The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society with its associated audio recording.
June Ash: Kit!

Kit Johnston: Yeah?

JA: I’ll tell you what—if you bring this chair over here by the TV, instead of at the table, I’ll join you.

KJ: Oh, great. I would love for that.

JA: I can’t get out of that chair, but I can get out of the other one.

KJ: Do you mind if I just switch them around?

JA: Oh, everything gets pushed around.

KJ: How long have you lived in the Swan Valley?

Rod Ash: Well, we’ve lived off and on ever since 1969, full time since 1984.

JA: To be honest, it’s been since 1960 because we used to...

RA: Well, camping and things like that, yeah.

JA: Yeah, but that’s living in the Swan Valley too.

KJ: You would come and camp in the summers?

JA: Yeah, we’d come up in the summer and camp.

RA: Camp up on Glacier Creek mainly. We started doing that in 1960, when our kids were a little bit older and could travel easily.

JA: (Giggle) Three and five...(laughter)

KJ: Do you have family now in the Swan Valley?
RA: No, not in the Swan Valley, but we’ve got—one of our daughters lives up in Eureka, and one of our sons lives in Ferndale, and he used to live in the Swan Valley, and our oldest son is a ranger down in Dillon, but used to be the wilderness ranger back in the Bob Marshall. And then our youngest son is the only one that lives, he lives back in Massachusetts, so....

KJ: Did you raise your children here?

RA: No, no...

JA: Summers...

RA: Yeah, summers, yeah, but mainly they went to school in Northern California, out of—

JA: Well, Gordon graduated from U of M in Forestry, and Ellen graduated from U of M in Environmental Science.

RA: Wildlife Biology, and then Environmental Science at Pullman.

JA: Oh, I thought it was also at...

RA: No, it was Wildlife Biology.

JA: Oh, okay...

KJ: So, before you came here, where was home to you?

RA: It was mainly in Northern California, Shasta County, near Redding. We lived in a little town called Cottonwood.

KJ: I was telling June the other day that my family is very close to Northern California, to Petaluma. So, I go there often.

RA: Yeah, right, right.

KJ: It’s a beautiful part of the country.

RA: Oh, yeah.

Steve Lamar interrupts about a check for birdseed delivery.

KJ: So, when you decided to move here, was the beauty of this landscape a part of what drew you here?
RA: Sure, definitely. Just to give you a little background, I always loved this whole country. You know I’m a westerner, I love the West. I’ve been all over the West, mainly and hardly out of the West. When I was...in 19...let’s see, it must have been 1948, I was going to the University in Berkeley, and I got a job working for the Forest Service in the Clearwater National Forest. This was before there was even a road over the Bitterroots into Missoula and I loved the country. Then in 1952, June and I got a job as lookouts in Big Sweet Mountain on the Kootenai, out of Libby. So we started coming here every chance we got. As June said, once the kids got a little older, we started camping here in the valley. So, the place really drew us.

JA: Yeah, we really came across the Lolo, the first summer that it opened - the highway over the Lolo.

RA: Lost two hubcaps.

JA: We lost the hubcaps. A bunch of it was gravel and you stopped for construction and all that kind of thing.

RA: I remember when I was...when I worked for the Forest Service, on my way home I hitchhiked from Idaho into the Glacier. I can remember standing waiting for a ride over on the East...on the West side of Flathead Lake, hours for a ride, not very much traffic. I had a map with me. I could look over the Missions and see this long 200 mile dirt road going through the Swan. I said, “Boy, I’d like to get over there.” So that was kind of my first contact with the Swan.

KJ: Do you feel a different connection to this valley than to Northern California?

RA: Oh, sure. We love northern California. We also took advantage of that place, and loved camping in the area and so on, but with this as a small community, you get to know almost everybody, or used to know almost everybody. It’s just such a...the community is so blended with the environment, and most people accept that. It’s one of the few places where you don’t get big resistance to the grizzly, and all that sort of thing. I’ve always loved that. I used to love to camp—we used to love to camp—on National Forest Lands because it was a working place rather than the National Parks, which were so restricted. I love...then I worked for the Forest Service, two of my kids worked for the Forest Service. There’s been that really close connection with the people and the groups and so on who work the land and live on the land, and do their best to get along. I think that’s part of this sense of place, is you get a good community feeling, and you get to know people and you can work as a community. I love the history connections. I’ve always been interested in history, so that the historical connections here are so easy to see and work with and so on.

