

Warm Valley Historical Project  
Interview with Alberta Roberts  
Interviewed by Sharon Kahin  
February 2, 1991

AR: I don't know what year we moved to Mill Creek—my parents. I went to the boarding school for a while and then, after I got done there—I don't know how many years I went there—then I quit. I went to this government school after that.

SK: So you started out at Robert's Mission?

AR: Yes.

SK: How old were you when you went there?

AR: About six or seven years old then.

SK: And where did your family live at that time?

AR: Wind River.

SK: So, you were just right up the road.

AR: Yes, down the line. So, I don't know how many years I went to that boarding school and then from there I went to this government school. I was about twelve years old then.

SK: When you went to the government school?

AR: Yes.

SK: And why did you switch? Do you remember why?

AR: I think they shut it down. They must have because—I don't know what happened but anyway I was taken out of there and I went to the government school. That's all I remember.

SK: When were you born?

AR: I was born in 1929 I think.

SK: Who were some of your classmates at the mission school?

AR: There was a bunch of us girls. Some of them are living and some of them are gone I think.

SK: Do you remember some of their names?

AR: Yes, there was the older girls too that were in the higher grades. And then the ones I went with—[Ionturniss and Pegginitwater], and—I can't remember them, it was so long ago. Some of them were older and some of them were my age.

SK: Do you think you were some of the last people there? Because the school shut down in 1945 I think. [a seemingly affirmative response from Roberts here] Do you remember what year it was when you went to the government school?

AR: I don't know. I can't remember nothing way the back. I was [laughter].

SK: When You went to the government school, did your parents move?

AR: No. we stayed at the same place. Then I quit that government school and that's when we moved to Mill Creek. And then from there I went to this public school they had at Mill Creek, with white children. There was only me, my sister, and my brother was smaller then—he was only about six years old. So he could have started, you know, because they don't have these now-days. There was a few of us that went there—the St. Claire girls like June St. Claire, her maiden name, and her brothers Floyd, and the one that's gone now, Larry. Their older sister went to high school then. That's where I just finished in ninth grade too. I was supposed to go to Oregon with that one girlfriend. So my parents didn't want me to go but she left. I was supposed to go to Lender high school, but I didn't make it either. So I just quit at ninth grade.

SK: That was at Mill Creek School?

AR: Yes. Mill Creek School just went to eighth grade.

SK: So you went all around the reservation then. [affirmative response. laughter].

AR: I really can't remember back in the past. I remember some of them.

SK: Do you remember what it was like going to Robert's Mission when you were very young?

AR: We had to go to church every Monday mornings. There's a little building on the North side of it.

SK: The little log building?

AR: Yes. So, that's where we used to go every morning. We got all dressed up—see, we had to have our hair cut way high when we were there, because I used to have real long braids and they clipped my hair off.

SK: How did you feel about that?

AR: I didn't mind it because I was a kid [laughter].

SK: Did you have any choice?

AR: No I just went ahead and let them cut it because everybody had too.

SK: Do you know why they did that?

AR: I don't know.

SK: I was just wondering because I was just talking to Eva [Enos] and she said that they had so much lice at St. Michael's Mission and that's why they cut peoples hair [interruption].

AR: We'd get back at about five, six o'clock in the evenings.

SK: So Sunday evenings you'd come back around five or six o'clock?

AR: And we'd go home weekends, like Friday. We'd spend two nights—Friday and Saturday. Then Sunday we'd go back.

SK: I didn't have this on by mistake. You were saying that the hair was cut just because it was so much trouble and the clothes were made there. Do you know who made the clothes?

AR: I don't even know, but made someplace so they had it all there.

SK: You each had a little cubby-hole and they'd have it all freshly laundered for you on Monday? [affirmative response]. Did you have your names put in it?

AR: No, they got on the shelves so that way we'd be able to get at them.

SK: When you went there—could you speak English when you went to Robert's Mission or were you one of the families that spoke English at home or did you have to learn when you got there?

AR: I think we kind of spoke a little English—not that good, but when we got there, we had to speak English. That old man, Reverend Roberts, kind of said a few words—not that good. You know, just like single words.

SK: In Indian?

AR: Yes. We also had his daughter for a teacher. Her name was Gwen. She caught the languages from the children and she knew how to talk Shoshone—that woman that teached us. We had a matron there and then there was a guy that used to milk all the cows that was for that place there so the children could have milk. I remember him and his name was Mr. [Gossip].

