Oral History 365-08

Passport in Time Interviews on the Lewis and Clark National Forest

Interviewee: Dennis Tanberg

Interviewers: Sarah Jaffe, Dave Wanderaas

September 12, 1997

Sarah: Good morning. We are interviewing Dennis Tanberg at his home in Harlowton, Montana. The purpose of this interview is our involvement with an oral history for the Forest Service, and we would like to find out your connection with the Forest Service, and a history of you and your family's background. First, would you mind telling us where you were born and when your family came to this area?

Dennis: We're talking about the wife's family. The father-in-law came to Montana in 1926. He was going on 16 years old, and relocated from Minnesota. He started working on the ranches on the Shields River, and then later had his own ranch on the Musselshell River, what we would call the Upper Musselshell, seven miles west of Two Dot, Montana.

Sarah: Did you attend school here?

Dennis: No. This would be back to the wife and her family. My wife, Arleen Mager, was born in Two Dot in a home, with the mid-wife bit of that era. She went to school in Two Dot up to the eighth grade and then come into Harlowton for some of her high school. Her family then, her dad and her mom had already been done with school, of course at an early age, before they moved into this area.

Dave: There are lots of stories and lots of history. You and I were talking about that and I knew Arlene was from that area, but I didn't realize her dad had spent that much time with the sheep herding and packing. We (the Forest Service) had the sheep allotments up in the Crazy's, and that ties in with the sheep herding up in the Crazy's, on several different allotments. We would like to look at some pictures that you have, Dennis, and get a bit of the story and the history of what your father-in-law did with the sheep herding and which allotments he was on. That will give us added background.

Dennis: The father-in-law, Frank H. Mager, went to work for the Smith Brothers on Shields River. They had allotment in the Crazy Mountains. The only area that I know would be Loco Peak. That's where they had their main summer camp, but they also talked a lot about the Forest Lake area, and they had a base camp there. I'm not sure if they had allotment there, or if they just traveled from that direction and then used that for a stop over. The father-in-law done the packing for the Shields River Ranch. He would pack the herders in, help them set up their camp, and then, I'm not sure the schedule, but every couple of weeks he would bring in a pack string with their supplies. When the sheep herders, I guess had a little bit of idle time they would stack
up rocks, and make our sheep herder monuments that we like to go and look at now-a-days. If they was goanna move to an area that they weren't sure where Frank would find them, then they would leave a note, and sometimes those notes weren't really easy to read. Sometimes he would just follow the tracks of the sheep in order to find that herder to drop their supplies off.

He really enjoyed that up on Loco Peak. However, one time there was a thunderstorm come in, and he was riding his horse down the trail and lightening hit him. It knocked the horse down, and sent him flying. It knocked the horse out, but then Frank was unconscious. When he woke up the horse was standing with its head down, straddle legged trying to keep its balance. He was numb for two or three days. His whole body would tingle, and he didn't have his normal feeling. To the last day, he had a hard time being out in a thunderstorm, because he always remembered that.

Then he would pack other things into the Crazy's. They needed water troughs for the sheep up on the top of Loco Peak, because the sheep would walk through the spring, and get it muddy. Then the herder didn't have fresh water, and the sheep didn't. He packed eight foot planks up there, two by fourteen inches, and he built troughs, and would dig down into the spring, develop it, cover it over with logs and flat rock so the sheep wouldn't walk through it. The son-in-law and I went up there in September of 1997, and we got to take pictures of these water troughs, and how he had developed that. We still was able to drink water out of those troughs where the water would run in.

Dave: As far as those troughs, and I had a Forest map and I left it back at the office (opening map), I'm real curious which troughs these are. I know when we come on up to Loco Mountain and then go about a mile to the north, kind of up the head of the Middle Fork of Elk Creek, someplace right in here, (pointing to map) in that low spot, there's one set of troughs. Then you come up around (north east), there's kind of a knob off to the northwest, and then you come over to this area here (pointing to map) and there's another set of troughs. That would be to the north side of Middle Fork. I had quad maps and forgot to bring them. I took this hike and marked this trail out real carefully on quad maps. I think the first lower ones were in Section 34, and then the upper troughs would have been in Section 26, probably. But those are the two (sets of troughs) I know of. Are those the ones you're speaking of?

Dennis: It's these here, (pointing) but they're back further over that way. Loco Peak, or Loco Mountain, is a little over nine thousand feet, and when we're at the troughs we're still at eighty-six hundred feet. That's where these posts are in the picture, is where they had the tent for the main camp. These are the water troughs. I forgot to take a picture of how they dug down and developed it and put galvanized pipe in, that is still there. I have a picture of when the father-in-law took a few pictures, but we didn't get the information wrote on them so we could remember. I have a picture of the tent set up at these water troughs on those posts. When they would set those camps up, I'm not sure of the early (summer) date, but it would stay until either the grass was gone depending on the moisture that year, or the bad weather would set in for the fall. The herder would start out, and then Frank would go up with the pack string, and bring the camp out.
Dave: Some of these old pictures of troughs, could we possibly borrow those to take black and white pictures, and we would check them out. I could even do it at your house here.

Dennis: Yes, of course you know how important they are, we would like to get them back, because we would never get a duplicate of these.

Dave: Yes, what I do is use a close-up lens and take pictures right at the office and bring these back.

Dennis: They were building the sheep shearing sheds around the country. The father-in-law would get into hauling some of the lumber and equipment, and of course, help set up some of the equipment. He wasn't much on the building structure, but he was a natural for figuring out equipment. Later years he went to work on the Martinsdale dam on the night shift, servicing their equipment and all that. That's how he acquired a Caterpillar and a dragline in the early 1940's, and had a lot to do with developing the country west of Two Dot, for ditches and canals on the private ranches.

Here's a picture of the tent that set up on those stakes, (near Loco Peak) but there's no landmark that you can go by other than if you was standing at those stakes then you can see the skyline.

Dave: I'm going to track those (picture sites) down, I've been to both. We're talking of two troughs then aren't we? Have you been to both of these water developments?

Dennis: No. We didn't know about that second one, but I'm pretty sure that's the one that Steve Moore, and T J Moore rode their motorcycles to years ago. I remember when they come back to the ranch then and asked Frank if he knew how those plank had got up there, and he said, "Yes, I packed them up there." Their first thought was on his shoulder, and then he told them he packed for the Smith brothers, and packed them in with the packhorses.

Dave: I wish I'd brought my USGS maps, we've got these identified real carefully on USGS maps. To me, the one with the four posts were actually the second troughs (to the north in Section 26). I didn't remember any posts at the one here (to the south in Section 34), but you feel that these ones with the posts where they had the tent was actually pretty close to Loco Mountain? I've been to both and down in here (south trough) it's in a big draw and this might be it. I didn't remember this here, (to the south) and I wish I'd have brought my pictures. What I do remember is this one where the four stakes being over here a ways (to the north) but you feel that's real close to Loco?

If you're at Loco Mountain, and you're going north you go down into the draw, about a half mile to it, following rock cairns, and then there was kind of the low draw that goes into Elk Creek, and then it started coming north up the draw, and went off to the northeast. There was a knob that was on the northwest, and there the trail straightened out and eventually going to Cinnamon. That was the one I was thinking had these stakes. Does that seem familiar to you, or are you pretty sure it's down lower in this drainage, almost at a saddle that dropped down into Middle Fork of Elk? The one over here I remember, where there was a knob, I had to climb to get over
to it. Just a little ways south is where the trail turned and ran northeast to this (northerly) trough. You're pretty sure this is the one in 34?

