



VERDIGRIS PROJECT

KBMF & BUTTE-SILVER BOW ARCHIVES

PAT MOHAN

The Verdigris Project

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Oral History Transcript of Pat Mohan

Interviewers: Clark Grant & Aubrey Jaap

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[00:03:33]

Aubrey Jaap: Ok. It's November 9th, 2018. We're here with Patrick Mohan. Pat, I'd like you to start off a little and tell me a little bit of your family background, so talk a little bit about your parents to start with.

Pat Mohan: Ok. The parents on my mother's side are Swiss-Italian and they were born in - my grandfather and grandmother were born in Locarno, Italy, right on the Swiss/Italian border. He immigrated to the United States when he was about sixteen. He hit Butte when he was about 18 and he went into the tinker, you know, the repair of the pots and pans, and he was a mason. There's some of his works still in Boulder City Hall. And then he became the tinner. And of course, he went back and got his future bride and brought her back to the United States,

Jaap: So he left her in Italy and then came back for her?

Mohan: Mmm hmm. Then on my dad's side he was . . . Well, my brother and I actually talked about it a lot of times and we thought we'd won the lottery because he was born and we were born in the United States because my father was an illegal immigrant from Ireland, and the British wanted him because he was a member of the IRA. Irish Republican Army.

Jaap: Talk more about this.

Mohan: What the conflict?

Jaap: About your father? Ok, I didn't know that.

Mohan: You asked the question.

Jaap: So, your father came here illegally?

Mohan: He came down through Canada.

Jaap: How old was he when he came here?

Mohan: He was in the conflict in the 1917 Easter Rebellion. So it was years after that.

Jaap: What was his role in that Easter rebellion?

Mohan: He was a member of the Irish Republican Army and he was a second lieutenant.

Jaap: Did he talk about that ever to you?

Mohan: Mm. He did a few times.

Jaap: Do you have any stories to share about that?

Mohan: He was in prison. He escaped. Sometimes he got amnesty. He was wounded about 13 times. He was in a lot of little conflicts over there.

Jaap: That's really interesting because they killed so many people that were imprisoned over there

Mohan: Yeah, him and his brothers had to leave. Yeah. Rather quickly.

Jaap: Oh, that's fascinating. Hmm. Okay. So and then he came to America.

Mohan: Came and settled around New York and then depression, he rode the rails, ended up in Butte because of the mining and stuff like that. So he was a miner, and he retired when he was about 70 from the Company. He was a hoist engineer. Okay. And he finally got his birth certificate that said he was born in 1900.

Jaap: Oh, interesting. So when did your dad meet your mother?

Mohan: Here in Butte. And he was never nationalized because he was, you know, his background. So he was married in 1939 to my mother. And then in 1940, he was nationalized. And my grandfather was in 1894 when he was nationalized.

Jaap: By that time, did he have any problems being naturalized here?

Mohan: No, just certain people wouldn't okay it. He had to get other Irishmen to, you know, to witness and do all their stuff. His paperwork's here.

Jaap: Is it here? And what was your father's name?

Mohan: Peter, Peter Mohan.

Jaap: And your mother's name?

Mohan: Carina Rose Canonica.

Jaap: So your mother's the Canonica. Well, I think that's really interesting about your dad. Yeah, I had no idea. Hmm. All right. All right. So they were married in 1939. Mm hmm. When were you born?

Mohan: I was born in 1948.

Jaap: Do you have any siblings?

Mohan: I have one sister that was, Peg or Margaret named after my dad's mother and I was named after my dad's father and my brother, Peter, was named after my father.

Jaap: Are you the baby?

Mohan: Yep.

Jaap: OK. All right. So your mother's a Canonica? Can you tell me a little bit about your mother's background?

Mohan: Well, she grew up, of course, at the Tin Shop. And as the family developed, she was a typist and stuff like that, and she worked many jobs here in Butte.

Jaap: Yeah, OK. I worked at the Tin Shop. Do you have any stories to share about the tin shop?

Mohan: The women operated the tin shop at night because they were making the stills for the prohibition?

Jaap: OK? That's interesting, so the women were making them?

Mohan: You know, they worked at night. According to her. Yeah.

Jaap: That's really interesting. Did she ever talk about . . . did they ever get caught making them?

Mohan: No. There's no record of it.

Jaap: No record of it. Good. Oh, interesting. So tell me a little bit about the tin shop. What do you know about it? When was the Tin Shop started?

Mohan: It started in the early 1900s. My grandfather learned the trade and then eventually he moved in to just the storefront. And there was a wooden structure behind it where they lived. And then as the opportunities and the economic conditions developed, they tore it down, the wooden structure and put in the remainder back to the building. You know where they had living and then upstairs, where they had the ladies of the night - a brothel. And it was subcontracted out by Mrs. Olson and her husband.

Jaap: So your family contracted it out to them for the brothel?

Mohan: Right.

Jaap: Oh, interesting. OK, interesting. So, Pat, you were born in 1948, you said. And where was your family home?

Mohan: Well, actually, it was in Avon, Montana, because I was born in Deer Lodge outside the walls.

Jaap: OK, it's better than inside the wall, right?

Mohan: And there was a family ranch. And then eventually we went to Basin and he was the owner of a bar. And it's pretty, you know, owner of the bar, but he was an alcoholic. And then we moved back to Butte and stayed here ever since.

