The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society with its associated audio recording.
Suzanne Vernon: Do you remember going to work for the Forest Service right out of college?

Clarence Stilwell: The day after I graduated, in fact. From the University of Idaho I went to Northern Idaho. That's where I started. I went from graduation ceremony there at Moscow, directly from there to work on the Kaniksu National Forest, Northern Idaho.

SV: Do you remember what kinds of things you had to do there?

CS: Oh yeah. I was a lookout for a while, and I was on trails. Just the regular routine Forest Service stuff. Firefighting. I was on lookout for a while. Most of us started that way. Then, mostly that and trail work, besides regular lookout work was routine for the Forest Service in those days. The lookout I was on I could see into Canada. One year there was five fires going up in Canada, above north Idaho. Boy that was some summer. I can't remember, but I think it was about '34 or '35. I've always been a fire man. Always been a fire man. I developed the fire control plan for the Bitterroot National Forest. I worked on that four years.

SV: Do you remember the first day you got to Condon.

CS: Oh yes. Yes I do. I'll never forget it. Bein' a fire horse, it was quite dramatic really. But you see, when I got out of the service, I went to the Flathead Supervisor's Office. Niceling (sp?) had written me a letter just as I came out of the service saying he wanted me to come to Kalispell. He had plans for me. Fred Niceling, I knew him very well. He was a good friend of mine. He was the supervisor here when I came to the Condon District. I had left the Helena forest, and I was in the Service. After I got out of the service, course my tenure went on and I was assigned to the Flathead. Fred knew me before. He knew me on the Bitterroot Forest. So he wrote me a nice letter and told me where to come. But first I went to the Flathead, to Kalispell, then worked out of the Kalispell office on the Coram district, during the bad seasons. I must have been down there for I don't know, a couple years, before they assigned me to the Glacier View District out of Flathead. He was going to send me up there. But he said, "Things have kind of gone to seed up at Condon. So I want you to go up there." I didn't know what he meant by that, but he changed my plans and I went up there. But at that time, I was in Kalispell. I couldn't get through from Swan Lake side, the road was so bad, I couldn't get through. So I had to go around by Missoula. Clear around, and come back up what is now 83, to the Condon District here. And he oriented me as to what I'd find and so on. But, as I came down through, course it was the old highway. This part of the road, the south end, was fairly good, but, and was solid, you could
drive on it and I had a pickup. Maybe, I should say, prior to the time I came, when I was in Kalispell, working out of the Kalispell office, I had Mabel and the girls at Creston. Just outside of Creston. (To Mabel: What was the name of that store down there at Creston?) I don't know. Anyway, the store. Wendt? The place we rented? Anyway, that's kind of beyond your part of it. But anyway we rented their place. Soon as I was assigned to the Condon District here I had to come down this way and get down to the ranger station and look things over. As I came down through this area down here, Pine Ridge Road, I looked over to the west, and there was the damndest smoke over there. Heavy smoke. I thought, uh-oh. I'm the new ranger and here I've got a fire already. It was over at Lundbergs. They were clearing that land over around their lake over there. And they'd gone and left their fire burn and I drove in there and nobody was around. So I kind of stopped the spread of the fire. It wasn't very big. It was throwing a lot of smoke. I was kind of a fire horse, anyway. So I waited around there awhile, and pretty soon here come Charlie and his wife, and I got introduced to them. That's Mabel's dad and mother. And started giving them heck, introduced myself, for burning that. I can't remember just what time of year it was but it burned pretty good. It didn't do any harm. It just burned a little more of the stuff they wanted to burn. I got acquainted with them. They were, Mabel was gone somewhere. I think she was teaching school, she was some sort of a school, teacher's conference. I didn't meet her till later. (Can tell he is talking about two different time periods with Mabel. . .) Down at Condon. But anyway I went on down to Condon from the fire here. And the first thing, I drove into that, you know how you go into that ranger station? You go down that long lane and then to the old buildings? I could hear somebody bellerin' and hollerin'. What's going on down here? So I moved on up to the barn, and here was Scoop Scoville (sp?) up there gathering the mules up and he was really bellerin'. Scoop was a burly guy and that's the way he did things. He was a powerhouse, I tell you. So we got acquainted, Scoop and I. Scoop had been acting ranger prior to that time. He was living in the dwelling there at the Ranger Station. So, he knew of course that I was coming, and I was married, and I was going to? his house. He was going to have to give up his house. So I moved my family into the ranger's headquarters. Residence. Can't remember how soon after that we moved up there. I moved my family up there. It wasn't too long, though.

