



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Helene C. Monberg

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Interviewer: Megan Rosenfeld
Transcriber: Megan Rosenfeld

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

ROSENFELD: We are at the Potomac Valley Nursing Home in Rockville, Maryland. It's July 18, 2003. Ms. Monberg, would you spell your name for the record?

MONBERG: Yes. My first name is Helene. [spells] I was named for my mother. My second initial is C, as in Christine. I was named for my aunt Christine, who was my mother's favorite in-law. And my last name is spelled M as in Man, O, N for Nancy, B for boy, E, R, G for George.

ROSENFELD: And could you tell me your date of birth.

MONBERG: Is October 19, 1918.

ROSENFELD: And you were born in Leadville, Colorado I believe?

MONBERG: That's right.

ROSENFELD: Perhaps you could tell me, now that we seem to be reasonably settled here,

MONBERG: I'll be 85 in October.

ROSENFELD: OK. When did you move to Capitol Hill?

MONBERG: I moved to Capitol Hill in 1982 -- excuse me, in 1972 -- but I bought my house in 1971. It was at 123 6th SE. And after I bought it I spent close to a year in fixing it up before I moved into it. I moved to Capitol Hill because I worked at the Capitol so much as a journalist that it made sense for me to live on the Hill. And I thoroughly enjoyed my time there.

ROSENFELD: Where were you living before?

MONBERG: Oh, I lived all over. I've been in Washington since 1942. So I lived in Washington for, I lived in Washington for 61 years. But I lived all over. I started out living in Northeast Washington, then I lived in Northwest, and I ended up in Southeast.

ROSENFELD: Whereabouts in Northeast did you live?

MONBERG: Oh, first address -- this is a long time ago, this was in 1942 -- the first address I believe was on South Dakota Avenue NE.

ROSENFELD: When you moved to Capitol Hill, was it considered a little bit risky for a single woman?

MONBERG: I never, I never felt any, during the entire time I lived in Washington, I never had any sense of risk at all. But that's partially the fact I was in the news business where you're used to going a lot of different places. And partially because it just wasn't something which was on my mind.

ROSENFELD: Did you walk to the Capitol?

MONBERG: Sure! God, I was only six blocks from the Capitol.

ROSENFELD: So that turned out to be a good location for you.

MONBERG: Oh, it was -- you know, it was a no brainer.

ROSENFELD: How did you find the house?

MONBERG: Well, I have no recollection how I found the house. It was a -- I bought it from an estate, ah, a husband and wife had lived in it. The husband had died, and then the wife died, and I bought it from an attorney who was in charge of the estate, and I have no recollection as to how I came to it or anything. But when I looked at it I knew that this is where I would like to be. There was a lot of work that had to be done on it, because it had been vacant for some time. Quite a bit of work. But I went to it and I uh, I was also ah, kind of pushed along because through Ethel Payne I had -- the DC Department of Corrections had asked me if I would do a scholarship program similar to that which I had done through the Payne scholarship program, and I had said yes I would. But I had to get my house in shape in first. So I always had back in my mind, you know, move along, kid, because this was coming later.

ROSENFELD: Did you work out of your house?

MONBERG: Yes. Yes. My house was my working space when I was home.

ROSENFELD: At the time you moved to Capitol Hill, were you publishing your own newsletter? Or you were working for someone else?

MONBERG: No. No, no, no. At the time I moved to Capitol Hill I had my news bureau, and...

ROSENFELD: What was the name of it?

MONBERG: My news bureau? It had no name. It was just my news bureau! And my client papers were all in the West.

ROSENFELD: How many papers did you have?

MONBERG: They -- it varied. Depending on what was up in Congress. But there usually were about six newspapers in the time that I had my news bureau.

ROSENFELD: What were you reporting on? What was your beat, so to speak?

MONBERG: I reported on basically natural resources issues that were of particular interest to my papers, particularly water issues.

ROSENFELD: So that was your area of expertise?

MONBERG: Not necessarily. But it was my area of expertise while I -- we're kind of screwing up on my career. But it was my area of expertise so far as my news bureau was concerned. I've done an awful of political reporting, but that was in connection with being assigned to the Hill by UP [United Press, now United Press International] and working for Congressional Quarterly for 15 years.

ROSENFELD: So one of the projects you had when you moved to the Hill was this scholarship program. Maybe you could tell me how you met Ethel Payne and got involved with her and tell us a little bit about that.