JA: As I mentioned once before, I think every summer of our married life we’ve been camping in a National Forest, or living in a National Forest. My impression of Rod from the very beginning was that he loved to be in the woods with the trees. I remember our neighbor wanted us to go down to the Southwest and into Mexico one summer, and Rod thought about it and thought
about it and he said, “I just can’t leave the Northwest, and what we find when we go there, and our trees.” Then we did quite a bit of traveling up in British Colombia, but we felt like the United States treated its national lands, and gave more attention to them than British Columbia did.

RA: You... unless we became British Canadian citizens, you couldn’t take part in the community; you’d just be an outsider all the time. I didn’t want to be an outsider. We wanted to be part of the community. So I say, if you’re going to be... if you’re an American, you stay in an American community, you don’t go to Alask—I mean Canada. Even though we love Canada; Canada’s a great place.

KJ: What makes this valley home? Can you think about more things about this valley that are particularly special to you?

RA: The fact that you’re in a relatively small valley, with two wildernesses on either side, that you can relatively easy get into...I mean, I can walk into the...I used to be able to walk into the Missions, and come home that same day and be in a lot of places in the Missions. Can’t do that so much on the east side, but it’s just so...you’ve got so many opportunities to take part in a very interesting and beautiful habitat and, at the same time, in a living community that’s a part of that habitat. To me the humans and the animals and the trees and all are part of a community. You don’t find that easily too many places. Everything’s pretty segmented.

JA: Yeah, because we’re living in what has been determined... a wildlife corridor.

RA: Grizzly bear corridor.

JA: Oh, grizzly bear wildlife corridor. We feel like we’re part and responsible in this situation.

RA: Yeah and that’s the other nice thing about it: you’ve got some influence in a place like this. I think we’ve had lots of influence in the community and how things...how the community has worked into the environment. We’ve both been active in the Swan Ecosystem Center, and even before that in the Swan Citizen’s Ad Hoc Committee, all of which the focus is on protecting the resources, and at the same time allowing people to make a living from the resources. We’re not purists. We don’t want to separate people from the land, but we want them to get along with the land and learn to live on the land and take care of it.

JA: Don’t forget Montana Audubon too.

RA: What about it?

JA: Well, that’s been part of our—
RA: Oh yeah, we’ve been really active in Montana Audubon for the same reasons, on a larger scale obviously. But our focus has really been on the community, particularly in recent years.

KJ: So do you feel like you’re rooted here?

RA: What?

KJ: Do you feel like you’re rooted here?

RA: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, they’re going to have to carry me out feet first.

JA: I thought you were going to get on an old nag...

RA: Yeah, if I could work it I would. Put me on a mule, and tie me to it, and kick the mule and get into the hills.

KJ: I know this is tricky, but do you think you could describe what being rooted feels like?

RA: To me, it’s loving the country, knowing the country. Having not just superficially like a hike now and then, and driving into an area from 200 miles away - it’s really knowing the places. Like, I don’t...I used to travel, we used to travel quite a bit and go into different areas and mountain ranges and stuff, but lately, I’ve been really confined and want to be, even when I was in good health, to the places I know here. I love going back to the Jim Lakes basin and to Cat Lake and Pony Lake, even though I’ve seen them a thousand times. I still love to go there and know it’s still there, and that we are keeping care of it, and not screwing it up. That’s...to me that’s being rooted. In other words, if somebody tried to convince me to take a vacation somewhere else, I’d probably turn them down because I really feel I know this country. I probably know it better than most and that’s very important to me.

JA: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah, that sounds right.

RA: Of course, the other part of being rooted is being able to take part in the community so completely: being involved with SEC and with other groups. June’s the president of the AARP chapter and we’ve worked in other things, so we’re really involved with the community. We try to work those things into our love of the land, too, whenever we can. Make announcements at AARP and all that sort of thing.

KJ: What other communities and organizations are you a part of in this valley?

RA: She’s the president of the AARP chapter and I’m the chairman of the board of the Swan Ecosystem Center and one of the founders of it. Then the Ad Hoc committee: that was an informal group that eventually led to the Swan Ecosystem Center. I was one of the founders of
that. Those are...I suspect I spent most of my time there. June was a volunteer with the schools for years and worked with the school kids and so on.

