



VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

MARJORIE CANNON

The Verdigris Project

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Oral History Transcript of Marjorie Cannon

Interviewers: Aubrey Jaap & Clark Grant

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Location: Marjorie Cannon's Home in Butte

Transcribed: February 26th, 2021 by Nora Saks

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AUBREY JAAP: All right. So it's July 6th, 2018. We're here with Marjorie Cannon at our home. And Marjorie, would you like to start out and tell me a little bit about your grandparents?

MARJORIE CANNON: Yes. My grandparents were Cornish people. My great grandfather, I had four boys and he came up during the gold rush in California, brought his four sons. Two of them returned to Cornwall. One of them was killed while they were here. And my grandfather decided that he liked it here. So he came up to Bernice, which is just out of Elk Park there. And he mined there for quite a while. This was during the time in Cornwall, when the tin mines were running out. Totally. In fact, just within the last 10 years, the last one closed, there's no more tin left.

So they were seeking places to work because that was their whole life. Their tin mining was like copper mining was in Butte at the time that we were flourishing here.

So anyway, they went back to California. They stayed in California for a year. Two of them went back to Cornwall. And my grandfather, as I said, stayed here. He went back to Cornwall and married my grandmother in 1890.

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And that was a time when the tin was all gone and California didn't have the excitement that Africa had. So he went to Johannesburg. And he was down in Johannesburg for a number of years. After he was married, he left and he was gone for two years. And when he came home, my mother was greeting him at three months old. And she was in bed with her mother and he handed her a gold watch, which I have. And she cherished that, of course.

My grandmother and grandfather were married for 14 years, seven of which he was gone. Most of that was here in Montana. And he would be here for a year or two and go back. And then he'd stay there for a year or two and go back, and so on. And in 1903, my grandmother, who by that time had five children, said 'I've had enough of this'.

And she said, 'I'm not going to stay here anymore without you'. So in South Hampton, she got on the boat, and came to Montana, took her to weeks to get here. Brought five children. The oldest, being my mother, who was 12. And my uncle who was just a baby, he was born in 1900. So not quite three yet. So they into Butte on October the ninth, 1903. And the East Ridge was a blaze of color. It was absolutely beautiful. Prior to that, they had spent a week en route from New York, it took them a week to get to New York from South Hampton. And then they routed up through Havre. And when they got off at the station in Havre, they were greeted by a bunch of Indians, whom they had heard of and read about, but had never seen.

So that was quite an interesting thing for them to have seen.

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Well, my grandmother thought this was lovely. And she came from the British Riviera. Cornwall's a gorgeous country. Within the next week, it went down to 20 below zero. And she said to my grandfather, 'why have you brought me here'?

And you know, it was at the time when the smelter was up in that area. And my aunt was devastated, because she used to go out and pick the daffodils and the tulips, and the primroses just growing wild. There wasn't even a blade of grass. So my father had a grocery store. And he gave her a little cracker box. And she took that cracker box and planted some grass seed and put them in her window sill. That was the only green she could see.

So any way, that's my mother's story. And she was here in 1903. She graduated from Franklin School, the same school that I graduated from, when she was in the seventh and eighth grades there, graduated at 14. Then she went to Butte business college, which was where the new Northwest Energy building is now.

And she graduated from there when she was 16. And Mr. Orton, W.C. Orton, who had Orton's music store up on North Main Street, above Hennessy's there, and he hired her as his private secretary. And she worked there for 11 years.

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My grandfather was working in the Leonard mine. And he was a shift boss, and he was bringing home a hundred dollars a month. And my mother was bringing home a hundred dollars a month. And she would give it to her mother, and her mother would give her back \$10. By that time, there were eight children in the family and, you know, they needed everything they could get.

So my father came into the picture in 1906. He was a butcher in Porthleven, in England. And he came out to Alameda, California. And that was when that huge earthquake took place, in that area around Oakland and Alameda and San Francisco. And he said, 'you can keep California. I have lots of former people who bought from me at my store. He owned his own store in Porthleven.

He said, 'my customers are up in Montana'. He said, 'I'm going to Montana'. So he came in 1906 and he went directly to my grandmother and grandfather's house, because they were former customers, and asked if they knew a place where he could live. And they said, 'yes, Granny Oldfield up in McQueen, had a boarding house'. So that's where he went.

Well, of course he thought my mother was about the best thing that ever happened and he wanted to marry her right away. She said, 'Edwin, I can't marry you. My mother is depending on me for the money I bring home'. He said, 'well, you go and have your fun. You'll come back to me'. So 11 years later she did, but that was a tragic situation because in 1918 was the terrible flu epidemic.

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And my Aunt Hazel worked at the round house, which is for the Milwaukee Depot on South Montana. I think KBOW's in there now. And she was exposed to the flu, brought it home. Her mother contracted it, her mother died. Her father contracted. He died within a week. They died a week apart in 1918.

Well, my mother being the oldest, had seven siblings that she had to think about. And my dad, I don't know many men like him said, well, he had a store in McQueen that was a double story building. A residence upstairs and the store downstairs. He said, 'we'll just move up there and raise 'em'. So he brought all of those children up to McQueen.

And they were married on Lincoln's birthday in 1919 and spent their first night in the old Thornton Hotel. Still up there. That was a one night. My mother went home in her wedding dress and scrubbed the floor in the hallway, in her new home.