SV: Do you remember what the trees and stuff looked like around that site?

CS: Pretty much the same, you know, they're mature enough that they haven't changed that much. There's a few, Condon Creek comes down that draw, and, mostly meadow out there. A lot of good fishing in Condon Creek, I know that. Later. My folks, my dad and mother, came up there, oh I don't know what year it was. My dad thought I might have changed my mind about my career, and want to go back to the hop ranch. He had a hop ranch. He was quite a farmer, really. He kind of wanted me to come back and help my brother in the hop ranch. But I already had my career in forestry started. So I didn't have any desire to do that, so I stuck by my career. Then in 1948, we were transferred from Condon to North Idaho, Kaniksu Forest, where I was . . . That's when I took charge of timber management up there.
SV: When you were at Condon, out at the old ranger station, what were some of the crews and that you had to be responsible for? What was some of the work that they were doing?

S: I can't think of the names, now. There were a couple brothers. I had about five different people that worked there, on trails, mostly. Mostly trails. This country, about the only way you could get around was on trails, you know.

SV: Is that what the mules were for?

CS: No, lookouts. We had Hemlock, Holland. They shuttled stuff over the divide at Holland to the Bob Marshall. They used the mules to shuttle lumber and stuff over to Big Prairie. They based the operations of Holland Lake here. Were shuttling stuff over there. That's what we had them for mostly. The only way we had to get stuff over the hill.

SV: So the trails led to the lookouts and led to the . . .

CS: Yeah, mainly, that's all they did. Hemlock was the west side. Hemlock lookout was the west side of the district. And over here on the Holland side was Holland Peak. Most of our mules and things was for our supplies, food supplies for the lookouts and things like that, and any construction that we were doing.

SV: Do you remember when you were out and about on these trails and forestry projects, was there a lot of second growth stands here, or would you say there was more of the . . .

CS: No, it was more mature then. Lots of mature stuff. There used to be an old guy had a sawmill down the valley here. Just loved ponderosa pine. Can't think of his name right now (Wise). Down, (Salmon Prairie) where that church is down here. He, they were tied in pretty close to the history of that church, but they were lumber men and they liked that big ponderosa pine. They could slab big boards off of that stuff. They were always looking for a bug killed tree or some excuse to cut one of those big pines. Always. If they didn't find them, well, I'd find them, and sell them to them. It was a salvage proposition. Try to keep ahead of the pine beetles and things like that. But most of the trees in the valley at that time were the big ponderosas. They scattered through, just like they are now, really. Not that much different. And they had their mill down there by Salmon Prairie, that's the place, they'd go back in there by Kaser's. That's where they were. The mill, seems to me was up the road a ways. (Wise mill was near Dog Creek.) There's a stream comes out the east side.

SV: But he liked the big trees?

CS: Oh boy.

SV: What did they do with the big boards?
CS: Oh, they sold them. It was pretty good revenue for them. I'm not sure exactly where his market was. It was always a problem, disposing of that mill slash. I had to watch them real close on that to be sure when they were sawing that they'd throw the slash in a means around the sawmill site where it wouldn't set it afire and burn it up easy. I remember that very plainly. Disposable sawmill sites after they got through. I don't think you could even see the old sites any more. All grown up in there.

SV: Do you remember any logging projects that the Forest Service did when you were here?

CS: You mean sold timber?

SV: Did you have to mark any sites or sell any...?

CS: Just the salvage stuff. At that time. There was no real commercial type sales. They were just kind of keeping ahead of the insects and things like that. I'm just can't remember, I'll think of his name. They were brothers, there was two of them. Two brothers.