Jaap: OK, so your family had a ranch in Deer Lodge?

Mohan: Avon. Outside of Deer Lodge.

Jaap: OK, so did your dad run that ranch then?

Mohan: Yes, he did.

Jaap: Interesting. OK.

Mohan: And then he was a farmer, actually in Ireland as a young lad.

Jaap: Hmm. And then how old were you when you came back to Butte, then?

Mohan: I was in preschool.

Jaap: Oh, so you were young still. So this was all when you were really young that you were moving around? OK, then where did your family move? Did you have a family home here?

Mohan: Well, the family home was 308 North Arizona, that was up the hill from the Tin Shop.

Jaap: And the Tin Shop is what block?

Mohan: 108 Arizona.

Jaap: So you grew up right next to the tin shop?

Mohan: Well, blocks away.

Jaap: OK. Where did you go to school?

Mohan: Sacred Heart Elementary School till the eighth grade, and then I went to Boys' Central 62 to 66. And received a social promotion out of there. [laughs] No, and then Tech for a couple of years, then University of Montana, graduated from there twice, once in education and in administration.

Jaap: OK, interesting. What did you do as a kid? Did you spend a lot of time in the tin shop?

Mohan: Not really, no. No. We just ran around the hills and the ore dumps and all kinds of other games. And it was right on the border of our house, was right on the border of St. Mary's and Sacred Heart. So we had an interchange back and forth

Jaap: An interchange? That's what you called it?

Mohan: Well, a few conflicts.

Jaap: Can you tell me about those conflicts?

Mohan: Well, just neighborhood fights and stuff. And always remained friends back in those days. Nowadays, it's not like that.

Jaap: OK, so what did you do after you went to the University of Montana?

Mohan: Well, my graduation from the University of Montana, I was at Fort Polk, Louisiana. In the army for basic training. And then did AIT. It was in the infantry and I was a member of the Montana National Guard. And just about volunteered for everything and went through all the army schools, NCO, OCS. Became an officer, decided I wanted to . . . I used to have a dream of flying airplanes. I couldn't because of my eyesight, so I eventually ended up jumping out of them.

Jaap: Did you? Is that what prompted you to join the military was this desire to fly?

Mohan: Kind of. I had an idea, but I couldn't pass the eye test. I joined the guard and then in the guard, you could join the Green Berets out of Missoula, so we joined them. My brother was in the regular army and he went through with the Airborne Ranger School, Vietnam. And then he was in Germany. And when he was rifted out, I talked him into joining the guard. So we served together and jumped together.

Jaap: Oh, did you? You shared that picture with us. Was it last week, of you and your brother? So where was that picture?

Mohan: It was in Missoula, Montana. Yeah. Reserve Street was actually Dirt Street back then. It wasn't like it is today, and the army was right where the center is on Reserve, where they're doing the . . . And the golf course didn't exist, so we were able to jump right there at the golf course. Well, I mean the field before the golf course and then we used to jump on Blue Mountain, but Blue Mountain is populated, so.

Jaap: Did you ever think you'd jump out of an airplane, when you were growing up?

Mohan: No, no, no. Nor did I . . . I became a teacher, so. And I did thirty one years as a teacher. And no, I didn't have any idea that I was going to be a teacher. Yeah, I was lucky to get through school.

Jaap: Oh, I doubt that. So you went to the Persian Gulf?

Mohan: Yeah. They disbanded special forces in 1979, something like that. So I was in another unit and we went to Korea a couple of times, Panama a couple of times, Honduras. And then eventually we were activated to go to the Persian Gulf, 91.

Jaap: And what was your role in the Persian Gulf?

Mohan: We were public affairs. When I got out of the special forces, I thought I was going to get out of the dirt and become a, you know, so we were video and newspaper and stuff like that. We were escorts for the regular civilian newspaper and video people and stuff like that.

Jaap: How long were you over there?

[00:16:39]

Mohan: Well, we went in December, landed Christmas Day and then we got out in about April.

Jaap: What did you do after that?

Mohan: Well, I took a vacation. Yeah. Then the school district called me and asked me if I was really going to come back. So I went back to teaching.

Jaap: Okay. Yeah. So you taught before going and then went.

Mohan: Yeah, I was in teaching at Butte High School, and when you get activated, you go.

Jaap: What did you teach at Butte High?

Mohan: I was a special education resource, became a history teacher, world history and my closing was I was a dean of boys at the Alternative High School. I did about thirty-one years and then I did about twenty-one years with the guard, so I retired from the guard too.

Jaap: Did you do work with special education as well?

Mohan: Yes.

Jaap: Yeah. Tell me some about that.

Mohan: They're very interesting. Yeah. And Special Olympics and stuff was just starting and all. We were just basically on the ground floor. They even gave it a degree in mental retardation, which they eventually changed the name and revoked and stuff like that.

Jaap: Yeah, because when you started, were you at a time where it was kind of shifting and it was . . .

Mohan: It was shifting and it was changing because there was a need for it. But it was just a unique experience.

Jaap: Yeah. So I found this article, "Butte's F Troop." You're in here. Yeah. Tell me a little. What is this?

Mohan: Well, you know, as you move up through the ranks, you finish officers' candidate school. Uh. I ended up with the F Troop, and I eventually became the commander of F Troop. We went on various trips down to Boise for a summer camp and stuff like that. Okay.

Jaap: So teaching. When did you meet Judy, your wife?

