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PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

PADDY DENNEHY

The Verdigris Project

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Oral History Transcript of Paddy Dennehy

Interviewer: Clark Grant

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[00:01:00]

GRANT: Okay. I guess let's start. What we normally do is ask people, just tell us about your grandparents. What you know of them, where they're from.

DENNEHY: My paternal grandparents, Pat and Kate Dennehy, they were both from Ireland, a place called Allihies. Pat was in a town called Cliffoney. Kate was up called Eyerics. They're about maybe 60 miles from each other, but they never knew each other until they got to Butte.

So, he came over first in about, I think it was about 1906. And then he went back to Ireland. I think one of his parents was dying. And then he came back to Butte in about 1912 and yeah, then he never did go back to Ireland. He met my Grandma Kate, they were both living in Centerville at the time. And, not sure the year they got married, but I'm trying to count back from my uncles and everything like that. So my guess, it's about 1919, but I could be wrong on that.

GRANT: Okay.

[00:02:11]

DENNEHY: And they got married in St. Lawrence Church. And their first house was where the Mountain Con engine room is now.

GRANT: Oh, really?

DENNEHY: Yeah. And they had the house there and I got a picture of that at home. And then when they started expanding on the Mountain Con mine, the engine room, they had to move. So they moved to Center street, which is right behind. And they raised six kids there. In fact, all the kids were born in actual Centerville. Except for the youngest one. The youngest one was born in St. James hospital. So the old days, they had it. So, yeah, they both lived there. My Grandpa Pat, he worked as a miner. He retired, let's see, I think he retired in 1952. And it was like within a year after he retired, he's walking out the back door, drops dead.

GRANT: Heart attack?

DENNEHY: Well, yeah, it's, you know, I've always - I teach construction safety for the carpenter's union, for all kinds of chemicals and everything. And I, you know, everybody died from a heart attack or, you know, things like that, on the death report. But he came from a village where it wasn't uncommon for people to live to be 110, you know, very, very healthy. He came from a family of, I think he came from a family of 10. Grandma Kate, her name was O'Shea. She came from a family of 12. And

most of them either stayed in Ireland. A third of them stayed in Ireland. The other two thirds, most of them came to Butte.

GRANT: Wow.

DENNEHY: And so his family lived long time. His brothers lived a long time, back in Ireland. But you come here and you take, you know, the arsenic and the acid and the sulfur and the smoke and working hard in the mines.

[00:04:01]

I'm sure there was a lot of things that they never tested for, that he died from. But yeah, just a heart attack. And my Grandma Kate, she lived until 1965. She died relatively young. She was only 67 years old. I mean, old for the time, but nowadays. And she pretty much stayed home and raised the kids.

Prior to that, she worked in a pub back in Ireland. And she worked here for different jobs when she came here, her and her family here. Most of her family came over too. Most of them lived in Centerville too. And they raised - my dad had five brothers and one sister and they raised them all up in Centerville.

GRANT: Wow. And are you named after your grandfather then?

DENNEHY: Yeah, I was.

GRANT: Okay. And do you know much more about why Butte? Why did they come here?

DENNEHY: Well, he was actually a copper miner. He was also a fisherman and a farmer too, back in Ireland. And a good percentage of those people came here. In fact, you probably know that Allihies is one of the, probably you have 50%, at least 50% of the population of the Irish in Butte.

It was like that whole barrier peninsula between Cork and Kerry transferred here. I think it was just a matter of one came, and then the next came. So that's pretty much why they picked Butte. He got naturalized. My Grandma Kate never did. She just, you know, and I guess those days working, you know, helped you, you know, you wanted to get naturalized. But she never did get naturalized.

[00:05:47]

GRANT: When were you born Pat?

DENNEHY: '53.

GRANT: So you knew her?

DENNEHY: Yeah. I knew her, yeah. I knew her well. After school, I used to go to St. Lawrence, I'd go there - for like sometimes when my parents were gone. She'd give me toast and tea that looked like coffee. Yeah, she was a kick, you know. But she

was a typical, you know, stubborn, but very smart. You know, she ran that family good.

GRANT: Stubborn. What makes you say that?

DENNEHY: Oh man, she was, well, one thing I remember, we were at the Columbia Gardens. And she was old then and she had just come out of the hospital about a couple months before. She wanted to ride the rollercoaster. Well, all of my dad and her brothers said absolutely not. 'Well, you're not telling me what to do'. She did it. She rode the roller coaster. And you could tell they didn't go against her, at all. Just sort of more of a suggestion.

GRANT: Even as grown men, they couldn't.

DENNEHY: Oh no, she still ruled the roost.

GRANT: And what about your dad?

[00:06:54]

DENNEHY: My dad, he was, let's see, he graduated out of St. Lawrence. He was working for the Montana Power Company and he graduated out of Boy's Central too, not sure of the year. But right when was about 19, he got drafted into World War II. He was in the Battle of the Bulge, he got the silver star, the bronze star and the purple heart.

So he was - and he didn't talk a lot about the war. If you asked him about it, you know, he'd tell you, but he never overly talked about it at all. Like, I think most guys.

GRANT: That's right.

DENNEHY: And he came back here, and through the GI bill went to Carroll College, got a teaching degree. Also went to Western, at Dillon. And got the extended degree. And then he came here and his first teaching was the Blaine school, the old Blaine school in Centerville. The old one, the one that they had to tear down in 1960 because of the earthquake.

GRANT: Oh, I wasn't aware of that.

DENNEHY: Yeah, it was a big gigantic building. And it was, I mean, it was one of the old ones. I don't know if there's any to compare.

GRANT: Like the Sherman or McKinley?

DENNEHY: Bigger than the Sherman. Yeah, it was bigger than the McKinley, but it was a different style.

GRANT: Okay. Was it on the same site?

DENNEHY: No, it was on the site across the way. You know where there's a Trinity Methodist Church there?

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: Okay. Right next to it was the Blaine. So what they did is when they had the crack, the earthquake caused a crack in the foundation that they figured they couldn't fix. So they started building the new Blaine while they were tearing down the old.

GRANT: Okay.

DENNEHY: Yeah. So that one across the street is, you know, what we call the new Blaine. Actually that's the third Blaine up there and Centerville. But yeah, that was his first teaching job.

[00:09:04]

From there, he went to - and he coached football, basketball - went to the East Junior High, he became the assistant principal at East Junior High. And then they built West Junior High, because that was a junior high. They picked him for it, so he became the principal of that and he helped develop the school. He had very well connection with the contractors and everybody else. They basically gave him a free reign of what he wanted. And he put in carpet. It was the first time any carpet was put in the schools. And people were complaining, but he says, 'I got the quietest school.' And it did, it really worked.

You know, you have all those kids at that age, sixth through eighth, you know, making noise and everything, but not in there. And he ran a tight school. He ran a good, he was strong on the discipline, but he was always fair.

And then he went from there, became the assistant superintendent. And then he retired as an assistant superintendent.

GRANT: Wow.

DENNEHY: Yeah, he had quite a life. He was the only one of his brothers that took the advance - he was the first actually, the first of the Dennehy's at all to go to college. So his brothers never took advantage, most of them took advantage of apprenticeship trainings, things like that.

So he took that road. And then him and my mother, they got married - St. Pats, 1947. And the first house was in Carroll College. It was called the village because he was going there. And then they had my brother Eddy. Then they moved to Alabama Street, had my brother Joe, moved up the Mullan housing up in Centerville, they had me. Then Center Street, they had Steve. And then LaPlatte, the house I have now, they had Tony. So I got four brothers and they each got married. So they decided not to move anymore.

[00:11:10]

GRANT: Okay. Wow. Yeah, he had quite the career. Did he ever bring that home? You know, that disciplinarian...

DENNEHY: Oh, he was a disciplinarian at the house. But again, he was always fair. It just, you know, but when he told you to do something, you do it. You didn't cross him much, that's for sure. But he was a good loving father. But yeah, when he told you what to do, you do it.

GRANT: And his siblings, were they also in the war?

DENNEHY: In fact, I got a picture at home, all of them were in the war at the same time. His brother Pat was in the army, wasn't with him, but you know, both in the army. And he was a prisoner of war. And there was my Uncle John, I think he was in the merchant marines. Bernie and Vin were in the navy. And Jim was in the coast guard. And there's a picture that appeared in The Montana Standard, the whole family, you know. And they're all in military uniforms. Neat picture.

GRANT: Oh, nice. Can you tell me more about your uncle who was a prisoner of war?

DENNEHY: The oldest one was Pat and he came back from the war and he became a blacksmith. He worked in the shops and there, and he married - interesting, he married what we call an orange. And the oranges is those Protestants in the six counties of Ireland who are basically anti-Catholic. And I mean, Katie was a great person, you know. But what - the interesting thing about it is, you know, Pat was Irish to beat the band. He looked Irish, he acted it, you know, the whole clan thing. And Katie was just the opposite. She come from a family in Whitehall. Very good people - her family - very, very good, nice people. But when he got married at St. Lawrence, her father and her brothers refused to enter the church. I mean, this was, these are the days when things were that way. And then he became a blacksmith. And him and Katie got married. And he's the only one that moved off the Hill. He lived in the flats. Everybody else lived in Centerville and one lived on Second Street. And he was a blacksmith for a long time. He actually ended up working under his brother, John Mike. Now John Mike, John Mike was the second oldest.

But to go back to Pat. Pat was, I mean, he was a good, hard worker. He was big man. like me. But when he was dying, he had Alzheimer's. And he used to hate, there was a show that was on TV called Hogan's Heroes. Hated it. Because it was sort of a fun show, laughing show. And wasn't funny to him.

[00:14:02]

And when he was dying, he kept his boots, because they used to steal the boots in the prison, you know. And it was a German prison. And that's what he was afraid of when he was dying - my boots, just to keep his boots. But he was a good guy. John Mike's an interesting one. John Mike, the only one of the family never, didn't finish high school because he had to go to work in the mines. And he started out as a water boy and he eventually ended up being the superintendent of all the crafts on the

Hill. And, very smart guy. And he could do anything. I mean, he knew any, he was a type of guy when they built the Kelly, he was overseeing the job. He'd climb to the top of the Kelly and he'd expect the guys to do anything he did. And he was, he married a woman by the name of Cora. She was a carpenter. She's half Italian, half English, out of Walkerville. And they had two sons and they lived right down the street from us.

And he was a sharp guy. ARCO treated him like hell. They let him - when ARCO took over the company, he was being replaced by kids who came out of college. And it was one of those kids who didn't know anything. And he, from the bottom all the way to the top, he did. So when he, when they fired him, he took it real hard. But he was a sharp guy.

Then I got, they had two sons. Then the next one down was Bernie, he was the longest - he was a mailman from the war. He had five children, four boys and a girl. And he married a woman by the name of Pete Peterson. And he was a mailman and he was - this is according to my brother, Tony, and he probably shouldn't - he was the longest person who was a mailman in the United States.

GRANT: Continuously?

[00:16:10]

DENNEHY: Continuously, as a mail man. And he was nice, nice, easy going guy. And then it was my Uncle Jim. And Jim married - his family's interesting cause he married a Kelly. And they're both - both families are from the same part of Ireland. And my brother Steve does genealogy. And he finds out that they were connected about four or five times...