MONBERG: That's important. I met Ethel -- I went out to look for her. In 1968, and you would remember this because you're a native of this area. Washington was in flames. And it was a mystery to me how it could be that people would burn up their own homes, and places where they lived, locations, neighborhoods where they lived. I thought that was incomprehensible. And I thought, 'what could I do?' And for many years -- I graduated from C.U. Boulder [Colorado University in Boulder] in 1940 -- and for many years I had helped relatives, and friends of relatives, you know, providing some dough for the kids. It wasn't a scholarship or anything like that. But it was just something that would help along the line. And in 1968 when this happened I thought, well I know something about providing dough for kids to go to school. So I recruited Ethel, who was, she was in charge of the Washington bureau of the Chicago Defender. I think at the time there was another person in the bureau, but she had come in from Chicago to be head of the bureau. And I provided the dough, and she provided the kids. And she had a network. These were deserving kids. They were all girls and they were high school graduates in this area who wanted to go on to college. And I had been thinking -- and we named the scholarship program for Ethel's mother, and that's why I would like to know, if you get hold of the Chicago Defender and see if they have anything in their archives about this. Because it's like everything else on this, the way it happened I just wasn't able to get my files in shape before I left my house.

In any event she said yes. And I think the scholarships we provided were \$500. I'm sorry I do not remember her mother's name. But I believe we provided six scholarships during that time. That was 1968 through 1970. Then she was assigned back to Chicago. Then she told someone in the D.C. Department of Corrections that I was a no-nonsense volunteer and I might be willing, because they were very eager to have scholarships for their parolees and probationers. Then they came to me and then I said well I'm buying my house. I had no idea that they were going to do anything. Of course Ethel had no idea either. She just told them that I might be interested. This was at a period of time when it was odd, to say to the least, for a white woman to be raising

money for black kids particularly through the D.C. Department of Corrections, where the kids were practically all male. They weren't exclusively, but they were practically all male. And this ultimately resulted in something which I still do not know the answer to. I believe in open society. I really do. Probably because of my news career. But the other correction agencies in the area of course learned about ASP about soon it started -- that was the name of it -- Achievement Scholarship Program -- and they wanted in. I was able to hold them off for two or three years, but I had no good reason. I had a good reason, but it wasn't really an acceptable reason, why I didn't want to spread the wealth around, such as it was. I really felt that the black kids, the need was so great. They had nothing, including, they didn't even have families. I felt the need was so great that I should stay with the D.C. Department of Corrections. For all of the scholarships. But the other people were so eager to get in and I didn't have a good reason for keeping them out. If I'd had my druthers I would never have gotten into the suburbs. But I did not have my druthers, I felt. I didn't feel I had an acceptable reason to keep them out. And most of the kids were white and they had many more resources, both the kids themselves and the correction agencies. So this was something that was a concern of mine. But looking back, I am not sure, and I have thought about this a lot since Guy Martin called me -- I don't recall our ever having to turn down anybody. But we, as soon as we had the money collected we gave it right out, we didn't hold it. There was no -- the money always had to be there. And all of them were starter scholarships. Everything was a starter scholarship.

ROSENFELD: What does that mean, starter scholarship?

MONBERG: Get them started in college.

ROSENFELD: And these were kids who were...

MONBERG: ...on parole or probation.

ROSENFELD: And they were between -- how old, what was the age?

MONBERG: Well, they were old enough to go either to college or to trade school. So they were, practically everybody was in his or her teens. And we began to get some girls too. When the suburban types came in.

ROSENFELD: Where did the money come from?

MONBERG: I raised it!

ROSENFELD: How?

MONBERG: That was what I was, I was the fundraiser.

ROSENFELD: Did you have a board of directors -- and all of that?

MONBERG: Oh sure. Oh sure.

ROSENFELD: Who was on your board of directors? [Pause while she thinks]. Were they like your friends and neighbors on Capitol Hill? People you knew from journalism?

MONBERG: Ah, no. Capitol Hill had nothing to do with it. They were people who I worked with. Ah, who knew about the program and were interested. I remember particularly a man who is dead who would have been an excellent source for you to interview. His name was Eddie Weinberg. Edward Weinberg. But everybody called him Eddie. He was originally from Wisconsin, and with Eddie -- for everybody else Public Power is public power. With Eddie it was a religion. I am not kidding you. He felt that Public Power was absolutely vital to the health of the country. He was nutty on the subject. And he became -- he was an excellent attorney. He became the solicitor -- be sure to put down solicitor -- Interior Department. He was the solicitor for many years there -- he came in with either Kennedy or Johnson, but he stayed after he got there for quite a number of years. I think Eddie Weinberg probably served as solicitor longer than any other person has. At least in modern history. And he was absolutely fascinated with the subject of Public Power, and you know how controversial that is. Because a kilowatt doesn't know whether it's private or public. But with Eddie there was no question that a kilowatt had to be public. But his interest was primarily in power. He handled land issues in particular --

ROSENFELD: By power, do you mean electricity or water power?