Mohan: When did I meet Judy? After my first marriage. And I had a few years of doing anything I wanted to do for a while. Swore I'd never get married again. And then I met Judy and it all changed. Yeah, that was 23 years ago.

Jaap: I don't know Judy well, but she seems like a pretty sweet lady.

Mohan: She has to tolerate me.

Jaap: You are very lucky that way that,

Mohan: Yeah, she's got a straight gift to heaven on that one.

Jaap: So how did you meet? Where did you meet?

Mohan: Well, in those days it was in a local bar. And uh, we exchanged names and stuff like that. It went progressively from there.

Jaap: When were you guys married?

Mohan: Twenty-three years ago, on August 6th, I think

Jaap: Judy tells you when.

Mohan: Yeah, I just look at the certificate of whatever, some people call it, marriage.

Jaap: What do other people call it?

Mohan: Institution.

Jaap: Sorry. Let me think where I was going with that. Do you have kids, Pat?

Mohan: Yeah. She had three in the previous marriage. She has eight grandkids. And she's got four great grandkids now, and I had one and I have one grandson.

Jaap: Is that from your previous marriage? Is it a son or a daughter?

Mohan: Kelly is the son and the grandson is Titus.

Jaap: OK, yeah. OK, Pat, let me see what else I have written down here. So you volunteer a lot? So what got you? I mean, because you volunteer for us at the Archives. You volunteer for the mining museum. Correct?

Mohan: Right.

Jaap: You do work with Big Brothers, Big sisters. Don't you know?

Mohan: No. My wife does.

Jaap: And then Butte historical adventures you do.

Mohan: Yeah, I do tours for them.

Jaap: So tell me about some of the things you do. You keep very busy.

Mohan: Well, you never really quit volunteering and you never really quit giving. And if you do, then you're not paying forward. Pass it forward. And I just find it very enjoyable to do all that stuff. Ancient Order Hibernians. We do the cemetery.

Jaap: And AOH. I forgot AOH. And then, so tell me about the cemetery work you guys are doing down there.

Mohan: Well, it started with the fact that nothing was getting done and there was a lot of complaints. So the meeting and the brothers of the Ancient Order of Hibernian took it upon ourselves to go down and do whatever we could and then to find, you know, money, we were selling Herberger books. And that would bring in enough so that we could, you know, buy equipment and stuff like that for it. And then we had to pay for the tree people because you can't really knock down a tree or trim a tree. So all those little neat things.

Jaap: A lot of work and new curbing is going in down there and all that good stuff. Yeah. Yeah. Because that cemetery is in such disrepair

Mohan: Has been, but that is really getting changed. It had water up until 1982, when the pit closed, the water shut off.

Jaap: So did the company provide water?

Mohan: The company provided the water for free. Oh, and then the diocese didn't have any money, so they just shut her down, and it's been a struggle ever since.

Jaap: So how long have you been a member of AOH?

Mohan: About five, six years. I'm a vice president. Yeah.

Jaap: Was your dad a member of AOH?

Mohan: No. He was actually a member of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. Because back in the rift between the Hibernians and when they went out and stuff like that, there was a lot of conflict and a lot of animosity. You know, Irishmen don't fight with other people when they can fight with themselves. So when they run out of that then they start fighting with others.

Jaap: Yeah. [laughs]

Mohan: I'm a member of the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, and it's, you know, you donate, you give your time. That brings me pleasure. And then developing the museum [inaudible] stuff like that. And the Montana History Club actually spends a lot of time there and they spend overnight. So it's going to need to watch all that stuff.

Jaap: Yeah. Yeah, the high school kids go stay in the brothel and yeah. Right. And you own the tin shop, don't you? Now you own that building.

Mohan: Well, I own the building with my sister,

Jaap: With your sister.

Mohan: We turned it into a 501(c)3 so that we could support it and stuff like that.

Jaap: When you're working to try to kind of rehab that building as well, aren't you right now?

Mohan: Yes. Yeah, we have over throughout the years, I made myself a promise and I made my mother a promise. When everybody was passing away. When I got back from the Gulf, my uncles and aunts. I asked her what she wanted, and she said, I want my home. And she lived there. So. You know, it was your home.

Jaap: Yeah. So Tony Canonica, was he your uncle?

Mohan: Oh, Antonio and Anthony. Antonio, my grandfather. But they couldn't pronounce that, so they named him just Tony. And then the last name, Canonica, was unable, so they gave him the nickname Tony, the tinner. That was my grandfather. And then Tony the trader. Same problem. They couldn't pronounce the first name. Last name. They always. That's why all these nicknames in Butte came about. Yeah, So that he became Tony the Trader.

Jaap: Yeah. Do you have a lot of memories of him? Were you?

Mohan: Yeah, I never did meet my grandfather because he passed away in 1948. So Tony was a character in his own mind. Paid a dollar per parade. So that's why everybody went into the parade because in our younger days, that dollar meant more like \$100 now.

Jaap: So, yeah, and he always went in the parade and he always had a bunch of kids with him.

Mohan: Yeah. Myself included. And that was his joy, too.

Jaap: Oh, I bet. Yeah.

Mohan: And he was just Tony, the trader. It became an antique store after the names changed.

Jaap: I've heard some funny stories from, I think, it's the Moyles, you know, they always joke about, I don't know if he ever sold things, you know, they'd go in there and . . .