She baked bread every single day. And would make saffron cake and pasties and all the Cornish things, she just was a marvelous cook.

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But I think of my dad and how many men in this day and age would assume the responsibility for that many children? But what could they do? My mother was the oldest and they had to do something. So that was their story. Yeah, that's pretty much the story, I guess.

JAAP: Will you tell us what were your grandparents' names?

CANNON: My grandparents names: Adams. My grandmother was Sarah Ann and my grandfather was Paul Alfred Adams.

JAAP: And then your parents names? Your dad was Edwin. What was your mother's name?

CANNON: My mother was Lavina Jane Adams and she married Edwin Roberts. And that was - my name is Roberts then, before I was married.

JAAP: All right. So were you born in McQueen then?

CANNON: I was born in the hospital on Granite Avenue, the Deaconess hospital is still there. It's that beige colored building with a great big chimney. I don't even know what's in there anymore. Do you?

JAAP: I don't know if anything's in there. The one just right next to East Middle School?

CANNON: Yes. I was dropped down the chimney there, as were my two brothers and sister. That's my mother's story. That's where we came from. The stork just dropped us down.

JAAP: Dropped you down the chimney?

CANNON: Absolutely. And I believed that for a lot of years. Long beyond when I should have been believing it. But anyway, yes, we four were born in six years. My oldest brother was born in 1920 and I was born in '26.

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And in between was my second brother who was born in '21. And my sister who was born in '24. Well, before we were all born, the family was still there. But gradually they all moved out except two aunts. The one who brought the flu home and her sister, who was Mrs. Dobbs at the time, a beautiful singer. And they lived with us for about five or six years after the four of us were born.

So, you know, those are unbelievable circumstances, but that's the way it was. And my dad had the butcher shop downstairs and he'd bring up the best of all the best. And we were well fed and happy as if we had good sense.

JAAP: Did the butcher shop have a name?

CANNON: Roberts' Market. Yeah.

JAAP: All right. Hey, just because you mentioned the good singer. So we did a Cornish exhibit a while ago. Do you remember? So was your family musical? 'Cause you know, the Cornish...

CANNON: Oh, very musical, my dad had a beautiful bass voice and he sang with the Cornish choir in England when he was there. And he sang in the Methodist choir, the church that we went to for all the years that the church was there. Little Unity Methodist church in the Franklin school, of course they're in the pit now. Both of them.

But my Aunt Millicent was born with a gift. She could hear some music on the radio and sit down to play it on the piano. She was just gifted. And she belonged to a group called the Treble Clef Club here in Butte. And I think Marian Jensen, no Barbara Parker, did a report for ?? on the Treble Clef Club. And my aunt was one of the first ones that belonged to that.

JAAP: Oh, how neat.

[00:12:12]

CANNON: There were 12 of them. For each of the four parts, there were three. And they wore their beautiful pastel colored dresses and sang My Sweet Little Alice Blue Gown, and all they were wonderful. They entertained all over Butte. Yeah.

JAAP: And are you musical?

CANNON: Am I musical? Well, I claim to be. My daughter was, though. She had a gift for music like her aunt. That's the reason that the piano's in there. She was quite a gifted musician. Yeah.

JAAP: So I was doing some research in the newspaper, though, and I noticed that you were in quite a few choirs when you were young though?

CANNON: I was in the choir, I was in the concert choir in Bozeman, which was what I really loved.

JAAP: Yeah.

CANNON: We traveled all over the state. That was wonderful.

JAAP: That'd be pretty neat.

CANNON: Yeah, it was great. So anyway, yes, all of the family sang though, and we'd get together in Bozeman to play and we'd all sing, you know, that was just the way it was. Yeah.

[00:13:15]

JAAP: Alright. So you were born in 1926.

CANNON: 1926. And went to start a school, in those days, they had a test that you could take when you were five. And if you passed the test, you could start school in January, which I did. And I started school at the Franklin in January, went all through school a half year ahead of the ones behind. We graduated in January and went to Butte High School. In January. So therefore at the end of the four years, I had a half a year left and I had more credits than I needed, so I wanted to go to college. My dad said, 'no way'. All of the veterans from the wars were coming back then. And he said, 'you're not going down there. You're too young'. And I said, 'well what am I going to do'? He said, 'you're gonna take some more classes at school'. So I went up there and took English and science and home ec for no credit. 'Cause I didn't need any more credits.

But then I graduated in 1944 with the class. Yeah. Went to Bozeman on a scholarship, worked three jobs, worked at Hamilton Hall. And I worked in the student union building. And after I pledged the sorority, I worked in their kitchen. So I had three jobs and it was tough going. But anyway, I wanted to help my parents because they had four of us in college at once.

JAAP: Wow.

[00:14:40]

CANNON: Yeah. My two brothers were up at Montana Tech and my sister was down in Bozeman. So, anyway, that was that story.

And yes, I graduated in 1948. And I got the Danford award, the award for the most outstanding home economics student, which I treasured, of course. Yeah. And Mr. Graff from Laurel came down, and he was the superintendent, and he needed a new home ec teacher. Well, I kept telling everybody I was going to teach in Two Dot or podunk, or wherever. That I was able to get a job in Laurel was beyond belief. I taught in the high school there for two years. Loved it. It was a wonderful place. Sang in the choir there, at the Methodist church.