GRANT: Oh god.

DENNEHY: So that was interesting. And they had two girls and two boys. He worked for the Butte water company, lived up there on O'Neil street. Vin was a machinist. He was the youngest of the brew. And he was a real easy going, guy smoked like crazy, but he always had a good sense of humor. Married this woman Dorothy, who was really a nice lady. She was a bartender, you know, tough as nails, but she was straightforward. And then there was my Aunt Mary. My Aunt Mary, she was a kick. She was the second oldest, but her husband died. She went into the kitchen. Her husband was sick on the couch, asked her to get him a drink, glass of water. When she come out, he was dead. And they had two sons. One was 12 and one was seven. But she lived right next door to my Uncle John Mike. So him and Cora took care of the kids and everything. So she never really got married again and stuff like that. So I think that's all my dad's family.

[00:17:47]

GRANT: Wow. I'm kind of struck, I want to ask you a question about the Berkeley Pit at this juncture, because, you know, you hear - just your description of family, you

know, just on your dad's side, demonstrates the fabric of the neighborhood in Centerville, you know? And so I've always wondered how people just kind of laid down and let the company destroy their neighborhood?

DENNEHY: Well, I tell you it's, it really goes back - I'm doing a book on Centerville, and so I'm entering into where I'm coming to the big personalities of this town. And the whole thing it comes back to is Daly. And I don't like Daly I thought Daly was a real ass. And he manipulated this town and he manipulated it good. And he used fair tactics. He went after Clark, which if you really read the whole story of Clark, he just - Daly actually was working with Standard Oil at the time. Nobody knew, to get it. And it was the Sherman Antitrust Act, is why he didn't want Clark being elected at the time. And that's why he went after him so hard.

But anyway, he manipulated and had a strong Irish, you know the Irish of Butte, and he used the Irish as a - as a real bullshit point. Because they were strong in the unions. They were strong, and a good representation - and not everybody liked Daly, but they were afraid to go against him. So, you know, when the votes came, the word got out, this is who you vote for. And so the fear of losing jobs - cause periodically throughout history, they shut the mines down just for, they didn't want a market heist.

You know, and in those days, you know, there was no unemployment, there was nothing. So when you went out for two or three months, that was tough, you know? So he had, he manipulated this town, stole a lot of mines, monopolized everything. And then the fear of losing the mining is still as prevalent today, as it ever was. Last night, we had a Butte historical meeting up there, there's a guy by the name of Ed Banderob, and he lives out in the Greeley section.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: And did you guys tape that, that night?

GRANT: No, we didn't, but I know Ed.

DENNEHY: But Ed, the dust - and you could see it up in Centerville when they blast, you could watch the smoke, just go...and the dust settled right in the Greeley area.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: They're trying to get a monitor for the testing. The county's not going for it.

GRANT: Right.

DENNEHY: You know, and it's one of those things that people don't understand is - forget the mining. The mining is either going to be here or it isn't. You know, this is British Petroleum, for crying out loud, the largest oil company in the world, you know. But they cater to them. and they cater to them to a point of, it's sort of - they're afraid to make any kind of move, because they're afraid the mining will shut down.

GRANT: Right.

DENNEHY: I mean, you know, I come from a mining family. I worked in the mines, but mining is a destructive, disgusting thing. And the only people that make out on that is the guy that owns it.

GRANT: Mmm hmm.

[00:21:03]

DENNEHY: So it's, you know, so their fear that - and the county, every time there's, you know, like that law last year, when they tried to get - if you're going to do any mining, make sure that you're not going to affect the water.

GRANT: I-186?

DENNEHY: Yeah, simple bill, honest bill, why fight it? I mean, for crying out, and it didn't affect -

GRANT: Montana Resources -

DENNEHY: At all.

GRANT: Right.

DENNEHY: I mean, they're already there. But they put the word out, and you saw all the signs around here and the county commissioners a hundred percent voted to go against it. And it's like, and that's what it is. Anytime you bring up any kind of something, some kind of industry, how will that affect the mining is what most people -

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: And if you know Ed, you know that heritage thing that there they were trying to get? Now, I hear all kinds of different stories, but probably about 50% of the reason why people don't support it, they're afraid it will affect the mine. And I'll tell you what, it's like you know, they just don't understand. Mining is a dead thing. It only is good as when they go. And when the ore is gone, they're going to close up and they're not going to care. So they should be concentrating on just building Butte without the mine. They can't do nothing about it. So concentrate on your surviving. But they don't. And Butte's hit rock bottom.

[00:22:24]

I was really surprised. We came back, I worked on the Eastern seaboard for about 20 years, 23 years. And then I come back to Butte. And you know, how much is closed here? How much has closed since I come? MSE was closed, you know? And then, you know, you start doing the, the AWARE, the shopping, everything else, it's like, you know why? And I've always, I was always under the opinion Butte didn't grow because the mining companies didn't want it to grow. It was to their benefit, you

know, it's their benefit to make sure they got enough employees. There was a benefit to where they take the land, nobody's going to fight it, you know?

So they keep that mining city mentality. And you could see it a lot of places. The county doesn't force people to clean up things. They letting it go. I mean, they talk about their history and everything else, and I'm a historian, but you can't live history. You gotta, you gotta make it pertinent to the day. And if you don't, you know. And I'm a little disappointed in Butte, at this point in the game. Is because of they're concentrating too much on things - good example that really makes me mad about that council of commissioners.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: Is that alley thing. Now, anybody who grew up in Butte, that was a place where you urinated, that was a place where you threw up. And that became, and they were talking about how exciting that is, and it's like, wait a minute. First of all, you're bypassing all the businesses. So if people go through the alley, you know, the business, the main street, but who the hell takes their kids down an alley, you know?

GRANT: Yeah, it's not exciting.

DENNEHY: Where you got half the buildings in the Uptown area are empty, and a good third of them on the flats, you know - except for the CBD things - are empty. And they're not making them aware. You know, you've got to change the attitude here and they got to stop being a mining city.

GRANT: Mmm hmmm.

[00:24:25]

DENNEHY: I mean, you got to look at it like, the mining's there. There's nothing you can do about it. Concentrate on this.

GRANT: Isn't that blasphemy?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. Honest to God, isn't it? It's just one of those, one of those things that, you know...and people's sense of history is really, it's sort of like, Daly's the big guy. You talk to anybody, Daly was the hero. Daly didn't do anything. All Daly did was by a mine that happened to produce quite a bit. He never built his house here. Hamilton. Anaconda, he did. And once he sold the company to Standard Oil, Butte started going down and you can check that the population, as soon as they gained absolute control of the Butte Hill, that's when the population - our peak was right at that point. And it's been going down ever since. So I always liked Clark. Clark actually gave a lot to this town. Few people realize that.

GRANT: He's painted as the villain, just because he was Daly's political adversary?

DENNEHY: Yeah. And people, it's like - he gave us Clark's park. He gave us the Paul Clark home, which he funded the whole time he was alive. He built his home

there. His son built his home here. He built a church for the African Methodist community on Platinum. He gave us the Columbia Gardens. And if you ever see a pamphlet of when Columbia Gardens was built, it was fascinating. I mean, I saw it in the sixties before it got closed. But when they had the zoo there, and they had the lake, and they had, you know, all these things. And it was for the city of Butte, because we didn't have anything there. But everybody still gives the statutes to Daly, you know, not to Clark.

GRANT: So you think this, you know, servility to the mine is built in from a century ago or more?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah, without a doubt, it. And mining's always, I mean, industry is sort of always like that, anyway. You're always afraid to lose your industry and stuff. But people should learn from the history of the mining that, you know, it's done nothing but really destroyed Butte, you know. If they would have fought it, and made them do certain things, you know, and pass certain laws, control, but, you know, it's sorta like what they did with the Montana Power. When Montana Power wanted to move away from being controlled, and it was actually, you know, the Butte delegation that did that. And then what happened to Montana Power? And I worked for the Power as a carpenter for about four years. Good company. They treated their people good. They paid their people good. They were very clean company. Every place they went, they made buildings nice. They became part of the community. And we lost all that. Plus not to mention the tax base, and the thousands of employees, you know. And people don't learn is - you can't give any company absolute control. You gotta be able to watch them and you gotta stop them at times. They can't just say, we want this and we get it, you know? But they're still doing that.

[00:27:35]

GRANT: I know you were just a kid at the time, you know, but would you have stopped the Berkeley if you could have?

DENNEHY: I would have. Absolutely. It just, it destroyed, it's amazing - because I remember, vaguely, Meaderville. When it was really active, and the grocery store and when they had the Christmas thing. But I was real little at the time. But I remember before they actually destroyed all of it, you know? And once that pit started and going Meaderville, and doing East Butte and things like that, the whole town sorta changed. It's sorta like, well, we're dying. The old Butte's dying. So now we do the new Butte, or whatever. That's when they started, you know, fires up here. I mean, I watched half the fires burn and it was like, you know, I mean the Uptown area was literally four times bigger than it is right now. And there was like at least six, seven major fires that destroyed all these buildings and stuff. And then they started moving to the flats. That's when they got the mall. And it's like -

GRANT: Thank God for that.

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. That was wonderful. And then now, they're pumping money in the urban revitalization. It's like, really?

GRANT: Why didn't they go up the Hill with that?

DENNEHY: See, that's the kind of stuff that just bothers me. Because those people in the mall, when that thing was first built - I'm a carpenter, that's my trade - and when they built it, they built a roof, had no business in this kind of weather. It was a replica almost from when they brought in California, it was a California company.

GRANT: Like a 1/12 or something?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. And it leaked from the moment they built it. They had to redo it. It leaked for at least 20 years. And when Penny's was in the left side, all you had to do was look up, and it continuously leaked.

[00:29:33]

And they charged, at the time, it was a ridiculous amount of money - I can't remember what it was, but it was like, you know, \$20 a square foot a month, you know. And it just, you know, and they were just greedy. And now you got nothing in there. I mean, it's sorta like the mall in Helena, you know. Malls are sorta out now. So that that's the kind of stupidity they did, and they didn't preserve anything.

And a lot of fires could have been stopped, and a lot of things could have happened, but people here looked the other way. You know, and it was all Larson. Arson, not Larson. I'm just thinking of a guy.

GRANT: Larson is the guy, huh?

DENNEHY: Yeah. And that's part of the attitude, you know, and what they do with their money around here is really stupid. Good example. The O'Rourke buildings over here. Now, first of all, they were really nice buildings at one time. I remember them. And I'm not sure who owned them, but whoever owned them, just let them go to hell.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: And then they wanted to sell them for a million dollars, you know. And then, so two people have owned the - they bought them, you know? Well, I think there are over \$400,000 in money, so far, between the two people. Well, the first thing that you do, if they're going to give money to somebody with a building, is make sure they got a roof. I mean, it's a common sense thing that they don't seem to understand is, if you want to preserve the building, you take care of the roof. If you lose the roof, you get that building like on East Park, where there is no roof now, you know. And \$400,000, you couldn't think of something better to do with it? Or at least say, 'look, yeah, we'll give you the money, but you do your roof first'.

GRANT: Yeah.