SK: Mr. Gossip? [Roberts laughs] What a wonderful name. Was he from your community?

AR: I don't even know, maybe he just worked there.

SK: He wasn't Shoshone?

AR: No, he was a white man.

SK: Were there any Indians that worked there?

AR: I don't think so.

SK: Besides Mr. Gossip and the teachers, what were they other employees?

AR: There used to be some maintenance men that used to come over and check out the buildings and whatever else had to be done. They were just white men to me [laughter].

SK: Can you describe what a typical day was like? What would happen during the day?

AR: We had to go to school all day. At lunch time—see they had a long building just in the same place and in the middle section, that's where they had the kitchen part. That's where we had our breakfast, dinner, and supper. After we'd get through eating they would give us a little time for recess, I guess, and then we'd all go back in and study again.

SK: So you studied in the morning and in the afternoon?

AR: Yes.

SK: Did you have any chores you had to do?

AR: No, there were some older girls that had to do that.

SK: You were too young then?

AR: Yes, and they had some girls in their twenties. I just remember Nellie [Watta], and [Irene Bonatsie], and [Nanny Brown]. They gave us baths every morning—they older girls.

SK: But they were students too?

AR: They were students. They helped us little ones. Like at breakfast time they would make sure we'd get everything and eat. They really made us eat that oatmeal that I really didn't like. I remember that one time that one lady shoved it in my mouth

and I didn't want to swallow it. But I had to [laughter]. That's what they would do you know. They kind of took care of us—them older girls. They gave us baths every morning and made sure we had clean clothes. See, they furnished the clothes too, and the stockings, shoes, and everything. I guess probably they washed it and whoever came got clothes. We had a good time over there when we used to go to school. Sometimes they would give us days off and we'd go outside and—you know we had—they called them rag dolls. We made them ourselves out of rags. We'd set up little tepees and tents outside and we had a good time with that. At Christmas time they were the ones that gave us presents. Like they would give us little dolls and little wagons and things like that. That's what we had and we played with them. We used to have quite a time. We'd get our presents from those people that we'd go to school at, every Christmas.

SK: Did you have a special Christmas day? What was Christmas day like?

AR: See, they would give us Christmas dinners too. We had to eat Christmas day and then in the evenings we'd all go to that church. We'd all be in there and Reverend Roberts would preach to us. That's where I learned my Lord's prayer. That's one thing I never felt good—I still could say it I said. All the others—I said I forgot all about it. I don't even know how to look in the Bible now.

SK: Did you have to study the Bible?

AR: Yes. But see, we were kind of younger so we didn't really understand what was going on.

SK: So how many years were you at Robert's Mission?

AR: I was about six or seven when I was put there. Maybe about five years or so. When I was twelve, that's when I had to go to the government school.

SK: So you were pretty young most of the time you were there.

AR: Yes. We didn't even remember

SK: But you remember the oatmeal.

AR: I remember the oatmeal [laughter]. It was shoved down my throat [laughter].

SK: What other things did you have to eat there that were strange to you?

AR: That was the only thing I didn't like—oatmeal every morning. All the other food was okay, like bacon and eggs. Sometimes they had fried potatoes with it. That was good. But we had to eat that every morning.

SK: Oatmeal, every morning?

AR: Yes.

SK: And it was one of the older girls that made you eat it—shoved it down your throat? [affirmative response. laughter].

AR: It kind of made me mad, you see, because they did that

SK: Some of these older girls that took care of you—were any of them kind of like bullies? Were any of them mean to you little kids?

AR: Sometimes they would jerk us around because they don't mind them, because you know how kids are. Every now and then we would be in a good mood and we would be good to them. So we minded them what they told us to do. We had a bedroom way up stairs. Every evening when we had to go to bed, they let us know. We had to line up our shoes all through the hallway. In the morning when we had to get up we would hear somebody down at the bottom part that she makes a big knock on something and that's what waked us up. I think it was a matron. So we all got up and came down and cleaned up ourselves—washed and combed our hair and be ready for the breakfast. But we were all happy there—laughing and running around in there.

SK: You had to line your shoes up outside the dormitory room at night?

AR: Yes. We can't take it upstairs. We had to come down to pick up our own shoes.

SK: Did you have to polish them every time?

AR: I think they—somebody did the job. All we did was put them on and they were nice and shiny.

SK: So they shined them every night for you?