Dennis: I feel it is, because I believe the pictures we have is the Middle Fork that has the snow on the background. It should be that drainage starting there (pointing to map).

Dave: The troughs are right in here (pointing to map).

Dennis: Yes.

Dave: This is Loco right here.

Dennis: Well, I felt that is Loco, the one with all the grazing on it?

Dave: Loco is the peak where the trail comes up out of the very head of Loco Creek looking into the Shields. I think this is Loco right here, and then the troughs to the north are in this little draw right in here (to the north).

Dennis: We didn't go over there, and that's the one's that had to do with the Martin's. We stayed on this Trail 636; it comes back to Miller Creek.

Dave: OK, this is the northerly set of troughs that face south (pointing to map).

Dennis: By the tracks, nobody had been there for quite some time.

Dave: Yeah, very few at all. The first set is down in this little draw half a mile north of Loco Peak (pointing to map). The set that you were at is right in here, is a little further to the north.

Dennis: Yeah, then that would make it what you have there, but when you show your mark there and looking down on to Section 24. I hunt Section 24 quite a bit and I know we weren't that far.

Dave: You were more than a mile, a mile and a half? This is a terrible map for reference.

Dennis: I go back here to hunt, and if you say it's there, then, yeah, I know we weren't looking down into the start of Little Elk.

Dave: Which one do you call Little Elk?

Dennis: Well, that's this creek that runs right down behind David Pump's house.

Dave: OK, Little Elk, it's over the hill, on the other side. The north troughs are still draining in the Middle Fork. Anyway, I've taken pictures exactly of both of those, which I'll look at later to chase these locations down. So, it was your father-in-law that built the set here then (north, in Section 26)?
Dennis: Yes, and then he had to pack firewood up for that camp, because there was no trees up on top.

Dave: Which way did he come up to get in there?

Dennis: I'm not sure. I know he did come up from Forest Lake, because they would be camped there. Some place coming right off of the Shields River, he had another way of coming in so you didn't have to go to Forest Lake, but I don't find it on the Forest Service map. I always felt he come by Bartleson Mountain (?) on the Shields River side.

Dave: I don't know where that is at. I know of Bennett Creek and Crandell Creek and there's (Crandell) Creek trail from the Shields that comes up and ties in with Trail 636. It comes up from the Shields side and on to 636, which comes out of Forest Lake. The Crandell Trail intersects 636 at a point before it starts down Loco Creek, it's about a half mile north before the junction with 632 into Loco Creek.

Dennis: I think it's this one right here. See this trail right here (pointing to map)?

Dave: Yeah, that would sure make sense if you're coming out. That's the only trail I know of. It's sure rough country in there. There's Dugout Creek and I know there is a trail up Lodgepole over to Lebo Fork Big Elk (640) but I think it's passable.

Dennis: He used to also ride through there, and then come out on Big Elk. But he didn't go up over the top.

Dave: He probably went over Lodgepole, possibly, there's a rough trail. I think it was an old Forest Service Trail (640).

Dennis: This would be with a pack string.

Dave: The trail would have had to be in fairly decent shape at that time to bring a pack string over, if that were it.

Dennis: Then of course when he'd be up on top, he would look down on the Two Dot area, and that's what got him interested in getting over there to ranch. Even though he worked for a sheep company, he wouldn't be a sheep man. He was a cattle rancher. Some of the older gentlemen would make a statement on that, if they liked sheep or not.

Dave: I've had several folks mention that. There's a big difference between a sheep owner and a sheepherder, and they might agree to own them, but they wouldn't herd them, or they wouldn't have them at all. It's an interesting perspective, you either like them, or you don't like them at all.

Dennis: Any chance he would get on the way up, he would harvest some fresh meat for the herders. I guess that's why they really liked him to be their packer. Might be a mountain grouse,
or maybe a deer, and he would say how they would hang the deer up in the top of an evergreen tree down below, and then he would just whistle off some and take to the different camps.

Dave: This black and white picture here (pointing), that's this camp right here then, isn't it, where those poles were at? That was the tent corner poles for that tent, I suppose?

Dennis: Yeah, and when I go up again I'm goanna take this picture, and I'm gonna find that little slope. I think a guy could match it up close enough and get an angle of the tent.

Dave: Did he ever talk about having cold caches, or ground refrigerators?

Dennis: The herder used that spring for what he needed to keep cool, and of course, they didn't have that much fresh stuff that needed to be cooled. Say if he took his canned milk out, and things like that, then the herder would have this flat rock, and he had a little, what we would call a spring house now, and of course they were real popular in the headquarters in the lower country, but up there you would never know a spring was there until you walked right up on it. It comes out of the ground and then it goes back in with just a few yards.

Dave: In this area here, we found a big hole that was probably about 6 or 7 feet across, 8 feet across and it was about 3 to 4 feet deep. I'm thinking that had something to do with sheep herding, making a refrigerator hole and then covering that up.

Dennis: We seen one hole just as we got up on top. That would be right back in this area, back here (pointing). We was only about 100 yards up over the crest, and the hole was there. When I first looked it looked like it had been dynamited out, and then as we walked along the cairns that they had stacked up, we decided that whoever had stacked the cairns to mark the old trail had taken it all out of one pit. So, I took a picture of this other stuff, how the rock, it looks like there's holes in the ground, and that somebody had picked all the rock up there and dumped it in those holes to fill it up. There are smaller rocks. They're smooth like they went through the glacier era, but they're just in those little pockets, and then the rest of it is a soft turf when you walk on it. You gotta be careful not to turn an ankle, because it's so much like a tundra underneath that. You can just see how nice it'd been up there with sheep that you could've spent the whole summer there. There's a lot of elk signs. We believe that there's goat sign up there, but all we was finding was the dropping. It's pretty hard to tell that from a calf elk when they're still drinking milk.

Dave: That hole in the ground, you say it was kind of over a knob and off to the west side draining into Little Elk possibly?

Dennis: It was draining towards Loco Creek. There was four wheeler tracks that had got up to about 300 yards of the top, if they'd of had a little winch they'd of had a four wheeler up on top through all that grazing up there.

Dave: The four wheelers, they came up from the Loco side some place there?
Dennis: From Forest Lake. We followed their tracks. They was on the trail most of the way.

Dave: That's one last tough piece, isn't it, before you get up to Loco Mountain? It's real narrow and steep.

Dennis: Yeah, they didn't have no problem, just when they got right to breaking over the crest then they turned around and went back. They wouldn't of been that bad with a winch. I seen them other places where they would winch them up places like that. I just felt that maybe they had run out of time and turned around and went back.

I can remember the father-in-law talking about them changing a name of lake up there, and I had the impression it was Forest Lake. We have this picture that later, Yvonne Rice had colored it for them, and made a copy and then colored it. It was a black and white picture to start with, and then they made a colored picture out of it. You can see the writing on there, Cottonwood Lake, and I don't know if there's a Cottonwood Lake up there on the Sondeno Ranch, or if that is Forest Lake and the government changed the name.

