The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society with its associated audio recording.
Suzanne Vernon: When did you come to the Swan?

John Hulett: 1931. The folks come in before I did, in the same year though. I was in Oregon when they come here.

SV: Why did your folks come first?

JH: I'd left home when I was in Oregon. I worked out there. I was a kid. I was gone a year then when I, I never communicated with the folks, when I got home, they'd moved. We lived on the side of the reservation around Polson and Pablo for most of my life.

SV: Why did you come over here?

JH: They thought there was homestead land. But homestead land was all taken up about then. There was only forty acres they could find and it didn't suit 'em. This was NP land I bought, after we lived up here awhile, the NP agree, well, you could buy your land from the NP then. [Northern Pacific Railroad. The railroad was granted every other section of land in the Swan Valley by the federal government. Railroad land is also referred to BN or Burlington Northern land, or PC Plum Creek Timber land in other interviews.] We bought this 160 [reportedly paid $460 according to one source] and our neighbor he sold us the other half, quarter section. Later on, he was in pretty bad shape and stayin' with us, and I had a deal made with him to buy his part. He died then, before we got the papers signed. Then I bid on it, the heirs sold it, put it up for sale, and I bid on it, and that's how come I got that other 160 east of here. [reportedly paid $2000 according to one source.] Yeah, well my mother, my folks, I think my dad died in 1950. And I don't know what year it was my mother died, but she lived here with me for a long time, until I had to put her in the rest home. She went blind, and I couldn't take care of her. I put her in the rest home. But she was, I don't know, she musta been in the rest home three or four years when she died. But I don't remember what year it was.

Note: John has family members who disagree with this story slightly, saying that the title to the land is in other family members' names, too. However it is beyond the scope of this project to address land ownership or title. Tom Hulett was interviewed for the Upper Swan Valley OHP but didn't want to be tape recorded. Notes of that interview are also on file with the USVHS in Condon.
SV: In Kalispell?

JH: No, Polson. Rest home at Polson. I had two sisters that lived over there was one reason. I got two sisters over there now.

SV: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JH: Six. Was one brother. He was a little baby when they come up here. None of my sisters lived here. Two of them are dead. My oldest sister and the other one.

SV: When you first came here in 1931, how did you come?

JH: They come with a team and wagon. Yeah, boy that was quite a road, used to be. Course they was drivin' it with a car. The old road used to go right east of here. We had a house over there right by the road and it burnt on the folks when I was in the Army, four years. And they had a fire and burnt up everything when I was gone.

SV: Do you remember that first trip into the Swan?

JH: Oh I come over the Crow Creek Pass. I rode from Oregon horseback, too. I went over there with horses. Reason we left, me and my partner, we had quite a few saddlehorses, took 'em to eastern Washington to sell to farmers for the kids' saddlehorses, then we stayed all winter around Salmon there. Then I went over into eastern Oregon. I worked over there until I decided to come home.

SV: Do you remember what that trail across that pass looked like?

JH: Better than than it is now! [laughs]

SV: Did it look like a lot of people used it then?

JH: Oh, the hunters in the fall used to come through there and then go in the 'Marshall. And, uh, yeah. Then the Indians used it a lot. They used to hunt and, hang around the bars, the Indians did. [laughs] They used to come over here hunting all summer. They, the guy I bought that place from over here, he was friendly with them. They had camped here all fall and hunted. When I bought the place there was still their old sweat. They built them sweat bath deals. You ever see one of them? Finn baths, they call 'em here. Over on that place. There was one of them still there yet when I bought the place.

SV: Were they next to a creek bank or were they just out...?
JH: They were in a big meadow over there. They were on the edge of a meadow over there. Yeah. I knew some of them Indians. I got acquainted with them. Well, I knew one of them before I left the reservation. Ol' Beaverhead. Yeah, they used to come up. Then the Indians had a big, oh, yeah, it seems to me it looked like fifty of them had camped down at Squaw, they called that Squaw Flats 'cause that was a campground when they come up here hunting. [Maybe Pete Beaverhead]

SV: Where?

JH: That was down the valley. this side of Point Pleasant. Yeah, they had a big camp in there. I was goin' outta here one day and boy I bet I met forty Indian buggies and wagons. They was comin' huntin'. And, the game warden, he was...then I met the game warden. He stopped me and he said, "Did you see them Indians?" Yeah, I seen them goin' up to their campground. The next day when I come back, I met all them buggies goin'...the game warden kicked them outta there. They had to move. Well, they didn't...now he couldn't do that. The Indians can hunt anywhere all year, now. But, didn't have that way, then. Didn't have a law, really, but the game warden made one.

SV: They do that sometimes.

JH: Yeah, they passed their own rules to fit the case.

SV: When you came over Piper Crow Pass did you see Indians that first trip?

JH: No, I didn't. Two of my cousins came over with me. They lived in Ronan. Then the folks were camped up here at Pony Creek. My dad was tryin' to homestead that piece of land and he couldn't get it done. And uh, well my uncle was already over here. My dad was tryin' to put u hay. He'd bought some cows, up here, and horse. He was a hayin' when I got here. My uncle come up to help him. Yeah, we hung around. Couldn't get a job them days. Pretty near starved to death. Wasn't for the deer we would have, I guess.

SV: Ate a lot of venison, huh?

JH: Yeah. We finally got started, and I finally got a job on the Forest Service after we was here for two or three years. It was sure hard to get a job. That was the only job there was, in here, was Forest Service. Well, anywhere I knew. I used to go to the employment office at Polson. Yeah they'd give me a bunch of papers to sign to go into the CCC's and I told 'em, I'd throw it back at them. I ain't, I know enough to join the Army without you guys, I told them. And I wouldn't join the CCC's. [Civilian Conservation Corps.] You didn't make enough. thirty [collars] a month.

SV: What did you do for money the first year or so you were here?
JH: Oh I made several, I used to be pretty fair at buying groceries by trapping. I always had a little money. I wasn’t rich. My dad he was crippled all his life and he was gettin’ I think sixteen dollars a month pension, welfare, or what the hell ever. With that, and what I could make, we didn’t starve to death.

SV: Did you pick huckleberries that first summer you were here?

JH: Was the first summer? The second summer. One summer my uncle, and he brought his, well, he had three sons, and they come with him and one of them had his wife, and they camped over here on Jim Creek. There was really a good huckleberry patch up above Jim Lookout in them days. You never could pick ‘em all. So I went up there and helped them pick berries. We picked, that first, one of my cousins had an old model T Ford he’d built a pickup box on it. We filled that box with huckleberries, a hundred gallons. So we went to Ronan, they lived over there, and my two cousins and me we went peddlin’ huckleberries. We sold them all in one day to the, there was a...the farmers were all thrashing the grain. They was harvesting, and every one of them ol’ ladies wanted to make huckleberry pie for the crew. Boy, every one of them bought huckleberries and we sold them all in one day. Then we come back and picked a hundred and sixty gallons that time and took off. That was a good huckleberry patch.

SV: How much did they sell for?

JH: A dollar a gallon. That was a lot of money in them days. We had a hundred dollars the first trip. A hundred and fifty the second. We didn’t sell of them the last trip, but most of them. No, they made, we had horses here and we’d all go up in the huckleberry patch and we’d had five gallon cream cans. Or ten gallons, couple of them. We'd fill them cans, and pack 'em down to the horses. My aunt and me, we all had to pick five gallons of huckleberries. I’d get done first and my aunt would get done. Then we’d have to help the other guys fill theirs. [laughs] That was a lot of fun, though. We didn’t know any better in hard times, anyway. We had fun.

