

CATHERINE MAHON

First Interview

Interviewed by:

Sam Schrager

Oral History Project

Latah County Museum Society

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I. Index

CATHERINE MAHON

Lewiston, Juliaetta; b. 1906

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.8 hours

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Side B

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Side B (continued)

02 14

Mother went to work for telephone company in Palouse for \$20 a month, seven days a week, 12-14 hours a day. She transferred to Lewiston, which seemed like a promising city. The Raymond House was too expensive; she stayed with the Thatchers. Grandma Thatcher's anger about Boise stealing the capital from Lewiston. Why Genesee was given to Latah County.

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Value of books as a measure of culture. Grandma removed her leatherbound Shakespeare from her bookstore after a salesman offered \$100 for it. Expense of shipping books made them a luxury. Some had only a Bible. Albert Alford's identification in all books he lent.

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Mother came from Quaker background and had strict upbringing. Operators had to be respected by their community; they were more careful.

13 18

Mrs. Foster, a Moscow dressmaker from the South, was a racist, believing blacks had no souls. The Alford's and Jim Reid were Southerners. Southern men who got worldly experience often became quite liberal, but the women tended to remain narrow. Attitudes in West towards South.

(18 minutes)

with Sam Schrager

August 11, 1976

II. Transcript

This conversation with CATHERINE MAHON took place at the Luna House ^{.1} Museum in Lewiston, Idaho on August 27, 1976. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

CM: He found out cement basements can get pretty wet.

SS: Did Joe Alexander have a store down here as well as, or just the one in Juliaetta?

CM: Oh this was his uncle. This was uncle Joe, the original Joe. The one in Juliaetta was his nephew. Named for him, of course, but he was his nephew. Joe and Amanda. And Amanda Johnson. But it was his uncle down here, and of course his uncle financed him in the begining, set him up in the store, you see.

SS: They were Jewish?

CM: Oh yes. They would have said, were not Orthodox Jews. But Joe was all Jew. Some of them, you know, then, well Joe was, ^{some of them} in his generation, most of them didn't marry Jewish. In Lewiston, they associated other people more than any of the other Jewish families, and most of them socially, and most of them did not marry Jewish. ^{if they ever did or not.} Gosh, I don't know. The other Jewish families, the Banards and Goldstens, mostly married Jewish people. They stayed a little more, they were more Orthodox Jews. And Joe had a brother, old Joe, who wasn't here very much, and it was his brother's wife who kept house for him. And later when his brother's children of course, scuttlebutt had it that a lot of them were Joe's, because the brother was gone a heck of a long time and the children arrived regularly, it was a large family. But nobody knew. She was quite German, Jewish I guess. Didn't mix much. Everybody knew Joe. Everybody liked him. And she was not a social person. But the children were. Some of them were very, very popular, there'd be no party for young people in Lewiston that some of them ^{that age} wouldn't go to. Which wasn't always true of the other Jewish families. But they mixed more. And I know one granddaughter of Uncle Joe that I knew very, very well and she ^{put it, "Oh, "} were not Orthodox Jews. Course, she was only half Jewish. Her father was not Jewish. But her mother was, a niece, a brother, a sister of the Joe that was at Juliaetta. And, but you see, Joe up there didn't marry a Jewish girl. He married a Juliaetta girl, you know. And they, I think never went to the church, to their

synagogue particularly when it came time to marry or anything. They didn't bother and I know in that generation they weren't strict about keeping the, oh, you know, not eating ham, they weren't kosher at all. And I don't know whether in the family house though, old Joe *may have been*^{somewhat}. Because this other, his sister in law was a Mrs. Alexander, who kept house, ran the place. She was also Jewish. She was a German Jewish.

SS: Her husband was...

CM: Was a brother of the merchant and he didn't amount to anything and he'd show up and I know my mother said, the reason she gave credence to the story, she heard him call ^{up} ~~one~~ and talk to him, "What do you want? Money I suppose!" (laughs) And well, "He was here. Well we don't need to see you." You know. (laughs) "You just come around for some money, I suppose."

SS: Was the old Joe a widower?

CM: I don't know, quite frankly, you just asked me something I don't know.

SS: This younger Joe, do you think there were some people that would hold it against him that he was a Jew in Juliaetta? It didn't matter.

CM: No, ^{it didn't matter} And of course his wife wasn't and they were established people. *Nobody thought anything about it.*

SS: In Juliaetta did they...

CM: Oh, they mixed completely.

