



VERDIGRIS
PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

MIKE & PAM RUDOLPH

The Verdigris Project

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

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

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Oral History Transcript of Mike & Pam Rudolph

Interviewers: Clark Grant & Aubrey Jaap

Interview Date: August 28th, 2019

Location: Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives

Transcribed: April 2022 by Adrian Kien

[inaudible general conversation]

[00:04:33]

Jaap: So I don't have a list of questions prepared or anything. I just thought we'd go kind of casual. I'd love to start maybe talking about the Rudolph family, but then I also want to talk about your faith and kind of some of your traditions and the temple, things like that.

So I guess, shall we start with, can you tell me, Mike, about the Rudolf kind of family history and Pam jump in as well? What you know about them and how they came here.

Mike Rudolph: We're in the furniture business. My grandfather was going to the front lines and left the front lines in Russia. Yeah. And, uh, so they took off because the front line was all getting murdered off and killed off. So he walked it. It's like the story of Dr. Zhivago, basically it's that format. And he ended up in Butte and started working here. He had some relatives here. That's how we ended up here. And then he started selling junk on the streets and then ended up to be a furniture store. And we're still running the furniture store. It's been a hundred years now.

Pam Rudolph: Can I fill in a little bit?

Mike Rudolph: You can. I go quick. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: But I think there are some really good parts. For instance, his wife was expecting auntie Bessie and he knew if he went to the line, he was going to be killed. So that's why he defected. And he walked all the way across Siberia into Manchuria and into China and then immigrated. I know you guys have his immigration records here. I think he came in through Canada. Yeah. I believe so, but you know, to make this story just a little richer, you know, he, and then he, he never, he saw Bessie once and then he left and then he had to wait and she was five years old, I believe when he was able to bring grandma Resha and Bessie here.

Jaap: Oh my gosh.

Pam Rudolph: I think it's a little bit richer story.

Jaap: You didn't say your grandfather's name.

Mike Rudolph: Kalman, K-a-l-m-a-n.

Jaap: And then your dad ran the business as well. Can you tell me a little bit about your dad?

Mike Rudolph: My dad and uncle both did. They were partners after my grandfather was retiring and slowing down. And so my dad's name was Lewis and my uncle was Newt and he died in '98, I believe. October. Yeah. And, my dad just passed away a couple of years ago, but we've been running the store, Pam and I, since dad died in '15. And we've been running it for . . . Pam started in '96 in the store and I started in '76 full-time but worked all the way through junior high, high school and grade school. Yeah.

Jaap: And your dad worked until his 80's.

Mike Rudolph: Nineties.

Jaap: And his father worked a long time as well.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah, exactly.

Jaap: Are you going to wait as long before you retire?

Mike Rudolph: No. We've already downsized quite a bit because this one had some health issues. And so we've eliminated all the employees and we had to reopen. So we get health insurance. That's a big thing. And building insurance. And we sold part of the building already to the Italian restaurant, La Casa Toscana. And so once the rest of the building is sold, we're going to move south to a warmer climate. So her health will get a little better. Yeah. The altitude, the barometric pressure up here is rough on her. Yeah.

Jaap: Was it hard after, you know, having a business that was so for so long, is it hard kind of winding that down a little bit?

Mike Rudolph: You know, not at this point, you know, it was tough when we first made the decision and, you know, we both said if one of us can't work, we're both done or one of us croaked, the other one, we're done. And she was shocked when I said we're closing.

Pam Rudolph: But we're having fun now. We don't have any employees. It's just us.

Mike Rudolph: I used to work six, seven days a week, and for 42 years, I said, no more of that. I found out life goes by too quickly. So now we're five days a week.

Pam Rudolph: And just having a good time. Just the two of us. It's our little hobby.08:56

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. Semi-retirement

Pam Rudolph: Yeah, exactly.

Jaap: And you both grew up here, correct?

Mike Rudolph: Right.

Jaap: So would you both, um, I guess we'll just take turns, both, tell me a little bit about growing up here. What that was like. Some of your favorite experiences.

Pam Rudolph: As a Jew or just in general?

Jaap: I guess in general, but I guess if you have . . .

Pam Rudolph: I grew up over on the lower west side. So growing up, it was just a fun neighborhood full of kids and our playgrounds were the mine tailings. Before the museum of mining, we used to hike over the hill and go spend the day over there. I don't know how any of us are alive anymore. As far as the Jewish connection, I went to school with Mike's cousin and she was my best friend. So from the time I was a little kid, I went to a lot of Jewish functions, whether they be forum parties or I dunno, bar mitzvahs, whatever. But I always, to be honest in my whole life, I've spent a lot of time, um, there, and then after we got married, it wasn't til after. And when we started thinking about kids, I surprised Mike and said, you know, I think I'm going to convert. So I've been a Jew . . . almost 40 years. About 40 years.

Mike Rudolph: She knows more about a lot of the religion than most of the born Jews. And she had to learn it all.

Pam Rudolph: I think when you have to study it, it makes a difference.

Jaap: Other than when you just grow up with it and it's kind of what . . . How about you Mike, growing up? Do you have any fun stories growing up? Can you tell me a little bit about Butte?

Mike Rudolph: A little bit. Yeah. Well, I can remember driving uptown with my dad. We used to come up and east Butte and McQueen, come through that whole area. And of course it's all gone. It's where the pit is now, you know, driving up east Butte was a big area, McQueen. What's the other one called down there that they took away? Meaderville. And it was a totally different world in those days than it is now. My dad has pictures and I was trying to figure out how we could do it. He has slides of a lot of all the businesses on Park Street and the 4th of July parade when it was on Park Street and different things like that. Growing up, uptown Butte was a hustle and bustle place because there were so many miners working here.

Jaap: Yeah. Um, in regards to your slides, we can help you with that.

Pam Rudolph: I was going to say, this is where they belong.

Mike Rudolph: Some of them are personal stuff. Because they are pretty interesting. My son did some of them, but he took mostly the family ones. He put them on DVDs. Yeah.

Jaap: So what was the clientele of a furniture store? Was it everyday people?

Mike Rudolph: That's all we had in Butte. That's all we had everyday people in Butte. That's all you had. Yeah. Really.