SV: It wasn't Wise's? Vic and Al?

CS: That's it. The mill was up this way from the road. On one of those streams that comes in. One of the prominent ones. (Dog Creek.) There's a lot of them down there (streams). We didn't have too many fires then. Scoop had been on the district prior. He knew everything that had gone on as far as fires. But there hadn't been too many in here. We had one over on the west side after I got here. Can't remember that little stream. Windfall Creek. We had a fire in there that threatened a little bit. Kind of a battle for a while. But I was amazed. Had the Wilhelm boys, had the, name of that packer used to live down here? He was a dude packer. Had that ranch down here. Dunlap. He was a salvation to me cuz he'd take his horses and mules and take stuff into places where other people wouldn't go cuz they was afraid of the fire. He'd go anywhere. I'll never forget that. But that fire kind of threatened us for a while. I remember one time in particular, after that fire, somebody came into the ranger station and had walked through that area where the fire had been and had smelled smoke. Sometime after we'd supposedly put it out. That bothered me, because I thought, uh-oh, that darn thing is liable to take off again. So I wasn't going to let it wait. I took off in the evening and went up there. It was quite a hike clear up the stream. By golly there was still a little bit of fire in there, and I put it out. Sent a couple of men up the next day and double checked it. Something kind of funny happened that night. The night I walked up there it was a full moon came up. Full moon. I tell you that moon just right on the horizon, and I thought it was that doggone fire. I thought, boy that thing it taking off. But after I get up over the ridge a little way, I could see it was the moon, it wasn't the fire. I felt a little better about that. I took care of that situation and went home. That's the only real scare I had with fires. Wasn't really anything but my imagination, that there was any danger there. But I was trying to be conscientious there, I guess, and do my job, and didn't want anything to go wrong. I put it on myself to check it out cuz I wanted to be sure I knew what was going on. That there was no danger of any blow up or anything like that.
At that time, it seemed to me the timber spans in here, really doesn't seem to be much difference. Course, once trees get up like there are up here, you don't see that much difference in the matter of ten years or so, they don't really show that much. But, it looked pretty much like it does now, 'cept the trees are taller. The canopy over the valley was pretty much the same. Wasn't too much difference that way.

SV: Was the Wineglass Mill starting up about that time?

CS: Just about. They hadn't started when I was here. They were just getting ready. I didn't have any association with the Wineglass at all. Fact I had to move out, it was right after I had to move out of here in 1948 that the Wineglass really established itself. I don't know too much about it. I think Shorty Koessler had that mill.

SV: When you were out and about on the district, did you see much wildlife?

CS: Oh yes. There was always quite a bit around. I don't remember specifically seeing any cougar, things like that, but lots of deer, of course. Bear, well, you'd see them occasionally. I didn't think there were too many bears in the area, but could have been. Then when the Highway came through here, Fred Niceling and I decided, there was a nice area of ponderosa pine down here, you know, in this stretch on this road here, above where Pine Ridge Road comes into the highway. South of that, there's a nice grove of ponderosa pine. The highway survey was coming right through that. We noticed that, and I told Fred it'd be nice to save some of that. So we got to looking in the books and found out that there was a method by which we could set aside areas in one place and exchange it for timber in another place. So we set aside this strip of ponderosa pine, I think it was 100 feet on each side of the highway survey. 1945 I believe. And I cruised all that and made an estimate of the volume that was on the strip of highway that we wanted to save. We traded that timber for timber back of the Gordon Ranch that they had in mind. We just made a straight across swap. No money involved. Just a matter of timber and land for timber and land. That's the way that started.

SV: That ended up being a project that stayed with you for a long time.

CS: Yes it did. Our interest was only in the valley bottom here up to the divide. Where the big ponderosas were this way. It involved mostly the big ponderosas. We figured the highway went through there, and if they weren't preserved, people would never know what the valley looked like with the big pine. So we wanted to save those. That was one way to do it without making anybody mad about hording anything. It turned out to be all right.

SV: Did you have to come to the defense of those big trees any other time?