SS: They probably didn't go to church though.

CM: No, I don't think they did and Juliaetta was kind of church town. If they did it would be his wife's church, you know. But I don't suppose he went. But I think it was like anybody else that didn't attend church. Juliaetta had a lot of churches. They had a Catholic church way up on the hill, they had small, they had a Methodist, United Brethern, oh golly, they got a ^{whole} lot of churches.

SS: They had United Brethern.

CM: Oh yes and I think there was something else in the begining. There was quite a few churches for a while. Almost more than the town could support. I think the Methodist is the main survivor up there, isn't it? I think maybe United Brethern. That was a strong church up there. I think quite a few people went

to it. But the Methodist was quite prominent. Now I don't know what else.

SS: I understand that there were a lot of revivals in those days.

CM: I presume there were. Now, that I don't that there were in Lewiston. They were around, it was kind of a thing you know, to have them. Palouse had a lot of churches. And had not much, there were a few Catholics, but I don't know if they had a church or not. The sisters of St. Benedict came and taught school one summer. ^But there were a few Catholics there, but not many. There was quite a group of Episcopalians, there was the Christian Church, the Methodist...

SS: From what I understand it seems that some people preferred the Evangelical type of Christianity and some people like^d the more staid kind, they weren't too demonstrative.

CM: Oh yes, there was a definite difference there. And of course there was quite a bit of, some Methodists stayed quite straight and some were quite demonstrative. In the groups, I know, there were some that would not be quite so thrilled at the ones that got up and shouted. And they called them the Shouting Methodists and the others, you know. But one very dear, sweet pioneer Methodist in Lewiston that was my mother's very close friend, Grandma Piersdorf had a way of, she couldn't do those things, you know, I mean, she never shouted and made an exhibition. But they had a minister here ^{who} that wasn't too popular. He had, the poor fellow tried too hard. He just tried to^o hard. He tried to be young with the young people too much. He tried to be with everybody. And he had a perfect knack of putting both feet in his mouth. And making people mad. And Mrs. Wright, her husband was a pioneer blacksmith and a very well to do man here, not to attend that church, they were all down in the flat, 'cause it was convenient and especially I think on a Sunday evening, course there wasn't much social life, that was kind of the thing to do. And it was handy for her, but she wasn't a member of that church, and didn't intend to be. Maybe she belonged to another one or something, she had definite ideas that way. But she sort of liked to go ^{over there}. She told Grandma Piersdorf, she said "Everytime I go he gets out there real quick you know, to shake hands. And

he says, "I'm still praying for you Mrs. Wright, still praying for you." She says, "It makes me sound like I'm a terrible sinner, you know." And Grandma Piersdorf smiled and she said, "Well just tell him the ~~prayers~~ of the righteous ~~avail~~^{eth} much." (pause in tape) Colfax and Palouse.

SS: Bernard was a Jewish name.

CM: Oh yes, and they were all related. And Bernard in Lewiston, it came from them.

Now Joe Alexander had a store in Grangeville with Frederick, another Jewish fellow and it's the A&F. It's still the A&F store. And I think maybe in Genessee.

SS: In Genessee it was Rosenstein and...

CM: Jake Rosenstein, a very, very dear friend of my grandfather's. Very close, they were chums! And I said to my mother later, I'd always known she'd ~~known~~ these different Jewish people. And, but Jake Rosenstein, they were very close, he was my grandfather's closest, they were just chums! And I knew he had be-
relatives
friended him up ~~river~~ in Oregon. And he gotten his ~~A~~ down there to help him and they financed him at times. Oh.

SS: Your grandfather had.[?]

CM: No, they had helped my grandfather. And ~~they~~ had been so good to my grandfather.

My mother, his relatives and everything. I said, "Well now, do Jewish people generally stick together?" You know, they're kind of clannish. "How did it happen? We aren't Jewish! There's no Jewish blood. How did that happen?"

And mother said, "You know, we never thought about it. It was just Pops' best friend was this Jewish, Jake Rosenstein." And she said, "It must have been the language. They could speak the same ~~time~~^{type} of Low Dutch, or German.