134. I went over to Ronan several falls and worked in the sugar beets when they harvested, when I couldn’t get a job up here. One summer I went over there, the farmers had put in a lot of peas, and well, they had rogues. We’d go through a big 80 acres of peas or so and pull the rogues. You’d pack 'em outta there and hang 'em on the fence when you come. they told us, they was seed companies had them farmers put in them peas. They told us that if you didn’t rogue them peas, in two years they’d all be back, they’d all go back to wild peas. That’s why they had to rogue ‘em. They didn’t dare sell any rogue peas with the other, I guess, when they sold these people their garden peas. Yeah, I worked in that.

SV: When that all finished, then, did you kinda start in on the trapping?

JH: Well, we hadda feed our stock. I’d set out a trap line. Well there’s deer over there now [looks out the window of his house]. There’s a salt block there by that tree, and they come in there some of them pretty near every day and lick salt.

John Hulett Interview, OH 422-016, 017, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
SV: They like salt, don't they? Must be something in it they need.

JH: The Fish and Game Commission claims they don't need salt but I know they sure like it.

SV: You wouldn't think they'd go and hang around it if they didn't need it.

JH: Boy, I've seen game really starved from salt, lack of salt. In the Selway in Idaho, boy. And Brush Park over in the Bob Marshall? We camped there with, I went in with Hultman on his trail rides, and Joe Wilhelm, he'd been in there before. He said, "Boy, you're gonna have to guard your saddles and bridles and everything." And I said why, and he said, "The deer will eat 'em. They'll eat bridle reins and cinches. Eat the leather right off the saddle." And, boy after we, we had over thirty dudes and eighty-five head of horses, and boy them deer here they come. When the sun started to cool down, you know. I could see what Joe meant. We'd cover up our saddle best we could with tarps. And the cooks, she put her bed in the kitchen fly and she slept there. Thought she could keep them away from there. She asked me if I'd come in and wake her up when I got up to go wrangle the horses. I went in the tent and she was sleeping. There was an old doe just across the table from her. It hadn't even woke her up! I sure wouldn't advise anybody to camp there in the summertime.

That's the only time I camped below there and above there, but I never did camp there before. I packed. In '34 me and the old guy I bought the place from over there, we took in forty hunters in the fall. I made a good year in '34. I had a pack string and I packed thirty-five days on one fire. Then when we got done with that, me and Roy [Fox] we decided to take in this big huntin' party from Polson. That was in 1934. That was the first time I went over into the Bob Marshalls. But I went in there a lot of times after that.

SV: Do you remember what it looked like? What trail did you go in on?

JH: Over Holland. In '34 you didn't have that trail up the canyon. You had to go on switchbacks toward the lookout and then drop over and hit Smoky Creek to go into Big Salmon. Then, well I worked on that trail when...they went up from Holland Lake Lodge. Did you ever see that trail on the cliff there? Well, we built that trail. That was a tough trail, too. You had to do a lot of drilling in the rocks and we had to do it by hand the first year. We finally pulled a little air compressor in there though, bit horses, the next year we could drill faster with that air compressor.

And then, well, where they got it now it's a lot better location for a trail. I never got to use that new trail too much. I went in on it three or four times I guess. I packed six trips in there in summer of '41. Them were hiking [trips]. Mostly girls, back East. Belonged to hiking clubs. I had 32 of them one trip. That, I had a good summer that time. Lots of fun.

SV: Were the girls pretty good sports?

John Hulett Interview, OH 422-016, 017, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JH: Oh yeah. What few men there were, I had more trouble with them. No, them were good people. They belonged to hiking clubs and they had a lot of clubs. I had a bunch from Detroit and a bunch from Minnesota. They were really good people. Some of them were from Maryland, and some from New York. I had a few from Seattle, but not many. No, I got along real good with them.

SV: When you went in that first time what kind of people did you take in?

JH: They were businessmen from Polson. Owned bars, most of them.

They had a few friends they took with them. I didn't get along with them too good. They were elk hunters. We took fourteen of them the first trip, the time I went in. They all, the deal they made, they was supposed to help pack and furnish all the groceries and the whiskey. And they, and boy the first thing I kicked them away from my pack string. Boy, they didn't know. They'd just foul up her pack. So I had to do all the packin'. Oh Roy was crippled from rheumatism when he was young. He helped a lot but he couldn't lift, could only lift his hands this high. [shows about waist high with his hands.]

SV: What kind of pack saddle were you using then?

JH: We used all sawbucks then, but I was packing them like Deckers. I run the ropes. I don't think we owned a Decker then. We had 19 pack horses that trip. Well, I packed that fire, I used all Decker saddles, too. Not Deckers but sawbucks, and I done, I packed mostly water. That was called the Station Creek fire and I packed out of Goat Creek. Where the Station is now? [The Swan River State Forest] They just had a Guard Station there then. They had a mule packer there. We had a...then the Boundary Fire just this side of there it started while I was...we had two fires. They called it the Boundary Fire. The Boundary was on the State forest line. That was a big fire, the one I was...I packed a few trips to that Boundary Fire. Mostly I packed to Station Creek. There [was] two feet of snow the last trip I was packin' tools and stuff out. That was cold work. Firefighters would pile the tools up and they were covered with snow. They, well the District packer, they had a lot of packin' for him to do, so they turned movin' the camps out over to me. That's why I got in so much time.

SV: You must have had a lot of good horses?

JH: Yeah, one thing, they brought lots of good feed for them so they's in good shape for when we went huntin'. We had horses [that] were hardened in. I never did saddle up any horses either. So many green packers. But I had two good guys that helped me out. Milt Fenby, and Andy Cork, they were about the best packers yet I ever worked with. They really was glad to see me come down there 'cause they was makin' two trips a day and it was a twenty-mile round trip. Their mules were leg weary and they couldn't keep water up there. The first trip that's all I took was water. Boy from the fire line they met me on the trail with water sacks to take water
down to the firefighters...so thirsty they can't even talk. The ranger, he was a...well, Hutchison was the ranger then at Swan Lake and nobody could wash their hands or face but the cooks. Well, ol' Hutch come outta there all whiskered and black face. Finally they sent some remount strings in there and we made it fine then. We had about 200 head of mules and horses down there at Goat Creek for awhile. That fire got away every night on 'em.

SV: What kind of country?

JH: Well, it was on this, out on this side and it was steep and snow brush, and big spruce. Yeah, and every night we'd control the fire with a fireline during the day, and then at night a snag would fall down and roll over the line. That's why it got away every night. It finally got away and went over the ridge. I was the last pack string through there. Boy it was a burnin' bad. They met my string and we busted it. Each took one pack horse, you know, in there with a string. I made it up there and got rid of my load, and made it back out. I met, I think it was three remount strings goin' in and they made it in and couldn't make it out. They hadda go down the Missions, one of them got lost and we didn't see 'im for three days! He come out clean down to Big Fork. [laughs] The other two they made it back the next day. They were good boys. They were them remount packers, they were CCC boys [that] they taught how to pack. I knew two or three of them. I went to school with them. They turned out to be good packers, too, later on.

SV: They must have found some clear areas to get those horses out of there?

JH: Well, there was a trail runnin' the full length of the Missions. But there was trails that come down. This one packer, he didn't have no map or nothin' and he didn't want to take the trail around. He hit a dead end so he just followed her all the way down over Crane Mountain, come out 'bout Ferndale.

Boy, that was fun. A lot of work, though. Twenty mile round trip I made every day with those pack strings. But they finally, they knew there was water, a big spring in about five miles, below the fire. And they moved me up there with my pack string to pack from there and then the remount string packed feed to my stock. We was right organized as far as the packin' went then. I had, they signed me six CC boys for my helpers. I had 'em feed my horses and stuff. One of them was a good hand. He helped me pack a lot, too. But I put the others feedin' and building mangers and stuff. That was a good camp, though. They sure had everything you could think of to eat.