JA: I think another one worth mentioning is the Upper Swan Valley History Group.

RA: Oh yeah, right.

JA: We’ve been instrumental in keeping it going.

RA: Yeah, definitely. That... it’s all kind of connected. Even the Upper Swan Valley History Group: one of our focuses is how the people relate to the resources in the valley and to the land.

JA: We’re interviewing the people who homesteaded here and their descendants and it’s going into a file.

RA: She knows Suzanne.

JA: Yeah, this is what Suzanne Vernon is doing for us. It’s being transcribed and maybe it might make it into a book someday.

KJ: Are there more things like... you go to book club...

JA: There’s a ladies lunch and there’s a...I understand there’s a support group. There’s...

RA: She wants to know what we’re involved in.

JA: Yeah, I’m not involved in all these things, but I go to book club, and to ladies lunch. I guess basically that is what the Upper Swan Valley Group and AARP, and all the things that are connected with what AARP does.

RA: We used to take a very...well, we still to a certain extent do but, we used to take a very active role in Flathead Audubon. For five years, I was actually the state president of Montana Audubon, so we spent at that point...we were involved at the state local level, but we still...our roots were still here.

JA: Yeah that’s what we’re doing out here. We’ve organized this annual birdseed sale for Flathead Audubon and we sell probably about...close to 300 fifty pound sacks to the whole Flathead area. We have five depots and the first depot is here in Condon. That’s what you guys are going to help unload out there. Yeah.

KJ: In these communities, do you feel that the other community members are also rooted to this land...?
RA: Not all but many are. We still have a lot of the descendants of the old families are still here and they feel that way. A lot of the newcomers, thank heavens, are...I’ve got some friends who’ve come in and taken part in the community just like we did and I think they love the place as much as we do. They do feel rooted. Then there are those who look at this place as a playground. They come in; they’re here for two or three weeks; big homes, huge homes, and they hardly ever are there. They don’t take part in the community. There are some people, I’ve heard their names and I don’t think I’ve ever seen them. So you get a mixture. But I’d say by and large, even the people that say, we might disagree with about forestry practices and things like that - some of the loggers and so on - are very rooted here.

In fact, that’s one of the gratifying things that’s happened with SEC and so on is that some of us, who are considered to be environmentalists or hard-core loggers and so on, have learned to like each other and work together and deal with problems. I admire many of the loggers, for example. I think they’re as deeply rooted as I am, if not more so. They love the land. We might disagree about what they do sometimes, but they still love the land.

KJ: Do you think that this understanding, that even though you might disagree sometimes, that you’re both rooted, does that make your community stronger?

RA: That’s why SEC has worked so well. Because everybody that...we’ve got a bunch of volunteers and so on and it’s...we’ve worked very hard to learn how to get along together and, rather than argue all the damn time, to try to solve problems that exist as best we can. I think it’s because...my good friend Neil Meyer, who’s the vice chairman SEC, is a retired logging contractor and he loves this place. He is deeply rooted, he and his family and so on. Very deeply rooted.

KJ: So why is it important to you personally to be involved in your community?

RA: Pretty much the same thing we’ve been talking about.

JA: I think it’s because of our upbringing. That’s been part of our lives to always be involved. I don’t think our families—either of our families—were retired from being part of the community. I know Rod’s family was deeply involved in labor politics, labor unions, working...

RA: This is in California.

JA: Yeah, and my mother, I can remember when I was twelve years old, going to volunteer for the Red Cross during the Second World War, wrapping bandages and that kind of thing. I joined organizations like community concerts and ushered for them and so on. I decided people were where my interests were and I became a social worker and a group organizer. That always has to blend in with the fact that I love the land. I’m not an isolationist. I feel like...I think all of us...
think we’re blessed to live in the land that we’re living in and I think we have a responsibility. I think it’s nice to be able to give something back to it as well as to take from it.

KJ: Do you feel a spiritual connection with the land?

JA: I was looking up the meaning of Deism and it says it’s a natural...let’s see...and I just got my polio bulletin too that I was looking at today. The fellow was talking about how you survive without depression with your disability. He was saying if you believe in God, or if you have a spiritual connection, or if you have a natural feeling for the world that you live in, this helps. Anyway, so I thought that was interesting. I think my feeling is that I have a natural feeling for the whole world. I look inside myself and I look around me to get my strength.

