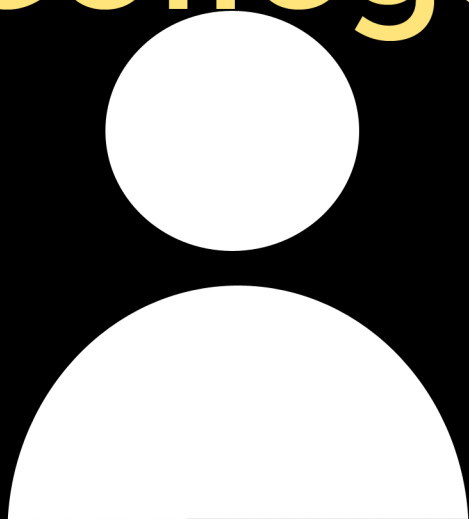


**Nevada State
College**



**Undergraduate Oral
History Project**

Oral History of Janet Bremer

An Interview

Conducted by

Laura Hutton

April 30, 2014

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Produced by:

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Department of History, Nevada State College 89002

Directors: Peter La Chapelle, Ph.D. and Kate Hahn

Project Manager: Melissa S. Stoner

Project Assistants: Noelle Cruz and Laura Hutton

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible with the support of the Nevada State Library and Archives and the generosity of the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). The collaboration between the Nevada State College department of Humanities and the Library provided a unique opportunity for undergraduate students and project staff to work together with community members from the City of Henderson to acquire a series of first-person narratives.

The transcript received minimal editing to preserve the conversational style and content of the narrator.

This interview is from the series *Bridging the Past: Henderson through Oral History*.

Oral History of Janet Bremer

An interview conducted by Laura Hutton on April 30, 2014

Biography

Janet Bremer was born August 17, 1946 in Knoxville, Iowa. After meeting her husband Klaus in college and traveling cross the world with the US military, Mrs. Bremer settled in Henderson in 1978 and began teaching at Gordon McCaw Elementary School in 1984. After a trip to northern Nevada ten years later, Mrs. Bremer began first discussing building a permanent structure for Nevada's students to learn about mining with the faculty at Gordon McCaw Elementary, which gave birth to the McCaw School of Mines in 1996.

Mrs. Bremer discusses the fundraising, planning, and involvement of the community, investors, and, most importantly, students that went into creating the McCaw School of Mines. Mrs. Bremer retired in 2005 and now volunteers as a docent at the mine and teaches a workshop that she created upon the mine's inception. The McCaw School of Mines has been in operation for nearly 17 years and has had an estimated 20,000 student attend the 4th grade "Mighty Miner" docent-led field trips.

Janet Bremer

Narrator: Janet Bremer
Interviewer: Laura Hutton
Interview Date: April 30, 2014
Location: Henderson, Nevada

Laura Hutton: This is Laura Hutton, interviewing Janet Bremer at her home at 630 Winchester Drive in Henderson, Nevada for the Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project.

So Janet, tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what your parents did for a living.

Janet Bremer: Long ago, my father was a farmer and we lived on a farm north of town. My mother was a homemaker. I had one older sister then my father started substituting for the U.S. Mail Service and eventually he became a City Letter Carrier and our land was condemned and taken by the government to build a flood control project which turned into Lake Red Rock.

Laura Hutton: Wow!

Janet Bremer: In Iowa so we moved to town and sold the farm to the feds and lived in town then - - till I was 16.

Laura Hutton: And that was in what town?

Janet Bremer: Knoxville, Iowa.

Laura Hutton: And tell me a little bit how you ended up moving into Henderson.

Janet Bremer: Well since I've never heard of Henderson and hardly Nevada. My husband was a career Air Force Officer and we were stationed in Hahn Air Force Base in Germany. When he got orders it was to Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas Nevada. So here we came

Laura Hutton: Awesome!

Janet Bremer: No choice. I stayed in Iowa with my parents and the babies. He drove out and found a house to live in and everything fit except the dining room tables. So that was good. We had to buy a house because we had sold a house in Virginia before we went to Germany. So in order to avoid the taxes, whatever you call them, what kinds of taxes, we had to put our money back into buying a home so he found this one.

Laura Hutton: This house we're in now in Henderson?

- Janet Bremer: Yes.
- Laura Hutton: Awesome! Okay.
- Janet Bremer: Why, why, I don't know. So that's how I found Henderson.
- Laura Hutton: Awesome, okay. So what about year was that?
- Janet Bremer: It was in 1978. Christmas of 1978.
- Laura Hutton: Okay. What made me him elect to find a house in Henderson if he was based at Nellis?
- Janet Bremer: I have no idea. I have no idea.
- Laura Hutton: Okay, so tell me a little bit about your first experiences once you moved out here.
- Janet Bremer: The houses were new. There were no trees. That was the end of town, two houses up was desert from then and forever more. It was just a brand new neighborhood, no fences, a lot of people with little kids, kids play out in the street, there were lots of birthday parties and just young families.
- Laura Hutton: So did you start teaching right away when you moved out here? How did that process go?
- Janet Bremer: No let me see. I had an infant that first year and I think I did go get my substitute license and I think starting subbing at the local schools around here in about 80', probably the fall of 80', that's right when they were building Galloway. I can't remember exactly but I did substitute then and then we got orders and went three year to Vandenberg Air Force Base in California in Long Hook, California. And then when we came back we rented the house out and when we came back then I started substituting quite a bit, the kids were older. Then the man I was subbing for died. So there was an open position in Mr. Twitchell, Neil Twitchell was the principal and he hired me. I started the day before Halloween in '84.
- Laura Hutton: Oh wow, okay.
- Janet Bremer: With CCSD.
- Laura Hutton: And what elementary school was that at.