Whenever they wanted firefighters, they used to go down to the Hobo, the water tank, in Missoula. Hobos, there was hundreds of them, or so, around there, cookin' up their meals. And they hired five cooks, and they was in my camp, and boy was they good cooks. They was the best camp cooks I ever seen. Then we had them camp stoves that the Forest Service, I don't know what they got now. This one guy buried the ovens, dug a hole, and he baked ninety pies one day. Perfect pies. One of them cooks, did. Had all kinds of fruit to make pies out of. Yeah, he baked ninety pies. I packed some of them up to the fire line, too.
SV: That's hard to believe, isn't it? You saw it—

JH: Yeah. Them cooks, they treated me like I was, like you'd think I had, was royalty. "You eat in the kitchen here with the cooks, we want to be on the good side of you. You go out once in awhile and you can take our mail out and bring our mail into us." [laughs] And they could really fry beef, or cook beef steaks. Good, too. That ranger he come down from the fire, he ate a meal there and he told them, "Boy I never ate such a good meal in my life," he said. [laughs]

SV: Everybody wanted to go fight fires so they could get good food, huh?

JH: Yeah, they're still, the last fire I was on in Idaho, they really give you food until the fire's out. Then you taper off on ham and bacon. In Idaho, we, they dropped everything in the Selway. We got two drops a day, B-25s, parachuted stuff down to us. Boy we had ice cream and every darn thing. Fresh fruit of every kind. I was a cargo man there. I didn't have a pack string.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
SV: Do you remember any years of deep snow?

JH: Yeah, one time my grandparents from Washington Stayed with us that winter. It was in March. It snowed four days and nights without a let-up. It was already about three feet of old snow. Six or seven inches of new snow then. Russell Fox and me was haulin' hay with four horses on sleds. We went ever' day while it was snowin'. Good thing we did, too. It was the only road in the country was broke open. Good thing we kept at it, 'cause, geez, the horses could hardly pull. The baskets on the rack was draggin' in the snow and they had to pull hard with the empty sled. That was the damndest snow. That was March. I tell everybody about that now. March isn't here yet, we might get some snow yet! Everybody was snowbound.

The mail carrier, he had a son, a big, husky kid. He packed the first class mail. He come up on skis and snowshoes. That's the only way you could get through. You couldn't get through with horses. We all had to divide our groceries up so...We had a school marm, she was a city girl. We all had to get groceries for her. She was used to runnin' to the store every couple of days. She liked it though, god, she never did get over that. Last time I seen her she said that was the best time she ever had.

SV: You all had enough groceries to share?

JH: Yeah, somebody'd have like lard or something they'd have a bunch. Somebody would run out, then flour, sugar. They divided up and we all made out good. Finally, the snow...we got a thaw and the snow crusted. My grandpa, he got worried about his kids out in Washington and he wanted to get out there. My grandmother stayed. I went with him and hiked out to Swan Lake with him on the truck. On the way down, Dude Neese [spelling?] lived across the river, where Dee Morton lives [access via Piper Creek, then back toward the river]. He'd taken his wife to Polson, she was going to have a baby. By golly, when we got down, oh, this side of Swan Lake, well we met him. He had a hand sled, and had the new baby in a apple box. They was goin' home, comin' home. It was a good snowshoe'in. You wasn't sinkin' in. Dude told me, "My old Ford's down there. We drove it. The road was open to Swan Lake. I left it down there." He handed me the keys. He says, "When you get out there you can take it on to Polson." So I did. It didn't have no lights. It was night. My granddad was nervous. Finally, he settled back. The only way I could see the road was the ruts, you know. Dark in the ruts. I had to peek around the windshield most of the way then. Made it all the way to Polson. Finally he said, "I don't know how the heck you can see to make it, but you seem to be on a road yet." [laughs]

SV: Those early days must have been pretty exciting.

JH: Then, once the snow got crusted enough, Roy Fox had a high sled, he called it a pung [?] just two runners, but the crust held it good. Held the team. So he went down and loaded up with grub for everybody. Made two or three trips. The snow packed enough it held the horses and...
everything. I don't know if it would'a held a car or not. I believe it would'a. Oh we had a lot of fun, though. Played cards or visit the neighbors. Maybe you'd be at our place or we'd be there. Couple three times a week. That...the school marm, who liked to play cards. I think that's why she liked it so well here. She had two kids of her own.

SV: Her name?

JH: Thelma Kekkich [spelling?] She was from Polson. Last time I seen her, she was in Missoula teaching. I got my first furlough from the Army and my sister went into her in town and told her I was on furlough and she got my sister to invite her for supper that night. Boy was she ever tickled to see me. She talked. Then we took her home and she took us up to her apartment and it was after midnight before we got out of there. She was a good old girl, though. I was in the Army two and a half years before they'd let me out. I was overseas two years of it. In the Pacific. That was the best years of my life I spent over there. I mean, it coulda been if I'd a been here that four years. I packed hunters for the Gordon Ranch. Harold, you know Harold Haasch. Him and me packed for Koessler on fall. That was a good fall, too.

SV: What was the Gordon Ranch like then?

JH: Oh, it looked quite a lot like it does now. Ol' Shorty, he got in trouble with breakin' game laws and he couldn't get a guide license. So me and Harold got a guide license. So me and Harold got a guide license and took in his dudes. Shorty hung around our camp all the time. He was a good old guy. I didn't, I met him, but I didn't know him till we went in hunting with him. Now that, they had a big lodge there then. That was in '41, 1941. [See Gordon Ranch collection of photos for pictures of this trip.] They had the big lodge. Well the first old house, it burnt and I haven't been there, but they built another one there. [Update: The house burned in modern times while Mike and Sue Holmes were living there, and Tony Koessler rebuilt it for the Holmes family to continue to live at the ranch as caretakers. See interviews and transcripts for Mike and Sue Holmes.]

SV: When you took the hunters in, were they looking for elk?

JH: Yeah. Goats and elk. They all got everything they wanted. That was a good fall to hunt.

SV: Was there a lot of elk back there then?

JH: Yeah, you could spot, from...I set up a spotting scope where there's a little flat out in camp. I just left it out and covered it up at night. Tarp. You'd go out there in the evening, you could spot about four herds of elk every evening. You could see slides from tango down, you'd see the slides down to past Brownie Creek. There was always four herds of about thirty head of elk in each herd. That was in ruttin' season. Lotta young bulls around the edges. They all filled up on their game that time. They don't do it now.
SV: What about bears?

JH: No, I never did pack a grizzly. Very few of them ever killed there. The first fall we went in there, I had a wild hair I wanted to get a bear. And I got three of them. Brown bear. Well, one of the hunters, he was from Chicago, he and another guy from Polson, he told me, "You get me a shot at a bear and I'll give you fifty bucks." And well they got complaining that I was scaring their game away. They wasn't killin' nothing. I'd see herds of elk ever' day. But they killed one elk, by golly and I got, why, sometimes I'd see thirty elk in a bunch. And they [were] complaining that I was running the elk outta the country, that they couldn't find them. No, there was a little snow up in Brownie Basin one day and well, they told me they was gonna go over to Sappho Canyon to hunt that day, and I got saddle horses for 'em so I went into Brownie. They was in Brownie a couple days before that. "There ain't an elk in Brownie, and there ain't been any," They said. I run into these bear tracks. There was bare ground most places, patches of snow. I had a mutt dog with me. I kept a goin' around, I'd pick up their tracks. Pretty soon I see the rear end of a bear stickin' out behind a tree. This darn dog seen it about the time I did and way he went and the bear's runnin' up a slide and two of them went up a tree and the biggest one went up a tree and this dog grabbed her, fool dog grabbed her, and then down the tree she come. It was the wrong side, there, and that dog couldn't gain an inch on that bear. Right on top of him. There they come right towards me and I was on the trail. There was a dry wash went down and the trail come over to me and this ol' bear, that dog was tryin' to get down to me. And the ol' bear crowded so close the dog went down that wash and she's gonna cut through on him to the trail I was on. She was bout, when she got about from here to that chair [shows a chair at the table in the kitchen] I shot her in the head. And she rolled way past me, she was goin' so fast. I went up and shot them other two. I was up there skinin' them. Pretty soon, that ground is hollow, you know. I could hear "thump, thump" and thought, what the heck's that? Hunters went into Sappho. Boy got my gun ready. Bet there's a bull elk comin' or something. I had my gun on my lap. Pretty soon here come this guy, that was gonna give me fifty bucks if I'd get him a shot at a bear. They got lost and way down on another trail and I beat 'em up there, see. He got right beside this bear, the first one I killed. He hadn't even seen him. I hollered, "Look out, you'll get bit!" Boy, he looked and there laid that bear. Man, pretty soon, here come the other hunters. All horseback. "Where was you when you shot?" I told them, right there. "That bear was chargin' you." I said, no it wasn't. It didn't even know I was in the country. It was after my dog. "Nope, that bear was after you." Said, what would you have done when she come to you. I said if I stood still like I shoulda', she'd a went right on...They won't run into a tree or stump or something. She'd a thought I was a stump or something. Nope, nope, I couldn't convince them that that bear hadn't charged me.