And my dad became ill at that point in time. And my mother, he could no longer drive and she didn't drive. So I would come home, I'd drive home. I had a whole 1937 Chevy coupe and I'd drive home every other week from Laurel. And there were no freeways in those days, but I

didn't have enough sense to know how dangerous it was. Because the roads were grim.

And so every other weekend I'd come home on Friday after I was through, and go back on Sunday, just so I could take them. But after two years, I recognized the fact that my mother needed more help. So I applied in Butte. Well, of course in those days, no married teacher could teach. You didn't teach if you were married - too bad.

So I signed a contract in Bozeman because Juanita Robbins was the teacher trainer there. And she taught all the home ec students that, or take getting the degree, and I having been one of her students. But she got married. How dare she? So her position was open. And I signed the contract there, which I thought was wonderful.

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I could train all those kids and just have a free hand with it. Well, that was all well and good. Except that the one in Butte also retired, but in August, after I'd signed in the contract. And I went up to the superintendent, Mr. Gold, and I said, 'you know, I have a dilemma'. I said, 'I have signed my contract in Bozeman. I still would prefer being here in Butte, because my mother needs me'. He said, 'well, go down to Bozeman and they'll release you from your contract'. So I did, and yes, they did.

And so then I was hired as the home ec teacher for the younger kids, the seventh and eighth graders. And I taught in the Whittier, right here, and the Emerson. But in the interim, the Whittier burned down about two years or three years after I taught there. So then I went to the Emerson every year and I taught 360 kids a week. They would come from all the schools around town, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, Greeley, St. Anne's, St. John's.

Everyone in this particular area came to me. So over the years I taught 360, each year.

And you know, I would look at them when they came in and I would try to find some identifying characteristic they had, so that I could remember their names. And I gave them a written assignment, so I could look at them and think, well, now I think I've got you straight. And I was able to do that. And you know, that was a good lesson in learning because it developed my memory for names somewhat. Yeah.

[00:18:36]

So anyway, then I taught for nine years - and then the new junior high - well, I taught two in Laurel and seven in Butte, the new junior high opened that year. And that was in 1957.

So that's the year I got married. As long as they were hiring married teachers, then I could get married. So I got married in August, had a substitute teacher, and taught 1957 - 58 at the new junior high school. And then I was through teaching. That was it. So anyway, that was my life as a teacher. And you know, the fascinating part of it is, I have so many who are now grandmothers themselves who'll come up to me and they'll say, 'Miss Roberts, you haven't changed a bit'. And I say, 'ph yes, there's lots of snow on the mountain. Since those days'. But they said, 'I can't call you anything, but Miss Roberts'. Some of them know me, you know, in the organizations I belong to, I have some of my former students, and they said, 'it's awfully hard for me to call you Marjorie. You're still Miss Roberts to me'.

JAAP: Oh that's so darling. Yeah.

CANNON: Yeah. 'Oh, and if I hadn't had you for a teacher, I never would have learned how to cook, but I cook all the meals we eat'. And one of them said, 'I hated sewing until I had you'. And she said, 'I've been all of my children's clothes'. I said, 'well, that's all the thanks I need to hear'. That was great.

So that's pretty much my story, I guess, except that when my sister and I, when we were living in McQueen, my sister became very ill and she got a strep infection. And the infection was such that when, after she had taken the medication, she was like this, someone would walk up to her and she was just a nervous wreck.

So the doctor suggested that she needed to get away from the store where there were all those people. And he said, you better take her to California, Mr. Roberts. Well, he couldn't, he had his business there. How could he do that? But he found a little two room cabin off up at the Gardens. So he bought that and that is what the picture is of there.

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He had it made into a home for us. And we would leave when school was out in May, and then when the snow flew, we would go back down to McQueen. But the Gardens was very much a part of our lives. And I was just a year old when he did that. And just beginning to walk. So my mother would put me in a great big box, one of the big boxes that had come into the store and that's where I had to stay and play because couldn't keep track of four of us. If I was out wandering around.

But she always said it was the most wonderful thing, because none of us ever had a doctor's appointment after that, when we were children. She said the healthy, outdoor living - we all had suntans, we'd climb up the East Ridge, and we'd go out the path and find the wild strawberries and go up in the mountain and find the choke cherries.

And my brother, who graduated in metallurgy and taught up at Tech here for two years, he was a doctor of metallurgy, but he loved rocks. And so he and I would go climb the East Ridge. I dragged him along behind me and he made himself a knapsack that he put over his shoulders and he'd collect the little rock samples. At the same time, he'd get little baby trees and he'd bring them and plant them at our place. And we were surrounded by trees up there that he had brought down and planted.

So anyway, our life at the Gardens, we avoided it like the plague on Thursdays. 'Cause that was all the kids could come for free. Well, you have at it, because we've got it all week without you.

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And we had the hobby horses, we called - the carousel were the hobby horses, and they, what's the big one? The roller coaster, which had another stack above it. And somebody had jumped out of a cart and gotten a broken leg there. So they took away the second layer of that. And that's what usually happens. The same thing with the chutes, the slidey chutes. They were twice as big as they were, when they finally took them down. But they took them down because somebody fell off them and broke a leg there too. So out of something good,

something bad always happens, and that's what happened with that Columbia Gardens. It was so much a part of our lives. We were so blessed.

JAAP: So how long did your family keep that home?

CANNON: My mother, after I was married, my mother still lived in McQueen and I would take her up there every day, because we had a gravel driveway just this side of the house that you see there.

