Judith: This is an interview with Roy Brewington at his home outside of Judith Gap on September 11, 1997. The interviewers are Judith Pressmar, Dave Wanderaas, and Sarah Jaffe.

Dave: Roy, I've read *Dawn of Golden Valley* and we have a fellow working with us, Wayne Carpenter, whom you may know, he's been up in Careless Creek from the time he was a boy. He was talking about some of the history of Swimming Woman and I remember him mentioning your father's of grandfather's name up Swimming Woman. That's where they homesteaded.

Roy: In fact, my grandmother ran the Irene Post Office. They named it after her. She had the first post office there.

Judith: So, her name was Irene Brewington?

Roy: Irene, yes. I don't know why they called it Irene, but I had a great-grandmother, they named Lavina after. They homesteaded at Lavina at one time and then found out they were on railroad property and they had to move. So, they moved up into Swimming Woman. My folks lived there. My grandparents lived there, raised their family there, back in the Indian days. My parents told the story, (I shouldn't talk like this while you're doing that taping) they said, "I asked my grandfather if he wasn't afraid of the Indians?" and he said, "No, he was just going to stay there and outnumber them." And he must have, because the Indians left and he stayed.

Judith: So, where were your grandparents from?

Roy: They came over from Iowa but they came from Maryland originally. I don't know just which old country they came from, but they came from Maryland to Iowa. Then my grandparents came over to Helena and Virginia City years ago. They thought they had plenty of money in the gold, so they went back after their family. Then, before they got back to Virginia City, my grandmother insisted that she had gone far enough and they homesteaded there.

Judith: So, what year was that that they arrived here?

Roy: '81. We've been here all our lives. I was born in Garneill and my dad was born in Livingston. Then, they moved from there back to Swimming Woman and raised the whole family at Swimming Woman.
Dave: What years did they go to Swimming Woman? Did you say that was '81 or '82, something like that?

Roy: Shut that (recorder) off and I'll look. (Roy brings in papers from the other room for reference). I'll give you some dates.

Dave: I know there's quite an article in Dawn of Golden Valley about your family and I read that about a year ago. I didn't have a chance to look at it today, but I know there were some collected stories.

Judith: We can get this later. This (the papers) is a wonderful history you've got detailed here. I think it's going to take me a little bit to find the right date.

Roy: Here's when they came from Maryland. (Looking at papers)

Dave: You've put a lot of work into your lineage and history.

Judith: OK, that might be a little easier to read. I still haven't found the date. (Looking at papers)

Dave: It (papers supplied by Roy) says they arrived in Yellowstone in early summer of 1882 and, subsequently, they were among the first to settle on the Mussenshell. They later moved to Judith Basin County where they, for years, had a ranch in Swimming Woman Creek.

Judith: April 7, 1881, is when they left Kansas (looking at papers).

Roy: This Allison Brewington is my granddad. This is his parents, my great-granddad. He had 3 sons. They came to Montana in 1863, where they were at Alder Gulch and Grizzly Gulch, from Helena. They returned to Kansas in 1869. Then, in '81, I think they left Kansas and came to Helena again. They came here in '81.

Judith: Well, thank you. This looks like good reading. It's wonderful that you've put it all together.

Roy: Thank you. You can probably read that (on the tape) better than I could.

Judith: So, what was life like growing up at Swimming Woman Creek?

Roy: Well, my particular life?

Judith: Yes.

Roy: There was a large family of us kids and we were kind of, more or less, on our own. Dad would give us anything, but we didn't have anything. We kind of had to make our own way. Each and every one of us worked, ever since we were old enough to work. I happened to be the first one that was graduated from high school. In those days, that was something special, that we
had to work our own way through school. There wasn't any money in those days. Then, 63 years ago, I got married and the wife and I worked on ranches and everything. We finally bought a little place. It kept increasing and we ended up over here.

Judith: When did you come here to this place?

Roy: 1946. We were too broke to leave!

Dave: About how long were you in Swimming Woman?

Roy: Well, I wasn't in Swimming Woman myself. My parents lived there and then they moved over to Garneill and I was born in Garneill. Then they moved from Garneill just 12 miles north of here. My brother's on the old homestead place now, my brother George (deceased January 1998). That's where we grew up. We didn't get very far from home.

Dave: You speak of some of the Indians still here when your grand-folks were in this area. Boy that was just a few years after the Custer massacre so this was probably still pretty wild country at that time.

Roy: The Indians? The stories about the Indians bothering them wasn't like you think it is. Is was just a few renegades that bothered them. The tribes had already gone, but there was always some renegade Indians that came back to steal horses and steal things from the ranchers. But the tribes didn't bother them. There was always Indians. I can remember even when the Indians traveled through the last time. They didn't bother much. They never would work. They always wanted something to eat. Groceries or something. The ranchers fed 'em and they took off.

Judith: What time period would that be?

Roy: Well, I was born in 1915, but prior to that is when most of the Indians came through. All the homesteaders had outlets in their cabins so they could come inside and shoot out, if necessary. And they had a truce too. The old timers would never tell you about killing Indians. I know they killed Indians and I know where the Indian graves are. You never get any information from the old timers. They'd never tell. And they were really superstitious about picking up any Indian artifacts from graves or anything or jewelry. There's a story in here (Roy points to his papers) about an Indian tree they had on the old place where they buried Indians. They used to watch, go there all the time and they'd see the rawhide falling off of it and everything fell down. And one time my dad and his sister gathered some beads and took them home. They really got a thrashing for that. Had to take them back. My dad used to carry mail too, through this country and he would see where they buried Indians, especially little ones. They'd push them under the rocks. They'd see a lot of little moccasins. Where they buried the elderly Indians, they had bows and arrows and they buried their possessions with them. Nobody would touch 'em in those days. Now they dig up graves.

One particular wild fire my dad tells about, when the fire was in these mountains up here, the smoke was so bad with the chunks of charcoal and bark from the trees, that they had to hang blankets on their doors and windows, coming in the house so that they could breathe. And about
4:00 every afternoon it got so dark, they couldn't see. They just had to let it burn out. They couldn't put it out in those days.

Judith: What year would that be?

