I: What do you love about the city of Meadville?

P: The community.

I: Could you like explain that in depth?

P: I grew up here so all of my frame of reference is from like my family and schools that I went to and my friends and then when I was 25 I moved away and I lived in Providence, Rhode Island for 18 years and Albany, New York for 7 years and I really liked those places but after 25 years I wanted to come back to Meadville because I...that sense of community was like a magnet drawing me back. I felt like I belonged here and even though I lived in those other places a long time and had friends and life and had jobs this felt like home.

I: So like, do you think that sense of community's better here or do you think you know "I missed that sense and just wanted to come back and enjoy it"?

P: A little bit of both. When I first moved to New England it felt very strange to me that people seemed so standoffish. But then I've met places where people are always like in your life, you know. I umm...the other thing is that both places I was working on college campuses I worked for technical institute and then Brown University. And those are transient neighborhoods so it could be partially that that there wasn't that sense of community.

I: Yeah. Well we're glad to have you back in Meadville!

P: Well thank you, I'm glad to be back. It's been 11 years and I don't regret it.

I: Nice. What matters to you most about living here?

P: What matters most? Affordability

I: So it's cheaper living here than Rhode Island or those two cities?

P: Some things are cheaper some things are more expensive. Over all it's cheaper here.

I: What is your favorite memory about living in Meadville?

P: I'm not sure I've made it yet. Uhh... I have a million stories. But then you know then also after I graduated from Penn State I came back and I worked as a newspaper reporter for 5 years with the Meadville Tribune so there's some fond memories there. And then after I moved back from New England I worked at Allegheny for uhhh 3 years and I have some fond memories there so...

I: Did you like writing the newspaper?

P: Yes I did. I really enjoyed writing the newspaper. Its just, there was no money in it. I could hardly support myself.

I: Was that like a dream of yours when you were younger?

P: Not til high school. I actually, when I was in 10th grade I joined the journalism club. Basically because the English teacher I really like and she encouraged me and it was a way to get out of some others I didn't want to do. But I really liked her and then her husband was a professor at Allegheny. She got me into a summer creative writing program that was being run by two Allegheny students who were working on their masters in teachers, Allegheny still offered their masters in teaching at that point. And I just absolutely fell in love with writing. Yeah 10th grade community project made me fall in love with it.

I: The community actually offers a lot of projects that like kids like like some of the kids here at Grow Meadville like the gardening and all that.

P: ah ha

I: Why do you stay in Meadville or what brought you here?

P: Uh what brought me back was family. Yeah.

I: What makes you stay here with them?

P: I never married and I never had children. And I have my sister sarah and her daughter and I've spent a lot of time with those, her grand children, my sister's grand children. And it gives me a sense that I'm part of their life, they're part of mine. And I wouldn't want to move away because at this point because I would really miss them and I would really miss that uhmm... that they've gotten me out in the community they're very active and athletic. Plays hockey uhh addy plays soccer, gymnastics, now she's doing track and we go to all those events with them so I don't want to miss that. I want to see them grow up.

I: That's what most people want for their family. What would make staying in Meadville easier?

P: I never would have left Meadville in the first place if there had been good employement opportunities and the only reason I could come back to Meadville was that I was nearing retirement and could take a less paying job and I was able to find a job doing something I wanted to do.

I: What was the job?

P: Well at Allegheny. But what keeps me what would make it better now? I mean I like it I don't feel like anything is missing.

I: That is a perfectly okay answer. What things capture the spirit of this town?

P: Uhh Crawford County fair the county fair the uhh balloon festival uhh or anything at the Baldwin Reynolds house, programs like this (Grow Meadville), uhhmm second saturday you know and there's a lot of irony that a lot of these programs came out of community service projects from Allegheny.

I: What's your favorite thing out of all the things that capture the spirit of our town?

P: Probably the balloon festival.

I: I always thought that was cool. They like fire up and look really pretty.

