

Maureen and Mike

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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

**Oral History Number: 299-002**  
**Interviewee: Eva Cross**  
**Interviewer: Patricia E. O'Connell**  
**Date of Interview: November 11, 1993**

Patricia O'Connell: Okay, this is a Pat O'Connell and I'm interviewing Eva Cross. This is Veterans Day, 1993, November 11. I didn't say that at the beginning of this interview, and I'm sorry about that. Eva we're going to continue on above The Frosty Malt. You liked that business.

Eva Cross: Oh, yes.

PO: How long were you in it? A year or two or three or what?

EC: Let's see, oh, I was in for about...about six or eight years. I was in there for a quite a long time.

PO: Where was your husband during that time? Was he down in...

EC: My husband was down at...he was working down there at the shipyards there in...

PO: San Diego?

EC: Yeah, San Diego, that's where he was working, down there in San Diego.

PO: Came home weekends?

EC: Yes, and then he'd come home weekends.

PO: Then you left because the war started and you couldn't get—

EC: Yes, when the war started, the government then, they took the sugar and the meat, especially. The fact is, they were rationed, and we had ration books. I found my ration books the other day when I was at home and I was going through some of my old recipes, and I found these ration books. I had forgotten all about them. You'd take the ration books in when you buy all these things, and then they take out the coupons then you had more and more coupons. Of course, there was a lot in those ration books.

PO: I think you got one pair of shoes a year, didn't you?

EC: I didn't get that many by a whole lot.

PO: I think it was just one pair of shoes because I danced a lot and I was crazy about shoes. Then we got things...tickets we could buy butter with or we could buy meat with and we could buy sugar with. What else was there? We had another book for gas, didn't we?

EC: Yeah, that's right. You had one for gas, and then you had one for sugar and for meat and...I think was butter.

PO: Well, anyway, you had that about six or eight years. Now I've got to turn this over.

EC: They took the cream, you see. The army took the cream, too. When you take the sugar and the cream, well then, you just can't make ice cream. There's no possible way. That's what they did.

[Long pause; Break in audio]

PO: Now, we were talking about the rationing. We talked about rationing. You left that place because rationing went on, and you couldn't.

EC: I couldn't cope. I sold the place to some people that they put in just hamburger and just short order is what they had. What they used to call a short order house.

PO: Did you do any cooking at all there? Did you sell hamburgers or anything or just ice cream?

EC: Well, yes. I had a hot plate there, and I used to make hamburgers and hot dogs.

PO: And coffee, I suppose.

EC: Oh yes, I had coffee, and I had tea. I could make tea. I had coffee on all the time because I sold quite a lot of coffee.

PO: Well, then where did you go after you left Whittier?

EC: I moved down to Lakewood City, and Lakewood City later become part of Long Beach. That's where I went to work there at the Douglas Aircraft.

PO: I was by the Douglas Aircraft not too long ago.

EC: Were you really?

[Break in audio]

PO: Your husband, did he come up from Long Beach then or what?

EC: Yeah. He used to come up to Whittier there.

PO: And then to Lakewood, or did he live with you?

EC: Yeah, he'd come up there every weekend, you see. He'd get bathed and clean clothes and everything, and then he'd go down to San Diego and work. He couldn't get a room down there because there were just no rooms to be had, so he had to sleep in his car. That was pretty rough, but there was a place he could eat there. There was a café there, and he could eat. He was glad to get home to get into a bed and a place to eat.

PO: Where did you go from Lakewood, then? Did you go another place in California, or did you come back to Montana?

EC: Let's see. I went down to Lakewood and I bought a place down there, and my sister bought a place over in Lakewood. She was over in Lakewood, over in Lakewood city. She was about two miles from me, and that was my sister, Irene and her husband, Clyde. Then when we sold our place, we went over and stayed with them until the weather warmed up a little bit. While we were, my husband had gone uptown for some reason or other, and he met this man that raised the chinchillas—had the chinchillas. Then he came back, come down back to Irene's house there, and he said, "Well," he said, "I tell you, I've done something." He said, "I don't know about it." He said this Chapman that brought these chinchillas from South America. So he said, "I bought four pair of them. I'll have to go home." He said, "We'll go home to Red Lodge, and I'll put up a house for them that's the right kind of a house and everything to raise them in."