SV: They wanted to hear a story?

JH: I sold quite a little bear hides, so I done pretty good there. That guy that give me fifty dollars? He bought the biggest one for fifty dollars. This was probably a cleaner killin' than he would'a made.
SV: I bet there was some characters on those trips.

JH: I don’t know if I ever seen a grizzly in the Bob Marshall. I jumped ’em, heard ’em run, but I never...I killed five grizzlies in the Swan here. Last one, he’s tearin’ my barn door off. I had some calves in here and he was trying to tear the barn door off so he could get at them calves. I got my gun and went out there. It was one they’d dumped, ’cause he had paint on her hip. ["dumped" means relocated by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks] They dumped him. My neighbor, I didn’t know that bear was in the country. My neighbor, lives down there at Wise’s place. He took, they had a garbage pile back in the brush by their house there. He took a wheelbarrow load of garbage out there. He had a little boy with him. And boy this old grizzly let a snort out of him and scared that guy half to death. Then he went down to Kesterson’s and asked Buck if he’d shoot a grizzly for him. Buck told him no. Told him to come and get me. I was a bear hunter. So he come up and told me the story about his bear. I’d already killed the bear. I didn’t tell him. I said, well if I see him I’ll kill him for you. [laughs] Yeah, he was a pretty bear.

SV: what did you shoot him with, what kind of gun?

JH: Thirty-thirty. Right by the hump. That’s where I always shot ’em. Break ’em down. Then you can finish them. You shoot ’em back there, you break them down. They can’t get up and do nothing. That’s the best shot for them.

SV: You shot other grizzlies besides that one though?

JH: Yeah, I killed one over there right in the meadows. Roy Fox’s meadow. That was quite a bear story, too. I come home, I was comin’ back from Roy’s and I seen them bear over at the edge of the meadow, two of them. I come home and I told Mom, I seen a bear, big grizzly. I got my gun. Away I went. She heard me shoot and she discovered I’d left my huntin’ knife at home. So, I broke that bear down. She was chewin’ on a windfall lodgepole. She chewed it in two, a growlin’. I went on over the ridge to try to see the other one. Mom come over there, and when finally I come back, oh, she was...one time she was glad to see me. She could hear that old bear growlin’ and chewin’ on that tree, that windfall. I told her don’t come through there, that bear might get up. She was glad. She thought that bear was eatin’ me, I guess. I would’a probably thought the same thing. Hear her chewin’ on that wood. Lettin’ growls out. But I’d broke her down, she couldn’t get up.

Tuff Anderson and me we killed one over this side of Lion Creek one day. I don’t know why I wanted to kill ’im. I didn’t know any better in them days. I’ve had several chances since, but I wouldn’t shoot at ’em. I wouldn’t unless I had to. [Lion Creek] it come out when we was setting on a log. Two, there was two of them, too. Roy Fox had lost a horse in the winter. He drug it from here clean over there, to the meadow over there. There it was all winter, laying out in the middle of that meadow. Them bear finally smelled it when spring come and they was goin’ to it. That’s why they come out there. Did Joe Wilhelm ever tell you about his grizzly?
SV: You tell me, too. I haven't talked to Joe yet.

JH: He broke his leg. The hunters killed some elk. Well, his boss and everybody was gone so he took some horses or mules and went down to pack 'em. They killed two elk. Joe, it was late in the evening, it was in the Gordon. He started in there and the grizzlies, some grizzlies had taken over his elk. Boy, his horse jerked away, he was walkin', leadin' his horse. Horse jerked away from him, and Joe, wantin' to catch his horse, and he run his foot in between two rocks and broke his leg. There he was. Hap Morris, box, didn't know where he was or nothin'. So, finally Joe started, up on the side, he seen a dead snag. He crawled up there and set it afire. Ol' Hap got into camp late at night. Asked the hunters, where in the heck is Joe? Well, he went after a couple elk. He should be back. They wasn't worried about him, them hunters. So, Hap was mad. He went down there and found Joe. He found the horses first. They'd got tangled up and was tangled up out a ways from there. Then he went on in and he run into them grizzlies. They took possession of them elk. Poor old Joe he had to ride all the way outta there with that broken leg. It was bad, bad break, too. The trouble of it was, Hap decided to bring his camp out and everything, too. They wasted all that time, too. Then when they got to Holland Lake, they unpacked and was sortin' out all their stuff, and somebody from the Lodge spotted Joe setting under a tree, with his broken leg. Hadn't even called Babe up, his dad. Boy, ol' Babe was mad. He come in there, he gathered Joe up and took him to Missoula to the doctor. Joe, he never would complain, you know, about anything. That was a funny way to do, you know. With that broken leg. What they should'a done, somebody should'a come right out with him, you know. Joe and me was the main packers with Hultman's first trail ride he got. There was men and boys, older people most of them. There was thirty some of them. Oh, Hultman bothered me and bothered me. "I have to have you," he says. "First time I got the Trail Riders. I want to suit 'em, please 'em, for next year." I finally let him talk me into...I was just getting ready to start haying. So I went along. Boy that was a workout. I bet me and Joe put in 16 hours a day. He had plenty of bodies to work but none of them knew how to do anything. And he's about harmless as they were. Did you read this, that news report, there at Drummond? [laughs] good story. Lotta B.S. [laughs] [pointing at something in a newspaper on table]

JH: Friend was here yesterday, he's my age, he was born in the valley. We got talking about some of them stories. I told him when he left he ought to come tomorrow. That was Saturday. He can't hear. He could fill you in on the valley. About the old timers. I thought maybe you wanted the history about the old timers.

SV: Anything you want to share. [Note: I found out right at the start that John couldn't hear me most of the time when I asked questions. I think he lip reads. Except he also can't see very well. At least not across the room, just up close.]

JH: I knew quite a few of the first people that come in here. Like Bob Hartwick and Mrs Hartwick. Mrs Hartwick wrote a book. I don't remember the name of it. Their homestead was above the Forest Service Corrals [Holland Lake T19N R16W Sec 2 HES 123]. Hopkins, the Hopkins place. Him and his wife, they, he, I worked with him on the Forest Service. He was a
real nice old guy. But his old lady she was, I don't know...I know when we were maintaining trail, we'd stay at the Holland Lake Lodge and, I mean the guard station, and on Saturday at noon we could go home. Poor ol' Bob would go home, and here he would come back, lookin' sad. His old lady kicked him out 'cause he didn't bring a can of ham or something from the Forest Service. He says to our boss, "Do you mind if I take something to please the old lady?"

