

HALPHILL, HELEN
AND HERSCHALL

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HELEN AND HERSCHALL HALFHILL

An Interview by Wanda McDonough

Wanda McDonough Oral History Project

Tape No. 3

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Archives

Diocese of Salt Lake City

ORAL/TAPED HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Helen & Herschall Halfhill
Name

Interviewer: Wanda McDonough
Name

Interview: June 5, 1991 home of Mr. & Mrs. H. C. Halfhill
Date Place

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Signature

Helen P Halfhill

Date

6/6/1992

A TAPE RECORDING BY WANDA MCDONOUGH (WM) OF AN INTERVIEW WITH
HELEN (H1) AND HERSCHALL (HH) HALFHILL, MADE AT THEIR HOME IN
SALT LAKE CITY ON JUNE 5TH, 1992

WM: Go ahead, Mr. Halfhill.

HH: I was born in Galena, Kansas, a suburb of Joplin, Mis and I moved over to Woods City, in Missouri, and I lived there until I was thirteen. In 1913 I moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I graduated from high school, and then from a prep school in 1920. My father said, when I graduated, "What was I going to do." I said, "I have not made up my mind," so he said, "Work for awhile." So I went into Chicago and worked in Chicago from 1920 'til '23, and then I decided to be an engineer. I went to South Dakota State College in Brookings, South Dakota. I took a course in Civil Engineering, and graduated from there in 1928.

WM: And after South Dakota State?

HH: After I graduated, I worked for awhile in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, and then moved back to Cedar Rapids to work for my father...a general contractor. In 1930 I came to Salt Lake to visit my sister, who was living here at the time. I decided I liked Salt Lake's climate, so I came back in '32 and lived here ever since! And, I worked for the federal government until 1946, when I was forced out due to the fact I was not a veteran.

WM: What did you do with the federal government?

HH: I was an engineer for them. Worked for the good old W.P.A. in Logan--that's how I got to Logan.

H1: He was an engineer there for Box Elder, Cache and Rich Counties.

HH: Three counties! Then, after 1948, I had to find a place to live, and we moved here, and lived here ever since. I went to work for Salt Lake City, and worked for Salt Lake City until 1972. I got tired of the hired help that they were giving me, and I quit! And I haven't worked since! My wife says that I haven't done a minute of work since! And when we first went to Logan, there were only four other Catholic families...in Logan. And at that time--in 1938--practically the entire county was Mormon. I think there were a few Episcopalians, or Presbyterians, I'm not sure which they were, but the primary population was Mormon. We lived there...when my second child was born. I had to take her down to Logan--I mean, Ogden--to have her baptized.

WM: Wasn't there a church in Brigham City?

Hl: No, no! We didn't start that until afterwards!

HH: St. Henry's was started after Logan.

Hl: Father Valine used to have to go over, or one of the others used to go over there and say Mass after they purchased a house, or property over there. I've never been in this development.

WM: I've been in it.

Hl: Well, he used to go over...

HH: Also went to Corinne to say Mass over there-he used to get around.

Hl: He was very good-especially to the boys during the war-because there was a lot of the boys that couldn't come to services and get to Mass, because if they did they would miss breakfast.

WM: You speak of Father Valine?

HH: Yes, Father Valine.

Hl: It was really a rough time.

HH: He was also-from my point of view-one of the best persons they could of sent there as a Catholic priest, because he went around town flaunting the fact that he was a Catholic priest!

Hl: Very friendly. Made himself visible.

HH: The first time he came there, Father Giroux, in Ogden, told him to stop by and see Helen, and I took him to a friend of mine who was in the furniture business, who was quite knowledgeable, who had also worked in Portland, and he took a liking to Father Valine. He sold him the furniture and the stuff he needed for the rectory, and gave him a discount of 5% because he was a clergyman, and 5% for cash! Then he invited him to one of the merchants' monthly meetings. And after Father Valine told the merchants how long it took to be a Dominican priest, they decided to make him their chaplain, primarily because he said the shortest prayer!

Hl: "Grace before Meals!"

HH: He was marvelous especially with those soldiers who came to train during the war. And, like Helen said, if they went to church, they couldn't eat! They lost out in the dormitory. That's when he started making the trips.

WM: You're talking about these soldiers, where were they stationed?

Hl: They were all stationed up there in the dormitories.

HH: In radio school.

Hl: Radio school up at the USAC. They send them there to train for radio work for the army. They weren't boys, they were men.

HH: Grown men. What they were were reserve officers, and reserve noncoms from all over the United States, who were going to take a refresher course before they were assigned to the ships.

WM: And you got a lot of Catholics?

Hl: Oh, yes, there were quite a few of them, and in fact, one of the most memorable occasions was up in the canyon. They had a Canyon Home thing, it was kind of a summer camp. So Father arranged for us to serve the boys breakfast after Easter, and there was a whole group of them that came up after we had Mass up there, and then we gave them Communion. There was only about three or four ladies.

WM: Up in Logan Canyon?

Hl: Up in Logan Canyon, and we served the boys breakfast that day. I've never forgotten it, because we had grapefruit and a lot of meat, potatoes and eggs and rolls and things like that. And then after we had served all the boys, there was this one tall gentleman, and-God love him-he went down with one of his ships. But he went out in the kitchen, and put on an apron and tea towel and said, "All right, now you ladies go and sit down, and I'll serve you breakfast!" So he did and it was just wonderful!

So we did all we could for the boys. We used to have some in our home-practically every Sunday someone would come for dinner. We had a ping-pong table in the basement, and they'd play there. We took them on trips, and got acquainted. But the funniest story was this one big Marine, and he thought Logan was just so tiny and so dead-there was no life around

there. He said, "This is the first town I've seen with a train running through a cemetery!"

But we had all kinds-we had Marines, and we had the sailors, and these men had to put on their little old sailor suits. But they nick-named Postem up there, most of the Catholic boys, Mormon coffee. Because they would ask the boys if they'd like a cup of coffee, and they'd say, "Oh, sure!" They'd be tickled to death when they would invite them into their homes, and then they'd give them Postem, so they nicknamed that Mormon coffee. But they were all good about doing it.