Pam Rudolph: One thing that's really fun because the store is officially a hundred years old this year, is we're getting fourth and fifth generations. And it's really cool when they come in and they say, my great grandparents still have lamps from here that your grandpa gave them when they got married or, you know, stories like that. And it's just, it's very heartwarming and we're very blessed to truly be able to continue a tradition that's been here for a long, long time.

Jaap: That is really neat that my grandparents shopped at Rudolph's.

Mike Rudolph: In fact, I just sold some stuff and that's what the lady said. My relatives used to buy everything from you guys. Yeah.

Jaap: So I guess you, and as well as your father and your grandparents, did they . . . there were a lot of Jewish businessmen, correct?

Mike Rudolph: Yes.

Jaap: Did they socialize with primarily Jewish people? How tight was the Jewish community?

Mike Rudolph: Tight. But everybody was doing their own stuff too. We used to have different functions with the Jewish functions. Now, there isn't enough people to do the Jewish functions to speak of. We just have a small group. There's six or eight, maybe of us that once in a great while get together. But in those days there were a lot more, but they were all mixed. I mean, you had a mixture of so many people, whether it was a religious deal, they had non religious Jews come to all the stuff too. Everybody was wide open. They still are pretty much in Butte. I mean, it was a melting pot. So big. I mean, people were, nobody was prejudiced really to speak of that I recall.

Jaap: What were some of those events when you had a big gathering?

Mike Rudolph: Well, some of them are in some of those pictures I was telling you about. They had a fez club in different places. They had dinners and you wouldn't believe the people in them, you know, because there was a big Jewish population here. And then every year we used to have a picnic up at the Columbia Gardens, baseball games and stuff. And there were a lot of different things, food and barbecue and stuff. Every year we had that. And then the B'nai B'rith stuff. I don't know if you've heard of that one. Yeah. That was what the picnic was up at the Columbia Gardens was. It was a B'nai B'rith function.

Pam Rudolph: In fact, I brought, I think it was like, I dunno, 39 or 35 . . . there was a national convention for B'nai B'rith and that's the men's fraternal organization. It was held here in Butte. And, I believe you've got the program from it that I lend. And there were just thousands and thousands of Jewish men and their wives.

Mike Rudolph: If you look at that program, the ads in there are a lot of the businesses that were open, Jewish businesses at that time.

Pam Rudolph: Almost all. And some that are still, you know, like Wieux's and us and . . .

Mike Rudolph: That's about it, isn't it?

Pam Rudolph: Oh God. Yeah. You know what? I think you're about right.

Mike Rudolph: We're done. Our whole block was half Jewish.

Pam Rudolph: The clothing stores and the shoe stores. Our whole block was, yeah. In fact, if you look closely at where Rediscoveries is. There are some tiles that you can partially see the bottom of when you go inside, you might be able to see some of the top of it. But I think it said

Raffish brothers or Raffish. I can't remember. I don't know what that would be, Mike's mother was a Raffish and, when they all came, he already had some brothers here and some cousins that had a haberdashery store or a tailor store. Yeah. It's always been down in that neck of the woods, East Park, that general area.

Mike Rudolph: Well, David who you have coming in tomorrow, his dad had a store on Montana Street and then he moved across the street from us after his dad passed away and stuff. Yeah.

Jaap: Did the Jewish settle in that East Park neighborhood?

Mike Rudolph: Some lived uptown, Mel Raffish. Glen, did you talk to Glen yet? Have you talked to Glen? Okay. They lived on West Park, 725 West Park. They were probably the closest, their family.

Pam Rudolph: Well, and then your grandpa and your parents.

Mike Rudolph: They lived on West Broadway. And uncle Sam lived on Granite Street, 400 something.

Pam Rudolph: I don't know where the Grants live now. Beautiful kind of Spanish looking home in the 400 blocks, but that was Mike's great uncle, Sam Raffish. The Aronson's. There were a lot of west side people.

Mike Rudolph: They were all over. Dave . . . Avron Canty was on the flat. We were on the flat.

Pam Rudolph: But the [inaudible] didn't move to the flat. Because they're in the Hillcrest area which was built in around the sixties.

Mike Rudolph: Well, no, they were past Hillcrest or in that next subdivision on the other side of the interstate. Yeah. Yeah. And I don't remember where they lived before, to be honest with you. Okay.

Pam Rudolph: But a lot were in . . . and those Jews who were very religious at one point, I'm sure you've heard this. There were three congregations in Butte and those who were very religious, the Orthodox, they lived closer to their temples, to their Shoals, their houses of worship because Orthodox don't drive or use mechanical things or that sort of thing on the Sabbath. So they all lived a little closer, so they could walk to services and that sort of thing.

Jaap: Okay. Sure. And then B'nai Israel is reform, correct?

Mike Rudolph: Yes.

Jaap: Okay. And then was the third one just small [inaudible]?

Pam Rudolph: A'dap Israel was Orthodox that was across from Emma Park. And I don't know if it's still there, but you used to see three steps. That's all that was on that whole block was three steps. And that was to A'Dap Israel, which burnt down. There were services held above a kosher

Jewish butcher shop that was on Main Street. Yeah. And I don't know how that fit in with the shul that was next to the YMCA?

Mike Rudolph: I don't remember. I just remember the shul next to the YMCA, I believe that burnt down. I was just a little kid when it burnt down. I remember being in there vaguely, just going in there and helping them doing some work with everybody. And I don't remember much else.

Pam Rudolph: Grandpa Coleman was Orthodox. And then there was a period of time when the kids were kind of spinning off into the reform. So that's where Mike's dad and uncle were, they were more instrumental in getting B'nai Israel going, but there were still some people who remained Orthodox or we'd go to their Orthodox services and then come to the reforms so they could be with the rest of their family. So kind of an interesting dynamic there, but I think it's no different than, you know, now you might have a very, very religious Catholic family and the kids are going off to belong to some of these pop up religions. You know, the newer, what do we call them? More progressive, more progressive religions. That would be, feel free to edit that. However you want.

Mike Rudolph: What year was a temple built? That was in 1903

Pam Rudolph: Your dad wasn't born yet.

Mike Rudolph: No, none of those guys.