So I told him, I said, "I thought that was pretty nice." [laughs] I was surprised as I could be. Then when it come more of a springtime time, but he just kept the animals for me down there, this Chapman Ranch. I went down there to see them though. When Jim said he bought them, I went down to see them, and they were just plenty cute. I was pleased to get them. They were just the dearest little animals.

PO: How'd you get them up to Montana?

EC: We had a place all fixed for them, and then we had them shipped up by air. They shipped them by air. They brought them by air to Billings, and then we went down to Billings and got them. We were just 60 miles from Billings. We had pens and everything all ready for them. Gosh, we turned them loose, and they were just as happy as they could be. They were just bouncing around in there. Then there were some people that were down in Billings there that had four more pair, and they didn't want them. They didn't like the work that it took, and they didn't like being confined. They wanted so they could just be going all the time. Anyhow, they come up, and we bought them. We bought those four pair from them. That gave us eight pair. Then, you see, no relationship. So we had good breeding stock.

PO: What did you call their offspring: kittens or puppies? Kits or what?

EC: No. We just called them little babies.

PO: How many would each mother have?

EC: I'll tell you, They averaged about two to a litter.

PO: About two to a litter.

EC: But then we had one litter of five. That little mother only had two little breasts, so we...I had to feed them. I had a medicine dropper, and then I fixed a formula for them of...I had that Sago canned milk. Then I got vitamin B. I got this vitamin B from the drugstore, and it was a liquid and it was pink. It was so good; it was just sweet. It was just awfully good, that vitamin B was. Those little buggers just lap it up. They loved it, and they grew like little weeds. I had no trouble at all. I never lost a one. When I'd sell them, I teach them how to do it. That's how come I went to Boston in Massachusetts there. I flew there with 18 pairs. He wanted 18 pair of them. So I flew to Boston with those, and I taught him how to take care of them. But later on, I found out that he was not very much of a [unintelligible]. Fact is, he didn't want to pay for them after he got them back there. My husband went back there, and he just camped on his doorstep. The graders went through, you see, to grade his animals there. The graders were asking him about...He told the graders, he said, "Yes, that Cross S.O.B. said he'd come in there," and he said, "I had to pay him to get rid of him." But he said, "He was drinking my liquor and eating my food, sleeping in my bed. I had to pay him in order to get rid of him." [laughs] So he did, he come home with the money. Then—

PO: How long did you have the chinchillas?

EC: I had them for about, round about 12 years. Then there's another time I went with a gang of them down to Fort Worth, Texas. That man down there was a veterinarian, and he was a nice guy. He was just as nice as he could be. I enjoyed being down there with him. He had cattle, you see, he was a cattle man.

PO: Whereabouts? Fort Worth?

EC: Fort Worth, yes, Fort Worth, Texas. Down on his cattle ranch, he had one building on there. It was a great big open building inside. One end is where he had people sleeping, and there was no curtains, no partitions, no nothing. Another end's where they cooked and had a long table there where everybody sat down to eat. Anyhow, my bed was way over in the corner. He fixed me way over in the corner where I felt a little bit protected, a little. Then he had a little dressing room. You'd go in there and get your nighty on, and then parade on out there. Nobody cared about anybody. You'd just go crawl into bed and sleep like a log. I was so tired. Then the morning, I never woke up. Finally he come in and he told me, he said, "Well, breakfast is all

ready. You just have to get up." So then I crawled out and got my clothes on, went in, and had breakfast.

Then he took me way down...oh my goodness, it was miles and miles on down to the cattle ranch where he had his cattle. I don't know, it was about 14 or 15 miles down there, long ways down. His wife was down there. She managed the cattle. Se liked the cattle, but he could have the chinchillas. She was down there and boy, she was a record cow person. I got a kick out of it because they were so different. I never dreamed he'd had a wife like she was. When I saw her, I never dreamed that he could be her husband, either, because he had the polish, but she had the boots and the get up and go. Quite a pair. They had no children at all, and they just had them two selves.

When I was down there at their place, I was down there to where he had the cattle. I can't think of the name of the place where these cattle were down there, but anyhow this girl that I knew down in Santa Rosa, California, I took care of her when she was just a little thing, three years old. Her parents would go someplace, and I'd take care of the little [unintelligible]. Then when her little sister come along, I took care of [unintelligible] and her sister, Ruth. Then her mother, then, after I left there, her mother passed away. She had tuberculosis. She passed away. About three years later, her father married another lady, and this lady never raised this little Catherine, was her name—Catherine and Ruth. She raised them, but she never let them know anything about their mother, nothing at all. When Catherine met me, I could tell her all about her mother who I knew so well, and her grandmother and her grandfather, and of course, her father. But then, of course, she knew him—Bill. I told her all about them and everything, and she played for the symphony and the symphony was playing there. I got the tickets there from her—she give me tickets—and I attended that symphony.

