big grandstand. That would hold more than 5000 people. And that type of ball that they played back then, the Copper League. The plaques and everything are still in the McQueen Club. That was as good as semi-pro ball is today. Probably the triple A semi-pro ball. I remember all the guys that played in the Copper League. They were just great players. Hockaday, he was great. Jimmy Freeborn, the judge's dad, was a good ballplayer. Jan Honan, he was an umpire. Gus was a good ballplayer, too. I mean, the Copper League lasted up until about 1952 or 3. But it was going on for probably ten or fifteen years. And then they had Navy VJ Ball before that in the 40s. The Navy had a team because they had a big naval installation there, right at Clark Park. Did you remember that naval station was right there? I'm not sure what all of the training that was there, but the Navy fielded a full-fledged baseball team through that program.

Crain: So Clark's Park, where else would you go?

Mack: We'd get onto Bell Creek and fish in that. We could do a lot of fishing which would be down in the location of Walgreens and both sides of the Interstate. That was all swampy, creek / marsh type area. In fact, I guess they found that out. The Holiday Inn Express that's on the south side of Harrison. They're having settling issues and recent lawsuits over that. The building is sunk. You hear how they put all those pilings in for this Ace Hardware? They must have done that for a month and a half because I walk that route. I go walk behind the Chamber of Commerce. I couldn't believe they picked that as a location. It just blows my mind. I don't know what's wrong with me, but I think that's a horrible location. Why didn't they buy the K-Mart property? That would have been perfect for them.

But I got off the track. No. What else did we do? Well, we used to go watch movies at the Silver Bow Park's Athletic Club in grade school. They'd have movies for the kids. That's right across

the street from Cristina's Cucina, the Racetrack, it used to be. They had stuff for kids there. We'd go to movies at least once a week there to watch Abbott and Costello. Great. And when the drive-in theaters come, we would sneak out at night and go. They were right by where the Crest Nursing Home is. There was a drive-in right there. There was the Ridgeview down by where the Knights of Columbus is. There was another movie drive in there. So we could walk to both of them from my house. We'd walk. And, you know, you didn't have to have a car to go watch those movies. You could just go in there and watch them. You didn't have the speaker, although usually there was an empty spot.

You could just use the speaker that was right there. Go buy a box of popcorn or whatever. We went to the movies. But it was mostly skating in the winter and it was baseball in the spring and football. And like I say, a little golf. We built our own little golf course. We used to dink around on that in the summer all the time. And fishing in Bell Creek. And we'd hike. Sure, we'd hike up the East Ridge all the time and hike up there. And the Columbia Gardens. You can't forget that. We spent a lot of time there too.

Crain: In your life, you've seen a lot of changes to the landscape, the built environment, environmental clean up and devastation of fires.

Mack: Oh, the fires. I'll never forget them. They were the worst, the fires. I mean, the pit is certainly nothing to look at. You know, it's ugly. You can't get around it. You're never going to change it. And then they're worried. You know, this business right now, it's going to cost so much money. The dirt, that's by where the city shops are, county shops. You know, my thought on that is just leave that alone. They're going to spend 30 plus million dollars and it isn't going to accomplish a damn thing. Just a waste of money. That money could be well spent, better spent doing almost anything else than that. And maybe I got the wrong slant on that. For the money involved in that. I can't see it at all. Not at all.

Crain: I don't see the evidence. This is just editorializing. I don't see any evidence that that place is causing problems.

Mack: Exactly.

Crain: And I am intrigued that you would go to Bell Creek to fish, because there's a lot of people who say the loss of Silver Bow Creek in your old neighborhood is devastating.

Mack: No, it isn't.

Crain: Did you ever go near that creek?

Mack: I don't think so. We had another name for it. It's only a four letter name. It started with an 's', ended with a 't.'

Grant: Shit Creek.

Mack: We never went there. I saw that just within the last week, they're talking about the need for headwaters. Where are they going to get the headwaters? You're going to pump it out of Yankee Jim Flats or something? I don't know where that water is supposed to come from.

Crain: I think their plan is to pump it from Anaconda.