Pam Rudolph: And Gramps wasn't here yet. Your dad was born quite soon after.

Mike Rudolph: 22

Pam Rudolph: Gramps. Yeah. After Gramps was able to get all the family here. Yeah. Yeah.

Jaap: So growing up in the temple, what was that like? Did you go to church . . . or I'm sorry.

Mike Rudolph: [Laughs] I had a bad enough time going to religious stuff.

Jaap: Was your family very active then?

Mike Rudolph: Semi-active, semi-active, you know, in Butte once you're getting to the age where you're in sports and doing different activities, it's not like today's activities, but we went and less and less, but we used to have Sunday school and we used to always, we had to go to that and then probably once or twice a month go to Friday night services. I had a bar mitzvah. But it was after, but then we lost, we didn't have a rabbi because we couldn't afford a rabbi. And then everybody got a little bit lax and there was nothing we could do.

Pam Rudolph: David Canty's father.

Mike Rudolph: He was the layman.

Pam Rudolph: He led the services for a long time. And for many things, not that.

Mike Rudolph: Well, when I was studying for my bar mitzvah, there was a Rabbi Kaplin who was here and Jerry Kaplan and I studied with him for a while then in the middle of all that. So that would have to be, let's see. Yeah, mid 60's, 64. So now it'd be 66'ish somewhere in that area and then they couldn't afford them anymore. So we had to terminate the contract with them and then Avron did the rest of it.

Jaap: So your bar mitzvah, what'd you do for your bar mitzvah?

Mike Rudolph: I couldn't even tell you it's so long ago. Same as everybody else, sweat all day and think, "God, I got to do this over!" Get it over and done with and have the party. And that was it.

Jaap: What did you do at the party?

Mike Rudolph: I couldn't even tell ya. I don't even remember.

Pam Rudolph: I wonder if our boys remembered their parties much. Of course, we have pictures. We have pictures.

Mike Rudolph: We didn't have many pictures in our days.

Jaap: Did you have big parties for your kids?

Pam Rudolph: Oh yeah. It was great. Just like any other religious ceremony, whether it be a wedding or a naming or whatever, you can go big or you can go small and I've seen where they go so big that they could have bought the kid a house. We didn't obviously go that far, but you know, beautiful invitations, just like a wedding with RSVP cards and stuff. And we had the service at the temple, and then we were able to close Lydia's and we had music and a dance floor and good food. Some of it was traditional Jewish things and some was just fun stuff, but they were big parties. They were really, really fun. And family came from many, many states. And, it's really a great reward because these kids have to learn when you're 12 and 11. I mean, the farthest thing on your mind is learning how to read Hebrew and you have to learn how to read Hebrew and you have to stand up in front of all these people and basically lead an hour to an hour and a half service.

They deserve a big celebration after they do that. Now, some people don't have to do all of that. It depends on the rabbi that's leading the kid, but our kids pretty much led services. And you know, with the help, the rabbi was there standing side by side, but they have to go through a lot. It's pretty cool to see if you ever have a chance to see one don't turn down the opportunity.

Jaap: How do they do that now? Because there is no Rabbi in town.

Mike Rudolph: We don't have any kids and there's no kids available around now. We had student rabbis come once a month.

Pam Rudolph: There was a group of seven core children. There were other kids who kind of came and went over the years, but the seven core children, when they were starting to get to school age, it was like, what are we going to do? How are they going to learn? You know, we

can teach them so much, but only so much. So we started bringing in a student rabbi and that rabbi would come in from LA once a month during the academic year. And we would work with that person. But then the hard part for the kids a lot of times was they had been studying and working with this rabbi for their studies for bar mitzvah, next year, it's a new rabbi. So they had to get used to somebody else and learn more from them.

Mike Rudolph: A couple of times we had rabbis come two years in a row.

Pam Rudolph: Only a couple times, but I think overall, it probably was a good thing because they got to see things from more than one perspective. But that's all we had. Then when it came time for, you know, to learn another language, that uses whole different characters, Max, our older son, learned from a young woman who was a couple years older than him, but just brilliant and had known, learned all these things from the time she was little. So she tutored him in between. And I don't know if you've had a chance to chat with Janet Cornish. She is just a wealth of information.

But when our second son, it was his turn, her daughter and our son were the same age. So she was going to work with the two of them. I said to our son, I wasn't going to ask unless he was okay with it. And I said, "Would you feel badly if I joined your Hebrew classes?" And he said, "No, that's fine." You know, it's what an 11, 12-year-old kid says. And so I did too. So we had every Friday, we got together and we worked on our Hebrew. I'm proud to say I'll be reading from the Torah on Yom Kippur. But when you're in a small community and you don't have a lot of resources, or accessibility to the things that you want, you somehow pull together and make it work, it's the Butte way, isn't it? So that's kind of how we did things. In those days, 20 years ago.

Jaap: Do you think that makes your congregation closer knit that you guys have to rely on each other?

Pam Rudolph: Oh, without a doubt. Oh yeah. Everybody has to . . .

Mike Rudolph: We did a lot of socializing, in those days when the kids were all younger. So you were always looking for something to do.

Pam Rudolph: We'd have weekends. We didn't have summer camp, but instead you'd have fall weekends in Yellowstone or, you know, they're just, we all pulled together and I think to this day, that group of us are still very close. Yeah. Pretty much a blessing.

Jaap: So, the temple now, what do you see for the future of the temple? What do you see for the future? And, I guess, what would you love to see for its future?

Mike Rudolph: Well, the problem is Butte is not growing, so we're not getting any new members. There's a few here and there that come once in a while for the high holidays. But one of our members was not very active. He was when he was younger, then he got married to a non-Jewish lady. And so he kind of got out because the kids were doing the other religion. And so now he's really involved in it. And he's, and I'm surprised because if you talked to Joel now, now he wants to be the last man. It's funny, he turned around from never seeing him, now he's really involved.

Pam Rudolph: But his father was involved. Yeah. And his family. Yeah. But we're going to be gone for Rosh Hashanah. And I realized we're only two people, but that two people can make a huge difference when you're trying to get . . . You can't read from the Torah. It's one of our 613 commandments, unless you have, what's called a minyan, a gathering of 10 people. And sometimes during the high holidays, if a family is gone, it's pretty tough. It's really tough. So I don't know what's going to happen. It's a beautiful building. It's significant to the community. It's in very decent shape.

