Gladys Peterson: I’m here with Forrest Poe and Flossie Poe. I should say it’s a re-interview because there are some points which came up after our last interview, a few weeks back, which we felt were worth recording.

Forrest, as I was leaving several weeks back, you mentioned something that really sounded worth knowing more about and that was about the Longlys. You said that they moved out of the Rattlesnake in desperation. Why don’t you tell that story?

FoP: Well, the way I can remember, to the best of my ability, is that...I was a pretty small kid myself. I know the Longlys lived up about two and half miles above where we do here, and they were on a small place. There are some large springs there that come out of the ground and flow into the Rattlesnake, and they’re quite close to the mountain. Now, they are more narrow there than where I live, and it was quite cold in the wintertime. Their family had contacted some communicable diseases—children’s diseases—and they couldn’t get out from home to get to a doctor and things like that. So they finally just decided in desperation to leave home and move to town when all the...about all the kids got sick. What I can remember is them coming down the road to our place, stopping there, and getting out, and Mrs. Longly, the first time I saw a lady dressed in men’s overalls.

GP: Now, they spelled their name L-O-N-G-L-Y, right?

FoP: Yes, L-O-N-G-L-Y. The husband’s name was Joseph Longly and Mrs. Longly, or the mother’s name, was Nettie Longly. They had one daughter that was named Nettie, after the mother, I assume.

I remember her getting out of the sled and going up to the house to talk to my mother, and it was quite a cold day, probably in the middle of the afternoon when they came by our place. They had all of their belonging piled on this sled, or all that they could haul out. They had, I think, it was two cows or a cow and calf, something like that, tied on behind the sled. They had chickens and a chicken coop on top of the sled, and I can remember that her saying that there was two dead children and one very sick one in that sled and that they were going to get out of that country up there and get to town so they could get to a doctor and get the kids to a hospital and so forth. The other kids, evidently, were not too sick to sit in the sled, I guess. One of them was quite sick from what I remember. So they left their chickens and their cow and their calf at our place because when going to Missoula I don’t think they knew exactly where
they’d be going. They’d have to find a place to move into and so forth. There’s this much I know of their record that they had a total of 14 children altogether, and 10 of those grew to adulthood. One of them lived to be about 22 or 23 years old and then she got killed, so there was two boys and one of the girls that lived on into adulthood. There was Nettie, the oldest girl, and then they had another girl named Doe. I don’t know, I think that might have been a nickname, and she’s the one that got killed at a later date. Somebody shot her, I think. Then there was the two boys, Ernest and Dennis Longly. One of the boys was named Unc, U-N-C. I suppose that was for uncle that some of the nephews or somebody called him Uncle Ernie. He wasn’t a very reliable sort of a person. There was the younger boy, Benson (?), was a pretty nice boy. Nettie married a man named Davis. Can’t remember now if his first name was Marion (?) or what his first name was but it was Davis, and they lived over in Mullan, Idaho, and he worked in the mines over there.

GP: Could we back up now? You say that’s a childhood remembrance of your’s seeing the sled come down to your place and then leaving the chickens and the cows there. About how old would you have been or what year would that have been? About?

FoP: I would guess it was somewhere in around 19...It would have been anytime between 1912 and 1915.

GP: I see.

FoP: Somewhere in that area. I’m sure I wasn’t more than six years old. I don’t think I was more than six years old.

GP: Did your folks talk about what the disease was that they had?

FoP: If I can remember right, it was...There was scarlet fever and diphtheria involved in it. I remember Mrs. Longly talking about the ones that died sure had diphtheria because their throats had gotten so sore and then their throats swelled up until the kids couldn’t breathe. So I think it was diphtheria, and I’m pretty sure there was scarlet fever and possibly something else. A little kid like that he doesn’t remember too much about all those diseases, but I can remember thinking how bad, how sad that was and the thought of there being dead children in that sled under the furniture somewhere.

FIP: One of the children got killed when a load of wood tipped over. Killed him.

FoP: Yeah, one of their children, Roy Longly, one of the boys, was hauling wood out Grant Creek. He was 16 years old.

GP: That was later?
FoP: No, I think that was probably earlier. He would have been one of the older boys.

GP: Oh, so these were the younger, some of the younger children then that were on the sled.

FoP: Yes, I said they had 14 children and I don’t know all of the history of all of them. But I know a load of wood tipped over the horses...They were on a steep hill hauling wood down and had a load of wood. He was trying to hold the horses back, and just what happened I don’t know, but the load of wood tipped over on him and killed him. He was about 16 years old.

GP: Well backing up then to this incident that you’re remembering now, do you remember any reactions on your parents to that? Did they talk about it at all? Was there any fear?

FoP: Well, yes I remember them saying, well they guessed that was about the only thing they could do was get out of there and go to town because when the snow got deep up there and the weather got bad, why, it was almost impossible to get a doctor to come out from town because somebody would have to almost meet him and guide him in. It would be an all-day trip for a doctor to come out, and most of the time the country doctors or the town doctors did go out if they could be of any assistance, I guess, but they [Longly family] didn’t have way to get out to get to the doctor. So I think that was just a conclusion they came to, Well let’s get out of here and get to town where we can get these kids to a doctor and save some of them.

I don’t remember it for sure if there was one or two of the children that were already dead and one dying. I think it was three children they lost in that episode, but I’m not sure. I could only been two. I don’t want to (unintelligible) because I was a pretty small kid, but I remember the impression I got on that

GP: Two or three of the 14, anyhow.

FoP: I can remember Mrs. Longly was crying. I remember these big tears coming down her face and she...I walked from the—what we called the barnyard where they drove through the horses and things—I walked with her up to the house to where she went up and talked to my mother for a few minutes. Her husband, Joe Longly, stayed down by the corrals and talked to my dad. I can remember...I don’t remember much about what he said, but I remember Mrs. Longly crying and saying, “We want to get to a doctor.” That’s the main thing I can vision yet in my mind. She was dressed in these overalls and things because the snow was quite deep and it was cold weather.

GP: So somehow I found out, was it from you, that they kept their land though?

FoP: Yes, they kept their land. It was never sold and in later years, sometime in the ‘30s, they...I can remember seeing the old house, the logs that were there and after a while the windows

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were broke out and so forth. Their son, Ernest Longly, moved up there and lived part of the time. Sometimes he lived up alone—

GP: Unc?

FoP: Yes, Unc. He lived there, oh, two or three years, I guess because you knew him.

FIP: Oh yes, he was living up there when you and I were married.

FoP: He is the one that sold the land to the Montana Power Company. His dad became an invalid not too long after they moved out and back to Missoula, and Mrs. Longly usually went out and worked doing housework for different people—doctors and people that could afford a housekeeper. She mostly did that to make a living for Edmond (?). The last seven years that he was alive, he was, well, I'd say bedridden.

FIP: Didn't she work at the laundry for a while?

FoP: She might have worked at the laundry, I don't know. I know she used to do housework a lot.

GP: Well then was that land sold about the same time as your father's land was sold?

FoP: It was sold in 1935. That's the year that the Power Company started—

GP: Negotiating.

FoP: —uying up the land. They started picking up any land they could get and, of course, some of the people found out they were buying some land and they rushed right in to sell it. I don't know, but I believe the selling price of their property was 3,500 dollars. I know one year it got high water, and their house was gone—quick level—creek level—but old house had gotten to be almost nothing. Ernie had put up a—what we called a tar paper shack—a frame house or a small one-room deal with (unintelligible) roof on it and covered it with tar paper and strips of wood. One year the water got quite high, and he was afraid he'd be flooded out where he had his house sitting. So he put out a call for help and there was several of us—different ones—that all took our cars and went up there and hooked up, a sort of a chain effect of automobiles to his shack that he had on skids. We managed to...Oh, there was salesman up there selling, I think, magazine subscriptions at the time, so we chained his tire end of the cross-section of the rest of it, and we managed to pull his shack up onto higher ground.

GP: Backing up then, this idea that family having to leave because of disease interests me. Did you, in your family...You had the brother, two brothers, didn't you? Did you have any illnesses up there where you felt like you couldn't get to a doctor? How did your folks handle illness?

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FoP: In later years, yes. I can remember we didn’t have much of anything like that while we were going to grade school, but when we got older and started going to high school we began to pick up a lot of children’s diseases that we had never run into while we were in grade school because we were out mixing with the public. My first year in high school that my brother and I were going...We were staying in town and batching and going to high school and come home on weekends and things like that. I remember this Easter vacation came along, and my two brothers were sick with the measles. I said, “Well I’m going to be tough. I’m not going to get the measles.” So I went out and put in a culvert across the road where we had to drive in and out, and worked all day at that and wouldn’t say I was sick or anything because I was going to be tough and not get it. But the next morning...Oh, my younger brother didn’t have it yet, but the next morning my younger brother and I were taking the horses out to pasture. We rode them out and we had a gate that we shut, and I put them on the other side of the gate. I rode them up the road a ways and back—one of the horses.