PO: That was in Fort Worth?

EC: That was in Fort Worth. Boy, that was beautiful, my lord in heaven. She played that harp, and she could do it. So I had a nice time there.

PO: How long did you stay? A couple of weeks or a month?

EC: I was there for about a week. But then, I had to get back to Red Lodge, too. So I come back. They were nice people down there. I enjoyed it down in Fort Worth. Then they were—

PO: Then you came back to Red Lodge?

EC: Yeah. I come back to Red Lodge because I had my own chinchillas to look after, and I had left a young man to look after my animals while I was gone. I'd just got them all cleaned up, so they could go for two weeks or so, and Nigel (?) and I had no little babies to feed. So it was easy for me to leave them because he could look after the rest of them. He took good care of them. When I come back, why, everything was just fine.

PO: What was his name?

EC: I don't remember. He was just a young fellow who was in town for...he hadn't been raised there, but he was there just looking for work and stuff. He seemed real nice young kid. He was just out of high school. He was looking for just something to do until he went to college. Anyhow, he took good care of them, and I appreciated it.

PO: Then did you come from Red Lodge and live up here or did you go...when did you go to Florida? When were you in Florida?

EC: Before we got rid of our chinchillas, then we built that log house up there on the upper end of the place.

PO: On the ranch, or up here at Polson?

EC: Up on the ranch. That was at Red Lodge. We built that log house that's in that picture up there, and we lived there for about 15 years. Then my husband said that he just couldn't live there any longer because he had to get to a lower altitude, due to this darn smoking he did. My son had a vacation coming up, and so then on his vacation, why, he said he'd like to take a trip up to Canada. Up just north of the park [Glacier Park?] up here.

PO: Alberton and Calgary.

EC: [unintelligible]. We said, "Well, sure, we'd like to do that." He wanted us to go, so we did. He had a nice car and everything. We all went on up there, and on the way, why, we kind of liked the area on in here—the lake and everything. That lake is a beautiful thing. Then the area up there, we really did like it. We decided that it was a lower altitude here and everything, and there was a fellow across the lake there from us. His name was LaCara (?). Frank LaCara. When Frankie was just a little boy like this, he come up and see Jack. He and Jack were good friends, these little bitty kids. I used to take a lot of care of Frankie, because he had a stepmother that wasn't a bit nice to him. Then there was another boy over on the creek. The same way he had a stepmother that was not nice to him. I don't know why those women were like that, but they just were.

PO: The only thing is, I've been a stepmother. You marry your husband because you're crazy about him, but you didn't take on those kids and they want extra. I think it's disappointing when the man that you fall for has kids.

EC: That could be.

PO: Because you don't marry the kids, I mean you don't think about them when you get married. You think about the guy you're crazy about.

EC: Yes. Of course, he's got the children.

PO: Yes. And you know that if you're going to have him, you're going to have those kids.

EC: Have the kids too. That's right. Anyhow, that's how these two families were.

PO: But you should be nice to them.

EC: Yes. I look back-

PO: I'm still friends with one of my step children, good friends. Actually wanted me to come for Thanksgiving. I don't want to go. She calls every once in a while. It's been a good relationship, but I think a lot of step relationships aren't good. But the same time, you don't marry for those kids, you marry the husband for yourself—

EC: Yes, you marry your husband.

PO: —and you take the kids because they go with the deal. [laughs]

EC: That's right, they go with the deal, that's just true.

PO: But you should be nice to them.

EC: I know it, yes. Well, the kids can't help it.

PO: No.

EC: The kids can't help it. Well, anyhow, that was Frankie's situation. Then Lee's situation was the same way. So they come to my house, oh my gosh, of course, I was good to them.

PO: Was that in Red Lodge?

EC: Yes. Whenever I went anyplace, I'd take kids along with me. They really liked me, those kids did. Anyhow, then when we come down here then, Lee—the one that lived over on the creek there—well, he come down here, too, and Frank was already here. Frank LaCara. He lived over on the other side of the—

PO: Lake.