Mike Rudolph: Excellent.

Pam Rudolph: Um, but what's going to happen when there are none of us left and that's going to be very, very interesting, it's a conundrum. I guess time will tell. Who knows? Maybe Butte will suddenly take off. And the Jews will have this gorgeous synagogue, just waiting for them along with we have four Torah and, we have, you know, we have just a beautiful . . . Have you been in our synagogue?

Jaap: Only once and it was lovely.

Mike Rudolph: It's a really nice building. It's well kept. Yeah, we redid it in 2004. We did a lot of work. When did you do the fundraising?

Pam Rudolph: The early two thousands, because it was built in 1903 and we had our Centennial in 2003. So between 93 and 03, we did a lot of work. We're grateful to have it and we'd love to see it continue. But unfortunately, the Jewish cemeteries are growing at a much more rapid rate than our Jewish congregation.

Mike Rudolph: Well, we only have how many members? Probably 15, 16 members and a couple of them are out of staters and out of towners. Yeah. So it's pretty difficult to keep it going, but we're not broke, but we don't have a lot of extra money if something major happens. The furnace is all working good and stuff at this point. So you never know. The roof is great. We'd redid that at the time when we renovated it. Pam did a fundraiser to raise money, to do the building, the renovation of the outside and inside. If it wasn't for that, it was in rough shape. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: And the cool thing about it is we found relatives and relatives of relatives that all had Butte connections and they were so happy to be able to contribute to such a worthy project. And when we did that, then when we had this wonderful celebration for the Centennial, we had people from, I won't say, from every state, but from a very significant number of states, we had a very large celebration and it was really nice. People were tickled to come back to their roots, visit the cemetery, visit the synagogue and reconnect with friends and relatives and cousins of cousins. And it was pretty cool.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. It was a big deal. I can't remember how many people were there, but it fit that whole great big backroom at Lydia's.

Pam Rudolph: The 100th was up at Tech. They opened up all the doors of the dining room and we filled that dining room to the brink. It was all the way. Yeah. That's pretty cool.

Jaap: How do you both feel about the building being used for another purpose? You know, there were talks about getting a group to kind of take over that building. How do you guys feel about that?

Mike Rudolph: Well, you know, it's probably better off to be used than to be empty buildings. You never know what's happening when it's empty. And, uh, about four or 5, 6, 7 years ago, it must be closer to seven, eight years ago. In the wintertime the pipes froze and stuff. Our heating system died. We had a major overhaul, so a lot of damage. So you're better off if it's used.

Pam Rudolph: I don't have a problem. Even if it's another religious group. I don't have a problem provided that any Christian . . . what do I want to say? Artifacts not be permanent. Um, so that if they used it and then we're going to use it for the high holidays for instance, that would not be appropriate. It simply wouldn't be appropriate, but if they need to put up a cross and do different things, that's fine. But take it down afterwards so that when we're ready to use it, it'll be our synagogue again. I'm just using the church as an example, but whatever it be, I think most of us would probably be somewhat, one or two people might drag their feet, but, you know, with some coercion, they might agree.

Mike Rudolph: But they all seem to agree that they'd like to see it used.

Pam Rudolph: Yeah. It's like a piano. In fact, you know, we've got a grand piano there that hasn't been used in years and years. It's not doing that piano any favors, um, you know, anybody who was looking for a grand piano, it is for sale. I don't care whether it's a building, clothing, an instrument, whatever it is, they're meant to be used and loved.

Mike Rudolph: The problem is it's not if, it's when we're all gone, there's no new, younger ones moving in that are involved.

Pam Rudolph: Mike's mom is 92 and just was not up to this. Um, but she's basically the matriarch. Yeah. And I never thought I'd see the day when Mike and his cousin and, you know, so many, Dave, but they're the old guys. You guys are all the old guys.

Mike Rudolph: Joe looks like the oldest though.

Pam Rudolph: I think he is.

Mike Rudolph: He is the oldest. He's the senior, he and my mom. The old ones. Yeah. He's probably 70, I would guess. Yeah. Yeah.

Jaap: So your mom couldn't be here. So what would your, what do you think if you had to put words in your mother's mouth, kind of, what do you think she would say about the situation? Because she's been active so long now that really, she has seen probably . . .

Pam Rudolph: Her mom grew up in Butte and then she married and moved to Seattle. So Mike's mother was born in Seattle, but as was very typical and if you were to talk to most, a lot of people in the Butte congregation, it was like, okay, his grandma moved to Seattle to marry a Jewish boy, but then his mom moved back to Butte to marry a Jewish boy. And it's just the way it is. Everybody mixes. And, she's been here I would say very close to 70 years. Well, let's see

your mom's 92. And she was married when she was just barely 19. Anyway, that's how long she's been here. She would remember all of those changes.

Mike Rudolph: We don't have a choice. None of us. It is what it is. Yeah. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: They got married and moved into a house next door to Mike's grandparents. She's been involved forever, but it's just harder and she can't do it anymore. There's steps up there and those steps are just a challenge for her.

Jaap: You talked about traditional foods. So do you have a favorite traditional Jewish food?

Mike Rudolph: We make fried matzo. So we do that once a year, probably. We always like that. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: I like potato latkes at Hanukkah. I don't know why I don't make them the rest of the year. If I'm not feeling well, I like matzo ball soup.

Mike Rudolph: You make that quite a bit. You used to. We're on the keto diet now. So we can't eat a lot of that stuff.

Pam Rudolph: You can edit that out. What else do you like? Brisket.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah, my grandfather was married to a lady that made good fried chicken.

Jaap: That's not traditional.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. That wasn't, but she did a good job making it.

Pam Rudolph: Trying to think of some of the other stuff that I make or that your mom makes.

Mike Rudolph: Chopped liver. A lot of people don't like liver, but it's doctored up. It's good.

Pam Rudolph: I love it. Yeah.

Jaap: It's fine if it's buried deep within something.

Mike Rudolph: On a bagel with pickles.