[laughs] Yeah, ol' Bob, in that book she wrote, there was no roads in that way from Missoula side. They come in there with team and wagon. They homesteaded that. Well, they was old when they sold out and left. I don't know what ever become of them. Well, they're surely dead now. [Mary Hartwick published several stories in a UM magazine. Rights are now owned by Scribners. See Gyda Newman interviews.]

SV: He was a lookout, wasn't he? Were you working on the lookouts, too?

JH: Well, in the summer months, about two months. The rest of the time I was on trail crew. The first summer was pretty interesting. Bad fire year. There's an emergency point up on Owl Peak up the head of Lion Creek. Back down, and just on the divide between Bob Marshall and here. They sent me up there, well, Andy Kirken [spelling?] the assistant ranger. Fred Kaser and Barry Rudy [?] was assistant ranger then. They packed me up there, right on timberline about. We set up camp. Rudy had to locate my map stand. They had a map stand, no building. I set up a tent. Well, they had to stay overnight. They went down to the other creek, they was late from the lookout. I put my tent up there.

I had a heck of a time putting my tent poles up there in that timberline timber. I got my tent up and I could see Rudy and Andy down there at the lake. They turned the mules loose, there was good grass down there. And here come a cloud. Here it hit there and it was hailing. It hailed about that much hail. [shows with his hands about three inches] I had a good fire goin' and I had my stove up. I had a little spaniel dog about that long with me [shows about 18 inches long]. He was a laying on the foot of my bed. Every time the lightning would flash, the stove pipe would turn red hot. I don't know what caused that, but it turned plumb red. All of a sudden lightning struck right close. Paralyzed me. I could think, I wasn't unconscious, but I couldn't move. That was my first experience. I hadn't been there over half an hour when that happened to me.

Then I had to hang telephone line. It had been manned before and they, that low timber in the snow, where snow got over the line and packed, tore all the line down. Been four or five years since anybody's up there. And I had to hang three miles of telephone line so I could call the station. Boy I worked all of daylight ever' day for three days and, more than three days, five days I think. I got down to the pass. The trail crews was supposed to hung the line to the top. Then I went back to the lookout and rung my phone and no response. So, what the heck am I gonna do now. It was evening, getting late, so I took my sleeping bag and got some groceries. Gonna find out what's wrong with that line if I have to hike all the way to Condon. I got down below the pass a ways. These guys, a snow slide had took the lineout there, and there was
about a hundred feet of it gone. That's why I couldn't ring. Then I didn't have enough wire with me. They'd packed the wire away you know.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
JH: He said, "Is Rudy up there?" I said heck no. I hadn't seen nobody. "Well, he's on his way up there." Says, you was supposed to call in within three days. It's against eh law to have anybody up there. I said, well you should'a told me that. I'd a walked down and reported in. Oh, he talked awhile and I told him about that lightning hitting me. The ranger, he was just a punk from New York the first job he'd had, he sent Rudy up there to can me. Rudy was mad. Boy he was mad. I told him he ought to send three more men up there to help me with that line. "I don't see how you could'a hung that wire that length of time," he told me. He was mad. I think Rudy straightened things out when he got back. That ranger treated me awful good when he got back.

SV: Do you remember what the Valley looked like from up there?

010. JH: You didn't see any clearcuts. You could see, well, you could see the Loon Lake burn. That was, well it was five or six years after that. They called it the Stoner Fire then. That whole country burned. Where that little lodgepole are? That whole country burnt. Even got on this side of the river, even. [Talking about the view from another lookout this time, I think]

SV: Any other burn areas?

JH: You could see that one. They called that the Brothen fire. [Brothem, Rolf Johnse. T20N R16W Sec 4 SE1/4] He homesteaded that. He was burning brush and it got away from him. Well, you've seen Cooney, well, the old, signs of the burn at Cooney? You could see that from Sunset. [There was a Sunset Lookout on the Divide between Clearwater and Swan, at the Summit/Beaver Creek.] Them's mostly the two burns. You can see them yet.

SV: What was the name of this lookout?

JH: Sunset. You couldn't see that country from Owl. Owl Peak was way...there was three canyons from the Divide up here and where the Bob Marshall Boundary.

SV: How long were you on Sunset?

JH: Two seasons. Let's see now, maybe three seasons. I packed at Condon here, the last year I worked. They was finishing up the Holland Trail there. I packed the trail camp. That first Holland Trail, I mean, not the last one.

SV: Very many people use that trail?

JH: Oh, yeah, that new one. Then a lot of them use that ole one. Wilhelms packed over in there, the Gordon Ranch. Lot of them from Seeley over Monture and up in there. A lot of summer traffic. Lot of people rented horses and went in there. That was an awful trail, that switchback.
Hard on horses. Blimbin' that. The sun would always hit that, it was hot. You know how it would glance off the sidehill. That was a good deal when they built that other trail.

JH: [talking about Vandewalka, an old timer] As far as I know he was the first settler in this area. Always heard people saw Vandewalker [pronounces the name] but I seen his name printed. Vandewalka [spells it]. He was an interesting old guy. He was there at Salmon Prairie for several years. He had cattle up ere. This side of Goat Creek, you know, just his side of that station where them houses is down there? He homesteaded that. Then after he got it homesteaded there, they surveyed it and found out it was on NP land. So the NP give it to him anyway. Bein's he was an old timer. After he built his home there, they found out, after they surveyed it, bought another Forest Service section.

SV: He must have been here pretty early.

JH: I don't know what year. As far as I know, well there was a guy below there, ol' Soup Creek Harry, he was, him and Vandewalka, was about the first ones in here. The Andersons, they must'a come in here about...ol' Carl Anderson, Tuff Anderson's dad. Ed Anderson and Al Anderson, all homesteaded down there on Salmon Prairie.

SV: What did Vandewalka do?

JH: He trapped. Far as I know. I never heard of him working for any job. Then he had, I don't know if he sold, he had cattle. He used to trap bear. I don't know if you could sell a bear then or not. But anyway, he had traps set for them.

SV: Did you ever run across one of his sets?

JH: No. That's before my time when he was trapping. Old Lars Anderson, he always told me where one of his traps area, way up Lion Creek. I don't know if I could find it or not. They cached it below the trail at a big slide. I bet it's covered up with stuff. I'd like to have that bear trap. It was a grizzly trap. Lars Anderson [T22N R17W Sec 20 SW1/4 NE1/4 N1/2 SE1/4 SE1/4 SE1/4] was the one that cached it there. Lars was the one that homesteaded that place Dee Morton is. Harry Harmon, Butch's grandad, just north of there [T22N R17W Sec 20 N1/2 NE1/4 SE1/4 NE1/4]. I knew Harry before I come to the Swan though. He come out and worked on the ranch where I was working when I was a kid. And I knew Roy over here before I come to Swan.

SV: You did know all of the old timers then?

JH: I got acquainted with quite a few Finlanders, that was homesteading. Like ol' Maki. Kolehmain got killed the first spring I was here. I got acquainted with his wife and daughter after that.

SV: That was some kind of an accident?
JH: He had a fractious team of horses. He always fed 'em good. He was bringing in logs. He had a two-running they built that put two logs on there. Put the team on chain. That team got so if they heard that chain click they'd lunge and away they'd go. The only way they'd pull good is if you'd let them run away. They jumped and pulled that right over the top of him. I didn't get acquainted with Martha's dad, old Jacobsen. I knew old lady Strom, she owned the store, up there, Oscar Southern. I worked for him before.

SV: Tell me about Oscar Southern.

JH: Well, he homesteaded [T20N R17W Sec 2 S1/2 S1/2] over by Swan Valley Centre. Him and ol' lady Strom was always friends. He give Mrs. Strom that land when he died. Over where uno Strom lived, that was part of Oscar's. Old Semling, he was over across the river. I met Kettleson and Pete Rude. Kettleson, was his homestead [T20N R17W Sec 12 SW1/4].