I worked with Professor Christiansen's daughter on the USO. We had entertainment for the boys. This all took place at the college, but, of course it was nothing compared to what the buildings were now. It was only a few of them up there. But, they made quite a fuss about it, too, the Loganites, about having the boys all come in there. They said they'd have to close the sororities at midnight, they wanted their girls in because they were afraid that they were all going to be "led astray", and here these were grown men-you know what I mean-it was the farthest thing from their mind. But, oh, there was quite a fuss about that, but they never did.

WM: You didn't finish telling us:"Halfhill"-that name sounds English to me-what's your background, how old you are?

HH: I was born in 1900. And, the story that I've gotten was that my grandfather's great-grandfather came over here from Alsace-Lorraine.

WM: French.

HH: They were German or French. Because at that time, when they came over here-in 1845, I guess it was, and at that time the Germans were starting to take over all of the various German little colonies. Personally, I've always thought that they were draft dodgers! Anyway, the three brothers came to the United States, and landed in Hershey, Pennsylvania. I've met all descendants from the three brothers, and its the same story. So it was my grandfather's great-grandfather. And there's about a thousand Halfhills in the United States. At least a thousand at the present time. They're scattered all over. I think most of them, when they came over here, went to work for railroads. Most of the people in the United States, since about 1865, were brought over here to work on the railroads.

WM: Railroads-that's what my ancestors did.

HH: The Irish started first, then the Germans, and so on. I've

known personally at least three or four men that were engineers for different railroads. When I say "engineer," I mean the guys that ran the trains. I never could understand why they called those guys "engineers!"

WM: They are locomotive engineers.

HH: Locomotive operators, really. One of the things I remember was a guy who called me one time from the Hotel Utah and said that his name was Charles H. Halfhill. I said, "Yes, my name's H.C. Halfhill." He said that whenever he was in a strange town, he always looked up to see if there were any Halfhills. So I went down and got him, and brought him up to the house and it turned out that he worked for the Union Pacific. And he knew-he had an uncle who knew my uncle. Both of them were named Will and both of them worked for the Santa Fe Railroad at the time. The railroad had to give them a different middle name to keep them separated on the railroad.

WM: They would have to find nicknames.

HH: Then he told me, "Your uncle was an S.O.B.!" And that's what my father said about his brother! [Laughs]

WM: [To Helen Halfhill] Why don't you tell us about your background.

HL: Oh, dear. I don't know where to start!

WM: What's your maiden name?

HL: My name is Helen Florence Pruss. I was born July 21, 1913 here in Salt Lake on a home-in fact the house is still standing. It was on 3rd East there between...somewhere below 13th south. Then my father built a house up on 4th East between 7th and 8th South. It was one of the larger homes on the block. I know we used to get kidded because everyone thought it was where the bishop lived, because it was the one of the nicer ones at the time. At the present time, its been torn down, and now Victoria Square-the Victoria apartments have been built there. In fact on one side of the sidewalk there are three-at least a short time ago-there are three trees that my father planted, and they're still sitting there-as far as I know. Of course now the property's been upgraded and it's been asphalted and that type of thing. I moved up there when I was two- or three-years-old; I don't recollect the house I was born in, but I know which one it was. That was our home for several years, and I used to walk from there up to Judge-or the Cathedral school as they called it. I started in the first grade. I went to summer school for the kindergarten, and

then I started up at Judge, or the Cathedral School.

WM: You're talking about where Judge is now-not in the old Cathedral School?

H1: No, no I'm talking about the one on 11th East. And that was a full 7 blocks, because I walked from 4th East to 11th East in summer and winter-and the only time we were allowed to ride the streetcar was when it was raining, or we used to buy tickets from the nuns up there. But the Daughters of Charity had the lower grades, and I went in there from the first to the seventh grade-I took the seventh and eighth grades together. We were allowed to because they were going to start the high school section, which was going to be under the Holy Cross nuns. That was over on the other side of the building and was forbidden territory as far as youngsters were concerned. But, I felt I received a good foundation as far as education is concerned-from the Daughters of Charity. I particularly remember a lot of them, because they're very kind, dear women, and they were very interested in me. I lost my father when I was nine years old, and they were the first people to come and extend their condolences, I remember at the house.

WM: Do you remember the names of some of the nuns?

H1: There was one nun-Sr. Gertrude, and she's the one, I recollect, they told me about. She was miraculously cured from cancer of the knee. Her nurse said it was the saints-Saint Gertrude I guess it was. And I have a clipping here of Sr. Severina-she was my seventh grade teacher.

We had to have an average of over 90 in order to take the seventh and eighth grade and then the ninth grade. My average was 92 for the two years, so I went into the ninth grade over in the high school section. In those days the grounds weren't-well, the front part of the school had the long driveway that they used to have circled around and go down into where they used to take patients into the hospital when it was a hospital.

The back end of the school was nothing but rocks and trees, and there were little springs that used to run through there. And, in our early days, as children, we used to take our lunches, and sit on the rocks and make little dells around there-around where all of the water was. There was a great big well on one side of the place-I remember very clearly-at the school.

We had wonderful services. We used to go down to confession to the Sisters' Chapel. I remember Sr. Theresa, especially, cause she used to stand at the colonade there, at the

center of the school there where she used to come in, and she played a record of all of Sousa's marches, and she'd be standing there tapping her hand on the colonade. As some of the kids went by, she'd grab them by the collar-especially the boys-take them aside because she'd heard of some infractions they had made, and so she'd talk to them before she let them all into the school. But those early days at the school were tremendous, because there was definitely a beautiful, religious atmosphere. We had our May altars-different performances and things like that-it was really delightful.

Of course when we went into high school, that was a different territory. I remember some of the nuns that are buried up there at Mount Calvary. Sr. Erma...there was Sr. Frances James, whom I loved, she started my devotion to the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Father Keith, who taught us some of the classes, Sr. Claramine was especially interesting in English.

I had a well-rounded education-I was told. With the subjects I had taken, I could enter almost any university in the United States. In those times they required four years in English. We had to have three years, and we also had it in History. In those times, they divided it into Modern, Ancient, and Present Time History. We didn't have too many extra things. We did have football. Girls didn't do too much in athletics.