CS: No, no. Nobody, once they were set aside there was no problem. A few of them have blown down. What's his name, Mike (Holmes) has salvaged some of those. That's been a lot later.
wasn't even around then. But we just did it because we felt there was a need to preserve that history of the valley and the way it looked and so on. Those big trees, that was the idea, to show what it was like at one time. And it worked out all right. There was a regulation in the Forest Service regulation where you could make those kind of swaps, for an area you wanted to preserve to another area you were able to log. In this case out here, it was just to preserve the scenic value of those trees.

They did, the Forest Service, after I left, in '48 then I came back again to visit Mabel's folks, I noticed they had sneaked in there, the Forest Service itself, and cut some of those trees. Yeah. Over just in that same general area. It made me a little mad, but then, it was done, so. I don't know how much. . . control they had over what had been done, or if they even knew. When Niceling passed away, I don't remember what year, so his history of the times, I don't know how long he stayed there. He was supervisor there till he passed away. He would have watched over them. I'm sure he would have known.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
SV: Did you ever hear comments good or bad about that project?

CS: Oh, yes. Yes indeed. They've talked to me since I've moved back up here. In fact, the controversy over the trees was in the Missoulian for a while. But I never had anything to do with the larch over on the other side. The Missoulian article made it sound like I saved everything from this side clear to Seeley Lake, but that wasn't true. The big larch down at Seeley Lake were something else. There's been a lot of comment, especially by local people, about that article. I remember Mrs. ?, lady that lived down the valley, she said, "Oh, they'll be gone. They won't last long, those trees." But those trees have lasted. Five hundred years old, some of those trees. The ones down here in the campground, right down here where Mabel said the boy drowned? (Pine Ridge) Bud Moore and I cut that out, we didn't cut the trees, but there was a stump there. That was since I moved up here. And counted the rings. The wind came through that campground and blew the top out of that, one of those trees, so the Forest Service sold the lower part. And Bud and I cut out with a saw, off the stump so we could count the rings. That was five hundred years old. That was when Columbus landed on shores of (North America). Anyway, it was a historical thing. We had it on one of our parades up here, our history club. We had a slab of that tree showing the years and what was happening, when Columbus was coming to America and all that stuff. Had it on a pickup truck, I think. I'm not sure it was a truck, or what. Those days, that was after I moved back up here. Kind of a historical thing. That old slab's gone now.

SV: Was that a campground that was used for camping when you were here?

CS. No. In fact, it shouldn't be now. It's not a good place for a developed campground. It could be, a small one. Could have been somebody killed when that tree broke off. It landed right where people had been staying. That was after I moved up here, that storm. Forest Service sold all the trees that were knocked down. That was part of the big wind storm that was here maybe ten years ago. I don't know what it was like up on the divide, but it was pretty . . . I know where Stratton lives over on Pierce Lake, it was pretty wicked over there. Homer (Skip) Stratton, who lives over at Pierce Lake? He was one of my assistants at Kingston. I knew him, and his wife's dad owned a piece of property on Pierce Lake that they lived on (Forest Service lease). His wife passed away. She used to be a librarian down at Missoula, University. We haven't seen him. They were a nice couple. He used to be an assistant for us over at Kingston.

SV: Did you remember hearing any more about windstorms?

CS: Well, really, this last one was the worst one I ever remember. It blew over trees I didn't think it could. You know, big tamaracks, five feet across. We had one back in here. I didn't think. . . we went out after the storm and seen that tree down and I just couldn't believe it. We sold it out of here. It was something that should have been salvaged. That's the way we had to do it.
SV: I asked you a little bit about campgrounds. Do you remember what Holland Lake Campground looked like when you were here?

CS: Just about the same as it does now. Not too much different. The old cabin was up there, back off the lake. We used it as a headquarters for packing mules from this side over to the Bob Marshall. We used it for that.

SV: Did very many people camp there, in their tents?

CS: Oh, not really. That one little area, between the boat launch and the swimming area? There was a little activity there.

SV: How about hikers and stuff on the trails?