Mack: It is ridiculous. They get up in arms about having Silver Bow Creek restored. It's gone. Let it go and leave those shops where they are and fix the streets. Man, the roads are horrible. Why don't they take that 36 million dollars. We could have some nice streets to run on. And that dirt is not going to kill anybody in the shops where they're located. Nobody is dying from working there. It's crazy. It really is. Somebody ought to go on an agenda and really start making some waves about doing that. They should leave that alone. You want to talk about spending some money. The pole plant. It's been a bunch of money there. I don't think they've improved anything. Maybe there's not quite as much creosote there. I don't know.

Crain: I just don't think long term use of that area is going to be available. My question to you is, do you think it's been improved? Do you think we look better than we did 30 years ago?

Mack: Physical appearance? No. No, not as a community. I think the community's doing fine. It seems to be a place where people want to live and where people want to connect with each other. That part of it, I think, is good. And again, maybe I'm just on the outside just looking at what's going on. I'm not active in the business community in any way, shape or form. I used to be on the chamber committees and do a lot of those things. But the only thing I'm involved with now is the church and the choir. Keep going with that. I do some work with some other programs. AA to be exact. I stay active in that and try to help some people in those areas. And that's been very, very worthwhile. It's you get back about 10 times what you put into that. It is good to see some gains there, some lives change. That's been important to me. You know, I think our community is pretty good that way. I see a lot of people involved in helping others there. That's more my thing and than a community thing. But I think it helps.

Grant: Do you have any feelings when you drive to the uptown and see all these places where buildings used to be?

Mack: Oh, yeah, sure.

Grant: Does it sadden you at all?

Mack: It tugs at you a bit. But again, there isn't much you can do about it. Like I said, I was devastated by those 70s fires that took out the great big buildings, man. I had thoughts, you know, why did they have to destroy them? We'll find out someday what it's all about.

Grant: You think so?

Mack: Yeah. Yeah.

Grant: Working in insurance, doesn't it seem obvious?

Mack: Oh yeah. I didn't do that kind of insurance, but yeah. I hear where you're going. I agree. It's too bad they couldn't have caught them, you know. Butte is good at figuring out who did what. There's some handle's been put on some of the fires. I don't know. You know, and especially if there were loss of life and there was loss of life in some of those things, I don't know. But what we've got left. I mean, that's stuff on East Park. I don't know how they're going to keep that going. You know where Shiner's furniture was. And Rudolf's. I just don't see much hope for anybody doing anything with that. I really don't.

Grant: There's a restaurant going on.

Mack: Well, yeah. Yeah. But I mean, the structure itself and all the upper floors. Nobody's gonna use any of that. Thank God they restored this. This is where the horses used to pull the wagons out.

Crain: Thank you, taxpayers from Butte Silver Bow. But, you know, someday maybe the money will come back. Maybe someone will make an investment.

Mack: I guess we could hope that that might happen. You know, we're not that much different than downtown Missoula or downtown Billings. They've all gone by the wayside. Downtown Helena. And there's the shopping centers, even the new stuff, you know, that was built in 59. And I don't see it lasting. Once Herberger's leaves in August. How are they going to keep the doors open for two jewelry stores? No. No way.

Crain: It's going to be really hard.

Mack: It is. And, you know, my wife loves to shop and she loves to go to the stores and Macy's. And now that's in Helena. And that's going to go down in this same thing. And Hastings is already gone down over in that new shopping center, they got out north of town. And that's coming down already. And the Capitol Mall. Forget it. You know, they can use that for government buildings, I guess, or state buildings. And that's the only thing that keeps Helena going is the feds and the state. That's all Helena is. But, boy, it's busy.

Crain: Yeah. It's interesting. Interesting economic times. Yeah. Amazon delivering your product. I was talking to a young woman from Virginia who was saying that her friend couldn't survive without Amazon. They have two kids. She says they order all their groceries and diapers on Alexa. "Alexa, order diapers." And then it's delivered to her. And I thought, wow, that is such a shift in how the world is moving. But you said something important by saying people want to connect here. When young people connect, they connect on a device. And you walk across the yard, and my husband is the same way, walks across the yard to talk to the neighbor. They connect in that way. And I think it makes for interesting social interaction.

