The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society with its associated audio recording.
Rich Nelson: ...and I could have bought that house for two thousand bucks. Of course there’s all these trees and stuff growing up around it. But the inside is good; it’s got a good roof on it. The little garage is still there. Amazing, isn’t it? But that’s how depressed those areas are.

Suzanne Vernon: North Dakota, huh? Only $2,000. But that was long before anybody came to the Swan.

RV: Well, I think my mother and dad had this property by then. When he (Grandfather) had that (above-mentioned house) built.

(Rich is looking for some papers and photos in a briefcase.)

SV: The book that you put together of your mom’s stories, she talks a little bit about coming here, but not very much.

RV: Not very much.

SV: Do you remember about when they came here.

RV: I can tell you exactly. It was probably—exactly (laughter)—1923? They were from St. Paul, and Missoula.

SV: Where did he work?

RN: Northern Pacific Railroad. In fact I have copies of three telegrams in the bedroom that mention Charlie Lundberg. That the railroad was looking for my dad because he was going to be transferred out to Tacoma. So I don’t know. Nan found these three or four telegrams. I had them put together. It mentioned in there that they had been trying to find my dad to tell him he’d gotten this advancement and a transfer to Tacoma and that he might be up north of Missoula at Charlie Lundberg’s place. That somebody should come up here and try to find him.

SV: Did they build this cabin?

RV: They had it built. Charlie Lundberg and his half-brother (stepfather?), Fred Roll—my dad hired them to put this cabin up. (Note that Charlie Lundberg did have a half brother named Charlie Roll. Not sure who Rich is talking about.) And all the logs came from across what is now the existing highway. And they are all tamarack (larch) so this was finished as much as I would...
say finished with a roof on it, in 1930. And then for a long time the roof was tins from box cars that were built in the 1800s. They were scrapping them out in Missoula and my dad bought a bunch of those tins and they hauled them up here. Somebody hauled them up here. Charlie Lundberg ended up with some of them and they had them on the big barn down there for awhile, on the face of the barn. And I’ve got some bits and pieces around here.

The cabin itself was just a bare bones affair, because we had to go over to Swan River to get our water. We would bring it back two buckets at a time. Where we are sitting (living room now) was the kitchen area, the stove was right over here in this corner. We had a couple short lengths of the logs that we put the water buckets on. There was no window there and there was no door there. This was all just plain. The folks had a bed, big old iron bedstead in here and there was a partition went across. No fireplace, because it was just used during the summer.

We had an aluminum dipper, if you can imagine, and it was probably the same at your place, we just had this aluminum dipper standing there, or hanging on a nail. If you wanted a drink of water you’d get a drink, and put the dipper back up. The next person . . . didn’t matter who it was . . . when you think of how careful we are today of bacteria! If somebody says here drink out of this cup that twenty kids have had water out of . . . But I suppose my mom – she was always big on Lysol – and she probably ran it through there. But I don’t ever specifically remember that the dipper was ever washed on a day to day basis. But it served its purpose well.

SV: They didn’t stay here in the winter?

RV: No.

SV: Why do you think they got land in the Swan to begin with?

RN: My dad liked it. Charlie Lundberg brought him up here. And they went hunting and fishing. So Charlie told him that there was a quarter of a section for sale up here. It was an estate sale. And so they came up and looked at it. The old cabin that still sits down here, was built by Tom Haggerty who was the homesteader. And Haggerty, a bachelor, very nearly didn’t complete the five-year term (for proving up on the homestead) but he did get it. Down where the gate is there was a good sized barn down there. He had a woodshed and an outhouse. He did a lot of work here, clearing across the highway. That was all cleared out. Fenced and cross-fenced. And now it’s all grown up. Plus the brush. Lundberg’s used to hay that.

SV: So he must have planted something?

RN: He got redtop. If you look at the book down at the library and look up his name, you’ll see the time that it took him.
So over the years, first they had this built. First, we stayed down in that old cabin. It’s interesting when Haggerty built that, he put up one set of purlins, and then he put a double shake roof on it out of larch, then put up another set of purlins, and through dirt up there. There’s about four inches of dirt up above. And then he put up another shake roof. You can go down there and look and see where the dirt trickles out.

That cabin is where, I’m pretty sure, is where Fern and Kenny Huston were born.

SV: When?

RN: The folks let them live in there during the early 1930s. They didn’t have any money and Glen (Huston) was working out in the woods. Scrapping around, any kind of a job. Then he finally was able to buy this chunk next to us from the railroad. The railroad was getting rid of a bunch of that stuff. That wasn’t a homestead next to us; that was a railroad sell off. As is this piece directly north of us, that’s another 80, that Frank Lundberg owns, and that was another piece the railroad sold. I remember my dad being somewhat upset one time, because Charlie Lundberg had offered that 80 acres for three hundred dollars, and my dad said, “My goodness – that’s a terrible price.” He wouldn’t buy it. So, there it is. Frank told me one day, “If I ever decide to sell it why I’ll give you first option.” That was the same over here. Fern and Dick Johnson had the place over there. There were two or three trailers over there, and some sheds and a barn. And then they decided to sell that 80 except for two acres that Dick and Fern wanted. And then they built a cabin down there. That’s that other little cabin next to Arlin (?). Dick Johnson built that cabin, then the garage. They offered that to my wife and I. At the time, we didn’t need it. We were building a house out on the coast.