[00:31:25]

DENNEHY: I don't know, things like that are just, they're bothersome to me because if you look at the old pictures, you know, I remember most of this town, the Hill. Before the pit, before the burnings. And it was quite, you know, I mean, it was, as far as

a metropolitan area, it was, you know, the metropolitan area between Chicago and Seattle or San Francisco.

GRANT: Right.

DENNEHY: You know, you see a lot gone. And I think that's a lot why Butte clings so much to their history. Which is, history is a good thing - I mean, I love history too. But it's, they cling to it to a point that it's sort of destructive, self-destructive. I mean, they cling to that, but they also cling to the mining. And they accept things that are deteriorating, you know, and they shouldn't accept it, you know? Because it benefits them, if things are kept up. Nobody wants to buy a building, or move into a building, where the next one to them is deteriorating.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: You know, there's too many, too many things. Too many drug dealings, too many possibilities of rain coming in and weathering and stuff like that. But they don't think a lot in those terms.

[00:32:40]

GRANT: Has anyone ever tried to do something, maybe through the carpenter's union, that's like an apprenticeship while fixing derelict buildings on the Hill?

DENNEHY: Well, it would have been a great thing to do. And that would be a positive thing to do. But one of the things that - is I don't like the International. The International basically cares for the International, and they look at places like Montana or any other rural areas as - well, we'll just consolidate them. There's only 500 carpenter members. So we'll put them all in one state. So training is lost on it. We used to have, well, there used to be a training school, when I first started, when I came back to Butte, I spent my apprenticeship in Houston, Texas. When I came back to Butte, they were still training here in Butte, for the carpenters, you know. And something like that would have been right up their alley.

GRANT: Okay.

DENNEHY: And then they moved it, statewide they moved it to Helena. Which - not too far to go for the apprentices, and stuff like that. But you could see that the whole craft was changing. The mechanisms, the how you built, what you built, you know. You used to build your own cabinets. You know, you got taught how to build a window. Well, nobody does that anymore. You know, and it's a rarity when somebody builds a cabinet. There are some, but they're few and far between. The nail gun eliminated a lot of, you know, air guns, things like that. Eliminated a lot of work, where it used to take 12 guys to build a house, now it takes two or three, you know. And that sorta changed, and that hit into the apprenticeship training, but it was still good. But when they did this baloney with the state and eliminated, basically eliminated all the local unions, you know, they sent training people to Las Vegas, because that's where the headquarters of the carpenters is now. It was Washington DC, now it's Las Vegas. And that in itself says something, you know, Vegas. I mean, a lot of people love Vegas. I never did. I think it's an ugly city, but it's the whole concept of money. And

that's it, you know, so. Yeah. I've never been a fan of the International.

[00:34:53]

GRANT: Yeah. Well, we'll come back to that. I wanted to hear a little bit more about the fires. You know, never having witnessed one.

DENNEHY: Yeah. I mean, and they were big ones. The one I remember the biggest was there used to be the JC Penny's. Good, good size building right behind, well it used to be the Butte library, there on Park Street. It's a parking lot now.

GRANT: Near the Quarry?

DENNEHY: Yeah. And there was two other big buildings. And that was a large fire. I was up on Granite Street at the time, watching it. And that was, yeah...

GRANT: You could see it from Granite?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. I'll tell you what, the flames were just, they were high. They were a good, you know, 40 feet above the building. I mean, and it was started in the basement and there's all kinds of - there's a book around about how it was started, and who started it and things like that. And it was, there's no doubt in my mind, all these things were arson. And that was a nice building, but there was a building right down here, right on Granite Street, that was a beautiful old building. It had beautiful architecture. It was where the military training is, actually. When I got drafted, I didn't have to go - I was second to the last of the Vietnam draft, and I had ulcers. So they eliminated me, which I was tickled to death.

But that building itself, that was a beautiful old building. And every space you see right here was a fire. And big fires. And they just started. I mean, it was like, I don't know, in a five-year period, it was just - there's another fire, there's another fire. And it was awful, because the company said they were going to, the pit was going to go this far.

[00:36:51]

And then Anaconda gets sold to ARCO. And ARCO's full intent was never to do any mining. And they're not, I mean, they basically now - cleanup is what they do, and sell it. Because they got all that money from the Arab oil embargo, and they had to buy all these mining companies. But you think what they got with Anaconda is, people don't realize, everybody thinks it's Butte. They could care less about Butte. It's the mineral rights, the water rights, the oil rights and the gas rights. All across the country. In fact, parts of the world that Anaconda owned. So that's what they got. They got it good.

GRANT: Hmm, do you trust they'll do a good cleanup?

DENNEHY: No. There's certain things about the cleanup, I mean, they do a good PR. And they got people who talk a good story about how well they are and how they bought the company and didn't realize they had to spend all this money, you know.

Which is, you know...And then they say, you know, there's no proof that cancer is any higher in Butte than in any place else. And it's like, you know...I used to teach the classes, and I'd show a picture and I'd actually show a picture of the diamond mine up there in Centerville. Well, they didn't clean that up. They just left it. You know, and I says, 'well, look at this. This is a mine. You know, this mine is roughly 150 years old. The diamond mine was first done about 1876, I think it was, give or take'. I says, 'and you see this, the old clay hills, this yellow stuff? That's 150 years old'. And I says, 'now think about it. You know what you don't see on that? You don't see a weed. You don't see a grass'. I says, '150 years, think about it. And nothing grows on that? And you're telling me that what those guys worked in, or the smoke or the dust that people are breathing even now, is not having an effect on them? You're not going to tell me that. You know, too many people died from too many things like that, you know. But again, you know, and you can't trust them. I mean, you know, they're out for themselves and they're going to destroy it.

Jeez, it's high. I never realized it was coming down off the Hill. And the waste is as high as the Hill now. So right now, you live in Centerville, you don't see anything of the pit and the mines. You get a decent view, anybody who lives in Walkerville, or the West side, or any place like that. But we're going to be able to start seeing the waste now. All we got to do is look to the East, and we're going to see...

GRANT: The tailings dam.

DENNEHY: Yeah.

GRANT: There's another instance where Montana Resources wants to raise it a hundred feet, the county is all behind it. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality barely opposes it. They just go, go, go.

[00:39:46]

DENNEHY: Well, yeah. And it's, you know, it's again, people are afraid to oppose, you know. You know, this used to be a fighting country. I mean, the unions fought, and the sixties and environment and, you know, rights and civil rights and things like that. We lost that. And I'm not sure why we lost it. I see certain protests, and it's good to see. But people used to - one thing I think is affecting the country as a whole is a real shitty educational system.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: And my father was an educator. And I think of what I was taught when I was going through school, and what my sons - and I have three sons who were taught in their school here in Butte. And they have absolutely no sense of history. I mean, they'll pick it, you know, they'll go, okay. Columbus. Civil War. And then World War II, with the Nazis. And it's like, well, okay, important. But come on now. There's a hole. And so people don't really understand history and they're poorly read. I mean, people stop reading. I mean, it's scary. You go any place with a crowd anymore, and it's an iPhone. And a few people with books. But you know, books, they're out of vogue. Nobody wants any.

GRANT: Have you seen that, just as an aside, one of my favorite bumper stickers says, 'read a fucking book'.

DENNEHY: Honest to God! And we are educating, or uneducating these people. Between the corporations and everybody else's - and it's to their benefit. If people are not educated, I mean, you take a look at, right now, at the politics. I mean, it's almost really, this is, who would ever thought, you know, and we've had some bad presidents. And you know, things like that. But who would ever thought that somebody like that - I hope you're not a Trump supporter!

GRANT: We're operating on an NEH grant. He wanted to cut the whole department.

DENNEHY: It amazes me. But also, I look at the other side and I used to be a real strong Democrat. I was a Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Johnson Democrat. And that party doesn't exist anymore. When the NAFTA was a real slap to the working people. And it couldn't have been passed without the Democrats.

[00:42:38]

Which is, it's sort of like - they're cutting their core. They always cater to the unions and they always talk about, we need the unions and everything else. And they always use the unions to go door to door and knock and everything else like that. But realistically, they haven't done much for the unions - 30 years, you know. Locally, yes. You know, you've got your local. But on the federal level, you know. And they wonder why people just sort of stopped. I mean, there's more independents now than there are Democrats or Republicans now. And it's sad, because if people started making noise, and you see a few of them making noise and stuff like that, they'd change. If nobody's gonna go after them on what they do wrong, why not do it?

GRANT: They just operate with impunity.

DENNEHY: That's right. Yeah. And I think reading has a phenomenal effect on people in this country. And credit cards. I think credit cards had an amazing effect. And all negative.

GRANT: Hmm. I want to hear about your education. You went to school in Butte here, or in Centerville?

DENNEHY: Yeah, St. Lawrence. I was the last, there were 14 of us graduated out of St. Lawrence - we were the last class out of St. Lawrence. They closed the school after that.

GRANT: In the church building is where they had school?

DENNEHY: No, there was a building behind it. The guy, if you ever been up there, some guy...

GRANT: Wayne Fornier.

DENNEHY: Yeah, did a hell of a job. He was going to do something with it.

GRANT: Oh, that was the school there.

DENNEHY: That was a school. And we were the last. And when they built St Lawrence, the Bishop took the town of Centerville and the town of Walkerville and made it. And the church was built equal distance between Daly and Main, and Center and Main. It was exactly equal distance so that, you know, both towns could be equal. So when I graduated, there were 14 of us. There was six girls and eight boys. Four boys and three girls from Walkerville, four boys and three girls from Centerville. Sorta equally divided, the last one. So from there, with the two years of Boys Central, they combined the schools and then it became Butte Central, worked with the girls. Before that it was just the Irish Christian Brothers. And then it became the brothers and the nuns and the lay people.

[00:45:10]

Graduated out of there in '71. Went to college for about six months and decided I didn't want to do anything. So then I came back. I started working in the mines. I was working up on the Kelly, up on the surface. And then at the Steward, I went underground. I was a sampler. I would go into the places where the miners were and sample the ore and put them in bags and stuff like that. And then, things started changing. You could tell they were starting to lay off a little bit. So I moved up out of the ground. And I started working as a laborer, and then it was a bad move, because I wanted to be a carpenter. So I moved out of this place I was then and became a laborer for the carpenters, hoping to work myself in. But three, four months later they cut a whole bunch of people. And that was me. So, I looked around the country and Houston, Texas was the town that was growing the most in the country.

So I picked up one day, me and a friend, we spent two days in Vegas. He come back to Butte and I spent four years down in Houston, Texas, and got an apprenticeship down there. Then after the apprenticeship, I come back to Butte, let's see, that was probably '76, I guess. And then, worked as a carpenter here. And then in '85, I ran for business agent for the carpenter's union. And I was a carpenter's union business agent for 11 years. And then after that, the health and safety department of the carpenter's union, I started working for them. And I moved to Washington DC, and I started traveling around the country, teaching construction safety classes. Lead and asbestos and things like that. And then they closed the department - this is when McCarran, he's the head of the, real jerk - but he closed the health and safety department, which was really ridiculous. It was one of the best organizing tactics they ever had. And so they closed it.