And maybe it was that. When they both had had troubles with language when they came to this country. And they just happened to like each other!" Of course, everybody liked Jake Rosenstein. In Genessee. Now, talking about the Jews and being accepted, in these small towns, there weren't many Jews. So there was never a ghetto, you know. They lived with other people. They went to the other schools. And if there was any association, it was. And they were mostly accepted. And as I say, very often didn't marry Jewish. Now sometimes

they did. And those were the more Kosher Jews. But lots of them kind of drifted away. Well, there was no synagogue, there was no rabbi. They didn't go to the other church, but they still weren't very strong in theirs. And they were accepted. They were much more accepted and assimilate than the Jews in the big cities in all the Western towns at that time. The Jews as merchants were part of the community. And Jake Rosenstein in Genessee was loved. I remember in my business, one man said, "You knew Jake Rosenstein!" I said, "No, never saw him. But he was my grandfather's best friend." And this was a very substantial older farmer from up there, not Jewish, I think he was probably Lutheran, because there ^{were} ~~was~~ many, but he said, "My father told me always you buy from Jake Rosenstein. You would have starved to death without Jake Rosenstsein!" And there had been this panic in the '90's or so.

SS: '93.

CM: And they would have been very hard up. And Jake Rosenstein gave them all credit, very nicely and graciously. And was very good to them. And they respected him and everybody in town liked the, it would sometimes, they would ready to kosher and it would come up, when it came time to marry, whether they would marry a Jew. And then it would be a difference you see. And it was just as apt to be that the Jewish people were objecting to marrying somebody else more than the others would to marry a Jew. Of course, they probably wouldn't have become a Jewish person, which is difficult to become, to go into that faith, I understand, I guess you have to go through quite a bit. But Jake Rosenstein had wanted to marry out of the religion. He had been in love with a girl in Oregon. I think he always, "I should have married Mary." But she wasn't Jewish and she was kind of, in his mind a beautiful "it might have been."

^{But} His family didn't approve and all and he didn't, he thought it was better to marry Jewish. And the girl he married, and everybody in Genessee liked her very much. In fact she was from one of the townspeople, almost more liked than he was. She was very German. She came from Germany and they were courting at his brother in law's house, I think it was, in Oregon. And my mother was visiting there as a child. And she could hear them talk. They talked in German.

In the parlor. They'd gone off to the parlor to talk. They were courting. And the family was very, 'making the match'. This was very much their approval. And mother said it was all in German so ~~some~~ of the kids could listen but they couldn't understand a word of it, you know. (laughs) And they knew they were kind of courting out in the parlor and they were kept out of the parlor at that time. But friends liked her very much. He was very jealous of her, and nobody knew it. I know what I said that to one girl that lived in Genesee, and she said, "Was that what's the matter with him?" (laughs) I said, that was the most ridiculous thing there was no reason at all. And he'd be jealous of the bookkeeper or something. Just a good bookkeeper and I don't want you to do nothing without him 'cause the two worked and ran the store and they prospered. And I know his wife was away once and there was a fair in Lewiston and of course fairs were one of the big things. And my mother was always active in them and she was secretary in the poultry association, and knew all the people in the fairs that made the circuit. And I know his two little girls came down and stayed with ~~us~~^{her} to go to the fair. And mother said they were so cute. And bright. And I think however, I'm not sure, when they grew up they went to school. Whether they really, whether they went and married Jewish or not, I'm not positive. But they were very smart. They went to college, you know. She was oh, such an attractive little kid, girl? She just adored them. And she had them as her houseguests so they could go to the fair. Which was a normal thing. When my grandfather was in Oregon, as I say, he met Jake, I don't know just how. And he was a stage driver and he needed, he wanted, he'd been on the mail route from Looking Glass near Roseburg to Albany I think. And one of Jake's relatives financed him to buy his equipment. And they had a disastrous barn fire and it burned. And it wasn't paid for yet. And he just immediately financed him again, which some people wouldn't have. And of course, my grandfather did pay him back. But he was so gentle, there wasn't any arguments like, no hassle like a bank would give you none of these, and why didn't you do this? And of course, they didn't have insurance. And why this and why that. And my mother

who was considered very sickly and the kind, "Too bad she'll never live to be grown," child, you know. They knew she wasn't very well and they would say, "Well bring Laurel over." And she would go and be their houseguest. And now, they were quite wealthy. More than the average person. And they would just take her into the family and they ~~were~~ marvelous to her. And mother said she did eat a lot more over there than her folks could possibly tempt her.

SS: Was this Jake's family?

CM: This was relatives of his. Yes, in Oregon. And then Jake...

SS: And he lived with his relatives?

CM: Well, he peddled. He was a Jewpeddler. He carried a pack in the begining.

And had quite a hard time. He was a poor Jew, as he would say.

SS: Was this at Roseburg?