AR: I think they do. The thing I didn't really like is before we went to eat breakfast, they would line us all up and, I think it was this matron—she would give us a spoonful of cod-liver oil every morning. That's one thing I didn't like. But we had to every morning. I guess that was for health or something; or maybe for bowl movement or whatever.

SK: Before breakfast?

AR: Yes. ,

SK: Now what about if you got sick? What would happen? Was there a special room or something, or did you have so much cod-liver oil that you never got sick? [laughter]

AR: Well I never got sick, but I hated it. But that's what they used to do to us every morning before breakfast. We used to come down and we would all clean up and put our shoes on and they would line us up. Each one of us, she put teaspoonful

of that cod-liver oil and we had to swallow it. That's one thing I didn't like because it tasted fish like [laughter].

SK: But if you did get sick, was there a special room or anything?

AR: No, I didn't see any of them getting sick. We were just happy.

SK: When you were at home, did you have oatmeal and things like that? How different was the food? .Were there a lot of things that you ate at school that you didn't have at home?

AR: We never got—my parents had a hard time. So we had to eat whatever they had to give us. I don't think we ever had oatmeal.

AR: What were you eating at home before you went to the school?

AR: My grandmother and my grandfather—my grandfather hunted at Cedar Butte. I remember he used to get on a horse and go horseback riding and pretty soon I would see him coming back with something—a deer I thought~on the back part of his saddle. Then he would come to where my grandmother was and she would get at it. She would pull the hide off and she would do the butchering. Then she would grind all the meat and that's what we were living on. She had chokecherries and all of that. See, they had all of those to eat. We never had—because we were poor at that time. So we have to eat what the old people cook. When I went to the mission, it was different. I had to eat whatever was there. From what I remember, we didn't have that kind of food at home—but Indian food that our grandmothers and mothers made for us, so we had to eat it.

SK: So you were living with your grandparents at that time?

AR: We all lived in this one big—something like this but had an addition to it. We lived in one part and my grandmother lived in the other part.

SK: A log cabin?

AR: Yes. When we ate supper, my grandmother had her own food and my mother had here own food, but I guess they used to share the game food that they had. So that's how I lived.

SK: What about a garden? Did you have a garden at that time?

AR: Later on when I was about ten years old, I remember my stepgrandfather had a garden across the river and that's where my grandmother and my mother would go. We would get the potatoes and stuff like that—corn. But they dried the corn—now we eat them form the cobbs, but in those days they would slice them up and dry it and put it in little jars, and whenever they wanted to cook it, they would get up and cook it. But the potatoes, we would just eat it—boiled, fried, and

things like that.

SK: The dried corn, how did your parents and grandparents prepare that?

AR: They planted it in the garden. They called it Indian corn. It had all little things like black and red in there. That's how I saw it.

SK: What about things like carrots and peas and things like that? Did your grandparents or parents grow those?

AR: Yes. My grandmother and my step-grandfather—they planted it. When it's growing well, they had to pick it and put it away. So whenever they wanted to prepare the food, that's when they would start cooking it.

SK: What else was different at the mission than at your childhood home? The bed, the kitchen utensils—what other things were strange to you besides the oatmeal and some of the other food?

AR: It was different because they had beds for the children. At home we didn't have any beds. We had a big mattress we had to lay on. We used to have kerosene lanterns at those times, but there they had electricity and that was different.

SK: They had electricity at the mission.

AR: Yes. We had kerosene lamps and we had these little cook stoves that we had to burn with wood. That is what they cooked on, but there they had to cook on electricity stoves I guess. That was different.

SK: What about things like forks, knives, spoons, all the plates, and things like that? Was that strange to you when you first went there?

AR: No, at my home we had forks. Just a few; not too many. But when we were there we had everything—forks, spoons, knives. They had spoons, plates, and cups all ready for us so when we sat down they had little napkins over here. That was strange. Some of us would take it off and the matron would say, "you keep that on."

SK: Kind of like a bib?

AR: Yes, kind of like a bib but it was a square napkin I guess—kind of bigger.

SK: Like an apron.

AR: Yes. So they had to tuck them in our little dresses so we wouldn't get ourselves dirty. It kind of bugged us because we weren't used to that. We would try to pull it off but she would catch us and, "No you put that back on."



SK: Did the older girls have that too?

AR: No, just the little ones. Some of us didn't like it but later on I just got used to it, I guess—didn't mind it.