I know at the time, I was kind of disappointed with my education, because I wanted to be a nurse. When I went over to Holy Cross, I was told that I couldn't be because I didn't have a chemistry credit. My mother insisted on graduating from a Catholic high school, and they didn't offer chemistry, because they didn't have the facilities to have a chemistry room. Our credit in science at that time was Physics, and Sr. Francis James taught that.

So all in all, I was very pleased, and I think I can certainly lay my devotion and my steadfastness in the Catholic Church to all those early days-it was implanted in my mind-it was beautiful. I've never forgotten my education. In 1960-it would be, I went to the National Council-Diocesan Council of Catholic Women in Las Vegas.

WM: It was the National Council.

H1: Yes, national, as a representative from Saint Ambrose. They paid my expenses, and my roommate was from Tooele, at that time, and we stayed at the Sahara motel. I will never forget, and the convention hall was new, and when we left the Sahara Motel we went down-it was fields! We walked in

the street on Paradise Boulevard, and as we walked down to the Convention Hall, there were weeds on each side! I remember having Mass, and it was offered by the Greek Orthodox...I remember going to Communion, and they were singing at this Mass, and when we received Communion, they told us that we weren't going to receive the wafer, but we would be offered a cube of bread dipped in wine, and just to hold our mouth open, but not to clamp down on the spoon. They would drop the little square of bread that was in the wine. That was our Communion.

WM: I remember that.

H1: And there was chanting from the Greek Orthodox choirs, and it was beautiful. The evening, we had our banquet. And at that banquet, Cardinal Cushing talked. We had Helen Hayes talk, Jimmy Durante entertained us, and then after the services, or after the evening, we were able to mingle around-Mother Theresa was there.

WM: You met Mother Theresa?

H1: She was a tiny little thing. She was very friendly and greeted everybody.

WM: That was before she had any notoriety.

H1: Oh, yes-yes, I remember that very clearly! But we all went down on a bus from Salt Lake. We went home. And, of course, I gave my report to the Saint Ambrose Altar Society. I also brought back some...money...to the parish [laughs]. And Father Marceau said, "I've never heard of anybody bringing back money from Vegas!" But I said, "Well it's your money, and I didn't spend it!" And the funny thing about it was I had never been to a gambling thing before-never in my life!

And here I was a grown woman, but I-this is really funny-I went in-and my sister had given me a bunch of nickels in a plastic purse, and she said, "Helen, when you go down there you've gotta keep trying!" So I went into the Sahara Club one afternoon, and I put the nickels in the machine, and I put in two or three, and nothing happened. And so, finally, after a few, the lights start lighting up, and it started ringing, and I just couldn't move. I thought I had broken the machine. But this guy comes up to me, and he says, "You've won the Jackpot!" And, so he says, "Will you please put a nickel in it and shut that machine up?" He gave me my five dollars-or whatever it was I had won...

WM: It wasn't anything like \$9million.

H1: No, nothing like they do nowadays. I went to Logan. It was a very lonesome time for me, because I had the one little girl, and I was expecting Karen, but while we were there, we used to have to go down to the community Chamber of Commerce. It was on the Main Street. We had to climb a large flight of stairs up to the room. Many, many times we would actually have to sweep up the floor, or help clean it up, because they'd probably had some kind of a party there the night before.

WM: This was where you were going to Mass?

H1: Yes, this was where we went to Mass. Most of us who could get there came. If the priest couldn't get through the canyon-because in those days they hadn't modified..

HH: Sardine Canyon was kinda tough to get through.

WM: Sardine Canyon was well-known, wasn't it!

H1: If he couldn't get there on account of fog, or the ice, or the snow, why we just waited for awhile, and if the priest didn't come, why we said our Rosary, and went back home!

WM: Did any of your parishioners come from outside Logan-come from small towns?

H1: The only one I know of would be the Doyles.

HH: They came from Idaho.

H1: He was manager of a hardware store up in Preston, Idaho. They used to come down-if it was weather permitting-and they were very religious about coming down and going to Mass. They were there before the church was built, too. And the most notable characters at that time were Sergeant Callahan, and Sergeant Daly-up there at the University.

HH: At the R.O.T.C.

H1: They were connected with the R.O.T.C. Sergeant Callahan died, while we were there in Logan. I never will forget that the ward that he lived in offered their warehouse for the funeral. Father Giroux came up from Logan. They have some of the speakers in the Mormon wards stand in the front.

WM: Yes.

H1: Well they wheeled his casket in, and put it down in front, then they improvised an altar, and of course all we could do was sit in the chairs. In those days we were taught to kneel down at the Consecration no matter where you were! At

Derk's Field, or in a fancy Church. And we could hardly kneel down between the seats, but we did! And we all-the few of us were there that were Catholics-went to Communion. That was my recollection. Then Sergeant Daly stayed there-he was there a little longer. And they all came in fact, I think they were godparents of one of our children, I can't remember right at the moment. The war days, especially, were important. And like I said before, I attended the first Mass, and there were more Catholics there at that Mass than there were Mormons because...

HH: People came up from Ogden.

H1: There was some of our friends there that came to see! I remember this one Mormon lady-brought her family that night. And she said, "This is the first time I've been to church, and it looked so quiet!", because, you know, our Masses were quiet compared to what the others were. There's a time the time when-oh, it was a cold, cold frosty night. And my husband brought me over, and that's the time that Father Valine met me at the door, and invited me in to have a hot toddy! And I looked at him and I said, "Father...what on earth...what are you doing?!" And he said, "Well, it'll make you sing better. Do you want it or don't ya'?" And I said, "Sure, I'll take it!"

WM: Would you repeat that about Father Vaughn letting non-Catholics in?

HH: Well, Monsignor Vaughn decided that the Forty-Niner Club was to..was purely for fun, and so they decided to let anybody come in who was over forty-nine years old, regardless of their religion. Today, we have about 380-several hundred members. Once a month, they have a Mass at nine o'clock at Ambrose, and then after the Mass, we go someplace and have breakfast together-not all of 'em of course, anywhere from 35 to maybe 50 people actually go to the Mass.

Then on the first Monday, following the first Sunday, they have a meeting in the parish hall, and that's once a month. They take trips all over the place-primarily places they can gamble. The Forty-niner Club actually has about four women for each man, because, you're going^tlive longer if you are a woman. That's not 100% true! It's primarily true because the man usually marries a younger woman.