[00:40:47]

Jaap: So I have kind of one more question about being Jewish and then I'd like to kind of go a different direction, but so some bouncing around. What does being Jewish mean to you? When you think of being Jewish, what do you think of?

Mike Rudolph: I'm not a really religious person, so it's hard. I'm a bad person to ask that question, but it's just a heritage. I presume. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: That's what I was going to say. I mean, for me, it is a religion and a heritage, and I'm grateful to be able to respect both. A lot of Jewish people aren't religious, they're Jewish

primarily because of their heritage. And I think that I don't mean to put words in your mouth is probably where you are. I, on the other hand, am both, both respect the religious side and the heritage side, but it's very deep. And it's the basis of many, many, many religions. People will say, I don't know anything about Judaism. Well, if you've ever read anything in the Old Testament, you know a lot. So it's a very simplistic, very beautiful, very ritualistic religion, but a lot of things that go on in Judaism - let's use Passover, for instance. That's not celebrated in the synagogue at all. It's celebrated around a dinner table, together, sharing. A lot of Jewish holidays - Hanukkah is another one. It's more about bringing family and friends together than it is about being in a temple and reading page to page. And I like that part, that it is so family centered. It's a really important aspect.

Mike Rudolph: So many people think Hanukkah is just like Christmas, but it's not even close to what Christmas is.

Pam Rudolph: It's like 4th of July. Yeah. It's a celebration of freedom. Yeah, it is. It is.

Jaap: Okay. Well I might change directions. So you mentioned the Columbia Gardens earlier. So what are some of your favorite memories of the Columbia Gardens? Did you go there often?

Mike Rudolph: Uh, not really. We used to ride our bikes there. We weren't that far from it. You could take the bus up there too, but we only went three, four times a year, I would guess, with family. And then the kids in the neighborhood, we used to ride our bikes, like I say, every few weeks or something because you couldn't afford to go up there and pay for the rides. Yeah. In the good old days, I think it was 10 or 15 cents a ride.

Pam Rudolph: What did you do just go up? They were a nickel and a dime.

Mike Rudolph: Is that what they were? I couldn't remember. I knew they were cheap.

Pam Rudolph: Did you just play on the playgrounds and stuff?

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. There was a lot there. Yeah. There was a lot there to do. Yeah. Just go for a ride. I mean, it wasn't that far away from where we lived, probably three miles, which isn't very far.

Pam Rudolph: It was a long way for us and my mother wouldn't let us go on the bus days. Well, I'm from a very large family. And I'm sure she was smart enough to realize between all of my brothers and me. She was smart not to send us. Mischief would have been had.

Mike Rudolph: Well, the rides were pretty Mickey Mouse in today's world, but when we were little kids, they were great. You know, they had a rollercoaster and a biplane.

Pam Rudolph: And people came from everywhere.

Mike Rudolph: Well, it was a unique thing. There weren't all the Disneylands, Disney Worlds and Epcot at that time. I mean, it was very little and a great park up there, baseball fields. And then, they had games up there.

Jaap: Did you go to prom up there?

Pam Rudolph: Oh yeah.

Mike Rudolph: Ours was the last one. Wasn't it? Before it burned down?

Pam Rudolph: It burnt right after our prom. Yeah.

Jaap: Did you two go to school together?

Mike Rudolph: We did.

Pam Rudolph: We did, but we didn't date.

Mike Rudolph: We didn't know each other really. She knew who I was. I didn't know who she was.

Pam Rudolph: I knew who he was because of his cousin. And when we would go to temple and stuff, I knew who he was. So I went to junior high and high school. I knew who he was, but we didn't date for a long time.

Mike Rudolph: A long time after.

Pam Rudolph: And when we started dating. Boom. Got married in five months.

Mike Rudolph: Yep.

Pam Rudolph: We've been married for 41 years. 41 years.

Jaap: What happened when you started dating? So what's the story?

Mike Rudolph: I worked at a car lot and I sold her a car. And so we ended up . . . I don't know after that, was a little ways after, you moved to Missoula, didn't ya? And then, she was in town one night and we ran into each other. Went on a date that didn't happen in oh 4, 5, 6 months, no, a couple of years later, I guess, we were out one night my buddy and I, and she and her girlfriend were out at a bar. And my friend had the hots for her friend, Emily. And so let's go to our house for a drink. And so we went over to my house for a drink and they got in a fight and left. We got married five and a half months later. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: It worked obviously, as my mother would say, it was good glue.

Mike Rudolph: The glue worked. Yeah.

Jaap: Clark, have you been typing some questions?

Clark Grant: Yeah. I was curious about grandfather Rudolph on the front lines, would there have been a consequence for defecting.

Mike Rudolph: Oh yeah. Death anyhow, one way or the other, unless you got away, you were dead.

Clark: Was it the Soviet army? Or, I guess before the Soviets, the Russian army?

Mike Rudolph: Prussian, I guess. I'm not sure which one.

Pam Rudolph: I've looked it up and tried to study it a few times, but figure, because it took them a couple years to get here.

Mike Rudolph: It was a long trip.

Pam Rudolph: 15, 17, right around in there, about a hundred years ago. I'm sorry to seem ignorant with that, but I can't remember what.

Clark: Oh no, hard to keep track of. Do you have any idea what kind of family he came from?

Mike Rudolph: They were bakers. Yeah. And they did pretty good over there. And then when the kids got drafted and had to go to the armies and everything changed.

Pam Rudolph: When he defected, that's how he survived to come here is whenever he'd get to a new town or whatever, he would get a job as a baker to earn enough money to get to the next point and so on and so forth until he was able to finally get here.

Jaap: Did he talk about that often at all?

Mike Rudolph: Oh, a little bit. Not a lot. You know, he was here so long, when I was born and then when I was old enough to talk to him and, you know, converse and do stuff with him, he was off onto other stuff.

Pam Rudolph: And he still had a very strong accent when I met him.

Mike Rudolph: Broken accent.

Pam Rudolph: That would be 78

Mike Rudolph: Yeah.

Clark: And you said he went through China, so he went all through central Asia and then came in through Canada.

Mike Rudolph: Well, they had to get away because if not, they would have been eliminated anyhow. So they had to go through Siberia, all the way and get away from the Prussian armies.