SV: How did you end up getting on this place? Horses, cows?

JH: Yes. They trailed some cows in here. Then they brought four or five head of horses. We couldn't...Roy, see Roy used to lease this whole section. Roy Fox. Told 'em heck why don't you build you a place right down there off the main road. That's how come we built, then after we built, the NP started selling land. That's how come we landed here. Roy bought a quarter section and so did we. The rest should'a bought the whole section, I guess. Course money wasn't very plentiful then. but, boy I wish I'd a bought some of this land. Tom, my brothers' kids, are living here. Little Tom, he's down at Ferndale. Tiger and Tony, they're on this home place here.

SV: Did you guys have a logging business at one time?

JH: Yeah, I started that logging business. I decided to go into cattle. I was gonna build up my cow herd. I had 'em built up pretty good and then when the highway got here the traffic started killing my cattle. I had to, they were putting me outta business. I lost about thirty head of cattle on that highway. I had to get rid of them or they'd a all got killed I guess. I didn't have any grass for them. I leased, my grazing lease run from Goat Creek to Old Condon, County Line I mean. 14,000 acre lease for grazing. That turned out to be a failure. I should'a kept on working. I was sawing logs when I done that. Pretty good money.

Yeah, I sawed logs, well, the old Wineglass Mill, you heard of it? When Rother bought that I went sawing logs for him. I sawed for him three years. Wineglass Mill.

SV: How big were the trees?

JH: They weren't cutting no little stuff. Anything wasn't 16 inches, they told us to leave. About like that [holds hands two feet wide]. If it didn't look like good to us we'd even leave some big
stuff. The blowdown above Elbow Lake, well Lindbergh Lake now, I sawed in that three summers. There was three sections of timber blewed down all at one time. Rother logged that. No, I beat wages all the time when I was sawing.

SV: Were there any other mills before the Wineglass?

JH: Yeah, there was a few little mills. Uno Strom. He had a mill on my place. He sawed up my timber here with his mill. Fenby's had a pretty good sized mill down there by Simmons Meadow. [North of Old Mill Road east of Highway 83] They made pretty good fortune with their mill. Then they, Wilke, got to mining and broke 'em. He got interested in mining and bought a plane and Geiger counters. Hunting uranium. They got a pretty good mine, uranium, over by Great Falls. They was raised with mining, the boys that was in with him. Two brothers. Wilke said...a big company offered him a hundred thousand bucks apiece. There was three of them. Three hundred thousand. Bielenbergs [well-known business family from Swan Lake] told Wilke you better sell that. 'No, no' they said. 'We'll mine that. It's worth a lot more.' A common man ain't got enough fortune to mine. So Wilke moved a lot of their machinery to the mine in Great Falls. A couple Cats...and they stockpiled a big bunch of ore. Then they found out they had to send it to New Mexico to have it smeltered. After they got down a ways the vein pinched out. That done away with the Fenby brothers. They're both dead now. That don't matter to them, I guess.


JH: They had a mill up Dog Creek. Used to call that the old Condon Loop Road. You got up there about a mile above Tuff's there [Anderson] and...they was interested in religion. In the summertime they'd get some evangelists up here and lay off and preach with them. They never got anything done. Well the Forest Service got tired of laying out timber for them 'cause they weren't logging it anyway; finally they couldn't get timber.

SV: Well, you got by pretty good...trapping?

JH: Yeah. We always had plenty to eat. Always had lots of company at mealtime, you know. Well, the Wise's, they come in there, they were hunting. They come over Crow Creek, and my brother-in-law, he belonged to their church. Told them to come over and stay with us. They come over here and scout around. They stayed with us and boarded with us for awhile. My dad, he liked company, anyway. Somebody come, he didn't even know, "Stick around. Pretty near dinner time," he told them. And Mom would have to get busy and cook more groceries. I don't know how we got by. Mom always had a big table of company.

SV: She must have been a good cook.

JH: Yeah. I wondered how she made out. No refrigeration. We had kerosene lights. I dug a flume, made a box. Had a couple cows always. And she kept her butter and milk out there by
the creek in that cool. How the heck did she keep it? Well, she canned most of the meat. You had to can meat. You can't keep meat too long anytime, unless it's froze solid. Unless it stays cold. We always had plenty. She packed water from the creek. Never had indoor plumbing.

One time, the first winter, we was in there we run outta groceries about March. My cousin stayed with us that winter. We hooked up a team and my brother-in-law said we'd buy groceries in Polson. They'd store them and then they'd meet us at Bigfork or somewhere. Boy, my cousin he decided to go back home. He didn't come back with me. Boy a big snowstorm hit. Him and my dad had built a sled. It had about that much clearance, just like a snowplow. And I got stuck way down at Point Pleasant I unloaded half my load of groceries there, then I got up on top of a hill and got stuck again. I come up with the team to Goat Creek. Fenby had hay in the barn there. I put my team there. I told him I had to go to Roy's to get another team. Boy oh boy, we had vegetables, oranges and fruit. That stuff all froze plumb solid. It was ten days before I got back to that load of groceries. All of it. I had to make two extra trips after I got up here. That was a hard trip, I tell you. When I left the team down there they was pretty well wore out. On top of the snow where it had been broke out, it was about that deep of new snow. It hit me right there. I started hiking home, and dark when I left there. I got up to Lion Creek. Ed Cortbine lived on the other side of the creek where Russell Fox used to live. I thought well, I'm about all done in. I'm gonna go in there and roll Ed outta bed and maybe he'll let me stay all night and rest. And there his house was locked and he was gone. Boy, it was cold. Finally I hiked all the way in. It was 3:30 in the morning when I got home. I got a team from Roy and I hooked four horses onto that sled and they couldn't pull it. That had to be bad. I got Roy's high sled and went clean down to Point Pleasant one day and got a load of groceries. Next day I got it where I left my sled. Actually from the time I left to the time I got back was ten full days.

SV: Things are a little different now, huh?

JH: If people run outta hay up here, you couldn't jump in a pickup or truck and go get any hay. A lot of stock went pretty hungry, too. Andersons down there, they had cattle. They run out of hay every damn winter.

SV: Anybody else have a store besides Strom's?

JH: A guy down at Swan Lake was the closest store this way, Post Office. Old John Torson run it. When Beck's come in, heard ol' Ed tellin' about when his dad come here and homesteaded. They run outta groceries. He took off, went down to Swan Lake and Cready [spelling?] was logging that area then. He had a loggin' camp. They let him have some grub.

SV: Who was logging?

JH: Cready was the guy. That timber growed up. It was logged in 1910. I never knew him but I heard guys talk about him. The Andersons, they worked down there. That's why they come up
here homesteading. High stumps down there. They was springboarding there. [A tree-felling technique where the sawyer inserts a long, wide, board into the tree and uses it to stand on while cutting his notch into the tree to fell it.] Them larch. Like they did the big firs on the [West] Coast. That way they didn't have to long-butt the shake outta them. [eliminate the waste that wasn't merchantable] Looked to me like it would have been faster to long-butt them. [laughs] They had to cut, chop in, in two places, then build a platform and saw.

SV: Do you remember any other places where there was big larch?

JH: Over on Elk Creek. Let's see. To the end of the road where you go down to, you go up to Steve Feucht's then what's his names. Well, in there [at the end of Elk Flat's Road, via Glacier Creek Road, on the west side of Highway 83 behind Swan Valley Centre] toward Elk Creek, there was big larch in there. I done a lot of sawing in there. A timber man was in here one day, and I had to laugh. He said, "Who cut all these notches out of these larch, and why did they do it?" Well, I told him, well, hell, that was homesteaders hunting shakes for their roofs. It was, too. They'd take splinter out of there, they'd split it and look at it to see if it was straight enough for shakes. But them NP boys they didn't know what done that. All them big larch had a big notch on them where they checked them for shakes.