- Janet Bremer: Ellen McCall.
- Laura Hutton: Ellen McCaw, awesome! So what do you think about Henderson just outside of where you were living? What did it look like? What was it like out here? Just outside of your neighborhood?
- Janet Bremer: It was desert. It was a brand new area. They were building. They were building houses like this. This is a Chisholm Home. They were building but there wasn't much. There was the one high school, Basic High School and there was Burkeholder and there was Galloway and McCaw. Sewell was down that way, the big building boom hadn't happened yet.
- Laura Hutton: Okay.
- Janet Bremer: But we did have a downtown. We had Vernay's and we had Perry's' and we had RASCO's, we had Thrifty.
- Laura Hutton: What is RASCO's?
- Janet Bremer: RASCO's was like a K-Mart kind of thing.
- Laura Hutton: Oh okay, awesome! It's good to know Vernay's that was still here and that's really interesting. Okay, so - -
- Janet Bremer: And then Othena's
- Laura Hutton: Oh okay, what is that?
- Janet Bremer: Othena's was the next lady shop that was her first name, Othena. She's been gone maybe 7 or 8 years now.
- Laura Hutton: Interesting, okay, so tell me a little bit about your first teaching experiences at Gordon McCaw and year was that about again, tell me?
- Janet Bremer: It was '84 when I took that job and it was a made up class. It was not a very good class, it was the first one. Got to sit with a man who had the class before and they always give naughty little boys to the men. So when the man had a heart attacked and disappeared I was left with the naughty little boys.
- Laura Hutton: So specifically you had a class full of boys.
- Janet Bremer: Lots of boys.

Laura Hutton: Wow okay.

Janet Bremer: And it was you know a takeover class so it was kind of a hard year. But then after that it got a lot better and more fun.

Laura Hutton: Awesome, so tell me a little bit about what sparked your interest specifically focusing on Nevada Mining with kids and what started the hands on program that you wanted to start implementing in your classroom?

Janet Bremer: Well, I've always taught 4th grade and I taught it in California and Virginia and Iowa and then we moved here and one of things in 4th grade curriculum in all those states is to teach state history. Luckily in Virginia they had a video that we could all sign onto because Virginia history started in Jamestown. It was a lot of facts to remember. But I didn't know anything about Nevada at all. So, I had to learn and figure it out and it was fun. You know, it's the Wild West, I'm from Iowa. It was fun, interesting.

But the reason I was interested in mining is because I went to Virginia City. There was a class at that time out of Fresno State maybe you know; teachers have to get six credits every 5 years to keep their certification, that's why I have all those credits. So, I took a class, a long distance learning kind of class. You paid the money, they send you the books, you read the books, they give you workbooks, you go to the site and then like on page 15-20, you have to go to the Nevada State Museum and answer all these question and then they stamp it saying that you were here.

So, my daughter had started college in Reno. I took two personal leave days and I took two classes, one on Carson City and one on Virginia City. So, we had to go in Billy Chollar, it was Billy Chollar's Mine, the Chollar Mine and it was cool, totally cool. Rails on the ground, curvy ceilings, the light, candle light, go in down and blow the candle out, cool. You know and the timbers are 150 years old. It was cool and I knew that my students would love it but they weren't there. They couldn't get there; it was an 8 hour drive.

So, I took slides and pictures, you know to take back to them. And I bought candle stickers then the next day I had to go to the State Museum. Have you ever been there? In Carson City, It's the Old Mint, the federal government put a Mint to take the gold from Virginia City and stamp it as gold coins so that they didn't have to

take it to San Francisco over the mountains and what not, they just built it there and stamped it there and used it.

So that building is now a museum. And as you leave that building, you go through the basement and there's a setup of a pretend mine down there. With the tunnels and mannequins working and some equipment and whatnot and I remember walking down the hallway thinking, this is not done very nicely. But it's better than what I had, which was nothing. So I took pictures of that too. And ended up not being able to use those credits for some reason. You could use them for re-certification but not for advancement. Some kind of nonsense, anyway, I been there and seen it so --. Came back, all excited, been to Virginia City, talked to my principal, this way cool, Dr. Dobry, okay that's interesting and right then they had Basic homecoming and my other daughter was working on a paper Mache float for the homecoming parade whatever.

So I go, that was pretty cool, I could do that. So, I wanted -- -I had a frame, a metal frame in the back of my room and I took butcher paper and put it over it because I wanted the curvy top and then we used cardboard boxes to make rails and I think an old sheet for the end so we go in-- had a curvy top at the rails. I had my candle holder, take the kids in there, tell them stories about Nevada History, blow out the candle, wasn't exactly dark, kind of dark and that was cool and all the 4th graders, I mean all the 4th grade classes came in and we did that with them.

Laura Hutton: That was cool.

Janet Bremer: So we told the principal how great we were and she's [Inaudible] then it was Christmas vacation. And the guy that taught next door to me went home to Chicago and he went to the, it's some technological museum they have their site and industries or something. And they have a pretend coal mine, I think on the second floor. And he went to it and he saw the curvy top and he saw the rails and he rode on the little cart and he came back going, oh wow, oh my gosh, that was oh so way cool!

And so you had two of us going, oh wait, that's so cool, Dr. Dobry it's so neat. And about that time a man name Frank Bupp. I can't remember the name of his company, from the test site somewhere. Anyway, I think he had \$10,000; it's either \$10,000 or \$20,000, \$10,000 that his company wanted to use for good for education. And she said maybe we could get him to -- what should we do?

And so she gave that idea to some committee that was working with the railroad.

We'd gotten a railroad caboose a couple years before and gotten it cleaned up and they were going to use it for a minerals museum, something rather. So she talked to that committee, she said, see if that - - you guys go, you teachers go and talk to that committee and kind of rev them up a little bit and see if we can figure out a way to use that \$10,000.

