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I removed crutch words and false starts from this transcript, including all the “uhs,” “ums,” “sos,” “okays,” “and sos,” and “you knows.”

Leighan Worden: Do you understand that this interview is being recorded for use by Longwood University? Any information given may be made public.

Max Hjortsberg: Yes.

LW: This is Leighan Worden on May 18, 2016 in Livingston, Montana speaking with- Could you state your name and spell it?

MH: Max Hjortsberg- m-a-x h-j-o-r-t-s-b-e-r-g.

LW: Could you just start off by telling us a little bit about how long you’ve lived in the area or how your family came to the area?

MH: I was born in- here in Montana. I grew up in Paradise Valley. My parents came here in the late 60s at the invitation of a friend to come visit and fell in love with the place and decided to stay. I have an older sister who was ready to go into school, so they needed to settle down in one place for that purpose. And the combination of those things, in addition to it being a beautiful place to live, [it] was also relatively inexpensive, even for the times, to settle here and buy a home and live here. My father’s a writer, so that helped with the fact that they needed somewhere that didn’t cost a lot to live. They bought a small place in the Valley at Pine Creek, had a big garden. We had horses, chickens, rabbits, pigs, and kind of a small farm. –lived ... in a very sustainable manner. I was born in 1974, grew up there and went to a small three room school house, but technically a one room school house in Pine Creek. Then completed my education in town at the Livingston Middle School and then Arc Senior High School. Graduated in ’92, went to school at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. Graduated from there, traveled around the US. Lived in Oregon, and then traveled through Europe, North Africa, the Middle East- Came back- was living in Atlanta, Georgia and then decided to return to Montana for what I thought was going to be a layover type stay, just maybe a year. See my family, see some old friends-that was in 1999 and I haven’t left since.

LW: Do you find that a lot of people that grew up in Livingston or around the area end up going away and staying in other places? Or do you find that they come back to Livingston and make their career and lives here?

MH: A good majority of people leave. A lot of friends, people I know, went to Montana State or [the] University of Montana then went to school and stayed. Some stayed in Bozeman and Missoula in those towns. A large portion of the kids I grew up- have all left the area and now live in other parts of the country. By necessity in many respects because there is just not a job base here to support everyone, to give them the opportunity to stay. Certain people stayed because their families owned ranches and they stayed to help run the ranch and continue that basically that family business. Others stayed just for other reasons. Some came back, like myself. I didn’t think I would be able to stay or find a career in this area and I feel like I got lucky in that I did. Some people leave and never come back because they never really liked it to begin with. So it’s mixed,

but I would say, especially for my generation there wasn't a lot of opportunity to stay just because there weren't jobs to support them.

LW: Since you're from the area, you have a wealth of knowledge about the history of Livingston. Could you tell a little bit about the railroad and how that has ... changed the area and what's come out of that change now?

MH: Livingston was found and built by the railroad as a locomotive shop. It's the last stop if you're traveling from the east before the Rocky Mountains begin. At least in a linear path. I mean the Rocky Mountains stretch north and south from here. The first major pass out of the Great Plains technically I right to the west of Bozeman. The railroad picked this area as a place to service locomotives that prior to having to make the many climbs over the mountain passes to the northwest or the engines coming back. The railroad also saw this location as a great place for a hub due to its proximity to Yellowstone. They knew that they could bring passengers into this area and then in Livingston they could then transfer, go to the park- There used to be a rail spur from Livingston to Gardiner that's no longer there. It was very convenient in that sense. Livingston was a railroad town- very blue collar, union town from the late 1800s until the 1980s when after the ...Northern Pacific then became _____ Northern. In 1986, the spring of '86, the railroad closed the Livingston shops and moved the locomotive services that they did here to other places throughout the Midwest and the west, and with that went the economic base and a large portion of the population. I'd probably say a third. A lot of people got early retirement, there was a state of "accidents" and disability payouts right at the end, but for the most part, everyone packed up and left with the railroad and left Livingston severely depressed economically, but not completely down and out. Then the town rebounded with a new focus and- on the tourist economy, which had always been there alongside the railroad economy, but now it took center-stage and Livingston promoted itself as a destination and since that time- it's 30 years now- the economy has become dependent upon it and also thriving from the tourist economy. And there's been a bunch of recent studies that come out that show the hundred and millions of dollars that brings to this area and Livingston ranks in the top 1 or 2 towns in the state for revenue gained from people coming here to go to the park to take in the natural beauty and the scenery, the amenities that the, I guess, recreation economy provides- rafting, hiking, fishing, anything that kind of involves an outdoor activity- hunting is another very important one as well. Now that drives the local economy and it shows Livingston as doing pretty well considering where it had been post-railroad departure.