P: Well plus it doesn't cost anybody anything and you know it's easy to get to it's free it's you don't even have to go you can just look up.

I: Plus some people can't afford something like that they can just go enjoy the experience

P: Families out there the mother packed the picnic lunch or the father brought something for dinner and

I: We actually used to go with my family. Do you have any special memories about that place?

Pat: I have a lot of special memories about the Allegheny College fields but not necessarily about the balloon fest.

I: Just something like...

P: We grew up within a couple blocks of the Allegheny College field and in the winter we would walk over. I was maybe 10 years old, which was really early back then. And um where the practice field is and then there's that hill we used to ski down that. And then back where the tennis courts are there were the riding stable and one of the fraternities used to flood the rink so that you could skate there and we spent hours over at the college football field.

I: Sounds really nice. Did you go with your sister and them skiing?

P: Mmhmm and my cousins

I: What would you miss in Meadville, like, if it wasn't here?

P: My family and friends... obviously. But what *thing* about Meadville.... Well I think the College is a tremendous asset. Umm most people don't realize it but Meadville's never thought of itself as a college town, not like State College or even Edinboro...

I: Yeah.

P: Meadville was existing as a running community and the founding forefathers got together and said wouldn't it be nice if we had a college here. So they went after the Baptists... no it was Methodist here, Baptists at Brown, Methodists here... and decided to create community leaders but there's always been a very strong hold of family-owned businesses like Channellock, Ainsworth, Greenleaf... umm and then the railroads were here for a long time. So the College was always kind of seperate and removed a little bit. But ummm... and they've made a lot of very valiant efforts to become more a part of the comunity` and that kind of thing but there's still a snese of "us and them" and uuhhh yeah I wish that were better

(Interviewer sneezes)

I: Yeah and it also offers people education at the same time too, so it helps the people getting educated and people like this program or the My Meadville program too.

Pat: The other thing that it's done is it's created a tremendous dichotomy between South Main Street and North Main Street. When you come into South Main St., especially if you come over the Smock Bridge and start up, it's so very different than if you come in, you know, say Leslie Road or you know up through there. Uhhh. So that I think uhh as Allegheny has grown and thrived and parts especially south Meadville have floundered, there's just this tremendous divide.

I: Yeah, I'd like to get both of them to be like equal so there isn't really a divide anymore. And I think that's what this is kind of about.

P: Yeah. I don't know that they need to be equal but I think that they need to be aware that they're codependent.

I: Yeah.

P: When James Mullen first came in I ran his innauguration as President and I spent a little bit of time with him. I really really liked him. And he asked me if there's anything that I should know and I told him that I thought it was important for the College president to remember that Meadville does not consider itself a college town. It considers itself that hosts a college. The difference being that we're here and we're glad to welcome you rather than we need you to come in and tell us what to do.

I: Yeah.

P:Yeah. When I was in high school, we had student teachers that were from the Allegheny Masters in Arts program and that whole thing when PPMMMFFF. Uhhh schools felt that the kids coming in from the College weren't being supervised that they weren't trained well enough that they were a disruption to the school system. And I think that Allegheny felt that Meadville wasn't being supportive of it. Then in the late 60s there was this whole thing about why are there so many drugs coming into Meadville and they did this survey to see if it was the college kids bringing drugs into Meadville and getting the high school kids hooked and in reality they found out that the flow was going from the high school kids to the college.

I: MMhmm. Yeah, sometimes it's not good to assume things, cause then you like, assume the wrong idea. What about Meadville is important to you and like why should it continue in the future?

P: There's days I wake up and watch the Today Show and think about what stupid thing Donald Trump did or what idiot North Korea's doing or how China is like growing so fast it doesn't seem to be able to control itself. And I roll over and I think you know what, I have to go over to Giant Eagle today and I've got an interview at the MARC and I'm gonna go workout so that sometimes it just feels like.... I don't wanna say safe haven, but it makes me feel.... more comfortable with the day to day. Yeah. When I lived in Providence, that was when the attacks were on 9/11, and they arrested a huge cell in Boston that they were taking the train from Boston to New York City and they came through Providence and they arrested all of them. And when I lived in Albany, we lived right next to a big (arsenal?).... so it's like you know what? you're just safer here.