RA: It’s interesting how your patterns to a certain extent change as you get older. I’m a history buff. My major field was anthropology, which I loved and still do, but as I’ve gotten older, I find I’ve gotten more and more interested in kind of the place of where we are in the whole universe. In other words, I’ve gotten into cosmology and read all the stuff about alternative universes and what might happen after the big bang. It’s really interesting to me. I got to thinking about the physicists of the one discovering all this stuff. So what’s my share? My share is to be responsible for the tiny bit of a place that I live in and keep that going. If everybody would do that everywhere, we might survive.

KJ: Rod, do you feel a spiritual in-tuneness with the land?

RA: Spiritual in a broad sense. I feel part of...it’s pretty much what June said. I feel part of the universe now. I always felt part of the West and the Swan Valley and things like that. It’s more than just a playground to me. It’s something that I just feel...have you read, by any chance, Sand County Almanac?

KJ: I’ve read excerpts from it.

RA: You’ve got to read that. Because he gives you that...the same... He kind of gives you the feeling I have about a place and where you stand in the universe. I just feel we are... we could save the earth, maybe.

KJ: Do you feel that your connection with the land and this place has changed much since you’ve come here?

RA: No, the connection hasn’t changed. We worry, too rapid growth. In other words, we don’t. That’s maybe one of the big things we’re working on with the Swan Ecosystem Center is to try to save some of the land that Plum Creek is otherwise going to put on the real estate market. We’re not against people. We know they love the place too, but we think you can overdo it. You’ve got to keep some kind of control over the good lands that are better for resource use and (?) than for subdivisions.

Rod and June Ash Interview, OH 422-182, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JA: Forty-five years ago, when I told anybody we were going up to Montana to camp for the summer, they’d say, “Montana? Where’s that? Do you mean Minnesota?” No, Montana. Now the favorite phrase is “Montana has been found.” We all are quite aware of that and that has its significant consequences.

RA: The connections are still as strong as ever. More defensive - trying to protect rather than just accept, but...

JA: Anybody driving through the valley now these days, they stop. They think it...they write it down. Or they check in at the real estate agency, or whatever.

KJ: Do you two, either individually or as a couple associate with a spiritual community in the valley?

RA: Not particularly. I’ve got my own philosophy, pretty much. I don’t reject it. I have huge numbers of friends that are all praying for me, for example, but I don’t take part in the church or anything. Now, we used to, or June used to. I didn’t so much, my family was pretty much irreligious and so I guess that’s part of the background.

JA: I’m interested in what man has to say, but I don’t have to belong to a structured form regularly in order to survive.

RA: Intellectually, I’m really interested. Matter of fact, that was kind of one of the fields I was fooling around with when I was taking anthropology, was religion: how religion functions in a culture and its effect on life and so on. I respect it. I have absolutely nothing against it until it gets extreme and screws things up. But, as far as the spiritual part of it, I’m all for it.

JA: Whatever I believe in has to encompass all people. I can’t belong to a group that ostracizes anybody else. When I went to school, why I had people from many different places, friends, and I respect that. It also widened my experience as to what you belong to. That’s why I say I have a natural—a feeling for nature and the whole world—as Rod expressed, the universe really—and my relationship to it.

KJ: Did you spend a lot of time outdoors?

RA: Oh yeah.

JA: Oh, lots.

RA: Yeah, June said, until some of our infirmities caught up with us, we camped every single summer and every chance we got. We’d spend the whole summer...that was one of the nice...
things about being a teacher, you had the time off. I spent, we spent, whole summers camping. We’d spend more time in a tent than we would in a house.

JA: Yeah.

RA: The kids too. That’s why two of them are in the resource business. That’s what they learned when they were children.

JA: We were kind of roamers, but we had our favorite spots. Then there came a time when I guess, we...in coming into this valley and camping, we would come down and get groceries periodically. You would talk to the people that ran the little businesses and there were some very gracious people who were really homesteaders in the area. They welcomed us and they talked about the valley. I can remember Minh Croper invited us to come to, what was the meeting? The Swan Citizens Conservation Council, organized back in 1963.