So that’s the story on these cabins. When they put the road through they burned down the barn.

SV: Haggerty’s barn?

RN: Yes. The new highway. Just about where the gate is. In fact I still run into scrap iron down there. And there was the remnants of a model-T sedan sitting down there for years and years. We kids would get in there and play in it. I think the round gas tank is down Barber Creek yet, because we’d take it down there and play on it. It was easy to get off the car so we’d use it as a pontoon. I think it’s still down there. And Haggerty had dug a well and stoned it up, right down there by Barber Creek. But I think that was prior to our knowledge of giardia, in fact I know it was. In the report that’s down at the library it tells about Haggerty always having stomach problems and I think he was taking water out of that well. See, it would seep in and look good. And my dad was going to use that, too, but he could never get it so the water would look like it was any good. So we’d walk over to Swan River. The only thing with the Swan River water, usually about the time we were ready to leave here in August we’d have a bout of stomach problems. The water had warmed up in the river, and with all the kids around here all the people – one kid would come down with diarrhea and regurgitation and pretty soon the whole
place was that way. My mother would be here by herself. The Huston’s were across the fence by then, they had put up that little cabin across the fence. Lundbergs were here. I think my mom went over once a week, or Olive Lundberg came over here. They were great pals.

We would go down to Holland Lake when it was warm, just about every day. We’d always be playing down here in Barber Creek. There were no cars. We’d be building dams or going fishing. You know, just kid stuff.

But Haggerty was, as I said, was a real worker. There’s still evidence of the fences and the ditches that he ditched across the highway over there, and then cross-ditched it. There was quite a slough in behind the place to the east of this place. Then he dug the ditch that’s right below this house and came from the south. It’s still recorded. It’s on some of the maps as Haggerty’s ditch. In fact there’s two water rights on Barber Creek. The Forest Service has one and I have one.

SV: Yours is the old one?

RN: That Haggerty had established and my mother re-established it. I checked with them, so I still have it. I don’t know what I’d ever do with it, but it’s there. And I guess that’s about it.

We were just turned loose to play. My mom was real good about letting us go wherever we wanted, assuming that we’d stay away from the places where there was possible trouble. The log jam. There was a big log jam down here by where Jim French has his place now. She didn’t want us to go around that log jam because if we fell down between the logs they wouldn’t find you for a long while. So we would stay away from there.

SV: Didn’t have any trouble with bears or lions?

RN: There were bears and I remember hearing a lion give a scream one night. Everybody was up wandering around trying to figure out what was going on. The only time I ever witnessed anything like that – and we could see where the bears had taken apart a log or – if we saw them they saw us and they didn’t hang around.

I think everybody around here had bear skins hanging on some door or else they had deer hides hanging on the fences. I guess it was just something that we never thought of. I remember well one day we were down on the old road down by where Jim French’s place is. We saw this dirt flying out of the ground. Well here was a badger, was in the bank going after a gopher. Because Kenny Huston was the youngest and my sister and Fern and I were older, we dispatched Kenny to run up and get a box. We put a piece of bark or slab or something over that hole and when the badger tried to back out, he was hissing and scratching. Kenny finally came running along with this apple box. So we put this apple box over the hole and this badger came out. Then we put the boards back over the apple box. We carried it up here. We were going to make a pet out of that badger. And it was snapping and tearing at the box. We brought it up and showed it
to everybody up here. We nailed a lid on it and came in for lunch. When we went out after lunch – why here was a gaping hole where that badger had just chewed his way out of it.

SV: He didn’t want to be a pet.

RN: Nah, he wasn’t much on that pet business. We tried to track him down. But it was futile. That thing had more brains than we did. It was not an uncommon thing that we would see a badger or a porcupine, which around here, I have not seen one for years. There used to be a lot of them. If we saw one we’d try to tease it into whacking at something with its tail so we’d get the quills. Again, you never thought that you might get a quill in your hand or clothes, or you might put a foot down and we’d get some quills in our boots, or tennis shoes usually.

We would come over for three months in the summer, as soon as school was out. Each of us kids had our own railroad pass, so our mother would put us on the train in Tacoma and then she’d start out with the younger kids. She’d usually stay in some motel on the way over. For us, because we were riding on the slow train, because that’s what people that had the passes had to do, or at least we did, it took us 24 hours from Tacoma to Missoula. We’d pull into Missoula and here’d be my mom waiting. She’d load us up. She would always shop in Missoula because there was only one store at the time down in Seeley. She would pack the car, even fuller, and that was it. Oftentimes in three months that was the only time we went to Missoula. You came up here, that was it.

We used to get milk from Lundberg’s and in later years she used to get it from Holmes or Marian Matthews.