Roy: I think it was 1909, that they had the big fire on this side. And there was an old Forest Ranger name of Greathouse. They named the point in the Snowies up there Greathouse Point. You know where that is? On the Snow Saucer side, there's still the remnants of an old cabin where he built a cabin up there and hauled some tin up on the mule and put a roof on it. That was his lookout for fire in those days. And I can still remember they had a telephone up on top of the mountains there to the Ice Cave. Just sat out in the open, but they had a telephone there and a wire running down to the neighbors.

Dave: Where did the telephone line start at? At the cabin at Snow Saucer?

Roy: The telephone? The telephone was a little closer to the Ice Cave. Greathouse lived at his cabin during the fire season. He was up there to look out for fire. Then Dave Lake, later, took his place and he moved up there. But the telephones in the mountains, the reason I remembered, it was a telephone wire. It came down the mountain and then when they came down to the foothills, the ranchers around here hadn't money enough to build a line, so they run it on a barbed wire fence. And that was our telephone in the old days.

Judith: So, that was the telephone for the whole community then?

Roy: Yes, we had community telephone. Somebody could hear the phone ring and pretty soon: click, click, click, everybody would listen in.

Dave: When do you think that cabin was built up there at Snow Saucer?

Roy: I would suggest it was after the fire. It was after 1908, I'm pretty sure, that they built the cabin. And I remember the telephone being up there. It must have been, oh in the late '20's early '30's that the telephone was on top. They used to go up there during fire season and spent pretty near all summer up there looking for fires.

Dave: They had one or two people stay in the cabin and walk to different points, I suppose.

Roy: Well, the only one that I know of who stayed in the cabin that I heard them talk about was Greathouse. They called it Greathouse's Cabin, you know and Greathouse Point. He was quite an elderly fella'. He was probably one of the first Forest Rangers. You probably know about him.

Dave: I've heard of the name.

Judith: So, did you know him personally?
Roy: No, I didn't, but I knew Dave Lake that took his place. Dave Lake was an old-timer in through here, a Ranger when I was just a boy. That was a long time ago. And Dave Lake used to live in Judith Gap. He had an office in Judith Gap. He used to patrol this (the Snowies) and also the Belts, the south side of the Belts. I never was on the north side of the Belts. I was at Mt. High on the south side. I've hunted pretty near all that.

Dave: You know, on top of the Snowies, toward the Ice Caves, I've seen a telephone line. I forgot all about that. The old poles are still there, but I wonder where that line went to, if that went clear over to Greathouse's Cabin or whether that went to Crystal Lake instead.

Roy: I don't recall it going anywhere except from the top down to Clyde Lee's Ranch. The Lee Ranch is up there still. The boy's on it now. I know it ran from the top of the mountain down to his place. And then from there I remember it going on the fence.

Dave: Do you have any recollections of the old ranger cabins up there at Blake Creek or Dry Fork (Dry Coulee)?

Roy: Yes, they had a Ranger Station in Blake Creek and they moved that cabin down to Clyde Lee's place and then from there, Bob Lee moved it back up. It's up in his pasture now. He had a summer cabin made out of it. That's between Blake Creek and an area they call Hardscrabble. It was a little canyon where Evans had a sawmill. And he moved the cabin up there and made a nice little summer cabin out of it. But it did sit on Blake Creek, ever since I was a youngster. We used to go up there for our school picnics, Blake Creek Ranger Station.

Just above Blake Creek Ranger Station, there's a cave. It's all caved in now, but years ago there used to be a natural cave there. The history or the story went, that some robbers, stagecoach robbers, they cached the money in there. The old timers always used to talk about it but the water washed down, covered it all up, and they never found it. There's still a lot of Indian paintings on the rocks up there. My brother and another fella was going to take a backhoe up and dig that one time and they found out that if they dug it out, they'd have to turn it over to the Forest Service. They claimed no matter what they found there, artifacts or anything, that if it was on Forest, the Forest claimed it. So, they didn't dig it out.

Judith: So, are those pictures still there?

Roy: Yes, those pictures are still there. There's not much of a painting. It looks like a big swing. I'm sure the Indians didn't have swings, but it represented something. And then there's some kind of design that meant something to the Indians, but it didn't to us. It's still on there. But trees are growing around it and a very few people even know it's there.

Dave: Do you remember the other Guard Station over at Dry Gulch (Dry Coulee) by any chance? It was a Guard Station or Ranger Station over past Swimming Woman, east of Swimming Woman at Dry Coulee.

Roy: No, I didn't. I didn't know about anything over past that. We used to live there at Wrzesinski's. You know the Wrzesinski's?
Dave: Yes.

Roy: They were neighbors to us and he worked out of Dry Coulee. I think he had a sawmill there. They could give you some information on that country. They lived there. In fact, this young Wrzesinski, that’s coach in Harlowton, he could give you some answers too. He knows more about that country there. I don’t know anything about it. I do remember going over there with one of the Wrzesinski’s to what they call Crystal Cave, and we crawled on into some cave. I think that was up in Woodchuck or you know what they call the Washboards? Woodchuck Canyon is the First one.

Dave: Coming out of Careless?

Roy: Or Ashley Gulch. In that area somewhere, there was a Crystal Cave. Wrzesinski might know where that is. I've forgotten.

Dave: Do you have any recollection of David Lake, in particular?

Roy: Yes, I knew Dave. Not the young Dave, but I knew the old Dave real well and he was a real friendly old fella. Everybody liked him. He would always stop and visit with us kids, that's why I liked him. So many of them wouldn't have nothing to do with kids. Dave always had time to stop and visit with the kids. They used to stay at the Ranger Station up there in Blake Creek quite a lot. And I cut sawlogs in the canyon and he used to come up and mark the timber for us to cut. That was in about ’36.

Judith: And what would the timber be used for?

Roy: They had a sawmill, Evans had a sawmill. I cut the timber. I would log it and he would go snake it out and saw it up. And the wife and I stayed one winter at Careless Creek. We cut mine props for the Roundup Mine and a fella by name of Burlingame had a contract to sell props for the mine in Roundup and another fella and I were cutting mine props. They were just like posts. They were 6 feet long and they had to be a minimum of 6 inches on top and we were getting’ 6 cents each for those. In the winter it got cold and he moved out and my wife and I stayed there. And we were in a tent, in what they call, Snow Saucer Coulee. In came a big storm and Burlingame came over with his truck and suggested we move into his cabin that's over in Snow Saucer Canyon.

