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Interviewee: Glenn Lillegard  
Interviewers: Sarah Jaffe, Judith Pressmar  
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Judith Pressmar: Well maybe just to get started, if you could, tell us something of your background in the area.

Glenn Lillegard: I just lived here all my life, since 1917, and in the community. I was at Geyser for a while. But I’ve been in this valley ever since I was born.

JP: And how about your parents?

GL: My parents moved to Geyser in about 1909, I think. It was 1909 or ‘10. It was before the railroad went in. My dad came from Norway, and my mother was from Minnesota. She had relation in Hobson and that was where they met.

JP: So were you born in this house?

GL: No. I was born in Great Falls. We lived in Geyser at the time. No, I’ve been in this situation here, this house, since 1947.

JP: And what kind of work did you do?

GL: Well, from the time I was about 11, till I suppose 17-18, someplace along in there I broke broncs. I rode broncs all the time as a kid. Then I worked on ranches and worked with purebred cattle and stuff like that, until I entered the service. Then when I came back I worked mostly as a carpenter, carpenter and bartender and anything I could find to do, there’s not much difference in it.

JP: Seems to be the lifestyle in this state. (Laughter)

GL: Yes, it’s different. When I got married, then we moved and I bought this house here.

JP: So that would have been in 1947?

GL: Yes. I’ve always said I never had money enough to move out of it. (Laughter)

Sarah Jaffe: We’ve heard more than one person say that. Well, there are worse places to live.

GL: Yes, yes there is. My daughter’s been after me to move to Great Falls and I said no, this is lots better.
JP: So do you have any other children?

GL: No, just the one daughter. One daughter and one granddaughter.

JP: You must have had some exciting times here.

GL: Lots of them, before I got married! That slowed things down quite a lot!

JP: So did you still ride broncs after you were married?

GL: Very little. No I kind of quit it. I couldn’t stand getting shook up that much anymore. We first moved down here from Geyser in 1936, I think it was. Yes, I know it was. I got in a mite of trouble in schools in Geyser and I left there, and I didn’t go back for four years. Went back four years later and finished up, but then I run a trap line throughout the mountains here, and hunt and guide, so on and so forth just about anything, but I’d always something to do in the wintertime.

JP: So what would you have been trapping? What animals?

GL: Just coyotes, bobcats, mountain lion, bear, anything I could catch.

JP: So was there much of a market for those skins?

GL: Yes, there was then, yes. It wasn’t a big market I mean, high price or anything like that. Oh, in later years, where they were getting a $100 or $125 dollars a bobcat why I was getting $4 or $5. But then at that time it didn’t cost so much to live either.

JP: And there were probably more bobcat.

GL: There was, yes. And then when they was hitting 100 dollars for them it was starting to get back so they should be caught, because there was a lot of them. Same way with the mountain lion up here now, they just ought to do something about them to.

JP: So were there many mountain lions at the time you were trapping?

GL: Yes, there’s lots of them. Well, I think, for the four or five years that I was trapping up there, I caught six mountain lions is all. But bear, we got quite a bunch of them, because they were in the sheep all the time. So we got rid of them pretty fast.

JP: Those would be black bear?
GL: Yes. Well there is black bear and they call it a cinnamon bear, they’re little brown ones. And clear over in Bear Park I run into a bunch of martin over there and that was good money. And I was kind of foolish on that, I caught them all the first winter and I don’t think there has been any back there since.

JP: You were too good at your job. (Laughter)

GL: Yes, well they hit around $65 apiece for them then. And that’s a pile of money. It’s like everything else, when I was doing carpenter work, why it was paying a little higher than most of it. That was two and a half an hour, now they wouldn’t even grin at you for that.

JP: So what year was that when you started doing carpentry work, roughly?

GL: I think it was about 1952 when I started carpentry. Well, when I first started, I joined the union in Shelby in 1938 and I worked a while up there. There’s a carpenter business school up their and some other things they got there. And when that job ran out, then it was pretty hard to get another job so I didn’t work at it for a long time, I went back to trapping, tending bar and just anything that came by, herding sheep, or anything, it didn’t make any difference.

JP: So what period of time would you have been herding sheep?

GL: Oh, that was when my folks first moved up here. I think 1932 was the first time I worked for Lon Vestment out here. And, I worked for them out there for three years, I think, something like that. I herded sheep there and in 1935...Let’s see, I quit school in 34, and in 35 I worked up at Depuyer for the Howland Sheep Company one spring and summer lambing. Then I rode for Chapel Brothers on the other side of the river, well between the river and Havre, rounding up wild horses, and I worked for them over the winter over there. And that was the toughest winter I ever put in. That’s when I almost decided I should have never quit school. (Laughter)

JP: So what made that so tough?

GL: Well, just you’re out in any kind of weather, blizzard or anything else, wherever you’re finding horses. We got paid pretty good when we first started and then, I and two other guys set out, well, to north of Virgil over here if you know where that is, it’s just below Fort Benton. And, we was rounding up horses down through there, and when we got back, the outfit had left. So we had to take horses for wages, and that was kind of a caution to, because you was lucky if you got something that was good. And then we had to break them before we could leave there, and we was eaten jackrabbits or anything we could find because nobody had any money.

JP: I’ve heard that the ’30s were pretty tough times.
GL: That was, I wouldn’t want to go through it again but I can say we always had something to
do. I could always find something to do. It was just a different time. I mean nobody had
anything, so everybody had the same thing. Instead of going to town in cars, you had a saddle
horse. And if you had a car you didn’t have no money to buy gas for it.

JP: So at what point would people typically start to use the car for that sort of thing?

GL: Well, 1937, they had a pretty decent crop and then in ’38 was probably the best crop they
had for, well since time back. They had good crops when they first moved into this area,
because the land was all new. And they had beautiful crops to start with, and then the droughts
really hit at that time. And they just never came back. I can remember at home that we got 25
cents a bushel for wheat and that was all put in with horses. I think it was 1935, that we got a
tractor and then we lost that the first year because we couldn’t make the down payment. They
was just hitting about six bushels to the acre on the harvest, and at 25 cents a bushel.

JP: Yes, not quite enough to pay off the tractor! What would you do in a bad year for food over
the winter?

GL: Raise it on the ranches. Yes, well there was a bunch of us, there was 10 in the family there.
And we butchered about 13-14 hogs a year, and then we’d sneak up in the hills and come back
with a elk, or deer whatever we could find. The forest ranger, Al Hughes, he wasn’t so bad but
we had a game warden at that time, an idiot. And somebody had turned us in from up there
that was, well, whether he liked it or not, didn’t make any difference to us. I know my dad went
up and shot an elk one time and somebody had turned him in, in the meantime. He got a
neighbor friend of his, and they took off up to the mountain with a horse and they found the
game warden sitting in the middle of the trail that they had to use, so they went around it and
went up got the elk, come back out and the game warden sat there all night long waiting for
them to show up.

(Laughter)

JP: So what would the game warden have done if he had caught them?

GL: Well, I think it would have cost them about 27 and a half apiece which they didn’t even
have.

JP: So was there much elk up in the mountains at that time?

GL: Yes there was quite a few. Yes, they got so many of them that in 1929 they opened the
season in the Highwood Mountains the first time. Then there was an old guy up there got his
elk first who was bragging that he was the first one to get an elk. Game warden went up, well it
didn’t open till about nine o’clock in the morning, went up at 11 o’clock and it was froze solid,
he’d got it the day before!
SJ: How about deer? Were there many deer up there in the ‘30s?

GL: You were allowed ten deer a year, but we spaced it out whenever we needed it. We didn’t have any way to keep them. All of us kids were pretty good shots, and we’d find enough ammunition to go. Well, we got enough so that we could shoot one prairie chicken on the ground and get one in the air. And then run them down again and get two more. It would take about ten for a meal at home.

JP: Yes, I guess there were 12 of you then?

GL: There were 10 of us. There was 7 kids and my mother and dad, and my dad’s brother.

JP: That’s a lot of people to feed.

GL: Yes, my dad and his brother, they worked hard.

JP: So, did your dad ranch?

GL: Yes, we had a ranch. Well I don’t suppose you know anybody up around the Highwood Mountains, any places up there? It was north of Geyser about ten miles. I think they had 900 acres in there, something like that. But, oh, we had our own eggs, chicken, milk, it was all right there on the ranch, and if it wasn’t you didn’t have it. Yes, we learned a lot of different things at that time because we learned how to take care of meat, how to smoke meat, and how to just make sausage and anything we wanted. We just learned how to make it. I don’t know where my dad learned how, but he knew how.

JP: It’s too bad there isn’t some way to teach some of the younger folks how to do those things these days.

GL: My dad was a whaler in Norway, before he come over, and he was out fishing and when he got back home about six months later he found out that his dad had died right afterwards. And he’d been sending fish in and they’d been coming out to unload the ship and nobody had said anything to him at all. When he got back to Norway again, back to the main land, he got mad when they told him that and he just packed up and came over here. He was heading for Alaska. He got to Great Falls and his brother-in-law was supposed to be in Alaska. Well he had left work for him there somewhere. Never did find out how. My dad couldn’t talk in American at all, and the fishing trip was off, anyway because something went wrong. So he didn’t have any money left and he took off for Lewistown on foot, because he heard there was work in Lewistown. He got to Hobson and that was as far as he went.

JP: So what kind of work did he do initially?
GL: Well, down there he was stone mason. They drilled the stone and everything for the Murray building in Hobson, and Moore both. He laid all the stone for them.