When we come back, he had shut the gate and then this horse came through the gate—it was downhill, quite a bit downhill—well, he was the type of horse to jump a fence a lot. All I had on him was a halter and I tried to pull him back and stop him and he wasn’t about to be stopped. So when he came to that gate, why, he just reared up and went over the gate. Well, by that time I was trying real hard to pull him back and stop him, I had to pull myself up onto his neck, off his back, onto his neck going downhill like that. I could feel myself turning and slipping, starting to fall, and I wrapped one hand over the top of his neck and pulled myself as high in the air as I could and let go. We cleared the gate all right but where I landed, as he went by, one of his hooves hit me over the eye. That really did hurt. And I really got sick at my stomach from the pain of that. Fact is, I got so sick I vomited. Then when I (unintelligible), I got up and I walked down to the house, and I wasn’t feeling so brave and tough by that time. My mother looked at me and says, “You’re breaking out in the measles.”

So she put me down in bed, and my older brother was in bed already. She put me in bed with him, covered me up. That eye swelled completely shut. I never peeped daylight out of that eye, that got hit with the horse’s hoof, for 22 days. Well anyway, when I woke up...After a while, I went to sleep and when I woke up, I was all completely broke out in the measles. So the spring / Easter vacation ended before I was ready to go back to school. We didn’t go back to school for a few days after school took up for the last quarter of the spring term of school. I know I went back to school before I got my eye opened, but it wasn’t very until the teachers decided that we’d lost so much schooling that year and so forth that we’d probably better drop out and go back the next year and try to complete it. I had those things happen to me two or three times.

FIP: When was it when (unintelligible)?

FoP: It was two years later because he was a senior. Three years? No, two. My older brother was a very studious kid, and he’d set up way past midnight every night studying and trying to

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get his lessons. He was very, very conscious about trying to have his lessons ready for the next day. He got so he was missing too many hours of sleep because usually if they’re on a ranch or even downtown, you had to get up fairly early in the morning in order to get to school. If you stayed up too late at night, and I know a lot of nights he stayed up until after two o’clock in the morning to study and then he’d sleep for two or three hours. He just naturally...His health went downhill and then he was exposed to, I think, that was scarlet fever. In the process of the scarlet fever, followed by spinal meningitis, and he died.

GP: You did talk about that briefly on the other tape, but I don’t recall that you mentioned the scarlet fever at that time.

FoP: I’m pretty sure it was scarlet fever, whatever you call it. There was two other kids in high school at that time that had...Robert Pugsley (?) died. He got scarlet fever—I think it was scarlet fever—and spinal meningitis, and he died from it like my brother did. Then there was another girl and her name was Virginia Alpier (?).

GP: I think that’s on the other tape too.

Now in the last few weeks then, Forrest, are there other things that you remembered that you wanted to recall?

FoP: Like the story about this William Bischoff (?) also known as “Coyote Bill.” There’s quite a bit of history involved with, and if you want to take that?

GP: Sure.

FoP: I’ve got some notes out here.

[Break in audio]

FoP: Okay this is the story about...his real name was William Bischoff and there’s a stream up in the Rattlesnake that’s named after him or since he left there, but he was known as “Coyote Bill” and Berg’s story. The reason I mention Berg (?) was the man Berg was involved in this story. I don’t know just when Coyote Bill went up there and settled in that area, but I think it was before the turn of the century. I think he was up there when my dad moved into the Rattlesnake in the 1900s. He had the last place in the valley—

GP: That was available?

FoP: That was settled or somebody lived—homestead or whatever. I don’t know for sure if his was a homestead. It couldn’t have been a homestead because nobody could homestead up there until after the survey came through. But the other man, I think it was 1900 or about then,
a man named Arthur Franklin, who was a civil engineer, came out from the east. He had either TB or consumption, whichever one it was, at that time. His doctors back east said get out west where it’s drier air and stay out in the open and see if you can maybe gain your health back. So he went up to the end of the road. It would have been about a half or three quarters of a mile beyond the Bischoff place. Took up some kind of a (unintelligible) and built himself quite a fairly good sized house, and he built it as a hunting lodge. What he started in doing was acting as a guide for hunting parties that came out from the east to Montana and into the area here. There was a lot of game and so forth in those days. He built this hunting lodge up there, and he would guide hunting parties or fishing parties. There were so many fish in the creek in those days you could put on two or three hooks and pull out two or three fish at a time.

But Mr. Bill Bischoff did not like the idea of Franklin moving in up there because he claimed all that territory as his own for trapping and fishing and hunting purposes and the timber and the mineral rights and all those things. So he didn’t like Franklin, and he wanted to get him out of there. He put a gate across the road and said, “Nobody will use this without my permission.”

Well, of course, Franklin was a small man—small of stature—and he took to wearing what’s called a six gun or a six shooter as kind of a matter of self-defense because he had a bad arm. His left arm was shriveled. I think it was the left arm. Anyway, one of his hands, lower part of his arm was shriveled. I think it was the fall of 1901, he came to my dad and said, “I want to do some trapping up in that land above my place and up the valley.” He said, “I have a very hard time trying to set traps with that one hand, so would you like to come up and set some traps? Maybe I could show you some ideas.”

So my dad went up and stayed overnight with him, and they went up, further on up the Rattlesnake known as the Bird Flats area. He’d pick out the place, and my dad would set the traps and he’d make the set. Franklin figured he’d probably tend them afterwards. When they came back down...They was up there two or three days, and when they came back down Franklin told my dad, he says, “I think my aunt is coming out next week, and I want to meet her in town and bring her out.” He borrowed my dad’s sled and team. They were coming down and he said, “Well, I’m going to go over and ask Coyote Bill if he’ll unlock his gate because I don’t want to have any trouble while my aunt is here. I want to see if he’ll unlock the gate so I can go through it all right with her with the team and the sleigh.”

Well, as it turned out, my dad says, “Well, I’ll stay out in the road and you go in.” So he stayed out in the road and Franklin went in to talk to Coyote Bill, and Coyote Bill was making a new part for a wagon and he had a piece of two-by-four he was working on. Franklin talked to him and asked if he’d unlock the gate so he wouldn’t have any trouble when his aunt got here. Bill looked him over and saw he wasn’t wearing his gun. He’d taken off his six-gun and left it with my dad out in the road before he went in to avoid any kind of trouble. Coyote Bill looked him over, and as he left he could see he didn’t have his gun on him so he walked up behind him and raised the two-by-four up and hit him. My dad yelled as loud as he could at Franklin, but Franklin was hard of hearing. He couldn’t hear him. But he did see the shadow on the snow and

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he threw his arm up to ward this (unintelligible) was coming at him—to ward it off. Franklin was hit across the ribs by Bill’s two-by-four and knocked him down, and he jumped up and ran out towards the road. It hurt him because my dad said he spit blood all the rest of the way down. He came on down to my dad’s house, and the next morning he felt pretty rough so my dad hooked up the team to the sled and took him to town to the doctor. He had to stay in a few days to...oh, he had to be (unintelligible) by the doctor. He had a broken rib or two.

GP: Did he file charges at all?

FoP: No, no. He didn’t file any charges or anything. So I don’t know whether the aunt got her visit up there or not, but that was the beginning of that. That’s when my dad decided he didn’t like Coyote Bill and he was a no good man. He didn’t want anything to do with him so he and Coyote Bill didn’t get along too good after that. They had a few quarrels of their own.

Then a young couple named Clark (?), Guy Clark and his wife Cora Clark—they were just kids. I think she was 16 and he was 17, or maybe 15 and 16. Something like that. They’d gotten married, and they decided to go up and spend some time up in the Rattlesnake. Above Coyote Bill’s place there was a chunk of government land that was...Well, at that time all the land that wasn’t claimed was government land. But they went up there and they cut a bunch of wood that winter, and I think it was 115 cords they cut, and they decided when spring come they wanted to get out and go do something else.

GP: Now did they have any trouble getting through the gate or anything? Or didn’t they need to?

FoP: They didn’t have to get through the gate. They had gotten in through a trapper cabin that was up there, the Leighton...A guy named Leighton (?) had built a trapper cabin up there in the earlier days, and they stayed in that cabin that winter. When they came out, why, Coyote Bill told them they couldn’t sell that wood to anybody else because he wouldn’t let anybody through the gate. He offered them a dollar a cord for it. They wanted a dollar and a quarter—the going price. So they thought, Well maybe they could do better so they decided to come on to town, and they run into a couple of lumberjacks that were out of work. Spring had come and they wanted something to do, and their names were Smoot and Bird.

GP: Smoke?


GP: Oh, Smoot.