MONBERG: No, no, water power did not get involved. Excuse me, it did in the Northwest. But the primary interest was in power which was in some way or other owned by the people.

ROSENFELD: Okay. You don't mean power in general.

MONBERG: I am talking about electric power, and that's important. But in any event I know Eddie was on the board. I believe that Neal Peirce was on the board [spells it]. He used to be -- I met him at CQ [Congressional Quarterly] -- he used to be, after he graduated from CQ, he used to be a columnist for a number of papers, particularly in Philadelphia. Because he's from the Philadelphia area. I know Eddie was on, I know he was on, because Eddie was our attorney. The great thing about Eddie was that he was truly interested. And he kept any legal problems off my back. I just didn't have them when he was working with us in ASP.

ROSENFELD: How did you go about raising money? And how much did you raise?

MONBERG: I know that in 1988 -- at the end of 1988 when I turned money over to the ARCH Training Center, who was taking over the program, I know that I gave it more than 100,000 bucks so that they could continue in 1989. I didn't raise a huge amount of money. But I raised a lot of money. And I would never

expect that I would be a fundraiser. [weeps a little during next sentence] But somehow people knew that I won't waste their dough. There is no way I would steal it, I won't waste it, I will give it my very best shot. I don't know how they know it, but they somehow inherently know it. And because I had high credibility, and you could come back again and again and again. Which we did. And of course as you become successful, people tend to give you the benefit of the doubt. And we had some wonderful lists. Which I turned over to the ARCH Training Center. Oh, I forgot to bring -- there was a story about the Americorps program in yesterday's *Post*. I think it was on page, probably on page 4 or 6. And it said how much help the young people had given in the program and it was urging the Congress to be sure to fund it fully because the Bush administration hasn't. And this I absolutely was totally opposed to. No government money, period! Don't get involved, because once you do, you become addicted to it. You don't work. And at least you have control over the dough and how it is spent if you raise your own. And I repeated that to ARCH Training Center over and over and over -- use these lists, develop more lists, stay away from government money -- federal money, local money, anything that has to do with the government, because the day is going to come when they can cut you off at the knees. Which is what is happening to the Americorps program. It was so obvious that -- well you would think you wouldn't have to tell people that. But people are lazy. And I worked, believe me, I worked my tail off. Remember, I had to support myself --

ROSENFELD: Well, I was about to ask you that. You were working full time as a journalist --

MONBERG: Correct.

ROSENFELD: Leaving your house in the morning to go up to the Hill --

MONBERG: Or whatever I was doing --

ROSENFELD: To get your stories, come back, [overlapping]

MONBERG: But I'd --

ROSENFELD: Let me ask you a little more about that --

MONBERG: I'd arrange my appointments and my schedule so I could get everything in. And we kept moving along. I wasn't an ordinary volunteer. In effect it was another job for me. An unpaid job for me. And of course the reason that I gave it up was that in 1988 I was 70 that October. And I knew there was no way that I was going to have the energy and the strength to continue much longer. So it was my effort to keep ASP alive. And the ARCH Training Center had been very interested. And they had indicated -- and they had trained a number of our kids, and they knew what they were doing. But they ran into trouble -- and then they unloaded on me. Please help us, please help us. And my reaction was: screw you! I told you not to get into this kind of trouble. You didn't pay any attention. You have to fry in your own juice. And I wouldn't lift a

hand for them. I was absolutely furious! Because this was a good program and they shot themselves in the foot. Just stupid. Just totally stupid. I have no sympathy for them whatsoever. And another thing they did -- I know Eddie said later, because he said he had gotten some kind of notice from them when they finally totally closed up ship and went out of business -- they put a number of the people that we had had on the board on their board, but we were never invited to meetings. They in effect didn't want our input at all. And when they came crying to me, I said take me off the board I have no idea what you're doing and I did not see this coming. No way. I don't want to be held responsible for anything I did not know anything about. And I was surprised Eddie was still on the board. But he called me and said he was. I think -- I am not sure about this -- but I think that three other people were on the board -- these are notes I made to myself.

ROSENFELD: Good.

MONBERG: They are other people who were on the board.

ROSENFELD: Ok.

MONBERG: The first is a difficult name. Cathy -- Catherin -- and it's spelled the plain old fashioned way [spells it]. The last name is very difficult. S as in Sally, ch, 'N' as in Nancy, I, double t as in Thomas, k-e-r. Schnittker. They're German Catholics.

ROSENFELD: Schnittker. OK.

MONBERG: I have never known anybody who is so Catholic as Cathy Schnittker. She and another friend of mine, Ann Thomas, who is also Catholic, we are all friends for many years. Ann lives up in New England. And the one problem relative to Cathy you will find -- she lives over in Northern Virginia, she works for OAR, which is a not just a correction agency, it's an agency that handles a number of facets of problem children.