I don't know who owns it now, but at that time it belonged to a fellow name of Shields. He told us we could live in it, so we moved from the tent to the cabin. Then, next day I went back to get some stuff and a big old tree had fallen right across the tent, so we moved out just in time. Then, we got snowed in and we were there from November 'til May.

Dave: That cabin's still there today (the Ross Cabin).
Roy: They improved it some. They put a floor in it. When we was there it just had a dirt floor. Yeah, we had a binder canvas under our three-corner bed that we’d roll out at night. We’d roll it up in the daytime. Dirt floor. And we stayed in that from November ’til the next May.

Dave: How did you get out for groceries? Could you get out at all?

Roy: We had groceries with us and didn't need much. Potatoes, and I was supposed to get my own meat but we run out of meat long about February. The snow was so deep, with a crust on it. Thirty to forty below zero that winter and the coyotes would just run on top of the snow and the deer bounced up and down, you know. The coyotes slaughtered the deer. We could not walk at all without snowshoes. I finally got two deer in March over there on the Washboards, over there where I told you that cave might be. Anyhow, I was two or three days packing it back to the cabin. Then it looked like a greyhound when I skinned it. (Laughter)

Judith: I bet it was pretty welcome.

Roy: We put everything outside and when we wanted it, we just dug it out. We had canned milk. They looked like baseballs. I don't think that generations now days could stand that.

Judith: Where did you go from there?

Roy: We came back down here and went to work down on the Musselshell. We worked up and down the river and I sheared sheep in the summer time. I broke horses west of Judith Gap for a fellow by the name of Dewey. Maybe you know Gilbert Dewey?

Dave: I know of him.

Roy: Gilbert lives in Harlowton. His folks lived west of the Gap and I broke horses for Dewey for three or four years. Then during the haying season, we'd go down the Musselshell. The wife would cook for the hay crew and I worked in the hay fields.

Judith: How many people would be on the crew that she cooked for?

Roy: Twenty five or thirty. I know when she first started out, we were both just kids and she would go down stairs to start dinner and then run upstairs and cry for an hour or two and then go back and work some more. She couldn't handle it, but she got so she could.

Judith: What kind of food would she cook?

Roy: Well, in those days, they had salt pork. They didn't have refrigerators, you know like this. And she had to dig that pork out of the salt brine and she had to make her own bread. That was a big chore for her. Of course, the better it was, the more they ate too. If she had poor luck, they wouldn't take so much. (Laughter) And it was all fresh vegetables then too, you didn't have cans then. Cooking wasn't quite so easy then as it is now. We went back there every year.

Judith: How many years did you do that?
Roy: Well, we were married in 1934 and we worked there until about '38. Then I bought a little place on this side of the Gap and she didn't go to work then. I was shearing sheep. But we did go up around Geraldine harvesting every year. She drove truck and I run the combine. She's pretty good help, that's the reason I kept her!

Judith: I guess so! (Laughter) Sounds like you made quite a team!

Dave: Did you spend more time in the forest, up in the Snowies harvesting house logs or post and poles? You had the winter up in Careless, which sounded like quite a time. Did you collect firewood or house logs or log up there at different times?

Roy: Yeah, in fact, back in those days, if you couldn't get a job, you had to make a job and that's what we were doing. We cut mine props and we cut sawlogs. I used to pick out wood, just anything to make a living at it.

Dave: Would that be fire burned timber?

Roy: In those days, the dry timber was standing just everywhere, just for the taking. In fact, people used to haul their wood from the mountains clear to Harlowton and clear to Ryegate. They hauled wood from the Belts to Harlowton out of Antelope, a lot of wood to Harlowton. Ten or 12 loads of wood, we figured, would last us all winter. Then in the fall of the year, the neighbors would have a sawing bee. We'd start going all around and help saw up the wood.

Judith: What might you have done for fun in those days?

Roy: Well, we used to go to dances. That was the main thing. Just a dance in the summertime, when we could get out. You know where Cushman is?

Dave: On the highway, going to Lavina?

Roy: Almost to Lavina. We were crazy enough that we used to go clear to Cushman to dances.

Dave: That was a long way to go, 20 miles or more.

Roy: And then around locally, we'd ride horseback to dances, you know, and then dance all night and go home at daylight.

Dave: Where was the second place you had dances at?

Roy: They used to have a lot of them at Judith Gap at the old town hall. They would have dances right here in this place. The neighbors would have a dance. We'd come out and there'd be six or seven little kids bedded down on the table or in the corner sleeping. Yes, we used to have neighborhood dances and card games, that was about it. Sundays, we'd have rodeos and all the young fellers would try to outride the other fellow.
Judith: Was that something you did?

Roy: Yes, I was foolish enough to try that.

Dave: Where did you go to school at? What was the closer school?

Roy: I went to school at Irene School in Swimming Woman. I was there about three years, from the first grade through third. Then we came back and I went to Hyde Creek. You know where Hyde Creek is?

Dave: No, I don't.

Roy: You know where Chuck Volf lives? Volf Ranch?

Dave: Yeah, to the southwest of the west end of the Snowies?

Roy: Yeah, it's up there about 4 miles. I used to ride from the homestead to Hyde Creek. I went there, then I went to Garneill. I graduated from 8th grade in Garneill and I rode horseback to Judith Gap School, about 8 miles.

Judith: That must have been difficult in the winter!

Roy: Yes, and in fact, I rented a little house in town in severe weather and then I worked for the grocery store and I washed dishes at the restaurant. You did anything you could to make a dollar in those days.

Dave: That's the same grocery store that's there today, Judith Gap Mercantile?

Roy: Haynes was there at that time. The same old store, Mark just sold out not long ago. We had a store in Judith Gap, but we were down on the old main street. The town used to be down by the depot on the old main street. Do you know where that is?

Dave: Toward the railroad tracks!

Roy: That used to be the town, and that all burned out. Then when the road went through, they moved it up where it's at now.