EC: We would always see Frank and Vivian. I knew too, his wife. So we went over to see them. Well, boy, they were tickled to death that we were coming up there. They right now knew a place for me to get. Right now they knew a place for me. Then when I went over there to see



this place and we did like it. There was nobody living there. We just went down and signed the papers, and we took it.

PO: Who had owned it before you?

EC: His name was Dr. Carter (?). Dr. Carter had bought the place, and then he had heart trouble. He had really bad heart, poor guy. He was as bad as the poor little Indian that had the chinchillas there. He had a hard time with that.

PO: So he had to sell his place.

EC: So he had to sell his place. Then that Mrs. Cruksack (?) lived across the street there from this place, and we talked to her some. We liked the place up there. That was a beautiful place, but it needed an awful lot of fixing. They had cherry trees. They had 20 acres in front on that hill slope, and then they had 20 acres in the back.

PO: You mean Cruksacks or you people? Who had all those cherry trees?

EC: Well then, after we got the cherries, we had the picking to do because we didn't have enough acres that the pickers would want to bother to come in. So we had our own picking to do. One year, the LaCaras, they all come over and help us pick. Then we had a grandson come up there, and he helped us pick the next year. We made out all right, but I was darn glad when the freeze come along and took them all. I think we had five trees left, and that was plenty because we had enough cherries then for our own use and for anybody else who wanted a few that we knew, and that's all we cared about.

PO: I think a lot of people buy these cherry orchards thinking they'll have an income from them and everything is going to be hotsy totsy and then bingo, they find out they're a lot of work instead.

EC: Oh, they're a tremendous amount of work. We just liked the place, and we didn't think anything about the cherries much. But, boy, we found out. My goodness, they take a lot, yes. Why, climbing those trees, you know. Some of those trees were tall. I had a real tall ladder we did have. Well, my husband couldn't get up on that ladder, it was a little bit rickety, so I'd go clear to the top. Shoot, I was as tall as that tall house down there at the top of the tree. Then we got sort of sick of that, so then we chopped the tops out. A lot of people did take their tall trees and chopped the tops off so we did ours that way. Then we had them all down where we could get to them easier. It made it a lot easier, but they were still a lot of work.

PO: Well, I wish you'd tell me more about Red Lodge and about Bearcreek. Now, Bearcreek had that bad mining accident.

EC: Yes, they had that bad mining accident, and Bearcreek lasted, though, until the REA came in. As soon as everybody got electricity, coal went out.

PO: Was it in the '30s that Bearcreek had that bad thing?

EC: Let's see now, where was that?

PO: Before World War Two, wasn't it?

EC: Where's that little tablet I had out? That was before the war, yes.

PO: And you said '70s?

EC: I think that '76.

PO: You said 74 miners got it.

EC: Yeah, and there were 74 miners that were killed in that.

PO: You knew most of the families?

EC: Oh, yes, I did know them. I knew their wives and everything.

PO: Who was the head of that mine? Who was the main guy?

EC: Brophy was the head of it. His name was Jim Brophy. No, Jim Brophy had the Brophy Mine, and that was around the corner from this big one. That was the... [pauses] oh, dear. Beartooth Coal, they called it. All the people that owned that—

PO: Who were the people concerned with it? Who did you know that worked there?

EC: I knew the girl that worked for them. Their bookkeeper was a friend of mine. She was a pretty, sweet girl—Jessie... [pauses] Fraser. Jessie Fraser (?). She was a really good friend of mine. I really liked little Jessie.

PO: Was she married?

EC: Yeah, she married.

PO: Was her husband caught in that mine or not?

EC: No, he wasn't. They had quit before that. They had quit and gone to Oregon, I believe it was. They went to Oregon. I kind of lost track of them.

PO: But they weren't involved in [unintelligible].

EC: No, they weren't involved in that crash.

PO: Was it a crash or an explosion or what?

EC: It was an explosion. There was gas in there, and they were all gassed in that explosion. They closed it off so they couldn't get out. They had a cave-in, and they couldn't get out beyond that cave, so they were just asphyxiated in there. I mean, they were just—

PO: Did they ever get their bodies out?

EC: They did some of them, all right. They went in there, and they got a lot of them. They buried them over in Bearcreek there.

PO: What about the mines over in Red Lodge?

EC: Well now, the mines over in Red Lodge, there was two coal mines there. They's on the east side and the west side of the town. Those mines, though, they were safe. They were all right. They had no trouble in there. They closed the mines because there was no sale. I'd forgotten about all—

PO: Who were some of the people involved in those mines in Red Lodge?