ROSENFELD: OK

MONBERG: And Cathy has just had a stroke.

ROSENFELD: OK

MONBERG: So she, her right side is very weak. And she can talk but not long. And then Charles Carrington.

ROSENFELD: Oh yes, he was the one you asked me to look up in the phone book. I didn't find him in the DC phone book.

MONBERG: Well, then maybe he's not around. Call D.C. Department of Corrections. And ask him if they have any word on Charlie Carrington.

And then Bill Butler.

ROSENFELD: OK.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

MONBERG: Bill Butler is an icon with the Boys and Girls Club in Washington. Bill and Alice Butler had two daughters, but they never had any sons. And Bill made up for that by being a very special father through his sports connections for hundreds of kids in the Boys Club of Washington, because the girls were not included for many years. And Bill Butler has the greatest smile you'll ever see. It's a genuine smile, and it is great. And Bill is totally unschooled, but he's very wise. And I believe he was on the board too. There were others on the board too.

ROSENFELD: Was your board integrated?

MONBERG: Integrated? What are you talking about? Are you saying men and women or whites and blacks? Of course! Of course! With something like this there is no way you can do it otherwise. I think I had an advantage in -- Jesus, it seems odd to be asked a question like that -- I had an advantage in being a white female so far as fundraising was concerned. Because I was saying in effect if you put your money into ASP you won't educate all of the kids that we give scholarships to, but we'll educate a lot of them. And we did. The first three or four years we really didn't know what the hell we were doing. But I was in charge of ASP for 17 years, and I was involved with it for 17 years, and the longer we were all involved the better it was.

ROSENFELD: How did you get the kids you gave money to?

MONBERG: That is an excellent question. We got them through the parole and probation officers, the Charlie Carringtons and the Cathy Schnitkners. And we didn't look so much at grades, although we did look at grades, as we listened to what the probation officers and the parole officers said about the kids they recommended. They could see where some of the kids that they had under their jurisdiction could really do something with a scholarship. They were salvageable. Some kids aren't. And you never say anything, but you know that -- that you're wasting your dough. You can't take those kids. But these parole and probation officers knew their clientele. And the longer we worked, the better the kids did in school. And toward the end when I was phasing out, in 1986, 87, 88, and of course the last payment was in 1989, the completion rate of

the kids we started in college, or in trade school -- now remember, these were only starter scholarships -- they had to find other ways to make it after the scholarship ran out. We made it very plain -- this is it. You have --

ROSENFELD: It's a one-time grant.

MONBERG: You have your chance at the brass ring, by God, hit it. And then we also interviewed the kids, to let them know we were for real. We didn't want any screwing around, we wanted them to go to school.

ROSENFELD: Where did you interview them?

MONBERG: In my house. I have spent literally thousands of hours working with black kids in my house. Thousands of hours.

ROSENFELD: What sort of questions would you ask them?

MONBERG: Well we asked the kids, when the kid came in, what he wanted to do, and how things were going, and how he would spend our dough. And they all had to have some kind of plan, if they didn't have a plan, they didn't get a scholarship. But I didn't just interview by myself. We always had two others there. They were scholarship students who were ex-offenders either parolees or probationers. And we used our kids, and paid 'em real bucks to -- I didn't deal with the colleges themselves or the trade schools, the kids that we selected to operate the program with me were capable of doing anything. The very best ones like Ed Hill, who is now director of information relative to athletics at Howard University. I don't know what his name is right now. He was Ed Hill Jr., but he became a Muslim, as many of the kids did at that time. They were excellent, just excellent. They were the best of all. They had been nominal Christians. And they just gave up on the white race and became Muslim. He took the name Jamil Hill [spells] although he had been named for his father, and his mother just raised hell with him. And I don't know whether he went back to Ed Hill Jr. or not. [Editor's note: according to Howard University website, Edward Hill Jr. is director of sports information.] But he could have handled money. The one thing we didn't do was, we didn't hand any money over to them. Did we have to? Could we have? Yes, we could have. There's no question that Ed Hill would not have wasted the dough. He would have used it just the way I used it. But the problem was I had no back up. And if you ran into a mess, you simply did not have time to clean it up. There just was no way. Because as it was for some years there I not only was providing the scholarships on my own, but I was providing my own time and sometimes it ran into the time I took for my bureau. And by the time we had gotten to this stage, I already had my newsletter operating. I started that in 1964. Western Resources Wrap-up. It operated until -- no, I started it in 1965, and it operated until 1994, when I had to give up my work because I was having so much trouble walking.