FoP: (Unintelligible) I believe but I don’t know if that was the man’s first name or not. And Bill Berg. They were guys that were lumberjacks that worked in the woods in the winter and what
they could do in the summertime. So they sold the wood to Smoot and Berg for a dollar and 15 cents a cord. Of course, told them about the gate and they’d have (unintelligible) a deal, and they said, “Well, we’ve got as much a right on that road as anybody else. We’re not paying him to get through that gate. So they took their team and their wagon, I guess it was at that time. It might have been a sled. Might have hauled it part way with a sleigh. Anyway, they went up there and started hauling that wood out. The one sat on the top of sled holding the team, and the other one sat there with his rifle. They went up to the gate and they...One of them got out and took his sledgehammer or his splitting maul and smashed the gate off...the lock off the gate. They didn’t see any sign of anybody, and that’s the way they did. They hauled their wood out of there. One sat on the loaded wood or the rig with the rifle, and the other one drive the horses. I guess they might have had some arguments with Bill but I don’t know all those details. Anyway one day they caught Bill without his rifle because Bill (unintelligible) roll boulders in the road in the road and things like that. So they caught him without his rifle so they went after him and they beat him up pretty bad.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
FoP: Anyway, they beat him up and put him in the back of his wagon. He was there with his horses, or his mules and wagon. They put him in the back of the wagon and started the mules for town. They were coming pretty fast, and one of the neighbors that lived next to, above our place, named Kravitz (?), heard the wagon coming. He saw the wagon coming but no driver so he didn’t know what had happened. He run off the road and got the mules put up. (Unintelligible) stopped him and looked in the back of the wagon, and there was old Bill laying in the back of the wagon. He was pretty bloody. So he jumped on the wagon and drove him to town and put him in the hospital and put in mules in a livery stable and walked back home. Bill was in the hospital for several weeks.

GP: Now this story that you’re telling...Did you dad tell you this or do you remember it or what?

FoP: Well my dad told most of it to me and I also heard some of the story from Ted Keen (?) and from Filcher (?) and some of the others. And some different versions of that.

GP: So Coyote Bill sounds like a mean hombre.

FoP: Yes, but I guess there was some other mean ones up there in those days because a man named Keen told me one time that Bill Berg was a meaner man than Bill—than Coyote Bill was—and he said, “If Coyote Bill hadn’t a killed him, I’d a had to.” So you can see how some of the people’s opinions were of each other in those days.

GP: Well, did he actually kill him? Later on?

FoP: At a later date, yes.

GP: Well, I don’t want to get ahead of the story.

FoP: Anyway, Bill went to the hospital and while he was in the hospital, why, his cabin burned.

GP: Just mysteriously or—

FoP: I guess. I guess that the dynamite that he had stored in his cabin got used on the road to blast some rocks to make the road more passable. So guess whether it was accidental how the cabin burned or not. Of course, I’m sure Coyote Bill figured that his cabin had been burned on purpose. So he packed a pretty big grudge after that, I imagine.

One day, oh, two or three years later, possibly four years later...Anyway, Smoot left and we didn’t hear of him anymore, but Berg stayed around in the Rattlesnake quite a bit and cut quite a lot of wood and logs and poles and things.
GP: Had they been living in the lower Rattlesnake though?

FoP: They lived in Missoula, I guess. I think Berg used to just come up and spend a lot of time up there, but I don’t think he ever moved his family out. He just cut wood and hauled it to town and poles—fence poles—and all kinds of things.

One day, Coyote Bill heard some chopping up there on what later became or was the post of the Longly place. He went up there. Coyote Bill was the kind of guy that claimed all the timber rights, all of the mineral rights, and everything above the hog’s back. Actually above Spring Gulch. So he found old Berg up there by himself cutting poles—cutting wood—and Berg didn’t have his rifle with him and Coyote Bill did. So Coyote Bill says, “I will defend my property. Get off my property.”

Berg says, “I own this property just as well as you do.” Actually didn’t belong to either one of them. Anyway Bill pulled up and shot. Hit him twice. First time, Berg threw his arm up like this and the bullet hit him in the elbow—above the elbow. Went in, followed the skin up and went across his chest and out the other arm over here somewhere, knocked him down. When he tried to get up and get ahold of his ax, Berg shot him again in the lower part of the leg or upper part of the leg, and I guess he—

GP: Now you mean, Berg didn’t have a gun did he? It was—

FoP: No, no. Bill shot Berg.

GP: Bill, yes, yes.

FoP: Well that’s the funny thing they’re both named Bill. Bischoff shot Berg, and then turned around and started down the creek and he says, “I got two more of you to get, and I’ll have a complete record,” or something. So he came down the road looking for Franklin and Fred Poe, who was my dad. Well, he didn’t run into either one of them on the way down.

So he went down, turned himself over to the sheriff, said he’d killed a man. He’d a killed three if he’d a found the other two. A lot of early-day grudges, I guess. The fact is, I guess, he and my dad had exchanged a little lead earlier a time or two because Bill Bischoff supposedly was carrying a buckshot under the skin of his neck that came from my dad’s shotgun.

GP: Your dad only used buckshot though?

FoP: Well, he didn’t have a rifle. All he had was a shotgun.
Anyway, he never run into him so that...so then they had a trial. Oh, there was quite a to-do about it. During the trial, why, the prosecuting attorney asked one of the neighbors—a Van Buren that lived up there right close to where my dad lived—and asked him, “Well you’ve been around this quite a while,” he says, “can you give us any idea how this man became...acquired the nickname ‘Coyote Bill’?”

Mr. Van Buren was an old southerner, Arkansaser, talked kind of slow, and he said, “Well, I don’t know unless it’s cause the coyote is the most cowardly animal they is.”

About that time the other lawyer jumped in and, “I object! I object!” and so forth. But that story got into the newspaper and a part of the testimony and the report. But Coyote Bill was sentenced to life in prison here in Missoula.

GP: He didn’t have anybody up there. No family? He was a loner.

FoP: He was just a bachelor, a loner. Now his story was—and he claimed that to all the people who knew him in the early days—that he had been a scout for General Custer and he dressed that way. He wore long yellow hair and buckskin. He always wore buckskin clothes. Whether he was a scout or not, there was always some doubt and so forth, because he told a lot of things, I guess, that weren’t always true.

They sentenced him to life imprisonment. His lawyer, Harry Parsons (?), was a young lawyer about that time and he was building a career, so he appealed the case to the Supreme Court over in Helena. They went over there and the Supreme Court said, Yes, there was proof of prejudice in Missoula—that the jury might have been prejudiced. They had another retrial over there, and they commuted his sentence to ten years.

GP: Was he over at Deer Lodge?

FoP: So he served time in Deer Lodge. And the Snooks (?), who later wanted to buy the Bischoff property...Maud Snook, I talked to her quite a few times. She’s told this story. She couldn’t remember, she was just a child then, but Snooks lived in Butte. He got transferred to Missoula to work on the Missoulian here instead of the Butte paper. They wanted to buy this property, so the sheriff brought William Bischoff, or Coyote Bill, over from Deer Lodge to Missoula and the Snooks met him up in the courthouse in Missoula and he signed the papers and so forth to the Snooks selling them whatever rights he had. In those days, I think if you served more than a year in the penitentiary you couldn’t have legal rights to own property.

GP: Oh, is that right?

FoP: I think the improvements or something he could sell, so he sold the Snooks the property and they moved up and started living on the place. They cut up logs and built a new house.

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Snooks had several children. I could get into the Snook deal too, but anyway this William Bischoff, or Coyote Bill, served his six and half years, or something like that. I think that’s about what you serve out of ten as your rulebook as you got off a little early for (unintelligible) and so forth. Well he came back to Missoula and he went up to Snooks place and went up there and visited with her mother, or Maud’s mother, Mrs. Snook was there and a couple of the boys. I can remember Maud telling me about how he had a bag of peanuts. He sat there and shelled the peanuts and threw the shells on the floor and ate peanuts while they were talking and discussing maybe some further details on buying the property and so forth. Then he was around Missoula for a short time and found out that he didn’t have very many friends in Missoula and so forth, so he left here and went to the reservation up by Dixon. He started mining and prospecting and so forth down there. I haven’t gotten a chance to go down to Thompson Falls and research the records there, but the best information that I have on it is that he thought he had found a pretty good strike of gold down on Magpie Creek, just a little bit west of Dixon. He went to Thompson Falls to file a claim. He did not have all of the information you needed. Whether is was a land description or what, I don’t know, but he didn’t have all the information he needed to file a claim so he left and was going back home. They used to travel by train in those days, and told the clerk, he said, “I’ll get this information, and I’ll be back in a day or two and finish plotting this claim,” because he thought he had something pretty good.