SV: Well, who would know that?

JH: Our first log house we built over there. We cut shakes way up Lion Creek where that big patch of cedar is. At the Six Mile sign? We cut, fell trees there, cut shakes both. Then I packed them out on pack strings for our roof. We packed them shakes out on a pack string. Me and Roy Fox packed them out. That's quite a nice patch of cedar, at the Six Mile sign.

SV: Do you remember any other cedar?

310: JH: That's how I got started logging across the river here. In the cedars. The NP had sent their loggers in there and all they'd done was made a mess. Hit a lot of rot and they told them it wasn't worth logging. Boy was that a mess. There's about six cutting units that they'd marked out there. They'd run into every one of them. Timber man up here at Seeley, he was worried the inspectors would find that. He'd sell me a unit for five hundred dollars. There was a lot of good stuff up there. I made a lot more money on that than I did logging logs for Plum Creek. I had a good market for my cull cedar too. Rails and posts. But there's still some of that cedar. Little Tom, my nephew, he's logging in there now. Him and Tim. They'd logged a patch of cedar there last winter. No, two years ago when that snow was deep.

SV: That was deep snow. Had you ever seen snow like that here?

JH: Only in March that time. That was awful. You can see that barn over there, what happened. [collapsed roof] Boy, that was heavy stuff. Actually what done that, the snow slid off on the east side. Put all the weight over here on one side. The way you can see the logs laying there, the
plate logs. That was quite a masterpiece, that barn. Me and Lars Anderson built it. Them big barns, up here at Leistikos, did you ever notice them? Then that one that's on up the road, I don't know who's got that place now. Jorgenson lived there awhile. Had that pinto horse there? Lars built that, and he built them two at the old Maki place where Leistikos are. He could do more with an axe than some people can with lots of tools. He was really the axe man. He tried to teach me how. That's what I started with, on that barn, working with him.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]
JH: Well, me and Morris Thomason built the guest cabins. [Not sure where he is talking about. Continuing an off-tape discussion.] No I got so I was a pretty good log builder.

SV: Did you ever sell any log homes that way?

JH: No. Bush [Jim Bush, Rustics of Lindbergh Lake, Gloria Bush interview] started the log yard up here. He tried his best to get me. He started small and he wanted three men. Well, he lived here awhile and got acquainted. The three guys he wanted to work for him was me, and Adolph Anderson, and Joe Wilhelm. That was the three men he picked. Boy, he tried his best to talk me into. But he would only pay three and a half an hour. I told him, why I could make that in fifteen minutes sawing logs. So Joe and Adolph they went to work for him. I logged house logs for him for quite awhile.

SV: Did a lot of house logs come from right here?

JH: Yeah. Like, he paid me so much for skidding them and cutting them. I was making a better deal than working for wages. I was about to strike for more money when he came down here one day. He found a good patch of lodgepole house logs on a homestead up there. This guy, a kid that owned the land. He'd never worked in the woods. They were going to let him log it. Said, I got it figured out. "You and him can make big money at two dollars a log." that was cutting me down two dollars. That kid never sawed before. You can imagine what it would have been like. I told him, well, you're going the wrong direction. I was going to charge you eight bucks a log. No, he wouldn't go for it. So I didn't log for him any more. Now one of those last ones I took off the place here I sold for ninety bucks a lot. And they're getting just as much for houses then as they are now. And they're getting just as much for houses then as they are now. Tony, where he's logging, he's getting a lot of house logs. He's logging down at Point Pleasant. Blister rust has killed all the white pine down there, and he's selling the white pine for house logs. He's getting other logs, too. They go to Hamilton. Didn't used to take dead logs. Now they'd rather have them dry than green. Over at Roy's I've got a good patch of house logs yet. They're trying to shut down the timber industry. The Forest Service shut down all the road building. There's some private land, a private guy sold it, over by Livingston, and they had to use Forest Service road to get their logs out. The environmentalists blocked it. Can't use Forest Service roads. They're stuck with their timber now.

SV: Tell me more about your trapping?

JH: The best year I ever done trapping was over in the Bob Marshall. We went over there and trapped martin, my partner and me. We was over there two months. Lived on snowshoes. We trapped down the Little Salmon and up the Big Salmon past Salmon Lake and then to the top of Smith Creek, and then to the top of Lion Creek. We caught sixty-four martin.
SV: How were you making your sets for them?

JH: Well, we made them a little different than a lot of them. There's old sets from other trappers. They'd notch way into a tree. We'd maybe find a dead tree, take our axes and hit on each side, then we'd get a splinter and wedge it in, then put the cover over. Didn't even mark the trees hardly that way. Course we usually pick a dead tree, but it didn't hurt a green tree to go in straight. It was faster, too, and it worked just as good.

SV: What did you use for bait?

JH: To start with you'd use a little elk meat. I killed...when we moved our camp there, the season was open yet and I killed a bull elk. We left some of it for...but after that you catch the squirrels, and flying squirrels you caught. More bait than you can use. They'd get in your traps before the martin, a lot of times. The martin would eat them out of the traps and you didn't get the martin. You could always catch enough bait after you started, you know. You had to have something to get started.

SV: Did you pack all your groceries?

JH: We packed it in on horses. We was late that year. Well, that was my friends, Wises. They heard I was going to go over there and trap. So they went and got them a partner at Pablo. Gonna beat me over there. [laughs] when we went in we met them coming out, with their loads on, they hollered at me. "No use you goin' up there, you can't make it over the pass." And I said, "Oh, I don't know. I'd like to go look at it anyway." I had an old black horse, he'd smell the trail out. When you'd go over the pass, there was little short switchbacks and looked just like a snowslide. When the wind blew, you couldn't see a sign of the trail. That old horse, my old saddle horse, he smelled it out and I led the packstring all the way in, and, broke the trail out. That's how we got in there. That was the first of December. Generally, you can't get over that late.

Then, when we got on top of the pass, here, there was a horse. Some hunters has lost him. And he had the snow all beat down there. He's afraid to risk the trail to get out of there. Boy was that horse tickled after that when we broke the trail. He was trotting at a full trot. Clean outta sight. He come out down there and Roy Fox picked him up. That horse would have starved if we hadn't broke that out. We caught a few coyotes, and mink, that was the best winter I ever put in. Comfortable camp.

SV: When did you come out?

JH: Middle of February. Just about this time or a little later we come out. We'd stop at Big Salmon Lake and get us a mess of fish once in awhile. Fishing through the ice.

SV: One more story. Tell me about lion hunting?

John Hulett Interview, OH 422-016, 017, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JH: They had a bounty on them when I...the last winter, when they took the bounty off, I got eight. I had two good hounds. But I wasn't really hunting. I had all my cattle in and I had to feed my cattle. During the day I'd take a big circle hunting lion tracks. I got eight lions that winter. Then that next year when I run the fire over in Idaho, them Idaho boys over there they said, "Heard they took the bounty off the lion in Montana. They said some guy over there got so many lions they had to take the bounty off." Well, I said, I got a report how many lions was killed. There was sixteen lions killed, and I got eight of them. Maybe it was my fault. They took the bounty off. Winter of '39, no. Yeah, '38 and 9. In '39 I went up to Stryker and packed up there all summer. That's how come I remember.

SV: Did you pack for the Forest Service very long?

JH: Just that one summer. Did a lot of dude packing. Started packing after the winter I packed up Salmon. Packin' the miners in. There was prospectors had claims over there and they had to do assessment work. Along toward spring, here they'd come and hire somebody to pack their stuff in. There's where I really started to learn how to pack.

SV: Did you ever trap wolverine?