LW: Do you find that there's opposition to the tourist crowd, or not so much since people realize that that's driving the economy here?

MH: I don't see much opposition to it because so many people that live here share that same, I'd call it a lifestyle, although I don't like the term. A lot of people who live here hunt for food and so a strong hunting economy and outfitting economy is desired and respected a lot of people here love to fish and hike and ski, and enjoy the outdoors. There's the more sport-minded contingent, but there's also a very traditional western component that enjoy equestrian activities: back country pack trips, trail rides- And I'd say the biggest conflicts that come from that is land use disagreements: mountain bikers get angry when trails are closed to mountain biking, snowmobilers get upset when they can't access a certain area on their snow machines- So I think the conflicts

between that- you have people that want trails designated for hiking only, but people want to ride their horses on them...or if the Forest Service closes a road to motorized traffic, that upsets people who like to ride their four-wheelers and their dirt bikes up into certain areas, but then the people who like to trail run or hike are thrilled at the opportunity to be on a trail without four-wheelers and such. The conflicts, and they're minor, people get angry, but there's still enough room for everyone to do what they like to do in this area that it hasn't gotten to the point of major contention, and that's ... the benefit of being in a very large state with a lot of area at your disposal and a relatively small population. We'd like to think there's already too many people here, but when you go to a major urban area, or the eastern seaboard you realize it's pretty empty.

LW: Switching gear a little bit, you said you've been back in Livingston since '99. Can you explain a little bit about your career? Because you said you were worried you wouldn't be able to find work, so can you explain what you started out doing then and how you ended up with the Environmental Council?

MH: As a background, I went to a liberal arts school, I got a degree in History, and I'm a poet. I didn't really, I know I wasn't really going to make a living from any of that unless I went on to teach or to use it in another profession, so when I moved back to Livingston I hadn't really set on any one career path, but I love the outdoors. I love fly-fishing, and I love the free stone, mountain, stream, and water-shed ecology because of that. As I was just working odd jobs here, wondering if I was going to be staying or not, I ran into an old friend who had just started a water resource consulting company that did stream restoration, enhancement, mitigation, restoration work, and I thought that was really interesting and I just said "Hey, had me a shovel, show me where to dig. I would love to learn about this." So I started working for his company, Aquatic Design and Construction; my friend's name was Russel Smith, his partner was Tom Coleman. And I just started working for them because I thought if one of the major trades in this area is one of the sustaining job sources is construction, but I didn't want to be building houses or working in that. This was a kind of construction job I could get into because I thought "well, at least I'll get to be by a water: near a river, a creek, or a wetland every day for work," which I did. I got to work on projects where we restored spring creeks and restored wetlands or created wetlands. We also created ponds, water features, and things like that... I just started working my way up from the bottom basically, as a laborer to supervisor of field crews to project manager. I just ended up in this water resource and environmental consulting world that I really didn't even [know] it existed prior to working for the company and I loved it. It was interesting. I felt like I got a Masters level education in water, Rocky Mountain ecology and repairing ecology. I went from being the field supervisor/project manager to running projects to bidding projects, and then I went back to school through an online course...[through] Penn State and got a degree in geographic information systems, GIS, and I started applying geographic analysis to the environmental consulting I was doing. The small company I worked for was bought out by a larger environmental company, Oasis Environmental. We continued to do much of the same, but got more heavily involved in environmental permitting and compliance. Oasis was then bought out by a larger company, ERM, which was a multi-national environmental consulting company and I continued to do most of the same things with ERM, but the water resource/restoration field work that shifted away and we shifted more into impact assessment, permitting and compliance, centered around water resources