CS: That trail that runs from the packer camp over to, up to, into the Bob Marshall, wasn't used at all. In fact that wasn't there when I was ranger here. The Packer Camp wasn't here. They developed that afterwards. I don't recall, just exactly when that was established. Shortcut for the people who wanted to hunt over in the Bob Marshall. They built areas where they could keep their stock and so on. That was all after I left.

SV: Do you remember any of those hunters or outfitters using any of those other trails?

CS: No. There wasn't too much activity. Let's see, what was I going to say. They used to go up that Little Summit Lake (Sapphire?) People used to go up to the lake up on the divide there. That's about as far as they wanted to go. (Or maybe Upper Holland.) They used to have a group they called the Trail Riders. Used to take that route and go over. Usually somebody from Forest Service would go around and try to help out occasionally. Generally was shuttled by a dude outfit from this side. (Hultman? See Hulett, Haasch.) Somebody that knew horses would take them over in the Bob Marshall. A lot of hunters over in the Bob Marshall, to hunt early. They developed that little place up here on the Packer Camp, that was developed as a result of the pressure for that hunting, pressure on that area over there. They come from all over, really, to hunt in there, in the Bob Marshall. It had a pretty good reputation as an area to hunt and fish, at one time. Still is, as far as that goes. Still use it pretty heavy, the Packer Camp.

I was going to tell you, there was one thing that followed me from the Kaniksu over here. Now on the Kaniksu, the primary tree is the Idaho White Pine. That’s the pine tree in Idaho. And here, we have one up here, there’s a couple Idaho White Pine on the road that runs into the Packer Camp. In fact, it’s real near the Packer Camp. And we have a couple over here, small ones, about the size of some of these lodgepole. I run across that one, too. Not realizing that we had Idaho White Pine in here. I don’t know how it got here. All this mess, you wouldn’t think you’d have an Idaho White Pine, but it was there.

SV: You like your trees, I can tell.

Clarence Stilwell Interview, OH 422-014, 015, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
CS: I teach all my grandchildren about trees. How to identify them. How to tell a Douglas fir from a white fir. Some of them never forget. They’re grown up with kids of their own, now. Toya is one. She can tell you. Her daughter, who is about the same age, we hiked up towards where the old Wilhelm place was, Barber Creek. We’d hike up there and we’d identify trees, going and coming. They never forgot.

SV: Is there any tricks to keeping your trees straight?

CS: Oh yes. Between the firs, you bet. The red fir, or Douglas fir, is the only fir with a sharp red pointed bud. If you have any trouble between the Douglas fir and white fir or any other firs, the sharp, pointed red bud is the key to the Douglas fir. Which is quite prominent in here, and spruce. Sometimes people get spruce and fir mixed up. But that’s one of the key ways to know what Douglas fir is. Pointed red bud. Sharp pointed red bud.

SV: Did you ever hike up in the Missions when you were here as a ranger?

CS: Yes, I went across that trail that goes across there? (points along foothills) I went across there one time when the, just prior to the hunting season. An old Indian was camped back in there. I saw his camp, in fact I come upon it. I had a horse, and I come upon his camp. I thought, oh, you’re kind of early. I stopped and talked to him. He never said much. I just told him, you know hunting season don’t start till ?. And just kind of cautioned him about being careful not to start too early. He was kind of a gruffy old guy. I don’t know if I took a chance of getting an arrow in me or something I don’t know. It didn’t bother me at the time. I thought about it afterwards. Maybe out there by myself I was taking a chance. I don’t know.

SV: Do you remember seeing any different kinds of trees in the Missions that didn’t grow down in the valley?

CS: Well, like I said, we’re in the foot of the Missions and that white pine was kind of an oddity. But that’s the only one that seemed like it was out of place. There’s some down on the lower end of the valley. Down there on the far drainages at the north end of the valley, on up on the west side. There are areas in there that look a little bit like North Idaho, as far as, quite a bit of pine down there. That’s the only one, though. White pine’s the only one that I noticed particularly. It isn’t a regular native here.