EC: In Red Lodge? They were the... [pauses]

PO: I see the name George Dilworth (?) a lot. He was a dentist, and he took a lot of pictures.

EC: Yes, he was dentist, actually, he was a—

PO: He took a lot of pictures.

EC: Yes he did, George Dilworth. I don't know, he was not much of a dentist either. He just did it. But he was there before I could even remember anything. He was an older man and he left there. Then the dentist that I remember there was Fulhrer.

PO: Fulhrer?

EC: Yes. F-U-L-H-R-E-R, Fulhrer. Then the other dentist was... [pauses] I don't remember his name.

PO: Well, did your family always live out on that ranch where you did the ice business?

EC: Oh, yes. Oh yes, they always lived there.

PO: So, when you would go back to Red Lodge, you'd live out at that ranch.

EC: Yes, I always went to the ranch. Then, of course, the house that we built was on the ranch. We lived there for a long time up at that place until my husband decided that he couldn't live there anymore, and so we sold that place. These people that bought it, she thought she was a sun buff. I told her, boy, she just couldn't stand out in that sun because she was from Minneapolis, and the sun's not that severe there. She just laid out there. Well, six months, she was dead of cancer. So it didn't [unintelligible] her. Then, of course, he just sold out and left.

PO: What do you remember about the mines and the railroad at Red Lodge? They said there were 500 Finnish families there.

EC: Well, I don't know how many Finnish families they were—

PO: Were there mostly Finnish people?

EC: They were Finnish and Italian. There was a lot of Italians there and a lot of Finn people, and then just plain old usual Americans. The Finns and the Italians were good miners. The Finns were especially good because they had a lot of that in Finland themselves, but in Italy not so much. The Italians were good, but the Italians liked the stores. They liked to- I know this Regis, he was Italian, and then there was other Italians there that had stores. Well, these Marcellos (?), they had one there. The Marcellos had a grocery store, and another Marcello had the hardware store. Another Marcello had the ladies' garment store. Let's see, then there was something else that they had. A meat market.

PO: Well, there was a Marcello in Polson, too, wasn't there? Was he related to them?

EC: Oh, yes. He's their son. He's the son of the one that had the grocery store. That's Louis that's up here.

PO: Were the Marcellos there when you were in grade school or high school?

EC: Oh, yes. They'd been there a long time.

PO: Who else were long-time settlers?

EC: I don't know when they came, really.

PO: But who else was long-time settlers?

EC: Let's see, there was Meyer and Chapman.

PO: What did they do?

EC: They each had a bank. [laughs]

PO: [laughs] That's a good business to be in.

EC: Yes. Meyer and Chapman, and then there was...oh my goodness, the one that my dad went to. Oh my goodness, I can't think of his name. I was trying to think of his name last night, and I cannot remember.

PO: How long did your father have that newspaper? A year or two or three or what?

EC: Well, I don't know. He had it for three or four years. He was [unintelligible] and then he stayed with it. He didn't close it down after the election or anything. He kept it for a while. I had quite a booklet of his papers, but they're in the archives there in Helena. They're there for good there. Yes, they're there for good.

PO: And he had a short order café?

EC: Yes, he sure did. His was short order. It was a short order...Oh let's see, he didn't call it a café. Short Order House.

PO: Your father was really into quite a few things, wasn't he?

EC: He sure was. I tell you, he had the first ranch there. He had the first ice business there. He had the greenhouse business, he was the first. What else did he have?

PO: Did you have the greenhouse on the ranch?

EC: Yeah. That was a lot of work, that greenhouse. Oh boy, that was a lot of work. My mother and us kids had that greenhouse more than my dad did because he had the outside. He did the ranch work more, but he wasn't so hot about the greenhouse. My gosh, he couldn't make a pansy grow. Anything my mother planted, it'd grow like fury.

PO: Well, I think probably anything you plant does, too, doesn't it?

EC: Yes, anything I planted did, too.

PO: When did you go to Florida? Was Jack in grade school or high school?

EC: When we went to Florida, Jack was in college. He was in [unintelligible], and we were living in Glendale then. When he went to college, when he of through with high school, he graduated from high school in in Glendale. Then when he went to college, he wanted to go to the state university in Florida. Why, he wanted to go there, I don't know. He did want to go there, but the instructor that he had in high school there took a lot of interest in Jack. He told Jack that that was one of the finest...and it was. He advised Jack that he could go there.