Well, he didn’t come back. After a few days, the clerk down there in the courthouse got a hold of the sheriff up at Dixon and asked him if he’d go up and look into it and investigate because he says, “I’m sure something must have happened because he never come back and finished filing his claim.” The sheriff took a man or two with him, and they went up looking and they found Bischoff face down in this little Magpie Creek, only about six inches of water in it or so. I’m not sure. I’ve heard the story that his throat was cut, and I’ve heard the story that it wasn’t. Anyway they found dead in Magpie Creek in two inches of water so—

GP: They think it was foul play?

FoP: Some people think it was probably foul play, or maybe they had found out he did really have a gold strike and they wanted to get his gold claim or what. I don’t know. But that’s about the last record there is of him. Now, he was involved in several deals up the Rattlesnake. There was a mine over by the hog back that he claimed the minerals rights and told them they have to give him a share of it if they want to continue to mine there.

The story was that he even (unintelligible) trees and shot off bricks out their chimney and so forth. Well whether that had any effect on them abandoning their mine and leaving, I don’t know. Anyway, I remember one of the neighbors, this Ed Keen, told me that Berg’s a meaner man than Bill, Bill Bischoff, and he said, “If somebody hadn’t a killed Berg, why, he’d a had to,” or something to that point.

Forrest Poe and Flossie Poe Interview, OH 196-006, 007 Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
GP: Sounds like they took real estate matters seriously and still were taking the law into their own hands.

FoP: Well, I think that one of main troubles was probably William Bischoff and two or three of the other early-day guys. They made their own law and tried to enforce it.

GP: Especially if he had no real claim to the land himself, I wonder how he ever settled that?

FoP: Well he thought that like some of the other early-day people, they figured if I went up and settled on that and built a cabin then it was my land and I’ll defend it for whatever I need to. But most of them took in a little more territory than what they should have.

GP: It sounds as if when he disposed of it, it was only the effects on the property not the property itself, so it would be interesting to know how those Snooks got a hold of it if Bischoff didn’t have title to it in the first place.

FoP: Yes, well, I don’t know exactly. I imagine that maybe there are some records, possibly records at the courthouse, that you could trace that land back and find out if there was filings on it or if it was purchased and who it was purchased by.

GP: Sure. Well, it would be interesting to know, but all those things take time, don’t they?

FoP: Yes.

GP: Are there other things now that you want to add, Forrest?

FoP: Well, there’s one more little deal that came along that I knew a little more about in later years. In year of 1929...it would have been the fall of 1929 and the spring or early winter of 1930, after I had finished high school and had a lot of energy and not too much to do, I decided to do some trapping. Pick up a few dollars that way. So I started trapping in the upper Rattlesnake and up by the lakes and so forth. So during hunting season I went up and stocked one or two of the cabins up there with some provisions and some bedding. I killed a deer and took a quarter venison to each one of the cabins—the one up in the Burnt Flats in the upper part and then one up the Rattlesnake lakes—during hunting season. Then this man named—I think his first name was Ed but I’m not sure. His name was McKay. He showed up in the area and began to go up in there quite a bit, and I didn’t know anything about him. I just heard about him. So he went up and took up this cabin known as the Parker Cabin and started trapping up there, and I didn’t want to...I tried to avoid him as much as I could. I didn’t want to run into him because I was trapping up there too and...Oh, I met the man a time or two, but I know that he was dealing mostly through Doc Mercer. The Mercer’s were quite prominent in Missoula at one time.
GP: Now what were you trapping?

FoP: Oh, martin, muskrat, minx, beaver. He was trapping about the same thing. Well, as I say, when I started up there I didn’t know he was coming. He came up after I got my traps set out, and he moved in. I don’t suppose he knew I was up there, but he got acquainted with quite a few people on the...up the valley and I know he dealt a lot with Doc Mercer and Doc Mercer’s hotel. He started trapping his martin way early before they got prime, and he sold...I know Doc Mercer showed me some of the hides that McKay brought to him. They weren’t prime yet, and he bought the martin hides for about ten dollars apiece, and they probably would have brought twenty-five or thirty—

GP: If he’d waited.

FoP: —if he’d waited a little longer. Well, after a few trips, why, I found out he was up there and what his plans were and so forth. One night I was coming down. It was after dark, and I’d come down the trail a little late and I...It was just dark enough I had to look up in the air some to see an opening in the trees to tell where the trail was, and my foot hit something soft in the trail. So there was a grunt that came out of it, and I stopped to see what it was and my cousin, Edgar Poe, and this McKay...He had recruited my cousin to go up with him and trap with him because he said he didn’t like to be, to live up there alone. So my cousin was stooped over trying to start a fire in the trail, and just before he had struck the match that I hit him with my foot.

GP: Must have been pretty dark.

FP: Yes, it was pretty dark. It was a cloudy night, and it was spitting a little bit of snow. They had started up there from the end of the road. See, you get to what they called the Franklin Ranger Station—or the place where Franklin used to live—you could drive to there and then you...from there on up you had to walk. It was about seven miles of trail up to Franklin, or to the Parker cabin. Well, they’d made it for about a mile, and McKay had a gallon of whiskey—moonshine—with him. That was back in the Prohibition days. He had some moonshine with him. So he wanted to stop and rest awhile and maybe stay all night. That was probably less than a mile above the end of the road where they’d started.

He had different philosophy than me. I wouldn’t have started out that time of night. Anyway they got the fire started, and I stood there and talked to them a little bit. That’s the first time I met McKay and talked to him, and he tried his best to get me to turn around and go back up with them, up to his cabin. Oh, he told me about the buck deer he’d killed and had hanging up behind the cabin, which I knew all about. I’d been up past his cabin during the day while I was up there and seen that deer hanging there. Oh, yes, we’ll cut off steaks this thick, and we’ll eat steaks and so forth. He did lots of talking, but he never talked any about his past. Nobody knew what his past was. He was very careful about that.

Forrest Poe and Flossie Poe Interview, OH 196-006, 007 Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
GP: Or where he came from or anything?

Fop: Yes. So they talked awhile and I said, well, I had to get on down the road. I remember in particular about it because that was the night that the first talking movie came to Missoula, and my brother came up after he got, they got through milking at home. My dad and my brother were there at home taking care of the cows and milking, and I had told him I’d seen him at the end of the road about a certain time. Well, I was a little late getting there because I stopped and talked to these guys, and I’d run into more problems than I figured during the day. Had to stop and skin some animals and so forth, so I came on down and my brother met me. Was waiting for me at the end of the road, and we came on home. Then he and I went down and listened to the first talking movie in Missoula, the (unintelligible) Theater before...That was the first theater they tried them out on.

GP: Do you happen to remember the name of the movie?

FoP: No, I don’t. I just remember they had added sound, and it was a talking movie. Always up front (unintelligible) they had silent movies. Some cowboy western, but I can’t remember about that.

That was the first time I met Ed McKay. Then as time when along I met him two or three different times, and so I’m on the road going up or meet him on the trail or something, but I kind of tried to avoid meeting him much because I could see there was some resentment between he and I that we were both trapping the same territory and so forth. So pretty soon I decided I would leave that part down there, and I would start just trapping the highline. So I started my trap line up in the highline over at what they call Sheep Mountain and the head of Johnson Creek, Marshall Creek, Johnson Creek, Gold Creek and so forth and then also over in the other area by the Rattlesnake lakes. McKay wasn’t trapping up at the lakes. He was just trapping the valley floor in the upper end. So I pulled out and left that for him.

As I say, my cousin went up and was involved with him, helped him with his trapping for a while. Later on, my cousin quit going up with him anymore, and what he told me was that Mr. McKay was very moody when he’d get sober. He would wake up in the night lots of times talking in his sleep. My cousin said what scared him off was he woke up one night, and there was Ed McKay standing over him with his hand ax, questioning and wanting to know what he’d said in his sleep. He worried a lot about what he might say in his sleep. So that scared my cousin out, and he wouldn’t go up and stay with him anymore. So it went on and about...I think it was just a little after Christmas, between Christmas and New Year’s, I was up at the Rattlesnake lakes setting my traps, and I came down on the ridges were I could look back down into the valley floor—the Burnt Flats up there and I could look down—right straight down into floor at this Parker cabin and there was no smoke coming out of it. No sign of tracks around it, and it
had been three or four weeks since we...Oh, it hadn’t been that long. It had been a while since there’d been any big snow. There was a real cold winter, really cold.

GP: Is that 1929? You were still in high school?

FoP: Well, it would have been in the winter of 1929 and 1930, and this was just about the week before, between Christmas and New Year’s. It would have been the end of 1929. But no tracks around, no smoke coming out of the stove pipe or anything, so I came...was tempted to drop down and come out that way but I figured, well, I hadn’t locked up the company cabin—Montana Power Company cabin—that I was staying in at the lake. I hadn’t locked up the cabin or anything, so I had to go back and do that. Then I came home.

The next day I walked up to my uncle’s place and talked to him and my cousin, and I told them that I was down there and I couldn’t see any sign of tracks and I thought that maybe McKay...aybe they should look in on him if they wanted to. So they said would, and they went up a day or two later—snowshoed up to his place—and he was dead in bed.