ROSENFELD: Tell me about publishing the Western Resources Wrap-up. How did you do it? Did you type it and then take over to get it copied and then mail it out, or did you send it to a publisher? Or printer, rather...

MONBERG: No, no, no, no. What I did was -- it went right up to the end. And then, my recollection is that I put it together, I had a copying machine. I put it together on Wednesday. And it went into the mail Wednesday afternoon. Wednesdays were busy, busy days for me.

ROSENFELD: How many copies did you mail out?

MONBERG: At the height I was putting out -- my recollection is about 240. And they went primarily to water experts, particularly in the west. Although some people like Guy Martin, who is a lawyer for a West Coast law firm, and OMB, some of the agencies bought it too.

ROSENFELD: What was the cost of a subscription?

MONBERG: It varied. I don't remember what it finally was. At the end. But it was something like about 200 bucks a year, something like that.

ROSENFELD: And did you personally stuff it into the envelopes and put the stamps on and carry it over to the Post Office?

MONBERG: Of course! No, there were no stamps. You can buy envelopes that are already stamped.

ROSENFELD: Which Post Office did you use generally?

MONBERG: Oh, I used the Post Office which was on 7th Street, which now is on Pennsylvania Avenue. That's the Post Office that I used. On Capitol Hill, I used the facilities of Capitol Hill all of the time. When I went to church, I went to the Presbyterian Church on 4th and Independence. Occasionally I would go to meetings of interested citizens for some reason or other, you know they would have a meeting. But to tell you the truth I was so busy. People ask me was I member of the Press Club. And I said, yeah, briefly, but I simply didn't have the time. I was doing my thing.

ROSENFELD: What did you do for fun?

MONBERG: What did I do for fun? I'd take off occasionally and go over and visit my Washington family, who by that time had moved to Maryland. But --

ROSENFELD: Who's that?

MONBERG: What was the question?

ROSENFELD: Who is your Washington family?

MONBERG: My Washington family were Ed Chicca.[spells]. He was an attorney with the General Accounting Office. And his wife Mary. And their six boys and one daughter.

ROSENFELD: Oh, wow.

MONBERG: And we had a barrel of fun. I had known them since the Second World War, because Chris Tjernagel was called up. Chris and Val were from Iowa. So he was called up in the Navy. And they decided to leave Washington, as it turned out never to return. So my roommate -- both in Raton, New Mexico, where I'd gone to get my daily newspaper experience, and in Washington, Gwen Bracken, was in a carpool that Ed Chicca was in. And she said to Ed, hey we need a room, because my roommate and I need a room because the people who are renting a room to us now are giving up their house in Washington and are returning to their home in Iowa. So Ed said 'I'll talk to my wife.' He said we could make an extra room available to you. And he said to Gwen the next day, we'll make a room available. So we moved right away. And since that time which was 1942, and at the present time they have been my, in effect my Washington family.

ROSENFELD: Are they all still around?

MONBERG: Not all of them. They're scattered through Maryland, except for two brothers who are in California. One brother was on the U.S.S. Pueblo. So he's an authentic American hero. Also brother Jack is in California. Boy, being a prisoner of war is no deal.

ROSENFELD: I can imagine.

MONBERG: It is hell. Being related to a prisoner of war is rough going. In my view Bob really never has come back. From being on the U.S.S. Pueblo.

ROSENFELD: During that time did you --

MONBERG: We worked our tails off to get him back. What would you do? You'd do the same thing.

ROSENFELD: What did you do? Did you use your journalistic skills?

MONBERG: It's so long ago I don't remember just exactly what I did, or what they did. But whatever avenue we saw open at that time we'd knock on the door and say hey, give us some help. Of course the big thing you need is publicity, keep the thing alive while the kid is imprisoned. But that is tough. I have more gray hair today because Bob was on the U.S.S. Pueblo. But the Chiccas moved to Maryland when the school integration started. Just as so many people did. And I should tell you that this work that I did in ASP, while it is renowned today, and so many people think it was a great deal, and it was a wonderful, wonderful contribution, but it wasn't that popular with my family. Either my own family in the West or the Chiccas here.

ROSENFELD: Oh yeah?

MONBERG: And, ah. Thirty years made a lot of difference. But I still don't think they would be that wild about it. They gave to me -- they helped me --

ROSENFELD: They were worried about you hanging out with troubled youths?

MONBERG: No, that had nothing to do with it. They just thought that I was a little nutty to be raising money for black kids. It wasn't that bad with my own family, but they weren't that -- they thought I was nutty. And a case could be made that I am nutty!