JH: I caught one. I got a, when I was working up sawing logs with Roy who ...we got laid off 'cause we got ahead on timber. I thought they was cougar tracks. Wolverine tracks all over the valley. You couldn't go 300 yards out any direction you didn't find a fresh wolverine track. Boy I got excited and my buddy I got him to take me to Missoula hunting cougar dogs. I didn't have a dog. I had a good one but he got shot that winter by a neighbor. Anyway, there used to be an old barber hunted lions. I looked him up. No, he got rid of his. He was old. Went out to Frenchtown. There was a guy out there had fourteen hounds and he wouldn't let me have any. He was sawing logs. He wasn't hunting. And then, Bill Ruder [spelling?], he had about a dozen hounds. He just hunted lions for sport I guess. I went to him and oh yeah, he wanted to know if I knew anything about hunting. About dogs. He let me have dogs. The first things I put them on, I put them on a lion and when I got to the tree it was a wolverine. [laughs] And boy he got excited. Every weekend he'd come up with his hound. He was bound he was going to get a wolverine. The rest of the winter, I could go out here and jump wolverine and put them hound on them and them wolverines would get away. Took me till spring to figure out how they was doing it. Them wolverines they'd always tree in a spruce bottom or cedar and they'd, like flying squirrel, they'd jump from tree to tree. The hounds would be at that tree and they'd maybe be a half mile away in another tree. He'd go to sleep over there. I sure made a lot of miles there trying to get a...this guy wanted a wolverine so bad, and I tried to get him one. So I set a trap over, I was trapping beaver. I had a beaver permit. I had a good place for a set. So I caught a couple. Yeah I caught a wolverine for him. Tiger, he caught a wolverine, about three years ago. Him and Bill Bartlett, he wanted a wolverine. They set a line up here...they trapped on up here. Tiger's got his mounted full size. Nice wolverine.
SV: What about lynx?

JH: I never trapped lynx. Butch Harmon, he got two or three lynx while he was trapping. I shot a lynx. I used to have lots of tame rabbits turned loose here. I was unloading the stock rack off my truck up there where the old mill set here. I loosened up them side boards and it sounded like a rifle shot when I'd drop them down to the sides. Pretty soon I heard a rabbit squeal from under the back of the truck. I thought, what the hell is wrong with that rabbit. I jumped down there, and there was a lynx. He had that rabbit. He ran across the [meadow?] and I chased him afoot. He'd just stay out of reach of me. I went to the house and got my twenty-two. There used to be a pothole there. There was a big cottonwood had blowed over. I circled that, I couldn't find nothing. When I come back I got on the cottonwood, boy here come that lynx out from under the roots where that cottonwood had tipped over. I shot it.

I looked under there and I bet he had twenty rabbits piled up in there. He stored them under there. Winter's cache.

Yeah, I trapped a few badger. I never was a very good coyote trapper. Ol' Harlan Lodge, he used to get quite a few coyotes. One day I met him down on the road there. Here he had a dead coyote, and one that wasn't dead yet. He had him hung over the edge of his stock rack, chokin' him to death. I said 'why don't you kill that poor coyote.' "Oh, I don't want to bruise him up." I said, geez, I'll show you how to kill a coyote." I untied his rope and I put it on the ground. You step on their heart and they'll stretch out and they're dead in about ten seconds. I told him you don't bruise them up doing that. Then I told him, gawd darn it, I don't know how you get them coyotes. I never was smart enough to catch them I guess. "Oh, there ain't no smart coyotes," he said. "Just dumb people." [laughs]

SV: He must have been a smart guy.

JH: Did you know Harlan? [heard of him] He was pretty smart ol' boy. Great big old guy. When he got drunk he was kind of ornery. Mame had to blackball him from her bar. [Mame Holmes Krause, Liquid Louie's, Swan River Tavern] He'd insult her customers.

SV: Did you remember anybody talking about wolves in here?

JH: No, not really. The first one I ever seen, wolf, they got it down at Swan Lake, on the grade there. I seen a wolf down there one day. There was a wolf over Sun River. I know that guy. He was on the game count. And he tried to get that wolf all winter. Lone wolf. He claims, he had a big elk yard there for the winter. He knew of sixty elk that wolf had killed that winter. And finally, he had a big Airedale dog that followed him all the time. Finally that old dog one day on toward spring, stuck his nose in the air and run out in the brush and come a runnin' back and that wolf was chasin' him. He shot him and got him. He said, boy that wolf really was killin' elk. He never would clean 'em up either.
I got after a lion one time. I don't know, he'd kill more darn deer and wouldn't even eat them. Big old tom. I didn't get him that first winter, either. I got him the next winter. He had a, the only thing I could relate it to, was he had a hollow tusk. I think that warm blood helped his toothache or something. That's what I would guess. He'd kill deer, dig a hole in the snow and go on, kill another. That one day, me and Tom trailed him above Lion Creek ford, and he went down toward the highway. Ever little ways we'd come to a deer kill, but the coyotes was cleaning them up. But that old lion went to every one of them kills though. He went way down to Van Lake and then one of them kills though. He went way down to Van Lake and then went into Squeezer Canyon and it got dark and we had to layout all night up there. It snowed about 18 inches that night and we lost his tracks. The next winter thought, Tom trailed, I'm sure it was the same one, down outta there, he swarm across the river, mouth of Lion Creek. Him and me went the next day and picked up the tracks and we got him way over on? Creek. He'd killed an elk. He was a big, nice, beautiful animal. Conkling had it. I sold the hide to Conkling. I don't know what ever happened to that hide. Anyway, I never heard of it again. That was sure a nice lion, though. I don't remember how he measured. I got one up Lion Creek, 175 pounds. That was a big lion.

Actually, the biggest lion I ever got was across the river from Goat Creek. Well, I had a black dog, went with me wherever I went. I was running my mink traps. I had to hike in about a half mile to the sets. I caught a mink and I was down on my belly, resetting my traps. I heard that dog, let a yip out of him. I finished setting my trap and I could see the dog going out of sight over a high ridge. I thought, what's that damned dog after now. I wasn't even hunting lion. Yeah, here was a lion track. I just had a twenty-two. I had a big rifle in my car. But it was a half mile back there. I thought that wasn't a very big lion. His feet ain't very big, the way he's stepping. I went way up over the ridge and here comes the dog back after me. Then he comes to a big fir and he stood up, and that lion was way up to the top of that big fir and all I had was that twenty-two. I started shooting him in the head and he'd get higher and pretty soon, he got to the top and the top broke off and he fell. Brought a load of limbs down with him. He got up.

I always had a little spaniel. He'd nail a lion and freeze onto him. The lion ran and he jumped a muddy creek. He jumped into that creek. The hound and him was having a big fight. So I got up the creek. I was going to shoot him in the ear, so I'd be sure and kill him. He was a lunging at the hounds. I got him too low. Boy he piled outta the creek and took after the hound. He jumped the creek and took off. That little dog was still hanging onto him. Jumped the creek and here he come. He spied me and here he come. That was a single shotgun, and I was trying to get a bullet out of the pocket and I couldn't get it. Boy, he got right like that [shows with his hands] and the only thing left to do was jam this gun down the throat as far as I could get it. That lion whirled. He was all alone with that little dog. I don't know yet how come he didn't get him. The old hound really got mad when he started to kill his partner. He come and he grabbed the old lion here. Him and the old lion went to fighting and finally he went right back down the creek and jumped in the same place again. The next time I got him in the ear. I was really glad, too. That's the only time I ever had a lion act like he was going to get me. He was after me, too. I didn't think of it until I went to bed that night. I thought, hell, he had to be after me. He knew
where that torture was coming from. Boy that was a big one, though. He wasn't as heavy as them other ones. He was old and skinny. But he was really a big, long, son-of-a-gun. I used to have his hide in the stairway, in the hall of the old house. It looked like a cow hide hanging there.

SV: That's the house that burned down.

JH: Yeah.

[End of Interview]