still, but doing environmental impact statements and assessments for development, oil and gas development or mining projects. Then I continued to use my GIS skills and my field skills with that, but I started to learn quite a bit about the federal level environmental compliance, whereas before it'd primarily been a state level compliance. But as a result of this larger company, the projects I was working on weren't really local projects anymore. They were in Nevada or Wyoming or the Midwest, wherever the work was- It was a big company. I wanted to get back involved in local projects again, so that's when I joined PCEC, so I would have an outlet for my energies on local issues and local projects while still having the job working on the national/international environmental projects. Then, just recently this year, I took a position with PCEC and left ERM and I'm now kind of almost full circle back working full time on local projects. None of this was planned by me. I had no goal when I set out 15 years ago, to do any of this. It just kind of all happened, I guess you could call it, organically. I guess I kept myself open to possibilities and to new opportunities and change and it just- It was odd. I went from a local company to working on international projects, some of the projects I've worked on were based in Africa- It felt like the world came to me in a sense and I stayed put in Livingston and all this interesting stuff kept coming to me and now I'm jumping back out, and working on very local issues that seem to be gaining and capturing the attention of the world and of the nation. It's a new perspective, and I still get to stay in Livingston, which is what I wanted to do. That was my goal, to figure out a way to stay here, survive and live and work and raise a family.

LW: Can you explain what your day to day work entails now that you've flipped back to the local side of things?

MH: I'm still figuring that out because I only just started this week. I'm helping develop and support the local programs, which PCEC's primary goal is to inform the local community on these issues and to keep them informed and up-to-date with the developments and the changes that are going on with them. I'm keeping up-to-date on changes in say environmental policy, changes in local policy, changes in the project, if it's advancing say through a state permitting process or county regulatory process or if there's a permit applications for certain things- Just getting that information and being able to then convey that to the local community and then provide the residents of Park County a means in with which to take on these projects either in a- For instance, how to get comments to a public comment period on an issue, being able to direct them to information on the issue at hand, and then where to send their public comments to, and then get the information from the agency back to the people so they can stay informed. That's primarily what I'm doing now. I'm sure things will change and grow and I have ideas to work on more water resource conservation programs within the county as well, but since I've just started [it's] one step at a time.

LW: What do you think will be the most effective way to put across these educational platforms? What is Livingston going to be most receptive to, do you think?

MH: As in how they receive this information? Social media's a huge component of that. An active and up-to-date website and then community meetings. We host events that people can attend and hear experts in the field speak on it, different community leaders [and] business leaders speak- It's a combination of the old fashion "get out, shake people's hands," talk to them, meet with them and

then the 21st Century alternative to that, which is social media. When you come across an editorial piece in the New York Times, you get that link posted up on social media so that people can see it, read it, and respond to it. Then just being here in the office and being able to answer the phone because people just call us up and say “hey ...I just heard about this issue, what’s going on?” If we can answer the questions, we will. If not, we do our homework and do some research and get back to them. It’s a small enough community where it really makes- you really have a great amount of visibility and connection because you can go out and meet with these people. You see them at restaurants or the grocery store or on a walk, but you’re also connecting with them electronically as well. It’s still a great combination of the two and you don’t really- You have to use both because there’s still a little old fashion attitude in this area that you need to be present in and ...sit down and talk with them.

LW: I imagine having grown up around the area and having come back, you have some good stories about visiting the park. Do you have one unique visit or story that stands out in your mind?