Mohan: No, he kept a lot of trinkets and stuff, and people had a tough time buying it. Yeah. And if you wanted it, then the price went up.

Jaap: Yeah.

Mohan: And eventually you got thrown out of the place.

Jaap: Yeah, yeah. Interesting. So how has Butte changed? Do you think Pat? Since, you know, since you've been here.

Mohan: Well, the population decreased, of course. The different community centers in different places that you would go like, you'd always go to Charlie Judd's for Halloween and stuff like that. Yeah. And I think the development of the TV set put a lot of people indoors rather than going and being outdoors as kids. We always had different groups and different events that we could go to and you walk the streets without any fear of anything. If you were troubled by an adult, there would usually be another adult to come by and take care of the situation. So you were free to run until the whistle went out and you had to be home. Yeah. So you had all kinds of different varieties of activities that you would do or could do without any fear of anything back then.

Jaap: So you were teaching when the mines closed. Did you notice an effect in the schools at all? Did you see the effect of the impact on the community through the children at all?

Mohan: You could because the population decreased. The jobs and it was tough for them to even have their living in anyway. But the prices weren't as high as they are now. And everybody survived by helping neighbors. You had the neighborhoods and the different community organizations and the churches and stuff like that. Now, it's kind of really tough to get your organization to get enough money to provide for different things for the people.

Jaap: Do you remember when they tore Sacred Heart down?

Mohan: Yes, I do.

Jaap: How did that feel like? Because that would have been really just right up the street from where your home was right?

Mohan: No, it is up from the tin shop, but it was down from my home. I don't know. You served mass in there and stuff like that. It kind of tears you up. And there's no way to correct it or there's no way to stop it because money talks. Yeah. And right now, they didn't really have to tear it down because they didn't, with the company getting kicked out of Chile. That's when the backpedaling started. They could never recover. Thankful, maybe for the community. We're still here. Parts of it. A lot of good memories.

Jaap: It is hard to see, though, where things were torn down. And then, you know, you think it never went that far. There were so many things torn down that didn't need to be.

Mohan: I would say.

[00:30:32]

Jaap: yeah, you know,

Mohan: I wasn't in charge at the time and I didn't need, you know, I didn't. They just sacrificed Butte for the wealth.

Jaap: At the time, was that apparent to everyone?

Mohan: Yes. With a dad like the one I had. He was very verbal in the situation. And, you know, the community just felt, you know, you had to fall in line in order to survive.

Jaap: Yeah. Didn't leave much of a choice, really.

Mohan: No, you did have a conflict going and stuff like that. Columbia Gardens. A perfect example. There was a mysterious fire.

Jaap: Mm hmm.

Mohan: So that you could never recover from that.

Jaap: Yeah. What did you think about that fire? What's your opinion on that fire?

Mohan: How many stories do you want to hear?

Jaap: Oh, whatever ones you got, Pat.

Mohan: A lot of stuff was removed prior to the fire. So I think it was arson. It was a really interesting conversation we had with Foote. He was a newspaper man.

Jaap: Rick.

Mohan: Rick. Mm-Hmm. He had a lot of interesting stories about that. And I believe him over what the company put out.

Jaap: Yeah. Do you want to share any of those stories he told you?

Mohan: Which one? The funniest story ever told me was the fact that as a newspaperman, they were always invited up to the company's office, which is on Hennessy's sixth floor. And as a news reporter, new to what they were doing. The other reporters said, "Hey Rick, when you get go and ask him about the arson squad." So Rick being a new reporter going through the whole thing. And then finally, "Any questions?" Rick raised his hand, says, "What about the arson squad?" He says, "The CEO became very red and left, and I was never invited back again forever."

Jaap: I don't know that. Yeah, that response kind of. Yeah, gives a little answer of its own, though.

Mohan: Yeah. But they ran it.

Jaap: So yeah. Was it the company who removed a bunch of the things from the Garden?

Mohan: There were various individuals now who still have stuff from the Garden. That are slowly coming back to the public.

Jaap: How about the fires in uptown businesses, do you remember some of those? Is there any you remember?

Mohan: Medical arts is what we call it. We watched them. You know, we came up that was what we've seen and how we got the stories and how the stories were put out didn't really jive with it. So, yeah, and the buildings just went down. Mm-Hmm. Because you had a choice, you could have a friction fire between your mortgage and your insurance, or you could sell it to the company for a dollar. I mean, for what they would pay and then they would sell it back to you. And if you didn't, there'd be a mysterious fire. Yeah. And the only reason the Myra is still standing is because my uncle lived there. So they didn't really want to get any of that situation involved with somebody going with the fire. Well, that's mainly the main reason that that building is still standing.

Jaap: Did the company try to buy it?

Mohan: Oh, yes, they did that. They wanted to level that whole block. And my uncle wouldn't sell. So they had an interesting thing going on all around. But it was just like when the pit started in 1955. The gentleman who was right in the center of the pit that didn't sell. It was a house out there and trucks around and all that stuff. And he finally was forced out and stuff. Yeah, but it was sitting there for a while. You could see it as a kid, watching it.

Jaap: I don't think I knew that. That's interesting. Hmm. Yeah. So you have a love of history, Pat. Where did that come from? Have you always loved history?

Mohan: Well, as a kid, I was oblivious to a lot of the stuff. Sure. But as you look back, you were living in history just like they're teaching the kids now about the Cabbage Patch and stuff like that. They're part of history. Mm-Hmm. So they're, you know, it's a really unique way to learn rather than learn the dates and the times you actually get involved.