Mack: You're right. I mean, I see these kids walking around like this. Do they ever know anybody else is around? But somebody on these phones, who's on the other end of that cellphone? You know, I'm glad it isn't me. It's funny, I can't hear them. When somebody hands me a cellphone, I can't pick it up. And I don't know if that's just from non-use, probably or not

being familiar with it. But, yeah, you talk about Amazon. I mean, look at Seattle, an explosion that is. Now they're in there. I've got a niece that's living in Seattle and she's trying to purchase a home in West Seattle. And honest to God, if you could take any 800 square foot home in Butte, you could say that even if it was fixed up to the best of its best materials, all brand new, it wouldn't be worth more than $150,000.

They're looking at dumps out there for 6, 7, 800,000 dollars. How do these young people do that? This kid needs a house. And so we're battling that. But prices out there are just insane. And Amazon is putting more pressure on them. They got all of that downtown now. Yeah, it's an interesting thought. Just for example, Gary Mannick still runs the Terminal, him and his brother. Frankie left them to do it. And of course, Dave died. He was getting out anyway. Died of the heart attack. He has to deliver all those groceries. And that's the only way he can stay in business is to make sure that they call him on the phone and he'll get all the stuff sent. Otherwise, you know, it used to be you'd walk in and get what you want. I mean, that's a thing of the past. That used to be a great place to shop, not only for the meats, but for your groceries. And you could get anything you wanted there.

Crain: He's one of the few people who do that.

Mack: I know, and that's the only way he can survive. That's my point, you know, he's got to do kind of the Amazon type thing to stay alive.

Crain: So you're involved with AA.

Mack: Yes. Yeah.

Crain: How long have you been involved with AA?

Mack: For quite a long time, more than 15 years.

Crain: It's a great program.

Mack: Yes, it is. Yeah. Yeah. And I was brought into that by some real caring friends. One of them, you know, he just died here, 10 days ago. It was almost like a brother died. And in fact, he did call me brother. We were really close. Joe, Joe Shoemaker. Joe was really active in that. And he was a good example for me. Change your thinking. You know, it isn't all about us. It's all about how we can be of some kind of service to others. And I see a lot of that in Butte. And maybe you have that same thing going on in other cities, Bozeman and so on. You just don't think it would be that way in Bozeman. I just don't. I'm sure they got the programs. It's just a different way of life. It's faster and more competitive.

Crain: There are so many people that are from outside of Montana, sometimes that impacts the way people react out to each other in a different way. So I was very surprised about Joe.

Mack: Oh, it came as a real shock.

Crain: He was a young kid at New York Life. When my dad was there, he was the young kid. I feel bad about Joe dying. It was a surprise.

Mack: Yeah, like I said, he was like a brother. It's funny you mentioned your pop. That's interesting. Your dad was primarily responsible. I say, primarily, he initiated it. I was 28 years old at the time because at that time I was one of the youngest ones that got on there. He was instrumental in me running for the school board. He handpicked me and told me, you're going to do it. And I did. So I ran for the school board at age 27. So that would have been in 1967. And I was elected. And I was the chairman then a couple years later. So that was all because of Kevin. I was in the independent party, obviously. And back down, it was Catholic versus Protestant. That's how the school board was - United Party and Independent Party.

And I was on the party that your dad was, the Independent Party. And thank God we had the majority. We had them four to three. And that's the way it worked. Although I'm sure, I don't think I ever knowingly made any wrong choices. Just what I thought was good for the kids and good for the system, hopefully. Boy, the politics in there is unreal. I can remember the first meeting I went to and a contractor and I'm not gonna say any more than that, but a contractor shook my hand and I thought, boy, that feels kind of grainy, this handshake. And I left my hand open when we were done with the handshake and a fifty dollar bill fell onto the floor. The way of the contractor introducing himself to me as a school board member. Yeah. Wow. What's going on here? But like I said, I was pretty young. Most of the guys I served with were more than 10 or 15 years older than me. And Judge Whalen who was on there, and very prominent attorney Alan McKenzie. Connie Fosset, who was just a regular working guy. He worked for Reardon. He married a Reardon, so. He got a job at Reardon Plumbing. No, he was a good plumber. He was my neighbor too, lived across the street for 40 years.

