

Jodanna Lundin's interview with Mildred Mickelaw

Me: I'm Jodanna Lundin and I'm interviewing Mildred Mickelaw for Red Dust. On February 18, 1993.

When and where were you born?

Mildred: Imperial Mine location Spur township in 1925. That's enough (chuckle).

me: So who were your parents and what were their names,

Mildred: Alfred and Jenny Mickelaw. My mother was from National Mine. My dad was born in Espeming but grew up in Humbolt. I have two sisters. I had a little brother who died.

Never married, and as well my father worked in the mine, and he did a lot of jobs. He was hurt in the mine, so he had to go into a variety of jobs.

I went to three schools but most of the time it was in Champion. I graduated from Champion. It started all in the depression years, you moved from one place to another where there was work. So I. Most of my years were in Champion.

me: Do you have any special memories of growing up here.

Mildred: Well uh I didn't grow up in National Mine. I most of my memories were in Twin or in Humbolt, I was grown up + working when I moved to National Mine, but this is my mother's home area. And I had relatives in here. Well a lot of memories of growing up, but they are all real poor depression year memories when you didn't have anything, but nobody worried about it, cause no one had anything.

I didn't know much about Negavance, except there was a hospital there. and my dad was in the Twin Cities hospital. Cause he was hurt in the me.

Espeming was a big event when we came to shop. We came about once a month maybe once a month, maybe not even that.

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Milcheal: you did all well my mother always come home with a headache cause she had such a long list of things to get,

me: So how old were when you got your first job,

Milcheal: I had graduated + I was home for the first winter maybe to time ^{+ 090 b6k for work} ishky in other words. I was 18 when I started working + I went to work at the Dazzard where I had no intentions of working there. I had all kind of big ideas when I was younger first I was going to be a nurse + I didn't know if I would ever be able to be a nurse, + then I thought maybe I'll be a bookkeeper or a secretary because I had all of that in high school. Well then it just ends up you downtown shopping + a friend of my mother's said they ~~are~~ hiring at the Dazzard. + why don't you come in + apply. I went in + started to work a couple days after + stayed there for 6 1/2 years.

me: And what did you do there?

Milcheal: Well I was sewing for maybe half of the time + then I was training beginners for the last couple years 2-3 years, which I enjoyed cause I got to be braver I had to help new people come in + show them how to run the machine + show them where things were, so my voice really came out then (chuck) my gift of gab in other words.

me: So how many total years did you work in your life time?

Mildred: uh I would say 44 years, which is a lifetime for alot of people. 6 + a half years there + then I decided to go to Minneapolis for a short time. + I it was just before Christmas so I did get a Christmas job, I was there for only maybe 6 weeks. I worked at Sears, came home. The job ended then it was just a holiday job, and they ^{had} called ~~where~~ ^{where} I stayed and they said I could've come back + they would've gotten me a job somewhere else if I had wanted because, well where I stayed she said she didn't want to be wrapping packages all . They said no they would find something else for me. Well any I decided then to go to California. So I went there stayed there + worked there for about 3 months, + having had Borgard experiance well it didn't take long to get a job there in a similar factory + they really favored Midwestern + Northern people. They said they always hire them. They felt we were many cold climate people + they would work faster or something but they just seemed to always be able to find a place for you there. Then I came home + no intensions of ever ^{going to} ~~working~~ in a store. I thought now I have to start looking for something or else go back to California, + someone said they were someone who was leaving Pennys + I went and applied + I started there thinking I'll maybe stay there for just a few months + get a little money + go back to Cal.

me: Well that few months ended up to be 37 years. So that is it that, that was my work.

me: Could you describe the main duties of you had at this job.

mildred: Well I had alot of them. I started off selling which I really enjoyed. + then there was a chance to go up in the office. It was merchandis sort of a merchandis inventory job. We called it merchandise guide + I did that for maybe a couple of years. + there there was a girl that was doing sales audit or ~~clerking~~ or whatever you call it. She left so then I ended up there. So, when you up in the office you do a little of everything basically, but that was mostly my job then for the rest of the years as sales audit.

me: Did you have to take any special training?

mildred: No, its just on the job really. I had bookkeeping, + shorthand +, typing, + all that in high school, but when you go to work. Every job has its own type of bookkeeping. I mean you just go by the forms. + you just learn as you go along + you might do a little of it, but it seem like nothing is really required as long as you can, you want to work.

me: Did you have any rules or regulations you had to follow?

mildred: Uh well in every company there is but it didnt seem like there was. ~~the~~ your dress code was just to dress. Well there was a time they really wanted you to dress a certain way they wanted you to wear black + navy.