(discussion talking to Mabel)

CS: Telephone line. We used to have, that was kind of a headache for me, that telephone line. People always wanted to get hooked up to it. The telephone line deal was a gosh darned headache. Everybody wanted to get on it. We couldn’t let them. Didn’t make any friends for us. Just had to have a rigid rule. For our official use primarily. Didn’t let anybody else use it. Wasn’t
a very good tool towards public relations, you know, good public relations. People just couldn't understand why they couldn't get on it.

SV: Do you remember what businesses were here?

CS: Strom's store. And down where the Mission Mountains is? There was a little store down there. (Conkling). We used to get our groceries over there when we lived at the ranger station. What little we bought.

SV: What was your impression of the community when you saw it in the forties there?

CS: Why, well. I kind of liked the area. People, themselves, I don't recall too many of the people. Sawmill people, I knew them. I, as a general rule, people were about as I would expect them to be in a rural community like this. More or less isolated. Kind of a backwoods area.

SV: Did most of them have work somewhere?

CS: Some of them worked for the Forest Service, limited number. But I'm not sure what was going on at Seeley Lake at that time. I don't know if Pyramid was going then or not. But work sources haven't changed that much, really. So it's about, as far as work goes, it's about the same situation in those days as it is now. There was a separate ranger down there, at Seeley. One up here and then down there. I do remember his name. Friend of mine at one time. Can't think of his name, he got hurt on a horse. I remember that. In fact he got shot coming out of the Bob Marshall. Somebody shot him. He had a gun up over his shoulder like this coming up the trail. Saw that gun top and thought it was an elk horn and shot just below it. Didn't kill him but messed him up pretty good in the rib section. I think that's the same guy that got killed on a fire down there in the Kalispell area.

SV: Gray's Mill?

CS: I don't really know. Gray logged some of this where we are now. 1950. But when he moved in down there I really don't know. Logged some of our stuff. In fact this big pine stump out here is one of his.

SV: When did you guys buy this place?

CS: It was Mabel's place, a homestead. (She acquired it)

SV: So some of these buildings are original? Except the house.

CS: House, built this when we moved up here. Garage, was original. I moved it from down below here where Mabel used to live, up to here. And set it up here. There was no buildings up here when we started building this. Joe's cabin was below (son's). At foot of the hill.
(discussion about homesteader. Reed's. Can't decipher to type. Reed's cabin. Couple more cabins down below that they burned.)

CS: Charlie Anderson. This homestead was the Charlie Anderson homestead and Mabel got that. You got this place from Reed? (Yes, Mabel says.)

SV: Are you glad you did that? (to Mabel)

Mabel Stilwell: Oh yes. I was born here and I'll die here.

CS: She's got a place to die now. (laughs)

MS: It's a nice place, nice people.

CS: When Charlie Lundberg built that lake over there, it kind of changed the looks of things over there, on 31 homestead where Warner and Margaret live now. That changed the looks of that area.

MS: That isn't a homestead, though. That's (NP). (discussion) Northern Pacific.

SV: Are you talking about the lake that was built or Loon Lake?

CS: The lake that was built. Underwoods was built about the same time. I think Warner's dad built the first one, then I believe Underwoods (Pennypacker) built the other one.

SV: You have some interest in that property around Loon Lake, though, too?

CS: Yeah, oh yeah.

SV: Is that something you did after you retired here?

CS: No, again, that was the Saderstrom homestead. Mabel had that. (In about 1955--Jenise.)

MS: You see my grandparents, Rolls, over there, they used to come down and visit Grandma.

SV: So you were familiar with that place around Loon Lake.

MS: Oh yes.

SV: What was Mrs. Saderstrom like?

MS: Well, she was her own boss. She was like... (can't transcribe)
Fred and Bertha Roll, grandparents. John and Charlie Roll. Then they (Fred) had a daughter, Wendlas. Can't transcribe.

SV: I'm curious about Loon Lake. Were there loon there when you were a kid?

MS: Yes. That picture reminds me of that. (Points to Monte Dolack poster on wall.)

(discussion)

CS: At Loon Lake we used to see the old loons with the little ones on their backs.

MS: We hope it stays wild so they still stay there.