And so we moved, me and my wife moved to - well, we moved to Providence, Rhode Island. We just drove around, decided well, let's move here. So then I started doing all kinds of different odd jobs. And then I ended up working for University of Massachusetts - at Lowell, and started doing safety, same type of training I was doing for the carpenters. And then retired, oh, let's see, about 2010 to 2015. And then my wife was still working and then she retired. And then we sold our home and I bought the family home from my brothers, and I moved back here about two and a half years ago.

[00:48:14]

GRANT: Welcome back. Back up behind the house there ,where you went to elementary school, what was the curriculum like?

DENNEHY: The curriculum was, I mean, one thing at the time, we were taught by the nuns. But the grade schools at the Blaine, which was across the street, I'm sure, had the same type of thing is - you know, neatness, penmanship, math, English, History. I mean, the math and the English were really, you know, pushed as far as, and reading and writing, you know. And figuring math and stuff like that. And they progressed as they did it. My first history class was actually in the fourth grade and they started with sort of the beginning of the United States, starting with, you know, Columbus and Coronado and those things like that.

And then, you know, as you went through each grade, you know, you advanced on certain things. And then some of the history, you went backwards, you know, to ancient history, Roman, Greek, you know, things like that. The training, I thought, was very good. I mean, you know, it's one of those things that you sorta always carry with you, you know, at the time, you know, I wasn't a great student. At the time I realized, you know, that yeah, I actually learned a lot. Especially in comparison to the day. So when I was back in Rhode Island, I decided to go back to school, in college. So when I was 55, I started college again, four years at the University of Rhode Island. And I got a degree in history.

GRANT: Wow. Okay. I didn't know that.

DENNEHY: Yeah. So I did that and did a little bit of teaching with that, and used the skills with that. But then I, construction is what I knew and I liked, you know. So I pretty much stayed at that.

GRANT: The school closed right after you left it?

DENNEHY: Yeah.

GRANT: What was that like for you? Did you have a sense then of what was going on?

DENNEHY: Well, it's a funny thing - at the time, the school itself, you know, I was concentrated more on being a freshman, you know. And then, so the sense of loss for the school, I mean, it was like, well, the school was there then. And they combined the schools, St. Mary's and St. Lawrence, and they named it a different name. St. Raymond's, I think it was, and that was for two years. And then they closed all the grade schools together, with the Catholic grade schools. Which is an interesting thing is - sports is a big thing in this town - always has been. And I mean, from way back, sports was just nuts in this town. And, so there was the decision - do we close the grade schools or do we close the high school? And I was, at the time and everybody was, we got to keep the high school open. And I'm a firm believer the only reason you kept the high school open was the football.

GRANT: I see.

[00:51:30]

DENNEHY: And so they closed all the, we had nine Catholic grade schools here in town. So they closed the grade schools and kept the high school open, which I found interesting. Because if you sorta, from a practical point of view, if you wanted to keep the high school going, you sort of have to start them from the beginning, to go up, you know. Or at least keep a couple of the schools. But that was an interesting thing. But that was, in my view, strictly a sport thing.

GRANT: Hmm. Never heard of that. Yeah.

DENNEHY: Yeah. I mean, sports was just phenomenal. I mean, it's, you know, at the Butte High or Central High, with Naranche Stadium, I mean, everybody came. Whether you had a connection to the school or not.

GRANT: They closed them all at once?

DENNEHY: Yeah.

GRANT: Oh, that's quite a bit blow.

DENNEHY: It was a phenomenal blow. And, I don't know if you're Catholic or not, but the church was going through a real strange time. The Vatican II was changing, you know, things were changing, and there was all kinds problems with it. Problems with power. What did we want to do? And there was a certain degree of arrogance in some of the upper echelons. There were a lot of good priests in there, there still are. But that was the power to be, was that. And then they started - which was bad - but then they started doing closing the churches. And that was a whole different ball game. Because if you were raised Catholic in the old days, Catholic church was pretty much a good 1/3 of your life. You went to mass on Sunday, you went to confession on Saturday. You went to all the Holy days of obligation, Christmas, Lent, Easter and stuff like that. So there was a connection. Plus if you went to school, there was also that connection. So when they started closing the churches, it really had a real negative effect, because people thought, well, why are we closing to churches? And, one of the reasons they closed the churches is they built St. Anne's. St. Anne's, you know, we always considered the rich area, the country club area, people like that. So they had a church inside the school, and they wanted a nice one. So they built this one. And I think at the time it was \$3 million, which was - and this is, you know, it's totally unique. It was totally modern, you know. Nice church, but you know, not my style. And if you ever look up above, it's a chalice. Oh, you know, if you ever see the airplane, it's a chalice from up above.

GRANT: Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

[00:54:08]

DENNEHY: But they built it on promises of people giving money. Yeah. The promises never came through. So they started talking about closing schools, churches, you

know, and closing the old style churches, the old ones. You know, Saint Lawrence, St. Mary's, Sacred Heart, Holy Savior. And, that's what they started to do. And it was - that left a bitter taste in a lot of people's mouths. And speaking of St. Lawrence is - the Bishop at the time wanted to tear down St. Lawrence. People are saying, 'tear it down. Well, save it'. It's, you know, it's beautiful - if you've ever been inside, it's one of the old styles, you know. And it's a beautiful building, you know, if nothing religious, it's a beautiful old structure.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: And the Bishop was adamant. We're tearing it down and we'll build an outside, you know, you can have an outside mass. Now, if you've ever been up there, Centerville or Walkerville, even in the summertime, you're cold. That wind's blowing. So people fought it, and a lot of good people got together. And they fought it. And politically, he started looking bad. It was a PR decision. So he says, 'okay, I'll keep it'. But no Catholic ceremonies can ever be said in there. If there's a Catholic ceremony in there, it goes back to the diocese. Which it was one of those slap - we'll give it to you, but we're only going to give it to you part. So, that left a sour note on a lot of people's. But they kept it open. And now it's still open, but it's not being used much. At first when they closed it, there were people who were Catholics who were getting married there, you know, because of the church and everything else like that.

[00:55:58]

And then Holy Savior, they promised Holy Savior to be moved, you know, out to where, uh, well Holy Spirit is now. And so everybody agreed to it. And then one day, they see this truck and there's a famous picture of it. And the Bishop had made a decision, without telling the people, the parish.

GRANT: And they just buried it.

DENNEHY: And they just buried it. You know, and I don't know if you remember Sacred Heart, you probably don't. It was a Spanish style church. One of those all stucco with the tile, beautiful old church. That was another one that they -

GRANT: Was it on Mercury? It was on the East Side, right?

DENNEHY: It was right on Park.

GRANT: On Park.

DENNEHY: Yeah, right on Park, in old Finn Town.

[00:56:41]

Yeah. And then they got rid of that, you know. They saved St. Helena's, out of Meaderville. And that's over there in the mining museum. So those little things had, you know, effects. There was a social change, as well as an economic change, as well as a whole different time. But this is sort of like the sixties, seventies into the eighties. And, you know, the destruction of the town, the closing of the buildings, the loss of

churches, and not just Catholic. I mean, there was all kinds of churches in this town at one time. Loss of fraternal lodges, you know, which was, you know, it's sorta like you lose communities, you know. And one thing that really kept Butte strong, and it's sort of what you see now, is every place where people lived, was a community.

You know, it was like Dublin Gulch was a community. Corktown was a community. And people talk about that, you know, growing up in these ethnic areas, you know, that were just a community of their own, you know. They had their own little schools, they had their own bars, they had their own, you know, and that's pretty much lost. I mean, we don't have communities anymore. We got the town of Centerville, but majority of town and it's thriving, so to speak, in a strange way. They're building new houses up there. But it's also, there's a lot of deteriorated houses at the same time. And there's no school up there to bind them. So there's no binding of anything. We're living there, and people know each other sort of, you know your neighbor, but that total sense of community that I think the whole country had at one time, you know, in certain parts of the country, your neighborhood was, you know.

You played ball with you know, or fraternal lodges or, you know, whatever it was, you sort of got together as a community. And I think that's something that's really lost in this country is a real sense of community, you know. And, we're lost, you know. And I think that's, what do people do now when they're, you know, they're doing the computers, they're doing their iPhones. Where people used to go and just communicate with other people, if nothing else, you know. Talked and everything else, went to a dance, you know, or listened to a speech or whatever. And that's lost. I mean, it still happens, but not as a sense of community anymore.

[00:59:13]

GRANT: Do you think there was a deliberate effort on the company's part to - when they were expanding the pit say to target the grocery stores? The churches?

DENNEHY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

GRANT: I wonder if there's evidence that that was a plan.

DENNEHY: You know, if you really searched hard enough, but see the problem is, the government was also part of, you know, helping destroy it. You know, if anything, the company says, 'well, we need to get rid of that area'. They fast pedaled that. I mean, one of the worst things for me is, outside of the town and everything else, is the Columbia Gardens was actually built for the people in Butte when nobody had grass or trees.

And it was one of those nice spots. And they made a half-assed attempt to move it, but it was sort of stopped. And it was sort of stopped from there. And I think it was stopped from ARCO. They didn't want it moved. They didn't want a new Columbia Gardens. And so, you know, and I knew a guy who worked out there toward the end, and guess what happened? A fire. Another fire. And it's one of those things like, you couldn't even let us have the Gardens? I mean, they didn't build the damn thing, but I mean, it was like, just as a PR, you know, we'll take everything, we'll move it. You

can have your Columbia Gardens. And they were supposed to be out there where Beef Trail was.

GRANT: There's a piece standing there.

DENNEHY: Yeah. And, you know, they were going to do that. But there was an opposition to it too, from there and from there, underlying. And why, I don't know. Again, it's those things that really puzzle me is - why not? You know, I mean, billions of dollars taken out of this and we don't even have a decent park.

I mean, Stodden Park's not a bad park, but I mean, Anaconda's got a better park. Helena's got tons of better parks. I mean, and it's like, really? They couldn't give us that? And that's where I resent ARCO. Anyway, I got no love for the mining companies anyway.

[01:01:23]

We had - the vice-president of the Anaconda Company used to live on the top of Center Street. It was a big, nice house, white pillared kind of thing. Beautiful garden in back. And then there was another one, that was inside the Mountain Con mine. And if you ever go walking up there, you can see where a house was. Another beautiful place. And that was also the vice-president of the mines. And when ARCO bought it, they tore them down. It was like, why don't you sell it? I followed ARCO, they had no intentions of ever carrying on any mining here, ever.

GRANT: What makes you say that?

DENNEHY: Well, because almost from the get-go, when they bought the place, they bought it in '74...they started having hearings over there in Washington, about closing the mines. So they knew when they first bought it, they weren't going to do any more mining. So I think it was like two years from the time ARCO bought up, they closed the underground. And then '83, they closed the pit.

GRANT: And turned the pumps off.