CM: Out from there. Relative in Roseburg and in Albany. There were the two there.

SS: Two families.

CM: All related. All these Jews were related. I think it was his sister's husband, or something. I think, let me see, Sol, what was the names of the ones in Oregon. ¹ One of 'em was famous for, he and his mule. They came to Roseburg. They were very prominent Jewish family there. And one lived in Albany, brother, and one lived in Roseburg. And they were among the rich people of the places, each one. When my mother was in Albany visiting them, they had a pet, one of the children in the town, now this shows that they mixed in the town a great deal, died. And they had a funeral for him. And they had a little pet cemetery there. And all the children, and she said, "There were fifteen or more of us." She went with the others and they had a funeral for that pet. And they buried it in this pet cemetery. And she had never seen anything quite like that.

SS: This family had the pet cemetery?

CM: No, the town had a pet cemetery. I said Albany, I think that was in Oakland.

I don't know. Albany or Oakland. Where his bus ran, it was one of the terminals. Oakland maybe. I'd know it on the map in the Roseburg county.

SS: It wasn't that far from Roseburg.

CM: Oh well, it took quite a little trip in the horse and buggy days. And that was horse and buggy days.

SS: Course Albany is almost out towards Portland.

CM: Yes. But they did go, I think this was Oaks... toward the coast I think it's more. And course, all travel was by stage^{coach}, you see. And my grandfather was a stagecoach driver. Carried the mail. The mail was the important thing. That's what kept the stagecoach going. Your passengers were that much velvet in your freight. There was this good by product to being that, but you would be in the towns and you could shop very nicely. And if there was fresh fruit that was a little bit scarce, maybe at Palouse, why he could bring it from Colfax. Or if the^{re} fresh fruit, maybe it would be a fish, 'cause they didn't have much fish unless you bring it, well then the Burns family would have fish. He'd bring enough to maybe sell, he'd know somebody that'd buy it. Maybe a hotel. And he'd always make enough on what he'd sell them to furnish his own but, they had a rather good table in their house. And my grandfather being a ^{thrifty} European family, but he wanted a nice table. He wanted to be sure there was always ham and always things like that in the house, you know. But he liked to have those things. And my grandfather, some things he would indulge himself in very thrifty. But the '90's or the 80's you would pay a dollar for a choise can of sardines. And cheese, when it was available and that would be ^a thing he would buy. Lot of cheese. Loved it. And, or as I say, those fresh fish or something, and fruits. And they always had a can of fruit. Boughten can on Sunday. It was a custom in most of the households they baked a nice cake for Sunday dinner. But in the Burns home they had cake plus fruit.

SS: The Burns?

CM: That was my mother's maiden name BERNs. The Europeans spell it like Berne in Switzerland. And my mother said some of her friends very much liked an invitation to dinner. Because the cake would be about the same, but there would be this fruit. And she said looking back, it wasn't all that wonderful. And they generally paid close 75¢ at least and sometimes more for this can of fruit.

And she said ^{was often} quite a lot of it was juice and all that, but it was fruit that they didn't have otherwise. Well home canning hadn't progressed as far either. And then, fruit was scarce in the early days up there. Most of the people had currants and raspberries quite soon. They spread those around. But fruit, except when they came down and brought it up from the river, which they did. It came up from the river. You know there's these roads leading down from all that country to the river. And once when she was sick, one man rode clear down there and brought back a ^{box} bunch of peaches for her. When she was, oh, maybe 12, 13. A friend of the family had liked her and he made that whole trip. And that was a long ways by horseback. He did it on horseback 'cause he could carry the box on horseback.

SS: Was this from Palouse?

CM: From Palouse. And you see Palouse was Colfax. And then they had a road to Moscow. Moscow was there. Pullman was a very small town in those times. Very small. Pullman didn't grow until they got the college. Which Palouse could have had. It was going to be located at Palouse, Pullman or Colfax. Whitman county was to get it. And Palouse was so sure that they were the ones to get it that they didn't make any concessions much. But, "Buy our land is a good price!" Colfax didn't have a good place for it. They were the county seat and they thought, "They'll have to come here." And Pullman just got in and worked like the dickens to get it, "We'll give you this, we'll give you that, we'll give you the other thing!" And they got it. And of course you know it's hilly, it's not the best location, but it was a goad to Whitman county and it settled between those towns and they got it. Palouse could have had the lumber mill that went to Potlatch. They again didn't make the concessions. They missed out several times, but in my mother's day, the St. Elmo was the, was quite a hotel. And you ^{know,} up there now, a lot of people don't even know the name St. Elmo, but that's that old brick building with the mansard roof on Main street in Palouse.