We always had fish around. Glen Huston, along with the rest of the old timers, would cut ice on Holland Lake and then we used to buy ice from Huston’s for the ice box. The ice box used to sit right here where this little novelty thing is. So we would keep most of the food that needed to be cooled right in there. Before we had that we an old apple box nailed to the side of the house and that was the cooler.

SV: Did you keep it wet?

RN: Nah, we just put whatever it was to be cooled, because that out of the sun. You just put it in that apple box. You know, you never thought...well, you never thought anything about bacteria. Who would know anything about that?

And my mother would always bake bread, she’d bake bread probably twice a week. So we always had bread and that was one of the things...we always brought fifty pounds of flour, and the yeast and can of Spry or Crisco.

As a kid you just don’t think of what it takes to provision a family for those months. My older brother Mel would spend most of his time over with Warner. They were big pals.
SV: He’s how much older than you?

RN: Probably ten years older than I was. He was quite a role model for me.

I don’t know if Warner told you about the hay rake accident?

They were haying over there and Warner had the team hooked up to the hay rake and Mel and Frank were running along behind it. Just about the time that Warner dropped the rake, my brother fell, and one of the tines went in one side of his head and scraped along the skull and it broke off. So here was this tine hanging out of his head. We hadn’t been over there and there were no telephones. My mother – it was just premonition – we drove over there. This must have been about 1933 or 1934. Here was my brother. Warner had patched him up and put iodine in this wound, and pulled the tine out. Here was my brother, one eye and his mouth, they wrapped sheeting around his head. He was pretty sick. So my mom loaded him in, to haul him into Missoula. They worked on him in there until they could reduce the infection. I’ll never forget, even as a little kid, that... he looked like a mummy. He was probably 14 or so. That was before penicillin. What do you do? There was just the three boys over there, Mel, Warner and Frank. Yeah, that was one of the highlights one summer.

Each year we were doing some little thing around here, nothing to get excited about. We’d always plan different fishing trips. We’d always hike up to Bunyan Lake. That was when there was a lot of fish in it. Or we’d hike off to one of these other streams, leave early in the morning and come back with a big batch of fish.

SV: Has any of that changed? Do you remember the streams, are they different now?

RN: Yeah. I look at Glacier Creek now. We used to get a lot of fish over here. I haven’t fished it in a number of years. We used to get a lot of fish out of Barber Creek. We’d go down there in the morning and get enough for breakfast. There was a pond that’s over on that 80 that belongs to Frank. That always had fish in it. It’s a pretty good sized pond. Where the beaver have been trapped out in here, in fact I attribute the growth of all the willows and alders down here now to the fact that the beaver aren’t here. Their normal job – because we had two beaver ponds down here and then they had a tremendous one up above on Frank’s property – I still think it would be nice to put some in here. But I suppose we should leave well enough alone otherwise there would be problems with the highway.

We used to get some good-sized fish. Usually rainbows just right for our operation. We’d always have some animals in here, usually the neighbor’s animals. Then we’d have a rodeo. Their yearlings would come in, because it was all free range. So we’d corner them and try to ride them, hassle them until they’d leave.

SV: Well, Tom Haggerty must have had stock, with all this fencing?
RN: I think he had some stock. Read up, down there at the library. He would have to leave every year. He’d run out of money and the cabin and the barn that he built were never built to do anything more than to satisfy the requirement for a building (homesteading) because none of those logs are peeled. He did chink those buildings with Butte miners, and the chinking is still there. (Newspapers?) And if we were to go down and pull out a piece of that chinking, from 1915, and soak it a little bit or you could even unwrap it the way it is. Here it is Butte Miners, and on the outside he used clay from down on the creek.

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

RN: ...And so you can still see evidence of how they used these round wire-type nails and they put up heavy paper, and used these to tack that up there just to keep that dirt from falling in their face and on the tables.

SV: The insulating layer of dirt.

RN: Yeah. In fact in the 1930s, my folks let a government trapper – I don’t know if you’ve heard of government trappers in your wandering around – but a guy by the name of Charlie Howard lived there for a few years. That must have been in about 1935. I don’t know if anybody else knew of Charlie. We kids got to know him pretty well. When we’d come over in the fall so my dad could go hunting – it must have been later than 1935 – at any rate, we’d go in there and Charlie would order up this stuff from the catalog. It was like Christmas. We’d go in and see him. He’d have these boxes all over the place. We’d take a look at what he got. But I don’t remember that he used much of it.

SV: What kind of stuff?

RN: Pots and pans. He’d see something and he’d order it up. He’s the one that ordered up a mail order bride. Charlie Lundberg went into town to get this gal, with him, from the train.

SV: What did Charlie Howard look like?

RN: I hoped you’d ask. (Brings out picture) This is a picture of the old cabin that the grandkids took.

[Break in audio]

When we put the bedroom addition on, why all these logs, Andy Kopra, my stepdad, saved, and they sliced those. So unless you get out there and look, it looks like the rest of the logs of the cabin.

SV: Made a siding? Which direction is this looking?