JP: Now there are some beautiful stone buildings there. You say you went to school here when you were young?

GL: No, I went to school in Geyser and I graduated from Geyser.

JP: And what was that like?

GL: Oh, I don’t know, it was just, a person might say a good country school, it’s about all. I started school there in, well, I went to grade school in the country at the country school. I must have been starting Geyser when I was, well, I know it was in 1930 because we’d just had the 60th anniversary when I started school at Geyser. I should say it was when I graduated from Geyser they just had the 60th. Well I quit the four years, and then I wound up as 21 years old when I graduated. But, in that time I broke horses in the winter time up there for a guy by the name of Gary McCray. He was supposed to have broke horses and ship them back east for sale. Well we’d get on, we’d ride them so that they’d be broke. So that was what he sent back there, and some of them didn’t work out so good. He finally had to send somebody back there to finish up the job.

JP: So you would just break them, you wouldn’t train them?

GL: No, just so you could get on them.

JP: So how many students were in your school when you started?

GL: There was eight graduated in my class I think when I graduated. And our big graduating class at that time had been 14 or 15. It just went downhill ever since. My sister graduated from there in 1927. Then my brother graduated in ‘29 I think it was. Then the next one he just decided one day that was enough, so he quit and wanted to work in a garage as a mechanic.

JP: Do you remember who the teacher was?

GL: Oh, in grade school, I had a teacher by the name of Edith Blaine, and she was from Belt. And Kaysells was another one, Elizabeth that was her first name. Then there was George Dickson, and then I had Sylvia Rover. And then we had Maime Dunn, was her name. I don’t think she lasted the full year, I think there’s a neighbor lady there who finished up the year for her. But then most of the kids was smarter than she was, that’s for sure. Then after I got into high school there was A. D. Hunters, English teacher was Burns. Then we had a mathematics teacher there, he was teaching his second year of high school and he was 19 years old. And I’ll tell you, I learned mathematics from him, I wound up with I think seven credits in mathematics when I got out of high school.
JP: I guess he knew his stuff.

GL: He taught and then the last year that I had him, he said, “All this other mathematics is good, but I think what we should have now is general math.” So we started all over again from the first grade, it was just general math. Now we started with that but he was the kind of teacher you could set here all day and give him six digit letters (numbers) and go down the line and just as long as you wanted to and whipped them off and he’d give you the answer. I mean he just knew how.

JP: Yes, I guess.

GL: He taught us how that way. He said, “If you grabbed a big column of figures,” he said, “make tens out of all of them.” He said, “Just go down the letters (numbers) tens and,” he said, “you’ll never have a mistake.” When I got through I didn’t. And fractions, I tell you, most everybody got of it from him, because he knew how. Well he finally knew how to teach it, and I didn’t have no trouble getting caught up, that was really good. I know, that general math, all through life, was the best subject I ever took.

JP: Did you go to school all through the winter, even when the weather was bad?

GL: Oh, yes.

JP: And how did you get to school?

GL: I always went home, we was about ten miles from school, and when we got back from the basketball games on Saturday night, I took off and went home, afoot.

JP: The ten miles?

GL: I’d take off cross-country.

JP: That must have been pretty hard in the winter!

GL: It was sometimes, but in the spring of the year it was the worst, because all the coulees would be filled with snow and it would start to thaw. Well then you couldn’t walk across them and you had to go around them. So then, I generally just followed the road and went home.

JP: So you didn’t ride a horse?

GL: Well, there was no school on Sunday and I’d be home...Well, we’d generally get back there by ten o’clock from basketball game. And I’d just take off cross-country and I was generally home by one o’clock in the morning. No, if I could get out of town, that suited me real well.
JP: Well in your times up through the mountains, did you come across any old cabins?

GL: Oh yes, all over the mountains. Some of them I knew whose they were. And when I was trapping up through this mountain up here, there’s cabins up in there that I was plum happy that they were there. There wasn’t much of a cabin left there, but then a blizzard would come up in the meantime, after I’d left home, and I got in there out of the blizzard several times. And a nice wood floor and build a fire inside! Oh the Forest Service has burnt up a lot of them since that, but there’s one that’s up here on this last peak (pointing out the window), you can see on the end, just on this corner of it, there’s one there. Last time I stayed in that one there was just half a roof on it, and I had a horse then. I put the horse in half of it and I had the other half. (Laughter)

JP: So when was that the last time you were up there?

GL: Oh gosh, the last time I was up there was about, last time I was up their horseback was 1937 I guess. But I’ve been back there, the cabin is still there, been hunting there several times since that time and the cabin is still there. There’s a spring there, and it’s a miner’s cabin.

JP: Do you have any idea who built it?

GL: No, I never could find out. Even at that time, my father-in-law Bert Skelton, he’d been here, well he was born in 1882, and he didn’t have any idea who built it. Because we’d talked about it when we were up there one time, we used it for just a stopover at night to go hunting. And he didn’t have no idea who built it. Then there was another one on this peak up in through here, (pointing to map) right on top and I never could find out who owned it. The only thing we could figure out was that a guy by the name of Gibson built it because it was Gibson Peak and its right on top of it. So kind of figured maybe he was the one who built it, but nobody really knew.

JP: Well the first cabin, how would you find the first cabin if you were on foot or on horseback?

GL: Oh, this one over here? (Pointing) Oh, there’s kind of a wagon trail, up to the saddle, and then you have to walk around the end of it. It’s about oh, 100, 150 yards off the trail around the end of the mountain.

JP: Now which mountain is this, the name of it? Because I’m not familiar with these mountains.

GL: It was Granite, yes, Granite Peak. I had to stop and think myself. And then around on the end of the mountain over here, where our ranch was, after we moved down here, we had a ranch up here too in the Belt Mountains, and around the end of that, there was cabin in there. It was a Smith, that had built it many years ago, had a homestead in there, and there was just about the bottom four logs, the last time I saw it. Everything else had caved in. Then there was
another one that Joe Chance had built, that was an old homestead. And the guy, well you’ve heard of that white wolf that was killed here.

JP: Yes.

GL: Well, the guy that was one of them that was in on it lived at this Joe Chance place—that was Al Close. And then the one that lived, well, right above our house, Joe Holland was the other one in on that. And they was the one’s that got that wolf.

JP: You say your parent’s ranch was in the Belts. Can you describe that?

GL: They moved up there in 1936, from Geyser.

JP: And did they build the house?

GL: No, no the house that we had when we first moved up there, was a log cabin about the size of this room here. But then they moved a house in from Leihigh, and that house burnt down. Another place just around the corner of the mountain from where we were, there was a big house there and we moved that one over there, so it’s there. And then Seth Steven’s had a place up there, a log cabin, he built that himself, or was in the process of building it. It would have been a nice house if he ever got it finished.

I can’t remember when that was, but anyway my brother’s kids, they were pretty little, and we were up there cutting wood. And they come down and they said, “I think there’s somebody dead under that building up there.” And so we had to shut down and went up there. And there was a man dead under there all right, so we went down to town that night, and called the sheriff and told him about it. And well, I had to go back up with him, and no identification on him, and as far as I know they never did find out who he was. I never did find out who he was anyway. Just from his hair and clothes he wore and everything, he was either Mexican or Indian, one of the two. And didn’t belong around here, you know because there weren’t any Indian families here except Close, and we knew all of them.

JP: So there was no sign of anyone doing him in or anything like that?

Glenn: Oh yes, he’d been shot. Yes, I’ll never forget, my wife and I went up with the sheriff. We went up there and, sheriff got down in there, and he’s being as careful as he could with everything, and come out of there. He picked up the head and handed it to my wife and said, “Here, hang on to this.” And you can imagine what she told him! (Laughter)

JP: Yes! When you speak about buildings, where would the wood have come from?

GL: Right there, right there within 25 yards of the building, it was all good wood itself. It was a log cabin so we’d just cut the wood right there.
JP: Were there any small sawmills in that area?

GL: Uh, no. The closest, really, oh there were some small sawmills up in Lone Tree Park, owned by a guy that had a garage in Geyser, Carl Deetz, had a sawmill up there. And then, up here (pointing) I think Munoz owned a small sawmill, but they just used it to square logs up and then they took them to Utica. But there was nothing very big up here, no. Well, actually in later years they had sawmills over on the Judith River, near Devon, south of here. They had some pretty good size sawmills in there at that time. Then there on Yogo there was a sawmill in there for a while. But there was never anything on this side of the mountain.

JP: So people would bring the logs to you to cut then?

GL: Yes, they never started taking logs out of this side of the mountain here just until the last few years. They never did log this side of the mountain at all. No, there’s some good timber here, but not that much. Well, in fact, they did have one sawmill, a small sawmill, up here too, a while. They logged off one of the rancher’s place up here. But they didn’t have any planners, or anything, just rough sawed and a lot of it, well most of it that came out of there went for railroad ties.

JP: Well, in your wanderings through the mountains did you ever come across any Indian sites?

GL: No, not really. There is, up on Dry Wolf up here, there’s a couple of places up in there, they must have just used them for an overnight shelter or something like that. And there’s some pictures on the wall’s there, you can’t hardly tell that they’re there. But if you knew exactly what you was looking for and where you was looking, then you could see them. But other than that, that’s the only thing that I ever did see.

JP: No tepee rings, or anything like that?