SS: Wasn't there a St. Elmo in Kendrick too?

CM: I don't know. There may have been.

SS: Some old timer told me they had the same name hotel.

CM: Well it was the hotel...

SS: In Palouse.

CM: Oh yes. And it was the hotel. Now it wasn't run by a French madam like a lot of our hotels were. It was, they were purely American. In Lewiston we had two hotels run by French madams. And I know in, where my father lived in eastern Oregon they did.

SS: Was one of those the De France?

CM: Oh yes.

SS: I'd heard about that one.

CM: The De France and the Raymond House was from Madam Raymonsaux. Mother said the first time she saw it she said, "Socs? What is that?" But it was Saux.

SS: What were these French ladies like?

CM: Very efficient. Business women who were there to run the hotel and make money. Generally, if they had a husband he helped them. But they were just purely business women. Definetely. They ran a hotel and the resturant and charged and it was rather an efficient operation, I would say and, business woman, a very definite business woman in the '80's, and there weren't too many things a woman could do. You know. But that was one thing they could do. And even if they have a husband, generally speaking, they were the brains. They watched out for everything and they could probably go in and cook if they had to. But they hired a cook. They could make beds if they had to, they could wait on table if they had to, but they didn't especially do it. They were overseeing it and were quite workers.

SS: Did they have a respected role in the community?

CM: Oh yes. They were generally quite strict. When my mother went into Burns, Oregon for the telephone company, she sent her in to take charge of the office. And her instructions were to get the keys before she told anybody her business. Because the big company had bought out the small ^{little} local company. And they weren't keeping books. They never kept books that was, you know, everybody out for one thing. And they wanted to systemitize it. And they were going

to train ^{their own} operators, but I don't suppose they had told the family that they would immediately fire their help that were relatives, the girls. And but they wanted anything that was there, because it was supposed to be their money. And they knew this Mr. Bush that ~~had~~ handle^d the deal that was the Northwest traffic manager for the company and that everybody feared and trembled that was in the company when he came along. And ^{here} of course, these people hadn't been at all. And so his instructions to my mother were, "Get the keys before you tell anybody what your business is." Well, you did what the boss said. And she arrived in Burns ^{from} Portland. She'd been there for awhile. And probably looked a little more city, little different you know. I mean, dress. And it was Court Week in Burns and a lot of people came in. And of course, ladies that were kind of gay congregated there. More for that time, 'cause there was more money being spent. And she asked for a room and, "What is your business?" She said, "Well I can't tell you my business." "Then you cannot have a room!" And so, mother said she ~~had~~ ridden over the mountain, she was so miserable. Cold, mud spattered and hungry and tired and she thought, "I just have to have a room. I'll just start crying ^{right} down here in the lobby if I don't have a room. I just can't stand it without a room!" You know. And so she looked at her and she said, he had told her which hotel was the leading hotel, to go there. Because he had been through and of course the telephone company was paying her expenses. And she said, "Do you know the people that run the telephone." Well, it was the so and so's. The Wrights or the Smiths, I don't know the name now. ^{"Are you acquainted with them?"} "No, not really." And she said, "I took a chance." And she said, "Well I'm here to take over. And I'm not supposed to tell this." "Oh, well then, you can have a room." And so, after while, she'd been there a little bit, she was going to move, ~~her mother~~ didn't stay long enough, but she had an annex across the street where her daughter lived and she was educating her daughter in music and what have you and she was to be the fine lady. And her daughter lived over in the annex, which was very exclusive and she was going to move her over into the annex. So that meant that she was approved quite, that she was sufficiently proper person. But she got her room but

she had to tell her business, first. And no, in Lewiston ^{Mamie (?) Saux} was one of the most popular ladies in the high social surface. And, the daughter of Madam Saux, and her sister, Mrs. Timberlake, ~~was~~ didn't care about things that way, but I don't think she was, ~~who, she~~ at that time, ran the business. And I don't think, I know she thought she was as good as anybody in the, and that would be that. And it was just that she was business. And you see there weren't, as I say, there were women ^{that were} ~~have~~ always managed somethings. But they didn't have the same opportunities. You could be a milliner and run a millinery shop, and that was one of the best businesses. My grandmother did that. Or you could run a hotel or a boarding house. If you were a dressmaker, unless you were in a big place, you were just, maybe, it wasn't as good a job. Or you could teach school and it was a very poor job. Might be a two months school here or a two months school there. And once in awhile they got decent pay and the clerks in the stores were not women. They were men, most of the time. They were just barely, in the '90's they began to have women clerks. But in these little stores, why you bought your ribbons and your yardgoods from a man! They were all men in the stores. I suppose part of it was because ~~it~~ ~~was a~~ general stores and there was a lot of lifting in parts. Because they bought things in quantity. But men did it. So how many things could a girl do? You know. She could be a hired girl. Somebody's hired girl.