But there was a little episode before that. About the first of December or sometime around there, he had talked a man who had just recovered, was recovering from some kind of an operation at the hospital, he had talked him into getting a pair of snowshoes and coming up with him. He says, “Come up to cabin and stay with me while I’m trapping.” He says, “You can stay in the cabin and do cooking or whatever you feel like,” and he said, “I’ll tend the trap line, and you can just live on venison steaks and recuperate.”

Well, Ed McKay was a pretty husky man was himself. The man coming out of the hospital wasn’t in shape to take the trip up there on snowshoes, seven or more miles when he wasn’t used to it. So he got awful tired going up and McKay, they got to within about a mile of where the cabin was, and the guy was getting so tired he sat down in the snow to rest. McKay says, “Don’t sit too long you’ll get stiff, and you’ll get too cold.” Well, it was cold anyway. It was down below zero, and so McKay says, “I’ll go on up to the cabin. You can’t help but find it. Just follow the trail—my snowshoe trail—right up there.” So he went on up to the cabin and started a fire and melted some snow and got some water on to heat, and McKay didn’t...or Alan didn’t show up so McKay went back down to meet him. He still found him sitting in the snow in the same place. He just got tired, and he wouldn’t get up and go on. So he got him up and got him to go on up to the cabin. By the time he got to the cabin, or I suppose while he was still sitting in the snow, why, his feet became numb and his feet were frozen.

So he got him to the cabin, and he took him in and rubbed snow on his feet to try and get the frost out. Then he soaked his feet in cold water and then hot water and so forth, and that night his feet began to swell and get bigger and bigger. So he came out and came down to the, what we call the Grigg’s place (?), he found at that time it was the last place with anybody living. That’s right close to the Stubb (?) place there, and made arrangements for them to come up
with their horses the next day and see if they could get Alan out. Of course, they could use the sled up to the end of the road, and then they took the horses and led them on up. The snow was getting pretty deep in by the first of December. So they got up away and they took...They took the horses, and they left the harness right on them and thought maybe the guy could ride out on one of the horses. Well, the snow was getting fairly deep but not awful deep yet, so they went on up. There was no way he could sit on a horse. His feet were—

GP: He probably had gangrene by that time.

FoP: So they took a piece of canvas they had and made a kind of a rope bed or sled deal with it with some poles. They hooked that on behind one of the horses, and they dragged Alan out. He was sitting on this, or laying on it. Anyway they dragged the canvas out with him on it, and it was a government trail there so (unintelligible). They brought him out and got him down, put him on the sled. He tried his best to talk McKay into coming on out. He said, “You come on out,” he said, “Forget about those traps up there. No place for a man to be alone,” and so forth.

McKay says, “Oh, I’m tough and hardy. I’ll make it. You just take care of yourself.” So they got...brought him down as far as they...with a sled until where they could get a car. Somebody came up from town. I don’t know whether the sheriff or who it was came up from town and met them with a car, and put Alan in the car and took him down to the hospital. They had to amputate both of his feet. I don’t know if they took the complete foot off or just back to the ankle. I know he lost all of his toes. I never did see the man. I just knew him by story.

GP: You heard the story. Were there telephones up there at the time?

FoP: At my uncle’s place, which was the next place above mine, there was a telephone. The other telephone was down at the Rattlesnake Dam, which was about four miles from Missoula. That’s the only two telephones. Because, you see, the only telephone was a Forest Service telephone line, and they had one at the dam because Montana Power probably paid some of the cost of it and the Rattlesnake Dam. Then my uncle worked for the Forest Service for quite a few years so he had a phone. Those the only two phones they ever had in the Rattlesnake. The next closest phone was Goldfrey (?) and Seeley Lake.

GP: Did you have more notes there and things you wanted to add now, Forrest?

FoP: Not very much.

GP: Those are both very interesting people, that McKay and that Coyote Bill and the others that you mentioned too.

FoP: About the only thing that I can say, I went up and helped bring McKay’s body out.
GP: Nobody ever found out what his background was or his past?

FoP: Yes, we did. Found out also what caused his problem. He was using his hand ax to blaze trails or something, and the ax had evidently slipped and cut him on the inside—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
Forrest Poe: —made it back to the cabin and didn’t stop to build a fire, and he was probably getting weak from the loss of blood and cold, so he just crawled into bed and that’s where we found him. Froze stiff in bed, and the door wasn’t all the way shut. He must have been getting in pretty bad shape getting to the cabin, but he was no problem to bring out because we just took three of us on a rope and tied him up in canvas and slid him down the trail.

Gladys Peterson: But I mean, you say you always thought he had something in his past that he never revealed. You never did find that out did you?

FoP: About a year later, a federal marshal came through Missoula and was asking questions and trying to track down a guy that was using that name. So he talked to my dad and my dad said, “Well, yes my son knew an Ed McKay that was doing some trapping in the Rattlesnake.” So this marshal came over and talked to me and took what information he could about size and some of the stories. They came to the conclusion that he was the guy that was serving time in McNeil Island prison in Washington for counterfeiting money, and he escaped. They traced him to Missoula, and they had information that he had spent some time in the Rattlesnake and that’s where...He wrote it up the report that that was the man, anyway, so we figured that was his past and that’s why he was so quiet about his past because normally he was a talkative guy, especially when you get a little whiskey in him.

GP: How did that make you feel when you found out he had a record?

FoP: Well, I didn’t feel too bad because I never was too well associated with him. I had met him two or three times down the trail and talked to him, and I met him up there that night when he was drunk and doing a lot of talking and so forth. I met him in town one time and that’s how it looked, but I never spent a night in the cabin with him or associated with him that way so I never had anything to fear. After my cousin told me about how he used to wake up once awhile in the night and find him over standing over his bed with a hand ax wanting to know what he heard, that would kind of shake anybody up.

GP: I don’t remember that much was said about your uncle when we talked before, Forrest. Did he sell his property about the same time as your dad did?

FoP: Yes. I think that possibly the year before. I’m not sure. The year of 1935 and ’36 Montana Power bought all of that private land of up there that they could buy. Some of them sold in 1935, and I believe my uncle sold in 1935.

GP: I can’t remember this far back to the beginning of those earlier tapes that we made. Did you say your uncle came out when your dad did?
FoP: Well my uncle came out after my dad did, sometime in the...about 1897. I know he was here in the year of 1987.

GP: Eighteen ninety-seven.

FoP: He and my dad worked together up on Mount Jumbo here, quarrying rock to build the Donahue Building. Then I think my uncle went back over by Great Falls and worked along Great Falls because he knew Charlie Russell.

GP: Oh, what was your uncle’s name?

FoP: Mark.

GP: Mark?

FoP: Mark Poe. Mark H.

GP: He knew Charlie Russell?

FoP: Yes, because he worked on one of the places over there where Russell was working and doing some painting. They got to know each other.

GP: He had one son, is that right?

FoP: My uncle had five children altogether. He had one son. The oldest child was a son born in 1901. Now, my uncle got married in 1900, I think it was, over at White Sulphur Springs in the same courthouse that my wife and I were married in 31 years later.

GP: There must have been a reason. Why was White Sulphur Springs so popular?

FoP: I don’t know. He was over there, and he got a job working on a sheep ranch, working as a packer on a sheep ranch. I never heard too much of the details, but I think probably that’s where he met my aunt because she was, I believe, cooking on that ranch for the hired hands. I think they just got together there, and that’s where they got married. Then after they were married a short time they went back home to Minnesota. They lived there for several, oh, three or four years or something like that. I think the three oldest children were born in Minnesota and then they came back out to Missoula. They moved back up the Rattlesnake, and they first lived in the Hogan place, which is below the hog back down over the hill, in a little old wood chopper cabin, a cabin there. They lived there for about a year or two, and then cold and didn’t get any sunshine in the wintertime so then they got a piece of the...got a piece of ground up there. My grandad, I think, bought them a little piece of ground, 40 acres up on top of the hill. So they moved up out of the creek bottom and up there on the hill and built a new house. I
don’t remember the house too well, but I think it was a pretty nice house. Then he went
together in with Chapman, and between the two of them my uncle did most of the work and
Chapman was an old man at that time—an old Civil War veteran. They went together and
developed a spring that came out of the mountain right up close to where that mine was, and
they took...brought the water around in a flume and then put it into a pipe, buried it. They hired
Hogan to dig this ditch and bury the water pipe down to the Chapman place. Then from there
they piped it on down to my uncle’s place, which was not very far away. The two of them got
their water from that spring up there.

GP: So did he stay there and farm as just as pretty much like your dad did?