Well all they could think of was, take a trip somewhere, you know, take the kids on a field trip. So we started doing all these ideas. We're idea people, never follow through whenever an idea got - - oh we could do this, we tried that - - let's - - my first idea was, McCaw had an elevated playground, the parking lots down here, it's probably 8 feet or so and my idea was just to tunnel in there, make a curvy top, make the front look like a mine entrance, get real rails, some kind of a door, go back 15 feet, take my candle, take the kids in there, close the door, blow out my candle, start school.

Another idea was, we saw a Louis Home, it was about \$100,000. If we could get \$100,000 we just build a Louis Home and then put dirt over it and we have 2,000 square feet in there. So these are the kind of great ideas we had. So Dr. Dobry okay, I think the mayor at that time was Mr. - - what was his name? Grossman, Groesbeck, Gross- -, he had gone to that school as did Mr. Gibson.

But she invited him, somebody from the state minerals, Walt, Walt Lombardo, she invited Mr. Snyder, Bill Snyder who is with Tate and Snyder Architects, who had just finished a huge contract with the district his architecture firm made the plans for Green Valley High School, Durango, they used it for what - -6, 7, 8 different schools so he was kind of looking for a way to give back I think.

Invited the mayor, invited a man from the Pacific Railroad, the Pacific Railroad, I can't remember who else was at that meeting and then several teachers and we met on a Thursday morning in the library at 7 o'clock. And we talked about how cool it would be if we had some sort of an experience where the kids could learn about mining because it was so interesting. It's the total beginning at state; we wouldn't be at state, started way back there with those grubby old men up in Gold Canyon. So I talked that day, I think, I had slides that I had taken at Virginia City and the real mine and the pretend mine.

So they all talked, oh, that would be very interesting and then, oh Mr. Bupp came I think. And then two weeks later we had another meeting. Somebody else spoke, the other teacher, that's right. And my job was to sit beside Mr. Snyder and like talk him up about how cool this would be. Well it was no necessary, Mr. Snyder used to be a little boy; that would be so cool, ferno, ferno and his imagination, he's my favorite millionaire to this day, adorable man. Anyway, so same thing, community leaders, anybody know anything, have any ideas, la, la, la, la.

So every two weeks, we would meet at 7 o'clock in the library and Dr. Dobry always had breakfast for them. She said that people will come if you feed them. So the teachers would- - one teacher would make sausage gravy and biscuits, Dr. Dobry had it a couple of pretty good recipes for casseroles. I don't remember pancakes but we fed them. We always fed them every time they came and after awhile it got to be a thing.

Laura Hutton:

And what year was this about?

Janet Bremer:

It was- - it started in January of 94' because my daughter graduated in 93', she went to Reno that fall and that's when I went up to see the mines. So it was 94' and it was totally interesting, the - - talk about interesting Henderson characters. There were many of them interested in mining. You know guys that went out and did panning for gold still, had some corporations that were interested in helping children, the mayor helped us get some block grants and that lady that's running for something - - a state senator at that time, she helped us get some grants and then Mr. Snyder the architect, came up with a floor plan and one day he came with a garbage bag diorama. We're all like, ooooo, so cool. So he did the heavy work and he did it all for free.

And I believe the design of the mine got him some national recognition. I believe he put into some contest - - won some contests with his designs. But he designed four teaching rooms, a tunnel, the shaft and an outdoor room that we try to turn into an open pit, that didn't work.

But anyway, getting the money together was a big deal. At some point in time, every student at McCaw had their own hard hat and Mr. Snyder, after these, every other Thursday morning, he would stay and talk to representatives of different classrooms, take them out there to the site, show them how to work a transit, show them difference between cement and concrete. Show them how to build walls, it's a working class neighborhood, these students were

working class neighborhoods. And there were many skills that the parents had. The kids were all excited. Oh my daddy can do that, my daddy knows how to build a wall, my daddy knows how to do a roof, my daddy can do that.

We got people from the Plasters Union came to help us, the Carpenters Union and I heard the Mr. Caldwell who's the Executive Officer right now was on TV last evening and he seem to mention that the mining companies helped build it. Mostly it was the local, Carpenters Union, because they would – people would donate block to us. One of the parents was Ken Wirthlin, his company was KW Pipeline, so his men came and took the plans, the architectural plans and laid it out on the ground. We used the school district property at the end of the playground and they did all that work, the footings and the pipes and all that.

Laura Hutton: How did the community find out that you were working on this project? It just kind of worked out that way, huh?

Janet Bremer: I think that was just mostly word of mouth.

Laura Hutton: Wow!

Janet Bremer: Because you see how interconnected everyone is and we were smaller then. But one of the huge things that Mr. Snyder always did was involve the children. Make sure the kids are a part of this. So, when it came time to put the dirt back in the footings, we had a dig-it-day and everybody was supposed to bring a shovel from home and gloves and we would be workers.

So after school, we all went out there with our shovels and we backfilled. Who knows if they had to backfill it after us or not, I don't know but the kids felt like it was their deal and they would come and stand along the playground wall - - the hurricane fence with their hard hats on and watch it come out of the ground.

Laura Hutton: Lots of things to learn.

Janet: And whenever Dr. Dobry would have someone visiting, she ding us on the intercom, could you send out two students to explain the project and the man next door to me, Mr. Rogers was- - we had an after school program, I don't remember if it was every week, every other week maybe, mighty miners and we did lots and lots and lots and lots of talking. I probably did lots more, science, social studies was allotted and then the time schedule at that time but our students, our 4th graders knew all sorts of stuff about mining.

So, we would have breakfast where community people would come and we would feed them in the cafeteria. I taught my students that people with shiny shoes had money.

Laura Hutton: [Laughing]

Janet Bremer: So, when they were talking to somebody with shiny shoes, they needed to be especially persuasive but it was a whole school thing, that's what was so cool about it.

The 2nd graders wrote begging letters, you know, on that big fat lined paper with the empty at the top, they draw a picture of a miner or a truck or something like that and then they would write down here, I mean this took forever. This was writing practice with complete sentences and all that.