SS: I've heard about that a lot. A lot of women did that.

CM: Oh yes. And it really wasn't that bad a job, but it wasn't that good a job either. We wouldn't like it. But that was, the difference was do they eat with the family or not. And some of them did not go where they didn't eat with the family. And a few people, they were putting on quite a lot of airs. If a hired girl didn't eat with the family, in some of these homes. But a few people, few professional and that would not let the hired girl eat with the family. And if they were a wealthy home they might have two hired girls. But the average hired girl ate with the family.

SS: That's interesting, I never heard that.

CM: Oh yes. And then it was told that one place, one that was putting on airs,

didn't allow the hired girl to have desert.

(End of side A)

CM: ~~Pieces of pie~~ were carefully counted. So they didn't have it sometimes too easy. That was a place that was considered hard to work, but they paid a little more.

SS: What about what was expected from a hired girl? Didn't that vary a lot?

CM: Oh yes, but they just did everything. They just helped with the work. You know, washing was done by hand. And they probably did the washing. And the ironing was tremendous. And they cooked and they took care of kids and did the usual things, I guess, that were done around then. And generally it was a lot to do. It was a big family, generally the housewife herself worked right along with them, and the children if they were old enough; in lots of homes, just became an extra member of the family sometimes. But and then it was more oh, banker or lawyer that was putting on a little more front, why then maybe there was more distinction. But in the average home they were really more like just another member of the family that was like an older child, they'd grown up and was helping more. And then of course they were table waiters in the hotels. And ~~the~~ waitresses. And the waitresses didn't have as good a standing, quite. I think because they ^{felt they} waited on the drummers that came to town and that. And maybe they went with them some, 'cause they were ~~thrown~~ with them. And that wasn't as a rule. Now that varied. Some waitresses had very good standing. But sometimes maybe not quite as good. Probably it was a little better job than the hired girl. But still jobwise, I think maybe looking back on it, I probably would rather ^{have} been a waitress than a hired girl. I'm quite sure I wouldn't have liked to be a hired girl. But there weren't very many things for women to do. And I know my mother wanted to work at something. Her father owned stock in the store so she was ~~putting pressure on~~. They were begin^ging to hire women a little bit. And he was begining to put a little pressure on her not hiring Laurel, you know. But the telephone came to Palouse, and one other girl was hired. But after she'd been there about four months she decided to she wanted to leave town. And she decided. I think her father

put in a word

with somebody too, knew her folks and she didn't have any special friends so she sent word for my mother to come. And she went to work for the telephone company. Well her wages were as much a month as a schoolteacher. Which wasn't large. I think was about, oh, twenty dollars a month. Something like that. But that was about what lots of schools paid. And it was twelve months a year. But you worked about 14, 12, 14 hours a day and you worked half a day on Sunday to school. But still it was a twelve months a year job. It wasn't two months over there, two months over here and off in between you know.

SS: She'd already had that experience in Burns.

CM: No, this was long before Burns. That was when she started working for the company. And she worked there and she heard, they decided to come to Lewiston. The company was going to send somebody to Lewiston. And they wanted somebody to go and they decided that she had trained in this town, somebody that could relieve her at Palouse. And so they said, "Well you can send that." And she said, "No, I'd kind of like to go." And they said, "Yes, if you want to go you can." So she had heard that Lewiston was a promising town that might grow. And she decided to come to Lewiston, although it meant some hardships 'cause she could live at home, her mother was dead, but she and her father at Palouse. And she came down to Lewiston. And when she came to Lewiston she came down the hill, the Lewiston hill with Molly the early stage driver. And she stayed at first at the Raymond House. But that was too expensive. Meals were 50¢. And she couldn't afford to stay there. So her first home here was with the Thatchers, that started the bookstore. Grandma Thatcher and Grandpa Thatcher. And he had been in this country in the '70's. He was Indian agent on the first, and Grandma Thatcher would still tell those times with black eyes snapping, about the time they stold the capital in the middle of the night. In Boise. Oh yes, and was very indignant.