FoP: He didn’t do much farming. When the Forest Service came into being, in about 1907 or
1908, why, then he went to work for the Forest Service. He worked for the Forest Service in the
summertime, and then he cut wood and different things like that. He always had a cow or two
for their own milk and chickens and some horses and whatever odd jobs he could find. That
went on. Then I think it was about 1912 or may it have been later than that...might have been
1913 or 1914, they moved further up the Rattlesnake and took over the Cummin’s place (?).
The Cummin’s place had formerly been owned by the Crepps (?) family, and then Crepps sold
out and went to town. Cummins took it over, and they lived there until about 1914 or 1915.
Then they sold the property to my uncle. So they moved up there, and my dad bought their
place from them down below the hog’s back and had it for a while. He resold it again to
somebody else named Polshiver (?). They had it for a year or two, and then they moved out and
then it just became abandoned.

GP: Now you said your grandfather bought that place for your uncle. Your grandfather wasn’t
out here, was he?

FoP: No, my grandfather still lived back in Minnesota. My Grandfather and Grandmother Poe
both lived in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, where Mark and my dad and their three sisters came
from. Grandpa was always a little handy source when someone was short on money.

GP: Oh, I see. Were you close to your cousins at all as you were growing up?

FoP: In younger years, yes. Up until about 1917 we were real...visited back and forth and was
real frequent and spent a lot of time together—my folks and us kids and them and their kids.
Then when they had the rift over the school and my uncle driving the school route. My uncle
didn’t want to have a school up there because he liked the job of hauling the kids to town
school, and my folks took the other side of the fence. So they got into some disagreements, and
they never were very friendly after that.

FP: Oh, I see. Did your cousin stay around here?
FoP: He stayed and worked until he was about 20 or 21, 22 years old. He worked for the Forest Service quite a bit. Then he got so in the wintertime he could go over and work in the Butte mines during the winter and then work for the Forest Service in the summer. Then he eventually he went back east and went to work for the Pontiac car division of General Motors in Flint, Michigan, and worked for them for quite a few years and became a foreman of some sort.

GP: And the sisters, did they stay around here?

FoP: The two sisters stayed here in Missoula, and the youngest one of those two, Bernice or Bernis is the way she was named...I think it was 1918 or 1919, no, I guess it was later than that about 1920. She was working in town in a restaurant, and she met a young fellow that had come back from the service. He was going to school on the G.I. Bill, going to University, and she and him got acquainted. Then they got married and he graduated from school in forestry, so he had to—like most young fellows that start out—to be a ranger or something. I don’t know, serve in whatever district they put him, so they moved around to several different ranger stations. I know they went over and lived at Three Forks, Montana, one year. Then he wound up at Priest River, Idaho, or Priest Lake, Idaho.

GP: What about the other girl?

FoP: The other girl stayed here and she worked out some, but mostly she stayed home and she got acquainted with a guy named Pringle—Bill Pringle. They went together for a while, and then they got married and she had one son. There were two more kids younger than the two girls. There was Edgar, the second boy. He was born in 1911, I believe. He lived with his folks up in the Rattlesnake until they sold out, and then he lived with them downtown for a while. He got to going on the alcohol route. After a while, he eventually committed suicide.

The youngest girl, Gale, she got out on her own and went out after they moved to town and went to work for Ernie Eishem (?), the Paramount Cleaners, I believe it’s called, over on Brooks Street. She worked for there for years and when Eishem finally decided he wanted to get out, why, she bought his interest. Then she got married to a guy named Stickley (?), Gordon Stickley. Then later Gordon died, and she was alone for quite a while. She ran the business, and then when she was about 62 years old, why, she met another man named Peterson so she and Mr. Peterson got married. He was a retired printer from the printer’s union in Butte. He had worked on the papers over there, and then he came to Missoula and got acquainted with her. So they got married. When she turned 65, he was a little younger than her, she turned the cleaning business over to him and about two years later or three, she died of cancer.

GP: I see. Well, you’ve certainly filled us in on a lot more information today, Forrest. I was wondering, has there ever been a chart or map drawn up showing who lived in all those houses and the succession, you know, when a house was sold who got it later? Has that ever been done and studied?

Forrest Poe and Flossie Poe Interview, OH 196-006, 007 Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
FoP: I don’t think so. I have a map or two of the Rattlesnake that says it became a recreation and wilderness area, but—

GP: A historic map of the homes up there has never been done?

FoP: I don’t think so. I’ve thought about trying to put it together, but there again I would need to go to the courthouse and research some records to put my memory of what took place before I was old enough to know, I wouldn’t want to guarantee the accuracy of it.

GP: Well, this has certainly been enlightening once more, and unless you...Can you think of some more things?

FoP: The First settler in the Spring Gulch area above the Evinger (?) place...Evinger filed the first water rights in Spring Gulch in 1882, and the first place above them was owned by a man named George Duncan (?), and I think he filed a water right about 1889 but I’m not real sure about that.

GP: Just as a matter of interest, are there any Evingers still around here?

FoP: No. As far as I know there are no Evingers still alive.

GP: Are there descendants of any of those families that you grew up with?

FoP: There’s possibly one of the Snook boys, might possibly be alive, and some of the great grandchildren of one of the Snook girls, a Mrs. Downs (?), might be still alive.

Now, the Snook family had...the oldest boy’s name was Ben, and then he had two brothers, Paul and Glen. They had a sister named Maude. She had a nickname of Doll or Doll-doll. Then there was a younger boy named Fred that lived with them long enough to...I think he committed suicide about a year before that property was sold in the Rattlesnake. His folks sold their place to Wheelers, and Wheelers sold to the Montana Power Company. That’s the (unintelligible) place.

The Greek place, they called it, was...Pete Brown was the true owner. He was a Greek man. His real name was Peter Datsopoulos. He was the uncle of the lawyer, Milton Datsopoulos. He sold his place to the Montana Power Company in the same year, either ‘35 or ‘36, and his cousins, the Papis’s, (?) which Maude Snook married John Papis, and they lived down on the old George Frazier place right by the creek below Pete Datsopoulos’ place. They were there a year or two, and then they moved to Missoula because that was too rough of a life. They had some tragedies, lost their cow and their house burned—cabin burned (unintelligible)—and so forth.
Then the next place down was the Longly place, and I've told you about what happened with that.

Then the next place down was the Ed Keen place. He was an orphan boy that grew up, worked for the railroad some, and then wanted to get on his own so he went up there and took up that place right there at the mouth of Pilcher Creek. Later, after the survey came through, he filed on a 160 acres and got a homestead. That was in Section 20 so it wasn’t railroad line. Later, he bought three sections of railroad land that was still there. Then the next place was the Pilcher place which later...I think Pilcher died about 1912 or something like that, ‘13, and a man named James T. Bolen (?) moved up and took over the Pilcher place. Bought it from the estate or whatever there was left that handled it. I can remember when he moved up there, that was in February now. I believe that was 1914, I’m not sure.

Then the next place down was the Crepps, Cummins and Mark Poe place where my uncle lived last, and he sold to the Montana Power Company. Then the next place down was the Fred Poe place, and my dad went out there in 1900 and he had it until he went east. Then my brother and I run it for a while. I had it when Floss and I got married. Then when the Power Company was buying that land in 1936, why, he sold to the Montana Power Company. He owned the land, but I sold the other stuff to the people for something to live on because that’s when I got my arm hurt and I had something.

Then down below the hog’s back, there was the Lowman (?) place which he changed hands several times, and the Chapman place that burned in the 1919 fire, the Mark Poe place where he lived earlier. That also burned in the 1919 fire. So did the Hogan place where Mark Poe and his family first lived. Then you come on down and there was the Erin (?) place and the Erin...after they moved nobody lived on that that I know of. It burned in the 1919 fire (unintelligible) and on down you come to the Orr (?) property, which had originally been the Neely (?) property and they had tried to farm in there. Then they gave it up and left, and a real estate man named Obious Orr (?) became the owner of it. I don’t know there was an owner in between or not. He used to rent that property a lot, and I know the Orr cabin...different teachers that lived up there in the Orr cabins and taught the Rattlesnake school.

Then that brings down you down to Spring Gulch. Up Spring Gulch there was the Duncan (?) place, the Basser (?) place. I know both were two of the very earliest day settlers up there, and they heard there was the Laughey (?) family moved up there about 1919 or 1920. It was after the fire. No, John Laughy moved up there before the fire because they saved their house when the fire came, but they lost their barn and their chicken house. They rebuilt that. They stayed there for two years, and then they sold out and moved up the Blackfoot. Louis Laughy had taken up a little claim down in there just below John Laughy, and he only stayed a year or two and then he gave that up and moved up the Bitterroot to Mountain Pass Creek. He was up there until the 1950s, I guess.