SK: Did you have certain table manners? Were you taught to sit up straight and that kind of thing?

AR: Yes. We had to use our fork and knife, you know. Some of them didn't know how, so they had to come and show us how to cut with that fork and knife. But we caught on and she didn't have to tell us.

SK: Once you went home, after all these changes, was it hard getting back in the family way, or did you feel strange going back?

AR: Yes, in some ways. I thought, how come we didn't have the things they had there. Just kind of a little different from that school to back home where we went.

SK: But you didn't have to eat oatmeal at home.

AR: No. [laughter]

SK: Did you have brothers and sisters?

AR: They were smaller than me.

SK: How did your parents feel about you going away to school? Did they want you to go away to school?

AR: My mother did. My father didn't want me to go away to school. They kind of argued over it. You know how parents are, one wants to do this for their kids and the other won't. That's how it went. I had already bought my clothes and everything—my suitcase. Because when that welfare worker was here—you know, that lady that helps with things. I don't know what they did—write up purchase orders for those kids that were going to go away to school at that time. See my mother went over and talked to me and—they used to call her Mrs. Schultz. She was the one that took care of us children—the welfare lady. My mother went over there and talked to her so she gave my mother a purchase order to my school clothes to go away to school with. So I had bought all those clothes but I couldn't go so I just had them at home.

SK: If you had gone, where would you have gone?

AR: That's where I was going to go, [Shamoa] Oregon. I was going to go with Alma St. Claire but now she's named Alma [Chavis].

SK: Did she go?

AR: She went, but I didn't.

SK: Did she like it?

AR: Well, I think she did. I don't no how many years she went over there but last time I knew she was still [t]here.

SK: You went to the government school when you were about twelve. How was that different than going to the mission school?

AR: Well, there we had to go home every evening.

SK: It was a day school?

AR: Yes, by that time it was a day school. That was all right because we had to go over there in the morning. They had buses that would come around and pick us up and at evening time we would go home.

SK: What about some other differences. What was the atmosphere like? The people like? Did you like one place better than the other?

AR: It was all right to me. Just as long as I was going to school. But they never let us talk Indian at that public school because they were all white. They would catch us and report us—those school kids that we went with. They would tell us that we couldn't talk Indian language there—just white language. But it was okay. One lady would bring a food over at lunch-time. She would haul it over in a car and that's where had our late dinner.

SK: If you did speak Indian when you were at the government school, what did they do to you?

AR: Nothing, because they were all IndiansIbut we had white people for teachers. I don't remember those teachers either. I forgot all about them.

SK: Did you have any Indian teachers at the government school?

AR: No. But like now-days they have these teachers aides that are Indian ladies. She tried to teach them Indian language, but they don't catch on because they are too much white already. I have two granddaughters that go to a government school. They talk about Audrey Ward and say that she tries to make them talk Indian. They caught on to a few little words. They would come and ask me and I would tell them what it meant.

SK: When you went home, did you speak Shoshone?

AR: Yes. They say that it`s never forgotten. You have to live with it. No matter where

you go and spend so many yeas, you still have it.

SK: But that's changed now?

AR: No, it's still the same with me. I still speak Shoshone.

SK: But other people, do they still speak it in their homes?

AR: I don't know, sometimes people just talk English to each other all the time. My husband wasn't all that well educated. He got out of school in second grade. They lived way up further—Sage Creek, they called it. Its desert like. They had a school up there for the children that lived there. He was one of them but he said that he didn't like the school. He would take off on his horse [laughter]. But later, about 1940-somewhere he got in a car accident. I guess he sprained his back. Later on tuberculosis set in but he took care of it right. away. They sent him to Tacoma, Washington and he spent five years there until he completely got well. So that's where he caught his English words. He really surprised me. He can even send off for stuff in the catalog. That, I couldn't do, and he receives it. That really surprised me because he only went to second grade.

SK: Sage Creek, is that where Audrey Ward lives?

AR: Yes, way above on the west part.

SK: And there's a little school there?

AR: Yes, they call it Countryman school.

SK: Is that for both whites and Indians or just Indians?

AR: Just Indian children. The one that lived up there, they said that they were kind of shy people. They would take off when they saw people [laughter]. And they hide around. So he was one of them, but he really surprised me when I married him, because he could talk a little English. Now he talks to his kids in English because they don't talk Indian. [a boy responds—I do]. But they know the bad words like what the children mostly learn I guess. See when we're home now, we talk Indian most the time. We don't talk English.