When we were married fifty years, we got a picture-for the anniversary. And I went down to get a frame for it, and the lady looked up at me and she said, "You, eighty! What was your wife a child bride?" See, I was thirty-four--over thirty-four years old when I got married! The fact is that my parents thought of giving me up. I was going to

wind up the only one in the family that didn't get married. My sister and my brother got married way before I did! But, anyway, this sister of mine, she lives in Salt Lake. She used to belong to the Presbyterian Church, and she also belonged to a club-I didn't know what the connection was-it was a literary club.

WM: Ladies Literary Club.

HH: This sister of mine was a librarian. She-both of us-went to a prep school. What happened in Cedar Rapids was that in the eighth grade they would ask you-or your parents-if you were planning on going to college, and if you were planning on going to go to college, then they sent you to a prep school. If you weren't going to college then they sent you to a vocational high school.

WM: Before there was a church ^{in Logan,} did the sisters come up to teach the children religion?

Hl: No, no. Our children were too small at that time. The oldest girl was in the first grade when we left here-she was in the first or the second grade. But I don't remember the nuns ever coming up. We had the priests come up and visit us. And when anybody-if there was a priest that was travelling through or wanted to stay or something, Father Giroux usually called us and asked if we would put them up. That's how it happened to put up that Father Donelly that came over with the debate team from Saint Regis College in Denver.

WM: Who started you going to Mass in the Chamber of Commerce? Was this going on before you were in Logan?

Hl: Well, it did, because as far as I know, they came up there and that's what we heard. But, you see we didn't have it too often.

WM: Oh, I see.

Hl: And when we-as I told you-when we had our daughter Karen baptized, we took her down to Father Giroux in Ogden. Mary Ellen had already been baptized here in Salt Lake.

WM: Who made the first move towards building a church then? How did this get started, because you were in on that.

Hl: I don't know. We didn't have too much to do with that.

HH: The Catholic Extension Society gave them the money. You see, at that time, Logan was the biggest city in the United States that didn't have a Catholic Church.

H1: So whether it was through the Bishop, or Father Giroux, or what I can't really recollect. All I know is that they told us that they purchased property up there on 5th North, or whatever it was.

WM: Then you didn't have to go out and have bake sales and this and that?

H1: No, we didn't do that. Then they sent up Father Valine, and that was the first time I saw him, was when he came up and we watched the church being built, and to this day I couldn't say who built it. All I know is that Father Valine came over, and introduced himself. Father McEachan came later. And, of course, having a small family to watch--there were no babysitters, so I couldn't just take off. He used to come over and visit our home. We had him over for dinner many times. And if he wanted something special to cook, why he'd call me up and ask me, "Well, Helen, how do you make this?" or "How do you make that?", because he loved to cook!

WM: Father Valine is still doing that right now!

H1: And, he had a garden, and I was just remarking to Herschall, I said I would like to go down and see Father Valine in Milford, because, right now, where his garden was there's a trailer, out there at the motel.

WM: In Logan?

H1: Yeah, in Logan, where his garden was. To this day, I can see his wonderful Swiss chard; he had corn, and had all these things. And he had a father that lived in Modesto, California.

And he used to send him fish every once in a while. Smoked fish.

HH: You see, Father Valine was Portuguese!

H1: He'd call us up on the phone, he'd say, "Get the gang together, Helen!" Or he'd call Daly's or somebody and he'd say, "Let's go up the canyon and have a fish fry." We'd make salads, and have rolls, and we'd go up and build a big bonfire, and we'd go up to one of the camps in Logan Canyon. And we'd get all the people that we could--the parishioners that were there, and we'd go up and have a songfest.

And he didn't know any of the songs like When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain, and all these famous songs that we used to sing. We'd sing around the fire, and I'd tell him the words, and he'd sing it out, so loud you could hear him up and down the whole valley, because his voice was beautiful. But we had some good times that way, and if there was anything to do-like I said-I'd take care of all the linens.

Then that particular letter that I have here tells about-he gave me the job of making two palls before I left. And I said, "Oh, embroidery?" And he said, "Well, do this and do that," so I made them, and that's where he was commenting and saying that they were beautiful, and he said, "Don't ever tell me that you can't embroider." So if there's any cleaning around the altars, and we kept the flowers. I tried to locate-I've got a picture of the altar crocheted-my mother did a lot of crocheting. And she did that for the church-I don't know how many years-I don't know how many things she made for priests, and a lot of her handiwork is down at Sacred Heart or the Divine Saviors, too. There were some good times then, but, like I said, when the soldiers came it was a different story.

WM: Did you have a women's organization as such then, or did you just...

H1: Well, in one of these pieces, it mentions about the Altar Society. I guess we did organize...

WM: You did organize.

H1: Yes, we were sort of organized. I mean it was only just the few of us. But later on, when there were more...well, this is all about the dedication. And this is news of the churches.

WM: I just noticed one of these pieces that said "Saint Thomas Society holds a meeting." Where did you meet?

H1: At the rectory. It says here "An important meeting of the Saint Thomas Altar Society took place last evening at the Saint Thomas rectory. The meeting was open and presided over by Mrs. Andrew Daly after the opening prayer by the director, Father...", oh, that's McEachen. That's interesting-Father McEachen was assistant.

"Some interesting discussions were held pertaining to projects and activities for the coming year. Following the regular business of the evening, the election of the new officers took place. The results of the election of the officers for the ensuing year are announced as Mrs. Grant

Nielson, President; Mrs. George Carr, Vice-President; Mrs. M. R. Murphy, Secretary and Treasurer. A vote of thanks and sincere appreciation were extended to the retiring officers: Mrs. Andrew Daly, President; Mrs. William Kerwin, Secretary and Treasurer, for their wonderful work of the past year. Gratitude was also expressed to Mrs. H. C. Halfhill for her important work in charge of the altar linens. Before the meeting was adjourned, sincere regrets were declared over the departure of Mrs. J.W. Temarsky and Mrs. J. E. Valley, who are expected soon to leave," and so on.

These people that we mentioned in some of these were connected during the war. There was a lot of the men that came, and they had their wives with them. They were more or less stationed there for awhile.