Forrest Poe and Flossie Poe Interview, OH 196-006, 007 Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
Then, of course, the Evinger place, which was right up the Spring Gulch. In fact, this Evinger owned part of, the lower part of Spring Gulch—Ray Gulch or Evinger Gulch, it was called—and his land came down as far as Wood’s Gulch. Then Wood’s ranch was the one immediately (unintelligible) from Missoula from Wood Gulch. Then on down there was the Fost (?) ranches, on each side of the Rattlesnake. Originally the Otto Fost (?) ranch on the west side of the Rattlesnake had been owned by a man named Federson (?). He filed one of the first water rights, and the water company bought him out to buy his water rights. Whether they bought from him for sure or whether they bought (unintelligible), I’m not sure.

GP: Yes, I think you mentioned that earlier.

FoP: Then there was the Hamilton Ranch, which was a smaller dairy ranch and several small ones, but that’s about the extent of that stuff. That takes you down to about the length of the school. From there on down, I don’t know much about it.

GP: Sure. Well that’s certainly good information to have, and you have a wonderful memory, too. So why don’t we just stop now, and I’ll pick up with Flossie who has remembered some things too. Thanks again, Forrest.

Now we’re going to switch back to Flossie Poe who has some more remembrances of her childhood and her early life. Flossie, you were telling me not very long ago about some things that happened back in eastern Montana. Would you like to add?

Flossie Poe: Well, quite a few things. When I was a child, playing and things like that, and remember when the thrashers would come through. They always helped one another.

GP: Let’s get this setting again, now, was it near Lambert where your folks lived?

FIP: Well, Enid was the closest place. Enid. I don’t know if it even exists anymore. And then the Lambert was a little bigger town.

GP: And that’s where you were born? On your folk’s property?

FIP: Well, yes. At Gerard.

GP: Gerard. Now we’re really narrowing this down, aren’t we?

FIP: Like I was saying, the thrashers would come through every year, and the women did the cooking and the men always ate first and then the children ate later. So my brothers and I used to go out, and we’d wait until the men went in and then we would go out and crawl through the thrashing machine—all through the tubes up through the blades. And what a silly thing to do.
GP: Your brothers were older than you, too. They should have known how dangerous it was.

FIP: They did, but they thought we’d get out in time before the men came out. But if they’d gotten through with their dinner earlier, it’d been terrible.

GP: Oh yes.

FIP: But we used to do all kinds of silly things like that up there. We used to go out in the Badlands, and it’d be up high and find a hole, and we’d think we would come out down below, so we’d pick up some dirt or something and roll down through there, see if it came out the bottom. Well, then we’d secretly go back down through there.

GP: Oh my. You never got stuck, though?

FIP: No. Just think of the snakes, lots of rattlesnakes. So it was a lot of very silly things we used to do.

GP: This was pretty close to the North Dakota line, wasn’t it?

FIP: Yes.

GP: Those Badlands.

FIP: Some of the Badlands come into Montana.

GP: I know. I’ve been over, spent a little time in Glendive, and I know they have them just east of Glendive there.

FIP: They are beautiful.

GP: Yes, they are.

FIP: They have different colors. There’s blues and pinks and they are really pretty, but what a dangerous thing we used to do. My mother, she (unintelligible) went white hair, right away if she’d known what we were doing.

GP: She never knew that though?

FIP: Oh, no. Not until we were older, and we told her. She’s (unintelligible).
I remember one time being out in the yard. We had a roof house built purposely for a storm, a real bad storm, because we used to have sometimes, what they called, like a cyclone—

GP: A tornado.

FIP: —tornado. So we built a roof house, and I was out in the yard, and I came back in and I said to my father, “There’s some animal out there. They’re beautiful.”

He said, “What do you mean they’re pretty?”

I said, “Well, they’re real shiny.” I said, “They shine.”

He said to my mother, “Oh my heavens, silver fox.” So he jumped up. There were two of them. He went out, evidently, (unintelligible) went into the house and scared them away because they were gone. But I can still remember seeing those animals. They were beautiful. They just shined. They were really pretty. So I remember those things.

Then wolves. We had lots of wolves. I remember one time, in the winter time. We were coming in from, I don’t know, visiting neighbors or town or what, but we were all in the sled, and these wolves followed us out a distance on each side of the sled. Followed us all within a short ways of home. We were a little uneasy. I know my parents were. We could tell they were, and we were afraid.

I can always remember the breaking and branding time too. All the horses and the cattle and big corrals, and neighbors would come in. They’d brand, and then they’d break the horses and that was all interesting.

I remember one time we had one horse that we brought in, and he just bailed over that fence. Just came to the fence and just...I don’t know how he could ever get over it, but he did. He’s the only one of the bunch that bailed over the fence. All that was interesting on the ranch too.

GP: When you were a little girl?

FIP: Yes. I was a little girl.

GP: Because you weren’t very old when you moved from there were you?

FIP: Oh, seven. Well, about seven and a half. Then I can remember one other time that we had a prairie fire. Have you ever seen a prairie fire?

GP: No, I haven’t. Only pictures.
FIP: It’s very frightening.

GP: I bet.

FIP: Oh, if there’s the least little breeze, it just really travels.

GP: And it really blow over in that country, doesn’t it?

FIP: Oh, yes. All the men in the neighborhood were out fighting on horses with blankets or tarps or anything else you could hold to break the fire, to make a fire line. I can remember it made the strangest noise. It sounded like someone crying—that burning. My mother, she told us that was the sagebrush, the grass. It was crying because it was being burned.

GP: Sounds like an Indian story, doesn’t it?

FIP: Well it was, it really was very...Well, I can’t explain it unless you’ve ever heard it.

GP: Did it ever get close to the homes or destroy some of the homes?

FIP: No, but it destroyed some of the fields.

GP: The crops?

FIP: The crops because it really travels.

GP: I can imagine with the winds that they have over there.

FIP: I can remember that’s why going up over the (unintelligible), you know, it was frightening.

Oh, I was talking about the thrasher machine. They used to fire the thrashing with straw. Sometimes, where coal was close they used coal, but a lot of the times there, you know...because it was all dry land.

GP: Must have taken a lot of straw to keep those things going.

FoP: They had lots of straw.

FIP: Yes, you had lots of straw (unintelligible) of the thrashing. They had a whistle...At dinner time, they’d blow the whistle, and it would just break your eardrums.

FoP: Were you able to get over to the town of Grangeville, Idaho?
GP: No, I don’t.

FoP: They have a little thrashing machine mounted...all painted up and fixed up and and mounted right on this end of town, and it was a straw burner.

GP: Oh, well, that would be nice to see sometime.

FIP: We have a picture of it somewhere.

Now, I made a mistake on the tape before. I told you that the doctor’s name was Allard (?) but I think we corrected that no, it wasn’t. The doctor’s name that brought me into the world was Doctor Armour.


FIP: Yes, Doctor Armour. Later, he was the doctor at the mission, up at the mission.

GP: Oh, Saint Ignatius?

FIP: Saint Ignatius.

GP: It’s interesting that he came so far west, isn’t it?

FIP: Well, we came this far west. (laughs)

GP: By a roundabout way you came.

FIP: That’s right, a roundabout way. But he was up there for quite—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]
FIP: —down here there’s a correction in the other one. We had made the remark that all the children were born in Missoula (unintelligible) in Wyoming. Well, I was mistaken. I had one brother that was born in Laurel, Montana.

GP: Laurel. That was after you took the train from Greybull to Billings and you lived there for a while. Went to school there, didn’t you?

FIP: Yes, and then one of my...two of my sisters were born in Billings, but my brother was born in Laurel.

GP: Well, with...did you say 11 in your family or ten?

FIP: Ten.

GP: Ten, it’s hard to keep track of all that, isn’t it? I think you did a fine job.

FIP: I was the oldest girl. So I was a mother by the time I was...Well, like my sister’s four years younger than I am, by the time I was seven years old I was taking care of younger children. I was there to take care of the younger children.

FoP: You want to talk about your dad running a crew on the gas line when they put the gas line in?

FIP: Yes. In Billings he was working for the gas line and he was a foreman for putting in a gas line from Billings to (unintelligible), I think it was. My mother did the cooking on line, and Dad had taken a truck with rubber tires and everything and put a flatbed on it and built a kitchen—a kitchen and an eating place for the men. She did all the cooking and followed the gas line. Well, all of us were kids and we (unintelligible) out all summer. See, she had (unintelligible). That was before Tommy was born, so let’s see...I have to count them on my fingers. It was Ernie (?) and Chet and myself and Maddie and Richie (unintelligible) so that was six.

GP: So six traveled. Well, that wasn’t the first time that your dad made provisions so you could travel.

FIP: We traveled, we stayed in a tent, of course. For us, the children, it was a ball. You know, we had lots of fun.

GP: Your mother must have been a very good sport.
FIP: I would say yes. When I look back at my poor mother, what she went through sometimes I wonder how she ever made it.

Then of course then we all summer...about most of the time in summer putting that gas...line through then we went back to Billings. Again, we lived in a tent and then we went from Billings to Laurel.