Dave: It doesn't look like Forest Lake that I can get a perspective on. This is a picture taken in 1928, and then colored. I don't know, Cottonwood, I haven't heard of anything else. It's not Castle Lake in the Castles, it looks entirely different. I can't think of anything else. Sondeno's have a little dam coming up Loco Creek, on the Mackey Ranch, but that's not it.

Dennis: Does Cottonwood Creek come out of the Forest Lake area?

Dave: It sure does.

Dennis: I remember something about him saying they changed the name and he said that when he first got here in 1926 it was Cottonwood Lake, so it would always be Cottonwood Lake to him.

Dave: That would make sense that would have been called Cottonwood Lake. I'm not sure where Forest Lake would have come from.

Dennis: Maybe we could ask some of these older gentlemen that you're goanna interview, and see if they remember it. Barney Grinvoll would be one to know, or Geo Johnson. I'd like to tell the story about Geo Johnson when he was our Game Warden here years ago, before he become the county sheriff. He packed fish and beaver into the Little Belt Mountains. We take our family up there now and catch fish that are some that he planted way back in the Little Belts, and of course, you see that the beaver were there years ago. He said when the beaver pells got to a pretty good price then the trappers went in there and trapped them all out, because they were in an isolated area, and no way to reproduce once they had trapped them all out. You'll see signs of trappers that had been in there. There's still martin sets on the trees. Geo told me he put those in there at about mid 1940's .... '45, '46, something like that.
Dave: Yeah, they add so much to the health of a stream too, beaver dams and fishing ponds. You know, Dennis, I might borrow this picture to take a black and white picture, and the next time I go to Forest Lake I'll walk down and see if I can match anything. That's the only place I can think of other than Elk Lake. (Editorial note: another Cottonwood Lake is located in the south end of Crazy Mountains on the Gallatin National Forest.)

Dennis: I think you'd have to be on the east side looking west. I think of this too when we go up there, but I never take the picture along to match it up. Here's a picture of Frank at the Shields River headquarters.

Dave: Frank Mager, probably 1926, '28, somewhere in there?

Dennis: Yes, he started this album in '27, but some of the pictures have '26 on them, and like that picture for the Cottonwood Lake has the date 1928.

Dave: You were thinking that the Shields Station might of been down on Bennett, or some place down in the Shields anyway?

Dennis: Yeah, down on the Shields River, but I'm not sure just where it was. Then when they was building these shearing stations, we have one picture here of them building the shed at Jellison Place, and buildings that they'd built out of logs, of course it was sawed lumber then, the rough lumber. They really had some good design for the structure, because they went back later years and tore them down and used that lumber to build other stuff. There used to be one out here at McQuitty homestead that the Muir Ranch acquired, and they had moved it down to the main ranch, and when I worked for the Muir Ranch in the middle 1980's then, I helped tear it down and we used that lumber to rebuild calving sheds and wind shelter.

Dave: This (Jellison Place) would have been towards the Belts, but it would have been a ways out from the Belts off the Forest, I imagine? That wouldn't have been at Jellison Place (in the Belts), would it?

(Explain the two Jellison Places)

Dennis: Yeah, they just put that name, Jellison Place on it, but I know that is Forest Service.

Dave: Do you think this is on the Forest?

Dennis: I wouldn't think they'd put it on the Forest. Even in those days you had to be pretty certain of your property line, because if you built it on the Forest then they owned it, and if they didn't want it there, you know like the Forest had to do with the cabins so they didn't get the public in there abusing the land. They had to really control it.

Dave: Yeah. There was a Jellison homestead (Jellison Place) the Forest acquired quite a few years later, but this picture doesn't look like the Jellison Place up in the Belt's.
Editorial note: a later oral history interview with Ernie Jellison of Harlowton resolved this "Unsolved History" question. Ernie Jellison's grandfather Edwin Jellison had property or homestead at the site of the sheep sheds on Norman Voldseth's place off Forest Lake Road. Ernie Jellison's father Lewis was born at this place in 1888. Edwin Jellison cut railroad ties for the Jawbone Railroad up in the north Crazies on Cottonwood Creek, and his family used Castle Town for their shopping and commerce. This home site became known as the Jellison Place (on way to Forest Lake).

Prior to 1899, Edwin Jellison had moved his family to the East Fork of Hopley Creek in the Little Belts, and squatted on a homesite, later to become Muir Ranger Station. Another Jellison baby was born at this homesite in February 1899, brother to Lewis Jellison. This infant died in September 1899, and is buried at the Jellison baby grave site (a new grave site fence was constructed by the Forest Service in the 1970's, and is maintained by the Forest Service). This squatter's claim was sold shortly afterwards to W.G. Muir, who in turn sold to H. Holloway, who in turn sold the buildings to the Forest Service in 1910 for use as a Ranger Station. None of the "squatters" ever claimed up (proved up) as a Homestead entry.

Ernie Jellison noted that his father Lewis helped his cousin Andy Jellison build the Jellison Place cabin near West Hopley Creek in the Little Belts in the winter of 1917, on the homestead of Andy and Lillian Jellison. Andy and Lillian separated some years later, the Jellison Place Homestead was sold to an individual from White Sulphur Springs, who in turn arranged a land trade where the Forest Service acquired the Jellison Place (Belt Mountains) and utilized this Jellison Place cabin for a number of years as a Guard Station, until removing the cabin in the 1970's.

Dennis: Other than if your looking back out, they could be up to the Forest boundary, looking back out. I would imagine that the LaBries had a lot to do with that, being that was more up in their area. Joe Muir that started the Muir Ranch, used to have his sheep up around what is the Jim Freeser Ranch, now it's the Teen Patterson Ranch. So, he probably had a lot to do with it also. We have pictures here of the pack string when they would be taking the supplies in for the different sheep camps.

Dave: That would be a neat picture to copy. I'll definitely borrow that picture from you.

Dennis: Then, of course, there was always bear problems. Not so much for the sheep, but the camp. The herder might go out with his sheep, and even if he spent a night out with the sheep, or come back every evening like the one camp on Loco Peak (the water was right there by the camp, so they'd come back for the sheep to water, and then he could spend the night in his comfort) but the bears would come up there. When the son-in-law and I were up there the first of September, there was a big black bear up on top. They would, of course, shoot this bear, and then the herder would have fresh bear meat for as long as it would last without refrigeration.

Here's a couple more pictures of the packers with Frank at the Shields headquarters. Here's another picture. It's of a shearing plant on the other side of Bald Ridge, and this is more finished,
and I feel like the Shields River side maybe utilized this shearing plant. It would depend on the weather for the area that they would have their sheep in. Of course, weather meant when they could head to the mountains, and of course, after lambing, but they had to get that shearing done before they sent them out for the summer. Can you show me here where Bald Ridge is (pointing to map)?

Dave: Yeah. Bald Ridge would be coming off Trail 645 out of the West Fork, and this piece of ridge right in here is Bald Ridge (pointing to map). It starts up here at Unknown Point (benchmark elevation 8311). Down here is Skunk's Den camp, some folks in town have a camp up in there. It is the long bare knobby ridge with grass, up above Forty Creek, and then drops down to Bozeman Fork on the west side. It's pretty much this whole piece right in here.