PO: In what course did he take?

EC: Actually, he was taking up pre-medic. Pre-med was what he was started out to be, but he kind of wanted to be a veterinarian. But one thing and another, and we were moving around from one place to another. I had him in four different high schools when he was a sophomore. It just seemed like after he was in college then, we went down to Florida. We were in Wauchula, and we had this orange grove there. He finished his college education in Tallahassee.

PO: What town in Florida did you go to?

EC: That was Wauchula. W-A-U-C-H-U-L-A. It's a Seminole name.

PO: What town was he in for the first year of college?

EC: What year of college? Well, he finished college. He finished his college, though, in Billings. His college he finished in Billings. He took his college courses between teaching.

PO: But you had your orange grove in Wauchula?

EC: We had the orange grove in Florida.

PO: What year would that have been? If he was old enough for college, it'd probably be '38 or '39 or '40.

EC: It was. '38, '39. I think we went back up...Well, from Florida, where did we go? I think we went back to Red Lodge. I'm sure we did.

PO: You've done a lot of traveling around, haven't you?

EC: I have. It's kind of hard to keep track of all of it. Did an awful lot of moving. Honest to god, I'd just get the curtains hung up and would be time to move.

PO: I haven't gotten my curtains up yet, and I've been in my place 15 years.

EC: Oh boy. Well, I had to do better than that if I was going to get curtains up. [laughs]

PO: Well, I think what I'm going to do is go home and write this up and then give it to you to look it over. See what you think of it.

EC: Okay.

PO: I just do the outline of it. I don't write the whole thing or anything, but you know like I did an outline there of what you sent. Were you interested in what I wrote?

EC: Oh, yes, that was really good.

PO: How did you spell your mother's names?

EC: My mom? It was M-A-R-Y capital E-T-T. Ett. Mary Ett was her name.

PO: E-T-T, okay. And what was her last name?

EC: Webber, W-E-B-B-E-R. That's two B's, yes. Two B's was German, and one B was Prussian. Only, two B's was Prussian because my dad was Prussian.

PO: Mary Ett, what was her maiden name? Kaple?

EC: K-A-P-L-E. Kaple. The Kaples, they used to live in upstate New York and also in in Michigan there, Benton Harbor. My grandpa he'd moved from one to the other from one to the other until they were so sick of moving, so they finally just kind of settled for Benton Harbor.

PO: Tell me about your husband. Where did you meet him, in Red Lodge?

EC: No, god, I met him down the cow pen. [laughs] Oh lord god, when my uncle was down in Dry Creek there, he and his wife always wanted me to come down and visit them, so I went down there and I was visiting with them. Then one evening my uncle said, they said, "I've got to go to Red Lodge to get some supplies." He said, "I need somebody to milk my cows.

So I said, "Well, Uncle, I can milk them."

Then this oil man, he said, "I can milk cows, too."

I thought, who in the heck are you? Milking time come along and I grabbed a bucket and I started down there. Well, here come this oil man. He gets himself a bucket, and he goes down there. Well, I wasn't the least dang bit nice to him because I thought he was just kind of butting in on. Anyhow, he milked his cow, and I milked my cow. Then we had another cow to milk, and he said he thought he'd milk that cow, so I let him milk that cow. Then I turned up to the milk house there with this milk with my bucket and he come up with his bucket. Then I went home the next day.

Some time later—it was in the spring, but a little later than this—he come on by and come up to the house, and we had spring plants for sale like cabbage, cauliflower, and tomato plants. We couldn't plant them outside there, but we'd raise them in the greenhouse. We had nice, sturdy little plants. So my uncle come up there to get some of those plants to plant out down there at Dry Creek. I'd be damned if he didn't bring the oil man with him. There he was, the oil man. So my uncle, we were doing a lot of design work there. We had a big funeral to put out, and we're doing all of this design work. I had to put these flowers onto the sticks to stick them in all these emblems and stuff. At that moment, my uncle, he took my mom up to the greenhouse to get his order filled. He stayed a long time. He just kept my mother up there, getting these things and the oil man was down there counting on me to put on [unintelligible]. Well, I didn't think that was very nice.