ROSENFELD: (laughs)

MONBERG: So. What the hell. With Bill Butler, incidentally -- you should be able to find his name, either Bill or Alice Butler, in the phone book. I don't know how much he would remember, he is very old now, too, and I want to tell you that it seems to me, and I'll, and I don't know if I can do it this next week because I am getting my teeth taken care of, and Jeannie has to go with me, one of the, one of the Chicca brothers, Bill Chicca, he is my trustee. Along with Bob Dawson. But Bill is my top trustee. And his wife Jeannie comes to help me every Tuesday and Thursday. So she will be here when I go to the mobile unit for my dental work next week. And I don't know how, how much time we'll have. But I'll try to find the -- and she may have it also, I'll have her check -- but you really need the Armstrong --

ROSENFELD: The Congressional Record [insert]. [NB: This is a reference to an entry in the Congressional Record made by then-Senator Armstrong of Colorado about the ASP program. A copy is included with the Monberg file.]

MONBERG: You really need it. I used to spend a lot of time working to find that. The total number of scholarships that I recall we had -- these are starter scholarships [from] ASP, were, from that summary, were 346. And that's over a period of 17 years. Of course it built up as it went along. Then in addition to that I provided about six scholarships for the Payne scholarship program which preceded ASP. And then I provided six scholarships later to three colleges in Colorado. And the total number of scholarships I figure I have provided one way or another, sometimes officially, sometimes unofficially, was about 365. But most of them were through ASP. And you asked what the scholarships were. We started in at \$500. And then we went up to \$1000. We may have gone beyond \$1000. But I am certain we got up to \$1000. It seems to me in the latter years we may have gotten up to \$1200 a scholarship. But these were only starter scholarships. But then the kids learned how to network and to get other money, which started to become available in the Johnson administration. And we couldn't take credit solely for their graduation, but we got them started.

ROSENFELD: Did you ever get any thank you letters, or visits, or Christmas cards?

MONBERG: Oh, we got thank yous from time to time, often from the families, from the mothers. The, I really hated to put out any money for anything that was other than a scholarship. God, I hated to use it for other reasons. We always made a lot of ceremonies because most of these kids had never had been singled out for anything. And they really appreciated it. And it gave them some momentum to keep trying in school. So, but, I resented every penny! That I had to put out for postage, and for the stationery. But I got -- people think they're doing great if they get 80%, if they use 80% of their contributions. The Salvation Army has gotten it down to about 90%. I got it down to about 92%, only 8% for other reasons. And that was mainly postage. The -- you can't go any lower than that.

ROSENFELD: Pretty amazing. I wonder if we could spend a few minutes going a little further back in time and you could tell me how you happened to come to Washington in the first place.

MONBERG: I graduated from C.U. Boulder in 1940. I had had only weekly newspaper experience up to that point. I got a job in Salida, Colorado...

ROSENFELD: Salida?

MONBERG: [spells]. Write it down. And my aunt Christine and her husband, John Bennett, who was a switchman on the D&RG Railroad, they let me stay with them. And I got a job on a weekly newspaper there, the Salida Record. And that lasted about four months. I felt the man who published it didn't really know his ass from a hole in the ground. So we parted company about October of 1940. And I had put an ad in E&P -- Editor and Publisher. And I got a job right away from a daily paper in northern New Mexico called the Raton Daily Range.

ROSENFELD: How do you spell Raton?

MONBERG: R-a-t-o-n. Wonderful, wonderful, coal mining and grazing area in northern New Mexico. So I was down there for about five months. I really loved the people down there. Wonderful folks. And then I answered an ad from a newsletter in Washington called Pathfinder Magazine. Excuse me -- a news magazine for rural areas. An old Norwegian was the publisher of it, and I keep trying to remember his name, it comes to me as Helge Nygren but Helge was a South Dakota [HM correction: North Dakota] waterman, so it wasn't Helge. Anyway, he took me on as the first woman editorial staffer on Pathfinder Magazine, and I stayed there for a year. And then I went to work for the Army for ten weeks. This was pre-WAC. And the Army was discovering women. I soon realized in that job, which was in the office of the director of women's activities, a gal by the name of Oveta Culp Hobby, whose husband had been governor of Texas. And they published a paper -- my recollection is in Dallas [HM correction Houston] -- which is now out of business. She'd come in and go out, and the Army didn't know what it was doing, and consequently I didn't know what the hell I was doing either. So UP [United Press, later UPI, United Press International] came over to interview the office,

and they found me there, and they offered me a job. And it was the chance of a lifetime. I took a \$5 cut in pay a week, I was getting \$50 a week from the military, from the War Department specifically. And I was making \$45 a week with UP. I gladly took the cut in pay to get out of there and to work in a real news job. And they assigned me to Capitol Hill, which I loved. I was assigned to work on the Senate. I worked there for five years, and they assigned me both to the Senate and to the big war agencies newsroom, which is down where the Humphrey Building is now. That was an extremely busy place because all of the war agencies, civilian war agencies, were down there. This is in the Second World War...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

After the Second World War, they ruffed the gals in the office, and I went home and talked to my father, and I had a plan, and I asked him what he thought about it, and he said he thought it was a pretty good plan. So I went down to Pueblo, which at that time was about the second [HM correction: third] largest city in the state. P-u-e-b-l-o, Colorado. And I talked to Frank Hoag Sr.