Dave: Do you have any recollections of the Ice Caves, of going to the Ice Caves in the Snowies?

Roy: Have you been up there? It used to be beautiful in there. There were big stalactites that came from the top clear to the floor and they were all colors. And they just broke them up as the years went by and they've never developed again. There used to be lots of water in there. In fact, at one time, I would say back in the early '30's, they piped water out of there and watered sheep on this side, when they ran sheep up there. They piped the water out of the Ice Caves, down the side hills to the sheep.
Dave: Coming down the side of the mountain?

Roy: Not very far down, but outside they had troughs along there and ran the sheep up and down that mountain, but now there's not enough water. And then there's that big Bottomless Pit up on top. There's an article about it in the store in Judith Gap. They think maybe there's an outlet down in the foothills somewhere for that, because they have gone down in there a long, long ways and there's water running down there. I never did go down in it but I have gone along the top of the mountain and there's a lot of sink holes up there. There used to be buffalo heads and bones and stuff in that. We never thought anything about it, but now they've taken a lot of the buffalo skulls out. We used to go and collect bones and sell the bones. We'd get so much a ton for them. There were bones all over the country then, from livestock that used to come down from Judith Basin and all over the mountains. If we had a big storm, the livestock would start going south with the storm and they'd pile up someplace and there'd be bones everywhere you looked.

Dave: The buffalo skulls on the top of the Snowies, do you suppose the buffalo were up there naturally or the Indians hauled them up?

Roy: Yes. I'm sure they used to range there and then they just got in there in the winter time and just couldn't get out. There used to be elk all over this country here when my dad was a kid and he said they moved out. They never did come back on this side of the mountains until just recently. Now, we're getting some back.

Dave: I heard that there used to be sheep up here in the Snowies?

Roy: I've never seen any mountain sheep but quite a few goats. In fact, just the other day, we were up there and saw 4 or 5 goats.

Dave: Up on the Crystal Lake side?

Roy: No. they were on the Careless Creek side. In fact, to show you how foolish we were, about two weeks age the wife and I both went with a pack horse and a saddle horse and went over the Half Moon Pass and camped over there about 4 miles from the Red Hill Road.

Dave: You folks did?

Roy: Yeah, we went over Friday and came back Sunday.

Dave: Amazing!

Roy: The horses did pretty good! (Laughter)

My grandson was looking forward to that and he thought that it would be something to take these 80 year old grandparents over the hill on horseback. He didn't think I could ride a horse anymore, I guess.
Judith: So, you do have children?

Roy: I have two, a boy and a girl. And the daughter built the house on the ranch just down the road a little ways. My son lives in Lewistown. He's a barber. He was in the Navy and married a girl from back east. He worked back East and he said he was going to move back to Montana while he was still young. He moved back when he was 40 something, a few years ago. My daughter works in the hospital. She's not in the hospital but she's got something to do with the elderly people down there. She's been working there for some time.

Dave: What's her name?

Roy: Helen Conroy.

Dave: I've heard of her. I believe it's Conroy's I see at the football games a lot.

Roy: Pat Conroy, her husband, has retired from education. He was a teacher for years; he has taught up around Havre and Chinook and that country. He come back to Lewistown.

Dave: I thought he ranched up here?

Roy: He is on a ranch, he is on our ranch right here. We put our ranch in a trust and we got the kids together and they each decided which half they would get. They built a house on Helen's half. It's down here a half a mile. He's trying to retire but he is working at the sawmill and she is working part-time. The skidder operator got hurt, now he is working full time. He's working more now, since he retired, than he did before.

Judith: I hear that happens to a lot of people!

Roy: I had a back problem and I was having some back surgery and the former commissioner talked me into running for commissioner while I was recuperating. I got elected and I never got well and I never got out of the job! I'd been doing it for 30 years, 1950 - 1980, and I was 65 and I had thirty years of service in, so I retired.

Dave: That can be a busy job!

Roy: It was no problem to get elected. I had it fouled up so bad, nobody wanted it. (Laughter) Yes, it is a kind of thankless job but it is kind of a way to look out for the Snowy Mountains.

Judith: Did you ever come across any stills or any evidence of bootlegging?

Roy: (Laughter) Down in the Snowies, everybody was a bootlegger, all the ranchers in the neighborhood. One of the most famous ones was Jess Sterling. He had one of the biggest stills in the state. They used to run whiskey to Canada through here, they followed the "Buffalo Trail," it went through Judith Gap. And we had an old fellow, the sheriff by the name of Charlie Coleman, and they were more afraid of Charlie Coleman, from Canada through Mexico, than anywhere else. The old fellow had palsy so bad he didn't know which one of the crew he was
going to shoot! (Laughter) He was a tough old fellow. I mentioned whiskey from Canada that they brought in along where the road followed the "Buffalo Trail".

Judith: What road is that?

Roy: They called it the "Buffalo Trail" and it follows 191, most of it, but most of it comes from Judith Gap. It used to cut across and go to Hedgesville and from Hedgesville to Shawmut. They called it the "Buffalo Trail".

Dave: I know the old Highway #12, instead of being river bottom, used to be up through there, through Hedgesville. Easier road building than the river bottom to go to Billings, I understand. You wouldn't think of that as the highway location today.

Roy: And they used to go to Billings, maybe once a year. They couldn't go through by Lavina, in those days, that was all lake at one time. When my dad was a kid that was all lake. That part of the road went through Roundup and then to Billings. When the railroad came through they built the road along side of it and it was county road. They just kept Golden Valley broke trying to maintain that road. Finally the state took it over and maintained it. It's highway #3 now, I guess from Lavina to Billings.

Dave: I think they are actually calling it #3 all the way to Great Falls now, so, it's not so confusing.