Clark: What a journey.

Pam Rudolph: God, we don't know how good we have it.

Clark: But he was never very forthcoming about the journey or his early days in Butte?

Mike Rudolph: You know, he talked a lot. It's been so long. And my dad knew more of the stories and then he passed away. Would you say four years ago?

Pam Rudolph: Louis passed away four years ago. And Gramps passed away in 79, 80, 81. Yeah, it was right after we got married.

Mike Rudolph: Right after. A year or two. Yeah.

Clark: So he would have been observing the decline in Butte.

Mike Rudolph: Well, it was just getting ready to start to decline at that point. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: The mines were still going.

Mike Rudolph: They were going pretty decent, but there were strikes and different issues. Fires.

Jaap: He was here for the boom.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. Oh, Butte was a hot town. Yeah. When I was a kid, when I used to go to the store to work, I mean, it's a totally different place uptown than it is now, you know? I mean, there was, everything was filled. Restaurants. People were all over. In our block where we're at. Phil Judd was on the corner. He was Jewish. Then Shiners. They were next door. They were Jewish. That was a furniture store too. Then Whiteheads. He wasn't Jewish, but it's an old store. Then us. And then Trethaway's Music Box. I mean, everyone was filled up there. I mean, it was wall to wall where Northwestern energy's building is. I mean, there were buildings all the way up to that corner there and across the street.

Pam Rudolph: And a lot of Jewish attorneys and doctors.

Mike Rudolph: And it was the medical arts center in there. Well, there were over 10,000 miners at one point here and they all lived uptown and in rooming houses and different places, uh, houses themselves. But most of them were, a lot of them were single. And so they lived in the rooming houses and then that's where all the women were up, the whorehouses were up in that same area.

Clark: Do you remember the southside of Park there on that block?

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. Well, there was, if you're looking from ours to farthest, to the left, the empty lot, now, that was, they called it the Greek cafe, but it wasn't really. My dad and grandfather and uncle always . . . my grandfather, not so much. Because he was gone after they started arguing about the Greek Cafe, but they don't ever remember it being a Greek Cafe. No, and so I don't even know what it was. And then on the other side where the Park is over there, there were businesses all the way across there. Then past that where Sparky's is, the parking lot. There was an old hotel there. And I remember that because that was our warehouse and that was a cool building. It was a marble, everything was marble and brass in it. And I can't remember, it might've been the Arizona Hotel. That was a long time ago. I was just a little kid when they tore it down and built the burger crown there. Because it was in bad shape. It was falling down. And then coming back across, there was a Tom Kirby appliance next to where the Greek cafe was.

There were bars there, the Montana bar was there. Uh, and then, uh, Newman's Booterie was there because they were next to us afterwards. They burnt down across the street, over there. That was Glenn Rafish's. Yeah. And then there was Fineberg furniture and that was across the street from us. And what's in there now? Nothing really. It's just junk storage. And then where the bank is, that used to be, uh, what was the movie theater? The Rialto theater and the Stockman bar was in there at, at that point. Then around the corner was the M and M. And then, I mean, that block hasn't changed that much except for the empty park is where the, uh, well, it's not an empty park anymore. It's where the parking garage is that used to be Burr's and Ben Franklin, well Woolworth before that.

Clark: Is it difficult to drive uptown?

Mike Rudolph: No, no. We're so used to it now.

Clark: I guess the change has been gradual.

Mike Rudolph: It's gradual. Yeah. Yeah.

Clark: Still, do you ever stop and reflect on buildings that are gone?

Pam Rudolph: When we have family in or friends in and we drive around town. And that's when we get very nostalgic, whether it be driving by our childhood homes or, uh, old businesses that we used to frequent and yeah. The escalator in Burr's.

Clark: Fires are such a big part of Uptown's history. Do you have any recollections or comments on fires?

Mike Rudolph: Well, there were a lot of them. Yeah. And nobody, well, they kinda know / don't know who did them all.

Pam Rudolph: When the JC Penny fire happened, the first JC Penny fire. My brother worked in the shoe department at that time, and he had a run in with a young man and the kids said, "You're going to regret this. You won't have a job to come to tomorrow." And that family was notorious for troublemakers and arson, and just knowing how to get even, and that night things went "Kaboom." Yeah. Yeah. Crazy.

Clark: And which family was that, the troublemakers?

Mike Rudolph: What the hell was their name? I can't remember.

Pam Rudolph: Oh god.

Mike Rudolph: Should have asked that a half hour ago and we would have remembered it. We'll call you at two o'clock this morning. They were the troublemakers. That was a big family.

Pam Rudolph: They were. They lived on Colorado Street. But I can't think of their last name. I'd have to look in an old city directory. I'd be able to, there you go.

Mike Rudolph: We used to have a mess of those too, then our store burned. They were all upstairs by the fire and we lost them all.

Clark: You had a fire?

Mike Rudolph: We had an arson fire in 2003.

Clark: Can you tell us more about that?

Mike Rudolph: Sure. We, uh, well, the store, I dunno if you've been by our store, but the main entrance where you come in, we moved into that in 1939. And then in 1965, my dad and uncle added the back section on. And then in the early eighties, Trethaway's Music was next to us for a long time and he was going to be the county auditor or something. I don't remember what it was, something in the courthouse. So we bought that building from the Shiner estate and fixed it up. It was in bad shape. We fixed that up. And then we leased out the main floor to Universal Athletics. And we used the upstairs when they moved out and built their building on Harrison avenue, we decided we were going to use that, knocked a hole in the wall and did it. And then we were doing pretty good. Business was still booming. It still is for us.

So then we had a mattress department downstairs and we just finished getting the mattress department all ready. We were getting ready for a President's Day Sale, a grand opening the next week. And president's day weekend, we got a bunch of stuff in and put all the garbage out in the alley. Because upstairs was our warehouse area. And so then a firebug lit a dumpster. And steals furniture on fire. Then he lit one at Orofino Ice, which is on Main and Mercury. No one block down from Silver. Yeah. And then, uh, came and saw the garbage out there and lit that. It just burnt. They did find him and get him.

Pam Rudolph: Yeah. He served time.