And I was so afraid she would fall. And by that time, the Anaconda Company had bought all the houses around her. So she was up there all by herself and, you know, she was older and she couldn't drive. And I thought, 'I can't leave her up there overnight, because no phones or anything up there at that time'. So I would take her up in the morning and bring her home at night.

But whenever the Gardens closed is when they bought this house. And she would never go back to see it. It was just a big old empty hole. But the trees that my brother had brought down - my son had gone up there, he said, 'Grandma, those trees are still up there'. That they were not in the pit yet. That was oh, many years ago now. But at that time, when he was old enough to be up there by himself. But anyway, it was a wonderful experience. Yeah.

[00:24:47]

JAAP: Yeah. I think that was pretty devastating when they took that Columbia Gardens.

CANNON: It was terrible. Well, what a blow! I mean, the people in Butte, just depended on it. Everybody had all of their picnics, all of their anniversaries. The beautiful place where we danced to Harry James and Jack Teagarden. And everybody went to all those dances. You know, they said that floor was unbelievable, because it had movement to it, it didn't have the big things underneath it. It would move while you were dancing. You could dance all night and never get tired.

Yeah. We were so lucky. I used to love to go to those big bands up there. We thought that was wonderful. And we had our proms up there. Yeah. Every prom I ever went to was at the Gardens. All four of them. Yeah.

JAAP: Yeah, that's pretty special, I think.

CANNON: Wonderful. I'll say, yeah.

JAAP: How did you meet your husband?

[00:25:45]

CANNON: I knew my husband in high school. He was a football player, but he was going with a girl and I was going with a boy. So I thought, well, he's a nice looking kid, but that was all that story was.

And after I came back to Butte, he was working for Cannon Laughton brokerage, which his father and mother own. And he would go down, there was a little place on Harrison Avenue,

right where it becomes Front Street there, over on the right hand side, there was a little place that was a coffee shop there, and he would go there to get coffee. And one time I went in to get coffee after I left the Emerson School and there he was. And he said, 'well, I haven't seen you for so long'. And I said, 'nor you'.

So anyway, we struck up a friendship and a couple of years later we were married. He's a great guy. Everybody loved him. Yeah. So I was blessed to have him. Yeah.

JAAP: And then, so you're active in the Methodist Church?

CANNON: Aldersgate Methodist Church, the Unity Church closed. It was one of four that closed. The Grace Methodist, Lowell Avenue and Silver Bow. And they all joined together and had a lot on a Grand Avenue where the Aldersgate is now. So they all mended together. They sold the three other churches, used that money for a down payment for the beginning of the building. And that's another story. They built the fellowship hall there first, took them a couple of years. But I was the treasurer for that, if you can believe.

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My husband used to say, 'are you getting paid for this? Here I was going through all of these checks and depositing all that money for all those years. And I said, 'no'. He said, 'well, you should be'.

But anyway, when it was finally built, it opened in 1959, and the Bishop from Denver came to consecrate the church. And so we had Cynthia, my baby, who was just six weeks old, she was the first one who was baptized in the fellowship hall. That's before the church was built, after that.

But yes, I've been a member there forever, sang in the choir there forever. Head of the league and youth fellowship, I was head of that for all those years. I used to get a gold button every year, for never having missed a Sunday school. That was just part of our life Sunday wasn't Sunday, unless you went to school, or to Sunday school. So I got my button every year and they gave me a a big button when I finished, because I was the only one that had gotten it every year. But the Franklin school and Unity Methodist Church were right across the street from each other. And that was just the beginning of Meaderville, in those days, the end of McQueen. And then we went down a big road and Meaderville was right down there.

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Guidi's grocery and the Rocky Mountain Club with Teddy Traparish. And I'll tell you, one day out of the whole year, my dad said we're going to go to the Rocky Mountain and Teddy Traparish. My dad would buy steaks from him and so on. And we'd have our steak dinner. Well, let me tell you with the hors d'oeuvres that came and filled the table, you were so full with all of the hors d'oeuvres, the wonderful hors d'oeuvres. Everything you could possibly think of - lovely cheeses, and oh, I don't know what all - carrots and celery and all of that good stuff. Sweet potato salad, out of this world. You just didn't have room to eat any dinner. So we all went home thinking we'll have our dinner tomorrow night at home, 'cause we brought it home. But that was such a treat. And that Teddy Traparish was a great guy. He never married, had size 16 shoes.

JAAP: Really?

CANNON: Mmm. Hmm. And he always dressed, always had a suit and tie. You never saw him. He lived in the Finlen hotel and everybody thought Teddy Traparish was an outstanding man. He really, really was. Never been quite the same without him.

JAAP: Yeah. We have lots of pictures of him with his cars...

CANNON: Big Cadillacs and so on. Yeah. He's a great guy. Yeah. So anyway, I guess maybe that's pretty much what I know and what I don't know.

[00:30:31]

JAAP: Okay. So, you and your husband then, you lived in McQueen then as well?

CANNON: Not with my husband.

JAAP: Not with your husband?

CANNON: No. When I quit teaching, we bought a home on Argyle. And that was the first, that was the year I was married. I was married for that one year, but before I taught that last year, we bought a house at 2230 Argyle. And that's where we lived the first four years. And well, by then we had a daughter and a son and we had only two bedrooms. And my husband said, 'well, we can't have this, because they can't have a bedroom together'. And I said, 'well, we can build upstairs'. He said, 'nah'. He said, 'this isn't a growing area'. So that's when we bought this land where we are. And he said, 'well, you took building and architecture at Bozeman'. He said, 'why don't you draw a plan'? And so I said, 'well, I think I can do that'.