Dennis: I guess when they say the backside of Bald Ridge that could be coming from the Shields River side.

Dave: It sure could be. Straight off to the west you step into the Bozeman Fork of the Musselshell, but if they went off to the south end of it, then they would be dropping right down into the Shields side. I know the Honey Run Trail is there, and Stag Creek, oh, yes, Park Creek and Spruce Springs. There's a trail down to Spruce Springs. That probably would make a lot of sense, going to the Spruce Springs, then down Bitter Creek, and right down into the Shields. Of course, there's still the trail that goes up over Target Rock. This trail's right here (pointing to map), and it's a jeep trail and goes on down to the Shields a long ways away, four, five miles away. One possibility would have been to, and I don't think with sheep but with a horse, follow this crest trail that goes up to Virginia. It goes down Eagle Creek.

Dennis: Would there have been sheep allotments on Bald Ridge, or in that area?

Dave: Yeah, I think there was.

Dennis: That was their idea of building these shearing sheds. It was around where they was gonna hold these sheep like for the lambing in the early spring, and then shear them.

Dave: I think these Gallatin sections down in here have a lot of grass to, so it would make sense there would have been allotments on the Gallatin side, within the checkerboard ownership.

Dennis: Here's a picture of Norris Galentine working on one of those sheds. It doesn't say which shed, but he later located down at Big Timber, or at McCloud, and started a resort type thing there, and had a swimming pool. He passed away in the late '80's, and at that time he was running the Senior Center in Big Timber, he and his wife. He was a good friend of Frank's. They'd visited back and forth in the later years quite a bit, and then this Pat Anderson was another one.

Of course, the entertainment then was going to a dance, and that wasn't very often, but they might have to leave early one day and ride all day to get to where ever this dance is, and then they'd stay up all night, and then after the dance take off to get back to work the next day. That's
how the mother-in-law and father-in-law met, was at one of those country dances. Later the father-in-law went to work for the Seventy One Ranch, this is the ranch that the Galts own now. At that time, the Seventy One Ranch was known for all their horses. This is the only photo we have. It says, "Bringing in the horses in the spring", but you really have to look to see the group of horses that are there. Of course, the father-in-law had done all the harvesting with horses. He was one of the few that had a thrashing machine in the Two Dot area. When the Martinsdale Colony first moved there and bought the Settle place, they didn't have their own equipment to harvest, and Frank went up and harvested their first crops for them. That really put him in good friendship with the Martinsdale Hutterite Colony. Later years they would just do anything for Frank, because he helped them get started. Most people rejected them when they moved here. They didn't want them to be moving in.

Dave: Where do you suppose this picture might have been taken at?

Dennis: I'm not sure. The Seventy One Ranch is so big, and it just looks like some of their grazing and in the lower elevations. It's pretty hard to say. Maybe Errol Galt would recognize it if you showed him a picture of it.

Dave: It's out in the prairies quite a ways, it's real flat.

Dennis: Yes, and then Frank and Ted Johnson were real good friends. That was one of Ted's major incomes was going and getting horses and selling it to the remount in Billings. He would go over by Helena, and then all the way from Helena back through White Sulphur into here, picking up horses that, in those days, would have been your wild mustang. They were at one time used and then turned lose when people started getting away from using horses, started going to the tractors. Then he would drive them down to Billings on the southwest corner of Billings, out where the Yellowstone Boys Ranch is, and sell them to the remount. Of course then Forest Service got a lot, the Calvary for the military got a lot of them, and he used to tell how they asked for color. One year they might want all bays, the next year they might want all sorrels. They went through the black, that they wanted all black horses. Well, then he'd find some good horses, but they was the wrong color, so he couldn't bring those in. He'd wait until the next year, and then maybe they wanted that color.

Dave: Who would have the remount been run by? Was that the Army or the Forest Service?

Dennis: This was a private contractor, and they called it the remount, but then he furnished horses to the Forest Service and the Calvary, and then the military stopped (using horses). My uncle had just joined the service, because he was gonna be in the Calvary, he was a cowboy, and the year that he joined, well, it was in the middle '40's, then they disbanded it. So, they attached him to the Air Force. That used to be the big joke that he went from riding horses to flying an airplane.

Then we have a picture here of a bear that was in one of the camps. They have it in a snare. I like to show this to some people that talk about how big of a bear they see now a days. I don't feel we have big bear left here. The most of them are harvested. You'll see a big bear, but not
like there were in the old days. When you look at it, and then look at the guy standing there, it had to be pretty tall and weigh a lot.

Dave: This was probably going up to one of the herder camps, I suppose?

Dennis: Yeah, they used snares a lot. Then, they would just walk up to it with a pistol and shoot it in the head. I have a picture of a nephew shooting one in the forehead. It's in a snare. When we took the picture it don't show that the bear is in a snare, but it shows him standing there with a pistol shooting it. It happened to be a twenty-two pistol, and when you tell people that, they just don't believe you. It was quite different in those days.

Here we have two photos of the rodeo in Two Dot, but I don't have any years. There's a good chance that this would be the time that Johnny Chris, or Christensen was such a bronc stomper there in the Two Dot area. I'd like to tell the story that I heard years ago. This would be Les Christensen's dad, the deputy sheriff's dad. They had a horse in the Two Dot area that supposedly nobody could ride it. So they made a wager, something like $50.00, if John could ride it. The day that was set for him to ride it, he went down there and he rode it, no problem. They went to give him his money, and he says, "No, I got to give you your money back," and they says, "Why?" He says, "Well, when I heard about that horse I kind of wondered about it, so I come down last night and I rode him to see if I could!"

Dave: (laughter) Sounds like a hundred dollar ride. Yeah, lots of stories of the old timers, and tougher life-style, and adventures that they had.

Dennis: I believe this picture was taken in the Deep Creek Canyon, but it would be about the same way. You'd just about have to match it up. It had to do when they was starting to come up with the cars. Everybody was so proud of their cars they would take pictures of 'em.

Dave: Yeah, just getting the roads upgraded to equal the cars of the time, from wagon roads. 1930, I suppose that's the father-in-law and some of his family?

Dennis: Yeah, there's no name for who it is, and of course, anybody that would know who they are, are already gone. I said that I was gonna write on all of my pictures that I take. I like to take a lot of pictures, but I don't have them wrote on. The father-in-law working on the Seventy One Ranch done a lot of the horse breaking, and that just happens to be a picture of a horse that turned out real good. They named it Coley, and I always felt it was after that Coley bay that was such a famous horse in Hollywood.

Dave: That was probably down at the Seventy One Ranch, same as today, I imagine?

Dennis: Yes. I believe that's about all the pictures we have any kind of information on that we could use for this (oral history).

Dave: This sure has been interesting. I'd like to borrow some of these pictures.
Dennis: Then, when Frank had the mountain pasture on this side of the Forest, underneath Cinnamon Peak, then he packed supplies up there, and this old wagon sitting up in front of the house (pointing to picture) is what he used to haul the fencing supplies and salt, and stuff for the cattle.

Dave: Up on the Cinnamon side?

Dennis: Yes, on Section 6.

Dave: Do you have any idea where the pack stock and the cabin is at?

Dennis: No.

Dave: There's so many places it could be.