Jaap: Yeah, because they go, they have those kids go sleep in the Cabbage Patch.

Mohan: And it's amazing because I was able to watch them more this year and they have games. They take away the cell phones and all the other stuff. They have interchange. Some kids didn't even know each other. When you put many kids together, then the seniors get the sheds and the cabins in the Myra and the newbies get the ground and the cardboard. That's pretty plain. They elect a mayor. They do. They used to go down where the rescue mission was and they'd have a meal with the people, and then they help the people, and then with that closing, they set up a, you know, a game that they would go find their food. It was all laid out and then they brought it back and made hobo stew. It tasted good. Yeah. So it was just, you know, it's just an interesting and then they go all over the place and that's all. They're part of history then. You know, the thing we loved and cherished was the Columbia Gardens, and they never had that.

Jaap: Did you go there to the Gardens, often as a kid?

Mohan: Yeah, anytime I could.

Jaap: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What was your favorite part of the Gardens? Your favorite thing to do.

Mohan: I was on the airplane rides.

Jaap: Would you take the trolleys out there or the busses out there?

Mohan: We'd walk sometimes, you know, depending on what we were doing.

Jaap: Yeah.

Mohan: And you know, people would pick us up and we'd be able to get back and forth that way.

Jaap: Did you go to the theaters or anything as a kid?

Mohan: The Fox and all those. All the theaters were good. Nickel. You know, it was tough to get that, but you found ways.

Jaap: Did you have any good ways of making money as a child?

Mohan: Yeah, we were right above the Butte Brewery. The cardboard boxes that were being sold. They would be throwing them out and we'd be picking them up. And we were able to make money that way and bottles and stuff. Anything we could find.

Jaap: I feel like kids were much more clever then. Now kids aren't that clever. They don't think.

Mohan: They don't have a problem with money.

Jaap: True. Maybe. Maybe so, you know? Yeah. You know, what do you think about Butte's future, Pat?

Mohan: I think it's golden. I think it is. It's a lot of people rediscovering it. And there's a lot of interesting things. You know, the URA's development and Butte's development. And there's a lot of buildings going up, you know, apartment complexes. People will drive in from here to Helena and the Bozeman because the cost of everything there is outrageous. And the pit is still the number one exporter for the state of Montana. And as long as that holds up and it goes.

Jaap: Yeah, yeah, I know we see it here, you must too giving the tours. It's always interesting, I think, to hear tourist perspectives of Butte.

Mohan: Oh yeah. You know, the most interesting is listening to the old people that come through on tours that lived in Butte and they have stories that just are unreal.

Jaap: Do they?

Mohan: Oh yeah, they talk about different things. As a young girl, they knew about the barbershop, but they didn't know about the speakeasy. And you know, the speakeasy itself was the hotel complex where some of the ladies stayed. There is actually a beauty shop in there and stuff, according to one lady. So, you know, I get all kinds of interesting and you just want to have a tape with you, but you don't.

Jaap: I can imagine. Yeah, yeah.

Mohan: So and the tourists come in are just very interested in what's going on and the history and stuff like that kind of neat to tell the stuff that you know and back and forth.

Jaap: Yeah, I think it's hard when you're here to realize how kind of unique Butte is.

Mohan: Growing up, I never . . . It wasn't there for me. Yeah, you know, but now that I'm back and looking back saying we grew up in the good times. Now, it's pretty tough on these kids.

Jaap: Yeah. How so?

Mohan: Drugs. We had our share of alcohol. And that was our claim to fame. But now it's just, you know, as the dean of boys at the Alternative. The drug problem is just . . . You can't help them. Unless they want to be helped. And they don't want to be helped.

Jaap: No, that's a tough age group, I think. Yeah. So even since you've retired, there's been . . .

Mohan: It's worse now. And then cell phones and computers, it's just phenomenal how they can get into trouble.

Jaap: Yeah. Do you think that has something to do with the uptick of suicides we've seen in our community? Do you think that has something to do with it?

Mohan: What's amazing to me that you would even think about that stuff. We never did when we were kids. No, we never, you know, we'd get in fights and get all kinds of mixed up, but not to the fact that you want to go do something to the . . . It's just amazing to me that it's getting into our culture. Yeah. You know, our parents, their parents, our parents had us, they could resolve any problem we had. And by various forms of punishment. But now they can't. And yeah, you know, it takes a really good psychiatrist/psychologist to even get to the root of the problem. But the kids don't explain that. All of a sudden there's suicide is just like, wow. But it's on TVs and in the news. They think, you know, that's the way to be.

Jaap: Yeah, it seems contagious to me, almost, you know.

Mohan: It's like the flu. Yeah, it's a cultural thing. And that they have all these networks in the drug culture that we can't understand or explain because we never experienced it. And you don't get in that culture. If you're on the outside, it's pretty closed. So I don't know any of the answers, but I do have a lot of questions.

Jaap: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Do you think there's less for kids to . . . there's less outlets for?

Mohan: Well, they don't. They don't. They don't even want to go into that stuff. And that's the kids that do the Cabbage Patch. It's amazing to watch them do these old games that they don't experience or to meet a person that's going to the same school that's not in your click. You know, that's all. That's always good stuff to do. And parents have double jobs, you know, trying to provide, and they're not around that much. And you don't have youth groups as solid as you used to have back in the day. They were on their computer, on their laptops and cell phones. They just sit at the same table and text each other, it's just like, no inner-communication.