So I made the initial plan for this house. And then Conrad Benson, of course, did the architectural work, but he built the home. We just loved it. And Cynthia was just starting grade school. And that was in September 13th, 1965. We'd moved in here and she started down at the Whittier.

JAAP: Oh, that's so neat. How special that you designed your own home!

[00:31:59]

CANNON: Oh yeah, I just, you know, I've been in hundreds of homes and I've never seen one yet that I even thought was in the ballpark. It's just a very functional home. And one thing I wanted was the kitchen that looked at the Highlands. And to be able to see the East Ridge. And I get the sunlight here all day long. And people say, 'well, what do you want that big kitchen for'? My husband would say, 'if she's not in the kitchen, she's not home'.

JAAP: Yeah, isn't that the truth.

CANNON: Yeah. Right. But anyway, we had some very happy times here.

JAAP: How many kids do you have?

CANNON: I had two. Scott is still living. Cynthia died when she was 33. She had a pancreatic infection - pancreatitis. Didn't even know she had a pancreas until she was playing softball and somebody threw the softball and she caught it right where her pancreas was. Well that inflamed the pancreas. And they found that she was born with - where the tube comes out of the pancreas is supposed to be two special tubes - well, one tube came out. And it was separated into two sections, so that the minute this ball hit her, it caused the inflammation and the swelling. And of course all the pancreatic juice backed up into her pancreas. And she had two surgeries. The final one to have the pancreas taken out. But she never recovered from that. Yeah.

But my son lives here. He lives out behind the Mormon church out there. And he's a big strapping, healthy guy. He hasn't got that, and this is his boy. Yeah.

JAAP: Grandson?

CANNON: So, and that's my only grandchild.

[00:33:49]

JAAP: And then you're also, tell us, so some of the organizations you're involved with. I know you're involved with Homer Club. Tell us a little bit about the Homer Club.

CANNON: Oh, Homer Club is a wonderful club that was organized - it's the oldest book club in the United States. It was formed in 1891 and Ruth Cannon, who's no relation to me, did a research on that. And she was positive that it was the very oldest book club in the United States. And it has gone on continually since that all those hundred and how many years would that be? 120 some odd maybe.

And of course, in the day, the Homer Club ladies were the neat, sweet and elite of Butte. Let me tell you, they were the ones that were the West side people who, Mrs. Godrocks, and they were there because they were there because they had the reputation of being somebody, you know. Well, that has certainly changed, but I know when I got my invitation, which was about 55 years ago, I belonged. She said, 'you know, when I was working up at Orton Brothers', she said, 'there isn't one person in your Homer Club now that would have been in it then'. They were not the neat, sweet and elite, you see.

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But we have continued on. And at first it was called Homer Club because that's who they interviewed in the beginning. Their book was all about Homer and the Elliot of the Odyssey. And then programs were assigned to people during the year. Well, and that was okay up to a point, but I think it was my suggestion - you know, when you are assigned a book, you're not necessarily interested and enthused about that book. And I said, 'why don't you let people choose their own, the type of reading that they enjoy? And they'll give a whole lot more enthusiasm to that book than one that's been assigned to them'.

So that's when they changed that. Now you can choose your own book and do that. Yeah. And we have the Homer Club luncheon - the first Monday in May, always. And it starts on the second Monday in October. And they've changed that since I was in. It used to be the first and third, but people thought the second and fourth were better.

So they changed it to the second and fourth. but I. It decreases the number of meetings because there are sometimes five Mondays, you know. And every other Monday, you could do it. But now it's just the second and fourth. And we have a good time.

We meet out at Big Sky in the back room behind the dining room. And it's a lovely fireplace room. And that's where we hold our meetings. Yeah.

JAAP: Oh, that's so lovely.

CANNON: Yes. And then I belong to PEO. And I've been a member of PEO for 67 years.

JAAP: And tell us, what is PEO?

[00:36:54]

CANNON: PEO is a philanthropic educational organization, and their aim in life is education for women. And they have all kinds of scholarships established. They have a college, that's a woman's college, it's called Cottey College and it's in Neveda, Missouri. And women go there and now, it was just recently, it was a two year college, and it's recently become a four year college. A wonderful college, in fact. Yeah. I was the state president for PEO in '83 and '84. So that's my PEO experience.

JAAP: Okay. Alright.

CANNON: And I belong to a bridge club that I've belonged to for 50 or 60 years. I'm the last remaining member, of course. A huge number of changes over the years, but it's still, we meet the first Thursday of the month. And we play bridge and I loved going to play bridge because I love the people. I don't care if I win or lose it. It doesn't make one darn bit of difference to me, who cares? I mean, it's just a game. And, you know, I have belonged to three or four bridge clubs and in some of them, 'oh if you had led this, then I would have done this and we would have won'. Well, do I care? Is that going to change my life?

JAAP: Probably not.

CANNON: Not really. No. So anyway, those are the organizations I belong to, but I have wonderful friends here in Butte. I'm blessed with a wonderful friendships. Yeah.

JAAP: So, Clark and I were talking on the way down, actually, what do you think of, 'cause you have the view of the Hill. What do you think of this ever-changing view you have out your door?