Roy: There's another character over at the east end of the Snowies, between here and Roundup, by the name of Simpson. Remember Simpson, they hung him in Ryegate? The kids he killed were kind of relatives of mine. These kids' mother was a sister to my uncles' wife, whatever that makes them. Yeah, he killed those two MacDonald boys. He had been rustling cattle and the boys knew about it. He was sure the boys knew he was rustling and he had a loan from the Production Credit Association. They called it the PCA and every once in awhile the inspectors come out and inspected your cattle to see if you've got the same number that you have borrowed against and all that stuff. He thought it was the law after him and he refused to let them come. He shot the deputy from Ryegate and he shot at the sheriff. They went back and he got away. He came back and he shot one of these boys in bed and the other was helping him split a carcass. He was holding the carcass and he chopped him in the head and killed him. He put these two kids in the pickup, threw a tarp on them and threw a beef on top of these kids and took the beef to town, to the butcher shop and unloaded the beef. He took the kids up on the golf course and buried them, stuffed them in a crack in a rock. They finally got him in Lewistown. They trailed him all over and finally caught him. They put him in jail in Ryegate and that broke the county. They had somebody on guard all the time and then when they did hang him, it was real expensive. It was pretty expensive for the county.

Dave: I heard that. That was one of the last Hangings in Montana too, wasn't it?

Roy: Yes it was.
Judith: You know you mentioned the railroad. How did the pullout of the railroad affect your life?

Roy: You mean, when they did away with the railroad? Well, personally it didn't do anything, but I was still commissioner when they took it out and it affected the town of Harlowton. It used to be a railroad town, half of the town was railroaders. Now it's nothing but a ranchers town. The hospital and the school are the biggest industry they have there. It affected the whole community when they took the railroad out.

Dave: You mentioned getting brace logs for props for the mines over there in Roundup. Was there ever any railroad ties that came out of the Snowies that you can think of?

Roy: I didn't personally, but when my granddad came over here, they stayed in Billings. The town was Colson, I think at that time, it wasn't Billings. He worked for the railroad and he got out ties. Those days, a lot of them were hand hewn. They didn't saw them out, they chopped them down.

Dave: And those came out of the mountains here?

Roy: Yes, and they took house logs out of these mountains clear to Roundup and Lavina, not sawlogs, but house logs. People built their houses out of them.

Dave: Yeah, in Dawn in Golden Valley, seems like just about every one of the cabins in the area were made from logs that came from private or Forest timberlands in years past, the only trees near at hand.

Roy: Back in the early '30's there used to be vacant houses around here, on almost every 160 acres. They moved them all around, moved them into town. They moved a lot of houses from Judith Gap to Harlowton. I worked for a fellow that was moving houses. There are a lot of houses in Harlowton that came from Judith Gap.

Dave: I didn't realize that. Thursday, we stopped by the Ross School, south of Tom Glennie's. Do you recall when it was in service?

Roy: I don't. I know they used it for a community center after they quite having school there. I know Mrs. Benson, just passed away here, she was 105 years old. We were great friends of the Bensons and they used to go to Ross School a lot. We used to go down there, they used to have country dances and country card parties and gatherings there.

Dave: Have any idea when that closed?

Roy: No, I really don't. You know where Bercail School is where Wade Sorenson lives? My dad went there when he was in the third or fourth grade. He went from Swimming Woman to Bercail to school. In fact, he was probably the first pupil Bercail had.

Dave: What year would that have been?
Roy: He was born in '88 and he would have been 6, 7 years old. (1894 or 1895)

Dave: The Sorensons are keeping it up real nice; it has attractive grounds and building.

Roy: They rebuilt it and made a nice home out of it.

Dave: You'd never guess that the school building was there before the turn of the century or about 1900, or parts of the Bercail building anyway.

Roy: There used to be a sign on it but I can't remember whatever happened to it. There is quite an article and I have it somewhere, about my dad being one of the first pupils for that school.

Judith: Were you always able to go to school, regardless of the weather?

Roy: Yes, I did. When my dad was going to school, they didn't hold school in the wintertime, just in the summertime. We never did go to summer school, we had to go the year 'round. We had quite a time getting our kids to school from here. We didn't have school buses in those days. We had to go to town in the wintertime, cold or not. My wife lived over the hill here just a little ways, and she rode to Judith Gap and I rode from my home. We rode to school year 'round horseback. They had a horse barn in the Gap. We relied on our old horses a lot of times. You'd just turn it loose and it'd go home.

Dave: Can you relate when the roads were rebuilt into Timber Creek, for example, or remember when those roads were improved? I know it was pretty primitive, and there was logging in there back in the '60's. Do you remember any of the use up Timber Creek such as house logs or what the roads were like before they were rebuilt?

Roy: Yes, I remember the roads going out of there were just wagon roads is all they were. I remember going up Timber Creek with my dad up to Evans's sawmill after lumber with the wagon. It was just a wagon road, practically all the way out. We didn't have any roads, 'course you think I'm bragging. When I first became commissioner, there were just trails all through this country, you know, just ruts. We didn't drive any particular area, we just drove wherever the ground was bare, all over. Those days you could go anywhere. Now days, you have to stick to the roads and you don't dare get on the other fellows property. They fight over right-of-way.

Judith: Do you remember any particular conflicts that people had?

Roy: Just living! (Laughter) We used to have trouble getting to town. I know there used to be a little schoolhouse right here close to where my straw shed is now. They moved it over to Snelling. People used to come there and the people that lived north of me, the road was so bad they'd leave their kids here all the time. Then finally, they'd come and stay most of the winter. We would start to town and I'd go in the tractor and we'd follow the benches all around. I would also get the groceries and come home on the tractor. We did that about once a month. When I was cutting sawlogs up in the canyon, we had a bad winter and I loaned groceries to the neighbors. We'd drag sawlogs to the sawmill. I was the first one that ran out of groceries and I
had to go to town. We took three days. Coming back, we had such a load of groceries our old team could hardly pull it. Most of the groceries bought in those days were beans and dried things that didn't spoil.

Judith: When did you get electricity?

Roy: It was in the '50's. REA came through. We were over here in the '40's, we had bottled gas. We had a refrigerator and bottled gas stove. The REA was a lifesaver for all these ranchers.

Dave: Do you have any recollections of David Lake or any of the other older fellows that worked for the Forest Service?