Jaap: No, it's not. Yeah, you don't get that sense of bonding that you do. I think talking to someone when you do that, yeah. Right? Yeah.

Mohan: Anything else?

Jaap: Well, let me see, Clark, do you have some questions?

Grant: I made a list as I've been listening to you?

Mohan: All right, shoot.

Grant: Did you ever have a nickname?

Mohan: People that knew me well enough, aunts and uncles and stuff like that. It was Patty.

Grant: Yeah. What were some other nicknames around town?

Mohan: Mo. For Mohan. You know, and stuff like that.

Grant: And you were saying nicknames came about because people have Croatian names, Slovenian names, that people couldn't pronounce.

Mohan: If they couldn't pronounce it, they would give you a nickname and then you could see the books now. It's just amazing the names they had, but it was something that would click, you know, you could know a person by face. I know a lot of people just talking to them, but their names are nowhere in my head. But the nickname, maybe?

Grant: Or some other well-known nicknames? I'm just curious what kind of nicknames are around, like, did your dad?

Mohan: No, he was just Pete. You know, and sometimes they called us Mo-digger, but that was about it.

[00:46:08]

Grant: What do you think compelled him to join the IRA? And could you describe that conflict more generally?

Mohan: Well, it was the Irish Catholics, and it was the Protestants and Catholics. And then you had the mixture of the English that owned just about everything. And the Irish did go through the starvation things, but they were always exporting to England. And we talk about our game wardens here in the United States, how they control pretty much for hunting privileges. And back in Ireland, they had game managers and the Irish that my dad knew and hung around with, they sometimes would go hunting. But the first thing they would catch was the game warden or the games keeper. And they said sometimes they'd tie him up to the tree and go hunt. Sometimes when they came back, they'd untie him and sometimes they wouldn't. So that's . . . and the conflict just grew out of that. And who owned the ownership and stuff like that. And my dad and his brothers, they were very young when it started and they were messengers and carried notes and stuff on their bikes and stuff like that. And when the black and tan, black and tan was the name they gave to the British and they'd come in and just go right through your house in search of anything they wanted to take, anything they wanted. And when the parents stood up to them, then they would beat the parents and the kids would watch that. So that's a lot of animosity there.

Jaap: Did you say your dad was born in 1900? So he was 16?

Mohan: Mm-hmm

Grant: When did he get his first gun?

Mohan: They had them available, but they had to hide them in the bogs and they never had them around the homes unless they were going to go out on a mission or something like that.

Grant: Which he did?

Mohan: Mm hmm. He did. And they had a lot of entertainment that they would provide for themselves. They'd put a scarecrow out in the field and watch the black and tan come up and start shooting at it and they'd be up in the hills watching. When the black and tan left, they'd go down and get bullets that came out and they'd heat them up and make their own and stuff like that. And they had Catholic priests with them, and sometimes when they were in the conflicts, he said, they'd say, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition: and all that stuff.

Grant: Did he look back on those times fondly?

Mohan: He did in effect. Except for the black and tans going through his house and beating his parents and stuff like that. But with the membership that he had in the 50s and stuff like that, they were trying to redo and reconstitute, you know, give an honor to the IRA and they'd send him letters from Ireland and stuff like that. And him being a second lieutenant, he'd be able to identify who was in his column and stuff like that. So now back in the information and stuff.

Grant: So he left under duress. Do you know many details about that?

Mohan: Just to get to the ship, this, you know, and not how to slip out and get away from . . . And mid-ship, he met people that were on the ship that weren't to his liking. So they usually had a crew that would adjust that person.

Grant: Adjust?

Mohan: Overboard. But he settled in, you know, New York, and when the depression hit, then they started hitting the road or the rail cars.

Jaap: So in April of 16, how close was he to the rising itself? Was he in Dublin?

Mohan: He was in the conflict. He would tell me that much about it.

Jaap: Oh my gosh.

Mohan: He was always and his brothers were always afraid that somebody was looking for them here. They kept it pretty quiet.

Grant: Was the heat off in New York City?

Mohan: They had more Irish at that particular time and more places to hide than they did in other areas.

Grant: When you say rode the rails, it sounds like he didn't buy a ticket.

Mohan: No, he was a hobo on the rails. That's how he traveled.

Grant: And what about in the mines, did he talk much about work?

Mohan: There was a lot of interesting stories and stuff that, you know, he started as a simple miner with no experience. And you always went down in pairs of two so that you usually had another Irish miner with him that would give, you know, teach them all the skills and stuff he became a contract miner. Contract miners get more money, but it's based on how much ore that they get in and stuff like that. And then he taught, you know, he knew some of the experiences that he had in Ireland with explosives and stuff like that, but not the dynamite

Grant: This story gets deeper. I'll tell you what.

Mohan: Yeah, but that's . . . and then eventually he became a hoist engineer.

Grant: Do you know where he worked?

Mohan: He worked pretty much in his younger days and stuff, he was like I said, he liked to drink. So you could get fired from one mine, go to another mine or quit one night or go to another mine. And eventually he worked his way up. And when he did that, he retired actually from the Kelley Mine when he was in his 70s, and then shortly after that, he passed away.

Grant: Was there a wake?