Dennis: Then of course, like the teams, I think they're plowing here, that's how they done it. The father-in-law had quite a few horses, and a lot of the other ranchers then would borrow horses from him. Like he and that Ted Johnson, they would go around and do the custom harvesting, which in that time there would be a whole crew of them, but a lot of them would be the ranchers themselves and their hands, then two or three ranches would show up, and they would do one ranch, all their haying, all their harvesting, then that whole group would go to another ranch. You just don't see that too much now a days.

Dave: Is this your father-in-law here (pointing to photo)?

Dennis: No, we don't have a name for who that is. That's the father-in-law there on the Seventy One Ranch. He was only sixteen when he went to work for Smith brothers over on the Shields River. The pictures always look older, but all of these pictures were before he was married. He was a little older when they got married.

Dave: What allotment would that have been? I have a map that kind of references here.

Dennis: He owned this 640 of Section 6. He had the 40 acres of BLM, and then this Forest Service there, but I don't remember, it would be the 640 or 680 from a thousand, because that was one of those thousand acre sections that they had to use to finish their survey. The balance is Forest Service, and then he had that permit there.

Dave: I did find this map, I didn't have time to copy it, that showed some of the old allotments. This would be on the north end on Section 6. These are units within various allotments. I don't have a name tied to these, but that East Fork unit and Lower West Fork unit 5,6,1,2,3. This is probably Pump's here?

Dennis: It is now, yeah. Then Pump's own this, and then Sections 7,11, and 13, I thought, and then the balance. That's why when we have our hunting camp up there we was always able to
have a pretty good area to hunt, because he give us permission then to hunt on his private, and then with the Forest we didn't have to worry about that checkerboard.

Dave: That would have been Pump at that time?

Dennis: Yes.

Dave: It says here (on map), "Henry Pump thirteen hundred and fifty band, 1934". It shows an arrow going down, so probably a lot of these units in here were Henry Pump's. I'd like to find another map that shows Morse's over here. Your father-in-law, he had his own band of sheep?

Dennis: No, he just had cattle. Pump's of course had cattle up there's before they eliminated the sheep.

Dave: I haven't had time to go through some of the old records.

Dennis: Now is this "one" band, or is that how many bands?

Dave: That's a band. They had 1350 sheep.

Dennis: Ok. We've always talked about how many was a band of sheep. Different sheep men would come up with different numbers. I decided when I was pretty young that a band of sheep was how many sheep you had. If you had a thousand, that was a band. If you had twelve hundred that was a band, because I'd always heard different numbers on it.

Dave: Yeah, I think it's just the numbers that we had, either in the group of sheep that you had, or in the capacity for an area. I think the way this was arranged you could handle 1350 sheep in this unit for 15 days. Then you can go over to this unit for 18 days. I'm not sure the sequence of it, you would think it would go 1,2,3,4, but it sure would not make sense to go through to another spot and then come back to it. Here it had 8 days, and 10 days, so that was figured out by the range folks just how much time there could be in each unit, and then the band would have to move.

Dennis: Yeah, I'd be curious to see the allotment time for Loco Peak with the Smith Brothers, because they put that camp in and then left it. But then maybe they trailed on to these others, and then that was just the main base camp.

Dave: The herder up on top must of just had a camp that he moved, I would imagine.

Dennis: Probably just a little teepee tent. Those were real popular. The father-in-law still had one, but then hanging in the shed at the ranch, the mice got to it. I still have his sheep herder tent that was for one man, and it was just like a wall tent, but it's only about, maybe 5 by 8, and the wall is only about 2 foot. It's real handy to put on a packhorse and then have all the convenience of a larger wall tent, but just really enough room for one and two people could get by in it.

Dave: Was that kind of today's A-frame, or is that four sided?
Dennis: It was a regular wall tent. You'd set it up just like a regular wall tent, except in smaller measurements.

Dave: Yeah, I’ve seen pictures of those used about the turn of the century. The military used them.

Dennis: Yeah, the Calvary had them, but I think they would have like two guys and they would share some of the things so that each one didn't have to carry certain things with them.

Dave: I was going to give you a copy of this map although, it doesn't provide too much information, but gives an idea of locations.

Dennis: Dave Pump has told me different times in stories about what they had to shoot up there, and how they could go all the way over to the Shields or back, because they had a ranch over on the Shields River also. And they would travel across the Crazy Mountains. I just always felt it was that trail that we was on. I wished I'd of went up there when the father-in-law was still living, then he could've filled me in on stuff that I seen.

Dave: We do have another map that goes down to Loco Peak, and I'm going to get a copy of that. It's kind of old waxed paper, and it shows the allotments that Morse's would've had, and Pump's, and I guess Smith Brothers. I'm not sure of labels, which ones belonged to who, but it shows the units within the allotments. It basically continues to Loco. I’ll get a copy made of that. I'll have to be real careful making it, so I don't tear up the old wax paper, and get you a copy.

Dennis: Now I think the father-in-law probably built both sets of those troughs that are up high, but there is a set going down, like where you was saying that other trail went, and you come up above Elk Lake. There's a set of troughs down there, and that's where there's a jar in the sheep herder monument, and you can take a piece of paper out and sign your name if you hike up there. I don't believe he built them, because that would have to do with the Martins... there was two Martin families up there. Was it George Martin, and then the brother, but I don't remember what his name was, and they'd of had sheep allotments up there.

Dave: Yeah, further to the south?

Dennis: Yeah, like your saying, this trail here, you would go down on that backside to come to Elk Lake. When we come over on this side, then once you got out there you gotta either go back, or come down on the Miller Creek side. There's a government trail known as the Groveland Trail. I don't remember what the number is that they have on it now.

Dave: I think that's 634 (Little Elk to Bear Springs).

Dennis: There's some real steep, barren canyons that I think would be impossible for a man to walk down. Animals of course use it. You see bear trails up there, but I would be pretty leery of
going down some of them, so once you're on top you're limited to how you can travel to get out of there. But then we could look right down that canyon and see Porcupine Butte down by Melville, and that's how I was getting my bearings, and then I knew that coming back west from Porcupine, and of course then we could see Rein Lake.

Dave: As far as, perhaps where the Martin's came up, they probably came up by Elk Lake and came all the way up to Lebo. Is there a trail that you know that comes up from Elk Lake, and actually I don't think so, because it would be so steep.

Dennis: Yeah, the real barren rock and steep.

Dave: So they probably would have to come all the way up the Lebo Fork of Big Elk, and probably figure out some way to maybe follow the ridge on up into Loco. That would be tough too. There's a trail, or old road that goes a long ways up, and I was thinking that trail was somewhere out of Elk Lake, but having been over there it just looks nearly impossible.

Dennis: I've never been down to Elk Lake. I've been up on that ridge looking down on the other side of the North Fork. We'd get back in there so far and then the hunting was no good and that was my biggest interest, so we'd just look and I never did take pictures when I was up on top. I was always gonna go up on top of Cinnamon Peak, and take pictures of the hunting camp, but I never did.

Dave: There's a lot of spectacular country from up on top. One of the allotments does show that it's long and narrow, and it goes from the upper reaches past Forest Lake and actually goes up in towards Loco and down towards Cinnamon. Maybe that would have been the Smith Brother's allotment. I just found that map about 5 minutes before we came over here. I didn't have time to copy it, but that would make sense. That would be an allotment that would go from Forest Lake running east and northeast, and up towards Loco. Maybe that's the answer to that question.