ROSENFELD: Frank who?

MONBERG: Frank S. H-o-a-g Sr. about opening a news bureau, and I wanted him to be one of my clients, and he said 'yes' on the spot. I hadn't even opened it yet! But he signed up both of his papers, The Chieftain, which was the morning paper, and the Star Journal, which was the evening paper. He was pretty close to retirement age then, but this was just a handshake agreement. But then his son took over, Frank S. Hoag Jr., and he carried out the agreement that I'd made with his Dad -- only a handshake agreement. It probably was the best agreement that I had ever made. I didn't make that much out of it, but I could pay the bills. So you see my news bureau already was in the profit end. Then I lined up the newspaper at Grand Junction, Colorado, and then two, excuse me three in the San Juan Basin. The Daily Herald at Durango in Colorado, and in New Mexico the Farmington Times and the Gallup Independent. Those are both New Mexico papers, all in the San Juan Basin. And we're talking about Colorado River area. And then I lined up the Flagstaff paper -- I think that was the Sun in Flagstaff -- and several other news organizations that were in and out depending on what was up in Congress.

ROSENFELD: Did you primarily --

MONBERG: And I was just building my news bureau at that time. I wasn't involved with kids at all, except I might have a relative who had a child who was going to college and I'd you know, give them two or three hundred bucks.

ROSENFELD: You didn't have any of your own children?

MONBERG: Well, I was never married! I'm just amazed when -- including doctors, ah, believe me, I was single the old fashioned way. [Laughs from both.] There was no way that I would be so irresponsible as to take on a child without a father. If I'd been married that's something else again, but I wasn't married.

ROSENFELD: Did you primarily cover the Congressional delegations for these areas, or were you covering the White House, or was it a little bit of everything?

MONBERG: No -- Ethel Payne -- you really should get to the Chicago Defender, and you can get ahold of them because they're in the Congressional Directory, I'm sure they have somebody here, because that's a big, big newspaper, and it's a black newspaper in Chicago. The question was --

ROSENFELD: What you primarily covered for these papers --

MONBERG: Ah, yes. I covered the agencies that particularly dealt with the part of the country that I was interested in. And I covered the Congressional delegations.

ROSENFELD: OK. And you must have gotten all over Washington. Did you do much traveling?

MONBERG: I traveled about a month a year. We'd go out to look at primarily projects that my papers were interested in.

ROSENFELD: And you probably had to visit each of your papers, and make nice, and --

MONBERG: Oh I'd visit my papers. But the travel was primarily to see what I was writing about.

ROSENFELD: And that worked out well for you. You enjoyed that. You enjoyed being your own boss.

MONBERG: Loved it! It was a total pleasure. When I had my own newsletter that was frosting on the cake. You -- by God you worked! But at the end of the day you got paid for your work. It's the only way that an ordinary person who hasn't inherited a portion of a newspaper or some other news outlet can make money in the news business. It's the only way. Because just being a reporter, you can't make it. You can get by, but you're not going to have the dough. This was a way I do what I did for kids.

ROSENFELD: And buy a house -- you wouldn't have been able to buy a house.

MONBERG: And I bought the house cold turkey. There was no loan or anything.

ROSENFELD: You saved up your money and bought a house?

MONBERG: Well of course I knew what I was going to do. And in 1971, I paid \$24,500 for my Capitol Hill home. And I sold it in 2003, January, the settlement was 2003, and I got -- this was the gross total --

\$350,000 for it. So you see I paid \$24,500. That is a net of about 225,000. I didn't get all of that of course, because the lawyer and the settlement cost me the difference from about \$220,000 and 250,000.

ROSENFELD: But this is the money you want to leave as a bequest to Colorado? University?

MONBERG: No. I changed my mind on scholarships also. And I am hoping that I can do this from my big account with Payne Webber. I am hoping -- the total amount in my portfolio now, and my IRA, and my checking account -- is about a million five.

ROSENFELD: Wow!

MONBERG: And I would like to leave \$1.1 million [HM correction: \$1 million] to three colleges at home. And to the Rawlings [spells] Foundation and to my home county school district, which is the Lake County School District in Leadville. And each of them will get -- each of those five will get a million bucks. [HM correction: \$200,000 each.] And then for my families, my two Washington families and for the mining museum there's about another \$100,000. So I need \$1,100,000 for my bequests. And whether I'm going to make it or not I don't know. Because this costs here -- at this nursing home -- is \$225,000. Excuse me, \$225.