GL: There is up on South Fork, up on Dry Wolf, but the county went in there and they was rebuilding the road through there and they cut those out. And there was nothing there, not even an arrow there. So they had to of been just overnight camps that were just very short camps. But on the old place up at Geyser, back of the shed, there were rings there, around a big spring. And oh, we found buckets full of arrows, partially made. And I don’t know what happened to them, I had couple of five-gallon bucket full of arrows, and when I come back from the Army they was gone.

JP: Oh, they’d be worth quite a bit these days.

GL: I got most of them when I was just probably 9 or 10 years old maybe. I just went down there and well somebody said that’s what they were so I thought there had to be something there. We found quite a few things there, and oh I found two tomahawk rocks, one that had
the rawhide on it yet. And I don’t know where they went either, they just took off when I took off I guess.

JP: Where did you serve during the war?

GL: South Pacific. I just got back from a reunion Sunday night, and, oh there’s quite a few of them left. But out of my company I was the only one that was an original, because I enlisted. Well I was in Bozeman and I was working down there on a purebred ranch. I went to town one night for something or another, I can’t remember what I went there for, and I ran into 4 or 5 guys that I knew in high school, that played basketball, and football against Denton. So we decided we’d have a drink or two, and one thing led to another and I enlisted in the Army before I got out of there. (Laughter) And that was the last time that I was on a good bucking horse.

I was out on the ranch where I was working, I was breaking a horse up there. I just got a brand new saddle, that’s the first horse it’s ever been on. And I don’t think there’s a building in town here that I didn’t get thrown just as high as it was. And I got back up again, and got a hold of the horse, and this guy’s standing there, and he asked me if I was Glenn Lillegard. I said, “Yes.”

“Well” he said, “Is this your signature?”

I said, “It really don’t look like it. I can write better than that.”

“Well,” he said, “you actually enlisted, but,” he said, “you don’t have to go under the circumstances.”

I said, “I signed her once. I can do her again, but,” I said, “you going to have to wait till I ride this horse.” So I got on, the next time I rode it then. Took off and sold my saddle, and chaps, the whole works and took off. I was trying to get a year in, that’s what they told me, said, “Sign it, get your year in now, then you’ll be through.” It took just five years. (Laughter) I spent a little bit of time in Australia. Then we went up in the islands up at New Guinea and we stopped there for about six, eight months, and back to Australia again to regroup. I think we spent six months there or so, something like that. We got everything together, got some new recruits and took off again. Then we never did come back to civilization, till we got back home.

JP: I’ve seen some of the photographs that the men from up in the Kalispell area have of New Guinea, and that was a tough place to be.

GL: Yes, it was.

JP: Well can you talk a bit about your first interaction with the Forest Service?
GL: Well, I fought fires with the Forest Service and that’s about all I ever did with the Forest Service. Whenever there was a fire up here, why I fought fires. And that’s about the only thing I’ve ever done with the Forest Service, but I knew all the rangers from here to there. You know, with trapping and everything else, like Guy Myers over in South Fork. He was the first one over in there, and his wife was my teacher for a while; she was the one that took over for Mrs. Dunn. Then Stacy Echert, he was in here for a long time, and then Young moved in here. Al Young was the one that I fought fires under. And then the Highwood Mountains, well Stacy Echert had that when he was in here. Gosh, I can’t remember who was here before him, but there was somebody ahead of him, but it just seemed like he’d been there ever since time began. He was there a long time [J. C. De Groat].

JP: And what was he like?

GL: He was a very good Ranger, I mean if you had any problems. We had timberland in the mountains there in the Highwood’s and then we had a ranch right at the edge of the Highwood’s, by the Forest Service, and if there was a problem of any kind, he wasn’t afraid to, you know, get it straightened out one-way or another. And, if it was fencing and it needed to be fixed and nobody was around to fix it, why, then he’d get in and help fix it. He was a good Ranger. Then later we wound up fixing the fences. And, let’s see, must have been 1946, the last fire was up here, before this Turkey fire.

JP: And where did that burn (1946)?

GL: On Green Mountain. It would have been south of where this Turkey fire went through. It burnt from South Fork over to, well the corner of where this Turkey fire went through. It just come up the ridge to where it stopped this (Turkey) fire, stopped it from going the other way, it just stopped on top of that ridge.

JP: So it stopped naturally then?

GL: Yes, well, yes. The Turkey fire stopped, the wind stopped that, there was about 100 mile an hour wind that night. It wouldn’t let it get over the ridge.

JP: So were you fighting that fire? Did anybody try to fight that?

GL: No, there was quite a few fighting that fire, but it wasn’t until the next day. It was more or less mopping up, it just kind of quit by itself, but it burnt up one ranch. And, well it actually burnt up two ranches there. A friend of mine from Lake Havasu, Arizona, he lost his pickup and all his rifles. I was working around that time of the fire. I was helping the ranchers get their cattle away from where it might come.

JP: And so what would be done with the cattle? Would they be moved to someone else’s ranch?
GL: Just moved them ahead of the fire, trying to. One guy, there's no way we could of helped him, he lost 150 head. He had them in a corral there. He was just getting ready to wean his calves, and ship them, so he lost 150 head of cows, and calves. He was just a young fellow just getting started.

SJ: Do you recall the location of the lookout cabins, or lookout points?

GL: Yes, one of them was up on Peterson, and that was, well do you have any maps or anything that I can check trails. Do you know where that is?

SJ: Yes, yes we have a map here. The Forest Service map, will that help?

GL: Yes, I think it would be in there (looking at map.) Let's see, here's White Sulphur and Niehart, so it must be up here. I can't even find what usually I know of.

JP: Oh, we need to go to the top of the map.

GL: Here we are. Let's see, where is the Blankenship Trail? The Blankenship Trail comes up from Stanford, and then back on Spring Creek. It's got to be this country someplace.

JP: Here's Big Baldy. There's Spring Creek.

GL: Here's Anderson Peak, and it's right up on top. But it was right on top of Anderson Peak, and they only took that down just a couple of years ago, or three years ago. It might be longer than that, just seems that it isn't too long ago.

JP: The Forest Service did that?

Glenn: Yes, they didn't use it any more. Now I don't know whether there's any of those lookout stations even working anymore. And then there was another one over there on Logging Creek. I can't think of the name of that peak [Monument Peak]. It was Pilgrim Creek, but it was where they found that little girl that was murdered, they found her up towards that lookout station there.

JP: When was that?

GL: I think it was four, or five years ago. They never found out who killed her either.

JP: So that would have been a lookout that was still there four years ago?

GL: Yes, it was still there until about four, or five years ago. Here, it shows historical sites on Belt Creek, before you get there. It's on the road from Belt, it's just out of Belt, where you go up
towards Neihart and Monarch. It's just oh, maybe five miles before you get to Monarch. It was on this side of the road, it's what they called the Sluice Boxes. It's an area that they use now, well it's an old gold mining camp is what it was at that time. And they haven't used it for years. It was 1900 when they quit trying to find something, and well it's about the same deal as what the sapphire mines were over here too.

I had a friend of mine; he was from Spion Kop up here, before they quit that town. He started working there in 1880, in the sapphire mines, and he'd walk from Spion Kop over to it and walk back on the weekends. Then they kind of gave that up there. And a guy the name of Gadson, was up there for years taking care of that and wouldn't let nobody in there. Then he left for a couple of years. I got quite a few sapphires, some small ones that I found up there. Then the Jap's took over, after that was the first time it was open again.

And now there's a young guy by the name of Ridgeway, well his camp is right there where Yogo Town originally was. And he's got more sapphires I guess than you can haul out. The situation now it's in such a way that you can only sell so many carats a year so they don't overload the market. So he don't have to worry about not having enough to sell for a while. And he does, I guess, get enough gold out of there, that he's doing well on that too. That was quite a situation too. His dad bought up all of those claims up through there, all up through Yogo Creek and all up that way. He said, “That over there where they was mining.” he said, “That ain't where all the big bunch of sapphires are.”

Well, he never done anything about it at all but when he passed away, he had the placer in the first place, he said, “Everybody around here is trying to be a millionaire.” he said, “I'm going to see if I can't find a way to owe a million before I die.” Well, he got it done. And all the other kids wanted property and stuff like that, range land and stuff, and he said, “I'll take the mines up there and you guys can have the rest of it.” So he's been doing well.

JP: Yes, I guess.

GL: I think him and his wife had some skinny years before they got things a going. Well, I knew his wife, she was a girl from Windham, I knew here long before, well I think she was about 3 or 4 years old the first time I ever seen her. He's the one, I think, he's putting up most of the money for the church down there that they're building down across the railroad tracks.

JP: Now Kelly had spoken of a man that you knew that had a cabin. I'm not sure if he was a trapper, or a miner, she said something about him having funny looking pants, that someone had come in and made out of burlap—

GL: Oh, now let's see, that could have been, oh, that was Ole Cameron, I'll bet that was the one she was thinking about. He worked the Bluedick mine over there for many years. One time he got down in the mine, and I don't know what he was doing, I suppose he was just used to working with black powder instead of dynamite. I guess the way I understand it, in a way he

Glenn Lillegard Interview, OH 365-009, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
don’t know for sure either what happened, but anyway, he blew himself up, well blew him clear out of the mine, pert near, anyway. He got back up to his cabin, and he laid in that cabin in the winter time, without any fire, he couldn’t get out of bed, he couldn’t do nothing. He don’t even know how he got to the bed. Well, he finally got to the place where he knew he had to get up and find something to eat.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
JP: This is an interview with Glenn Lillegard, at his home in Stanford, Montana. The date is September 16, 1997.