Mohan: There was, but not the traditional Irish wake. Well, the traditional Irish wakes in Ireland and that he would talk about and they never really drained the blood and stuff like that back in the day. They just put them in the casket and put them in the front room and bring out the libations. But in one experience they had, there was rigor mortis set in. And it came up in the casket and emptied the house.

Jaap: Yeah, that would be terrifying.

Mohan: Yeah, that was funny at the time. It wasn't, but I'm sure.

Grant: So your grandfather ran the tin shop.

Mohan: Yeah. On my mother's side.

Grant: What all does a tinner do? It seems like it is pretty diverse.

Mohan: Well, it is in the fact that he also was a mason too. And but he learned the trade just as a tinker, pulling a wagon that had the fire in it that would repair the pots and pans throughout the

area and then eventually went up into the blacksmith. But then, as it started to develop, he developed the store

Grant: What kind of things do he end up doing beyond the initial?

Mohan: Well, it depended on the need and the need during prohibition was stills. Then, you know, rain gutters, pot pans, garbage cans, tubs. Stuff like that. Whatever they needed. [Inaudible.]

Grant: OK.

Jaap: So did they only go as far as making the stills? Or did they ever?

Mohan: Everybody in Butte made alcohol. If you could get to the stories of, you know, the family secrets and stuff like that. Mm hmm. If you could make it, you would.

Grant: We've heard a lot about wine making.

Jaap: Oh yeah, yeah. Did your family make wine or did they make something?

Mohan: Well, they could do both. Wine was the Italians that liked that the best. And grappa tasted good when I was a young kid. So then if you could reach the top of the bar, you could have your beer for a nickel.

Grant: And what about their decision to lease the upstairs to a brothel? Did you ever hear much about that?

Mohan: That was a family secret, man. I never heard about that until I was 40 some years old. No. And my aunt told me, and so I asked my mother. And after the explosion, I didn't ask again. Yeah, it was a family secret. They just didn't even talk about it.

Grant: Explosion?

Mohan: Verbal. She got real upset.

Grant: That you even knew?

Mohan: That I even knew. And that my aunt told me that.

Grant: How does it feel nowadays knowing that it is in the paper?

Mohan: It doesn't bother me.

Grant: What about her?

Mohan: I think there'd be an explosion.

Grant: Yeah.

Mohan: You gotta understand. There's an article in there that back in the day when they were delivering coal and stuff, there was a conflict with the alley. And there's a 1933 article about my grandmother with a shotgun and stopping the situation that was going on. So that's how they dealt with it back then.

Jaap: So your grandmother was a tough woman.

Mohan: She was Italian. Yeah. I have a heck of a mixture of Italian and Irish.

Jaap: Yeah, yeah.

Mohan: 50/50 unless I go do a DNA test or something. Yeah.

Grant: Mm hmm. You said you went to Sacred Heart until eighth grade.

Mohan: Right. 62.

Grant: The expansion must have affected you.

Mohan: After. Yeah, still does.

Grant: Could you expand on that? How did that affect you?

Mohan: Well, eventually I gave up the Catholic religion. Hmm. And now I'm back with the religion, but I think St. Anne's is safe.

Jaap: I think you're good there.

Mohan: Yeah, but no, it does affect you, you know, you see your life history, but you always . . . there's a few buildings left like, we call it, Drivers. Now it's the taxidermist . . .

Jaap: Oh yeah.

Mohan: You know, you could all picture it in your mind. And then the Helsinki with the sauna. Yeah, that was always. And that's still there. That's it.

Grant: As a bystander what was it like to watch it expand?

Mohan: I didn't like any of it, but you can't stop it.

Grant: So you felt powerless?

Mohan: Basically. Anytime you're dealing with big money, money talks?

Grant: Did you voice that dissatisfaction to your family or friends?

Mohan: Oh yeah, we always discussed it. But what could you do? It was your job. And I worked for the company in the summers. I drove a truck. All those experiences. That helped me go through college and made sure I did. Stuff like that.

Grant: Have you heard of that new book that came out, *The City that Ate Itself*?

Mohan: I've heard of it. I haven't seen it yet.

Grant: I read it, you know, very informative book. Although I kind of disagree with the title and think it's a company that ate a city.

Mohan: Money ate the city. The company was a part of it, but it's always necessary and it's a necessary evil. If you don't make it, you have to mine it. Yeah. And as Kevin Shannon used to say . . . he wore it as a medal. You know, sense of pride.

Grant: Was the sacrifice worth it?

Mohan: Well, I think it was, to be honest with you. If you didn't do it, then what would you do? Now we're getting all the imports from outside the United States and they're a lower quality, larger quantity, but a lower quality. So we have to take care of ourselves.

Grant: Was seeing things disappear part of what made you want to teach? Does it tie in at all?

Mohan: I don't know about that. I was at university and a professor said, "You should take independent study." And so I did, and then I got to go to the lower schools and stuff and teach, you know, help little kids, kids that we're really having struggles. And I really enjoyed that. So that's why I went into special education just to help them out.

Grant: Seems like that's a thread through your life, volunteerism and helping people. Where did that come from?

[01:01:20]

Mohan: My dad was awful helpful to the people. Uh, you know, friends and neighbors and stuff like that. He'd always kick in and help no matter what. It was just growing up that way. Nowadays, I think it's changed a little bit, you don't even know your neighbor.

Grant: Is there some favorite aspect of school that was . . . being the dean or being special education? What did you derive pleasure from?