Well, Dennis, you've probably been at it since about 6 this morning?

Dennis: About 5:30! I had to go out and see which way the Sandhill Cranes were flying, and they weren't flying this morning. They were walking. I think they got wet and cold last night, and they were walking out across the prairie.

Dave: Yeah, that's coming up before long. Sarah and the other two ladies that are volunteering are staying out at Hunter Springs Cabin. They've been doing pretty well, but the bathtub is plugged up. Some of the conveniences aren't really working, but at least they don't have to get the wood stove going in the morning. Well, you do actually for heat.

Dennis: You probably enjoy that?

Sarah: It's really quite unique.
Dennis: Yeah, any of these other pictures if you want to make copies, like there shows the horse drawn equipment, and this is some sheep down at the ranch you can borrow these. The mother-in-law's dad come from Minnesota, and raised sheep, but they didn't use a Forest Service allotment. Going south from the ranch they had some short grass grazing hills out there. The father-in-law run the cattle, and then his father-in-law run some sheep, but they had a hard time coming up with enough hay in the wintertime. It would get so cold and blowing out there, and of course I think in those years it was more snow then there is now, and so they had to feed them hay, and it just got to be too much of a hassle for him trying to round up enough hay to get through the winter. They always had a few sheep around, but just maybe some for fresh mutton, or just something to do, a little bit of cash flow. Of course, that would be the mother-in-law would do that then when her dad passed away.

Dave: Where was the Mager ranch?

Dennis: It would be 7 miles west of Two Dot on the Musselshell River. They owned on both sides of the river and the railroad track.

Dave: Do they (the Mager's) still have the ranch?

Dennis: No. Jerry Gleason bought part of it, and then some lawyer out of Billings bought a part of it, and then, of course, Arleen's brother, Frankie he still has some. Then Jerry Gleason is married to one of the Moore girls from the Moore Ranch, and all I can say is it's some of this in here, but I can't remember any of the numbers right now. They trailed across Moore's and Pump's to get up to the mountains.

Dave: That was a lot of ranching history, three or four generations in there.

Dennis: The ranch used to be a stage stop. If you looked at the barn, I didn't get those pictures out, but it was built so you could back a stagecoach into it. When they cut the doors out they cut the corners down and made it extra high, higher than a regular horse barn. It was built in the shape of a horseshoe, and they kept the new teams in that center. They would wheel in with the stagecoach and unhook, and hook the new team up. They built a big house, and that was for if anybody wanted to stay, like if they'd come in late on the stage for some reason, maybe bad roads, mud, snow, whatever, and then they could put all the passenger up, and then they had a cook shack. They had the big bell on the shack.

Dave: Would that have been part of the Carroll Stagecoach Trail?

Dennis: I don't know. I've heard of that Carroll Trail, but I am thinking more of the Judith Gap area. This stage trail comes from Big Timber, Melville. It went through the town of Big Elk when it was there, and then down to that ranch, and then up the valley towards White Sulphur Springs.

Dave: It would have joined the Carroll Trail then. The Carroll Trail came in from Lewistown and Judith Gap, and swung around the south side of the Belts, and went towards Martinsdale.
I'm not sure it went through Martinsdale, it went through Checkerboard and over to White Sulphur. Folks have talked about the other trail, the Big Timber Trail coming from the south, and these would have connected, and then went on the Carroll Trail at that point. I haven't heard much about that other trail.

Dennis: In the early 1960's when I married Arlene, then the father-in-law would show me different places when we'd be out doing some type of work on the ranch, he'd show me where that stagecoach line was. Of course, same way they would move it over. They'd get deep ruts, and then they would just move over. Like now a days if you're in a vehicle and you're goanna move a road over most people would go a full width of a vehicle. All they would do is straddle one rut, and then maybe only move over a foot or so. That way it would last a lot longer. Some places where the water would pile up and really make it wet and boggy when they had the wet weather, it would be quite an area across there where they would move their tracks, because it got too rutty to go through with a stage coach.

Dave: Did he talk about working with the neighbors, or going through any of the other particular ranches, or getting house logs or lumber from some of the other ranches, or about stopping points at some of the other ranches going down south, like the Martin's and the White's Ranch, or going down to Sweetgrass, some of the ranches down there.

Dennis: Well, most of it was the ones that was right close. The Moore Ranch, Frank and the Moore Ranch done a lot of work together, branding, harvesting, and then there was a Ray Roberts that lived here. He had the ranch that now Bob Guesanburi lives on, but I believe it belongs to Teen Paterson. I'm not sure, but it's the one on the river. Ray Robertson and Frank were real good friends, and then of course, Ted Johnson, his ranch was up Findon Lane. He would come down the valley, and that's when they done the custom work, they would go and do the haying, you know, for a price. Also, Ted had got a truck in the early years, and then he kind of started this hauling livestock for people and then they started moving them with trucks. Of course, they was the older style trucks, but he done a lot of hauling. Then of course, later years they come up with the big semi's to do it. Have to have license to do it then and all that, in those days, you didn't. You just went ahead and done the work.

Dave: Some of your other pictures there I might browse through, they might be close to the Forest. It's just amazing how as time goes by, once the folks who took those pictures aren't here any more; it's almost impossible to track them unless you recognize people. This kind of looks like Bald Ridge (pointing to picture),but may not be. I suppose these are back in the '30's or so?

Dennis: Yeah, it'd be the late '20's and into the '30's.

Dave: Is this your father-in-law there? (pointing to picture)

Dennis: No, I believe that was the mother-in-law's dad.

Dave: Pretty distinct rock formations in the background, but it sure doesn't look like anything I recognize around here.
Dennis: I couldn't figure out where it was.

Dave: That other picture looks like the same area. I can see a little patch of bare park there; I'm trying to figure out where that's at. It would sure be unique to find that at some point in time. You just really have no idea if that cabin is still up?

Dennis: No. You see, the ranch, would've started with the great uncle, Jacob Taveton, and he's the one that was related to the Teig's, and I forgot that. I've got one picture in here that said something about the Teig Ranch. I was going to show you that they were related. They had the homestead up in the mountains, and this is right underneath Coffin Butte (Taverton). They had cabins up there where they lived. Here's a picture of the Teig Ranch, and that would've been some of their family. I don't know any of them by name, but I suppose if I showed it to some of the Teig's they would know.

Dave: Do you suppose this was their (Tieg) ranch, down Miller Creek off the Forest a few miles?

Dennis: I think it is. It looks like it's up higher. Now the Mackey Ranch would surround it, the Crazy M Ranch. They bought Sonden's, and Sonden's were their neighbor. They were real good friends of the family.

Dave: On the Teig's ranch that's just off the Forest, I guess it would be Emmett's brother's, up on Miller Creek.

Dennis: The one that's west of Miller Creek?

Dave: Yeah, west and north.

Dennis: Yeah, that was Yohan Teig, and that was an older brother.

Dave: I have never really looked at the land ownership maps. I know the other brother passed away about 3 or 4 years ago. There were the two brothers up there and one has passed away. I'm not sure if they lived together in the same building.