I: It must've been hard to see all the people get like arrested and stuff.

P: Mmmhmmm it was even harder working in a dormatory and all the kids getting up to go to class and realizing you know that their father or their mother or their boyfriend or their girlfriend or old roommate had been in the towers at the time. That was...

I: Yeah, that would've been hard to lose someone in that.

P: And to see all those kids wondering what their future was gonna be all about.

I: So, what do you want your children or grandchildren to experience while they grow up?

P: I don't have children or grandchilren. But my sister's grandchildren are the ones that I was talking about and I like the fact that they go to a small school, that I know their teachers, that their father coaches their hockey team. That everybody is....

I: Like involved.

P: Yeah

I: Do you ever like help out with any of that stuff with them?

P: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And I... I don't want you to use the term "help out" because I feel privilelged to be included. It's not like oh I have to go do that...

I: Oh I'm sorry, I didn't....

P: I know what you mean. Yeah, I know what you mean. Yeah.

I: It would be a privilege, you know, to help your sister raise her children, her grandchildren.

P: Yeah. Do you know what it's like when they fight over who gets to sleep with you that night? You know (laughter)

I: Yeah, me and my brother used to do that...

P: (Laughing) It's like, oh okay you can fight over me! (laugh)

(Someone else) : Like who gets the remote.

I: Yeah. My niece and nephew used to do that all the time. So what would you change in Meadville to make it a better place?

P:(silence) Well the economy needs help. Tremendous help. It's really awful that so many people are without jobs. Ummm we are experiencing the long-term ripple effect of....ummm... we're in fourth and fifth generations of welfare famillies that have been in child welfare services, family court... I mean it's just.... for a town that's so small, we have unbelievable poverty, child abuse, illnesses... It's just... That's was I would like to see changed.

I: Yeah. How do you think you could help with the economy or any of that? 16:02

P: Well obviously politics but then also serving on community boards and being active

I: How would you like your grandchildren or like children to help and try and improve like just the community or the economy?

P: Most of them have to do some kind of community service now which is something i never thought about at that age and I think that is a very valuable tool to have them be aware of the people around them, and that us, there's a poverty exercise where the divide the group into three and one gets tablecloths and linen napkins and a three course luncheon, and one gets like a boxed lunch and the other one sits on the floor with water and it's to teach them that there are people around you that have more and people around you that have less and you all do better if you go into sharing. Yeah that's what I’d like them to know.

I: How do you think they would help like if they knew that? How do you think they’d like help with it?

P: You know I try to do stuff like little stuff on a day to day basis. One of the things I’m doing right now is volunteering for a program called “WNS” which is Weekend Nutrition For Students and second district and first district schools alone there are 525 kids who get a bag every friday and it has like cereal and fruit cups and things they take home

I: Yeah they do that at lake too

P: Yeah and I’ve been doing that. Now obviously the kids can help me with that because we do it while they’re in school. But one of the things I need all the time are those plastic grocery bags because that's what we put the stuff in they rarely come back and we’re using 525 of them every friday

I: Ohh, Thats a lot

P:Right but most people if you ask them “would you save your garbage bags for me?” they’re like “oh sure I never know what to do with those things.” And that's something that i've had the kids help me do. “Can you ask you friends, can you collect them can you help me keep them together?”

I: Yeah

P: So that they know what i'm’ doing and the little things they can do to support it. Not feel overwhelmed and well “i can’t run a program like that.” No but you can help me collect garbage bags. Plus I think most people in their heart of hearts are willing to help are anxious to try to see how they could do something, but they need someone to say to them, uh so that if the kids learn early on that if they approach an adult and say “would you save garbage bags for me” most adults are gonna be like sure that's an easy thing and i can help

I: Yep cause sometimes it's hard for some people to approach others like to like help with some stuff like the garbage bags sometimes it's like hard to approach

P: Very hard. Very hard. sometimes people forget that they’re asking for a cause and not for a personal favor.