RN: This is looking west. The cabin faces west (toward the old road, not the new highway). My dad did, because it was setting on tamarack blocks, he did jack it up and pivot it (pinned it?). And here were these hides hanging in here, carcasses laying out front. Here he is (looking at another picture of Charlie Howard), he skied. He knew all of these places around here. He was paid by the hide. He was able to sell the hides, too. The government paid him for each coyote he trapped. The government has wasted a lot of money up in this country. And this was a nice-sized elk (photo again) that he shot. He got it here. You can see the clay that Haggerty had used.
SV: The white clay. That’s a good picture of him, with the wool coat.

RN: And the dog, I don’t know if that was his dog or Huston’s dog. And then he had a horse carcass that laid out here that he used for baiting his traps.

SV: His coyote traps?

RN: Yeah. So you can take those (pictures) and run copies.

SV: I’d like to. These other ones are marked?

RN: Yeah.

SV: Was this picture taken here? (Which picture?) Was it somebody local?

RN: No. Somebody that was in here visiting. I don’t think they were locals. This fellow was in here visiting for quite awhile. He was from Mandan. They had some kind of an organization in Mandan, Indian organization. They’d get all dressed up, for pow wows. That was the outfit made by the Mandan Indians. In fact that was a better outfit than most of the Mandan Indians had. His name was Peter Berg.

SV: He just came to visit?

RN: Yeah. (Other pictures.) That’s just a picture of my brothers, sitting on the fence.

SV: How many brothers?

RN: Well, there were seven of us kids, you see. That’s Lindy and Tom. That (other pictures) is Mr. And Mrs. McKee the ones you asked about. And there’s my mother with her standing out on the old road.

SV: The book that you gave us that you published, does it have dates in there when your dad died and when your mom married Andy Kopra.

RN: I don’t think it mentions Andy. I’d have to look it up. This is a poor album that has been ransacked.

SV: It would be nice to have a good picture of your mom for the history project.

RN: Yeah. (But he doesn’t find one.)

SV: Did she put together the album?
RN: She used to do this for everything. She’d put these albums together. She was great on any pictures that we had. She had an old box camera for years and would take the pictures, and would save them and put them in the albums. That was always a great day because she would put them in the albums and then, we’d sit around the look at the pictures. And that one down at the eco-center in the canoe. I said it was 1936 but actually it was the Fourth of July, 1939.

SV: That’s a good picture of you kids.

RN: Yeah, and here’s a good picture of the elk in the barn. That was right down here. That was the barn. I think Clara Huston – that elk stayed here all winter and would feed on the hay – there was a big hay rick so it had plenty of feed.

SV: Can I copy that picture? Was that into the forties by then.

RN: You can copy any of them. No, it was the thirties, I would say.

This is my fourth birthday, and this is Charlie Lundberg and my dad, and Eldon Hane (sp?) Eldon was an uncle and he’s the one that had the place right down by Haggerty’s Hole. They had a place on Lindberg Lake. (More photos; Rich leaves the room and comes back with photos.)

I think this is Mrs. Roll. Charlie’s mother. Charlie and Fred Roll were half-brothers (Rich is wrong about this, I think) and were Warner’s uncles. (He’s talking about Charlie Lundberg and Charlie Roll. Fred Roll was the step-grandfather to Warner.) So she would be the grandmother to Warner. And then this is Fernie Huston and Kenny Huston and my mother (Min Nelson Kopra) and that’s Clara with the bib overalls on (Fern and Ken’s mother). And I think this might be Mabel Lundberg Stilwell and this must have been over at Lundberg’s. We brought a horse over there and I don’t know, it must have been haying season. I don’t know if you want this.

SV: Yes. I’d like to copy this one of your fourth birthday party.

RN: That was in Mandan.

SV: This one is good though, with Kenny and Fern Huston.

RN: And you might ask Warner, he would be able to recognize them I think. That other girl might be my older sister, Marian. My mother, Marian and Mabel. That could be Warner’s mother, but she looks too old in this picture.

SV: I can compare it to some of the other pictures.

RN: And then you’ve got Charlie and Eldon and my dad.

SV: What’s Haggerty’s Hole?
RN: Along the old highway they had all these different places named on Swan River, because the highway followed Swan River a lot from the Summit on down. So right down here there’s quite a fishing hole. It’s great for swimming because you can dive from the bank and not hit the bottom. There are usually some cutthroat in there and always get some good trout in Haggerty’s Hole. That’s the place.

There’s a little house that my relatives built and it ended up in the Langbird hands and then my cousin, Althea Gray, has it now. And then you know where they are building the log church down here, the piece that is just south of that belongs to that same cousin. There’s a little building in there and the driveway is adjacent to the minister’s fenceline and that belongs to that family again. Where there’s places right out on the highway, just before you get to Swanland Drive, or just after, that are for sale, well that land used to belong to a couple of my uncles. They bought it from the guy that put those parcels together. McDaniel or McDowell. Then they have a place over on Lindberg Lake.

SV: What’s their last name?

RN: It was Langberg (?), now it’s Gray. Althea Gray owns all of that.