It was about a week later that war was declared, you see. The oil man, along with 12 other guys—there was 13 of them, I knew them all—and they joined. They enlisted. They joined the Navy, it what they did. Anyhow, the oil man was one of them that joined the Navy. He come up to the house. They had a dance for them that night, and he was the only man who wanted me to go to the dance. My mother wouldn't let me go. She said, "You're not going anywhere with a strange man you don't know." I just was having a fit because I didn't want to go.

Then the oil man when he actually left, he wrote to me, and I wrote back. He kept writing more and more and more, and I'd answer his letters all the time. When the fall came, he got a leave of absence. The war was over pretty much. He got a leave of absence, and be darned if he didn't come up. He come to Red Lodge. My dad asked him to...he was helping my dad a lot, so my dad said, "Shoot," he said, "You don't need to stay down there at the hotel." He said, "Come up and stay at our house." By damn there the oil man was up there at my house. The oil man really did thought a lot of me. He really, truly did. But I got to thinking a lot of him, too because he was nice to me. He was nicer to me then than he was after I married him.

PO: I think that happens a lot of times.

EC: Yeah, I think so. Anyhow, then in the spring, the oil man, he got his discharge as soon as the war was over, and he came back. He took over the ice business, and he run that ice business. Then in his spare time he fixed up the bunkhouse there. He was good at fixing things up, and he had the cutest house out of that. In June, we got married and lived in the bunk house. [laughs]

PO: You call him the oil man. Why do you call him the oil man?

EC: Because he worked in the oil fields.

PO: What oil fields, where?

EC: There were those oil fields where they drilled oil, and they pumped it, you know—



PO: Were they around Red Lodge, or what?

EC: No, that was down on Dry Creek. Actually pretty much down on the Clark's Fork River, but it was in Dry Creek, really—the lower end of Dry Creek. It was loaded of oil down there. Those big old pumps went up and down like this, pumping oil. Then they were shipping it to all over the place, that oil. People were burning oil in the stoves. Coal went out with electricity and the oil.

PO: Did you get to Billings on the train very often or to Laurel?

EC: No. [unintelligible].

PO: You didn't take the train down there.

EC: The first time I was ever on a train into Billings, I was about 20 years old, I guess. I went to Billings with my mom on a train.

PO: You didn't go anyplace the first 20 years of your life.

EC: No, I sure didn't. I was right on that old ranch. After I was married, that oil man, all he wanted to was travel from one place to the other, but I was [unintelligible] all he needed to do to move was go to the paint store and tell him what he wanted. He always liked to use the very best paints, and he'd always buy those good paints.

PO: Pratt and Lambert?

EC: What?

PO: Pratt and Lambert?

EC: No, it wasn't. What was the name of the paint he liked? Oh dear me, I can't think of it. One of them was the San Francisco. That was a good paint. The other was... [pauses] what was the name of that paint?

PO: Well, it doesn't matter, but you stayed home in Red Lodge for 20 years.

EC: Yes.

PO: Then you went to Billings after you were married.

EC: No, we stayed right on the ranch. See, he run the ice business, and the ice business was on the ranch there. He had that ice business until the electricity took over.

PO: Tell me, I'm trying to visualize. You go up the main street of Red Lodge, and then at the end of it, there's a zoo—animals. Then you take up that Beartooth Highway.

EC: Yeah.

PO: Okay, now, where was your ranch from the main street of Red Lodge, or was it on the Beartooth Highway or out by where that zoo was?

EC: It was on the Beartooth Highway, and it was before you cross the creek on that Beartooth Highway. We had some of it—our place went up to the creek, and across the creek. This a piece across the creek. That was the west fork of Rock Creek. Then on the other side, it went down to the main fork of Rock Creek.

PO: You and I, I think, are pretty much done. The one tape recorder turned off.

EC: Oh, it turned off.

PO: We've got about everything, though, I think.

EC: We really have.

PO: I wish I knew more about the mines, but...

EC: Those mines, though, when the electricity come in, the mines just had to close because they couldn't sell their coal. Nobody wanted that dirty old coal when they could have this nice clean fuel. So actually, we got it all in.

PO: Okay, well, I better go home and take my nap. You don't have to take naps, but then I'm younger than you and I have to.

EC: No, I don't have to take naps. I'll go looking around for somebody to play cards. Well, gosh, it's nice you come in, Pat. But I'll see you again right you leave.

PO: Yes. I'll come in and bring you a synopsis of this. Eva, is this the only picture you have of the family?

[End of Interview]