DENNEHY: Yeah. So the whole thing went, you know. And so it was, I mean the way it was done, why it was done, and the raising of the water of the pit, and everything else. I always thought, it's really funny, everybody's worried about the water flowing over - that never, ever worried me. It's like, it doesn't flow over unless excess water's running into it. And the only excess water is Silver Bow Creek, which I never did quite understand - is Silver Bow Creek actually stopped. It's one of those rare creeks that starts on the other side of the continental divide, but flows on this side. And why they just didn't take a pipe and run it into it, but they let it go into the pit. So everybody's thinking, well, we better do something about it. It'll flow over. But all it's doing, is the water's rising to its own level. It's what it was before the mining started here. You know, and few people realize that, where the courthouse is, where the airport is, the same elevation. You know, it sorta goes like that. And people don't think of it. They think of it as a flat. So, the rising waters I think would have had some effect on the wells, definitely, and a few other things. But as far as overflowing in the pit, never would have happened. Plus the precip plant was going when I was there,

and they made more money out of the precip plant, than the pit and the underground mines. It was pure copper. They didn't even bring it, they didn't even send it to Anaconda, it went right up to Great Falls.

[01:04:05]

GRANT: So the fires were happening. Columbia Gardens was gone, burned. This is all about the time you were coming back from Houston?

DENNEHY: Uh, yeah.

GRANT: So you were kind of a young professional. I'm curious about your apprenticeship.

DENNEHY: Actually, they had one of the best apprenticeship schools. They built a whole brand new apprenticeship school and each class had a different section. And, I went there four years on it. It wasn't a very strong union town, but they had large, good, strong union companies. And I worked for quite a few of them who were union. I went back training there, hell it was probably about 15 years later. And the apprenticeship school is still there.

There's no school being done there. And all the employers that I worked were union are no longer union. And they got hit real bad down there, in Texas. They weren't a very strong union anyway, but they had a small, strong core. So that got hit pretty bad. I never cared much for Houston. It was a fast growing city and everything was fast. And, you know, coming from Butte, it was the first time I ever was called a Yankee. I never considered myself a Yankee. I thought - Yankee, really?

GRANT: What sorts of things did you cover? I mean, you went down there, it sounded like you had some experience working, so it wasn't totally new to you? Carpentry, was it?

DENNEHY: Oh, you mean down there?

GRANT: Yeah, once you got down there and your formal education began, I mean, what all did it entail, the apprenticeship?

[01:06:01]

DENNEHY: I mean, the apprenticeship basically entailed just about everything from blueprint reading, to reading a level, to foundations, framing, cabinets, roofing, I mean, just about any form of carpentry at all. Sheet rock, things like that. And we covered it all through the four years. You know, you went through a whole - like in six months you'd have two different classes at the same time. I mean, you'd come out of work. You'd go to the class. You'd hit the class, probably about two hours, two and a half hours, and then go home at night. You know, and then after each course, then you'd have a test sometimes written. More often than not, you had to do build something. Build a coffee table. And then they test it - what kind of a coffee table, did they like it, and stuff like that. It was a good training. In a strange way, it was - if the Hill was running, they had a hell of a carpenter shop up here by the Anselmo. I mean, they

basically, you could build anything you wanted. You know, they had a machine - what always surprised me was you could take a two by four, or a tree, or anything else, and they could make any dowel any size from like, you know, a quarter inch dowel to this. And you just run it through, and they had this machine.

GRANT: Oh, that's cool.

DENNEHY: And it had a lot of other stuff in there. I mean, in the day it must've been, somebody told me they had 150 carpenters there at one time. Because they built, you know, in those days, companies - you had the people that built everything, in place. They never bought anything. It was better to do it here. So they really learned. And if you learned off the Hill, you were a pretty damn good carpenter, master carpenter. Yeah. I wish I would have had a chance to learn there, but barring that, since they were closing the mines, it's a good thing I went to Houston. Because what apprenticeship training was here, was nowhere near as good as they had in Houston.

GRANT: Okay. Yeah. And when you came back, I mean, what was your impression of Butte then? Did you sense the decline?

[01:08:21]

DENNEHY: Well, at that time, no. At that time, you know, everything was starting to go. The Montana Power was still around. Stauffer Chemical was still around. The town hadn't changed that much since I left, you know, so things were pretty much going, there was a lot more, even though the buildings aren't here in Uptown, most of the stores - there was all kinds of, you know, still stores Uptown and everything. So the town itself, not too bad. And I liked Montana and I liked Butte, you know. And I like the people of Butte and things like that. So I didn't, you know, whatever - I knew it was lost when I left, basically when I came back, there wasn't that much that had disappeared. But then, you know, I stayed here and then I was a business agent. And then when I went training for the International, then I came back, you know. Come back now, and now you see a change and it's a real - it's almost like it's a dying town. And they're sort of grappling, but they're not grappling smartly, you know. Like for me, the Montana Power building is like - they paid somebody \$80,000 to decide whether they should be able to buy it or sell it or what they could use it for. You know, those kinds of studies I think are, you know, a waste of \$80,000. And I mean, what I would have done with it, I would have said, you know, and they only gave it to that one realtor. I would have said, 'we'll give you 25% on anything we take in. If you get anybody to move in there'. Because they were nice buildings. I mean, when I was a carpenter there, they had not done the ranch house yet, the ranch house was being remodeled. But we were also in the Thornton. We were also in the building Uptown where, the Anaconda, the red building, you know, where they, the homeless people were, we remodeled that. Out in the flats, we were remodeling. They were really expanding at the time I was a carpenter. That building is well done. I mean, that's a good structure. And nobody wants it. I'm not sure why, and I don't think it was advertised, right. Because I mean, for crying out loud, you know, they gave it away for a dollar -

GRANT: Jesus.

[01:11:02]

DENNEHY: You know, and I hope that outfit does something with it and they're able. But it's like really? The guy who owns the Exerdance studio wants to sell that for a million. He got it for 30,000. He's never put a dime in it. And if you watch it, you can see where the canopy's starting to leak and everything's going to hell.

And realistically, they ought to address that issue. The county will -

GRANT: They should compel him to do something.

DENNEHY: Obviously the guy's getting some kind of tax credits, by letting it go to hell. I mean, he's paying taxes for it, I'm sure. But you know, But, those kinds of things like that - I'm not saying somebody would have bought it. But it would have been at least a better chance, you know, of buying it. And I don't know, it's an interesting thing.

GRANT: That one's frustrating.

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. And, you know, building the parking garage, from a carpenter's point of view, it was a lousy structure. I mean, you should have been able to come in on -

GRANT: - Galena -

DENNEHY: Galena -

GRANT: - and go up -

DENNEHY: And go up. And so it's like, when you have the farmer's market on Saturday, nobody can use it. Because you got, you know, it's those impractical things. It's like, geez. Can't you think of these things, you know? It wouldn't have altered a hell of a lot, you know? But you know, I guess everybody can complain, I guess.

GRANT: Oh yeah. Oftentimes that's what these recording sessions turn into, which is fine by me. I like hearing people's grievances with the county. But I want to go back to, you know, when you got involved with the 112 here, and eventually got elected as business agent, can you give me a sense of what the union was like when you first came back and joined it again? I'm gonna turn the mic a little bit.

[01:13:18]

DENNEHY: The union had started to, you could feel - the union was still strong, but you could still, you could start seeing where it was starting to fade a little bit. And a lot of that had to do with, you know, the unions got the hell beat out of them. As blaming for closing the mines, you know, it was the unions. And that was a crock of, too. And then, so when they opened the mines up, and they opened it non-union, it was a PR thing, you know, Buttes's no longer a union town kind of thing.

So, you know, when we got there, they had moved out of the carpenter's hall, I think it was two, three years before I came back. And we were meeting, the office was at

the old Metals Bank building, which was a real pain in the ass. Because they used to - the elevator used to stop, twice I got stuck in the elevator.

GRANT: Oh my God.

DENNEHY: And then at night nobody's there. So you're by yourself. So you have your e-board meetings in the office, you know, and then if the elevator's stuck, I never at night, I never used the elevator. So we used to meet over at the Eagles once, and then we were meeting at the Knights of Columbus, and sort of moving around and dancing around and stuff like that.

And the participation in the union meetings, we might get, you know, in the beginning we were getting 12 people, 14 people. And at the time we probably had about, probably had a membership of about 240, you know. And that included retirees and stuff like that. So, all the large projects in this town were union. And we probably had about maybe a third to half of the housing was still union. But they were coming in on it. And all the unions were starting to feel the pinch. They were no longer as strong as they used to be. But there were still that good sense of unionism, that growing up in this town, you know. Because when I was growing up in this town, there wasn't anything that wasn't union. You know, the shoe repair shop up in Walkerville where I got my shoes there, that was union. So you went from that, and you started seeing the deterioration of the union moment. And, we got hurt. We got hurt by Carter, really bad. And that was to me is, the Carter years is where you saw the unions start to go.

And, it was interesting cause it, you know, Carter stopped the wages of all the working people. He froze all the wages. When the Arab oil embargo...but the oil companies are allowed to raise the gas prices. So that was the first thing. Second thing was, he decontrolled the railroad. And decontrolling the railroads basically eliminated the railroads.

There was five that used to come in to Butte. When my brother Ed graduated from West Point, or Joe graduated from West Point and my brother Ed graduated from the Coast Guard Academy, we took the train from Butte. And that basically eliminated, in the whole country it basically eliminated the passenger trains. And it was for the support of the automobiles and the truckers and stuff like that.

[01:16:44]

And the Teamsters, in their brilliant move, pushed it. Hundreds of thousands of railroad worker jobs got eliminated. They thought they'd cut a big fat hog in the butt, and get all the trucking. Well, initially they were pretty strong. But then the owners of the companies started convincing guys to buy their own rigs. You buy your own rig, you're no longer an employee, you're an employer. And so they got hit real bad. And eventually - there are certain pockets that are strong - but most of the stuff is non-union, that one time was union. That was a big blast against unions. And any time one union loses, everything connected to that union loses too.

And then they decontrolled the airlines, you know. And at one time you used to be able to fly from Butte to San Francisco, Denver, Seattle. Now we got to fly to Salt

Lake, back and forth. That's where the starting of the hubs, and also the attack of the union state, airline unions and things like that, they got real weak.

And then you got into the Reagan years, and he basically outlawed a union, on a safety issue. It was a progressive thing, but it was a planned progressive thing, you know? And so we were still good. You know, we still had some clout here in town. And most people were union. But you could feel the pressure coming in, a lot of businesspeople didn't like the unions, you know? So, we were doing pretty good. First year was a strike and it wasn't that long of a strike and we did all right. And then, you know, we had our battles - through the 11 years, there was battles back and forth. You always having battles. But the core was still there. And, it got to be a sort of a stronger union. People started coming back more to the union meetings and things like that. I decided at the time, I says, 'you know, we've got a building here, it's just sitting there'. And it was in terrible shape. Well, with the upstairs and the downstairs about the same at the time.

[01:19:08]

GRANT: Wow.

DENNEHY: I said, 'well, I think we should sell it. We might as well get some money out of it'. I had it in there, if you buy the building, everything in that building has to be done union.

GRANT: Hmm.

DENNEHY: And, a doctor was going to buy it at one time. And he says, 'well, I got some specialists'. I says, 'well, all they got to do is join the union, that's fine'. And he was adamant, 'I'm not going to do that. I won't buy your building'. And I says, 'well'...so he never did buy the building. And, there was a few interests from people, but not really. So I says, 'you know what? We got ourselves a building. Let's go move back'.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: So we did it on a real slow process. I think we had \$15,000 in the corporate account. And the first thing we did was the roof.