Roy: No, I really don't. David Lake was about the only one that I knew of that was with the Forest. There was the Evans family. They were a real old family. They grew up there practically. They had sawmills in the Forest all the time. They had them in Timber Creek. They had them in Timber Creek and Blake Creek and in what they call Hardscrabble. That's between Blake Creek and Neil Canyon, over there. Bob Lee owns that country now. That's where they moved the little Ranger Station over there for a summer home, in what they call Hardscrabble. The Ranger Station was at Blake Creek. They totally moved it out and then Bob Lee moved it over on the side of the hill on his property. It's right beside, what they call Hardscrabble cabin. He has the old Ranger Station there.

Dave: We were talking earlier today about one of those buildings. Someone thought that maybe the old Dry Coulee Ranger Station, east up by Huffman Gulch, east of Swimming Woman, might have went down to the Berry (Korrell) place in lower Swimming Woman. Do you recall that?

Roy: No, I really don't. I've no recollection on that building at all. I just don't know where it went to. I don't even know where the Irene School went to anymore. They used to move it around wherever there were kids. They'd move the school.

Dave: The school you mentioned is Rothford or Rossville?

Roy: Yes, Rossville.

Dave: There's a school you may not be acquainted with, east of Janet Lewis' about 2 or 3 miles, just north of Edgar Lewis'. Do you know if that was the Clara School?

Roy: No, I really don't. Lewis could probably fill you in on that.

Dave: Yes, Edgar Lewis. I would have liked to talk to Ken Lewis some more; he knew stories about the Little Snowies from his days there. He'd worked for the Forest Service back in the late '30's early '40's. I suppose you knew Dave Lake pretty well after he retired to Harlowton. He was mayor and Justice of the Peace. They say he was a gunsmith too.

Roy: He was a pretty prominent old citizen. Everybody liked him and he had two boys and a daughter. I know the young Dave Lake, he lives around Kalispell someplace. A Richard Lake...
used to go with a neighbor, Davis girl here, when we were in high school. He was probably graduated by the time I was a freshman. He used to go with the Davis girl and then we had a reunion in the Gap a few years ago. Come to find out his wife had died and the Davis girl's husband died. They got together again after all those years. After 50 or 60 years they were reunited.

Dave: Amazing circles sometimes. You folks don't have allotments up in the Forest, do you?

Roy: No, we don't. My nephew at Garneill, George's boy, Gary Brewington, has an allotment in the Belts. His allotment is right above the green timber, you know, what they call the green timber up there that Saylor has, right west of Garneill. I'm not sure what his allotment is.

Dave: Can you remember any other fires up in the mountains? We talked about 1909 and I guess there was a big fire in Swimming Woman Canyon in about 1955?

Roy: Yes, there was, I went up to it. I wasn't able to work on it. I was to crippled up at the time. I went and saw the fire. I know it was the best thing that ever happened to that canyon. Lots to see there now that wasn't accessible at all in all that old timber and the canyon is full of good grass now after the fire, that's a good grass canyon. And this time I went, as I say, we rode over the top and the timothy was clear up to the stirrups on the horse, all the way over like that, clear out the other end.

Dave: Do you remember anything about that road up Swimming Woman Canyon, about when it was improved? It's been kind of a wagon trail for years and years.

Roy: Well, I don't think it's ever been improved. (Laughter) You just can hardly get up there.

Dave: It dis-improved over the last few years!

Roy: And you used to drive almost to the sheep trail, but they closed off part of that because they were digging the hillside all up.

Judith: What sheep trail is that?

Roy: Well, there's a sheep trail that goes up Swimming Woman and at the head of it, it goes to the left and comes up on top by the Knife Blade, up in there. They used to trail sheep up there. You know where the sheep trail is don't you?

Dave: It's the main track that goes up to the canyon?

Roy: It goes up on top and then there's another road that goes over Half Moon Pass. We packed over Half Moon Pass and then there's a sheep trail up on top by Knife Blade that goes to Careless Creek.

Dave: And follows the Ullhorn Trail, more or less?
Roy: And you can go from there on top, clear over to the Ice Caves and on to Crystal Lake and through there.

Dave: I suppose, you were on that trail in years past?

Roy: Yes, I have been up and down that Ice Cave Trail a couple times a day hunting, but it was before it got so steep! (Laughter) They talked some of building a road over the Half Moon Pass. I think that they had a reference to the Red Hill Road, because I don't think you could build a road over the Half Moon Pass. They used to ride over there. They used to walk over there, back in the early days. I know, I heard this story many times when I didn't want to walk after the cows! My granddad, when he proved up on the homestead and settled on it up in Swimming Woman, walked to White Sulphur with the papers. That was the county seat in those days and it was all Meagher County. When he was in White Sulphur, he heard they were building a town in Lewistown. So, he walked around by Lewistown just to see what was going on and came back home over the Half Moon Pass. But in those days, they just took off. Killed a bird or a rabbit whenever they got hungry and slept like coyotes in the bush. (Laughter)

Dave: Yeah, if you went by the highway today that would be about 125 miles from White Sulphur to Lewistown. I suppose that they cut it off to be about 80, 90 miles by the old Carrol Trail, then, possibly.

Roy: There was a trail that come through The Gap and then, it went west, the old Carrol Trail. That went west over to, well, it went to Helena. We might have had trail part of the time.

Dave: It might still have been evident at that time?

Roy: Didn't make any difference to him, he just cut across.

Dave: There used to be an old Ranger Station over at Muir Creek, on the east end of the Belts. Did you ever hear anything of that old station?

Roy: Yes. I can't think of the old fellow's name that used to stay there. He was riding for Lyons at the time, Lyons Ranch Co. He used to ride and herd cattle over there and see that they got water and what not. And I used to see him quite often because I used to ride my horses from west of the Gap. I used to go clear as far as north of Two Dot, and round up horses from that Two Dot way. They weren't wild horses, but everyone that came out here brought horses. When they went broke they just moved off and left 'em, so the horses just practically were wild. I would take 3 or 4 horses and I would start out at what they called the Burrow Ranch. I would drop my horses off maybe a little north of Two Dot someplace. I'd round up a bunch of horses and start 'em back. They'd all have stud horses watching them, and they'd have their little bands. If you put one band with another one and didn't keep them running, they would fight and split up. So, you had to run them. One horse couldn't stand that, so I would play out my horse and I'd come to a fresh horse. I'd turn him loose and I would corral them at Oka, west of the Gap. I've had more horses than you could get in the corral. The last horse was a pet pinto. I'd turn her loose, she'd run right into the corral and they would follow her. Then I'd shut the gate on them.
Dave: Was the Muir Ranger Station still there when you were around riding horses?