Here’s a picture of my mom (left) and my aunt (right) up huckleberry picking. They got them (berries), too.

SV: Where did they go pick huckleberries at?

RN: Up above Lindberg Lake. Actually huckleberries, there were a lot of them.

SV: Who’s the other woman?

RN: That’s my aunt from St. Paul. (Selma Erickson, Carl Nelson’s sister.)

Here are some cousins out in front and I think that might be one of the Lundberg horses.

SV: Boy, look at the fish in this one.

RN: Yeah, that’s back in Minnesota.

SV: The deer, too, back in Minnesota?

RN: Yes. The one uncle was an avid hunter and fisherman.

This is about all of them. My dad was always, whenever there was a train wreck out in the western division (looking at pictures of train wrecks)...and this is the engineer. He was in charge

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of getting all of the stuff back together. This was the engineer, he didn’t get out of there in time.

SV: Do you have any other pictures of your mom and dad that we could copy sometime?

RN: Yes. In that book there are pictures of them. Here’s a picture of my dad.

SV: I don’t have pictures of Andy Kopra.

RN: I’ve got pictures of Andy. Andy had a whole album here that showed before the war. There were some pictures in that of Ting Wilhelm, that’s how Andy ended up in this country, he came up with Ting.

SV: Who’s the cowboy? (miscellaneous photo)

RN: It’s a Nelson.

SV: Anyway, Andy came out because of Ting.

RN: Yes, after the war he knew Ting, and came out and used that stuff down there that came from the mill, most of those buildings, like Nan’s house in part was from the old mill (Wineglass). Like most of those houses. (See Nan Nelson transcript).

SV: Did they have any kids?

RN: No. Andy never had any kids. He’s buried in Missoula next to his first wife.

SV: I wish I’d a known your mom. We moved up here about the time she died.

RN: She was a great old gal. Wonderful.

SV: Everybody has something to say about Min. But they had the store. Was that a going deal?

RN: Yes. Andy had it, he had the store and the garage. And you know where the little restaurant is across from Swan Centre, that is actually a trailer. They had that up there, and they ran that. He bought that some place and had it hauled in and set up. So he was probably one of the best customers. He liked pie and coffee. So when he wasn’t in the garage that was just this side of the existing garage. So then my mother redid it and Mel did a lot of work in there for her. I brought the metal over there that’s behind the stoves and the griddle and all that came from Boeing surplus. And on the other side of it is a pattern that they used laminated to that metal that they used in airplanes. So we put that up.

And Mel and Nan didn’t want to run it after they bought the place.
SV: You have more pictures there?

RN: Well they are more pictures that you might not be interested in. They are my relatives. This again is my sister. My mom was engaged to some other guy, and he said well I wrote to you all the time, and you never answered (?) well, the guy she was engaged to used to pick up the mail and was throwing away his letters. So then she had to make a decision. Here's a guy dressed in a suit who had a railroad job, and here she was engaged to a guy that was trying to farm out there in North Dakota. So she gave the guy she was engaged to his ring back and she and my dad went to Glendive, Montana and got married. (Is he talking about Min? What a good story.) I went back last summer and got a copy of their marriage license.

SV: At the courthouse there? How long were they married?

RN: I forget. That's the trouble. Nan could tell you or my sister Marian, could. It was over 50 years. My dad worked for the railroad for over 45 years. His — you can find out — what his date of birth and death were because it's down on the community hall in that veterans deal.

SV: What was his first name?

RN: Carl Hjalmer Nelson.

SV: You mentioned there were no telephones in the thirties.

RN: There was a Forest Service phone. And one of the phones was right over here on the front porch of this cabin.

SV: Tom Haggerty's cabin.

RN: Yeah. I can show you where there are some of those split insulators still hanging on the trees, going into the trees right out south of the place. Some time.

SV: That's the number 9 wire?

RN: Yeah, they just strung it line of site through the trees.

SV: But your mom couldn't just go and use that phone.

RN: I'm sure it was there, I think anybody could use it. It was just sitting there, hanging there. The fact that there were different places along through the valley where those phones were, so people would use them. I've heard that it was there, but I never saw it there. But when I've been walking through the woods, I've spotted those split insulators. They just wrapped a wire around the tree put the split insulator on around the tree, and then I wondered about those

Rich Nelson Interview, OH 422-079, 080, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
split insulators. I’ve got a couple of them and you’ve got them down at the eco center. The reason that they put those up, if they were repairing the line all they had to do was splice a wire on and then they could take that insulator apart and put the wire through it.

This was my grandfather and all my sisters, this was Irene, that’s the one that had this property down here. My mother was the matriarch. So all of those sisters except one owned property up here.

SV: I’d like to copy this picture.

RN: From left to right, back row, Irene (m. Vern Peterson second husband, first husband was Jones), then my mother Min Nelson, then Clara, and then Myrtle. Maiden name was Haukus, or sometimes, Haukaas, pronounced hoo-kus. And it stands for Hawk Hill, it’s a pace. And I was there about four weeks ago (Norway?) One of my second cousins lives on the place now, with his mother and sister. He grows Christmas trees on it. How that family ended up with so much property – the people that owned that land originally had businesses in Bergen, so whenever they needed some money they’d offer the Haukus’ some land. It was only good for putting sheep on it and a few cows. So the relatives would buy those parcels. So now they own quite a bit of it and in the surrounding area. They’ve got some lakes on it. It’s nice property.