GRANT: Ahhh!

DENNEHY: So we did that. And then we just started doing weekends after work, cleaning up, taking things to the garbage. We hired an electrician to start running the wires. And we basically, it was basement floor and the first floor, it didn't go any further than that. And we started, once we got a heater down there, that was the first place we had a heater, right across from where the pool room is now. Then we had a whole bunch of, we owned a whole bunch of theater chairs that I can't remember where the hell we got them from.

And that's where we started having our meetings. And then eventually, the first office was up on the first floor, where you guys are now. And then we moved down to the second room on to the steps, or the first room off of the steps.

GRANT: Machinists.

DENNEHY: That's pretty much, yeah, and that's pretty much where. And then the machinists come on, they were across the way. They were the ones on the right. Laborers came in. Teachers came in. And there was - the painters came in for awhile. And there was another one I can't remember.

But it had started back. So that building is the oldest building, labor temple in the country that's still used as a labor temple. So, it's slowly, you know, each room, we took a week and, we just sort of - as we got more rent money and just...and when I left, pretty much every room was filled. There was the two storage rooms downstairs, but everything else was pretty well filled. The labors were where they're at now. And, then we'd have people that want to rent the hall and stuff like that. And so, that started it, and it survived, you know, it was good.

[01:22:03]

And then the International played their little game, like I was telling you.

GRANT: Well, I want to get into that. I'm curious, though, first about, you know, what was the decision-making behind leaving the building, when they...kind of before your time?

DENNEHY: Well, it actually, at the time, there was a business agent, a third business agent from where I was. There was him. Then there was another guy. And there was a guy who got elected, but quit immediately. And then there was me. But this guy, he was, old-style. Still kept a lot of the reins, even though he was retired, you know, things like that. And he was working with the International and they were in the process of bringing everybody together. And he was sorta, he was in the process, he wanted that, you know.

GRANT: Consolidation?

DENNEHY: Yeah, he wanted the consolidation. He wanted a consolidation, but he wanted the independent locals to maintain. It's sorta like, you know, you still got your local, but you know, you got to where everybody sort of connected and they're all sort of on the same page. Which isn't a bad thing. It just, the problem is, first year, it's fine and then eventually the International just takes over anyway. I always opposed that. Opposed it right to the end. And we were still independent when I left. There's a lot of, you know, as you can - see there's a lot of politics in this, of why people wanted to, and didn't want to, and stuff like that.

So when we moved back into it, we started doing things. There were a lot of people who really mad, never did understand why they were mad about it, and they were carpenter members. I don't know where it came from. And then there were older people

who were really glad to see it again. And for the most part, it was pretty much positive. You know, I think the county was happy that it didn't look all boarded up and things anymore. And the unions started using it. So there was a place where people actually were getting together.

[01:24:33]

The only other place like that was the Teamsters down there, and the plumbers and the Teamsters. And I think the electricians at the time were in that building down on Harrison. But, you know, the unions are nowhere near as strong as it was, but there's still that core there. And if we can kick some people in the rear end, and stay away from the International, it'd be nice. Because basically the International hurt Butte really bad, and they hurt the state too. I mean, even, you know, even little pockets of union is something. If you eliminate those little organizations where maybe you only have five people, then you got nothing. You got no connection. And they're not smart enough to think that, they think they think like corporations still.

GRANT: Yeah. Having torn out a bunch of lathe and plaster myself in that building now, I'm just, I'm curious to hear about the nights and weekends when you guys started in on working.

DENNEHY: Oh god.

GRANT: Was it fun?

DENNEHY: Well, actually I enjoyed it. And it was probably a max of 12 who helped, but concentrated mostly about five people, who actually did the majority of the work. And once people started seeing that it was going to happen, because people go - that'll never happen, it will never happen - but once they started doing it and they started meeting and things started changing, then the attitude changed quite a bit. And most of it, you know, as far as I think most people enjoyed the work. I'm sure they weren't exactly thrilled with a lot of it, especially the pigeon stuff. We spent, oh God, we spent a long time. You know, I'm not sure what it looked like with you, but you you'd see a window, busted window, right up to the busted window is the bird stuff, you know? And then, you know, after we did all the cleaning, then I start reading about all the dangers of the birds.

But that was, that was probably the worst of it, as far as doing it, is cleaning that up. And we started cleaning it up. We probably spent probably about three, four weeks cleaning that stuff up. And then we sort of let it go and concentrated more on getting the downstairs. And looking at a possibility of going up. And at that time, it was Mike Boysza and Miles Maloney. They brought the idea of an elevator. And that's not the one that was over at Montana Tech. This is another one. And it would have cost, I think it was somewhere between seven and \$10,000 to get it all together and erect it and everything else. And that got voted down, which, you know, hindsight was another stupid vote by people. But people - oh, we don't want to spend the money and then, you know. Because boy, if it had an elevator -

GRANT: We sure could have used that, hauling all our material.

[01:27:36]

DENNEHY: Honest to God, you know.

GRANT: We'll get there one day.

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. I mean, it's amazing what you guys have done, you know? I remember it. But it's a good place, you know, and I think all organizations have to have a place like that, you know. You can't have it sparred and separated. You've got to have a place to go to, to at least be able to talk to somebody else, and stuff like that. Which is again, what we're losing in this country because, unions are a community within themselves, you know? And if you're in the union long enough and you're doing union jobs, you usually talk union and you forget that there's a whole world out there that's not.

GRANT: Yeah. In my mind, the carpenter's hall has been a metaphor for maybe, for the union mentality in general. That when I first arrived in Butte, six years ago, it was just complete disarray upstairs, you know. But now it's closer to being this place where people can congregate. And maybe that could translate to, you know, more unionism or just activism, or I don't know. I mean, I don't know if I'm off base there.

[01:28:50]

DENNEHY: No, see, I don't think you are. It's - people have to be educated. And you get certain functions where you get people going and, you know, even a dance or a party, or just something along the lines to where at least they're meeting. Because one of the problems is - is the unions is, they're poor at organizing anymore. I mean, they, you know, organizing was what, you know, brought the unions together. And there's a long, hard fought battle and people don't realize that even in Butte, for 20 years, they outlawed the unions. And people don't understand that. Again, most people don't understand history to begin with it. So it's a buildup process. And you got to talk to people and you got to bring them in and you got to educate them. And that's a tough thing to do anymore because you don't have that sense of community and things where people used to just sort of show up, to see what was going on, where you could talk to them a little bit.

So, that really needs to be done in this country. It needs - not just unions, but politics, everything. People have to be educated on what they're doing. Stupidity is very rampant in this country. I mean, it's actually shocking. I mean, I watched the Trump thing in Dallas. Watched him speak. 20,000 people show up. I'm thinking, oh my God. And he's, you know, it's just like, wow.

GRANT: Well, I'm hoping you can educate me a bit. I do want to get into the legal fight. But if we could recap on that timeline. So you became business agent, you said in '80?

DENNEHY: It was '84.

GRANT: '84, okay.

DENNEHY: Yeah, it was 11 years and I was out in '96, I think it was. Yeah, give or take.

GRANT: And so the lawsuit, can you give us a...

DENNEHY: The lawsuit? Let's see, when they combined the locals, that's when the lawsuit started is, and basically the International just says, 'we're taking it'. And that's what they did with all the ones across the country.

GRANT: Taking the building, taking the money?

DENNEHY: Just taking it, and very little fight. But, you know, few people realize that number one, they never did own the building. They never put a dime into it. You know, they had no right to own it, but if the officers of the union sign it over, and that's how they usually did it, is they say, 'we're going to take your charter and we want you to sign it over'.

So, they the officers of the union had to sign, in order for anybody to take it.

GRANT: That was you at the time?

DENNEHY: No. I was out of business agent. I was back East.

GRANT: So then Larry Mayo.

DENNEHY: Well, Larry Mayo didn't have the authority to. Because at the time, he was no longer the business agent of 112. Because 112, from the union point of view, no longer existed. But the carpenters union 112 that owned the building, did.

GRANT: Sure.

DENNEHY: Because it's a state, you know, it's a state corporation. As an officer, when I was a business agent, I was a business agent and the recording secretary, both jobs. I'm not sure what he was when he did it, but I know he signed some things, but it wasn't - there had to be, the trustees had to sign. And I think the trustees and the recording secretary, or the treasurer, but they all had to sign. And they all didn't sign. You know, he signed. And so the International just thought, well, we'll just walk in, just like we did every place else.

[01:32:46]

It was Mike and got a couple other people, about five or six. They started taking stuff out of the hall. In fact, they took a lot of records out, that are gone. And that's really bullshit because, you know, they're not going to keep those records. They probably went to the files in the garbage. So it stopped there. And then the lawsuit was filed to stop the International from taking over. And so the International, you know, got their feathers up and sent a couple of very expensive lawyers up here. And so the battle just went back and forth there. But the International had no, they didn't have a basis to stand on, because legally the corporation existed, the corporation owned the building. It was not part of the union. Outside of the fact that the union members were members

of the corporation. And that's eventually - they kept holding it off and bringing meetings and shipping things up. And it's a good thing that the guys here stuck with it, you know. If they had given any kind of, you know, well, okay, we'll give in kind of thing - they would have been able to take it. But they did take the money.

GRANT: Right.

[01:34:13]

DENNEHY: And that's - which is another - a lot of people say we should have fought for the money too. The thing about it is, you know, yeah, the money was actually 112's, but it would have been a long drawn out process. It would have been more expensive for us because they got more money than they know what to do with. So in the long run, they got the building and some money, wasn't a lot. I mean, you know, comparatively, it wasn't a lot. So this is the first big win in the country. No other union has ever been able to do that because the International uses that - we own the charter attitude.

And that's the biggest thing that they fought on. They didn't care about that building. They would have gave it away for \$60,000. But it was the impression, you know, that, and we don't own, they do not own the buildings and they don't own any of them. Except for the ones in California. International only owned their own buildings. Everybody else is owned by the corporation.

But they've destroyed and took - they took everybody's in the state now, I think. In fact, yeah, I know they did. So basically that's it, that was the one that's left. They not only, I mean, they hurt the union here in Butte, more than - I mean, the building itself, and I'm sure glad it was saved - but they hurt the union movement, you know. They don't want small union owners, which is insane. I mean, that's sort of been always our strength because the small guys got bigger and they got bigger. They stayed union. Or they were subcontractors and they were union. But their sense of unionism is not a true sense of unionism.

GRANT: How do you define one?

[01:36:15]

DENNEHY: Well, unionism is basically people getting together and having a right to negotiate their safety on the job, their wages and their benefits, when they're working with somebody. They're an entity of people who work, without killing the contract or anything else like that. But they have a right to negotiate a fair and decent wage. And most people don't think of that as - because the International wants to control, they look at the top things. To them, just signing an agreement means they're union. And to me that's not true. When I was a business agent, nobody had a special agreement. It was one contract, one contract only. And it didn't make a difference whether you were a roofer or you're building the water treatment plant - same contract, same wages. There was no difference. And that way, everybody's equal. And everybody knows what to bid. But the International have signed, well, the ones who did the Northwestern Energy building, they're a non-union company, they were a non-union company.