Dear Mr. Bank President, my name is Samantha. I go to school at McCaw. We are building a mine. We need some money. Do you have money? Please send us some. Love, Samantha. And with a happy little picture and Mr. Snyder told us to do that; he said; you wouldn't believe how many letters he opened every week. His secretary opens them, I'm pretty sure; how many letters are asking for money for this good cause and they're all good cause but when you - - and they're all typed and you know, happily stamped. But when you send a kid letter, with a kid picture, on newsprint paper, you're going to get noticed.

And we did notice going around to the different businesses in the ensuing years, lots of those businesses had those letters framed on their wall.

Laura Hutton: Wow.

Janet Bremer: Little kids are good ambassadors. So somebody knew somebody that could donate paint, somebody knew somebody that would do this and would do that. When we got to the part about the rock work, now this was what we say early 90's, middle 90's by now, we didn't have all that rock work on the strip yet. And the rock work was integral obviously because it had- - the mountain had to look believable so we got some estimates, we had \$30,000 at that point and the estimate for the rock work was \$300,000.

So we said, hmmm, is there another way we can do this? So what ending up happening is we got Raymond Construction from California was going to be our teachers. And they stayed in

Boomtown, whatever it was called then, something else then. Two guys came over and Mr. Snyder sent two of his workers to California, he paid for the trip, he paid for the hotel, he paid for Disneyland and their job was to go through the Indiana Jones ride as many times as they could and look at the rock work. Look how it was formed, looked how the joints were, look how it all worked together because they were going to come back and help with his part.

So the Plasters Union, Apprentice Union, I think that Plasters' apprentice people came and Raymond Construction showed them how to form this all. It's all on pencil bar, you form it, I have some pictures of how it started but the building started as just a straight block building and then they put metal struts that were slanted then they added the pencil rebar and then they put netting over that.

Laura Hutton

Ok.

Janet Bremer

And then that's how they blew the plaster onto that. And after that then you add the paint and whatnot. But we were totally floored when Mr. Snyder came with his plans the first time. He had like an emergency exits, I'm going, what, oh, emergency exits, we never would have thought of that, fire extinguishers, you know we're school teachers, we didn't know about that stuff but that's pretty exciting.

The 3rd graders made up - - they weren't limericks but they were rhyming poems that they would entertain the breakfast guests with. The 5th graders were the waiters and we had fancy aprons for them. The 4th graders were the tour guides. So it was the entire school effort and that's what way fun about it; I think some of the teachers were ticked at the 4th grade teachers because it was more work. I know the secretaries were because it was tons more work to - - I mean this is when you had to send a letter. I don't remember when e-mails came by but they weren't there in 1995.

And then when we had the dedication it was totally cool. No one had ever done this stuff before, we were like, pioneers and we hired someone to put tents up. Then we hired a night watchman to watch the tents all night and then the next morning we had a silver dollar breakfast and the caterers cooked breakfast for the whole entire school and every kid got a t-shirt which we would put on them after breakfast because we're teachers.

But the art teacher figured out the design and we declared ourselves opened but we weren't really open until the next - - after January, this was dedicated in September but we didn't open it for tours.

Laura Hutton: That was September in 1995?

Janet Bremer: '96.

Laura Hutton: '96. So you opened it for tours, January - - -

Janet Bremer: '97 I think. I think that's how it went. But the whole school felt like they had done it, which was a school teacher plan.

Laura Hutton: So who put together and did the research on the actual you know classrooms that were other inside the mine?

Janet Bremer: We didn't those until after - - we didn't decide what to use the rooms for until after it was built. And we were double sessioning 96' with Vanderburg Elementary.

Laura Hutton: What does that mean?

Janet Bremer: They were just building Vanderburg Elementary; they didn't get it done before school started. So, our school started at 7 o'clock in the morning and we went until noon. Kind of a truncated day and then Vanderburg started at 12:30 in the same building.

So, my 4th graders were there in the morning using those desks, and then when we left, we had to take all of our stuff and put them in our cubbies, which we had to buy. We had to buy cubbies. And then the Vanderburg kids would come and take their stuff out of their backpacks and put in their desk. And they were there from 12:30 to 5:30.

So all afternoon, this other teacher and I would go out the mine, everything that's in there that's painted black, I painted. He and I made the benches that you sit in Room 2, in my garage, hammered them together.

We made the displays because when you went through it in September, everything was sitting on the floor. And nobody had - - we have had umpty um meetings and planning's and what you want teachers, well I wanted an exhibit about assaying, I wanted a donkey, I wanted all these things and then we turned in all this

paperwork and then nobody had any money to build, find it, do it, set it up, whatever.

So the other teacher and I said that we would- - we went to Home Depot, spent \$1000 on wood, paint and all kinds of non-sense and just built things to pick this up off the floor and stick it up there. So it's much better now than when it opened.

Laura Hutton: Okay, so you made actual improvements on it since the actual construction and lots of re-vamping - --

Janet Bremer: Yes, yes, yes and we've gotten better ideas about what to do in there and more hands on.

Laura Hutton: So you said the term assaying, was that something that you had to do deep researching to in order to actually put that exhibit together? Or how did that all pan out?

Janet Bremer: The recent ones?

Laura Hutton: Any of them, the original exhibits, the exhibits - --

Janet Bremer: The original ones I think our goal was to just get it off the floor and get it up so people can see it. Since then they're a little more organized. One of them is what they do at Keck Museum at Reno at the university that they developed that we stole; teachers can do that, officially. It's not exactly how I planned it certainly but it's a very sensible place to go and sure they learn things.

The number one thing that I feel that I have done that help the most is write a booklet that the required to do before they come. Because otherwise if you don't that the three steps of mining are drill, blast, muck then you're just there for the entertainment value. And another thing when we set it up, we said the school teacher, the teacher herself, has to come to my in-service and then I teach her what I want the kids to know before they come. So I still have my finger in the pie. And I still volunteer every Friday, if I'm in town. But I don't stay in town on purpose. If I'm gone, I'm gone.