Dennis: Was he the bachelor?

Dave: They were both bachelors.

Dennis: The one I'm thinking of, Yohan, it was a few more years ago than that that he passed away. He lived up there all alone. He had broke his leg and he got into the cabin, but then couldn't get out for help. When they found him he'd had such an infection from the break that when they did bring him to town it (the infection) made him so sick he just passed away.
Dave: I know he passed away since I've been here, probably in the last, 6 years ago. Does that sound about right, or maybe this is way back before that? I was talking to Ron Teig Jr., and he was telling me a little bit of the history.

Dennis: When we hunt on our area up there we look down onto Yohan's cabin.

Dave: He was probably about 90, 95, or so and living by himself up there in a cabin. Do you suppose this (photograph) is that building?

Dennis: No, what he (Yohan) had was just for one person really. It was a small cabin, and just enough barns for what stock he kept up there. No, this would've been the other brother that was down lower, but not down on the river. Then we had the one that's down on the river.

Dave: The one (brother) that's up there right now is he just a couple miles down Miller Creek, the one that's alive today.

Dennis: I'm not sure just where that is. That would be over in this other area, coming down in this area some place (pointing to map). This one right here would be what Yohan owned, and his cabin would be just above the creek on this side here, just above Little Elk Creek.

Dave: The one brother that's still there today, he's over in this area (pointing to map)?

Dennis: Yeah, it's down lower, because I know this government trail goes through there. Wayne Butts would get permission from them to come in, and then he would come in and hunt on this side, and then go back here to Section 24.

Dave: There's a lot of isolated country back in there, and I just can't imagine a man, 90 years old, living in a primitive cabin. Does he have a phone up there at all?

Dennis: No, no power, no phone.

Dave: He's probably been there since he was a little boy, I suppose?

Dennis: Well, he was younger when he was up there, because I've heard about him for years already in 1961. He was already established. Of course, he would drive down the road, he had this jeep pickup he would drive real slow, you know, nothing to hurry for. He'd come to town, get his supplies and go back in that same day and then you wouldn't see him for quite some time. He had everything he needed right up there, other than the few supplies from town, and then everything else was right there because he didn't need the modern conveniences.

Dave: It's just so amazing there is a person living that lifestyle, up in the woods, isolated, and he probably doesn't see anybody for two, three weeks at a time.

Dennis: I could see how easy it would be to do that, because when I went to school we never had electricity until I was a senior in high school, and I'm not that old! Then the folks sold our
ranch where we didn't have power, and semi-retired in Arizona. That's how we come up with their electricity, moved into Phoenix. After one year I finished my high school and I was back in Montana two weeks after I graduated. Yeah, a person takes that electricity and modern conveniences for granted, but it isn't that hard to survive without it. All you have to do is make up your mind you're gonna do it.

Dave: Would some of these old photos relate to the Forest?

Dennis: These here, all fell out (of the album). We was always gonna put them back in, but we get them out so often to look at them that we didn't put them back in.

Dave: He actually started it about 1927, with snapshots?

Dennis: Yeah, I thought it was kind of neat how he did come up with that (the idea of using a camera). Some of the old timers, they would call them a Kodak. Ted Johnson, he took pictures, and he's got a picture of Alberta (Bair) riding one of his buffalo when she was younger. I'd like to have that! I think I could of sold it to a history place. He always called his camera a Kodak. "Let me take a Kodak!" There's some history now that would join in with your Forest Service history in the Little Belts. I think I can tell this now because statutes of limitations is up. Ted had built an elk trap in the Little Belts, it's still there, but I don't think it's used now. He told how he'd set it up one time, and got a cow and a calf in there. He wanted to get a little closer look at that calf elk, so he crawled up over the real heavy corral poles that he had it built out of, and got down in there and was walking up to that calf. The cow just got up on her hind feet, and started thrashing with her front feet, and he started crawling up that pole corral again, and she took the shirt right off his back by pawing at him to defend her calf. He decided that was a close enough look at that calf elk (laughter)!

They used to hire him when they would trap the elk in West Yellowstone. He was just real knowledgeable about wildlife and mountains. He would go over then and help them trap those elk so they could ship them. He told how they came up with the idea they had to cut the antlers off, so they wouldn't injure themselves or other elk when they was transferring them. When they started using the helicopter, I remember when I would see helicopters land up to Ted Johnson's ranch. Probably Forest Service was on some of that, but the Fish and Game and their biologists when they would go out and trap certain animals and then they would always come and get Ted to help do that. I don't have any pictures of Ted's ranch. Well, I guess I do. I've got a picture of his elk and deer antler stack that was way taller than him. He didn't really care to have his picture taken that much, but in later years people did get some pictures of him, and then we did.

Dave: It sounds like he was quite a character, and quite an old timer. We were talking to somebody several days ago that said they thought there used to be wild sheep (Big Horns) up there in the north end of the Crazy's. Have you heard of that?

Dennis: Yes, there was people that would come up and stay where our hunting camp is now, underneath Cinnamon Peak, and then they would hunt both sheep and goats up on Cinnamon Peak and then headed south on those ridges.
Dave: What time frame was that? It must have been quite awhile back.

Dennis: No, that was in the '50's and early '60's. They've got goats up there after I come to the area, after 1960.

Dave: I knew there were a lot of goats, and they crashed later on, and just got the hunting season back recently. I'd heard, but wasn't really sure that there were sheep up there. I know folks had talked about finding sheep skulls up there. It looks like sheep country, with the high alpine plateaus. Some of your hunters, or folks you hunted with, were actually hunting for sheep up there in the '60's?

Dennis: That was before I started taking hunters out. It was just people would ask permission to go up there and camp, and hunt them, when they got a permit. I can't remember any of the names now. One guy was just a little Frenchman, but I can't come up with his name. He'd went up there and camped, and I believe that was a goat that he got, right off of Cinnamon. Of course, that was the days that, yeah, you might ask (a land owner) if you can go up and camp, but you didn't have to ask all the landowners up there. It was probably later years before I knew that Pump's owned that Cinnamon Peak. Just that the father-in-law owned land for access up there.

Dave: Did Fish and Game manage the sheep up there? They would have records of that. Did they actually have a permit or two they'd give out every year?

Dennis: Yeah, they give out permits.

Dave: I didn't realize that.

Dennis: You could probably check with the Fish and Game on that. They'd have a record of it.

Dave: Yeah, it's logical to check with them.

Dennis: I know one thing is, domestic sheep and mountain sheep can't be in the same area. The mountain sheep get like a pneumonia. It's a lung disease, and they die. The biologists tell me, but I don't know if they put it down for record, that it has to do with the domesticated sheep, that there's something that they have that they don't die from, but the wild mountain sheep will get that disease and die. So they really have to be careful. That's why their trying. I believe they mentioned it but I don't know if they carried through with it, but they was trying to stop the sheep allotments in the Absaroka Wilderness area. I'd went over there on some of those unlimited (sheep) hunts, and we couldn't find no sheep. "Well, no this was a bad year, they got pneumonia." "How can they get pneumonia?" "Well, because domestic sheep had been in here."