JP: Mr. Lillegard has just been speaking of Mr. Cameron who was able to heal his wounds from an explosion in the mine, using oranges. I wanted to ask you about Mr. Cameron who was working in the mine, is he related to the Cameron’s from Martinsdale?

GL: I would say no. No, I would say no for this reason, that when he left here, it seems to me, he just went straight from here to Colorado. And oh, he’s getting pretty old and he had some relations in Colorado some place. He was going down so he could be close to them, because he was still crippled up yet, still in pretty bad shape. He was getting pretty old by then. And then there was another old-timer here that used to, oh, he was kind of a lazy miner, he’d go up here on Butcher Knife up on Dry Wolf, I hear, and he’d just go up every spring, and pan enough gold to last him the year. His friend here in town that owned one of the bars, he’d buy his kids each a 25 dollar certificate every year and that was the money he spent. The rest of it lasted him the rest of the year. He told me where it was at and boy I couldn’t find it. I was looking up there a dozen times. He went up every spring—that was all the time he spent. He was going up with me and he got to where he couldn’t make it, we started up there one time, he just couldn’t walk it.

JP: So what ever happened to that claim?

GL: It was never a claim, just a working up on Butcher Knife there.

JP: So were there any other colorful characters in the area?

GL: Well there was Sam Cruet, was his name. Yes, oh, we had some dandy’s around here for a few years. Sheepherders and stuff, they work till they had a few dollars then they’d come to town. When it was gone they’d head back to work.

JP: Were most of the sheepherder’s local men?

GL: No. Well they wound up local, because they got here and they never moved out.

JP: So where were they from?

GL: Uh, gosh I don’t really know. Let’s see there was a guy, name of Sam Seiland, he was a Norwegian. He was a Norwegian fisherman, then he come over here and herded sheep. So far as I know that’s where he came from, was Norway, because I knew him ever since, gosh, 50 years before he died. Yes, he was another dandy, he’d work until he had about 1,200 dollars, and then he’d come to town. They had a hotel down here, I don’t know whether you ever, well its down on the end of the street from here. There was another building, a small building down
there alongside it at that time, I think it’s been moved out long since, but he got the snakes one night and he jumped out of the third floor of the hotel, down onto the building and took off across country. I can’t remember how they found him that time, but he just took off. Next morning he had a few drinks and he was ready to go again.

JP: So where did the whiskey come from?

GL: Oh, well you see that was after 1932. Before that, why, before ‘32, I think there was about seven bootleggers here in town. And there was I know one up on Surprise Creek, there was one bootlegger still up there. South of Geyser there was a still, north of Geyser there was two stills that I knew of. They had all kinds of them around here.

JP: So I’ve heard they were good friends of the community.

GL: Oh, the one up there, a guy was helping Billy Lacy, he had the still, and it was Tommy Kincaid helping him. Then along about that time Burt Hill was the revenuer around here. He snuck in to camp there, and he hollered at them, and Tommy jumped in the brush and left his feet sticking out. He kicked him in the foot, and, well they said he took off over the top of a mountain, and the next time they found out where he was at, he was in Boise, Idaho. And he never did come back here, he never come back here.

JP: Were there any remnants of those stills back up in the mountains?

GL: Oh, there’s one up on top of the Rocky Ridge. There’s one up in there, the old still with everything. Well whatever hasn’t been sold and carried away is in that coulee yet. But the steam engine is still down there that’s what they used for a boiler for the still.

JP: Can you tell us about that steam engine?

GL: Well it was just a regular steamer that they’d got down in that coulee. And they used that for the boiler, and they found that after airplanes come in. But the bankers in Great Falls they sort of took care of that. (Laughter)

JP: So how would they get the engine back up in there?

GL: I don’t really know. I think they must have took it on cables and let it down in there. It was down in the coulee. I’ve been by it several times since that, but the old steamer still sitting in there, parts of it. Everything is there except what was brass or copper on it, that’s all gone. Then they had a big still at Raynesford there. I’m trying to think of his name who had it. But he had the still there and he always hauled the excess mash down to feed his hogs. The neighbors’ hogs got into it one time and he started to chase them out, and the guy that owned the hogs, he come up and cut his fence and everything to get the pigs back on his own side again, and he (first man) shot him.

Glenn Lillegard Interview, OH 365-009, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JP: Dead?

GL: Yes. And, as I remember they hauled him into town in a wagon, into Raynesford. They had to put him someplace till the train went through so the guy asked the guy at the blacksmith shop if they could put him in there till the train come through. He said, “Yes,” he said, “you can put him in there if you’re sure he’s dead.” (Laughter)

JP: Any other conflicts that you can remember?

GL: Uh, well, yes there was one between the ranchers over on that end of the Highwood Mountains. Jay Wellhorn, Neil Silver, Frank Spencer, and, well, Ole Osmus was in on that to. They tried to get Dickson involved in it too. But they was afraid to get involved with him, they let him go. He used to live in Belt years ago, and he got in a fight down in the bar, and somebody took a knife and cut him open. He held them in (intestines) and walked up on top of the hill, it was about six blocks, up to the hospital. They sewed him back up and they said in two hours, he was back down town again. So they didn’t monkey with him at all. They didn’t bother Neil Silver too much either. He was an ornery little guy. I’ll tell you they just, flat all of them was ornery. It didn’t make a difference which of them you talked about.

Because I know Jay Wellhorn, he had a place, it’s the last place into the mountains where they took the cattle through. Well, he wasn’t going to let them through. So he shut the gates and sit there, and I was with the Ole Osmus that time, taking his cattle up through what we call the Red Nose. And well he said, “I think we can starve him out.” Because we had lunch with us, and everything. So we sat there, and I think we were there a couple of days. Finally one night, Jay Wellhorn, why, we saw him take off. He was going to go get something to eat, because he hadn’t had no water either, he’d been sitting there. He took off and he didn’t get out of sight before we was going through the fence. I thought that was pretty good because I was just a kid then. But they fought over that, and fact of the matter I’m not too sure that, that water right has ever been settled over there.

JP: Were the issue of water rights a problem?

GL: Yes, it was then. Well it was the same way up here too, between Skelton, and the Hughes’s, and Fiedler’s, and just about everybody on the creek up there, there was always a little hassle over the water right. And let’s see, Goings, he was the first one on the creek up there, so he got the first water. And yet they didn’t need much water up on that end up there because most land there was hay land and anything like that was sub-irrigated. So they really didn’t need water up that high, but when they got down towards where the Hughes ranch is, Lon Vestment owned it when I was up there, and they had a hassle over a water right there. But I think it wound up that, after they got everything all settled, Skelton wound up with the water right. Skelton or Fiedler someway wound up with a certain amount apiece.
JP: I was going to ask earlier when you were talking about trapping. Did different trappers have their own territory, how did that work?

GL: Pretty much, I know when I trapped up in the Highwood Mountains when I was just a really young kid, there was another guy up there by the name John Cuff. Well he knew where I was trapping so he didn’t bother me, he didn’t come over that way at all. I knew where he was at so I never bothered him. It was just more of a gentleman’s agreement, that’s what it amounted too. I lost a lot of school that year; I caught 750 skunks that one winter up there. I always tended the trap line, I had too, before I went to school, sometimes I’d leave home at six-thirty, seven o’clock in the morning. Then I’d always make it back by nine o’clock for school, most of the time I’d set outside.

JP: You mentioned skunks? So could you sell them?

GL: Oh yes. Usually get dollar, dollar and a half apiece of them.

JP: And what would they do with those?

GL: Well even at that time they was going to Russia for skunk coats. They was quite expensive.

JP: Well, that’s a new one on me. So I guess there was plenty of game?

GL: Yes, usually didn’t have to worry about it. And, weasels was, you could get, if you had a good outfit and took care of them, well they was worth about two and a half apiece. I made good money every winter.

JP: So when did you stop trapping? What year?

GL: Well actually I was one of the first. When I stopped trapping was probably about 1938, I guess. Because that was after we left Geyser, and I trapped up here two years. Then Pyramid Cattle called me or they wrote me a letter and wanted me to come down and help him get ready for a show in Denver. So I went down there and helped him take care of that. Then we come back up, he had two carloads of bulls to go to Wells, Nevada, the Reech Cattle Company down there, and that was in ‘39, I think it was. Then it was in close to ‘40, because I enlisted in the Army, so then in ‘40 we took off in September.

JP: And so what did your wife do while you were away?

GL: I never got married till I got back, I got married in 47.

JP: Right, you did tell us that. So what was life like for your wife after you got married?
GL: Well, before we were married, I think when she was a little kid, they had very little. Her dad was a sheep-shearer, and kind of a logger and stuff like that. Timber land up here, cutting posts, and poles and stuff like that. And then, well he was kind of a rock mason too. He built a lot of bridges around here that was made out of rock, some of them are still standing. I know she was with him one year, while they was working on the bridges, they’d just set up tent while there dad worked there. She got typhoid fever, and had an awful time with that. She just really had a bad time all of her life, because she was born with one kidney is all. And that’s what finally caught up with her, she got cancer on the tube to the other one that they couldn’t remove. Most of the time while we were married I just went wherever work was so she more or less raised our daughter by herself. Because I was generally gone five days a week, mostly up on the highline building elevators. When I first started carpenter work I was building elevators.