Did you get Myrtle?

SV: Yes.

RN: Again left to right in front is: Vina...

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
RN: I had an album of Andy’s that his wife put together. After he passed away, I called Andy’s sister. She lived out near Vancouver, Washington. I said, “I’ve got this album. Do you want it?” She wasn’t too interested. There were some neat old pictures from Alaska, when he was up in Alaska before the war, of the railroad, and steamships. Vern’s daughter (Vern Peterson) lives in Sitka. So I sent it to her. She’s all involved in some work there in Alaska. So I gave it to her.

SV: Do you remember if there were pictures from around here in it?

RN: There was. Do you know where the Broten cabin is? It’s all the way up on Rumble Creek Road. There was a picture of that. (Now Doc Berner’s place). The house that he built. In fact the doctor that lives up there now, Berner, he put a hot tub inside that cabin. Every log is pegged, one log to another, with wooden pegs in there. I was going to tear it apart one time and bring it over here. I looked at it and said, I don’t have time.

SV: Broten was Norwegian, too?

RN: Yes. Andy and his wife had gone up there and there’s a picture of her sitting in front of that cabin. (Nan had a copy of this and we copied it for the project –SV). This is the album that is up in Alaska, now. And then pictures of Andy’s car – he drove it out on Holland Lake on the ice, and you could see the background, the falls. But none of these were labeled. And when they first moved what was Andy’s garage in, the building is still there and part of it is still standing. It’s down behind where those little houses are there at Nan’s – the old road used to go down there. And that’s where he had his garage and the gas pumps. He had chain saw repair. There’s a picture of the cabin, which Nan (Nelson) lives in, when they first set it up on the hill. It shows the kitchen and the living area in there. Those were pretty small cabins but then they added the living room on it when my mom was there. They added that back porch. Andy being Finnish, he had to have a sauna. So there’s a sauna up there, it’s storage.

There’s a sauna in this place. But I don’t use it.

SV: I suppose they all had to have a sauna...

RN: Well, if they were Finnish they did. So that album is up in Alaska. There were a number of pictures of Andy there in his uniform. But I’ve got other pictures here of Andy and I have to remember to dig them out for you. They are right upstairs. I know where they are.

Andy and my mother – he was a hard working guy, a good guy – some of the guys in the family were concerned that she would marry again. Some of us said, well, just live with him. She lost her railroad pension, the widow’s pension, when she remarried. But the only way to do it, for her, was to get married. Which was fine, it worked out well. He was very good to her. This is where she wanted to be.
SV: What do you think she liked best about being here?

RN: I don’t know. One of the things, she wanted to be out and away from the family. She said it was easier for her not to be around all the kids. With a family as large as ours, there was always some problem. She came over here and she thought that this would be the place to be. And it was for her. She became very active in the different things going on around here. She was the one that donated the materials—logs—for the library. And the first logs she donated went into the house that Mahaffey’s had built down there. And then the Rustics bought those logs from her. Originally she had donated them. Then Paul Morton came over and cut another batch and that’s the ones that went into the library.

She was interesting. Originally I had offered Missoula County Library an acre here, to put the library down on the corner. Because I thought, well, that would be a good spot and they could park there. We’d have somebody around all the time and keep on eye on the place.

But they decided to hook it up where it is now.

SV: You should have the historical society here, with all the historic buildings on the property.

RN: She used to take groups through that old cabin down there. It was ransacked right after she passed away. They didn’t do too much damage there, but they took a lot of the antiques out of there. There’s still a lot of them in there.

I’ve been storing stuff in there. It’s kind of a disgrace, to take anybody in there.

We used to stay down there when my wife and I and the kids would come over.

SV: Did you ever drill a well here?

RN: Two wells. We put in one well and it always had that fine clay in it. So we had another well put in and it’s excellent water. A little over a hundred feet. It’s great water. I think that’s one of the big problems up here with many of these places, is the cost of getting water. At Lindbergh Lake a lot of those people have pumps that they hooked up and dropped them out in the lake. And then the septic systems are up on the hills behind them, and they are seeping down into the lake. I don’t know if there’s a limit there or what’s going to happen eventually. I know that’s the way it is with my cousins’ place over there. They’ve got a deep well pump and have it setting out in the lake.

SV: When you were kids, you used to go to Holland Lake. Were there any houses there?

RN: On Schoolteacher Island there’s that little cabin there, but no summer homes. Charlie Lundberg was the summer ranger there. They used to have somebody there. We would go to
Lindbergh Lake, or Elbow Lake as we called it most of the time. We’d go over there, but it’s such a dusty dirty road. There were no summer homes in there at that time either. Sometimes we’d just go as far as Swan River, and we’d go out and play in that water because it’s all sandy bottom there. When we’d go out to the swimming area at Lindbergh Lake, it’s not where the area is now, it’s down where the big rock is – that supposedly Lindbergh is the one that chiseled his name in there. Because you could walk out a long distance in that sand and that was always real nice. So those were the two areas.