CS: That was something. It's all lodgepole around there. There used to be some big larch before the fire went through. Some of them survived, but woodcutters get most of them. Since that fire in '29, there's been, they've went through that area and cut out all the big wood. In fact you see very few big larch snags anymore. Woodcutters got most of them. Used to be some big ones down there, before that fire. That fire I didn't know anything about. I guess Mabel knows more about that one.

MS: We had to leave the place and stay at the Gordon Ranch (see her tapes, earlier)

CS: Stoner and Lundberg were burning slash. The two fires kind of got together.

MS: Well, Wildes, the ranger here, said Dad's was the backfire.

CS: Well that fire kind of terminated here by where the Pine Ridge Road meets the highway.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
CS: Probably all second growth (talking about landscape.)

SV: So you think trees are pretty smart? (Note: good quote about smart trees was off tape. "Trees can tell you a lot about age. They know more than I do." --CS.)

CS: Oh yeah, they can tell you a lot of things.

SV: What do you find out when you bore them?

CS: Well, you can tell age, for one thing. You can, if you bore in the right place, you can tell when there's been fires, what time, and how far back. Especially on this big pine. My bore is about 18 inches long. It goes in the tree about that far. You can tell all the history with that borer. Increment borer.

SV: You were involved in forest management and fire stuff for decades. Is there anything you wished you could change about the way things were done?

CS: I wish we could have shut off the 1910 fire. That's the same age as I am, you know. I go through there, and see that St. Regis country and look at that. Kind of something. (big trees all gone) I saw, on the Kaniksu, there was a family that one of her teacher's, Dettweiler, her grandfather or who it was, (discussion), this old feller I was talking to. He remembered when the 1910 fire come up over the ridge to the west of them. Said it sounded like a freight train. He'd sit out there and just watch the road, cattle and highway. I saw him up there and I went and talked to him and he told me a lot of the history of that fire when it went through there. An old fella that was anxious to talk.

(discussion)

MS: Wildes was ranger here and he told my dad that dad's fire was a back fire.

CS: That was 1929.

SV: Do you remember what that fire sounded like?

MS: It was scary because it was a lot of burning.

CS: We were on the Kaniksu, let's see, what was that fire in '67? Sundance. That doggone thing, that was enough for me. It tore out big cedar by the roots. Actually tore them out, big cedars. Went back up in there after that fire, you wouldn't believe. They roar. They're terrible.

(tape off and on) huckleberries...
CS: Mrs. Jette was the biggest huckleberry picker, over on Cold Creek.

SV: Do you remember other people picking a lot?

CS: Well, down around Cold Creek, they scatter around. Pretty good berries up there. And there are areas west of here that aren't bad if you know where they are.

MS: The last person I went huckleberrying with was Mrs. Wilhelm. Eva. Babe and Eva. The old folks.

CS: In the days that I was here, huckleberries I never even noticed them.

SV: I was curious because some of the people I talked to who lived here in the thirties made quite a bit of money picking berries. . .

CS: You bet. No, I didn't pay much attention to huckleberries. Fact, I'm not even sure I ever saw a huckleberry patch the whole time I was here.

Jenise Eskridge: I don't remember grandpa and grandma picking huckleberries.

MS: They didn't have time. Mom used to. Up in the hills.

CS: Used to be a little market for them, all right. In fact, there used to be years they'd be pretty good. Sell them by the gallon.

(discussion)

CS: Mabel's mother could cook.

SV: What was your favorite thing that she cooked?

CS: In the bread line, svensekakka. (sp?)

SV: You guys are going to have to find that recipe.

MS: That was real thin, like crackers (something different than svensekakka). They had to make do with what they had.

JE: She made a fish head soup that we liked.

CS: Fish head soup? Eyes and all?
JE: We ate it, but we didn't want to see what she put in it. And she could make a mean mulligan stew.

MS: The reason she made dishes like that, she didn't have time to make up other things.

(best dessert?) Chocolate pudding! (discussion. misc. about Mabel teaching. Missoula, etc. hard to hear, transcribe. Started teaching at Wise River, then to DeSmet, then to Franklin. Second grade.

[End of Interview]