Laura Hutton: So what do you remember about the first group of kids that came through on an actual field trip?

Janet Bremer: I didn't - - I wasn't able to participate in that. I was still teaching.

Laura Hutton: Oh, okay.

Janet Bremer: The first docents were Dr. Dobry's Sunday school class, I believe, that might need to be verified. But I was still teaching, so I couldn't go out and do field trips. It was very expensive at first, they had coaches that came.

I think at first there was somebody that was helping USA Coaches and they got it at a reduced price and that was good but somebody else bought out and I don't know. It got too expensive and we use school buses now, which is terrible because it limits us to two hour tour.

Many, many, many more things that you could do there but the teachers could do with the kids. You know, they don't need us, they can go off and do something else with their class because they know their class and what they be interested in doing but we're only paying for the bus for two hours and the buses have to go on their next run so we have to be back by 1:00 I think.

Laura Hutton: Okay.

Janet Bremer: So that's a limiting factor.

Laura Hutton: So when were you able to actually be involved in the tour process itself?

Janet Bremer: When I retired and had all this free time.

Laura Hutton: Ok.

Janet Bremer: Which was 05'.

Laura Hutton: Interesting, so what was I going to ask you?

Janet Bremer: But it changes. There's a board that is in charge and some men from the mining companies are on the board, Marykaye Cashman, Cashman, one of her associates is on the board, Clyde is the director now, we have I think three paid physicians, he's full time, the secretary and the man who coordinates the volunteers.

Laura Hutton: So in addition, obviously you have your 4th grade actual docent who take the kids through -- who are your adult players in this situation?

Janet Bremer: They're volunteers that come. Four volunteers every day that go with each group. The class comes, they're broken up into four parts and off they go to - - the same docent takes it from beginning

to end. We don't pass them off. And the 4th and 5th grade students are very good by now in the spring, they're totally excellent. But there's a new lady that's going to be teaching the class this fall, they have a liaison finally between the school and the mine and I won't have to teach all of those classes.

Laura Hutton: So are you currently teaching the in-service classroom teachers? Is that what you're doing?

Janet Bremer: I do that twice a year and then in the fall, in September and October, the Mighty Miners come once a week, Monday nights, after school for an hour and I teach Nevada History, mining, what's important to tell them on the tour. And then they learn from the grown-ups that are doing it and by spring they're terrific.

Laura Hutton: Wow, so how are those kids selected?

Janet Bremer: I'm not a part of that. The school does that, liaison lady. They have to have grades all that, just like you would think. They have to - - - and they're mostly girls. I think we only had two boys this year, maybe three.

Laura Hutton: I like that girls teaching mining. I love it. So they have to have a commitment outside of school in order to be able to do this?

Janet Bremer: Right and they have to have parent permission and someone to pick them up always and they have to maintain their grades and they have to be responsible for getting the schedule making sure they're out there when they are scheduled to do it. We have vests and special shirts for them and name tags and all of that, special hats.

Laura Hutton: So they just know when they actually need to leave? There's no scheduled class time right? That's really interesting that they're able to streamline that. That the kids are able to keep their grades up. [laughing]

Janet Bremer: Oh sure, sure. It's an honor to go. It's an elevated position at the school which is good.

Laura Hutton: Definitely. So that board that you were talking to me about, is that the foundation?

Janet Bremer: Yes.

Laura Hutton: Okay, tell me a little bit about how that developed and came about.

Janet Bremer: Well, I think that's something that the school district disagrees with because at the time, the school district had their own foundation. And we set up an independent one and I do believe it made them angry. But we had a lawyer.

See, right at the very first, everyone was willing to help, everybody donated their time, their interest, la, la, la, la, la, and a lawyer set up the parameters and set up all the pages and pages of how you incorporate and whatever was necessary and so we have a separate foundation from the school district.

Laura Hutton: Wow, so sustainability built right in to keep on going.

Janet Bremer: Well, yes. I think it cost about \$100,000 a year to run because the number one thing they need is not salaries, it's to pay the buses. And we pay, oh, I don't know how much it is a day, it's more than \$100, \$125 maybe up to that we will pay for your students to come and then if it's pass that, make some of the far away schools maybe it cost them more to come. I don't know that's not my bailiwick I'm just a teacher. I'm on the bottom of all those ladders.

Laura Hutton: So tell me about the first time that you remember actually taking a tour through.

Janet Bremer: Don't remember. There wasn't anything I had to learn because I knew what I wanted other people to say so that's what I said. Every room's interesting and you just tell about the room's that you go through and then we open with just the mine and then there was phase 2, which was dedicated with Governor Guinn.

Kenny Guinn was the Governor and it is the, I don't know what they call it, Visitor's Center; I think it's just the Visitor's Center and that has bathrooms which we needed. Bathrooms and a large meeting room and the art teacher and I got two relay stays, we got substitute for our classes so we could go out and take the pictures that the students had drawn to put a mural depicting the history of mining. It goes from the indigenous people, clear up through huge ball mills and what we're doing today; so all of the pictures on that mural were drawn by students at McCaw which was pretty terrific.

We got to take 20, I think, 20 students to Carson City and Virginia City once during this whole episode. We flew up and back in the same day. It was one other time when we took two students. Dr. Dobry and I took two students up and back in the same day, paid

for I don't know by whom. I think that was a grant. I still have the t-shirt, maybe it says.

Laura Hutton: Ok.

Janet Bremer: It's been learning for everybody. But know all of those people who are the instigators are gone from the building so it needs to be carried on and the foundation and the executive director are the people - - they're the ones responsible now.

Laura Hutton: So was the foundation responsible for raising the money to build the Visitor's Center?