I: Yeah. so like if you could have one wish to make meadville better, what would you use it for?

P: (laughter) I would like everybody to be on the same page: the hospital, the college, The schools the factories, on working together in monitoring and preventing the things that lead to problems as an adult, whether it be alcoholism or drugs abuse or obesity or, you know any of the things that get passed from generation to generation that if we could all get on the same page and say look we can reduce healthcare costs if we can eliminate alcoholism, we can eliminate alcoholism if we can do more early intervention and counseling, you know what i mean its like lets quit putting bandaids on the problems and let's work together to find out what's causing the problems and what preventative measures could we put into place to keep them from developing further.

I: So like you mentioned obesity, to stop obesity like wouldn't you think lowering the costs of ho ho's and twinkies, and like making everything like the healthy stuff cheaper and the more expensive stuff, not more expensive stuff, the fat stuff more expensive cause then like they'd have to buy cheaper food which is healthy. I think like that would eliminate it

P: They already do that to some extent. You know um you can go to kentucky fried chicken and you can buy a whole chicken meal for like 10 dollars. Well you can go to Tops and you can buy a rotisserie chicken or a whole chicken to cook in the oven for less than half that and you're getting more, do you know what i mean? And people don't know that,they don't know, they go for the advantage of the way their mother did and not do that too much but what was your question?

I: Iike...

P: What one thing?

I: Like don't you think if we like lowered the cost of...

P: Oh yeah, but you know what's even better? I think to take young children and teach them how their food is grown. And teach them how to use that food, to make something healthy to give them the sense that they have something at stake here so that they would be willing to maybe cut open a fruit salad than open a thing of potato chips.

I: You mean like what the grow meadville program is doing?

P: Absolutely. I have a nephew that won't eat anything and i work with him all the time to try to find things. Well he loves wasabi. So i found that if i take fresh peas put them in the food processor, put in a little lemon juice, a little wasabi, he’ll eat that up like, and he doesn't think of it as healthy food

I:Yeah

P: Yeah i got my niece one time to make an owl with me out of strawberries, pineapples, grapes. I don't remember what else, oh yogurt for the eyes and she loved it she wanted to make it for her friends, which probably would have been substituted for a cake mix or brownies or cookies or something like that you know, um so not only are you teaching your children and spending time with them. Youre give them a healthier approach

I: Yeah it's better to learn how to use your healthy stuff in nature to make food than just you know put chicken in the microwave you know or something like that cause like it's better for you and it makes you liek feel better too like it makes you in a better mood and not so much like “oh i don't want to move”

P: And i'm sure you've become much more aware of what nutrients plants need, what nutrients plant provide you, you become much more of a chain, than just this random… yeah

I: Yeah. like for the grow meadville program we actually like the first week we learned how to turn beets into like beet chips instead of potato chips and it's good, healthy, and it like puts you in a good mood kind of

P: Yeah, right and plus you have the feeling like you did something good for yourself. Yeah yeah

I: And like what's another thing we did? i'm trying to think of another thing we did. Like homemade hummus instead of like buying it at the store that they like shove all the fats and chemicals and stuff in. you can make it here fresh and it's like...

P: Change the flavor, change the texture.

I: Yeah and it's actually cheaper because you can get stuff from the garden

P: Plus in terms of pride, this is yours.

I: Mhmm. so if you could help everyone in meadville like get a garden would you?

P: Yeah.