But they signed a chickenshit deal to - one time only - and did not enforce the subcontractor's clause, which we had is - you sign a contract, everybody underneath doing carpentry works the same contract.

GRANT: Yeah.

DENNEHY: So, basically they had a few people who were union doing that big job. Most of 'em non-union. And when that job was done, that's a non-union company again. So they'll bid another job and they'll have to sign another agreement. And I never ever signed one job agreements, ever. It's you sign the agreement, the term of the agreement, and usually we had a three-year contract. For three years. So you come back here, you still do the contract. So, you know, and it was beneficial. I mean, it's even beneficial to the contractors, because everybody that bids a job knows what they got to pay. And, you know, few people realize that the wages on jobs roughly is anywhere from 14 to 24% of the job. You know, it's not 50% of the job. It's not 60% of the job. And if you pay people decent wages, you're going to get good people, you know. And you want good people know what they're doing. You don't want guys who just bought a tape and a hammer and call themselves carpenter. We had a lot of those.

So you know, it always, it benefited them. And there were a lot of contractors that, you know, when they first came here, they yelled and moaned and everything else. But once they signed the contract and they got the people, and most of the carpenters we had were good people. They all went through, most of them went through apprenticeship training. They knew what their crafts were, and even the ones who didn't go through taught themselves and learned very well. And so they always got good people, you know? So it wasn't like - and everybody says, 'well, you can't fire a union'. I never required anybody to keep anybody, but you're not going to fire him for any other reason that, you know, you don't like his craft, you know?

[01:39:46]

And so, that was always, and so, most of the carpenter work done around here, they've been pretty good and we had some great craftsman. And that's being lost, sadly, but it's being lost all over the country.

GRANT: So it was probably '95, '96 when you moved out to DC?

DENNEHY: Right.

GRANT: And so the lawsuit had begun there?

DENNEHY: No the lawsuit began later.

GRANT: Right. Okay.

DENNEHY: Because about two years after is when the International came in and consolidated the unions in the state. It was sort of a long alarm, between the, you know, they were sort of diddling around on it and everything like that. The lawsuit began in 90, not sure, I think it was '92, but I'd have to go back and check.

GRANT: And you were still in touch with people here? And kind of keeping track?

DENNEHY: Yeah, they'd send me documents and things like that. And I'd be talking to them and discussing everything going and stuff like that. It was actually an interesting win for me, for them actually, I got to give it to them. I wasn't there. But to beat the International, after the International beat them, that's quite a nice win.

GRANT: Definitely. Yeah. So I brought in some documents because working in the building, you know, I've been really curious about it. So I went to the courthouse and I requested the whole case file. Cost me like a hundred bucks.

DENNEHY: Oh, you should have asked me, I had it.

GRANT: I know yeah. But I was happy to pay it because I was so curious just to know about the history of the building. And I thought maybe it would pertain to the security of our radio station. I don't know what, if anything was outstanding, you know, from the lawsuit. But anyway, so it looks like it dragged on all the way into 2013?

DENNEHY: Oh, yeah.

GRANT: Which I didn't realize. So it had said here, you know, that there was a mediation, that the Honorable John L. Peterson - you know, if you look at the case file, it's very contentious. Then, you know, towards the end, they're going to schedule a jury trial, and then the jury trial is held off, and then there's a joint motion to dismiss.

DENNEHY: Yeah.

GRANT: So there's no indication, in here really, of the negotiations that took place outside of court. And that's what I'm curious if you have any, if you have any info on it.

[01:42:25]

DENNEHY: Now, from what I understand is, the judge, and I think it was Krueger at the time.

GRANT: Yeah, Krueger.

DENNEHY: Krueger informed them, their side, they didn't really have a case. You know, basically it was, he wasn't forcing them, but he let them know that they were on very thin ice, if they took this to court.

GRANT: Okay.

DENNEHY: And jury trial would have went totally against them, even if they were in the right.

GRANT: In Butte?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. And they knew that. They knew that, and that's why I think they prolonged it. They were trying to beat it down. They figured, well, they couldn't afford a lawyer, stuff like that. But it got to the point where, okay, we're going to go to jury trial. And I think Krueger called them in, by themselves. Then he called -

[01:43:29]

GRANT: Wayne Harper -

DENNEHY: Harper, yeah, and they negotiated, at that point. But they knew that the International knew there was no way that they were going to win. I mean, even if it wasn't a jury trial, it was a real iffy thing anyway, you know? And so they negotiated with each other. And he brought back the thing to the guys, you know, this is what we're proposing, you know, accept it or not, and stuff like that. And the money issue was a big, big deal. But everybody says, 'well, you know, it's time to be done. We won it, it's time to go'.

GRANT: And Boysza was involved in all this.

DENNEHY: Yeah. Mike was really involved in it. Miles was there. There was a couple other people that I forget, Bentley's...and there was a lot of support from the members to do it, who actually supported them. And people gave money and stuff like that to do it. It's a nice little win, it won't get much coverage. They don't want much coverage, but that's gotta be, I would guess, I don't know about all the other unions across the country, but in the carpenters union, it's the first time the members are able to keep their own building.

GRANT: Wow. I'm so glad for that. I got to say, you know, now as we look at getting the heating installed upstairs and the rest of the plumbing and just, you know, the cost of these systems that have to be licensed trades that install them, we need money, you know, once again to fix the hall. And so when I looked at this document here, that it shows you at the end, the stipulated settlement, that \$46,303 goes to the Pacific Northwest regional council - I was like, dammit, there's the money we needed, right there.

DENNEHY: Absolutely.

GRANT: But that was just part of the arrangement, just to be done with it?

[01:45:39]

DENNEHY: Yeah. And it's one of those things, I mean, they did a waiting game cause they figured, you know, they're mad now, but how long is the lawyer going to hold it? How long is this? And I think they thought they were just going to hold out to the end and finally, they were just going to get it. But it had reached the point to where, you know, even on this side, and I know a couple of people didn't agree with this settlement, but, from my point of view, you're better off, you got the building, you actually won. Yeah, they took some money on us, son of a gun, but if it went on too long, it would have been that chance of losing, you know? Cause it, you know, as people grow older, they're doing things. Some of the one's who really supported it,

might've moved away. It's stuff like that. So it wasn't a bad settlement. All in all, they got the building and that's important, and the building's surviving. You know, you guys are doing an excellent job on that son of a gun.

GRANT: First thing we did was the roof.

DENNEHY: Yeah, jeez, what the hell, how old was that roof? Jeez, maybe it was 20, 25, 30 years old, I think.

GRANT: It was getting there.

DENNEHY: Yeah, it really was. I remember that - Walsh, and an outfit by the name of Thomas' - they subcontracted to Thomas' - did that. Yeah.

GRANT: K and K did it this time around.

DENNEHY: Oh, ok.

GRANT: Yeah, whatever.

DENNEHY: As long as it don't leak. It was leaking like crazy.

GRANT: Oh yeah.

DENNEHY: First time I was up there, it snowed, and it was melting. And third floor was just pouring all the way down to the second floor. But it was just pouring up there. And I never thought we'd ever get it, but yeah, you keep working at it.

GRANT: Well, they'll probably be some young kid after me, too. Well, just had a couple more thoughts here, before we wrap up. Really appreciate your time today. You know, not having grown up in Butte, I didn't see the Penny's fire. Didn't see the Medical Arts Building fire, you know. But as we work on the carpenter's hall, I'm aware of the work that went into build this building, you know, in 1906. Just amazing, the feat, you know, of building it.

And then, you know, the maintenance throughout the decades, I mean, more than a century now. And just keeping it up. And so, you know, so many people have poured so much energy and time and money into the building. And so I think about that, you know, there were people who cared about those other buildings that burned.

DENNEHY: Oh yeah.

GRANT: And that makes it that much more tragic, you know?

[01:48:33]

DENNEHY: Yeah, if you grew up in Butte, you do have a sense a loss, you know. And it, it's everything, the loss. Just Uptown, I mean there was three theaters up here when I was a kid, you know. And they were large theaters, you know. And they were

active and we went to them, and stuff like that. They're not there anymore. There's actually no theater, in what you call Uptown, as far as a movie theater, you know? So yeah, sense of loss is interesting cause it affects the socialness, the consciousness of Butte, and how people relate to each other, what they think about the town. Memories, nostalgia is a real great thing.

You know, people talk about the - when was this, and what was that, stuff like that. And I think it's, I think Butte's probably really unique that way, in how much was lost in like a generation, you know. I look at my generation, and my generation is the last that saw all this. We're the last that saw the Uptown, played in the Gardens, worked in the mines, things like that. So it's gonna be interesting cause we're slowly dying off, you know. We get people here and there, you know. And when we're gone, the memories will be gone too. I mean, the pictures will be there and people look at them, but nobody will remember what it was like - to go to the dance where the Miners Union Hall over there, or all the things that happened - the parades in the Uptown. Then the great restaurants. Jeez, we used to have - my wife's from New York and she goes, 'there's nothing to eat around here'. I says, 'oh sure there is'. I says, 'no, I agree with you'. But we used to have some really fantastic restaurants. And we have a few decent ones, but no comparison. Yeah, it's the sense of loss. And it affects everything, you know, politics, how you feel about things, what you want to see for Butte, what you'd like to see for Butte, and what you think you're going to see for Butte.

[01:51:02]

They're really tearing the hell out of that East Ridge. And if you notice, they're getting pretty close to that highway, you know, they're getting closer and closer. Now, when I was working for the Montana Power, the geologists were still there in the Thornton building. They said that it was the East Ridge going south, is where the ore was. He says that's, that's where they did all those tests, they did a whole bunch of testing, about three years before we moved in there. And I'm thinking, well, if they're going to go south, there's a highway they got to move. Yeah. So it's interesting, because they can only go so far now east, then they're starting to go onto the highway. You can actually see it. So it's going to be interesting to see where they go, what direction they go now.

GRANT: I wanted to ask about your civic involvement. You know, you're back in town and right away, you're president of the Butte Historical Society.

DENNEHY: Well, that was later. What I wanted to do was, Centerville has sorta been, let go. You know, it's one of those areas they don't watch very much. We don't get things, plowed, things are falling down. So I thought, well, you know, I'd like to - there's that area where they put the rink up there. And so it was my idea to have a park there. So, I went and got, did a thing for SARTA. We got \$20,000. So we've been having meetings. We've been having get togethers, fundraisers and stuff like that. We got a committee of six. And we've been, you know, we got the concrete poured around. We did a walkway, we put benches up there. We're going to put a flagpole up there. We're going to put a sign and we were going to do a whole bunch of other stuff. In my original plans was, we're going to make that a nice park, where kids could play basketball in the summer, skating in the winter. We were going to have a brick memo-

rial. And we're still going to have the brick memorial, but we can't have it there anymore.

So we were doing this for about 18 months. And then, I got a call one day - well, I turned in a report. I says, 'we're going to start construction tomorrow'. And I get a call, and they want a meeting. And I meet with the planning board and three or four other organizations. And they say, 'you can't have a park up there'. And I says, 'what do you mean? You can't have a park?' 'You don't have any parking'. And it was sort of a blow and it was sort of, for me it was a chickenshit blow, cause I think what happened is they didn't expect us to get the money for that. Because we have to have the money first and then they reimburse us.