Janet Bremer: That just kept going. I think that was just on-going. I don't think that there was a stop and then now we need more money. I think it was just- - we're still raising money.

Laura Hutton: So they maybe had plans to build that in the future.

Janet Bremer: Oh yeah, yeah. I believe they did. I didn't know about it but I'm on the bottom row.

Laura Hutton: [laughing] I understand, definitely. So, do they still actively seek out funding to continue this - -?

Janet Bremer: Yes, we have to because there's no other field trip in the county that's free and we pay for your kids to come. That's why we want to get the biggest bang for your buck. That's why the mining industries should be much more interested in us and to be giving us money because you do know that we do have a bit of disparity in our state.

We have the North and we have the South and we have all the people, with half the people in Clark County. But they have the history. We weren't even a part of the state when it was incorporated. So, when you do go up North and I have. I've been in several of those mines up there as their guest but the mining companies own those towns. And it's not exactly a company town but they build recreational facilities for the towns, they've built schools for those towns up there. I mean, mining is it.

Well if you come down here and take your clip board to Albertson's and inquire about the patrons when they come out, hello, would you tell me, do you know what's mined in the State of Nevada? Are there any minerals that are important to the State of Nevada? They're not going to say, why yes, I know all about that.

They don't know at all. Mining is invisible in Clark County, is it not?

Laura Hutton: It is.

Janet Bremer: It's totally invisible but when those mining people come down here they're like tuff stuff. But they're not tuff stuff and somebody needs to tell them that, probably not me but you know, nobody's even heard of you. You need to drop a little money, we're promoting you. We're the only people on town doing that for you. You know your billboards are lovely but we're actually talking to people, teaching them about our history and your history and your future. Because mining is a wonderful thing to work in, they certainly make more than the school teachers. And you have every job in the world. You can be a biologist, even a secretary, a truck driver, helicopter driver, and all those things.

Laura Hutton: So if they're not funding currently, who is?

Janet Bremer: Well they are, I think they give us, I think its \$10,000 that Barrick and Newmont and Round Mountain and Cashman, I do believe each of those four entities and those are the names of our field trip people and then their names are up on the storefronts for the whole year. But I believe those four people give us \$10,000 each, well that's not even half of our operating budget.

And in the - - there's a change of course, I know that. We're coming up close 17 years with it open but at the dinner the other night, the food was hamburgers and hotdogs in a buffet line. And I was appalled and embarrassed and whatever. Again, I wasn't on the board, I didn't get to choose.

The first year we were at Palace Station and we had shrimp and steak you know, appetizers and champagne and everyone had on fancy clothes and shiny shoes. So that's when we had money. That's when Senator Reid came. I've taken Senator Ensign through the mine, I've taken a whole lot of those guys but we're like invisible now, we disappeared.

Senator Reid did do a wonderful thing for us. He let us go down, I don't remember who went that day, down to Searchlight to one of his mining properties and let us take the timber rings out so the timbers that we have to hold up all of the timbers in the mine are from Senator's Reid mine in Searchlight. So that makes us much more authentic, feels different, just nice.

Janet Bremer

Laura Hutton: Are there any sort of little tidbits like that - - that maybe you only know?

Janet Bremer: One day someone painted Cashman- - let me see - - CAT on our big truck out there and they did it quite artfully and they're very pleased with themselves so happy. And so the next time someone came from Cashman they had a total explosion and said that is not our logo. I will send someone to fix that. So we have an official CAT logo on our truck. Don't want to upset those corporate people.

Laura Hutton: So how may do you think so far have come through the mine, children?

Janet Bremer: Oh, I think its 80,000 now.

Laura Hutton: Wow!

Janet Bremer: At the very beginning we would have like a t-shirt for the 1000 visitor and the 2000 visitor and - - but they don't do that anymore I don't think. I don't know if they keep track, don't know, not my job bottom rung.

Laura Hutton: So - -

Janet Bremer: I think of the 50th, 50,000 person, I think we gave t-shirts to the whole class and invited that kid and his parents to the fund raising dinner.

Laura Hutton: So two hours, your limit on actually taking kids on a field trip. Tell me about what they actually experience on a field trip.

Janet Bremer: Well, we've tried to divide it into half hours segments. One half hour is going through the rooms, the first room is the minerals room, where there's an example of minerals, interesting minerals, plus a whole case of just Nevada minerals; there's an amethyst in there, geodes and all that sort of thing. The second room is a history room, memorabilia and we talk about the history of lighting, [Inaudible] that kept the roof, kept the mountain from falling on the people in Virginia City because of the way the quartz were under the ground there would fracture and fall. And we have a lunch bucket, all that sort of thing.

In the third room, we talk about how we don't just dig things up. You don't dig something up unless there's a purpose for it and you

can sell it, that's what mining is right? You take the natural resources, you dig them up, you sell it and you use it for them.

Then the fourth room is a products room to try to show them how much- - when you're just sitting in your room and look around, how many of those things in your house are from the mining industry. You know, the pipes in your walls, the electric wires, your fan, your porcelain in your bathroom, tiles, shingles, stucco, fences, all that stuff. And then that's one half hour segment.

The other half hour segment is, you pretend like you're going to go to work today and you brass in, we talk about brassing in, they put on their hard hats with their lights and we go through, maybe a display of mannequins doing drilling, we do the blast wall and then mucking, we go through that tunnel and then they go back out and brass out so that's another half hour.

The other half hour is on the surface where we talk about the big tire, the stamp mill, we go up into the Visitor's Center and look at that mural. There's a model of a stamp mill there to show them how it works. There's a map of Nevada where you push buttons and it shows you where the minerals are located in the state. There's also an exhibit from the gold industry. I think we had to pay for that one shows the uses of gold, not just jewelry but computers and the plug-ins to your air bag on your car, all that sort of thing.