Mohan: Well, I thought being the dean of the alternative was a life changing experience because you found people that you just couldn't help. So that's how it was.

Grant: Do you think part of the reason that you ended up in that position as dean of the alternative school was because of your military experience? Is it about discipline there?

Mohan: Oh, it was. The military's got discipline. The dean of boys didn't, you know, it was just an opportunity. I was going to retire at 30 years. So it was coming on to that, and I felt that you're starting to hit the wall with teaching and stuff. So try something different then you really hit the wall. So you retired.

Grant: Do you think you achieved less there than you did in a regular school environment?

Mohan: Well, there it was, just like you couldn't help some kids, and that got real frustrating for me because I always thought there was a light at the end of the tunnel. And some of the kids prove there wasn't, you know? And I just decided that I had enough.

Jaap: Did it change your viewpoint on people?

Mohan: I still have even today people that I've tried to help that you can't help. And you've got to learn to say, "no." Sometimes you do that. But you know, I've always, always liked to help people to get a hand up. And then when you find out they don't, even . . . they don't care. I've had an individual just recently tell me that, "Well, I don't care." OK.

Jaap: Yeah, it's hard to help people when they don't.

Mohan: Well, drugs, it's just knocking Butte down. I think really the whole country.

Grant: What drugs are you talking about?

Mohan: Anything they can get. Opiates.

Grant: And I'm curious, similar to your dad who was compelled to join the fight. Why did you join the military?

Mohan: Why did I join the military? My brother was in the military. My dad had served. It seemed a good way of giving back and helping. Through the Montana National Guard, you could do both. And then anything in there, you just try everything. And if it's good, you keep going.

Grant: Your time overseas. Do you feel that you were helping people?

Mohan: Yeah. In Korea and Panama and Honduras, yeah. Uh, Middle East was a different story. They don't like us. We're wrong religion and the wrong culture. Their culture does not jive with ours. We were told when we got there that we were expendable. That wasn't a very good term.

Grant: Who told you that?

Mohan: The guy in charge of us.

Jaap: That's not something you want to hear.

Mohan: And it was reinforced by the natives over there that we didn't run with exactly. But we were around them and, you know, we couldn't talk their language that well and their faith was different. It was just a different world. And now it's proven again. You know, people that are over there serving to help them and train and help them get killed by them. So it's the culture's awful chain. I didn't like staying there and I didn't like being there. And we were on our way home and they said, "Well, you'll be back." And I said, "Naw, I'm not coming." That's when I retired, shortly after that.

Grant: And you were glad to return to Butte?

Mohan: Oh yeah. Butte was like, you know, you get to see all these fancy places and the army calls them exotic places, but no, Butte is where I'm home, that's where I feel comfortable.

Grant: What are you sure to tell people on tours? Is there any one thing you always mention on every tour? [inaudible]

Mohan: Well, I tell them that I've just given them a touch. You know, there's more. And a lot of people take that and stick around and stuff like that and try different things. You know, I tell them that the first thing they should do is the trolley because then they get an outer view and then whatever they pick from the trolley. And usually they either have been on a trolley tour or are going to be on a trolley tour or didn't know anything about it. And that's something that I encourage them to do because there's so much to see. And in our short period that I'm with them, it's all I can do is give parts and pieces of it. And some like to come back and some do. And people from different countries and stuff like that. Yeah, we had 80 kids the other day. You know, we broke them down there. Some have been there before, and some want to come back and bring their families and stuff like that.

Grant: Do you frame it as this is what remains of Butte?

Mohan: Well, history never, never ends. You could go on for hours on what different places and different things. You know, I learn a lot too even up here at the Archives. That's why I come back. It's interesting stuff. The Beef Trail to me was . . . the name Beef Trail. And then you look at the Smithers collection and you see that there was a big slaughterhouse, and that's where they ran the cattle. You know, interesting things like that.

Grant: I love going out there when my car can make it. That remnant of the Columbia Gardens is out there.

Mohan: You know, they spent a million dollars moving stuff around and never did get completed. So it's, you know, that was kind of discouraged.

Grant: It's just sitting there in the wind now.

Mohan: And stuff then moved back to Clark's Park. Different things and it could be done a little bit better, I thought, but I wasn't in charge.

Grant: My final question - over the course of your lifetime, would you say Butte's trajectory - what shape is it? A downward line? Is it up and down?

Mohan: Well, the Butte people will never let it go down. I mean, the money will, you know, that's just a fact of it. But there's a lot of internet working. It should go on further and hopefully it will, you know, tourism's getting to be quite a benefit for Butte. And we're just not getting the word out as well and stuff right now, but we're trying.

Grant: So no desire to be involved in the government?

Mohan: No, I have to look at myself in the mirror. Politics never really did interest me because of the fact that I can't lie with a straight face. Then the people that are in politics, more power to them, but it's not my not my bag. I like to help people.

Grant: Mm-Hmm. Thanks for helping us today.

Jaap: Pat, can I just ask one quick question and we go backwards? So you said after Sacred Heart was torn down that you, you know, you kind of lost your faith in the Catholic Church a little. Was that because of . . . did you lose faith in the church or did you? Was it just so? Did you feel like you didn't have a place anymore? Because your home was . . .

Mohan: Yeah, I lost my home.

Jaap: You lost your home. And that was the disconnect. Ok.

[END OF RECORDING]