RA: Which we belonged to by the way at the time, speaking of organizations.

JA: We came down to those meetings and we met other people. Then the time came in 1969 when we wondered if we’d always be able to have that place where we used to camp available to us because more people were coming up and getting on the trail and so on. We actually came down into the valley that summer and looked around and wondered if there was land for sale. That’s when we became a little bit less of a roamer because we found land. We found this log cabin. That’s when we really put down the roots.

KJ: So you didn’t build this house?

RA: No. We added to it. It was already here. It was just a basic cabin.

JA: We put on porches and things like that, but...

KJ: What are your favorite, or were your favorite outdoor activities?

RA: I love to fly-fish. And hike. Someone said, probably I’m more of a hiker than a fisher, because I choose—I walk to where I’m gonna fish—but I love fly-fishing.

JA: I guess mine would be bird watching.

RA: And swimming.

JA: Oh yeah, and swimming. Yeah. You’re right. Anything that ran or formed a puddle, I was in.

RA: I love bird watching too. That’s why we sit here. We’ve got that bird feeder there. We just spend a lot of time watching the birds coming and going. Yep.
JA: We’re part of a...for eight months out of every year, we belong to a bird group in the valley. We document every...

[End of Side A]
KJ: That’s a fun event.

RA: Yeah, it is. It is. We do that every month in the summer.

KJ: That’s every month?

RA: Every month from what? June on?

JA: From May!

RA: May, May on.

JA: Theotopical (?) birds come in May, June, July, August, September, October, and then we skip November, we have a Christmas bird count, skip January, and February we have the backyard bird count, and then we skip March and April and start again in May.

RA: So it’s a pretty regular group, actually.

JA: Then Rod and I, we also...every winter, we do the Kornell bird watching feeder watch from November to the end of March.

RA: Where you document everything that comes to your feeder.

KJ: So is that run by Kornell? It’s just people everywhere?

RA: Right, right. Yep.

JA: It makes you very observant. I keep track of all this stuff and it’s amazing. I can look in my bird book and I can say, “My gosh, those red pulls turned up the same time last year and the year before as they did today.” It’s uncanny.

RA: She’s a good record keeper.

JA: It’s absolutely uncanny. Then maybe Lazarai Bunny. We don’t see them every year, but if I look in my book, I find out, “It turned up the second week in June four years ago. (laughs) You learn a lot about birds and you identify of course with weather what’s going on at the time.

KJ: Were you always interested in birds?

JA: I think I introduced Rod to it. My brother is three years older than myself and he got his Eagle Scout badge in birding. I was a little tag-along. My family took us camping every summer.
up in the mountains in California for months at a time because my brother was an ailing child. So the doctor recommended that we get out where he could be outside. We row boated and swam and all that kind of thing. So, when we got married, we were charter members of the Wintune Audobon Society in Northern California and started keeping track of birds on our place. One thing just let to another. While we were students at the university, I don’t think I saw birds.

RA: Yeah, right. (Laughs).

JA: I can remember going out and standing out on that porch above Lucas’ bookstore and we’d look up in the Berkeley hills and I’d say, “Geez, wouldn’t it be nice when we can get up in the hills sometimes.”

KJ: Do you feel that you’ve learned a lot in general from being outdoors.

JA: Oh, immensely.

RA: Oh yeah, and a lot from living here and relating with the community, people in the community. A huge amount. My attitudes about a lot of things have changed.

KJ: Is knowing about wildlife and natural history a major part of being rooted to this place?

RA: Oh yeah. We kind of focus in on birds, but we’re interested in all the other creatures also.

JA: We notice the butterflies. I haven’t gotten into identification of too many of them, but you notice which butterflies are around, and when you’ve got different other little bugs or other moths or whatever—caterpillars.

RA: I know when there’s been a bear on the place.

JA: I sit out a lot now because I use my electric cart and gee I notice what crawls on the ground. (laughs) I know the shapes and sizes of all the little things. We just learned something new the other day. Where did we read about the blue aphid?

RA: We saw them first.

JA: I’ve been outside almost constantly all summer long and about two or three o’clock in the afternoon this little teeny weeny thing turns up slightly colored blue, just almost microscopic, flying around in massive numbers. Where’d we read about it?