SJ: Up on the highline?

GL: Yes, and then we got started repair work on the elevators, and I think I’ve been in every elevator in Montana at some time or another.

JP: How about these elevators, here in town?

GL: I’ve worked on all of them, yes. Yes, worked on all of them. I helped build one, it’s burnt down. Oh, Square Butte needed help there and Fort Benton, built several there, Chester. Then we built a lot for farmers up there. They got their own elevators out on the ranches. I think all in all, I counted it up one time, and we put up 27 new elevators. Then I got out of that and I started building steel elevators, lay them down and get a crane and set them up. I learned how to weld, and worked on them for a while, but I didn’t like. That wasn’t my job.

JP: How long would it take to build the wooden ones?

GL: We could generally run one up in about a week. Then we’d start the finish work on it, but the main part of the elevator, we put it up in about a week.

JP: And how many of you were there on the crew?

GL: Well it depends on the size of the elevator, there was 20 good men when first going up, but most of the time there was 8. And we finally got to where we was kind of spacing ourselves a little bit. We’d drive 96 pounds of spikes a day and then quit.

JP: Sounds like a fair number!

GL: My elbows still tell me all about it. Then people, oh, we’d have different outfits, oh, they’d start getting reckless, that I didn’t like. I was always kind of safety minded.

JP: So were there many accidents then?
GL: Uh, not really. We had one guy killed at Conrad, but that was nobody’s fault. It was his own fault really, because we built our own decks that we stand on while we are working. And he just didn’t look close enough and he put one of the main two by sixes that he was riding on, with a big knot in it, and he stepped on it and went down. When at Moccasin, a guy got killed there it was damn foolishness. They got to playing around trying to scare somebody and broke his back. They was playing when they should have been working. Gosh, then he went down about 45 feet on concrete. Most of the time, most of the guys, oh, I’ve seen them get up there like big dummy’s and get in a fight up in the crib, for no reason at all you might say. And stand up there on a big-set, and start hammering at each other!

Well, the only time I had a close call, it wasn’t my fault. I almost had an accident. It was up at Geyser, working on an elevator there and was putting metal on the roof, and I was putting the metal roof on the tin. And one of the guys, that was supposed to be working with me, well I tied a rope around my waste, and was scooping the cedar shingles off. He was supposed to be up there with the rope, you know, letting me down, and just trying to make sure that I didn’t go over the edge if I would have slipped or something. I was working there, there was dust, and it was pretty slippery and, I had all the nails drove down, and I stepped in dust or something. I slipped on that and I reached out and caught a knothole there with my big finger, and kept on working, and I was right down on the edge of the roof just like that, you might say.

I got through with all of it and went back in, and the guy that was supposed to be up there wasn’t even there! The rope was piled up in the middle right where I’d left it! So I asked the farmer where he was at, he said, “I think he went up town to get drunk.”

I said, “That’s a good thing, I better go up there and see if he’s well drunk.” I went up and stomped him around there, and beat him half to death, and next day I got fired. The boss came out and it happened to be his cousin. I don’t know what kind of a story he told him (the boss), but you know, he believed him. But that’s the only close accident that I’ve ever had of dying.

JP: Could have been a bad one.

Glenn: Well, I might have made it because shingles was piled up down there. Probably would have had a few nails drove through me, but it might have been cushion enough to break a fall, if I didn’t land on my head, but then I probably wouldn’t hurt anything!

JP: I don’t know! Well Sarah, do you have any questions?

SJ: No, Glenn’s been quite informative, he’s answered most of the questions that I would have asked.

GL: No, its good country around here, can’t beat it.
Judith: So what was the community life like when you were growing up here?

GL: Well, it was just all the same. Nobody had any money. When I first moved out here, well, I used to come down in here hunting a lot, I think maybe 14 years old something like that. We’d leave up north of Geyser there with the wagon with all our stuff in it, and head to the mountain over here. Because everything up in that end of the country got down to that time where you had to have a permit to go hunting so we’d come over here and go hunting.

JP: And there was no permit system here?

GL: No, never has been. When my dad first moved up here, they was allowed ten deer apiece. So they were really plentiful then. I know I was talking to my dad about it one time, and he said, “I just really can’t remember an antelope in this country.” The elk and stuff had already moved back into the mountains. They used to be a prairie animal, but they’d moved back into the mountains already, and he said you just never saw elk out on the flat. He came over here in 1903. Then he wanted his brother to come over so he called him, or wrote him and told him to come over.

JP: So he did? That’s right you said he lived with you for a time.

GL: Yes, they were in business together from then on. Never anything in writing. No at that time, I know at different times up in that country, you know during hard times and stuff like that, that any deal was made it was just a handshake and that was it. I mean, and that was just as good as any paper that was ever wrote out.

JP: What was your father’s name?

GL: Christopher.

JP: Christopher. And how about his brother?

Glenn: Knut. When he came over here, my dad had the name of Lillegard. Well, when he came over, his father’s name was Knut. So when he came over he took the name of Knutson. But then after he got here, then he changed his name to Lillegard. See when they left the old country that was what they could do, they could take their dad’s name which was Knut. Well he was Knut’s son, and my dad when he came over here I never really did know what his name was in the old country, because when he come over here the community that he came from was all small farms, and that’s what Lillegard means is small farms.

JP: Oh, so that was a name that he took when he came here.
GL: Yes. His brother-in-law, and I don’t remember his name, he was a logger, I met him. He was over here one time coming back from Alaska. But, one thing, I never met a one of my grandparents.

JP: So they were back in the old country?

GL: Yes. Well my mother’s folks was in Minnesota. And they was out here one time or so, before I was born. So I just never saw any of them.

JP: Did you do much traveling growing up?

GL: No. There was no place to go. I never went any place actually until probably after 1936-37, and then I got into the service. And then after I come back from there, well when I was in the service I was in a lot of different places. But in fact since 1940, I’ve been in 45 of the 48 states. Well it’s 50 states now. I’ve been in one of them to, I was in Hawaii, on the way home.

JP: So growing up, what did people do for fun?

GL: Oh, now like at Geyser when we lived up there, there was a school house about a quarter of a mile from my place. They had dances there every Saturday night, card parties and stuff like that. And that was about the sum total of it. Once in a while there would be an outfit come through with moving pictures, but nobody had any money to go to them anyways.

JP: Nobody wanted to go to the moving pictures?

GL: Well, they probably wanted to go, but they didn’t have any money. The first movie that I ever remember, was a silent movie, of comics. It was kind of a war story of some kind, I just don’t remember much about it except that he had his horse there, and they threw a hand grenade over there and the horse kicked it back over to them and that’s about sum total of the movie that I remember.

SJ: What kind of card games would you play?

GL: Oh, 500 mostly.

JP: And who would play for the dances?

GL: Just whoever could play. There was several up there, violin players, and there was two or three piano players, and banjo players, guitar players, all kinds of music. And then eventually somebody came up with a saxophone, then there was accordion players by the bucketful. My uncle played the accordion, but he didn’t go to them. He was kind of a bashful sort of a fellow, he didn’t mix up with people at all. But he’d get down to the basement, and get into the home brew every once in a while, then he’d get the accordion a going.
JP: I meant to ask you what your wife’s father’s name was. You said he grew up around here.

GL: Bert Skelton. And he was born and raised right here in Stanford, and died here.

JP: And where was his ranch then?

GL: His ranch, the one where he was born and raised, is just right out here at the foot of the hill coming into town on that side of the road. In the spring of the year, generally in February, he’d drive to Oregon or Washington, and he’d start shearing sheep and come this way, and he’d generally get here in July. Then he’s probably busy here till part of August, then that was about the end of his shearing for the year. While he was gone, then he’d always send money. Well, his wife passed away—used to live right next door here. Passed away in 1934, and after that why when he got work like that then he’d always send the money to his daughter, my wife. He’d send her the money. There was only two kids younger than her. There was quite a few older but he couldn’t trust them with the money. And one of them wound up being my sister-in-law too, my brother and I married sisters. Then one of the other ones she married a ranch hand out here and they moved out to Washington, went to Washington pretty much their whole life. Then they moved back here when they got older, and they lived up here. Well he contacted cancer and he died, and she’s still living. She’s in a rest home in Great Falls.

JP: One question that’s come up, and there’s been conflicting information about this, having to do with feeding the stock over the winter. Some people have said that they weren’t fed, they were just left to fend for themselves and others have fed always. What was your experience?

GL: Well we always fed. We always fed, and when the first snowstorm hit, why we’d start feeding. Just maybe not too much, but when the snow got deeper, then we’d feed every day. Well Johnny Hartenburg’s ranch up here, they never put up a pound of hay, they never fed. They’d always left it open. They had certain land that they didn’t have anything on in the summer time at all, but that was their winter range for the cattle. And they always had fat cattle up there. In fact Hartenburg, he didn’t, he never fed nothing. But I would say, well at Geyser we had to feed all the time up there. We didn’t have a winter range up there, but when we got this place up here, they had land there that was blew clear all year around. Just didn’t have to worry about feeding much. We didn’t feed as much up there as a lot of people had to. Unless we got an awfully big snow storm. We’d get some dandy’s up there.