And then we go out to the core sample driller. We still use the caboose that we got long ago and we can make it dark so that's our fluorescent mineral display in there, that's cool. And then the last half hour is panning for gold. But when we opened every pan was salted of course with four flakes of gold, every pan. Now we don't have the money anymore and one person in the class will get one flake of gold. Everybody else get silver, some sort of pretty rocks and garnets. So, I see a downhill spiral, which is so irritating when the mines have so much money.

Laura Hutton: Since this been going on for 17 years now, where do you see this going?

Janet Bremer: I have no idea. It's not being maintained the way I would like it but I don't have any wherewithal to change it. I just do my part.

Laura Hutton: And a good job you've done!

Janet Bremer: It's like anything else. It's still operating. They're still making the teachers come to my class. They still have to read my book, so that's my two cents worth. And it's still operating so, it's all to the good I think.

Laura Hutton: Awesome!

Janet Bremer: And I suppose it'll change again.

Laura Hutton: Do you have any memorable field trips that you hosted; remember little kids or comments that they made while on the trip?

Janet Bremer: Well when we were putting- - when we were getting our own students learning about mining, we took a field trip on a Coach to the Viceroy Mine in - - it's down by Searchlight and they did a pour for us. They poured gold so we could see the gold bar. They also did a blast, off in a distance so we could see it. We got to pick up, the teachers did, and the kids didn't, the gold bar.

The way cool thing that I learned from that is - - we saw it poured out, it's 4000 degrees or whatever it is but have you ever had like a gold bracelet and you're stirring something on the stove, like you're making spaghetti or something and all of a sudden, oh, your bracelet gets really hot, you go oh, it picks up that heat very rapidly. Well I didn't realize it dissipated that heat just as rapidly. They poured that bar out there and it was like 15 minutes and the man's talking to us and he goes, well do you want to pick it up and I'm going, well, I'm not sure. And you walk over to it and it was still warm but it was certainly cool enough to handle. So I thought that was a surprise.

But the problem was, the field trip was to California. You're not allowed to take your children to California. Oops, we went anyway. I didn't know we weren't allowed to take them until we got back. They didn't like our bus- - we got wrote up about that. You know, they are very specific about I'm taking these children and it's a learning experience, this is of that and these are all my permission slips and tra, la, la, la, la, we went to California anyway and came back. I don't remember what year that was but that mine is closed up now, Viceroy Mine, it's over by Castle Rock; Castle Rock that you see it, when you drive up to California, somewhere in California.

Laura Hutton: So do you have anything else to tell me that you can think of? Anything else you want to share?

Janet Bremer: I don't think so. It was exciting to be on the building end of things and my students - - like that first year when we had that very first wonderful fund raising place, the art teacher used to have the children draw murals and paint them. Five foot long murals and we would auction those off for like \$45,000. That's when the mining companies were happy with us and they wanted to donate and that's how they donated. Well that's long gone.

But we would select student from those mighty miners to go to the fund raiser and I'm telling you, this is a working class neighborhood. So these children borrowed suits from each other. One little boy didn't have any shoes and one of my other students had - - oh I had to buy these horrible shoes for my mom when she got married last month, you can use my shoes, okay, so they were trading things like that and they all got spiffed up and we had a Coach bus not a school bus, a real bus take us over there and each table would have one docent and one student at the table at whatever company had bought. And that was cool because this was a whole different world for these children.

You know, we had one session to show them how to use a napkin and how to eat your food and not be like if you didn't like something, what to do about it. So that was cool stuff but everybody knows how to eat a hamburger. The kids don't come anymore.

We had kind of a disconnect to ask the principles have changed because our guiding principal, the person who made this happened, it's certainly not me, it's Dr. Dobry, Janet Dobry who is our principal, who if she shook your hand, she would shake quarters out of your pocket and you'd be donating, hello lovely to meet you. She had a working relationship with all these people and she's the one that made it happen.

But the school district in there, infinite wisdom moved her away from McCaw to Taylor, across the highway and the ensuing principal have not been as enthusiastic about supporting this project. However, I believe the current one will. I would tell you her name but I don't know who it is. Her name is Jennifer someone, hyphenated name. You have to do some research to find out who she is.

Laura Hutton: What was the name of that - - that other teacher you were working with initially?

- Janet Bremer: His name was Mr. Rogers.
- Laura Hutton: Okay, perfect, awesome.
- Janet Bremer: So we were 4th grade and some people like it that the school was doing and it was all exciting and some people didn't because they thought that we were - -
- Laura Hutton: Was there anyone within that actual community around the school in that area who opposed the project? Like business owners - -
- Janet Bremer: No, no. No one opposed to it. And right now, I think we have 5 retired teachers from McCaw who come back and are volunteered docents.
- Laura Hutton: Wow that is very neat.
- Janet Bremer: Lynda Abbott, Lynette Reese, Nancy somebody, me, and I don't remember who the other one is. I thought I counted 5 the other day, don't know. Anyway, getting volunteers is always a problem. If you can find some, send them over.
- Laura Hutton: Awesome!
- Janet Bremer: I think publicity wise, we should advertise the fact that one of our mighty miners is teaching there now, DeJoria, she married one of our other mighty miners, Mr. Campbell, I don't remember his first name, Campbell and we need to have students come back. We're not doing a good job of that at all; getting the old tour guides back for a picnic or something.
- I think that would be good for all of us but Foothill is now participating, letting - - let's see, I don't know what the name of the class is but they work in the community one day a week and Foothill kids come to us on Tuesday and Thursday I think and Las Vegas High School has a group that comes on Wednesday. So their high school docents, so we don't need as many adult docents on those days, which is very helpful.
- Laura Hutton: So what has been the kids, the 4th graders have to say about their experiences as mighty miners?
- Janet Bremer: Well, you can see them as 4th graders, they're not as outgoing, they're not as full of knowledge, they're not as forceful, they're not as loud but if they come back and they're ours for 5th grade

too, their demeanor, it's public speaking and as they get more confident they're better at it. It's kind of fun to watch them grow and change, grow up.