Charles Davis, was . . . I got to tell this story. This is funny. I'm like I say, 27, 28 years old, Charles Davis, the great guy. I went to school with his son, young Chuck Davis, who is deceased now. Chuck was a brilliant mathematician. That's how he ended up at the institute in Flint, Michigan. That's where he worked. He was just a brain. Quiet kid. But a brain. So his dad, Charles Davis, was the superintendent of our district. Charles Davis. So we're having a meeting one night and I don't know, maybe they did this just because I was young and didn't know what the hell was going on. But they said, you know, Chuck's been riding the fence and he's doing this and that. He can't make up his mind. They said, "We're going to have to get rid of him." So they vote to get rid of him. Seven-0 to get rid of him. This is just at one of our meetings. The newspapers now are outside of every meeting, but they weren't invited. Must have been a good reason. You couldn't keep them in there because of privacy.

You got to be careful. But anyway, so this particular preliminary thing. We're going to talk about getting rid of him. So we went to the meeting that Monday night, the formal meeting. We vote on that particular thing. And of course, I thought it was set and dry. We're going to get rid of him. The vote ended up 6-1 to retain him. So they left me holding the bag. And Charles was a good friend of mine because I went to grade school at St. Anne's with his kid. And I'm sure he saw that vote and here I'm voting, no. Anyway, I think they just did a number on me, you know, and that could be. No, they weren't above doing something like.

Crain: So how many years did you serve?

Mack: Three. Just the three was enough. I was chairman the last year. But we had a strike and that was very unpleasant. We had a teacher strike and I got hate mail in the mailbox. And you were kind of walking on eggshells. We really, you know, as a board didn't have much to do with . . . how you're going to change that? You know, they're going to go on strike and they got to negotiate. Sort of like, what was it in the paper today? Said, "God couldn't even get them to get to the table." One of the articles I was reading. The Three Forks thing. But there wasn't much you could do about that. But the union talk, we had a teacher union who we personally as an independent party was more for the teachers than for the administration, that's for sure. Anyway, that was an interesting few years that I served on that board. I liked it. It's a lot of work for nothing. I mean, you don't get compensated, but that's OK. That's the way it should be. I guess I could have closed my hand.

Grant: And then gone to Lydia's or something.

Mack: Not today. What's a lobster out there? I think $84. I couldn't spend that much money, even if I had an extra $84. I wouldn't digest it. I don't need eighty-four dollars for one meal. But it's a great place. I can remember when Lydia's chicken was $1.75. So that's how much. Well it's still not that bad. You can get it out the back door for seventeen dollars or something. They put the ad in the paper. That's a pretty good deal.

Crain: They do more business out the back door on Sundays.

Mack: Oh God. We used to bring our pots and pans.

Crain: Oh yea, everybody is standing there with their dishes. It's really a funny thing because, you know, when you get there and everybody's there with their pots.

Mack: Yeah, we do. We always have.

Crain: Other boards and civic programs you were involved with?

Mack: Well, I was in the Exchange Club, you know, a lot of work with them for the years that I was in business. But. I don't think I was on any other boards, must have been one or two.

Crain: Chamber?

Mack: Yeah, I worked with the chamber for a lot of those years and committees. I was on the ambassadors committee for a few years. Just generally available if they wanted. Harold McGrath, he was one of the earlier ones. And then of course, Marco had it for a few years. Those are only ones I really remember.

Crain: You don't remember Connie Corette?

Mack: Sure, yeah, I do. That was Bob's daughter. He was quite a guy, lawyer. He appeared kind of gruff, but I think he was pretty, pretty kindhearted fella, too.

Crain: I thought it was interesting when you didn't stay with the power company when your dad went to work there. You said Jack Corettes kind of . . . That's kind of funny.

Mack: Well, it was. Yeah. And he was. He was a fair man, no doubt. He was like a king. I think he was a classy guy, really was. And smart. He ran the thing pretty good, but it felt more like family, you know, everybody really was interested in each other. I hope that's still the way it is today with, say, even Northwest Energy down here. I hope so. And I'm sure there's some of it. But even our community has that spirit, that feeling, and we push it. You know, we advertise it and we should. That's the difference between us and Bozeman. And you're talking about the work. People work from anywhere now. If they got their computer, they can do all kinds of stuff.