[00:38:43]

CANNON: It's ever changing. I look out of my living room window, and about once a week, I'll draw back the drapes and think, I don't think I even know where we are anymore. I drive up on Continental Drive and go up over the Texas Avenue bridge. And in fact, even Sunday night, we went up that way and went to, what's the name of that, it's not The Shanty? Sparky's, for dinner. And I said, 'every time I drive over here, I can't even believe it's the same place'. I said, 'if my dad and mother and my two brothers were to come back, they

wouldn't even know where they were'.

Because the Gardens was up there. McQueen was there, Meaderville was there. East Butte was there. It's all down in the pit. And you know, and the landscape itself, they're taking out so much of the land. It's going to be flat land before, you know, those hills are going to be totally removed before long, I would guess. I don't know. They seem to be finding more and more copper. They say that Elk Park has a big store of copper up there, I have heard. So there'll be digging up Elk Park next, I suppose.

[00:39:54]

JAAP: Oh yeah. Wouldn't that be sad?

CANNON: Really, yeah.

JAAP: Was it hard seeing - so you weren't living in McQueen at the time, but was it hard seeing that shift?

CANNON: Oh, my mother was broken hearted. Yeah, they came out and she said they took this place and you know, it had been worth so much more than they offered. And they just, it's down in the pit now. But she had all of the equipment from the grocery store that was there, that she had to deal with. It was difficult for her.

But we went house hunting and I found her a house over here on Moulton street, 3145 Moulton. I could walk from here through the alley and right to her house. And she was thrilled with that. She just loved it. So that made me feel awfully good.

She lived to be 98. She lived in her own home. She never had any help. She knew every bill that was coming in. She knew every check that was going out. And she was totally on her own. She was amazing. Of course, I went over every day. We had to have our English tea at 3:30, every afternoon. That was just par for the course. And my car never left the garage that she wasn't in it, that she loved to go for a ride. She thought that was wonderful.

[00:41:15]

Of course, when she and my dad were married, we still had horse and buggies. They used to go out to Lake Avoca, which was right out there by the country club. And they would take the horse and buggy and go out there and then they would go out in the rowboat and that was their Sunday. They thought that was wonderful.

And my dad had a horse named Frank. And he thought Frank was the best thing that ever happened. And my mother said when Frank died of old age, I'm sure, my dad cried. She says the only time I ever saw him cry, but it broke his heart. Oh yeah. So the courting was in the horse and buggy days then.

Yeah. But he drove Dodge trucks and had Dodge trucks and thought they were wonderful. Then he had a Studebaker and you know, in those days, you didn't buy a car until you could pay for it. So he bought a 1937 Studebaker, paid cash for it. And it had an overdrive on it. Well, whoever heard of overdrive? Well, we found out. But he loved that car.

[00:42:22]

And he took the family, he would take us out on Sunday afternoon. My mother would put the big roasts in the oven with the potatoes around it, and we'd go for a drive. And we'd go over to the hot springs right out of Whitehall. What's the name of that? You know what I'm talking about? Not Gregson. So we'd go to Gregson too. But there was, what is it?

CLARK GRANT: I forget.

CANNON: I've forgotten the name of it too, but it's still there. I don't know that the hot springs is open anymore, but he would just love to take us swimming. And there's another thing.

JAAP: I know which one it is, it'll come to me.

CANNON: Yeah, it will. I'm sure you know it. But when we'd go to school swimming, he'd take my sister and me in. And we were told to sit on that step. My dad was a little bit hard of hearing, and he would take my sister across the pool and come back and get me. Well, that was fine. Except he got out in the middle of that pool with my sister, and I decided I wasn't going to sit there. I was going to follow him. And I went straight down.

My mother was on the side of the pool and some guy jumped in with his suit clothes on and dragged me out. But scared her to death. In fact, she had a miscarriage after, it scared her so badly. But I was told to sit there and in my dad's day, when you're told to do something by your parents, you did it.

Well, I was in trouble for that and I got myself in trouble. But I've always been afraid of swimming ever since, because...

[00:44:01]

JAAP: I don't blame you.

CANNON: Yes, I almost drowned up at Flathead Lake at the Methodist Park, up at Rawlins where we have our Methodist camp up there. And I used to go up there every year. And we used to dive off of the diving board and so on, I could swim by them. But I got under that raft and I got caught on a nail that was underneath there. So they dragged me out of there. And I think at that point I decided I better not be swimming,

JAAP: Water's not your friend.

CANNON: Not my thing. But I did have to pass swimming in high school, and also in college. And I remember the instructor in both cases walked along the side of the pool, 'you're all right, you're all right, you're all right'. It's the only way I could ever pass that. And I had to pass it to get my degree. So, I don't know whether they still have that or not, but I know then they did.

JAAP: So I don't know when they drained Lake Avoca, but did you ever, were you able to...

CANNON: I never saw Lake Avoca. That was in my dad and mother's time. Yeah, it was out there, the lake property out there. Yeah.

[00:45:13]

JAAP: It was really beautiful.

CANNON: Yeah, it was lovely.

JAAP: Hard to believe.

CANNON: Yeah, really. So can you think of anything else I haven't told you that you want to know, or?

GRANT: Yeah, you said your family was kind of a holdout on selling the cabin.

CANNON: Yes.

GRANT: So was there much resistance to the mine?