- WM: You left Logan then, before they moved from the old Church.
- H1: That's correct.
- WM: We moved to Layton in 1943 or '42.
- HH: The latter part of '42. Moved the family down there. I was moved in '41, myself.
- WM: Well, when you moved to Layton, there was no church, was there?
- H1: When we moved to Layton there wasn't a church at all.
- WM: Where did you go?
- H1: We went to the local city hall-they'd provide us a room...oh, it was to the right, just as you went into the entrance of the hall. People would come down from Clearfield and Hillfield, and there were several families in Layton. We used to meet there regularly-there were two Masses-one at eight-thirty in the morning. And the fathers came from Bountiful, because they had a small house that had purchased down there in Bountiful.
- WM: Yes, I went to church in that house very many times.
- H1: And I remember having a choir-we used to come down and practice before, and then sing during Mass. And it was quite a little choral group, and with all these different halls that you meet in, sometimes you had to clean them up before you can have services. You have to set up the chairs. So, you know we had that. That was when my first association with the Catechists was, because the Catechist nuns were sent to us from Salt Lake, and I think their home

at that time was the old Fisher home on West 2nd South, if I remember correctly.

WM: That's right.

H1: When we lived in Layton, they had Sunday school, or I should say religion classes after school.

WM: Do you remember any of the names of the nuns that came out?

H1: I'm sorry, I don't remember.

WM: Sr. Barbara, by any chance?

H1: No...the names escape me.

WM: Rosario? She was one of the first ones there.

H1: Well, if she was, then she'd probably be there. I'm sorry, probably my girls could, but I can't. But it was very interesting, because, at that time, the Paulist Fathers had a trailer given to them by Loretta Young, the movie actress. It was kind of a letdown thing, and they could say Mass at the inn, and there was living quarters behind the place.

[End of Side One of the Tape]

WM: Let's go back to Layton-the trailer.

H1: The trailer-they were going to have a show, and Father announced that it would be shown in the trailer on the school grounds at such-and-such a time.

HH: For free.

H1: For free. Well, the local citizens heard about the Catholics having this show, The King of Kings, in a trailer on the local school grounds, and they went to the Chief of Police, or the policeman there, and told the Chief of Police that they couldn't do that. And this little boy-he was from Texas...

HH: He came to see me!

H1: He came to see Hersch, and asked him about that.

HH: And I told

him to
tell his brother, who ran the local grocery store. I said,
"ask him if he wants to lose all of his Catholic customers!"
And that was it!

WM: That did it?

HH: That did it-hah!

H1: Because there was a lot of Catholic people that purchased groceries from this particular store. But they told them that it was public school grounds, and that we were out of order.

HH: They had already made the religious argument.

WM: Who's they? Who reported you?

H1: Oh, I don't know. People heard about it and decided to report us.

HH: Yeah, it was one of the councilmen!

H1: It was the councilman I guess. The councilman was the man that reported us.

HH: And his brother was a Congressman at the time!

H1: But we had our regular classes-the children made their First Communion there. We also had summer school, where the children used to go every day. Sisters took care of it. We women would help them; you know we would bring punch and cookies, and what have you.

WM: I've helped a lot of Catechist sisters.

H1: Yes, I used to go up and help with the summer school all the time, because my children used to go up there-two of them I think.

WM: Did you ever go up and help with the Indian school?

H1: No.

HH: We were in Layton when that school was started.

H1: But I did-our Altar Society here at Saint Ambrose-when I was in the Altar Society used to provide cookies for the people to take up to 'em at Christmastime.

WM: At the Christmas party?

H1: Yes, I've got it in some of my notes.

WM: That's what I was thinking of-the Christmas party.

H1: The Christmas party-the different parishes here in Salt Lake-the different altar societies made dozens and dozens of cookies. We also collected little gifts like ball-point pens, and little purses and such things for the children up there. Oh, yes, I was involved with it that way.

But, getting back to the Catechists, now there was an occasion once where something was destroyed at the school, and they blamed the Catholic children. When I came-the children told me about it. They said they were blamed for it. I said, "I don't think that's correct." Something occurred where there was some damage after school, and they were blamed because after school, they were going to religion classes. I contacted the nuns right away. As soon as they came up, they heard the story. So then, I went to this one teacher-a children's teacher, and I said, "You know, our children didn't do that, and I'm going to tell Sister when she comes up, and you should investigate that thoroughly." Because it's just customary, because when you're in the minority like we are up here, they naturally are going to blame the Catholic children. I said, "If you check that out, you'll probably find that they weren't involved at all." And she says, "I know exactly how you feel, because (she apparently was of the Mormon faith) I

used to live-or was on a mission down South. We were the minority and I know how you feel." And I said, "Well, I'm grateful for that, but let's get this thing straightened out!" So, anyway, we got all that straightened out.

But the Catechists apparently did a nice job with my children. The children loved them, they loved the summer school, and-like I say-they made their First Communion there. There was a particular family that was very kind to me, George and Ann McHugh. Her husband was station master-I guess that's what you'd call him-for the railroad down there, and the children used to have to go across that crossing to go to school. Ann and George were very good about donating, and helping us and they helped us out, too, before we came out here to Salt Lake. But, while we were in Layton, before the church was built, they chose a piece of property, and I remember going out into the fields, by where the church is now. Father McLean came to our house with a stack of architects' books. And he said, "Can you and Hersch help choose the church?" We looked through some grand ones. And so, we looked through them all, and this particular one was the cheapest-well I don't want to say cheapest, but it was moderate.

HH: Well, the bad thing was that he wanted to put in a basement, and it was one that you could...

WM: Who's he?

HH: Father James F. McLean.

H1: They wanted a basement, and I remember this one time that they came down to our house, and we had gone out, and hired a babysitter, and here he was pacing-oh, it was our mother that was there, that's right. Well, here he was wondering, where the hell is Hersch? And he says, "I got water in my basement, Hersch, what am I going to do?" So, being an engineer, my husband helped him get over that problem. And...but he joined the Carpenter's Union, so he could work on the Church and save some money.

HH: He became a carpenter before he became a priest.

H1: And while he was there...

HH: Father McLean.

H1: ...working on the church, we women that were close to the church used to cook a hot meal, which would usually be our dinner, and we would cook it at noon. And we would take turns taking them each day-when he was working, he'd go to a different house, and that way we provided and helped him

with his meals.