Roy: Yes, the Ranger Station was there not too long ago. I can remember it. In fact, Jellison lived there for a while. There are some Jellison's in Harlowton, if you want to get some more information on that. They had a baby buried up there. I think, they lived there and found out they were on Forest Service or something and they couldn't homestead on it. While they were there, they lost a baby and the baby's grave is right there close to Muir Ranger Station now. Twenty or thirty years since I've seen it, doesn't seem like long but it should still be there.

Dave: That was not the Jellison Cabin, this was actually Muir Station?

Roy: No, it was on the side of the hill, the cabin. They might have moved it from there over to the cabin. I don't know, but at one time it was the Muir Ranger Station. Then they found out it was on government property and they had to move.

Dave: That fence, that's around it, is that a pretty good size fence, the fence that is around the gravesite?

Roy: No, that is just a little fence, not much bigger than this table. In fact, I got involved in that Patterson deal. You know, they closed up all that road? We tried to keep it open for the Forest Service and everybody else but they closed it all. There used to be a road, right straight west of the Gap, clear over to this area where the Jellison's lived. The road went to the Forest Service and then on the other side of the Forest Service there was another county road that went over to the Jellison place. There was a little area in there that belonged to the Forest Service, we couldn't find. There was about % mile there, that we couldn't find the transfer. You see it was all Meagher County. We found out where the government surveyed the land and they had the road and Wheatland County petitioned a road up to there. Then off of there, they petitioned another road and it says off of the county road. They called it a county road, but the judge ruled against this.

Dave: And that was about 1989 or 1990?

Roy: When they had the road problem? It was, no, I think it was after I retired. Yeah, it was about that time.

Dave: I think that Carl Fager, who was the Ranger at that time, worked on that quite a bit. So, you and Carl were probably in touch?

Roy: Yeah, we worked on that. We just couldn't find actual papers for it. But the Judge, Patterson trained the court reporters for him, they were buddies. That's why the judge ruled against us. Patterson and the judge were buddies anyway.

Dave: Justice is an interesting thing, isn't it?
Roy: Yes, it is. Funny how a judge can be so much smarter than everybody else and whatever he says goes.

Dave: Do you have any idea when they quite using Muir Ranger Station?

Roy: I'm sure they quite using it as a station when this old fellow camped in there, that did the riding for Lyon. There's a lot of Lyons' still alive, but all the old folks are dead and gone. I don't know if the young fellow would even know. Jim Lyons, you probably know him.

Dave: A little, he's up in Sawmill Canyon.

Judith: Do you remember anything about a lookout tower?

Roy: No, the only lookout tower that I recall was Mount High, then they finally tore it down. I can remember that they had quite a tower up there for years. They used to go up there during the summer season. Then they had one over on Daisy. That was just not to long ago. Maybe they still use it. Do they?

Dave: No, but it was used for quite a while as a lookout point. Daisy Guard Station Cabin nearby was used to stay in.

Roy: I know Bill Sanders used to go up there from Harlowton.

Dave: Oh, yeah, up at Kings Hill Lookout tower at Porphyry Peak. His granddad worked for the Forest Service back in 1913, 1916, something like that.

Roy: I remember the lookout they had at Daisy and Mount High before they tore it down.

Dave: There was a little lookout point at Daisy Peak for quite a few years too. They stopped using it in the 1940's or so. When did your family sell the ranch up in Swimming Woman Canyon that they moved to sometime after 1882?

Roy: They moved up in, I'd have to look here in my file of papers to tell you.

Dave: Who did they sell to, when they sold the ranch in Swimming Woman?

Roy: My granddad died in 1919 from the flu, the year they talk about everybody having the flu, he passed away. My grandmother, the youngest girl, and the youngest boy, stayed on the ranch. Bill and Goldie, they called her. They lived on the ranch for years after that. When they sold out, they sold our to Wagner. The old Wagner is folks to the Wagner that lives in Shawmut. You know, that Wagner that lives in Shawmut? They have the ranch now, still have it, the Wagner's do. He lives in Shawmut.

Dave: Dawn in Golden Valley talks about Swimming Woman and some of the History of some of the ranches in there. Was that the lower ranch by Bill Webber's, out in the canyon?
Roy: The Webber's have what they call the Swimming Woman Ranch. That didn't belong to my folks. I don't know how it got the name Swimming Woman Ranch. Ours was always called the Old Brewington Ranch. It was always a stopping spot for everybody that went through there. Old granddad was noted for his stories and they used to stop at the house to listen to his stories. To show the kind of fellow he was, someone stopped there one time and asked him that evening as they were sitting there talking, if they had any antelope around there. Old granddad said, "Yes, they had lots of antelope. In fact, I have 5 of them hanging in my spring house." And this fellow said, "You don't know who I am, do you?" "No," granddad said. This fellow said, "Well I'm the game warden." And granddad said, "You don't know who I am either, I'm the biggest damn liar in the State of Montana." (Laughter)

I can tell you another story on him, if you want. It isn't history at all. He was out building fence one day, he did a lot of truck gardening, old granddad did, and one of the neighbors came over and wanted him to go to the cellar. He wanted to buy some cabbage. So, granddad got in the wagon with him and they started to go over to the cellar. This fellow said, "I don't want much cabbage, I only want about 100 pounds." And granddad stops the team, turned it around and headed back. The old rancher said, "What did I do, say something to make you mad?" "No," granddad said, "I'm not splitting my head of cabbage for nobody!"

Dave: I can't think of much else to ask. I wasn't sure about that cabin up at Snow Saucer, so you gave a real good idea of when that cabin got started and was used. It was earlier than I thought.

Roy: I think there's still some remnants of it there yet. I haven't been up there for quite awhile. Since it got so steep, I kind-a don't make it up. (Laughter)

Dave: I looked at it a couple years ago and the walls are still there and a third of the roof is still there.

Roy: There's still some pieces of tin around?