Mike Rudolph: He served time. He's a registered arsonist. He was out. Now he's back in from what I've been told by the Fire Marshall.

Pam Rudolph: It was tough. It gutted a lot of our building.

[00:57:19]

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. I got the call at midnight and she's all shook up and I said, "Don't worry." We live up by Three Bears in that area, just north of that. So said, "Don't worry. Unless you see flames." When we went over the bridge over by the school there she saw, I won't say what she said, but . . .

Pam Rudolph: We could see it from the Hillcrest overpass, I could see the flames. So yeah, it was every fire engine you could ever imagine, but they did well.

Mike Rudolph: And two firemen got hurt because it was winter. Icy, cold. It was like 20 below.

Pam Rudolph: It was February 23rd.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah, it was right after President's Day weekend. Yeah.

Pam Rudolph: We had to get everything out of the building.

Mike Rudolph: Actually, it was President's Day because the garbage guys didn't come that day. Because it was a legal holiday and the garbage was still out there. We put it out there Friday.

Pam Rudolph: And yeah, we liquidated what we could. And while this building was being renovated and uh, 99 days, we got rid of everything in 99 days and restocked and rebuilt the entire building. I don't know how we did it. I could not do it now.

Mike Rudolph: We were younger.

Pam Rudolph: We were younger and had a lot more energy.

Mike Rudolph: And we had a lot of help. Yeah. Yeah. We had to move anything that wasn't burnt, burnt, just smoke damage. We moved out to the mall and had a liquidation sale. Yeah. And then. We've been negotiating with the next building over, which was at the time the Salvation Army building, where Toscana is. Yeah. And so we were in negotiations with that.

Pam Rudolph: This was a year and a half later. Yeah.

Mike Rudolph: Somewhere in that neck of the woods. And we had negotiated with the captain there and got the price, everything down. Well, lo and behold, by December 20th, he takes off with a girlfriend and leaves town. So we were supposed to close December 31st on it. So that went down to the wayside. And then we finally closed in August and had to start all over again with Denver because we negotiated with them and it was a work of art to try to get them to do what he said, but they finally did. And so we bought the building and I don't remember the date, but it was August. And the day we closed on the building, there was a fire in the fricking thing. It was wiring.

Pam Rudolph: It was horrid.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. And so we went through another fire. Well, it wasn't as devastating as the other because we didn't get as much smoke in the building.

Pam Rudolph: But it still was horrific. The bookkeeping on my end, I look back and I just like, aye, yi, yi. Everybody else was losing 10, 15 pounds because they were working so hard, moving furniture, bringing in new stuff to dah, dah, dah. And the only thing that was getting thin on me was my fingers from typing.

[01:00:34]

But we survived.

Clark: I just had one more question on my list was, uh, you know, before you head south, do you have any predictions for uptown?

Mike Rudolph: I think it's going pretty good and looking good if Praxis gets going. I'm sure you've heard about that. And if Ray gets that thing going, I think it's going to make a big difference with the uptown area. Yeah. Especially because Bozeman is so expensive and Helen and Missoula, and a lot of people are moving this way from Bozeman and commuting every day.

Pam Rudolph: We're getting customers doing that. And then with the production company going in, if that goes through, you know, we're going to be surrounded between Northwest Energy, Praxis and the production company. We're going to be right in the middle of all those good things.

Mike Rudolph: And with the opportunities all approved up here that should help too.

Pam Rudolph: I ask friends and relatives when they come to visit and I'll say, what do you think? How do you think Butte looks? And almost consistently they'll say, Boy, I can't believe the change. It's really not on the flats, but they're working on that issue. But uptown, I, you know, it's getting a lot more, there's a lot going on. I'm optimistic. I'm very optimistic.

Clark: When the Hennessy closed, the radio station that I work at did a number of interviews with employees and other folks and asked them, you know, was it just a case of bad management or does the town have some problem retaining businesses.

Mike Rudolph: It was bad management from the time that place opened from what I was told. And the new people that, well, I shouldn't say new, the ones that just closed it, they didn't know what they were doing, obviously, because the others had pretty good money flowing in and out.

Pam Rudolph: I didn't hear that. What are you talking about?

Mike Rudolph: When the Hennessy Market closed.

Pam Rudolph: Oh, the Hennessy market. I was thinking Hennessy department store. I'm thinking, Oh, wait a minute.

Mike Rudolph: That was poor management because the first ones, they stole a bunch of money. And so if you can, I think they stole \$85 or \$135,000. If there was that much money that could be stolen, they were obviously doing pretty good and they knew how to run it, but they also knew how to get some money out of it.

Clark: So in your mind, there is no systemic issue in uptown that prohibits businesses from thriving?

Mike Rudolph: No. Butte needs to, and I've talked to Dave Palmer about this too. We really need a 24/7 ban on alcohol, out on the streets, except for special events, festivals and that type of stuff. Because that keeps the bums up here. In our block, we're lucky. We don't have the bums where we're at, but over a couple of blocks down the way west, you see them, they're all over and over by the parking garage. And they all got their little bottles right there. Yeah. If you're telling them, "Yeah, don't do it, but here you go, go ahead, it's legal." I mean, you gotta fix it.

Clark: What does that do to business?

Mike Rudolph: You know, and it hasn't affected our area because they're not there, but I know the people on Main Street have had issues with them. And the bums, you know, I hate to say it, "They have more rights than we do."

Pam Rudolph: And I have to say, if I'm out walking at lunchtime, say, I know that on one block, I have to walk on the north side, on the other one, I have to walk on the south side, the next one, I go on the north side and I've had some of those people actually grab my arm and it's scary. You know, I used to think that I was pretty tough. I'm not as tough as I once was. And it really scares me. I don't know what they're going to do, or if they've got, you know, chemicals in their body or what's going on and I, you know, go, I know you've got money in there.

Mike Rudolph: They used to bug her, even when she used to walk, taking her dog and our dog was an attack dog. I mean, she was very protective.

Pam Rudolph: Yeah. That is a tough little, but it's, I mean, let's put it in perspective here in Butte. It's nothing compared to most of the other towns. So, or towns that we visit.

Mike Rudolph: There was a documentary in Seattle. Have you seen that on YouTube? Seattle is dying.