RA: Mountain Ash, they talked about it in the paper.

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Rod and June Ash Interview, OH 422-182, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JA: Apparently, it comes out at this time of year and it’s identified to the Mountain Ash. We have two Mountain Ash bushes over here.

KJ: Yeah, you can constantly learn from the land.

J and RA: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

KJ: Do you have a garden here?

RA: Yep. Nice garden, but it’s gone to pot because of this illness. I have a big garden and actually we usually are able to freeze enough of our own vegetables to take us clear through the year.

KJ: Do you feel that gardening helps you understand the land?

RA: Oh, sure.

JA: Oh yes, definitely.

RA: It’s fun.

JA: For example, tomatoes were great this year, broccoli not so good. Cauliflower has a hard time making it in Montana. If you live long enough and you have patterns to things, you learn a lot. You can’t...I think that’s one thing we learned even about our camping when we were going in the summer. It was always better to stay for a period of time in places so that you could become acquainted with it, rather than have just a very short time interest in it. Or knowledge of it, you know.

KJ: Does having a knowledge in the land give you a feeling of pride?

RA: Oh, sure.

JA: Oh yes, definitely.

KJ: Can you describe what this pride feels like?

RA: Pride? Well just satisfaction that...I’m not sure pride’s the right word, but satisfaction, great satisfaction, in knowing what’s going on around you and understanding it and so on.

KJ: Does having a knowledge about the land affect your relationship with the landscape?

RA: Oh sure, without question. Like if you’re...if you know something about trees and vegetation, you’re going to handle your property a heck of a lot different than if you just look at
it as a place you’re going let grow whatever the heck it wants to grow. That’s not natural either. We’ve come to learn and understand about fire for example, and how it fits into the landscape, which I didn’t know until we became part of this area. What are you checking on?

JA: I’m seeing if the truck came.

RA: What time is it?

JA: It’s after three. It’s a little bit late.

RA: That’s no big surprise.

KJ: You mentioned that you built onto this house. Did building on and establishing something as your own here, did that help you feel rooted?

RA: The big project - you might take a look when you go out, you can see it from where we store the seed - is a really nice building up on the hill, where we’ve got a little exercise pool for June, two guest bedrooms, a nice bathroom, and things like that. My second oldest was building log homes and so it became a family project. I peeled logs, June supervised, and my youngest son was here...took a semester out of school and came and worked with his brother. So the place wasn’t all built by just us, but a lot of it was built by us. That was a very nice thing to have contributed, you might say, to our own living situation. And building the garden. That took me a long time just to build that garden and get it going. But that’s beside the point.

JA: We wanted to be modest in our usage of construction or buildings. I don’t think we ever wanted to...we weren’t building for trophies or for display; we were building for existence, for sustenance, shelter. I think that’s always been pretty important. When we first established how we lived in the place from one period of time to the next, we enjoyed going to second hand stores and finding the things that would be useful. Still to this day, as I do some of my dishes or work in the kitchen, I think, “Gee, well we got that at Heels second-hand store in Kalispell, and boy, it looks like it’s got a crack in it. I’m going to keep that a little bit longer,” and stuff like that

RA: Except for that building up there, that’s the only new building we’ve ever lived in. The house in California was an old house that we bought and we fixed and things like that. We’ve never built a brand new house to live in, whatever that means.

KJ: Are you proud of this house, though?

RA: Oh yeah, we love this place, yeah. All we’ve got scattered around.

JA: Oh, and at the very beginning—a log cabin? I mean, that was romantic to me.

RA: And we knew who had built it.

Rod and June Ash Interview, OH 422-182, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
KJ: Who built it?

RA: Local guys, who were real craftsmen and so on. We knew them, or we came to know them. So that was a nice connection. I mean, they built it not for us. It was here when we came, but we knew who had built it in the past. Yep.

KJ: Your knowledge of this land...you talked about how you feel like you really do know a lot about the land—

RA: Yeah, and I keep learning more and more and more and more.

KJ: Has this knowledge changed?

RA: Yes. Oh, yeah. A great deal. I understand more about the importance of fire and how the place has changed. It’s not natural, all the growth that’s taking place, and the stagnation. That used to get burned out. I appreciate the fact that if you don’t have fire, you need to do something else to help keep things somewhat open at least, and natural.