WM: You helped him with his meals; who helped him with the construction work?

H1: Well, it was hired mostly, but he did a lot of it himself. But there were a lot of subcontractors and things like that. We eventually had our church, and I guess...it was dedicated.

WM: Do you know why they named it *Saint Rose of Lima*?

H1: No, I'm sorry, I don't. I'd have to look...

HH: I don't know whether the local people named it that or not.

H1: Wait a minute! There's a dedication here.

"As the patron of our new Church, Saint Rose certainly speaks the language that the world neglects but needs. And with her patronage, may the light of prayer and penance shine through our lives and be the source of our parish's dedication to Christ."

WM: And that's from the?

H1: That's from the *Solemn Dedication: Church of Saint Rose of Lima, Layton, Utah, April 11th, 1948*. We were also...we also went to the dedication of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and also at the dedication of Saint Rose of Lima.

WM: You weren't living there?

HH: No, we weren't living there when they had the dedication.

WM: Oh, you went back.

HH: We were living here, in this house.

H1: We were over at the arms plant...see, this says "April 11th, 1948." We moved in here in July of '48. So we were over across the way...we went to Saint Patrick's at one time. And we came here from Layton. We were kicked out of our house in Layton...we had sold it, and we had to move. So the government gave us quarters over here-"the arms plant" they called it. Used to be called the "fields of nowhere!" We went to Saint Patrick's and we purchased this home.

WM: Who was the priest at Saint Patrick's-do you remember that?

HH: The only priest I remember is the one up in-Lourdes-I think who had trouble with the heart: "What the hell are you doing up here when you're going to Saint Ambrose?"

H1: Yeah, that was after we moved here. See, we moved here in July, and we decided that the closest place to go would be Our Lady of Lourdes. We went down there, and the children were staying in the back, because they heard Confessions before Mass, and Father...I can't think of his name.

HH: An Irishman.

WM: Kennedy?

H1: No.

H1: No, he's dead now...Maguire!

H1: Old Maguire! Father Maguire-I was standing there waiting for the children, and he said, "What are you doing here at Our Lady of Lourdes?"

H1: Well, that's what he told us. He said, "You don't belong here. They've got a new church. Well, the church wasn't built yet. I mean, we didn't have any place to go to...they hadn't started at "We Ask You Inn."

H1: "We Ask You Inn." Over there by where K-Mart is.

WM: Where's that?

HH: It used to be by...the building is gone now, it used to be over in that corner where Albertson's is now.

H1: Oh, yeah, that's right, where Albertson's-where the triangle is-23rd East and 21st South. But now have you got everything for Layton that you want?

WM: While you were still in Layton did they have a women's organization, or a men's organization? Did you take care of the altar linens there, too?

H1: No, I can't remember too much about the early days in the church, so the only thing I can think of is after the church was built-I think we left before and came to Salt Lake...

WM: Before it was finished?

H1: Before it was finished. But I remember going back for the dedication.

HH: Because that guy that owned the house we were in sold it to

somebody and we had to get the heck out of there.

WM: So then you went to Saint Pat's for awhile.

Was Monsignor Dowling down there then, by any chance?

H1: Probably was him. Father Dowling.

WM: Was there a Father Sloan?

H1: No, no. Only Father Dowling-I don't know-I'd have to check on the records and see. The children would know-oh, but over there that's when our daughter made her Confirmation-Mary Ellen made her Confirmation over there.

HH: I used to send or take the girls up to the gate, and they'd get on a street-car to go to Judge Memorial, and then when they'd come home at night, one of the guys that worked for me would bring 'em down to our apartment.

H1: To the place we lived. We lived clear across town. They used to get up and go out on the first bus when they'd bring the people into work and the kids would get on that bus and go all the way up to Judge to go to school, the eldest of the two girls.

WM: You lived out by the Remington Arms Plant?

HH: In the Remington Arms Plant.

H1: And then he was bumped by a veteran, and so he left the federal government then, and then worked for the city, and we moved here in '48 in July.

HH: Nobody would have rented an apartment to a guy with four kids, so I had to buy a house.

H1: I used to sit down there Sunday after Sunday on a newspaper in my sister's house-Mary, my older sister-and look through the want ad columns you know, through the "For Rent" ads, and call and call and call, and you'd tell 'em, "four children," and they wouldn't have anything for you.

WM: Then you don't remember any of the priests except McLean out in Layton?

H1: Not really. McLean was the one I remember because he was always at our house while the church was being built. He came over to the house quite a bit. No I don't remember anyone else.

WM: Father Frederick T. Dreager was out there for awhile but I don't know when.

Hl: See, it says McLean, and Vincent J. Sampietro, and John C. Reynolds.

HH: McLean is the only one I remember. Of course at that time I only visited.

Hl: When our son was born, we took him down to Saint...what was it-Olaf's-Bountiful to be baptized. And I think Father John D. Mitchell was the one who baptized him.

WM: He was a Paulist Father.

Now let's go back to the We ask you Inn, when you went up there...

Hl: Well, we attended the first Mass at what was to be known-I guess you'd say as Saint Ambrose. When it was held, it was at We Ask You Inn on 21st South and 23rd East. And that was the end of the road-there was nothing up there above, below, north, or south of us. They had Masses I think at eight or ten-I can't remember. The first Mass was the one we always went to, because of the children, and getting breakfast. They also had a ten o'clock Mass, and many people after the ten o'clock Mass stayed, and they used to have coffee and doughnuts, and visit for awhile. But, with the small children, we didn't attend that.

We had our first dinner at Saint Ambrose. It was held at that We Ask You Inn.

WM: "We?"-the women's organization put it on?

Hl: "We" meant the whole people-men and ladies, and those that signed up.

WM: But there was an organization called the Ambrosians-is that a women's organization?

HH: Ambrosians were the men.

WM: They were later?

Hl: Yeah, that was later on. If you want me to I can read this history.