I started to Stanford with lambs to ship on October the 15th, and I came back home that night to sleep. The next morning there was about four feet of snow on the ground. So we had to leave them down there. You couldn’t get anywhere with them. It quit snowing the next day and started settling down and I went ahead with them. I took a team and an outfit and took some hay on it and a log and pulled behind the sled that I had and made a trail for the lambs to follow. And they generally did.
JP: So you would just pull a sled to create a, a trail, that must have been tough.

GL: Yes, that was. We left the lambs up there one day and I had to feed them. I asked this guy from Windham up here, Bill Hues “Could we get a load of hay coming?” “Absolutely not, I don’t know how long this is going to last.” So I sat around there and its dark and they all headed in for breakfast and when they come back I had my sheep fed! I stole a load of hay. I don’t know that he like that too good, but he got over it. But I thought that was kind of low because the hay that had been piled up for ten years then, it wasn’t very good hay but I used it anyway. I had the horses back in the barn and he didn’t know anything about it until the next day that I’d stole the hay.

JP: Any other good stories that you can think of?

GL: No, probably think of them tomorrow. I know I was pretty busy all the time trying to get the best advantage. If I needed something, generally I got it. Sometimes you paid for it and sometimes you couldn’t pay for it. I think, you know, a lot of people swallowed it up being in the Service and stuff like that. They blame the Service for all their problems and that isn’t. I don’t think that, I just had a good time. Wasn’t the best time in the world you know, I just done it and all you have to do is make the best of what your was at the time and I learnt that at home. Make the best of what you have. I was a smart enough in young life that I could always keep myself out of sight someplace where I wouldn’t really get hit. But that’s where I got the loss of hearing. I got down and they were shooting over my head with a machine gun. And it was so close it hurt deep in this ear. Boy I had fun over there too. I had some of the best whiskey sold in the South Pacific! Yep, a friend of mine from up in Glasgow, we made our own wash machine. He had quite an education in him and believe me, it worked.

JP: That was probably a valuable thing in that place.

GL: Yes, and there for anybody to use and as far as I know it’s probably there yet.

JP: So what changes have you seen in Stanford, since you were a kid?

GL: Oh there’s just been so many of them. When I first moved into this house there was no houses here hardly. That one over here wasn’t here. The one down at the end of the block that my brother-in-law has got, that wasn’t there. The big house across the street, that wasn’t there. That was moved in afterwards. Of course this house was here, and that big one on the corner. I don’t think this one was here either, I think that one was put in afterwards. The big one, the square one up on the corner, that one was there. But the ones in the middle, none of them were there because they were built afterwards. No, just a lot of activity, and of course across the highway, there was very, very few houses there. I can’t think of one that was there before, it was just empty. Of course the other side of the courthouse there was a house built there. Because the guy that lived behind the courthouse, his daughter got married and he built them a house. One of the big houses up there, it was there, but the other one was moved in after I
moved in here. Fact of matter, in Stanford right now, I have lived in the same place longer than anybody in town.

JP: Did any of the forest rangers live in town here?

GL: Eckert lived in town, he lived up on the highway. And, let’s see, Gallant lived here but I couldn’t tell you where he lived. No, the ranger station that was up here on Dry Wolf, they tore that down, I think it was in 1932. I wouldn’t be so sure of it, but I think that’s about when they tore it down. They had already quit living out in the mountain by that time. And now they built another ranger station up there that nobody ever stays at. They rent it out to someone who wants to rent it out. I don’t know why they built it. My brother-in-law built it.

JP: What was his name?

GL: Frank Dusse.

JP: Well can you think of anything else Sarah? You’ve certainly given us a lot of information here.

GL: Probably most of it you can’t use.

SJ: Well it’s sure been fun listening. It’s been enjoyable for me.

GL: No, I’ve been around quite a while. Probably lots of things happened that I haven’t even thought about. You know, about that time you made your own fun. Yes, been chased by Game Wardens, Highway Patrolman, and various rangers.

JP: Various rangers?

GL: You name it. I was, well one time before I wound up in the service. A patrolman tried to catch me coming out of Raynesford. I guess I didn’t have any taillights or something I don’t know what exactly it was. I took off there and he went on down by there. I went in through Stanford. When we were out in Washington, this Highway Patrolman was our company commander. We got to talking about it. He said, “You used to live in Geyser didn’t you?”

I said, “Yes, before I moved to Stanford.”

He said, “There was one guy there, he had a 1932 Chevrolet with a trunk on the back of it, I tried to catch him a dozen times” and he said, “I don’t know where he went, evaporated all the time.”

I said, “Yes, that probably could have happened,” I said, “probably knew the roads better than you did.”
“Well,” he said, “I think that’s what happened.” He looked at me, and he said, “Wasn’t you, was it?”

I said, “Oh, I wouldn’t do anything like that.” Then I told him, “Yes, that was me you tried several times.” So we was probably the best friends after that. He’s was out company commander for a long time. He was a tough old guy too.

JP: So how about when you were chased by the Forest Service?

GL: Oh, they was trying to catch me for shooting grouse and stuff out of season.

SJ: Well when you were fighting fires, did the Forest Service give you your gear? Or did you provide the gear?

GL: They provided us with some stuff. They didn’t have much more than what we did. I mean there wasn’t really any gear there. Just a pick and a shovel, was about the size of it. And somebody had a pick and somebody else had a shovel. Maybe somebody would be along with an axe when they thought they could cut a tree down, or saw a tree down that might help stop it where it was. That’s just about the size of our firefighting equipment. Then one time they furnished sleeping bags for us. Because I remember this fire up here with Al Young, was the forest ranger, he said, “We’ll follow down this ridge and then come back up the bottom.”

I said, “What are you going to do that for? Why don’t you take this trail and go straight down to where they’re camped?”

“No,” he said, “we’re not going down that way, you can’t go that way in the dark.”

“Well,” I said, “you can, we’re not going down the other way.” I and two other guys took off down through there, and I think we were back in camp in like five minutes, and had supper and was in bed before they got there. But he wouldn’t listen to us, it was just straight down the hill and there was a trail right down all right. Because we’d hunted all our life in there.

JP: Yes, I’m sure you knew that area pretty well. Well, is there anything else that you can think of that you’d like to say?

GL: The only thing I have to say, or add to that, was it tough coming to town in the winter time. I know my dad and I came down one time in the winter time. We just both came together, and it took us two days to get into town, 14 miles.

JP: This is from Geyser?
GL: No, it’s from up here. Up in Geyser we never did follow the roads wherever you saw bare that’s where you went. And everybody knew, just take the fence down and at the spring of the year they’d fix it again. One time we couldn’t get to town, it was cold and we’s out of coffee, we’s out of tobacco and Copenhagen. We just had to have somebody go to town, that’s all there was too it, otherwise half the mountain would had been torn down, and I come to town on skis that time. After I got to the flats there wasn’t any snow then. When I got ready to come back out Bay Shelton up here took me back up the road as far as he could go. Before the snow got too deep he turned around and then I went back on skis.

JP: So did you use skis very much, or snowshoes?

GL: No, that was only time. I used snowshoes a lot while I was trapping. But, skis no that was the only time. I was going to take snowshoes that time, but thought it would probably be easier, so I took off over the top of the mountain, and skied down the other side and it was a little faster. But I never was a downhill skier, no mine was all just cross-country; I could go cross-country pretty fast.

JP: So that was something then that you would have done just for fun?

GL: No. Oh, some of the younger kids they used to go up the side of the mountain there and ski down but, I could find a lot better things to do then ski down a hill and then walk back up again.

JP: I was thinking you might have used them for cross-country, for hunting or something.

GL: Generally down here on the flats, was very seldom that the snow was ever so deep that you needed snow shoes. If it did then it was time to stay in the house anyway. That was rest time. That was the way from Geyser to town. In 1928 the folks bought a Chevrolet truck. Well that was the only truck in the country up there, so when he went to town, everybody went to town. They had it rigged up there’s three riding up front and then the rest of them set in the back. Pretty cold ride but then that was the way you get too town. And then if he’d go alone why he’d have a truck load of stuff to come home with.

JP: Sounds like people helped each other quite a bit.

GL: They did. Yes everybody did. If anybody was in trouble, someplace around, there was always somebody going and trying to help him.

JP: Well, we probably should let you get back to your morning here.

GL: I’ll just call Steve and tell him too put the fire together. Gives me something else to do. I don’t do anything anymore really. I take care of the garden out here. I got a cabin from a lady, we rented her cabin one time for the fourth of July, back about 50 years ago. I fixed it up, the house was falling down and the garage was falling down. All the buildings, the cellar was caved.
in, so I just fixed it up, put it back in shape again. She gave me my money back and I’ve had it ever since. She passed away here a year or so ago, and her sister, she willed it too her. Her sister just, I guess told her kids that I could have it as long as I wanted it. She told me not to worry about it, it was mine.

JP: So do you spend much time there?

Glenn: Yes, fact of the matter I’ve been up there quite a lot this summer because it was raining quite a lot. Didn’t have much to do with the garden, I spent a lot of time up there.

JP: How old was the cabin, when was the cabin built?

GL: Well, it’s kind of a house. Actually it’s not a log cabin, it’s a framed house. But, I would say along about 1900 or along in there sometime. The guy that built it, his name was Fuller. They had a shingle mill up there. It was out behind the barn. All the buildings up there are made out of rough lumber, and sided with shingles.

JP: And where is it?

GL: It’s right on Placer Creek, right on the Wolf Creek road. Then one of the other guys had a cabin at that same time, that’s up Placer Creek about half a mile from the road up. That was where he lived, he and his wife had that for a long time. I was going to buy it at that time and then the Forest Service said they was going to burn it down. I didn’t see, really how they could, but they said they could. So I didn’t buy it, but it’s still there.