CANNON: Oh you know, you had no choice actually. I mean, they were going to take it whether you wanted to sell it or not. If you didn't want to sell it, they'd just take it and knock it down, without giving it to you. And McQueen was the same, with my mother. Of course, that was her home and her business and the whole thing for all those numbers of years.

But that's exactly what they did. And so many of those homes were just decimated, totally knocked down. Some of them were moved, some of them still exist. And some of the Gardens ones still do too. But they sold them for a pittance, to what they were worth and people were not happy about that. Of course not.

But the Gardens, mom had the Gardens for about five years after McQueen had gone. But they finally said, I guess, what was his name? I used to know his name, began with an M. He said that was a huge amount of copper under the Gardens. Well, as it turned out, there was nothing there. It was further south, but not right there. And they've always said that the company burned the Gardens, now. You hear that rumor, and I don't know whether that's true or not. But I think we all think that.

GRANT: Sure. That's my understanding...

CANNON: Yeah. And what a shame. What a shame. That was the most beautiful park this side of Minneapolis.

[00:47:06]

JAAP: Yeah.

GRANT: When you're driving around Butte, do you feel a sense of loss?

CANNON: Yes.

GRANT: Is that the primary thing you feel?

CANNON: Well, sense of loss because you know, when I was growing up, there was probably about 65,000. And in my mother's day, it was about 90,000. And, you know, things gradually diminished and have continued to gradually diminish. That doesn't bother me as much as the fact that people don't give Butte its due. Butte is a thriving, wonderful community, and people are so supportive of everything here. And when anything leaves Butte, it hurts me. Because I think, there's one more thing gone. But that man who writes the paper, that drives the bus? Jack, what's his name? The one who writes about Butte as it used to be? He's in the paper every week.

JAAP: Are you thinking of Richard Gibson?

CANNON: Richard Gibson. I went on a tour with him. And I had never been on that, but my niece and nephew were here from California, and they wanted to go on it. He is so well-informed. He is absolutely phenomenal. And he talked about, he said, 'every vacant lot you see here had a house on it'. He said this whole place was loaded with people. He said it's hard to imagine, but that's the way it is. But he is just, it's worthwhile. Even if you've never done it, and are not thinking about it, I would highly recommend that you go with him because he's outstanding.

GRANT: Mmm hmm. He's a good friend actually.

CANNON: Oh, is he? Oh, well you can tell him he has an admirer.

JAAP: He has many, I think. Yes.

CANNON: Yeah, right. Right.

[00:48:55]

GRANT: And did you ever happen to go to, there was a Methodist church in Walkerville, Mount Bethel?

CANNON: Mount Bethel. Mount Bethel was there. Trinity Methodist was in Centerville. I never was in Mount Bethel, but I was in Trinity. And you know, at one time I think there were 27, I don't know, if it was 27 churches or 27 Methodist churches, I think. But I think there were 27 Methodist churches at one time. Even the old Duggan mortuary. That was a Methodist church at one time. The Black church right down on South Washington was another Methodist church. They were everywhere. Yeah. They really were.

GRANT: It's like bars and churches both diminished in number.

CANNON: Well, exactly. And at one time they said there were more Methodists, or more churches, I should say, than there were bars. But of course, that became past tense in a hurry.. But you know, you could understand that too. Those miners worked down at the mile deep level. Came up at midnight. Boiling hot and thirsty. The first thing they wanted to do was to go to a bar and get some beer, probably. Because they needed that, they really did need it. And so that's why the bars thrived and just continued going. Yeah.

GRANT: Do you have many memories as a child? Was the Depression big in Butte?

CANNON: Oh, yeah, very much so. Yeah, in the 1930s, we never threw a bit of food away ever. My mother said, 'we'll make this do, no matter what'. Oh yeah, things were very tight. And the strikes were devastating. Year long strikes where my dad carried all of his customers for a year. And my mother would see somebody driving in Cadillac and she'd say, that's my car. 'Cause that person driving that Cadillac had a huge bill. It was never paid. That's just the way it was.

GRANT: How did that work, on credit?

[00:51:02]

CANNON: Yeah. We had a little books and they would take their order. And we kept a copy and that was my job. I had to add those up to be sure they were correct every time. They would come and pay it, maybe weekly, maybe monthly. But my dad just carried the, he had a big file. And each of their names were on the outside, and they would come in and pay it. And then we would go on to another page.

But during those strikes, they couldn't. And my dad wasn't gonna let them starve. So he was the patriarch of McQueen, really.

JAAP: Were most people good about paying?

CANNON: Yeah. Most of them were very honest. But there were a few that my mother would say, 'that's my car.'

GRANT: Were there any stores that refuse to sell on credit?

CANNON: Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm aware of.

GRANT: So it was a common practice?

CANNON: I think it was in those days. If they were out there, I'm not aware of them. I think most of the grocery stores did because when strikes came, that was their only avenue, was to have credit.

GRANT: And would your dad find any other, would his customers find any other work while they were on strike? What do all these men do while they were...

CANNON: They laid around and, bitch is a terrible word. But no, I don't think they did. I really don't think so. I remember when they had, what was it, the CCC or something? When Roosevelt had them building the sidewalks and all of that. I think some of them who might have been on strike, went to work in that avenue. But you'd see 10 of them standing there, leaning on their shovel. And one poor guy just sweeping up a little bit. My dad used to get so mad when he'd see it, and he said, that's what we're paying for. There's where my taxes are going.