Laura Hutton: Definitely, that is an awesome experience.

Janet Bremer: And be more knowledgeable.

Laura Hutton: Wow!

Janet Bremer: Sure.

Laura Hutton: Okay, was there anything else you want to finish up with? Anything else you want to say?

Janet Bremer: I don't know. It's been a good project. I just wish we had more community support, we need more docents, we need more money but I don't know how to get that.

Laura Hutton: We're all asking that.

Janet Bremer: Yeah.

Laura Hutton: Well there are all kinds of places to donate your money.

Janet Bremer: And that's the problem. See they have all the -- like my granddaughter, when she's in 4th grade, in Reno at Double Diamond Elementary School, will get on a bus and they will go to Virginia City and she will go into a real mine and she'll see the real place and she'll ride on the train and she'll do that for her mining experience for her History and whatever.

Down here there's no place like that plus children are not allowed to be on an active mining site. So there's that problem. The only other place since we've started this mine, it's at McCaw, you can pay money to go through the Techatticup Mine in Nelson's Landing and we've taken our might miners there for field trips.

Laura Hutton: Okay, so have somewhat of a not partnership I would say - -.

Janet Bremer: Well, it was just a treat for them and I was standing there one day, one of these little darlings and I said, aren't you going to go with that group over there and she goes, just like room 2, I did that yesterday. I'm thinking, this is a real mine, come on kid. But yes, they get very knowledgeable, self assured.

Janet Bremer

Laura Hutton: Do you know if your students have actually gone into mining, after they were a mighty miner?

Janet Bremer: We've only had two that I know about. One is driving a truck for Round Mountain, his name is John and the other one is a Mining Engineer, he went to Reno to the Mackie School of Mines and he is an Engineer, he was working in South America, I don't know where he is right now, Abe's little brother. I'll write that down for you.

The people at the Mackie School of Mines try to keep- - they come down trying to convince high school seniors to go to Reno obviously and be a Mining Engineer and she tries to track these children but we weren't doing a very good job of tracking for a while but I think we're better because some of the kids from Foothill used to be my might miners and they thinks it's really cool to come back now that they're grown up high school kids. So that's us.

Laura Hutton: Awesome! One more question for you. It's a little bit off topic. Do you happen to know anything about, the Three Kids Mine?

Janet Bremer: Well, it closed in the 60's. It was a big employer around here, huge employer. You can go see it, you not supposed to but you can go see it. I have photos. I can't remember what they're mining.

Laura Hutton: I think it was manganese.

Janet Bremer: Manganese, isn't the city supposed to clean that up and make that into a housing development? I believe that's the last I heard of that. I don't know what they're planning to do with that big hole because it is a big hole. Looks like an open pit mine. It's still there.

Laura Hutton: With stuff in it, I heard, recently.

Janet Bremer: Well, I'm sure there's all kinds of trash.

Laura Hutton: I think I heard of boats and cars and things maybe.

Janet Bremer: Probably, probably, from the middle 60's, that was a long time ago and I don't know that they did any closing down activities. Didn't they just close one day, just stopped?

Laura Hutton: I have no idea.

Janet Bremer: Because when we were getting things for the mine, we got substitutes one day, release day, and we all went to Pioche, there was a mine up there that was owed my Kerr McGee and they said that anything we wanted for our mine, to just tag. So went around and tagged. That's how we got the materials for room 2.

We took ladders and first aid kits and just stuff that was cool, hammers and anvils and all kinds of stuff and that mine just stopped one day in the 60's. I think that was 64' also, did we have a depression in 1964'? Because when you went to the bathroom, to the changing rooms, those baskets that the men use for their lockers, there were still shoes in it and pants and whatnot because they just stopped one day. They didn't warn their workers, they just said okay, go home. Don't come back tomorrow.

Laura Hutton: Wow! So the materials that you would see for room 2, where did you receive all your mineral specimens that you have?

Janet Bremer: The State Division of Minerals might have helped us. That's when Walt Lombardo was there, the guy now is Bill. When we were cleaning it out one year, it was closed one year because they were building a new McCaw and they took the school and they built a new school beside and then they tore down the school.

Well, when they did all that they cut our water lines, they cut our electricity and so for 6 months or whatever, we didn't have any tours. We couldn't operate it. And after that Sandy Miller was our Executive Director and she was helping, my gosh that woman is a worker. You know Sandy Miller? I saw her one day in her very nice matching jogging outfit on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor in the Visitors Center because she didn't like the way it was done. When she was helping clean up the mine with her broom and her whatever and Bill the mining guy, wouldn't throw any of the rocks away, she goes come on Bill, we got three of these, we need to clean this place out. Geologist loves their rocks, so it's hard to pare down.

Laura Hutton: Who's Bill?

Janet Bremer: He's still helps us. Too old to come up with these names, I saw him Saturday, Bill. He's the --- I'll write that down for you --

Laura Hutton: So is he a docent?

Janet Bremer: No, he's the State Division of Minerals Representative here in the South. There's one up North and one down here because we have that division you know. So he's the Division of Minerals guy.

Laura Hutton: So what is his involvement? What does he do?

Janet Bremer: He's on the board. He's very knowledgeable. He helps us with smart people things. He set up the fluorescent minerals display, huge knowledge base.

Laura Hutton: Awesome!

Janet Bremer: He's a good guy.

Laura Hutton: Alright, we talked about quite a bit.

Janet Bremer: Now is that enough about development? How to and what for?

Laura Hutton: That was a great amount of information. It was perfect. Do you have anything else before we conclude our interview session? Okay, well thank you very much for working on this project with us.

Janet Bremer: Certainly!

Laura Hutton: Definitely, awesome!

[End of Audio]