Jaap: We just talked about this. I haven't seen it.

Mike Rudolph: You got to watch it. Yeah, I hear it's getting better there, but somebody told me that's a bunch of baloney. They just moved them somewhere else. But according to the news about a month, six weeks ago, it said they're cleaning it up. But we've been in oh, all over. I mean, San Francisco's really bad. I hear it's worse than it's ever been. And uh, where'd we have our conference? Long Beach, California. They told us not to walk in a certain area and we screwed up. Yeah. And we went the wrong way and it wasn't a good place to be in.

Pam Rudolph: Not walking. Yeah.

Jaap: No, it's hard not to feel safe in your community when you're walking. That's really hard.

Pam Rudolph: It is. Yeah. Yeah.

Clark: Would you have any advice for up and coming business people, you know, having run a business for so long, what are some takeaways?

Mike Rudolph: Well, at least now, the mall is dead, basically dying. And that's why a lot of people are coming uptown, but the hardest part is coming uptown. Our building is for sale, but we've kept it up. We used every bit of it. A lot of the buildings uptown, they may have used the main floor and the rest of it, they've let go to heck. And so it's so expensive unless they got programs to help them out, to get a building going because their overhead is so high, you can't sell enough, unless you're, even lawyers and doctors are still having issues too, in the same boat, because it's so expensive to get going and fix up a building. That's the biggest problem uptown. But if you can get a building into something and you're in a good area where you don't have the bums bugging all your customers, and it's a great place to do business uptown. Parking is tough sometimes, but you know, they're going to need another parking garage, if it does grow.

Clark: Do you hope that it grows?

Pam Rudolph: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. There's nothing wrong with it. Provided and it's not too soon to be putting those growth thoughts in place because it needs to be managed. You just don't want this sudden sprawl. I don't want to be like . . . I used to love Bozeman. You know, it was Moo U, that's where, you know, the cowboys went to school and it has become, you drive down the main street, where all that stuff is. It looks like any other city, any place in the world, same with Missoula. You drive down Reserve, same restaurants, same stores, same everything. I want to be unique. Butte has always been unique. And I think that it can, it has the potential to remain unique with the appropriate guidance.

Mike Rudolph: A lot of people don't like to get involved in the local politics. I mean, it's tough. We have the same councilmen uptown that's been there for a long time. And I hate to say it. He doesn't do nothing when you call him and say, Hey, you know, we gotta do this. We gotta do that. And that's why the other towns are growing and we're not. Well, we don't want to be like Bozeman and Missoula and Helena. And he'll say, I said, we want to grow. We want to grow.

Jaap: Since we're talking about this, what do you think about this new tax district on the flat?

Mike Rudolph: I think it's good. Yeah. It's a good deal. Yeah. And they got a good person that's going to be spearheading it, Janet Cornish. She did that uptown. That's when uptown really spurred when she ran the program for Don Peoples. When you fixed up your buildings, she was the head of it.

Pam Rudolph: Yeah. She was the first director of the URA here. And man, she knows what she's doing. Her fingers have been in this for many other communities. Um, well, forever, gosh, since she's come to Butte, that's what her profession is. And she knows what to do. I think she will provide some very good guidance.

Mike Rudolph: Yeah. Well, in the old days, when you did a URA project, it was 50/50, you paid 50% and they paid 50% that was making uptown grow fast. And there were a lot of buildings that they built. The American candy store. I mean, there's all kinds of them. Sophie's. I mean, there's all kinds of places up here that are doing it. And then now I think it's 20, 80 or 25, 75. Yeah. And that makes a big difference. It's all the paperwork and all the hassles you go through. We didn't come out as good as we thought when we did it, we used the URA 50/50 program. And after all the work and you, you had to have an architect and different things. You didn't come out that much ahead at that. And then now that you cut it down to 25, 75, if they have the same historical stuff that we had to go through, they're not going to do it. Yeah. But now with the opportunities zone that could help. But if they buy a building for \$100,000 or whatever they buy it for, if they spent \$100,000, they get a lot of tax breaks and incentives.

Jaap: Do you ever want to get involved with local governments?

Mike Rudolph: Not anymore. Not anymore. Years ago, I was involved. I was on the parking commission, ran the parking commission. So God, when Don Peoples, no more than that 40, 35 years. Yeah. And I finally said, no, you can't get nothing done. It's time for a change and we want to make changes. And oh yeah, we can do that. No, we can't. We can't do that. The worst was we wanted to do six days a week for the meter maids to go out to the whole county, not just

uptown and patrol yellow zones and the handicap zones. Well, and the way we brought it up was, I brought it up, everybody rotates every third, because we had three meter maids. And so I said every three weeks you work a Saturday and you're off a day of the week. Well, we found out that somebody complained to the union. That's how it was going to work. And nope, it was the low man on the totem pole who had to work every Saturday, instead of rotating. So that went down the tube. They would have had more, I don't know if you read the local news, but they are always out of money with the parking commission. And that would have resulted in a lot of revenue. I mean, even in Walmart, anywhere, you go by the handicap spots. Because a lot of people park in the yellow and the handicaps and they shouldn't be there. You tag him and he gets some money out of it. It's common sense.

Clark: I think they're a quarter of a million in debt.

Mike Rudolph: I didn't think it was that bad, but I knew they were down.

Pam Rudolph: I think you are about right.

Mike Rudolph: The problem is, when I was on and where Pizza Hut was uptown. That was our parking lot. Well, they gave Pizza Hut that property basically for nothing, pocketed the money, the city did. And then we had that one over where the Stockman used to be. And, uh, they finally gave us that finally after we complained so much, but we didn't get it. I think they sold the property for \$28,000. We didn't get a penny of that to run the parking commission.

Jaap: Clark, do you have more questions?

Clark: No, you stole the last one.

Jaap: Sorry. Alright, do you guys have anything else you'd like to say before we close out?

Mike Rudolph: No, nothing really.

Pam Rudolph: We just appreciate the opportunity. It's a little intimidating to think about it, coming up and talking. But you made it very relaxing and very easy. And uh, you know, if we can help contribute to some lasting memories, then it's worth it. Yeah. You bet.

[END OF RECORDING]