GP: Could I ask you a question before you go on? About what year would this have been when they put that gas line in?

FIP: Tommy, let’s see, Tommy was born in—

FIP: [Nineteen] twenty-six.

GP: So when you went back after the gas line experience, was it to Billings then?

FIP: No. We were in the tent for a while in Billings, yes. In Billings for a short time.

GP: Was this in a park or Forest Service land?

FIP: No. We were down by the river. We slept in a tent, and my dad made around the campfire and where we cooked he put the (unintelligible)...put sticks in the rock and put camp stuff in (unintelligible).

GP: This was during the summer?

FIP: Yes. It was during the summer. We were there, oh I don’t know, two, three weeks maybe. Then we left there and we went to Laurel, and that’s when he worked for the telephone company for a short time.

GP: And you lived in Laurel?

FIP: Yes. For a short time, not too long because we left the next fall, I think it was, and we came to start up in Missoula.

GP: Thinking you were going to go to California, right?

FIP: Yes. We were supposed to be on our way to California but Missoula is as far as we got.
GP: Did you know anybody or did they know anybody at all in Missoula?

FIP: I don’t think so. I don’t remember.

GP: They just decided that Missoula was the place.

FIP: I guess my dad—

FoP: Got stranded here and stayed a while and got to working.

FIP: I guess, my dad got the wanderitis out of his system or something. As I’ve told you before, we lived out on the flat in a tent.

GP: Your mother, I’m just amazed at her because by this time it sounds like you must have had practically all of the ten children.

FIP: Well, let’s see. At that time Tommy was born so we had, yes, we had two more. We had eight.

GP: You had eight children?

FIP: Eight children.

GP: Today that just sounds almost impossible when you think of the bathroom facilities needed for eight children and two adults. I don’t know how in the world you managed.

FIP: It was cold when we were out in the tent out here on the flat.

GP: The nights would be cold, wouldn’t they?

FIP: Oh, it was cold because it was...Oh, we moved up to Miller Creek sometime before Christmas so it may have been in November.

GP: You had a house up in Miller Creek or a cabin or something?

FIP: Well, no. We rented a house.

GP: A house.

FIP: On up above the house was where my dad worked for a sawmill.

GP: Oh, I see.
FIP: He worked there at the mill, and we walked to school.

GP: There was a school in Miller Creek. Did you go that school?

FIP: Yes, I did.

GP: You could have mentioned that on the other tape. I don’t remember.

FIP: We walked three miles to school.

GP: You walked three miles there, and you walked three miles home.

FIP: That’s right. Our teacher was Nellie Hunton (?).

GP: Nellie Hunton. Interesting.

FIP: I don’t think so. I think she’s...I’m not sure if either...are any of the boys still living?

FoP: I don’t think Ernest is. I think I saw in the paper where he passed away.

FIP: The last I heard of Nellie Hunton she lived in Seattle. She was a very nice teacher. I liked her real well.

FoP: That’s an odd thing because I went to school with her and her brother.

GP: Oh, is that right?

FIP: And she was my teacher.

GP: At the high school, I suppose.

FoP: Yes.

GP: Well, I’ve also made an oral History tape of Guy Rogers and he told me his sister taught up there for a short time, but I don’t know how long that school was open either.

FoP: Guy Rogers was related to that Virginia (unintelligible).

FIP: It may have been later.

GP: I think it probably was because Guy, I believe, would be a few years younger than you.
FIP: I know that the school...They didn’t have the school much longer after we left there. They closed the school, and they bussed the children to the—

GP: Meadow?

FIP: No, not the Meadow. What was the name of that school house down below? Not Meadow School. Cold Springs!

GP: Oh, Cold Springs. Yes, that’s the one I was trying to think of. Cold Springs.

FIP: Cold Springs School because there weren’t very many children at that time when we were up still up there.

GP: Was it a one room school?

FIP: Well, one room and a little kitchen that close.

GP: I mean, one teacher school?

FIP: Oh, yes. Yes. She taught all grades.

GP: So you had your brothers and sisters in the room with you then?

FIP: Oh, yes. Sometimes there were maybe 12 or something like that. Other times, there were only eight of us. My older brothers—they went there for a short time, and then we moved we were up there. We moved from that place further up the valley, and my dad logged from there.

GP: Well, it’s kind of interesting to look back now and realize how hard he worked to keep his family occupied—all together and fed and healthy.

FIP: Oh, yes. It was quite hard sometimes.

GP: But I don’t sense any bitterness with you at all.

FIP: Oh, no. We had lots of fun. Now like when we were traveling from eastern part of Montana up to Wyoming.

GP: Did you mother complain? Did she appear to be healthy, and did she go along with these ideas of your dad?
FIP: Oh, more or less, and she was lots of fun. She used to go out and play hide-and-go-seek with us and all those kind of things. Of course, later years, when she...Well, before Lyle was born, that’s my youngest brother, she was 46 when he was born.

GP: Forty-six?

FIP: She was 46 years old when he was born, so that took a lot out of her. But I just often wonder...I don’t think I could have done it.

GP: No, I don’t think I could’ve either.

FIP: But she was just the kind of a person that she went along with it and made the best of it—and that was her life.

GP: And that was her life. Very seldom ever heard her complain about it.

FIP: —and that was her life. Very seldom ever heard her complain about it.

GP: Did you say she sewed for the family?

FIP: Oh, yes. She was a beautiful seamstress. If she hadn’t of, I don’t know how they’d got along.

GP: How long did she live, Flossie? I mean, how old was she?

FIP: I’d have to go look.

GP: Oh, well that’s all right. I just thought in a general way.

FIP: She was 46 when Lyle was born, and I think Lyle was 18 or 19 when she passed away.

GP: So she was in her 60s when she died?

FIP: Oh, yes.

FoP: (Unintelligible).

FIP: I’m not sure I can get the bible—

GP: Oh, no. Well, that’s all right. I just wondered with the...she didn’t have an easy life, and I wondered if it affected her health or how long she lived or anything like that.
FIP: Well, she had high blood pressure. She had high blood pressure, and it got to the point that it was so high at that they were afraid to even operate. Then she had a stroke of which was not uncommon with someone with real high blood pressure she had.

FoP: Her dad was a very capable man.

FIP: He was.

FoP: He didn’t like to work for other people. He was always going out on projects of his own, but he was very capable but he didn’t have good (unintelligible).

FIP: He didn’t like to work for someone else. He liked to work for himself. Of course, when he was on the gas line he was, more or less, his own boss because he was the foreman. But he could do most anything.

She was 65.

GP: Sixty-five.

FIP: She was 65 in January, and she passed away on May the 4th. So, you see, she didn’t live to a ripe old age, but with all those children I don’t see how she could.

GP: But then the people didn’t live as long. You know they didn’t have—

FIP: That’s true.

GP: They didn’t have the high blood pressure medicines or the diet that people follow today like you’re doing.

FIP: She loved salt. I can remember from when I was quite young, we used to have old cook stoves with the warming ovens on top. She had a crock that held two cups of salt with a lid on it, and I can still see her today lifting the lid and taking a pinch of salt and putting it in her mouth.

GP: Really?

FIP: Yes. And that’s what later...it’s a wonder she lived as long as she did when you realize what salt does to you.

She used to come out and play with us—hide-and-go-seek, tag, and run-sheep-run.
GP: Well, she must have been a tough lady, and I believe you said that she canned too, didn’t she?

FIP: Oh, yes. She canned. I can remember canning. Well, I can remember washing cans when I was six years old—washing jars. She always canned, and I always helped as much as I could.

GP: Must have been hard to move those things with all the moving you did, but—

FIP: Well, you take what you can.

FoP: After we were married, she used to work quite a while of a time making quilts to raffle off to get money for Christmas so she could buy each one of the kids some kind of Christmas present.

FIP: She used to make beautiful quilts.

GP: Did you ever save any of them?

FIP: Oh, we never...we couldn’t—

GP: You used them.

FIP: Well, no. We couldn’t buy tickets, a raffle ticket.

GP: Oh, family couldn’t. I see.

FIP: Family couldn’t. But I do have some quilt blocks that she made when Ervie was...when she first was married, (unintelligible) my oldest brother, and I still have those blocks. I have six blocks. She did all the handwork on them. She had what they call a crazy quilt block, and then (unintelligible) and do the different stitches. I quilt too. I think it’s six.

GP: Well they must be very precious to you.

FIP: I’ve got to get this and put some borders around them or something so I can hang them up because I want to give each one to the children.

My dad brought them over after Mother passed away. He brought them over—and he always called me, “Sis”—and he says, “Here, Sis, I want you to have these, and you give your girls some. You are my girls.”

GP: Well, that would certainly be a nice gift. Are there other things that you can think of now, Flossie?
FIP: Not right now.

GP: Well, I’ve probably worn both of you and taken most of your afternoon so I’ll just say thank you once more.

[End of Interview]