Mildred: but that didn't last very long, then they stressed, um, then you could wear almost anything as long as it was suitable, & then they wanted you to start wearing dresses or skirts. or a special, you could wear slacks or pants if it was an outfit, but not just thrown together.

me: What was the most rewarding part of your career?

Mildred: Well I really think it was just getting to know all the people. Every time there was new people there I always thought well this is the nicest group I ever worked with. Well then before you it some of them would quit, some would leave move away, & new people come in & you had to get used of them, & then after awhile before you know it you say that my this is a nice bunch, because generally they were really nice & they felt like they were family. You know your with them more than anyone else you're there everyday & you feel like you really need them.

me: What was the most challenging part of this?

Mildred: Really I don't know it. Every day is a challenge, & everyday um, it was really a pressure job. I mean um every morning you had to had your work, everything was kind of times, because you knew you had to get to the bank at a certain time & the mail had to go out, & the charge slips.

Mildred: + the job changed constantly, it was first very rutin, befor I knew it we started charge + that was a whole new thing. We went to meetings to learn how to run the charge slips, + then a catalog opened up + that was a whole new thing that learned how to do the catalog work plus, + then about many three years befor I retred computers came in. So then we thought now are we going to learn computers, so we said well we are not going to let this get us down were going to lean computas. There were two or three of us in the office + all were close to the same age + we said we aren't going to give up on this we'll lean computers like anyone else. And of course every company has there own type of programs + everything so you don't have to learn the basics you just have to learn how to run them + learn to use the programs

Me: Could you describe like some of your closest co-workers,

Mildred. Oh my, well I still have lunch with some of them, I really do. Its hard to describe anyone I mean they feel as if there um they're really close you know all your family problems you know who there kids were when they graduated who they're married to every once in a while we call each other + we do have well there is two or three of them that I have coffee with or lunch with quite often.

Mildred: Another there is a group that goes ^{maybe} once a month + I don't always get in ~~it~~ ^{it} ~~that~~. Of you want to go down town you can always call somebody to go + have a cup of coffee, so we do that

me: Could you describe some humorous events that happened in your career?

Mildred: Nothing, I mean there were funny things in every day I'm sure. Some of the people we worked with were really comical + had a very sense of humor. Everytime we see them we ^{still} remember the things they did, but not any special thing I guess, we had alot of laughs at everything I guess we just feel as if I guess you can laugh at almost anything if you want to. Nothing special

me: Did you ever consider changing your career?

Mildred: many times even though I liked it but I always - there was a time when I really really wanted to change, + in fact I looked for a change at that time, + right at that time my dad died + I thought this is no time to start changing jobs, + then I did have a couple of offers, + well it seemed like I must have had maybe 20 years in already + I just, I should've maybe changed

Mildred: , but I didn't quite have the courage to
 + I'm not sorry now because I was
 comfortable where I was + even if I might
 not have had the big pensions that some
 of them had, but I'm getting along.

me : Did you receive any special awards?

Mildred: ^{laugh} No, ^{well} nothing really, not. They weren't
 great award gives, just when you
 left they well they thanked you for
 working, but I mean there were probably
^{were} a lot of little things, but nothing that
 would be of interest to anybody or be nothing
 important.

me : Over all what ~~would be~~ ^{were} your fondest
 memories of your working day + career?

Mildred: oh I think the people really. I can't win
 the challenge interesting always. I still
 think that Monday mornings I had
 to sit myself up a little for Monday
~~for~~ mornings to get going, + that I
 didn't like it then, but when I think
 about it it was really ^{up} exciting that
 you had to because years ago there
 was a lot of pressure, but it did ease
 up later + they simplified things so
 much that it wasn't all the tediousness
 of the weekly reports so it did ease up.

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Mitchell: It was kind of interesting when it's a challenge even though life is much more interesting when you've got a challenge, even though you think I want to get away from it but when you look back at it, it's more exciting ~~when you've got~~ having a challenge than not having a challenge.

me: If you could do this all over again would you choose the same career?

Mitchell: If I was back to were I was if I had no more courage I wouldn't have, but I'm not sorry that I did I found out that I did enjoy sales and I like looking for mistakes (laugh). In other words I found out that I did enjoy bookkeeping + balancing things + running. I felt as if I had to more less run the office a lot in the years past. The manager was gone I mean I was given a lot of responsibility and one manager said well if I'm not here to tell you what to do you do the best you can and I'll never complain. So it was really exciting, but I think I would've I still think I might have enjoyed nursing.

me: Do you have anything ~~else~~ add about your career or growing up?

Mitchell: No, not really a lot of things you wish you had done and that, but all I do what we have to do at the time + um I'm really not sorry the

mitshel: way things turned out.

me : well thank you.

mitshel : youre welcome.