SS: Would you tell me how...

CM: I don't know too much, but she said they came in the middle of the night. Which they did, really, you know, to move the things I guess it was inevitable that they would, but they removed things in the middle of the night. And

took it to Boise. And of course, at one time, Lewiston you see was the head for all, you might say, northern Idaho mostly. And Moscow began to grow. And when they divided the counties, it was a lot of bitterness about how much they gave. And Gene see, you see, was given to Moscow. And they said, we were afraid. Some of the Nez Perce people, "Why did you give all that? You didn't have to." And they said, "We gave them Gene see and kept as close as we could so they wouldn't split off into another county." And Genessee was the town they thought might want to be a county seat too. So they put Genessee over with Moscow to keep them from being another county. And you see once Clearwater and Nez Perce and I would always say La-tah were all part of Nez Perce county.

SS: When your mother stayed with Mrs. Thatcher, was she boarding with her?

CM: Yes, she boarded with her. Now they didn't regularly keep boarders, but they did take her. And she stayed there for a while and then she stayed with Grandma Piersdorf, it was a little cheaper and she felt that she needed to save that money and she said afterwards, "Maybe I should have stayed." But of course she loved Grandma Piersdorf too. But one of the Thatcher boys had said, "Why do you want to move down there?" Mrs. Thatcher said, "Now Mrs. Piersdorf is a very nice lady and that will be alright." And she was a darling. But of course she always stayed a very close friend of the Thatchers too. She just really was very fond of them. And at that time Mrs. Thatcher herself, she kept a little buggy and a horse. But she had a very lovely set of Shakespearean books that were leather bound and valuable in the '90's, very valuable. And the Itoughton-Mifflin salesman came around. See we didn't have libraries, so we bought a book and the amount of books you bought was kind of a sign whether you had any culture or not. And books were loaned very carefully and they were very treasured things. And she had this lovely set of Shakespeare. And he had taken it down to the store and had it on exhibition. It was kind of an attraction. And this salesman said, "I'll give you a hundred dollars for it." A hundred was like a thousand now, or more, you know. In those days. And he told her he would take them. They ate quite nicely on white

linen and so forth, you know. And so Grandma said, "Well you didn't sell it?" "Oh," he said, "of course not." "You sure you didn't?" "You sure?" "I think I'll go and get it. I don't think I'll leave it down there anymore. I think I'll go and get it this afternoon." And she did. She had the horse hitched up and she went and got her set of Shakespeare because if they were casting longing eyes on it, she was not going to put temptation in any one's way by getting them. So she did.

SS: Did they have the bookstore at that time?

CM: They had the bookstore. Yes, he had retired from the government and had the bookstore, was Thatcher.

SS: So she was bringing back home from the bookstore.

CM: Yes she brought it back home. She wouldn't leave it in the bookstore anymore, if they were going to offer that kind of money, why, it might not be safe there. So she brought it home and it still I think supposedly in the family. But it wasn't in the branches I knew. I asked one of the granddaughters once, we belong to the same service club. And I said, "Who has the leather bound Shakespeare?" "I don't know. Don't know anything about it." I said, "Well I do." (laughs) "Your grandmother had it." She says, "I'll ask mother. Aunt So and so has it."

SS: So the number of books that you had was an important measure of the culture?

CM: It had something to do with it. Yes, it did. Books were a luxury, an expense. And you see freight had been important. And shipping books are heavy. And they weren't absolutely basic that you had to have a book to live, you know. So ^{they} came with culture. They generally had a Bible. Although my mother said she heard her mother say once about a sister, that she wasn't too happy about. Her, she loved her, but she wasn't happy about some fractions and I don't think they have a Bible in the house." And she was very worried about that, but they always did have the family Bible, I think. But that sometimes might have been about the only book in some homes.

SS: Were books that were in homes read carefully?