One of the things, and I guess I’d never thought much about it. But when Kauffman was down speaking one time at the Center, and he said, they couldn’t see the mountains. And we couldn’t either. When we were driving up here, we could see them from here, but when we were driving up here from Missoula it was all forest. You could see the sky but there were only a few places like along Salmon Lake and a few places up by Seeley that you could see very much.

Then we’d get up here, and by the Gordon Ranch – the old highway used to go through the Gordon Ranch – and then you’d go by Wilmeth’s place, in front of Wilmeth’s place, and go up through what is now Matthews’ place, then swing around and come down to the back side of this place.

SV: It went to the west side of this place then?

RN: Yes, and that road is still there. That’s what they call Jette Road. But there was a prior road that went down there, too. My mother always had tire chains and all so that she could get up the muddy hills if it rained. She had to put chains on. Sunset Hill was always the worst. The one right down here going up by Aiken’s that was always bad, too, from Barber Creek up that hill that ends up behind the Hungry Bear.

You now, you look back on it and it was a lot of fun. I remember one time, I mentioned I was over here in the fall. So Frank’s folks let Frank come out (Lundberg) and so Frank and I were walking around. I might have told you about this. We barricaded the Kraft Creek Road. The only one living up there was Charlie Roll, at the time. We hauled all kinds of fence posts and drug equipment across the thing. Here comes Charlie in his Model A. All of a sudden here’s the road barricaded. He figured sure as heck it was an ambush. So he turned around and headed over to his half-brother’s, Charlie Lundberg, and went over and inspected it. Couldn’t figure out who was trying to ambush him. He was the only one living up there at that time. Frank and I, boy, we swore never to divulge that we were responsible.

Another time, Frank and I were hiking over across the road. We took and look and saw this animal underneath a stump over there. We threw rocks at it, and took sticks and it didn’t move. We got braver and braver because it didn’t move. We finally came over and we got Charlie Howard and he went over with us. Somebody had shot a deer and skinned it out and wrapped the head and the legs up in the skins and shoved it up under that stump. Well, it might have been my dad. But we didn’t have guts enough to pull it out and inspect. We just kept throwing
rocks at it. So we were chastised, “Don’t be fooling around with those animals out there under stumps.”

SV: You kids really did have the run of the neighborhood.

RN: There was nobody else around. The Huston kids were over here every day. We were back and forth every day. So there’s always kids to play with. Frank, being a little older, he’d come over once in a while.

SV: How did you cut across the river going over to Lundberg’s?

RN: The bridge up the Kraft Creek Road. So we’d walk through Hall’s place, Mrs. Hall’s place, and then we’d cross the river down there and go up through Sheehan’s place. That was just a summer place, and then it burned down. It was right up above the river (it burned in one of the early fires). Then we’d cross Sheehan’s place and we’d be on Lundberg’s place.

SV: You would have had to cross the creek?

RN: No. Holland Creek runs behind Lundberg’s place, to the south, and that’s where the Indian burial ground was.

SV: Was the pond in there?

RN: Not until years later. That’s south of their house.

Mrs. Lundberg was always good for fresh bread and cinnamon rolls. It was about the same here. I’ve never seen a woman that could fix up a meal as fast as my mom or Mrs. Lundberg. Soon as they killed any deer, and I don’t think they ever did just one, but if there was fresh meat around they’d skin it out and then they’d go ahead and she would cut it into chunks. She’d have a big pot boiling on the stove and then she’d put that meat in these two quart jars, and then she’d pour fat over the top and there’d be a grave in there, too. So if you went over there, she’d fix up a lunch, too. So she’d take one of those jars, put it in a pan, heat it up, and chop up an onion and mix in there with it and maybe some potatoes. Fresh bread. Gosh, you couldn’t have asked for anything nicer.

We’d go over there to play. But she’d always fix us up something. So you asked about being up here, I don’t remember ever going beyond where Lucille Haasch lives now. I think that place was called the Williams place at the time. Later, we went to Rumble Creek, but we rode down there. We had transportation to go to Rumble Creek. There were sometimes when we’d hike up to Rumble Lake. I was probably in my teens then.

SV: Did you fish up there? There’s a story about people planting fish up there.
RN: I don’t know anything about it. So we’d go up there, but that is about as far north as we went. It wasn’t until they put in the Buckhorn Camp, I think my mother went down there a few times. But I don’t remember going down there, until years later. We’d go to Fresh Hours down at Seeley, or my mother would once in a while. But the thought of going to the store, riding in the car, no way, we stayed here. We were given some little chore, pick up rocks, put them someplace else. Then we didn’t have to go to the store.