Dave: Yeah, and I understand that parasite is viable for up to ten years or so laying on the ground, and that the wild sheep will pick that up. The country sure looks the same, the high alpine, grassy plateaus. It is just so logical there would have been sheep here once upon a time.
Sarah, can you think of anything else that we might ask Dennis about? History of the area, or any other interviews that brought up points of questions?

Sarah: What about lookout points? Any fire lookout points?

Dennis: There are none in the Crazy's for this area. When they put that government trail through, I call it the Groveland Trail because it's been that name for years, and then they came out with the number 634, I'd always heard that they put in that trail in case there was a fire. Then they would have a main trail to get into the area. I think for most of that area, there would be enough people up there at the lookout towers, and also the lookout towers in the Little Belts could look over there and watch it close enough. We did have fires up there through the years. I just remember the ones in the later years. You can see different places up there where they had fires, nothing real big, but it probably was a concern to the stock growers up there.

Dave: The other day someone found some pictures of an old lookout up on Elephant Rock in the Belts. We had just seen pile foundations but we weren't sure there was a lookout up there. We were talking to Ox Thorson, and by golly, he had pictures of it from back in the 40's. I think that's the only pictures in existence of that lookout. We weren't even sure it was there.

Dennis: Yeah, this will bring out a lot stuff that people don't know now a days. That's why I'd like to find out on this Cottonwood Lake. If my memory's anywhere's close on that, then they changed the name. When we would show that picture, I'd tell that story, so I should find out for certain if it's correct or not.

Dave: There's a fishing book from the 1960's written in Montana, and it describes fishing in a lot of these lakes. I'll look at that. It might say formerly called Cottonwood Lake. The writer was real good about referencing old names of lakes. Dick Konizeski wrote the book, and then did an updated version in the '80's again.

Dennis: Some place up in the Crazy's, and it wasn't really very far from the mountain pasture that the father-in-law had, was a horse rustler's camp. The gentleman that told me about it was Dick Stoltz. He's kind of a buff for looking for this old history, and that. He wanted to look for it, but we could never come up with it. He said there was a log cabin that was there. When I got permission from Pump's to hunt on their land, I found where this old log cabin is, but I don't dare tell other people, because their gonna want go there and look, and they're not suppose to be in there. Of course, I don't want them in there myself, but I know that the local rancher don't want them up there, so I wouldn't tell them where I'd seen this old log cabin. Supposedly they'd run these horses up there, and would hide them until they could sell them. This is the same way with this remount, that's why that person had to be so careful down there. The contractor, he never knew just who's horses he was buying, and then he'd want to resell them, well, then somebody would show up and claim those horses.

Dave: This old cabin, do you think it was inside or outside the Forest?
Dennis: No, I think it's outside the Forest, but then not knowing the Forest lines, it's hard to tell. A lot of that area is pretty hard to tell where it was checkerboarded. You can find some of the corner marks, you know, just happen to be walking through, and you'll see a corner mark, but then when you start going over the terrain it's hard to stay in a line.

Dave: Definitely a lot of history around in that country, it's sure unique. Have you ever read that old book by Andrew Garcia, "Tough Trip To Paradise"?

Dennis: No.

Dave: That's really an interesting book. This guy, in 1871, was a trader who came up out of Bozeman, out of the Yellowstone, with a wagon. He set up a little trading post someplace on the east side of the Crazy's. I think it might be at the base of the American Fork and the Musselshell, where it comes together; I'd like to do a little more checking on that. He wrote quite a book. He married an Indian lady whose parents had been killed in the Battle of the Big Hole two years earlier. I think that battle was 1872, or 1871, and he married her a year or two later. He spent the winter up someplace here on the northeast side of the Crazy's. They had wagons, and there was still a lot of renegade Indians at that time in the area. There wasn't much for ranches. There really wasn't anything else. That was just too early in 1871, '72. Maybe the Galt Ranch was getting started about that time, but everybody had to watch their own hide at that time. The renegade Indians would kill whites if they came upon one or two at a time, and take off their trade goods, horses or whatever. He had some real close calls. He talked about making it up into the Gap, and some places on the route over into the Gap, and the few Indians and a few of the white settlers that he met at the time. I think the book is in the library, and if it's not, I got a paper back copy. It's in the bookstores, but it's really an interesting story of 1871.

Dennis: That would be interesting. I wonder if it tells about the Indians that would travel from the Little Belts to the Crazy's. There was two different tribes, and they didn't get along, so all they did was keep a ridge in between them. If they happened to be traveling at the same time, if they didn't see each other, then they wouldn't have to fight. The ridge is out by Martinsdale. Barney Grinvoll pointed it out. You don't really think of the ridge as something used that way but no matter what direction they was headed, one tribe would stay on one side and the other tribe would stay on the other side.

Dave: It's probably a matter of honor? As long as they didn't see each other then they didn't have to fight. When did Barney Grinvoll come into this country, or his parents?

Dennis: Barney, he had an uncle here that was a sheep man. Stanley Dahl, and I know some of your allotments would show that. Well maybe not, a lot of his was the lower area, I don't know if he had Forest Service allotments or not. Barney is 94 years old. I believe he was around 16 when he got here. The reason he come over from Norway is, he couldn't get in the military service over there. Somebody had to put up four hundred dollars for you to join the military service, even if you was volunteering. He knew that in the United States you could go in the military service, so he come over here and went to work for his uncle herding sheep. He said he only done that as long as he had to, to pay his fare the uncle put up for him to come over on a
ship, and then once he got that paid off he went military. He's got 30 or 40 years military, 30 years on the railroad. He was our local Justice of the Peace for quite a few years. He really has history. He could tell you a lot about the lower country and the sheep ranching that his uncle was involved in.

Dave: He was a military person for about 30 years and then came out, and spent 30 years at his next career?

Dennis: He would come home, like work on the railroad, and then your time would both keep going, because if you was in the United States military then you didn't lose your job. You still held your seniority. Especially in the railroad and the bigger companies. He was building up on both, but then he would just go on the campaigns. I believe, like he was in 3 or 4 of the major campaigns, and of course, the wars. He tells a lot about Pearl Harbor, Germany, he is full of history. He's interesting to talk to.

Dave: Was he at Pearl Harbor?

Dennis: Seems like he was. He talks about Hawaii, and different places. We went there for a visit, and then he will ask if we seen Diamond Rock, and different places. I not sure just where he was, and then, of course he was in the infantry, and had something to do with the machine guns setting up, then he tells how they had these machine gun bunkers dug in to the hillside so they could be defended.

Dave: I know he's a load of history. I've never really met him. I've seen him. I should meet him at some point.

Sarah, can you think of anything else you might want to ask about.

Sarah: No, Dennis has covered a lot of history.

Dave: Yes, we appreciate that, Dennis. It's been real informative, and helps tie down some of that information, particular on the Crazy's.

Dennis: If Arlene would've been here she would have come up with some closer dates.

Dave: Well, that's neat. Today we just have the physical remains of some of the sheep allotments, and really the only thing that's left is the stock watering troughs and some of the fence posts. There isn't much else left there. It's neat to understand that your father-in-law built those, and packed those in. This is history that would have been lost otherwise. We didn't have a clue as to who built those.

Anyway, we'd like to borrow these pictures, we'll make a note of what pictures they are, then take them back to the office to take black and white pictures for reference and then add those to our pictorial history library. Thank you very much.
End of the History Interview