ROSENFELD: \$225 a day --

MONBERG: It's about \$225 a day, or about \$7000 a month. [next is overlapping]

ROSENFELD: Still, that's --

MONBERG: And that's just basic -- And then you have your medical costs on top of that.

ROSENFELD: But still, it's pretty amazing that you were able to save and grow your money to be able to leave that much money, as a journalist. That's pretty amazing.

MONBERG: Considering that fact that I was giving away a lot of money too -- and have given a lot of money away in my lifetime.

ROSENFELD: You must have been very frugal.

MONBERG: *Very* frugal. *Very* frugal. Yes. But I am not going to allow the colleges to use the money for scholarships. The colleges are C.U. Denver, (University of Colorado at Denver) and Colorado State University at Pueblo, and Colorado State University at Fort Collins. The reason I didn't leave it, leave money for C.U. Boulder is that I want each one of the colleges to select sites which, where there are a lot of needy kids. And C.U. Boulder had selected Brighton, but I didn't know anything about it. Brighton didn't mean anything to me. So I asked C.U. Denver if it had its program for tutoring in the high schools. That were really needy. And it has a program in a high school in West Denver, so, where the kids are really needy. So we took

that instead of Brighton through C.U. Boulder. C.U. Boulder gave me no choice either. So we're going to go through the University of Colorado at Denver, then the other two schools. And then the Rawlings Foundation -- Bob Rawlings is a nephew of Frank Hoag. Excuse me, he is a grandson of Frank Hoag Sr. and a nephew of Frank Hoag Jr. He is now publisher of the Pueblo Chieftain. The Star Journal has been phased out. Like all afternoon papers. It will help with the schools in Pueblo. And then the, along with the University -- it used to be University of Southern Colorado and now it's Colorado State University at Pueblo. And then the one at Fort Collins. That will be run by an extremely able young fellow by the name of Oscar Felix. And that is kind of a special arrangement.

ROSENFELD: So you --

MONBERG: Just one more minute. And then relative to my home town school district they will use the money basically for rehabbing the school district. That will be \$200,000. It will just barely touch the need, but the schools are falling down. They don't have competitive bidding, so that is going to have to be watched very carefully. The colleges will, they *must*, provide particularly English and math skills to kids who are not performing well in high school and are in danger of dropping out. So they're going to be working with some really rough kids. I do not expect a lot of success. But the point is it's the last opportunity for a kid like that, and some of them will take it.

ROSENFELD: Yup.

MONBERG: Some of them won't, too. But some of them will. Of course you're going to have to pay for any kid who doesn't show up. But scholarships I've learned get all put in, they get put in a pot. And the colleges give them out as they want to. They don't really look for the neediest kid.

ROSENFELD: Ah.

MONBERG: I learned that when I started making some scholarship money available to the colleges about 1995. And I gave up in about year 2000, because -- God, we were getting kids who -- the last kid there was a divorce in the family, and of course that always is tough -- but the kids were basically pretty well endowed so far as their family was concerned, and they really didn't have to work for the money. And I wanted the kid, the scholarship to be the difference between his going to school and not going to school. Or in case of a girl, her.

ROSENFELD: You decided to put your money back into Colorado rather than Washington --

MONBERG: Honey, I regard myself as a Coloradan. I know for this purpose you regard me as a Capitol Hill resident, which I was for 30 years. I was there, my house on Capitol Hill on 6th Street from -- 123 6th SE -- from the spring of 1992 until... I was there from the spring of 1972, until I had to leave in October of 2002

because I had gotten to a point where I knocked my back out and I didn't think I could live by myself anymore. So I went to Chevy Chase House in the District, and stayed at that assisted living place for about five months. And then I got so I couldn't walk at all. And then I came over here at Potomac Valley Nursing Home.

ROSENFELD: Do you expect to stay here?

MONBERG: Oh yes, I expect to die here. And I'm sure hoping it happens fast. Because I really want to use my money the way that I want to use it, and putting it out for this kind of thing is ridiculous. And they add all the costs on you...[more talk about insurance and money].

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

END OF INTERVIEW

[Note: Ms. Monberg called me after the interview to expand on her reasons for giving money to Colorado rather than DC. She felt that having been a taxpayer in DC all these years, and having worked pro bono for her scholarship program in addition to donating money to it, she had contributed enough to city, but had not done enough for the place she was raised. She'd gone through public school, including a full scholarship to college, and feels she wants to repay her debt to her home state.]