I: How would you lie help though? Could you explain that

P: I think first its community awareness, which is kind of what you’re doing here. And also the celebrations at the marc this summer has let people become aware of what's going on here first here and i think the second thing is uh just to begin to have your story be told by other people whether it be through a newsletter or a newspaper article or a tv story or a blog, a website, um, a live action camera on a plant you can see it go, you know something like that. And then you have to get people to buy in and it has to be very very easy. People won't change their ways unless a. It's more uncomfortable to remember to remain the way they are and b it's easier to go to a new way

I: Like the beds here, theyre 0-35 or 0-30 dollars i think to like rent and you pay what you can afford and you can just like grow your own vegetables here instead of like having to go the store and like pay like six dollars or something like that

P: Mhmm and that would be a lot more effective if i knew i'm gonna donate 35 dollars and renee smith and her children from conneautville are gonna garden that plot for me and uh i know that her son loves zucchini and that would make me feel more invested in getting that boy some zucchini than it would be to say well i can give 35 dollars to help a community project. You know what i'm saying? It has to feel personal to me

I: Yeah cause you can help that one person and know they’re using it for good or you can donate it but they could like use it for bad

P: Yeah

I: So like, if you could get some people to come here and help out with the gardens and stuff, like would you?

P: Yeah

I: Like how would you advertise it and stuff? Or like be like hey you know this is really cool and explain more

P: I would try to get teens and make it a project and get a sense of belonging and competition, like at gardens clubs and local gyms. I'd have to do some research but um, there's different groups through even the web like FYI crawford county and stuff that i don't really follow that closely but i think that a lot of them are aimed at markets that might be compatible with yours. Like for example um sue …. At the wildlife refuge might be a good contact because someone who's willing to donate time might know someone who would be willing to do community gardens.

I: I know your opinion on like littering is bad how would you think you would like get people to stop?

P: God I wish i know. Providence rhode island was the dirtiest city i have ever lived in. it was just absolutely disgusting. There is a theory that if you put somebody in a very clean space they will work to maintain the pristine cleanliness. If you put someone in a dump, they don't care, and it will become their dump within a matter of hours. So that it's a matter of trying to encourage people to realize. And i would stop somebody and say “oh you drop that, should I throw it away for you?”

I: Yeah most people would be like oh it's just gonna go away or blow away, just leave it.

(phone discussion)

I: So like, how do you think you could get the… like the person who likes wasabi, how do you think you could introduce him to more vegetables or fruits or like get him onto a garden and experience it for himself?

P: I would start by taking him to miller's food factory or whatever and having him look at different plants. He actually is getting more into different plants but i've done it from the approach of “wouldn't your mother like that” and uh he has a lot of land around him that it would be a good thing for him. He's a little young yet

I: Yeah

P: Yeah, um having him look at recipes with me and decide what looks good. This is a kid that when he goes out to dinner he has ahi tuna and chicken fingers. So obviously he's open to things it's just a matter of cmon lets go and do this and i want you to do this.

I: Yeah

P: His sister got really into cooking and that's how she, and my sister used to say to her um go out in the garden and cut some basil and bring it in and she put it in the salads or whatever and uh, she got real interested in cooking that way. What was in her food

I: Do you think you would like show him how to make garden so he could like experience it

P: No because i don't know how to do that, but with his grandmother yeah.

I: Well i'm sure you could like, there's a lot of programs here like you said i'm sure you could like show him one and then hed see it and be like, wow this is really cool.cause i mean like, me and cherish for example, we probably didn't know that much about gardening before we came here and then we did and we like learned a lot and it's really fascinating

We didn't’ know nothing

(discussion on time)

I: But yeah that'd be like really cool if you brought him here cause then he'd see it and be like oh my gosh

P: Well he's here almost everyday anyway. I’ll ask him about it. If he knows, and of course the best way is to get your buddy… your buddy gets interested in something, you’re interested in it.

I: Yeah its like the age where its like “hey my friends are doing it”

P: Would you be here without her?

I: Well i didnt really meet her until i came here

P: Oh well thats not a good example

I: Yeah but i mean like one of my friends came here cause like you know their parents had to and then i came here and we were like hey.

Alright well, thank you for taking your time.