JP: And do you know when that cabin was built?

GL: I imagine right about the same time. It’s two story so that’s a big house.

JP: Does it have a name?

GL: Well, the first one that I knew that lived there was Earl Windham. He was with this puller on the shingle mill too. And he later become an attorney. He was county attorney here for many years. But his wife stayed up there, she was a writer.

JP: What was her name?

GL: Her first name was Elva, because it’s Lake Elva up here, it’s named after her. He was a big man. I can remember him. It was about 1932, he got a model A Ford. And he couldn’t set behind the steering wheel. He sat on the other side. His wife was just a little woman. Yes, she wrote a lot of history around here, but I never knew what happened too it. Because I know she was writing all the time, but I have no idea, I haven’t seen any of it. She may have sent it to
some other historical group, because there wasn’t one here at the time when she passed away
I’m sure.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
[Tape 2, Side A]

JP: What is the hunting like up here?

Glenn: It’s always been good since I’ve been here. Oh, here and there isn’t good anymore, but we quit hunting them anyway, which is all the people around here just because there isn’t any. The only ones that shoot them out here are the Air Force come up from Great Falls and shoot them.

JP: But are there a lot of whitetail?

GL: There’s getting more all the time. Yes, there’s some whitetail now.

JP: And how about the mountain lion population, you mentioned we should do something?

GL: It had increased this much that last fall when we went up in the evening, this one certain spot, we know there wasn’t anything there. And when we went back hunting the next morning, it was dark when we went up, but we could see that they had killed a big deer there, and it was gone, all that was left there was just bones. When we come back that was gone.

SJ: Oh, my gosh.

GL: I can’t remember what year it was my wife and I went up in the afternoon, we just walked out to see what we could find out there. And we went up on the north side from Placer Creek, and I went up quite high because I wanted to see if there was anything crossing back and forth, and she went up towards the middle of it. She was walking along and she said she couldn’t hear them but I knew something was following me. So she said, “I kept walking as slow as I could and reached a big tree and got behind it and peeked around the tree, and there were two mountain lions following.”

JP: Goodness, two. So what did she do?

GL: Nothing, just she knew they was there, it was all right then.

JP: So she didn’t think they were after her?

GL: Oh yes, they were. But then after they knew she knew they were there, the feeling was mutual, so they stayed away. When I came back down, I thought we was going to meet up above, and so we walked back down through there. And just a short clip away where she had seen them, they had a deer killed.

JP: So they had dinner.
GL: Yes, they had dinner already.

JP: How about bear up in that area?

GL: When we first came here there was a lot of bear. Well they are coming back again now. I know that when we first came up here, the government trapper that was here was a guy by the name of Chris Koski. They was pert near have to set up all night to keep the bear out of the sheep corrals. So he come up and him and my brother went up, and tracked one back up into the mountain into a patch of quaking aspen there. Well they shot it, and in four more days they killed six more at that same place.

JP: So you think they were all going after the sheep?

GL: Yes. Well they didn’t have any more trouble after that. I wasn’t up there then, but my uncle was telling me about it. He went up one morning and let the sheep out and he said, “There’s two coyotes outside the corrals looking through the fence.”

JP: So how about the coyote population around here?

GL: It’s not bad now, but it was in the ‘30’s there wasn’t a coyote. Last year there wasn’t many, the year before thinned them out quite a little. They got mange and they died out. I think they probably caught it from the gophers because the gophers, had that same thing, they wasn’t even worth shooting last year.

JP: That’s bad.

SJ: Well, what about logging?

GL: On this side of the mountain there isn’t much. There is now on up towards Martin Springs, that’s up Spring Coulee. There’s a fellow from town that’s logging up there. Just on the other side of the mountain on the Blankenship trail, there has been some logging. Some clear cuts in there. But there’s not too much that’s in this area here. Then this guy down here has done quite a lot of logging in the last year up in the Highwood Mountains. But there just isn’t logging timber up in here. It’s mostly all, actually you might say junk. So actually that fire that went down through their done a lot of good, you know. Probably in a couple of hundred years there be some timber there. Because there’s places on this side of Woodhurst up here that you couldn’t walk through, about that big around, and certainly never get any bigger.

SJ: This would be lodgepole?

GL: Yes, but elk could go through there. It would never make any noise either.

SJ: There amazing.
GL: Somebody shot the leg off of a big buck up here one year and I saw him several years after that but never could get a shot at him to get it. And the last oh, probably the last year or two that I saw it up there, it was just as parched as that paper there. And nobody ever got him. I was up on the wrong ridge and started coming down through that thick stuff, and in that thick stuff I found him, died in there of old age.

JP: That’s amazing, that he could make a living on three legs. Thinking back over your life in this area what is the feeling been about the Forest Service?

GL: I don’t know. They get mad at them for this and that at different times but you know there is nothing that would make a feud out of it, if you know what I mean. Its, oh, they squall a little bit about cutting the grazing. They raise it five cents and they’d squall that they never make a living there. So forth and stuff like that. They never had such cheap grazing in their life. And then there’s certain places up here now that I don’t know why they stopped the grazing there because the grass in there now is about that high and all of it would just make a good place to start a fire. Which will happen someday, but it used to be they had the cattle in there all the time and just kept it down. So I don’t know, that’s one I can’t figure out. But then that’s not my place to figure it, I guess. Another thing is you know they cut roads in there and then they don’t close them off again. That’s what gets them a little owly to the hunters. And another thing, they don’t like people running around and I didn’t like that, when I was hunting. But I quit hunting the hill places when they started building them too high!

JP: I heard a few people saying they are building steeper hills these days!

GL: And they do squawk about people up there with motorcycles and four wheelers and stuff like that. Because you walk and climb those hills all day long and get up there and pretty soon three or four motorcycles go by. Now things like that are going to happen, it’s too bad I guess. But I still think that if they’re going to hunt they should walk up there. If they can’t walk up there, stay home.

JP: I agree. Doesn’t seem very sporting to rush in there on a four-wheeler.

GL: No, and that’s the thing of it. It used to be when I first went hunting, I had a friend here in town that him and his wife, neither one of them could eat any fat meat at all. So that’s all they could eat was venison. That was from when we first got up here. He’d buy my ammunition so I used to be able to take off from the ranch and go on to end up towards the Iron Mines. I would run deer down to him, and snow was too deep they couldn’t run on it so they’d lay down, they’d be setting there looking at me and I’d just walk on. No, there used to be large bucks, I had some monstrous big horns from up here. I shot a deer up there one time, and I wasn’t going to shoot it because I just knew it would have to be the toughest meat on this side of the mountain. It had 11 on one side and 12 on the other that I could count. They wasn’t big ones but I was close enough to it that I could count. I wanted them horns, so I shot that one and that
was probably the best piece of steak. And it was, it was a good piece of meat. And I killed deer up here with base horns that look like an elk, nobody hunted up here, they didn’t have money enough to get to the mountains. That was the trouble.

JP: Sounds like it was a good thing for the folks that could.

GL: When we first went up there in ’36 I remember there was no money around then either. We lived on venison up there for some time, in fact the Game Warden took his fair share of meat. I always took a rifle with me; it didn’t make a difference where I went. We was up fixing fence one day with my uncle, it was snowing out, we were in view of the game wardens house, these two deer come down over the hill, and I shot one. My uncle says the Game Warden was right there in plain sight at his house, but then the Warden knew we was eating what we was getting.

JP: Yes, I mean if you got to eat, you got to eat.

GL: And he was in the same shape that we were in.

JP: So was there a particularly tough winter that you can remember?

GL: Well in fact they just all of them was tough. Up in Geyser there, I know it was when I was going to school, the janitor up there stopped one morning about four o’clock, and asked me if I’d come up and help him. So I tell him yes, “I’ll be up in just a little bit, I’ll help you.” So I got up and got dressed, and went up there. We worked to fire that boiler just as hot as it could, and come nine o’clock the next morning, time for school we had the room upstairs, the main study-hall, at 27 below yet. It was 35 below outside and the wind was blowing like it was here yesterday afternoon. Well it snowed enough that time that I could walk from the street over the marquee on the corner bar in Geyser.

JP: That’s, how many feet would that be?

GL: I think, about 12-foot drift. There was a guy come through there and he got stuck out in the main street, in the middle of the street there. He just let his outfit set there. The next spring I and four other guys, they’d been driving over it with a team and wagon, and everything else all winter, we dug it out, and it was still in good shape. Yes, he was about from here to there from a gas pump and it was out of gas.

JP: It must have been tough on the stock at that time then too.

GL: It was. At that time people would feed them though. That was the worst of it, trying to get it out to them. And I know that the ranch at Geyser there when we’d feed in the winter time, we had a creek right along there, a fresh water creek, and there was willows and brush along the creek. And we’d go load up our hay someplace and just feed along those willows where the
wind couldn’t blow it away. In 1935, the spring in March, that was another time that I decided that I should have stayed in school, we had a bunch of cattle at Spion Kop, that was about six miles away. And we’d take a load of hay down there, and feed them, and load up a load of straw and bring back so they had something to lay on. And, I froze my feet so many times that I couldn’t get boots on no more at all, so I just wore overshoes. About that time there was a friend of mine up there with this purebred cattle outfit that I worked for, that moved from there to Bozeman. He come down wanting to know if I wanted to help him. I was still wearing just overshoes then, couldn’t get my shoes on yet under them. But that was a pretty good job there, most of it was inside, they had cattle all inside and it must have been 70 head that was in stalls in the barns there.