Hl: "In July 1948, we moved into our present home, only to discover that in a few weeks, our family would be able to

attend Mass in a newly created parish called Saint Ambrose. The first Mass was held at We Ask You Inn on 21st South on the outskirts of Salt Lake City. There were few homes above the church property, and very few across the gully. We held a "Get Acquainted" Dinner at the Inn. Two long tables held most of the members. Each Sunday, early parishioners prepared the inn for an 8am and 10am Mass. After the 10am Mass, people gathered for coffee and rolls. Having small children, we rarely attended this affair.

The parish grew quickly as returning veterans from World War II settled in the city and built homes. Soon we attended a ground breaking ceremony in a field for the combination church and hall, completed by November 6, 1949. It was glorious to have a place of our own. Large folding doors closed off the altar section for public events. We eventually acquired pews and added chairs as needed. It was a difficult task to move chairs and pews when we held meetings or had dinners.

A small kitchen on the northeast corner of the hall, without an outside entrance was our only facility for the preparation of dinners and breakfasts, etc. There were no electric coffee pots, and only a small range for cooking. For large dinners, the women used portable electric ovens, and we were always blowing out fuses from the overload. First Communion breakfasts were cooked and served between the 8 and 10am Mass-a small feat in itself. The men's society called the Ambrosians was formed.

The ladies' altar society began almost immediately, the first meeting being held in the evening at Mrs. Peggy Day's home. She was our first president and served two years. The women and men worked harmoniously together. We held dinners, card parties, luncheons, and even formed a square dance club, all the proceeds going toward our new church. In 1951, the present rectory was built, with a connecting door to the hall, which pleased Father Joseph T. Gosselin very much.

His mother resided with him, and his sister was his housekeeper. He no longer had to journey to the hall from the little house on Hollywood Avenue for Mass or other affairs. It was a sad day when Father Gosselin's mother died. I was president of the altar society at the time, and we did all we could to comfort him. Father Gosselin celebrated his 25th ordination as a priest during his stay with us. The celebration was held in our hall. I have never worked before or since with a chairman so efficient and learned a valuable lesson in organization from him. We had to rent dishes and silver and borrow many articles from parishioners and others. It was amazing how the event

turned out to be so successful. Father Gosselin was practical and efficient, and a comfort to us all. He died April 27, 1956. The women really scurried around and worked very hard to make the hall shine for his wake. I remember standing on a tall ladder, washing windows on the east side of the hall on uneven ground and weeds. It seemed we women were always wiping down statues, polishing the wooden backdrop of the altar, and doing all the general cleaning, not to mention the ironing and washing of all those long linen altar cloths. We women furnished all the flowers from our gardens, except for special occasions.

Father Marceau followed Father Gosselin before we knew the school was planned. Halleluia! The weeds and ground would now be covered with the school and convent. How we all worked to prepare the convent for the sisters. We were so pleased to have our own school and a place for our CCD classes so close to home, instead journeying down in carpools to Judge Memorial. We now held Mass in the school gym, due to the influx of new people. Chairs with kneelers attached were the pews in the school gym. The school kitchen was large and efficient.

We men and women worked hard on the dedication dinner. Juggling chairs became a task for all the church and school functions. The ladies were now able to hold larger luncheons. The altar society purchased new card tables. We made new bridge cloths from the art goods, hemmed and decorated them all. We still have a few of them left in our cupboard. We also made a few dinner cloths for long tables, but these have disappeared. The potluck dinners in September were a huge success. We sat at the dropdown tables in the gym for this affair. Donations for Catholic charities were taken in at this dinner for baby layettes. Attendance was excellent and the women were able to form their committees for the new year. With Monsignor William E. Vaughan succeeding Father Marceau plans for a new church were formed. And I'll never forget after an altar society meeting, Monsignor Vaughan took the ladies for a tour of the new church. It was by no means finished. As we walked over the concrete floor, through the lumber and wires, and saw the raised wooden floor for the altar, the building seemed huge after being in such small quarters. With Monsignor Vaughan's explanation of things to come, I could picture the finished product. We had plain glass windows at first, but they were soon replaced by the present beautiful windows. The altar society saved over the years six thousand dollars. This paid for one window. The dedication on May 23rd, 1965 was truly a touching experience, and I feel blessed to have been part of the parish, and to have seen all its progress."

WM: Now that's a history you wrote for publication?

H1: Well, for-somebody said to write my recollections-that was our first gathering we had at the We Ask You Inn reunion. Andsomebody requested plans when they were going to remodel Saint Ambrose Church. Somebody wanted a recollection of the old days, and they asked me and one of the groups to do this.

H1: This is a letter I received from Father Valine on November 26, 1943:

"Dear Mrs. Halfhill,
Long time, no see. Long time, no write. Things up in Logan have been about the same-no excitement, no murders, no arrests, no more bicycles stolen-that was some experience I had. I had given up all hope of ever getting the bike back, when lo and behold, a few days later the cops called me and said my bike was down in Smithfield. The fellow simply rode to Smithfield and left it there. I now have it for sale. If you want a good, cheap bike, you know where to find one.

Joe L. (that's Joe Lucioner) and Millie got your letter, and feel very bad that they did not answer it. They are now in California on ten-days vacation. (He was a special friend of Father Valine's. He was in the service, and he served them while they stayed there quite a bit.) The pall covers were just the thing, they filled the bill to perfection. Don't you tell me that you are an amateur at those things. Many thanks.

We were both invited out to a Thanksgiving dinner yesterday at Brigham. It happened to be at our tenants. They also invited a soldier and the wife, and a good time was had by all. If I ever get down to your neck of the woods, I'll look up your joint. Give Hersch and the children my best wishes. Again, many thanks.

Sincerely,
Father J. H. Valine."

WM: Tell us about the pall covers that he mentions in there.

H1: Well, he asked me to make two pall covers, and he gave me a design to embroider. And I said, "I don't do those kind of things. I don't do fancy work." So, anyway, I used my head, and was able to embroider on them just exactly what he wanted.

HH: I don't know whether you wanted this or not. When they first started Saint Ambrose, the men had-it was Charlie Nelson, and Mr. Vetter, and Mr. Butcher, and several other fellows who would invite men over to their house and we'd have coffee conferences to decide what they needed to do.

And that's how they organized the Ambrosians.