SK: Were there other little schools like the Countryman school for children that lived way out?

AR: That was the only one I remember for the Shoshones. But now they have schools all over, like Martin, the government school, and down—way they have all those high schools now.

SK: Someone else mentioned the 'Countryman school too. Do you remember your husband ever telling you what they would do when he ran away? What would happen then?

AR: They lived very close to that mountain. That's where they would roam around. [end of side]. They say that they called wild Indians wild. So now they say, "how did you catch that Indian? Did you rope him?" [laughter].

SK: What is your husband's name?

AR: Richard Roberts.

SK: I'll just ask you a few more questions about what your husband remembered. When they ran away from the countryman school, who brought them back?

AR: Their horses. At the time, their mother thought they were going to school, but here they just took off [laughter].

SK: So they would just hide in the hills?

AR: They would come back in evening times after school was out, I guess.

SK: That was just a day school then.

AR: Yes.

SK: Was people not coming to government school a problem? Do you remember children that did that when you were there then, during the day?

AR: No, we were all out at the playground most times. The teachers were out there with us. When the school bell rings, we were all in our school rooms.

SK: So you don't remember children, boys, playing hooky as being a problem?

AR: I think a few did. Just the boys—two or three of them. I remember [Perky Wesley] used to be one of them. He would just take off—that Sig Rock Ute. I just remember that they would sneak off after lunch. But the girls didn't.

SK: Then you went to Mill Creek. How old were you when you went to Mill Creek?

AR: I was about thirteen or fourteen.

SK: That was the last time that you went to school?

AR: Yes, that was the last time I went.

SK: When you went to Mill Creek, you said, that was for white students?

AR: It was a public school.

SK: How many students were there?

AR: Not too many. There were boys and girls both—about twentyfive.

SK: What was it like going with white children? Was that really different for you?

AR: It was at first, but when we got used to it, it was okay. We used to fight with them. Then the teacher would come out and talk to us and we would listen. Then we got along pretty good with them.

SK: Who was the teacher?

AR: The last one I remember was Mary Connelly. Last time I saw her, about two years ago—I met her at the nursing home there. She had a broken arm. My oldest girl worked down there. I told her about my school times. She remembered that teacher, "Hey Mom, I think your teacher is down here. You'd better come see her." So I did that one day and it was hard. But she kind of laughed. She is an elderly lady now.

SK: Is she still alive?

AR: Yes.

SK: Going back to Robert's Mission. If you spoke Indian at Robert's Mission, did that get you into trouble?

AR: No. Because that lady that taught there—when we talked Indian, she learned from us and she knew how to talk Indian.

SK: That was Gwen Roberts?

AR: Yes. Somebody told me that she died a few years ago. I used to see her at Mr. D's. She was grocery shopping and I would run into her. She would be talking Indian to me. It really surprised me too—she remembered that long.

SK: Did the students get along pretty well with her?

AR: Yes.

SK: What about Mrs. Roberts and Reverend Roberts. Did you ever have much contact with them?

AR: No. The only time I saw Reverend Roberts was at church on Sunday. But they were at the same building at the time— Reverend Roberts and his wife.

SK: What was she like?

AR: She was a nice little lady. When she used to have candy—she had a bag of

candy—she would call us in and give us each a piece of candy. So we kind of got used to it and kept running over there. The teacher caught on to this. [laughter]

SK: Did the Roberts family eat with you?

AR: Yes, we all ate together.

SK: Did any of Reverend Roberts' children or grandchildren go to the school while you were there?

AR: Their daughter wasn't even married. Gwen never was married.

SK: So there were no white students at all at that school then?

AR: No. Just the kind of half-breed like Lucille Meeks. She was there, but she was a half-breed. That's the only one I remember that was there. Oh, and her sister—that one—they call her now, that used to run the second hand store. She's married to a priest. I can't remember her name all the time. But I now that she and that one girl, Lucille, used to be together.

SK: You said that you had to have baths every day?

AR: Yes, every morning.

SK: You must have had running water by that time.

AR: Yes, we had running water. [interruption]

AR: That was way before me.

SK: But you still had the uniforms.

AR: Yes.

SK: Did you have different uniforms for Sunday or just the one?

AR: We used to wear blue dresses every day. They had to be washed and ironed. And little black socks.

SK: Were they jumpers?