JP: You say purebred, what breed would they be?

Glenn: Hereford. Yes, he showed all over the United States. You’ve probably seen one of those big steamer trunks. He had one of them that was completely full of ribbons and medals, everywhere. He entered all over. He had tough luck too. I wasn’t there that day, I don’t know why I wasn’t there, but they loaded up a load of cattle, and I guess I was bringing the cattle in from the mountains is the reason. They brought them into the shed and he had loaded old hay in each stall for all the cattle. I think we lost, I think it was 80 head out of that bunch. Poison from old hay, because it was molded. It was some kind of a chemical reaction that it causes and I don’t remember what they call it now.

JP: I know they lose some horses that way too. What was the name of the fellow who ran this operation?

GL: Chadric Cattle Company. Yes, he come out here from Chicago, he was always in trouble too, I guess, in Chicago, and they sent him out here and bought this ranch for him, and called it the Wales Ranch. His brothers had two big jewelry stores in Chicago and whenever he was short on money why they just gave him some more. Till they got straightened out and got his outfit going.

JP: That was nice. So how long was he running that outfit?

GL: Oh gosh, I can’t remember exactly when he came here, but he was in Geyser, he left there the same year that we did. And he got down to Bozeman, and bought a place down there. When he was getting straightened out down there he called me up and wanted me to come down and help him, so I went down there. Worked with him until I got into the service. When I got back he wasn’t there. See he moved from there, while I was in the Army, to Springdale, Alabama I think it was. Down in there, one of them states, I think it was Alabama, to show them how to raise purebred cattle. You know, how to take care of cattle, and work with them so on and so forth. When I got out of the service and come home, I was sick at that time. I had malaria, I’d had it so long then I just never was feeling good. He called me one time and wanted
me to come down there, talked to me for an hour on the phone. “Come down” he said, “I got to have ya.”

I said, “I ain’t going down there where it’s that hot, I have malaria, anyway.” I said, “I ain’t too sure I can make it.” He still wanted me to come down. I should have went down too, because I’d probably own that place because he didn’t have any kids of his own. He thought I was all right.


GL: Yes. Well I did pretty well, because I went down to Denver. We needed a new herd bull, and he was in Reno getting a divorce. So he called me up one day, they were already down there, and he said, “Now would you go to Denver for me and buy a bull?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “You know we got too much white in our cattle to start with, so keep that in mind.” He said, “Keep another thing in mind too,” he said, “we got only 3,500 dollars to spend on one.”

So I told him, “I’ll do that.”

So I went down, and there was a friend of mine here, that was down there buying bulls. He’d go down there and buy bulls for everybody in the country here, and I told him who I was working for, and what I wanted, because he was a good buyer. He said, “But for 3,500 dollars, I don’t know. We may not be able to get what you want, you may have to take something else.”

So this one, they called it Canadian Domino, he said, “You go down and look around,” but I told him that evening, “the bull I want is Canadian Domino.” He said, “He’s kind of a redneck.”

I said, “We got too much white anyway maybe, might change.”

He looked at it and said, “That’s what you want all right, but you ain’t going to get it.”

I said, “The owner ain’t very sharp.” Damned if I didn’t get it for 3,200!

He thought that was all right, but when he got back though he wasn’t too happy. He thought it was too much red, and I said, “Oh, I think that will change.” I said, “I’m sure it will.” Then he was mad at me anyway because he had one he wanted to get rid of. He told me to take it in and get it butchered. So I had it in the back of the barn there, and a guy come from Idaho, and wanted to buy some bulls. And he’d been out and looked at them, and I wasn’t even showing him that one, and we stopped there in the barn, and was having a drink, and talking. And he was wanting the five that he picked out, out there and he went back and looked at that one,
because he heard it trying to tear the barn down so he had to go see what it was. Said, “That’s the one I want right there.”

I said, “No you can’t have it, that one ain’t for sale.”

“Why isn’t it?”

I said, “Because he wants me to take that in and butcher it.”

“No,” he said, “I got to have that one.” He said, “I got cattle running on the Snake River and I want that one.” He said, “I wonder what he’d want for it?”

I said, “He don’t want to sell it.”

“Tell you what I’ll do,” he said, “I’ll just give you 1,000 dollar sharp.”

I said, “Take it, get it out of here. Don’t let anybody know where you got it.”

He come back the next year, wanted to...he said, “If that cow had a bull calf I want it, I don’t care how much money.” He showed us the pictures of the calves out of that bull, and they was some of the finest looking cattle you ever did see.

JP: He got it for 1,000 dollars?

GL: Yea, well he showed us about a hundred head of them there and every one of them is marked just exactly like. This one here was about as long as from here to the wall, that’s the reason he wasn’t going to sell it.

JP: What year was that?

GL: ‘38.

JP: ‘38, boy, I was trying to put the dollar amount with the year, thinking that seems like a lot of money.

GL: The bull that I went down and bought, the first 20 calves that he had we got 1,000 dollars apiece for them. I’ve had a little cattle dealings too.

JP: Well, do you know anything about the sheep and cow allotments?

GL: No, afraid not, although we did have sheep up here to start with. When I first got back out of the service, I bought a band of sheep, and run them up there with my dad. Then they were
getting too old, and I thought sheep is hard work so we sold them off and bought cattle and started buying calves and selling them as “long yearlings.”

JP: Was there any conflict between the people who ran sheep and the people who ran cattle?

GL: Not here, no. Oh, there was comments all the time, you heard them all your life, but then there was nothing. Around that time, I don’t think there was a ranch here that didn’t have at least a few sheep. Because see, even though you wasn’t getting anything for it actually you had two incomes a year off the sheep. Which helped keep from starving to death, and then you always had a few cattle too. A lot of them just kept some cattle for their own beef too. So they made sure that they had something to eat.

JP: Do many people run sheep now?

GL: Not around here. The Hutterites here have a small band. And then there’s a lady out east of here that has a few head, but no there’s very few sheep around here now.

JP: How do the people in the community feel about the Hutterites? They haven’t been here for that long have they?

GL: Oh, they squall about them, but if they got something to sell they buy it from them. No, they was pretty mad at Wilson when he sold the Hutterites this ranch out here. But then they’ve been buying up everything in the country ever since and nobody ever says anything about it. This colony out here, I was out in Washington, we went down to a community sale I guess it would have been, anyway, they had food stuff for sale there and we was looking at that, and there was an old Hutterite gal there, and she asked us where we was from and we told her. “Oh,” she said, “you know the people at the Hutterite colony there?”

I said, “Yes.”

She said, “That’s the first colony we have in the United States.” You know how they have been everywhere since. “Yes,” she said, “that’s the very first colony we had.”

JP: I just wondered how the people in the community might have felt with another culture coming in.

Glenn: Oh, they didn’t like it to start with. But then they put up with it after it got here. You see there’s this one here and then there’s one down in Hanover, and one at Deerfield. There’s some at Harlowton, they’re all the way around us, so just as well. White Sulphur Springs, they’re just all over. So they just as well get along with them. Yes, just got to try to make the best of what you got, wherever you’re at.

JP: Good way to live.
GL: Yes, well there’s probably a few out here that I wouldn’t trust. There’s some of them that are real fine. There’s one young guy, he stops in here, uses my phone and everything. I don’t even mind him coming into the house if I’m not home. But about half of them out there I wouldn’t do that. He’s the next preacher, he’s just a young guy, he’s about 34-35 now is all. He’s already the next preacher or lecturer in line. If they have extra chickens out there he brings me in a chicken, if they butchered beef he will bring in a few steaks.

JP: When you were growing up in the Stanford area, what kind of churches were there.

GL: Well, in Geyser we had a Presbyterian or Congregation Church, and the Catholic Church is all that was here. When we came down here that’s all that was here too. Of course then in Hobson, they had in addition to the rest of them, they had a Methodist Church and a Lutheran Church. And then after I came down here the Lutheran church was built out here. Then there’s these fly by night churches like the Calvary church and some of them. I mean that’s what I call them because they just most of them are not ordained ministers or they just seen the fast bucks so they started pawning the Bible.

JP: I just wondered, I know up in the Kalispell area there’s a lot of Lutheran churches which makes sense, because a lot of the people there have a Lutheran background.

GL: Well see, I was baptized a Lutheran, and my sister over hear and my two younger brothers they were baptized Congregation. And the older ones was baptized Methodist, at Hobson. They were born in Hobson. Oh, out of the family I was the first one born in the hospital.

JP: The rest were born at home?

GL: Yes.

JP: So would that have just been the family or would somebody, a midwife or something like that come to the house?

GL: Oh, I suppose, I think that a lady that lived close to the folks down there and helped out. No, there was nobody special like a midwife or anything like that around the country that I know of anyway.

JP: Your parents would have been born at home too?

GL: I don’t know, no, I just have an idea that my mother was probably born in a hospital because she was from Minnesota. And my dad was born in Norway.

JP: Well I think that they will probably be expecting us back at the Forest Service office. Its really been a pleasure.
GL: Well I can’t think of anything else. I think we’ve talked about everything I can think of.

JP: Well certainly if anything else comes to mind, Kelly’s here so I’m sure she’d enjoy hearing from you. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]