CM: Oh I think so. I think so. In the begining, maybe later, you know, as they were handed down not so much. But they were in the begining yes. And loaned from person to person quite a bit. One of our early, well, ~~when they first~~, one of the Alford boys, Albert Alford founded the Tribune wrote in his books "Stolen from the library of Albert Alford." So anytime you had that book, he loaned it to you, it was stolen from the library of Albert Alford. So you'd know it'd have to go back. And on all his shelves that was in there. Very important. ^{From the} "Library of Albert Alford." And quite nice writing in there, or sometimes a very elaborate stamp or something. Or very nicely done Spencerian on the flyleaf ^{or} on the book, who it belonged to. And well, you'll find if you buy an old book in a bookstore now, quite often the flyleaf, i'll be who its to and who its from, the gift, because it was a gift. I know I bought a volume of poetry, Meredith recently because I had lost this book. It had gotten ruined. And I saw it in this antique store. And it was in there. Of course, the name means nothing to me because I bought it in another town, but "To So and so" such and such a date from So and so" you know.

SS: Who was the author of the book?

CM: That was Meredith I bought.

SS: George Meredith?

CM: Yes. Lucille I bought, you know. The one that says that a ^{civilized} man cannot live without books, can't live without music, can't live without art. ^{Civilized man.} And I had had a very, very, really nicer volume of it, padded leather. It had gotten ruined and I regretted it, it was my mother's. And this is a good volume, it's like some of my other poetry, but it's not quite as good as what I bought, but anyway I replaced it.

SS: How old was your mother when she was living in Lewiston working for the phone company?

CM: Oh, let's see. Mother was born in '72. She came here in '93, the spring of '93.

SS: About 21.

CM: Yes. A young woman. And business, I know. You remember that was somewhat

the Victorian age. There, Edward I guess was on the throne, wasn't he? But they were of that time. And her mother was not an active member, but her folks back had been Quakers. Her mother had been raised away from it, but she still had a little bit of that strictness about it, but she belonged to another church, because it was the only church in the town, where she joined. But they were raised in rather a strict way. All of them. And I know ones said, "Were there strict rules in the company about how the operators were to behave?" And I said, well, you would have lost your job if you had not been respected in the community. But I think the rules were made more by the people themselves. The operators. They had their standards. And I don't think that the company, you would have lost your job, yes, but I don't think they said, "You can't do this or you can't do that." I think those were self-imposed rules and you just said, you had to be respected in your community. Or they wouldn't hire you. But beyond that I don't think they spelled anything out, I think the people themselves did.

SS: Judgement by your peers.

CM: Yes. I think it was. They were in, you know, it was a society that did that. They frowned on things. Not that there weren't, that they didn't do one of the things that people do now. They did. But they were rather careful. I think it always comes back to that, that you're judged by your peers. If its, this is permissible, why that's permissible. That's the whole bit. But there weren't the number of opportunities for women, that was the trouble. Now I think there was a dressmaker that my mother used to visit in Moscow so much, and this is Foster. I don't know whether you've run across that name or not. But she was from the South. There were a lot of people from the South up North after, this was enough after the Civil War that they had lightning opportunities, they had come North. And she was from, I think South Carolina. Very very definite ideas of white supremacy ^{over} the Negroes. She expected the Negro to get off the street and stand in a gutter until she walked by. A negro didn't have any soul, but you didn't tell them because of course they might do very bad things if you let them know. But they were just animals. And

mother said, "In every other way, just a charming, lovely person, but that was the old South." You know. And there were a whole group though, of Southern people came north ^{through} Moscow to Lewiston. Now the Alfred brothers here were from the South. Our Tribune family. But they were not, the men that ran it were not as narrow. They had mixed in the world and they knew that other things and other ideas, so they ~~themselves~~ didn't carry these ideas. But they understood them probably. And Jim Reid the lawyer, who was a very ^{close} friend and one of the framers of the Idaho Constitution, from the South, now his family would feel that way, but he didn't. He had lived North long enough and when a Southern becomes liberal, they're generally very liberal. Extremely so. You know. They are probably, because they really know the other side, they're probably a little better than the average just plain Northerner. And some of them were very liberal, but there were some, generally the women, I think, at that time, ^{that} carried the old feeling more. 'Cause they hadn't mixed in business much. And so they carried the old feeling. I think it was more the women than the men. Fortunately I'm a feminist, but I think women had probably been the narrower all through on that.

SS: Was it a matter off race primarily or how much of it was a feeling of independence, a desire of independence for the South?

CM: Well this was northern country and the GAR were like the American Legion today. And the GAR parades and the GAR's sell, I imagine that it was ^{Northern} that way, although I don't think that was excessive out here in the west, where they haven't fought, the soldiers from there, but, and they have a GAR parade or something. And they would read your annual constitution and its just barely pro-northern. And yet one of the founders, one of the signers, the one from this territory was, had fought in the Southern...(another voice interrupts)

(End of tape)