JA: What was the manual that we were a part of a group that put together...what’s that called?

RA: Oh, yeah...we worked together on the Landscape Analysis for the Swan Valley. Have you seen that?

KJ: Oh, yeah I have.

RA: A bunch of us, I did a chapter on wetlands and somebody else did...so, all of that was done locally.

JA: Yeah, and all the work that Northwest Connections has done. I think Tom Parker’s improvisation of...

RA: Well, he broke some of the sections.

JA: I mean all of that has just...we didn’t have that before and now it’s made available to us. It’s printed about it...

RA: People use it.

JA: People use it, yeah.

RA: Forest Service was going to do it, then ran out of money and didn’t do it, so we just took it over and did it, with their help. They gave us a lot of expert advice and information, but we did
the actual work. You got to take a look at it when you have a chance. Melanie must have one up there.

KJ: Yeah, there’s one floating around. What advice would you give to any newcomers to the valley?

JA: (Laughs).

RA: Learn to live with the place and not try to change it from what they used to be. In other words, don’t turn the Swan Valley into what they left. Accept what’s there.

(The truck with birdseed arrives)

KJ: Was there anything else you wanted to add?

RA: I think you’ve done a really good job, you’ve exhausted my...

(tape recorder is turned off, then back on)

RA: I look forward to seeing the results.

KJ: Yeah, on Tuesday, this Tuesday actually, is our presentation if you’re interested.

RA: I’m just not getting out. It’s hard. My leg is swollen twice as big as it should be and it’s just really hard for me to move. I’d have to... the chairs down there, I’d be in agony in ten minutes and...but I’d still like to see it.

(tape recorder is turned off, then back on)

KJ: I’ll go home and I’ll tell people how coming to Montana has just helped me really learn to love land, and find a sense of place, and people are like, “A sense of place?”

RA: Yeah, right, right.

KJ: Maybe people in Seattle and big cities do feel really strongly towards their city, and there is a lot of community there, but a community sense of place is just different when it’s tied to the land.

RA: Somebody, I think it might have even been one of your group doing this work in the past, made the distinction which I had never thought about before. She said there are two kinds of communities: one is a community of place, the other a community of interests, so that people got together because they were teachers or they were lawyers, or they were policemen, or whatever. That’s a very...that’s become a powerful community obviously in our society. Then
there are communities of place, which unfortunately I suspect are shrinking madly in many ways.

KJ: But there is also a movement...you were talking of the part time residents in the valley coming. I do really see people reaching out and trying to grasp a sense of place.

RA: Yeah. A lot of people come to the valley because of that - because they've lost those connections and they want to restore them again too. Kind of hard to do it in a big downtown neighborhood in New York City. Well you can do it there too.

KJ: There's great community activism in cities.

RA: Now where do you live now? In Petaluma?

KJ: Oh no, I grew up in Seattle. My family has really strong connections to Petaluma. Actually to Pengrove, which is a little suburb of Petaluma. But yeah, I grew up in Seattle.

RA: Oh, it's a nice community, I like Seattle.

KJ: Seattle's a really nice city. It's definitely...I went back there this summer and stayed with my parents and worked there, and it's definitely the last time—

RA: Yeah, yeah...

KJ: So did you study education at Berkeley?

RA: No, actually my major and then my master’s degree is in cultural anthropology,

KJ: Oh, neat.

RA: Then I decided...I was actually working on a PhD and I thought, “Oh man, I don’t want to keep doing this.” So then I went ahead and got my teaching degree and taught high school out of Redding for thirty years. And liked it, really enjoyed it, yeah.

KJ: My sister just graduated from Berkeley.

RA: Oh, yeah?

KJ: In cultural geography.

RA: Oh. I love geography. Matter of fact, I almost had joint majors in geography and anthropology because, again, that land connection—tell her that you’ve met a guy who was a student of Carl Soure. He is one of the icons of the Geography department in Berkeley. He
passed away many years ago, but he was a really interesting man. He almost got me to switch to geography. There’s a book called Land and Life; it was a collection of his essays that she ought to get and read. I think they’re great essays.

KJ: Yeah, the problem for her is just that there’s not a lot you can do with a geography major. She’s just had a hard time finding a job. Well, I should get out there and help.

RA: Yeah, they need your muscles.

[End of Interview]