What do you love about the city of Mdvl – things that you would say are special or things that you would say make this city great – favorite things?

I like the layout of Meadville very much, Diamond Park and the streets that go out from it – I don’t know, since I grew up here, I guess I’m just so familiar with it, if I don’t know the name of a street, I can get anywhere by going – you go there and around there… it’s small enough that you know a lot of people in the town, but it’s also big enough that there’s enough to do that would keep you here, - like I think of Saegertown – you probably know almost everyone in Saegertown, but to do a lot of things, you have to go out of Saegertown, unless you’re going to get pizza or something like that.

I don’t know, it’s just very familiar place.

You’ve lived here your whole life, haven’t you?

Well, I’ve lived away for a while, but came back 10 years ago. Just like - looking around Diamond Park here, so many churches, so many places that have always been here for as long as I’ve been alive and a lot longer, and don’t even look like they’ve changed –

I remember when they stone blasted that Stone Methodist Church back in the late ‘60s ‘70s , it was black, just because it had been there so long, and they sandblasted it to clean it and I remember my grandmother saying, “It’s like painting and antique white!”So that’s how long it’s been there and it hasn’t gotten much darker. My grandmother was adamant that it was horrible.

But I don’t know, it’s just an innate liking of Meadville, I can’t put my finger on it specifically.

What made you come back 10 years ago?

Um – well, we felt led to come back. We lived away for a long time – we were involved in a church in Waterford for over 20 years and it kind of disseminated, so we thought “what are we going to do now?”…and I sort of always felt bad about that because…my parents would have loved to have had us come back while they were alive, but…

Did it feel like coming home?

Oh yes, yes.

Do you have any favorite memories of Meadville?

Walking downtown! – I lived at the end of Chestnut street growing up. Walking downtown with my friends – we were allowed to do that. I met my friends and we walked to like Woolworths and Murphys and whatever else was down there at the time.

And there were things to do when you went there, right?

Oh yes, it was a very “happenin’” place down there.

Clothing stores, Weldon’s, JC Penneys… and then there’s the Crawford Store – across from the Academy – where you went in to watch movies. There was another movie theater down there, but we always just went to the Academy.

Basketball games, high school – I liked school – I liked learning – that sounds corny, but – hey -you gotta see your friends!

Would you be able to identify anything that captures the spirit of our town?

Well you mean like a permanent fixture?

However you want to answer that.

The high school football games, basketball games, the courthouse – I remember coming down for “Ray Day” – Raymond Schaffer stood up on those steps of the courthouse when he was elected governor. His daughter was in my class at Neason Hill. But anyway, he stood up there, we had “Ray day” - everybody in Meadville was here – it was, the whole place was covered…

What would you miss in Meadville if it weren’t here?

Well, that jr. high building. Have you ever been in?

No, I haven’t

Well, if you go in to the right, to the end of the hall, it’s a social room where you can have little gatherings and stuff. It was the girls’ gym, and they kept a part of the gym floor in there. So, that building I think adds a lot to the town in this area of the Diamond Park.

The churches, Allegheny College – that was always a part of my growing up because my grandma worked there.

Oh – where did she work?

She managed the bookstore – til, well, when my grandfather was alive, they ran the student union grill, then he passed away and then I think she ran the grill for a little while longer, then she went to manage the bookstore until ’65 I think she retired.

But I can’t even tell you – well, she’s been dead a long time, so I guess I can – I got so many things from the bookstore, and I don’t even know if she paid for them all.

So you got cool Allegheny stuff!

Is there anything about Diamond Park that you would like to see that would add value to the park?

I’m glad the police department is on Diamond Park. Cause I think probably a lot of unsavory things go on here, but you’re going to have unsavory things wherever you go.. Um, I want, I would love it, and I don’t know how this could ever happen, but for people at night to feel safe walking through here.

Do you think people don’t feel safe?

*I* don’t. During the good weather, summer, early fall – you look whne it starts getting dusk, kids start gathering. Now, I love kids, I’m all for having kids, but you know, sometimes you feel a little – there’s groups, you get a sense that maybe not the best things are going on.

Do you feel like Meadville is safe in general, or are you just identifying Diamond Park area?

Well, see, Diamond Park may be very safe, I just feel uncomfortable in it at night – I don’t know if any incidences have ever happened. And I’m not saying it has, that’s just how I feel.

DO you feel that way in other areas of town.

I don’t know – not necessarily, not any more than I do here – no. Cause this is sort of a public place – you don’t want to walk down any alley alone at night in north or south Meadville alone, but this is an open place, you know. And I don’t’ know that I am unsafe in reality, it’s just a feeling I have.

What about eadville is important to you that you thinks hould continue into the future.

Well, I’d like downtown to be kept in revitalization. There’s that new clothing store.

Do you remember what used to be there?

Weldon’s

Really? I thought it was in the mall.

It did move there, but it was on Chestnut st before that. I’m 99.9999% sure.

That Crawford store down there was a grea department store. Swanky! I mean anybody could buy stuff there but it wasn’t like out of this world. It was like having Peebles downtown. I like having Peebles there, like at Christmas time and I want to buy something, like not at Walmart.

And keep the YMCA going strong. My older brother, when he was a teenager, worked at the YMCA and his whole life was YMCA. I still get letters and notes all the time “Everytime I’m in the Y I think of your brother” But I think it is going strong.

Anything that you would like to see for Meadville as a wish – if money or resources were not an object?

Ok, to have a new YMCA – brand new, new pool, new basketball court. I don’t’ know, I can’t think of anything.

I think it’s well utilized

Oh, yeah - I have a couple friends who go early in the morning whenever they open and they say it’s just packed. Now maybe in the middle of the day it’s not so crowded, I don’t know.

Any stories of memories of Meadville that are important to you?

Hmm – not that I can think of. I mean I have a lot of stories from my childhood living in Meadville. But things that could have happened in Wichita.

Except one time – ummm – I think the building is gone! I think it was right there where those trees are!

Between the church and Bush Investment?   
  
Yeah – I think so – Mary Sue Prather was my friend and we were down town, a bunch of us, and her dad’s office, he was a lawyer, he worked there, it was a brick building, and it went down – and she said “Let’s go up to my dad’s office” – she had a key or something.

Are you talking high school age?

Yes, so we’re like, oh, ok. And so we went in and who walked in but her DAD! It was a Saturday, and I was just like, and my parents knew him, and I was like, “Oh my gosh, I’m going to be killed!” I just thought we were all going to be arrested, but it was Mary Sue – but I felt like I was invading or something.

So that building is obviously gone! Isn’t that funny, you didn’t know that until right now!

It’s probably been gone for 20 years or something. I’m going to have to ask someone.