AR: No, it was a whole dress. They had white collars. The first time I went over there, I thought, what are they putting on—I don't like this dress. I thought like that. Then I got used to it.

SK: What were you wearing at home?

AR: Those regular clothes we had. Like my mom would wash it for us and by time we

got home we would have—clothes on. But we—have black socks.

SK: Were they stockings: Did they come all the way up.

AR: Yes.

SK: How did you hold them up?

AR: And little black panties to go with it. [laughter] I didn't like those.

AR: How did you hold your little black socks up?

AR: They had little garters made. Something elastic. But it held it up good. Like when we would go outside and play, well maybe for so long they would stretch. They would go down and we would have to pull it up all the time.

SK: I would think that would happen. [laughter] When you were at the mission, did they let you go out for walks or anything like that?

AR: Yes. We used to walk about a mile and a half. From there where Gilbert Day used to live—that crossing. We would walk down there and then have to walk back up.

SK: That was every day?

AR: No, not every day. Maybe every other week or so.

SK: You would go with the teachers?

AR: Yes. She had to keep an eye on us. We would run away or something. See we used to live right down there where that crossing was.

SK: Did you have any organized sports when you were at the mission school: Did you have any ball games or anything?

AR: They never did have ball games. All we did was play baseball. It was the only activity we had.

SK: What about things besides reading, writing, and arithmetic? Did they teach you sewing or embroidery or anything like that?

AR: Yes. After we had lunch we would come back in and have a little embroidery going. Pillow cases and stuff like that. They had a man there that had this lumber. We would make little cats and things like that out of it. We had to carve and do it ourselves.

SK: You would sand it yourselves?

AR: Yes. Sand it and paint it. That's all I remember that we used to do. Little cats and

dogs or maybe we would make a little book stand out of it.

SK: Did they ever let you do beading or anything like that?

AR: No.

SK: If there was some kind of celebration or anything going on in the Indian community, did you get to go out of school and attend?

AR: No.

SK: During the summer, did you do that sort of thing with your family?

AR: No. We had to stay at school.

SK: So you didn't go home in the summertime?

AR: No. But I think we did get out'school in May.

SK: For a couple of months or so?

AR: Yes.

SK: When you got out of school, did you go into Lander for the Fourth of July or anything like that?

AR: Yes, in those days, people used-to go camping on the Fourth of July. We had to go on the wagon and team. They had a big carnival in Lender, in the bottom part. We had to walk down the hill to get there. They told us to come home early, so we had to.

SK: Did you camp with him [her father]?

SK: What was that like?

AR: I used to like to go to carnival. My cousin Juanita used to be with me. Me and her would go down there. Our moms would tell us to come home early, before it gets too late. So we had to do that. She would check on us to make sure we were laying in bed.

SK: Did you go there and take tepees or tents?

AR: Tents.

SK: Did you ever go in the parades or anything like that?

AR: No. At those times our parents didn't really have money. All those carnival rides



or whatever were a quarter. They would give us maybe about two dollars. When we would spend it, that's it.

SK: You were born in 1929?

AR: Yes, I'm sixty-two now.

SK: Can you remember what it was like during the Depression?

AR: All I remember was when they had that commodity building right here—you know where they have that helicopter? That building on the other side of it? [another voice says, "the flour mill?"] Yes, that's where they used to give all the people—Indians and all—cheese and stuff like that—flour. That's how we survived.

SK: That was during the thirties?

AR: Yes.

SK: So you would have been about ten years old at that time?

AR: Yes. We used to get that great big round cheese.

SK: That was at the flour mill where they handed that out?

AR: Yes, that's where that commodity bill was going then.

SK: Do you remember your parents or grandparents doing extra jobs, or things like that, to make ends meet? Did they sell things?

AR: My mother used to do bead work. She used to always do loom work. That's all I remember. We used to have a little store down below where we lived at Wind River. Mr. [Martell]—he owned it, him and his wife. That's where my mother used to sell it. She didn't sell it for very much. Maybe ten dollars. My dad was working on this irrigation with these peoples. He only had two horses and he used one for plowing the ditches. I don't know if he got very much pay on that. I remember every long wait, they used to buy me a pair of shoes. We're spoiled now days. These kids are. They'll ask for a new pair of shoes, but in those days we couldn't because we had a hard time. That's what my parents did. My mother did bead work on the loom. She would make belts and headbands. My dad used to work on those ditches with the irrigation people.

SK: Was that a CCC project?