And I remember particularly a guy named Shomba, who coached the Saint Ambrose boys in baseball, and the thing that impressed me about him was that when he needed something for the boys, he had no scruples about who he got the stuff from. Somebody told him he ought to have a pitching machine for the boys to practice, so he went over to the country club, and told a few Catholic men that he needed so much money, and stayed there until they gave him the money, because he wanted it. One guy told him "You bet that much on a golf game!" My son, for example, particularly liked the fellow.

And one of the things that he did-and it impressed me, there was one boy in the school at Ambrose, he was slightly retarded, and he loved to play baseball, and he couldn't play worth a darn, and he would come out and practice. So finally, Shomba told the boys, "I'm going to let him play a game." And he told Mike, he's playing second base, "I'm going to put you in center field!" I know he's going to miss half the balls, but you're fast enough, and you can come in and get 'em." They let him play in that game, and he was quite pleased about being able to play with the boys. But he was that kind of a man, but he's dead now.

H1: Do you want me to read this?

WM: Yes.

H1: Well, this is a letter I received from Regis College from a Reverend J.P. Donelly. October 20, 1941, Denver, Colorado.

"Dear Mrs. Halfhill: May I thank you and Mr. Halfhill for your wonderful hospitality to me and the boys while we were in Logan. Or course, it is impossible to adequately do so, since I'm well aware of the inconvenience to which we put you. It is a wonderful experience meeting such fine people. Meeting you and Mr. Halfhill was an experience I shall always cherish.

Also, it might rejoice you to know that the example of your unswerving loyalty to the faith under such adverse circumstances has been an example which I am sure the boys will not readily forget. All of them remarked how impressed they were by your courageous example. I feel that our trip to Logan would have been a profound success if we had done nothing but meet the Halfhills. These boys of ours live in a Catholic atmosphere all of their lives, and they take their faith for granted. They rarely see people who must sacrifice for it as you do.

I am deeply grateful for an opportunity of showing them such a fine Catholic family as yours. You can be sure that I shall pray for you and yours.

Sincerely,
J. P. Donnelly."

This letter was written in thanks for when Father Donnelly stayed at our home. And every morning, while he was there, the boys came from the hotel, and we had set up Mass on my dining room table. Having gone to a Catholic school, the nuns had taught us how to set up Mass, you know we'd put the cards on the right, and we'd put the book on the Gospelside, and we laid out the linens and the altar cloth, and the candles and the bell, and everything from his packed suitcase.

And when the boys came that morning for Mass at 8 o'clock, they found everything all set up, and they couldn't believe it! There's somebody-a woman-somebody in the outskirts like that, and lo and behold, they know how to set up for Mass, and that's what impressed them, and Father didn't want to stay at the hotel, he wanted to stay at our home.

WM: So you had used his Mass kit. You didn't get one?

H1: We used his Mass kit, he had brought it along. I set it up for him, because he went on to bed, and he asked me "Do you know how to do it?" I said, "Sure!" And so I had it all set up for the boys, and we had a long room, where we could put the table at one end, and the boys were in the living room, and they all came for Mass and Communion.

WM: Was that when the priest still had his back to the congregation?

H1: Yes it was all in Latin. You see we had to know which side to put the card on the Gospel side, or on the Epistle side, and we put out the cloth, and got the chalice, and put the pall on top of it. That's why they were impressed, because they didn't think that anybody out in the sticks would know what to do.

WM: They didn't think a woman could anyway.

HH: A little chauvinistic pig stuff, there! Speaking of the Mass, my son, who was an altar boy at Saint Ambrose when he was in school. He says today, "Altar boys don't have to know anything!" He had to learn Latin-at least enough to say the Mass.

H1: *In nomine Patris* and *Sanctus Amen*, and they can't even do some of the stuff now that they're supposed to do. I worked

as a fisher in Saint Ambrose Parish for five years, and that particular position called for me as a fisher to go into the homes, and try to get children to attend religion classes. And the only thing I can say about that is that the people that I didn't get, Father didn't get either, so I think, that's quite complimentary.

But, I also studied to take a teacher's certificate in CCD, but at the time, it was in a transition from the Latin to the English Mass, and having been raised and attended the old-time Masses as long as I could, it was a little hard for me to accept the new teachings and ways of the Church. Like, for instance, having Communion-take it in the hands, it took me a long time to do that. And how can you teach something that you can't understand?

HH: Or believe in?

Hl: So I never did become a teacher of religion. I went in other aspects of it. While I was at Saint Ambrose I worked with Father John B. Hart. And he was an assistant at that time, but we used to have to take the children from our group-the whole group of 'em-we'd go in cars, and go clear down to Judge Memorial before we had our own liturgy classes.

WM: This was religion class outside the school, some of the children went to Catholic school, but there were still others to pick up?

Hl: Well, see, we didn't have a Catholic school at that particular time. We had our religion classes. We used to have summer school, and I was in charge of that many times, helping, organization, getting it all set up. The nuns-we had our religious teachers...

WM: What nuns came?

Hl: Yeah, what nuns were available.

WM: But what order was it?

Hl: Could be Holy Cross I guess, I honestly can't say.

WM: The Catechists worked all over the state.

Hl: No, it had to be the Holy Cross nuns, because the Daughters of Charity hadn't come there, yet, at Saint Ambrose.

HH: They came when they started Cosgriff, didn't they?

HH: Wasn't that first principal a Daughter of Charity?

WM: Yes.

HH: The one they called "Tex."

H1: Well, we had our classes at the school, but not until after the school was built, because there was no place to hold our classes. Usually, they all went down to Judge, and then each class, as it came in, the kids all went to religion school there. Well, there's so much to remember. Well, we didn't have our religion school at the school. We used to have to take their lessons that they missed-their lesson for that night-we'd take it the next day, and go up to each one of the homes, and visit the homes and find out why they didn't attend. And we'd leave their lessons, and hope that they'd come next week.

WM: Is this when you were a fisher?

H1: Yeah. This was when I was a fisher. So, sometimes it'd be twelve, thirteen, fourteen homes, during the week to get to them. Because the roads weren't connected, and we didn't have any carpools then, so the parents would have to bring them in, or form a carpool with somebody else. And the roads didn't connect, so you'd go up one unit-kind of like a cul-de-sac, and come back down, then you'd go back up in the mountains up in the other one, up and down, and it really was something. But it all worked out. I don't know how many children we saved, or what.

(End of Interview)