Crain: Yeah, I have friends whose kids have moved here because they can buy a $150,000 house. And it would be really worth it. And they work on the computer in their offices in Washington, D.C. and Portland, Oregon. And they can afford to live here. In the high rent district which is . . .

Mack: I'm sure there are people that work here . . . Well, Helena was famous for that. A lot of times people would commute. And even Brad. He's going to stay here even though he's gonna be working full time in Deer Lodge. That's where his office is. He's going to still stay here and do the commute.

Crain: What's he going to do in Deer Lodge?

Mack: That's where the Board of Pardons is. The parole board, that he's accepted a position. That's where they're going to work. And he said, "I got to have a job for five more years till I get health insurance." And that's what you fall into because they couldn't get it. And do you know the biggest mistake Lyndon Johnson made was not making national health insurance back in 64. We would have been so much better off. And that's speaking from someone that was in the health care business for 30 years and it hasn't gotten better. To me it's deteriorated. It has gotten worse. It's just more fractured and splintered. And it's a mess. It really is.

Crain: So what do you see as the future of health insurance?

Mack: I don't know. I really don't know.

Crain: Did you think when they had crafted the Affordable Care Act that that would . . .

Mack: I was hoping that would have been enough of it and they could have worked through that. But they have to bite the bullet and get to single payer before they're going to do anything on it. And they're not ready to do that at all. Not ready. And, you know, if you look at our system of government, it hasn't worked for 30 years. The Congress is the biggest problem. The Senate and the House, they refuse to work together. And it's even on a state level, you can see the same

thing here. You know, they gotta take credit for it. They don't want to give the other side anything. I don't know. It's just there's no compromise. No sense of working together.

Crain: Common good. Yeah.

Mack: Thanks for letting me speak a little. I don't know really what my full purpose was, just to give you my story.

Crain: I did a little early research. We used to be called the Land of the Shining Mountains. And it was those early Hudson Bay, French Canadians that came through here. They would call this the Land of the Shining Mountains. And I always think that's fascinating. I'm always trying to get that answer about what did they hunt in here? Because, you know, being at the top of the Divide, it's so hard to find water and you have to walk in here at that time. So do you have any family history about how they came into here?

Mack: I have a cousin. And he did a lot of the research on his genealogy or the tree business. Jack Lowney. He worked for the state for quite a few years. He's living in Helena now. I think he would be. Maybe he could help us. But I'm thinking beaver was one of the main . . . muskrat, beaver. I'm sure some others. But he might be able to tell me a little about that. His sister is pretty good on library stuff. Jan Lowney, that's my cousin. That's Jackie's older sister. She's Lucille's oldest daughter. And Jan worked the library there and taught in the Anaconda System for 40 plus years. And did that as a paraplegic. I mean, this gal is amazing. She got crippled from polio at age 12, didn't slow her down a bit. She got her degrees at Carroll. And she taught at Anaconda Central and then Anaconda High School, then moved into the library part the last 20, 25 years. But she taught, I'm sure up to age 65 or maybe even a little past. She's a year older than me, so she's 79. But this Jackie, he must be getting close to 70. But he knows a lot of this history.

But I remember talking about it. He had to be an interpreter for when they were dealing with the Indians and that. The troops did. Even before that, I know there were fur traders. They came from the Quebec area. Montreal is just a little ways away from Quebec and my grandma was actually born in Sherbrooke. I think it was. My sister Marilyn could do a much better job. Being in that teaching field. She's got a lot better connection to that, I think. With the languages she's a delight to be around. She can speak Spanish and French and enough Italian. And she's been to the Sorbonne on a couple different occasions with her teaching. It's just neat to have those connections.

Grant: Thanks for your time today.

Mack: Oh, you bet. What's BAMF?

Grant: Butte America Foundation. That's the nonprofit I work for. They run the radio station. We're in the Carpenter's Union Hall. It's on 102.5 FM. Sometimes I take excerpts of these oral histories and put them on the radio. You know, it's like a 20-minute program. I'll kind of narrate a little bit. So that's on Mondays at 5:00. I do that pretty much every week. If I don't have a live interview, then I take pieces of these.

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