AR: I think it was.

SK: So was that a dollar a day?

AR: Something like that. They didn't get paid very much.

SK: But your mother would sell bead work at that time. Did she do that all the time?

AR: Yes, all the time. And she would go down to that store and buy beads. If she sold beadwork, she would turn around and buy some more beads.

SK: That was at Martel's?

SK: Was Martel's the name of the store?

AR: Yes.

SK: Who bought the beadwork then? Was it tourists?

AR: I don't know. He would buy them and I don't know what he did with them. That's when I caught on. Later on, I started bead working. If I hadn't payed attention, I wouldn't know how to beadwork now. I sat beside her and watch her while she did it. Sometimes when my grandfather would bring in the deer, my grandmother was the one who used to tan the hides. I would see my mother make little baby moccasins out of it. I don't even know how much she sold those for. That's how we survived.

SK: That's when you learned how to do it.

AR: Yes, that's when I learned how to beadwork. It's my hobby now. Like now, they have that arts and crafts down here for the people. That woman that buys it, she turns us down and I say what is the use of beadwork. But I still beadwork, no matter what goes on. .

SK: So, even when you were older, you used to sell beadwork?

AR: Yes.

SK: Did a lot of people do that at that time?

AR: I think they did. You know that old lady, Millie I think she was one of them.

SK: She still sells hers up in Dubois.

AR: Yes.

SK: She sells hers up through Stewarts.

AR: My niece—beadwork on the third floor now. That's where that—lives, at Bull Lake. Millie lives on this side by that diversion dam. My nieces goes over there and picks her up. That's what they told me to do. "Just stock up your beadwork

and go over there and sell it with us." But I keep going to this [Laura]. You know what I heard? The last pair I sold, I put a genuine rawhide sole on them and it had a big rose on it: So I took it down to her and says, Laura, I want you to pay me more for this, because she used to give me seventy-five. I said this is genuine rawhide soles on there. I need more money. She went in the back and signed a check and gave it to me. She gave me eighty-five for the last pair I sold. I heard lately that she turned around and sold them for two hundred dollars.

SK: That's a big mark-up.

AR: Yes, so I think people don't want to take their beadwork there.

SK: Did your mother ever make buckskin gloves or anything like that, or was it almost always beadwork?

AR: Usually just beadwork. My grandmother used .to make them mens work gloves and they didn't even sell them for very much. Maybe five dollars.

SK: Where did your grandmother sell that?

AR: The same place.

SK: Martel's store?

AR: Yes.

SK: Did she ever sell anything up at the Fort Washakie store? Ox was there not a store there at that time—J.K. More's store?

AR: I think he bought articles from the ladies too.

SK: But you went to Martel's because it was closer?

AR: I went to Martel's. But my mother sometimes went over there and sold things too because sometimes he refused.

SK: What about Lander. Did your family ever try and sell things in Lander, or did you ever buy groceries there at that time?

AR: They had that lady named Chisholm. When I was about thirteen years old, I remember that my mother used to make those little pouch bags. She put those little flowers on it and closed it with buckskin. She used to go over and sell it to that old lady Chisholm.

SK: It was a jewelry store, wasn't it?

AR: Yes. She started buying beadwork. That's when I started to beadwork. I used to

make little hair barrettes and I would take them over to that Chislem. That's when I learned how to beadwork. It wasn't that good. Probably lumpy and all of that.

SK: Tourists, would they buy the beadwork?

AR: Not from us. Maybe from the stores.

SK: When you were growing up, do you remember any tourists that would come around to the stores, dances, or anything?

AR: They would probably go to the stores, but I never did see any go to the pow-wows. I remember the . They had those little stands. Some people would come from out of state and they had all this Indian stuff with them. We would get out to it and we would buy what we want over there. There were big white earrings and chokers. I never did see any tourists there. The only ones I saw were the ones that brought stuff to sell. They were white people.

SK: They were white people that brought stuff to sell?

AR: Yes. They had to pay to have their little stand there, I guess.

SK: What about tourists going to Sun Dance and things like that? Were there many of those when you were growing up?

AR: No.

SK: When did white tourists start going to Sun Dance?

AR: A long time ago, the elders would put up the Sun Dance and they were kind of strict. When I was fourteen, they used to have tourists come in. They had a gate where the tourists would come in and that's where they would charge those white people. I don't know how much they charged them. They would go over and look what was going on and pretty soon, they were taking pictures. So they talked to one another and decided that they didn't want any pictures taken. Some of them had those flash globes. They said that that disturbed the spirits in there for the Sun dancers. So they put that off. Lately I realized that they don't have those anymore.