MH: Yeah, a lot of times the visits would be a whirlwind tour with friends and family where you drive down and you make the big loop and see all the sights, and those tend to blur all into one. In the park I had a dear friend, loved to fish with me, he wanted to go fish the Salmon Fly Hatch in the lower Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, right in Tower Falls area, and he said “I have it all planned out, let’s go.” So I just said sure and we drove in the park, and you ... get to Roosevelt and hang a left and head toward Lamar and he just pulled over... he said “the river’s right over there at the bottom of Specimen Ridge.” We hopped out and the river was a half a mile away, but it was down in the bottom, but I remember we get out and you forget in the park it’s all public land and you can just pull over and start- you go for a walk. It’s better to stay on more designated trails to lessen impact, but you can just walk where ever you want in that park if you understand the inherent risks with wildlife and geothermal features and what not, so we just took off wading across the field to get to the river and I remember people would slow, they thought something might be wrong because we’re out of our car or out of our pod, but ... we hiked over, dropped down into the Canyon and fished. And it was great fishing, and the Salmon Fly Hatch was there. I came across obsidian flakes from where early, I don’t know what era, Native American had basically probably sat in that spot and napped an arrow head...those flakes were just the napping flakes. I didn’t find the arrowhead, but there was an immediate draw. This place has a great history and a history that goes far beyond European influence and presence. It think that’s an important part to remember about this area, or I guess anywhere in North America, honestly, or all of the Americas. There was that right at my feet. There I was in the base of the Grand Canyon which is a spectacular formation. I’m fishing, catching fish. -come across an old fir tree, big, big trunk, and there’s grizzly hair wrapped up into the bark. A bear had been using it as a scratching post, kind of made the hairs on the back of my neck tingle a little bit because I’m like how recently had this bear been scratching his back on this tree? I didn’t see the bear, but they’re right there too,... so suddenly you have this- not only do you have this connection to a very deep history in this area to also realizing that you’re not the top dog at that moment. That there’s animals, in particular a very large bear that could have his way and you...I wasn’t worried that I was going to get attacked and eaten by a bear, but suddenly I was not on top of the pyramid anymore. I was sharing the top with another being and that itself, all those experiences come into one, it was in

many ways both exhilarating and inspiring and also very humbling, and I think that that experience what makes a place like Yellowstone really, really unique. Not only for myself in that very one day experience, but I think everyone who visit the park gets a little bit of that feeling from the majestic, vast scenery... to knowing there're wildlife creatures much bigger than them around to these really, really strange geothermal features that I think really show you that the planet is- there's a lot more going on under your feet and sometimes, especially here, it's bubbling right up at your feet. I think that experience I had that day in Yellowstone, was one of many trips down there, but that one really exemplifies why that park is so truly unique and such a special place.

LW: If you could share anything with someone from a hundred years from now, whether it be about Livingston or the park or your efforts with PCEC, what would it be?

MH: It would be rolling up your pant legs and wading up the small tributary to the Yellowstone and feeling that cold water almost numbingly cold, but it's a 90 degree day, so you're not freezing, but that intensity of that cold water that just...newly melted snow that has filtered through...the mountains and the rocks and is flowing through the surface there, and that feeling of that fresh water. That's what I would share. We'd be fishing as well, we'd have a fly rod or spinning ____, we'd be chasing trout because that's what leads me to jumping into these creeks, but here's nothing quite like the feeling of on a really hot day, of jumping in really clear, cold water. It's- At first it's a shock and then it just feels so good. So that's what I'd share.

LW: Is there anything else you'd like to share, that you think we should know?

MH: I've seen a lot of changes in this area since I was a boy. A lot more people have moved in here, for better or for worse. A lot of the people that have come here I've gotten to know, so it's not a bad thing, but you have to realize that this isn't always going to be here, and it can change and it will change and you have to accept that. And when you do, I think you find you really appreciate the place, any place, not just Montana or the park, but any place so much more. People talk about how much cities have changed in the last 30 years, but that's just going to be the same, so I think if you look at it and you know it's not always going to be here, then you yourself, as an individual, aren't always going to be here either- I think it opens up a greater appreciation and love and understanding for that place.

LW: Thank you so much for sitting down with me and talking today.

MH: You're welcome.

LW: I think we will learn a lot from this.

MH: Well, thank you. I'm happy to have been able to participate.