Glen Huston and Clara would come over just about every night and they’d play cards, they’d play cribbage. My mother was, she loved to play pinochle and cribbage. Clara was probably one of the best at rolling her own cigarettes that I’ve ever seen. And Glen, same thing. Glen always had his Levis a little longer so he had them folded up. So he’d always put the ashes down there in that cuff. And I remember looking at a pair of those one time. They were burned out on the bottom of those cuffs. Glen was a fine guy.

Kids’ attitude, being up here playing and all, and never having to spend a winter, which I always thought I wanted to do, I didn’t realize how desperate it was for these people. And in many cases, still is. I just thought that boy, they were just having a good time all summer long and all winter long. That wasn’t the picture. I have a tough time understanding how some of these people stay. They come up, and if they don’t have some decent employment, it must be pretty hard on the women and in some cases, I don’t know, if they could survive in an urban setting, but at least there would be a greater source of income. Because there’s many of these people who are very talented. But this is where they want to be. And this is where I always wanted to be. I can remember for years I carried around a couple matchbooks that had Missoula, Montana on them. I always had one in my pocket.

Montana, that’s it. And here I am. It’s still, as far as I’m concerned, one of the greatest places on earth. But it’s a place that they’d better be prepared to survive in. I think that if we hit a real Depression, you can survive here probably easier than you could in Seattle. There’s enough game and some of the old time skills that could come into play. You could get your flour and your beans and your venison, and your fish.

Mrs. Lundberg always put up fish, if I remember. They’d get a big batch of them. Clara would put up a lot of fish. They’d stretch a piece of chicken wire across one of the streams and beat the stream down. It would be in the winter, so then they’d pitch the fish out on the bank and then they’d go ahead and can up those fish.

You know it was a survival method.

SV: Kenny Huston told me he wished he had the recipe for how they canned those fish. Nobody has been able to duplicate that.

RN: No. That was another one, they would have, if you get tired of venison or elk, they would have fish. Over at Hustons, they had a marvelous root cellar that Glen put in over there. It
finally started to cave in. Arlen (?) had it bulldozed in. But it was all set up with juniper posts and double doors on it so it had an airlock. Clara, boy I’ll tell you, she had every one of those shelves filled, and then there was a bin for potatoes and a bin for carrots and... she may have kept the carrots in sand. She had a big bin for rutabagas.

SV: So did they have a garden?

RN: Lundbergs always had a garden. And that took a little bit to figure out. Where the frost pockets were. I asked Warner about that, where the warmer parts were. But they used to get pretty good batch of potatoes, root crops, cabbage.

Warner must have been pretty good to interview.

SV: Yes, we went up there a couple times, and one of Melanie and Tom’s students went up there, too.

Did the Hall family spend much time here?

RN: Yes. Mrs. Hall and her brother, spent at least a couple years up in here in that little cabin over there, during the Depression. She was a widow, I think, and Arnold Westcott never married.

SV: Mrs. Hall was a Westcott?

RN: Yes. I always thought Arnold was the original cowboy, sitting on a horse with the horse rearing back. You know there’s another person. . . Pel Turner, who lives in Missoula.

I called him and he and his wife stopped here. We sat here for a couple hours talking back and forth. There’s another source, not in this area, but they must have pictures. He knew all these people up here. He said he sold Buicks to everybody up here.

I asked him where people got the money to buy cars. He said if they came from up here, a handshake was good enough to go ahead and seal the deal.

SV: People talk about stopping at Freshour’s, but not at Tamaracks (the Turner family owned).

RN: Tamaracks didn’t have a store. We used to go down, where we’d go, you had to get off the road and go down towards the lake. Otter’s Resort. In that information about Haggerty, he used to have to get his mail . . .

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

RN: (Talking about mail sacks). They’d have two sacks, in fact I still have at least one of them upstairs. So they’d take one and leave one. Not that I remember getting much mail. (Laughs). And she knew the woman that wrote Hills of Home (Mary Hartwick) and she came over here a number of times. She would ride over. I’ve looked around and tried to find pictures of her. She and mom were good friends. Mrs. Hartwick.

Sonnenbergs – you know – they were kind of a different couple. I never knew him, but we would walk down there and we would always get cookies and milk. And Courtneys, Courtney was a friend of Charlie Russell’s. There’s a painting with Courtney in it that Charlie Russell did. It identifies these riders that were getting ready to start out in the morning. It was one of Russell’s early prints of these guys getting their horses saddle up and all. Here he has one of Courtney. And he identified some of the riders and Charlie Courtney was one of them. I didn’t know that until Ed Underwood shared that with me.

SV: Ed Underwood knew a lot.


SV: How about Wilhelms?

RN: They were older than I was. Ting, during the war, would come to visit us out in Tacoma. He had a tough job. Ting went in the Coast Guard and they immediately put him on watch along the Washington Coast and all he had to do was ride up and down and look for footprints to see if the Japs had landed. That was it. What a tough deal (laughter). He’d come up to the house once in awhile, I don’t know where he was based.

But you see those guys were all older. We’d go right down by the realty office, right up behind there, they had their mill set up for quite awhile. They were great guys. I used to think they were the epitome of freedom up here. They had horses and they had neat names like Babe and Ting. Joe and Eunice.

[End of Interview]