SK: Do you remember when that was, that they were charging and taking pictures?

AR: I was about fourteen. Maybe 1930-somewhere.

SK: That would have been when the dude ranches were at their height around the area—late thirties and fourties.

AR: Now days, some tourists go around there in campers. They don't want them

around there now. The last Sun Dance we had was way up there at Sage Creek. They had two white men sitting way up on the hill. They had scopes and they were going to take pictures. But I guess this [Hayman—] caught on to them and told them to leave. "We don't want to be disturbed." So that's what they were trying to do this last Sun Dance, I remember, because we were kept on this side. I didn't even notice anything because we were kept by that hill. Maybe they were up there, but I didn't see them. I would go up to the Sun Dance in the afternoon and watch. But that's when that one boy saw them up there with their scopes, taking pictures. He just went up there and told them to leave.

SK: When you were growing up, you didn't really have that much contact with people outside of this immediate area.

AR: No.

SK: If you went into town, that was during the summertime when you weren't in school?

AR: We hardly went to town, because we had no cars when I was growing up. We had to use buggy and teams. Every now and then, I would be riding in that little buggy with my parents to town. At that time my daddy had cattle. Every now and then, he would ship his cattle to Omaha. He would take it down here to that Hudson's stock yard. I don't know how much money they got. All I knew was that I got a new pair of shoes every now and then. We wouldn't go to town everyday. Maybe weekends or so.

SK: But in horse and buggy?

AR: Yes. We didn't have a car. Some of the Indian people had old model fashion cars. Not like now—fancy and all that.

SK: When did people around here start getting cars?

AR: When that per-capita money started. I don't know what year we got that. Oil money.

SK: Early fifties or something like that?

AR: Yes, somewhere there. Not all of us got cars. Just a little at a time.

SK: I was just wondering when the stores that you and your family used to trade at—when did they shut down?

AR: I remember where my mom and dad went—that old grocery store they used to call Billy's market. He had a little store on the south side of the street—a little old man. That's where my parents shopped. Sometimes they would give credit over there. Not too much. Maybe just so they could get flour, coffee, sugar, and

potatoes. Then he would come and slaughter my dad's cows for that. But what little money he gave my dad—he kept it. He didn't spend it foolishly. All I saw was them slaughtering a cow and hanging it up and that old man would take it off.

SK: Was Martel's store still going at the same time?

AR: No, he got closed down in about nineteen forty-somewhere. They moved from Lander and now I don't know where they're at. Maybe they're gone now.

SK: That's when you went to Billy's Market?

AR: After that, when we lived on Mill Creek.

SK: I was just trying to get some idea of where people went.

AR: My grandfather used to plant wheat and stuff like that. That was in nineteen thirty-somewhere that they had this thrashing machine. They used to go to homes where people had all this wheat and they would thrash it. They came to my grandfathers and I saw that big thrasher come in. That wheat and stuff they used to grow—they would cut it by hand. They would make it stand over there like little tepees. We would want to play around it and our grandfather would get after us. "Put them down because we are going to thrash it soon." Then when they got all that thrashed, they held them all in gunny sacks. My grandfather used to have that team and horse. I would see him load all of that on and then he would go to Lander. Next thing I knew, they would be coming back with about twenty-five sacks of flower. That's what we survived on.

SK: When did people stop growing their own wheat and making their own flour?

AR: About nineteen fifty-somewhere.

SK: About when people got their per-caps?

AR: A little before that, they quit planting.

SK: Do you know why?

AR: Probably couldn't afford the plants they buy.

SK: Did most of your family and friends grow their own grain when you were growing up?

AR: Not too many. Just some of them. Grandma [Josey] used to have a garden down here. We used to sneak down and get her carrots [laughter]. , she caught on to it. That was fun. In those times we used to steal from the garden whatever we liked. When it wasn't ripe, we would throw it. They would come along and find it. Then we were in trouble. [laughter]

SK: Did a lot of people have gardens back in the thirties and forties?

AR: Yes. My other grandmother—my father's mother—used to always plant a garden. My mom and dad had a big garden when I was going to school at Mill Creek. I was about fourteen years old at the time. They just quit because they were having water problems with people down here. They didn't have any irrigation water.

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