[00:53:01]

GRANT: Any idea your dad's political beliefs? Was he very political?

CANNON: Oh yes, definitely. He was a Republican from the word go. No question about that. But one thing he told us from the time we were little kids, 'you never discuss politics and you never discuss religion in Butte'.

GRANT: Oh.

JAAP: That's some good advice.

CANNON: Absolutely, good advice. Yeah.

GRANT: And have you stuck to that?

CANNON: Oh, absolutely.

GRANT: Okay, well I'll ask no more then.

CANNON: Absolutely. No, I could never change that.

But my dad, you know, he had his own grocery store in England. He bought his own grocery store when he was 16 years old. And just before that, he had a bull he was trying to wrestle, had a horn and it caught him in the roof of his mouth and hooked him and flipped him over. Yeah. And broke his jaw. And he had to wear false teeth after that, but that was his experience with that.

But he was a wonderful butcher. He could look at a cow and he could tell you how much that cow was worth.

JAAP: Wow.

[00:54:15]

CANNON: And I mean, he'd go out to the various, to Whitehall and to Twin Bridges, and where all the cattle were and he'd buy them on the hoof.

JAAP: Okay. So yeah. Did he have accounts with different...

CANNON: Oh yeah.

JAAP: Okay.

CANNON: Yeah. And so anyway when the tin mines were going down in Cornwall and he was in Cornwall, that's when he knew that his customers were leaving to come to Butte. Had a cousin in Alameda, California, who said, 'you come out here, this is a thriving area'. He said, Oh, I'll find you a business out here'.

So in 1906, dad sold his store in Porthleven, and came to Butte. Or not to Butte. Came to California, to Alameda. And Eddie Champion was there. That was his cousin. And they went out and my dad found a store he thought he wanted. Well, right at that time, that great big

earthquake came in 1906. And he said, this isn't for me.

GRANT: So did he have recollections of the earthquake?

CANNON: Oh boy, yeah. He was glad to get out of there. He said that was absolutely mayhem. Chaotic. He said it was terrible. Yeah, he was very aware of it. Yeah. So that's my life story, I guess.

[00:55:31]

JAAP: Well, Marjorie, thank you.

CANNON: Well, you are so welcome. You're so pleasant to be with.

JAAP: Oh, this has been lovely.

CANNON: And if you think of anything else I can help with, you give me a buzz.

JAAP: We will, we will. Yes.

CANNON: Okay. I hope I've covered what you expected from me.

JAAP: Yeah, you did great.

CANNON: Okay.

GRANT: Fascinating glimpse.

CANNON: Now, what do you do with all of this after?

GRANT: They're basically just on file at the archives. So in subsequent years, if researchers are looking for some particular piece of information, they may seek out that in these oral histories.

CANNON: Do you send a copy of what I have told you to me?

GRANT: I can if you like.

CANNON: I would like that. I would appreciate it.

JAAP: Yeah we'll get you one.

GRANT: No problem.

[00:56:09]

Tape stopped and restarted here.

CANNON: There's nobody like him, either. The heck with Tom Brady. And he's up here playing with our grizzly bears. Did you see that on TV? He's up and he's got a place up in

Yellowstone. And a grizzly bear came up and he clapped his hands and the grizzly ran away, and I thought good. Good for him. I'm glad he ran away. He could have bitten him if he wanted to. I wouldn't have minded. Now, that's nice. Not nice Marjorie. But Tom Brady thinks Tom Brady's pretty special.

GRANT: Indeed he does.

JAAP: And certainly he is special.

CANNON: He is special, but he certainly agrees with that assessment.

JAAP: I think so.

CANNON: And Brett Favre couldn't care less. You know, he's the most down to earth guy and he is fantastic. Honestly, that he could go back and play when he was over 40, wasn't he?

JAAP: He was, yeah.

CANNON: My gosh. I thought he was unbelievable. Yeah. Great guy. Of course, my boy and my grandson are Vikings fans.

JAAP: Oh no.

CANNON: Oh yeah. Oh they think they're Viking, but I don't think Viking is showing much promise lately.

JAAP: Not too much, no. Why are you laughing?

GRANT: Oh, just your love of football surprises me, you know.

CANNON: Who was the guy that was so wonderful for the Green Bay Packers, years and years ago? My husband went to the big game, what do they call it?

JAAP: The Super Bowl?

CANNON: The Super Bowl, yeah. And he, the Green Bay Packers and he was there. My husband got a picture of him and he signed it. It's somewhere in this house. So I've been a Green Bay Packer ever since. And I get lots of flack. But I don't care.

JAAP: My husband's a 49ers fan. And we argue with the kids, you know, who gets to claim which kid? I'm like no, they're a Green Bay fan. The dog can be a 49ers fan.

GRANT: The dog!

CANNON: You have children?

JAAP: I have two.

CANNON: Two, that's wonderful. Good for you. And how about LeBron? Going down ..

JAAP: LeBron's a Laker now!

CANNON: 150 for a minute. What do you do with it?

GRANT: I don't know.

CANNON: Buy the Statue of Liberty? Oh my Lord. And that soul, a protestor tried to climb the Statue of Liberty. Did you see that? Yeah, she's in trouble. Yeah that was on the 4th of July. But the program from the Capital, Sunday night, do you get PBS?

JAAP: I do, yes.

CANNON: It was wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. I just sat here and thought, I'm glad I'm an American.

[END OF RECORDING]