GRANT: Right.

DENNEHY: So we got the money, because we hadn't done anything with the park yet because we were doing the funding and everything. So the day that I submitted the report that we're going to start construction the next day, I get a call within 15 minutes saying they want a meeting. And at the meeting, Lori Casey, JP Gallagher, Eric Hasler says we can't have a park up there. And it's sort of like, what do you mean? We do this for 18 months and you tell us we can't have it now?

I'm still confused as to why that even come about. Because we've had a sign up there that says future home of Centerville Park. It's been there for a year and a half. So they told us we can't have a park. And I was going to do the history of Centerville in signs, sorta like you see on the paths. Only it was going to be around the rink. So there's people walking around the rink, I'd do the minds. And I'd do the ethnic groups, and the sports, stuff like that. And we can't do that. So now we got a park, but we can't do a lot with it outside of what we've done now. We're going to put a flagpole up there next week. And I got a sign that I'm going to put up there, but that's about all we can do with it.

[01:55:11]

Which really surprised me, because before I even started this project, I went to every one of those people and told them when I was going to do it.

GRANT: What the hell happened?

DENNEHY: See, it's that - I don't know exactly what happened. I could guess that people don't want certain places, progressive, you know. Nice, neat. I mean, if you're ever up on Center Street, the Centerville Fire Hall, right before the Centerville Fire Hall, the wall's caving in. And they got these Jersey barriers that they just put up after we complained about it. But the wall's caving in, and the road's caving, and nobody's doing nothing about it. And I mean, it's a danger to kids, or anything else. The Centerville Fire Hall, but for 10 years, they started doing remodeling on it, and they stopped it. It's never been completed in 10 years. We got a walkway up there, on East Center, that's a wooden walkway, that's actually quite dangerous. Nobody wants to address that. We don't have, if you look up above Bennett Street, there's a sidewalk all the way up past the St. Lawrence, you can go on into Walkerville. But once it hits past Bennett, we don't have a sidewalk. We don't have a sidewalk all the way down on the

left. There's one starting on the right, on Center Street. So people walk down the center of Main, because we don't have a sidewalk, you know. And they're not really interested in putting a sidewalk up there, which I find interesting because Main is a thoroughfare. So most tourists, they hit the Uptown area. They might hit Tech. They go up and see the mines. They'll go up and see the Speculator-Granite, you know, up to the Alice. So a lot of people travel that way, and a lot of people walk. Sorry.

GRANT: No problem.

DENNEHY: A lot of people walk up there. So it's like, why no sidewalks? So there's little things like that, but the thing with the park is just like, I don't understand.

GRANT: So you can't have a park because people can't park their car there?

DENNEHY: Yeah.

GRANT: They can't park on Main?

DENNEHY: Well, I mean, they could park around the park. We were going to have it to where, and realistically it probably a dozen parks around here where they don't have any parking.

GRANT: Yeah. What the hell.

[01:57:54]

DENNEHY: So it's, why there? Why Centerville? Why here? Because to me it's sort of an obvious place to make nice.

GRANT: Habitat agrees, I think.

DENNEHY: Yeah. I don't know. It's one of those things that caught us by surprise, and a little pissed off about it. So we moved the brick thing, we're going to move it up by the Con mine, which is, you know, a little bit better place to put it, I think anyway. But we're sort of at a standstill, you know, to where to go, because things like this, when they do that, without any real understanding of what the hell happened or why it happened, you don't know. So it's like, we don't even know who to fight. So, I mean, we still got our committee and we're still gonna keep going with what we got and try and do improvements as we go. But, you know, that was the big one.

GRANT: Can I still come and ice skate there?

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. I mean it's perfect for ice skating. Now at least you got a bench, you could take off your shoes. So we did that, you know. And it looks a lot better than when we started. So that's a plus there. And as soon as I get that sign up, put a new sign up there, basically it'll just say Centerville, you know, a town at the crest of the Richest Hill on Earth. 1866. Because that's the first actual recording of people in Centerville.

GRANT: Oh that's cool.

DENNEHY: And then I'll have pictures of some of the old buildings and things like that that were up here, you know. It'll look all right, but it's still, I'm still mad.

GRANT: Oh, I understand. Well, what about the historical society and the AOH, and your involvement there?

[01:59:46]

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. Well actually I was a charter member of the AOH in '86. I was here in '86. So we started it here. The AOH, Hibernian, was actually up in Centerville, had two organizations at AOH up there in Hibernia Hall. And so when they started it again, we started it, I think there was 18 of us. And so we started again and I maintained a membership, even as I went back East. I always paid my dues. And then when they came back here, people like Joe Lee and Phil Tally, and a few of these other people, really got people involved in it. It's actually, it's surprising - we're over about 115 now, which is, you know, amazing. Cause we started at 18, I think we got to 33, and we were doing all right. But not as good as they're doing now. So it's a very good, active organization. They've totally done a great job out there at the St. Pat cemetery. I can't take any credit for that cause I wasn't here. You know, the bowls, the what's the name bowls? They volunteer for that. They volunteer for the cleaning. They're very active in the community, which is what you need, if you're going to have an organization, is the activity on it.

They're all supportive. They donate quite a bit of money on it. So it's actually a real good organization. And we usually get anywhere from like 25 to 32 people at a meeting, which is phenomenal in this day and age.

GRANT: Yeah. I see you guys all piling into the hall, you know.

DENNEHY: In our bright green shirts and stuff. And it's a good one, we meet once a month and stuff like that. And then, the Butte Historical Society, Reno Parker, who was a member there, whose wife was a member of our board up in Centerville, asked if I wanted to join. I said, sure. And I didn't know a lot about it. So I joined in a little bit and it's sort of been in a lull for years, you know, and God, it used to be quite big. I mean, basically the reason this place exists, the reason the World Museum of Mining exists, was the Butte Historical Society. It was all the people, and there were all kinds of, and a lot of them are dead now, but they were really active in it.

I mean, we used to have a quarterly magazine, you know, and things like that. We had a printing press over there. So it was very active and they did a lot of good and they were instrumental in the CPR organization. Because the guy who ran that was also part of this, the Butte Historical Society.

[02:02:37]

So we're sort of at a growing stage now. The essay contest I started, the essay contest is just to get things moving. And we actually got quite a bit of interest in it. And it come out good, and there were some really good writings. And then we're going to do

the high school and we're going to keep that going.

But we're also going to do, you know, I'm going to give a class on how to do research for history. It's amazing how much false information is out there, you know? And, basically it's, what person thinks, okay, I'll say this. And then one person reads his and then reads hers, and then reads...So you've got 15 people all getting it wrong. So, we're going to give, and we're going to try and sort of continuously give classes like that, sort of in connection with the writing too. Sort of feed them both, you know, and stuff like. And so that people can actually do research, and doing historical research is monotonous and time consuming.

So they got to learn that first. And if they learn it right, and they can jump around and what not to listen to, what not to print, or at least verify, you know. It's funny, it's like the chamber of commerce says the Mountain Con mine starting one year. The sign up the mine has another one, starting another year. We got a booklet that has the Con mine that started another yea, and all three are wrong. So there's all kinds of things like that. So we thought we'd do that to get people interested in it. We're contemplating now is, I wanted to do something to make Uptown Butte look a little better. And one of my ideas, and we're kicking it around now, is putting a little Chinese garden right across from the Mai Wah. Cause there's a lot there. It's not a pretty lot, it's a county owned lot. But you know, Japanese gazebo. Just something to make it a little more look like a Chinatown, than the one building. And so that's an idea we're kicking around and -

GRANT: You can't have that without parking. Sorry.

DENNEHY: Oh jeez. So that's one other one. And I told you one about the fame and shame thing. People are leery of that. It's funny, they're afraid we're going to make people mad and stuff. And sort of, that's sort of the point, I think anyway. Is embarrass them enough to just do something with their buildings. They don't have to do a lot, but you know, like that building on the corner of the O'Rourke building there. You know, the guy did all right, cleaning up the outside. But there's that doorway there, it's a beautiful doorway, but it's falling apart. And if they don't put some kind of preservative over it, which would take about two hours, it's gonna be gone, you know?

GRANT: Oh and the Exerdance. That's a shame.

DENNEHY: Oh, the Exerdance is a million dollars. I mean, he's never done nothing with it. Yeah. And that was really, it was Hall, I think. A woman by the name of Hall. She bought that in, oh God, it was about -

GRANT: Ristine?

DENNEHY: Yeah. Ristine Hall. And, she bought it and she had dances and there was all kinds of things in there. And it was going pretty good, and then, I don't know how long it's been closed. It was closed when I was back over there. But nobody wants it. Other places you go across this country, people really maintaining their old buildings, and it's economically beneficial.

GRANT: Yes.

DENNEHY: You know, people are wanting to open restaurants. They want to have hotels or apartments. And a few people are doing that. But there's a lot of buildings that are just sort of like, let go around here. And there's no reason for it. So that's one of the things we're going to kick in and see what we can do.

GRANT: Great.

DENNEHY: Hopefully. You know, it's tough getting people into the organization cause there's, you got the Butte Archives, you got the CPRs, and you've got the World Museum of Mining, and people say, 'well, there's already too many organizations'. And you know, and I'm very careful of that when I come in, cause the things that I'm doing is -I'm not going to repeat anything anybody else is doing. And I want to work with them, you know? So like, we got donated, from 1927 to 1952, all the Anaconda Company financial records.

GRANT: Wow.

DENNEHY: This outfit out of North Carolina sent them to us because we're the historical society. And they says, we found them here. You guys could probably do something with them. So we took them, and we don't have a building, which I'd love to see us have, but maybe down the road. So we donated them to -

GRANT: To the archives.

DENNEHY: To the archives. And we got some China, some beautiful old China, that got donated to us. 12 pieces, just real nice, an outfit by the name of Heinz and Fairfield. A jewelry store that was in 1888 to 1902, here in Butte. And has Butte, Montana on it. And they were, they're sort of gold plated, real nice dishes. We got those donated, and eventually I think I'm going to put them in the Arts Chateau.

GRANT: Nice.

[02:08:16]

DENNEHY: You know, put them up there. So, you know, working with these people, if we can keep, cause there's a lot of people compete, sometimes. They think that, you know, people are stepping on toes or something. And we don't want that, and I'm very conscious of not doing it. So that's where I'm going with that.

GRANT: That sounds like...

DENNEHY: It's a slow process.

GRANT: It sounds like good leadership though. And I'm in support of fame and shame, by the way.

DENNEHY: I think that'd be perfect.

GRANT: You gotta do something for these negligent building owners in Butte. Well, Paddy I really appreciate your time today. Is there anything else you wanted to add before we finish up?

DENNEHY: Geez, no. Uh, not that I can think of. I'll probably think of a lot going up the Hill, but you know.

GRANT: It's hard to encapsulate a life in two hours. We got a glimpse today though.

DENNEHY: Oh yeah. Yeah.

GRANT: Well, thank you for that.

DENNEHY: You bet.

GRANT: And you'll have to let me know when these classes on research are taking place, because I need some help myself. Yeah, I would love to attend that.

[END OF RECORDING]