Dave: Yes, still some tin, one piece is still up on the roof. It was certainly a short man's cabin. It didn't take much to heat it. But to haul logs to that little spot would have been tough. They're just big, wide, cone shaped logs. It was a tough place to build. The water off of the snowfield was certainly a good idea and the only place for water.

Roy: This had to be all under water sometime up there. There's all kinds of shells you know. The rocks have got shells in them. Between what they call Teepee and Careless Creek, there was a big saddle that was all shale. I can remember walking through there and I found a bone. It must have been 3 - 4 feet long, great big knob on each end of it. Never even gave a thought to what it might be, but I am sure it must have been some kind of prehistoric animal of some sort. The squirrels have eaten it by now, probably. I remember kicking it around wondering what kind of mammoth animal it might have been. That was clear up on top of the mountain.

Dave: Was that fossilized then or was it still bone?
Roy: I don't recall whether it was or not. It must have been or maybe it would have crumbled but it was an animal bone of some kind. Almost as big around as my body, the ends of it were. I never give it a thought about taking it down and doing anything with it.

Dave: Very unique. All I can think of are the Mastodons that were in the area until about 10,000 years ago.

Roy: There used to be a lot of bones on top the mountains. We got a lot of good buffalo skeletons, skulls out of the depressions up on top.

Dave: It seems such a climb for the buffalo, but there is a lot of grass in the summer, it's cooler and out of the flies. In earlier days when you were first up there, the trail probably went clear across I suppose? Greathouse may have put that trail in clear across the top.

Roy: Yes, it did go clear across.

Dave: And Greathouse died after World War I?

Roy: I don't recall when he died, no, I don't. I just remember him. I remember the point and I remember him telling about how he took the tin up there on a pack mule to put on top of that shack.

Dave: He was injured in World War I and got shot in the throat. He was down at Blake Creek Ranger Station in 1919. Because of the throat injuries, he choked on some food and died. He probably built that cabin either in 1919 or somewhere before, like in 1915 or 1916. I didn't realize the cabin was that old!

Roy: I came here in 1915. I wish I could help you more. I could probably give you more accurate dates, if I would just brush up on this a little bit. I don't have Alzheimer's but I'm sure I got "Half-Heimers." (Laughter)

Judith: I think you can remember quite a bit!

Dave: Yes, you do! It seems like a lot of the homesteaders around here really tied in with the Forest Service. That was the only source, or most of the source, of firewood and house logs and logs for the sawmills. Everybody used forest products. The Forest was a part of the homestead era: it provided the building materials for a lot of the homesteads.

Roy: There is a cabin over there in the Judith, Hoover Cabin. You've been around there, haven't you?

Dave: I've seen pictures of it. It is gone now, at Hoover Springs. We were talking to Ox Thorsen a couple days ago and he had some pictures of that cabin.

Roy: That's at Hoover Springs, but there is a cabin up Trail Creek too, that Hoover and Charlie Russell used to stay in. My dad knew Charlie Russell real well. In fact, "The Bronc for
Breakfast," you've heard of that picture, that was just six miles south of here at old Living Springs. My dad knew the old cook real well. The old cook's son, with that group, he and another renegade stole some horses from them and started to take them over toward Roy, over in that country. They took after them and caught them over by the river someplace. They shot them and brought the horses back but they told the old cook that his son got away. He never knew they killed him.

Dave: The cook's son was one of the horse thieves?

Roy: Yes.

Dave: In "The Bronc for Breakfast," was Charlie Russell down there and had observed the scene?

Roy: He was in that same crew, yes.

Dave: I have seen Living Springs on the map but I'm not sure I have driven by it. Is there a building or two left there?

Roy: No, there's nothing there. They had a place called Living Springs but it wasn't the old Living Springs. They moved it over close to where Warner lives, Bryon Warner. The old Living Springs is over in DeBuff's field. DeBuff developed a pond over there now. It might even cover up where the original Living Springs was, west of where Warner lives now.

Dave: In John DeBuff's field or his dad's field?

Roy: No, it wouldn't be John, it would be the one that lived right by Harold, I think. I think Harold farmed it, or Danny, one or the other. I think Danny owned it or Danny built the reservoir in there.

Dave: There was a spring?

Roy: Yes, it was an old spring where they used to have a stagecoach stop at one time. They could get their water at a stage stop on the way to Billings. There used to be a stage road that run right through there, just over the hill here and down toward Living Springs, down to what they call PI Maul Ranch. That was down by where Lammers lives, and then it went on into Billings from there. There was another stagecoach that went around here, I told you, went around the hill that was the old Carroll Trail. Another was at Oka and over in that country and then on to Bozeman.

Dave: I've heard of that one. I didn't realize they had a stagecoach that went towards Billings. I thought the Billings road was later.

Roy: I'm not sure I'd call it a stagecoach. I meant to say freight train. They used to haul freight that way and wagon trains used to go that way.
Dave: Can you still see the wagon tracks in the old wagon trail up here on the hill?

Roy: Just over this hill there are still remnants of the old wagon trails. And there’s an old wagon trail coming out of Arrow Creek, you know where that is north of Stanford? It’s all gumbo up in that country and they would go up the hill with the wagon trains. There used to be big mounds, they looked like badger mounds, they'd be high as this table or more. That would be where there'd be a rock. They took the wheels off and laid them on this rock and then they'd pound the gumbo off the wagon wheels. Ended up there'd be great big mounds all over the area. Their wheels would get so big they couldn't turn them.

Dave: That probably came out of the trail out of Fort Benton, I suppose? Somebody else we talked to spoke about the trail coming out of Fort Benton and supplies coming down this way. They mentioned, at low water, steamboats couldn't actually make it to Fort Benton, so the trail went back further east on the Missouri River. A lot of history around this country!

Roy: Fort Benton had a lot of history up there, the Missouri River. Too bad they tore up the Eye of the Needle. What they are going to do with that, I don’t know.

Dave: So sad. It would be nice to have it restored!

Roy: Yes, I hope they do. I think we strayed quite a ways from history here.

Judith: Maybe not from history, but maybe from Forest Service history.

Dave: It’s been exciting, and we appreciate your time Roy. Thanks.

End of interview.