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Interviewee: Flossie M. Poe
Interviewer: Gladys Peterson
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Flossie Poe's husband, Forrest Poe, contributes occasionally during the interview.

Gladys Peterson: This is an interview with Flossie M. Poe on January 20, 1988. Flossie I know that there is always a woman's side to the story. On the phone you told me several weeks back that you came from somewhere else, and I know you came from a large family. I don't know if I heard you right. I thought you said you came to Montana in a wagon.

Flossie Poe: Yes, in a covered wagon.

GP: I couldn't quite believe my ears but I thought that's what you said.

FIP: Yes, I did.

GP: And where did you come from?

FIP: I was born in Gerard, Montana.

GP: You were born in Gerard. So let's go back now. That's obviously eastern Montana.

FIP: Eastern Montana.

GP: I know you came from a large family. Were your parents homesteaders over there?

FIP: Yes, they were. They were from Sparta, Wisconsin.

GP: Sparta, Wisconsin.

FIP: My two oldest brothers were born in Sparta, Wisconsin and then when the one baby (unintelligible) he came over and took up a homestead in eastern Montana.

GP: Now was Sparta a farming area? Did they come from the country or a little town?

FIP: No, he worked in the woods.

GP: Oh, he was a logger or a sawyer.

FIP: He was a cook.

GP: He was a cook in the woods. So that would have been northern Wisconsin I imagine.

FIP: I really don't know.

GP: Well, anyhow, when he came to Montana he intended to farm. Is that correct?

FIP: Yes.

GP: And do you happen to know what year that would have been?

FIP: Well, let's see. Chet was born what year?

Forrest Poe: [Nineteen] ten.

FIP: It was 1910, so it would probably have been. Chet was born June and let's see, so it would have been in the later part of '10 or '11.

GP: Now, is Gerard near Glasgow or Miles City or just where is it?

FIP: It's closer to the Dakota border than Miles City.

FoP: Miles City is the closest large town, though.

GP: Now, did they get the usual 160 acres when they came?

FoP: That's what he filed.

FIP: (unintelligible).

GP: You say there were two children born in Wisconsin, which means that there were about eight born in Montana, and you are one of them.

FIP: Well there's a bunch of them born in Wyoming.

GP: Oh, I see. Does that mean that they didn't come direct to Montana?

FIP: Well yes they came directly to Montana, yes. And I can remember this—Dad built a cabin, a one-room cabin, with a sod roof.

GP: A sod roof.

FIP: I remember that. I told my mother later, I can remember a cabin somewhere and it had grass growing on the roof. She said, "You don't remember that do you?"

I said, "Yes, I do," and that was the sod roof.

FoP: I'd like to interject something here. Her dad came out first with somebody else—

GP: Looked the place over?

FoP: Picked out his land and started to homestead and then went back and got the family and brought them out here.

GP: In other words he filed a claim before he got his family.

FIP: Yes.

GP: I wondered about that. So what was he raising?

FIP: Mostly flax.

GP: Flax. And where was that going? Who was buying that?

FIP: What do you mean?

GP: The flax.

FIP: Oh, I used to run a team...What you call them? And hoe.

FoP: (unintelligible).

FIP: Where it was sold to, I really don't remember.

FoP: In those days, they used flax straw for paper, and for some in clothing.

FIP: Linen.

FoP: Linen clothing. And they used the seed for flax seed meal.

GP: Sure. Did you have a lot of animals on that property?

FIP: Yes. We had a quite a few horses. We had cows; we had chickens. We had pigs.

GP: So you did.

FoP: Mostly (unintelligible).

GP: Now, I'd be interested to know how many of you lived in that sod house.

FIP: Well there would have been three, because I was born there and so that then five of us.

GP: Five of you—three children and your parents. And then did they build another house on the property?

FIP: Yes. He built another house on the property, and it had a large kitchen, a large living room and two bedrooms and one (unintelligible).

GP: Were you born in the sod house?

FIP: Yes I was. I was born in the sod house.

GP: Do you remember your mother saying whether there was a doctor present or a midwife?

FIP: Midwife.

GP: And where did she come from?

FIP: A midwife and then the doctor came later. His name was Dr. Allard.

GP: The same Dr. Allard who was in Billings later?

FIP: No, excuse me, that is the one you went to.

FoP: He later moved over into the north part of St. Ignatius.

FIP: Dr. Allard was the one who took of him when he had polio. I can't think of his name. He later came to the Mission, and he was up at the Mission for years.

GP: Well you must have some interesting anecdotes and remembrances from those days.

FIP: Oh, I remember quite a lot of those days. Of course I was kind of young and as you know, things look greater to a children than they do when you get older. But I can remember we used to...it was quite a ways, not too terribly far, from the Badlands. My two brothers and I used to go over to the Badlands and play.

GP: Is that right?

FIP: On all the rocks and they had sandstone posts with flat “table” on top, they call table rock. We used to play over there a lot. And then they had when it was time to come home my dad would come out and whistle between his fingers.

GP: You were close to the line then. Some of those Badlands are actually on the Montana side, aren't they?

FIP: Yes. They are on the (unintelligible). They are pretty.

GP: See, I know. I spent a little time in Glendive in the early '50s and I know we used to drive over there. Well, even around Glendive I think there are a few as I remember.

FIP: There could be. I was pretty small when I left there. Oh I can remember the winters were bad. They were really bad. In October, as a rule, my dad would run a rope from the house to the pumps and to the outhouse and to the barn. And that's the way you got in sometimes. You couldn't see. You just followed the rope to get in the house.

FoP: It's because of the wind blowing the snow.

FIP: The wind just blew so hard.

GP: And they had a lantern in the house that you could see by if you had to go out at night.

FIP: Oh yes. And when my dad would go to town I can remember my mother always put a light in the window.

GP: What was the nearest town?

FIP: Ten or eleven miles, but that is quite a ways when you have to go by horse and wagon.

GP: What was the name of it?

FIP: Enid.

GP: Enid. Enid, Montana.

FIP: Enid, Montana. And then Lambert was a bigger town. Enid was just a wide place in the road.

GP: You know, this reminds me. I'm pretty sure that Mary McDornney (?) was from that same area. Did you ever talk to her about that?

FIP: No. I knew she was from over there somewhere, but I don't remember where.

GP: I think her father homesteaded in that same area and her mother taught school in that area somewhere.

FIP: I don't even know what her maiden name was. Do you?

GP: Yes, I do remember. It was Alexander.

FoP: Yes, her brother Alexander.

FIP: I do remember my folks and my older brothers talk about an Alexander. I couldn't tell you where.

GP: That is quite interesting because there is probably one question that it was her family.

FIP: That could be.

GP: And one of her brothers stayed there too and farmed in that area. Well, your family evidently kept the property and lived there for some time.

FIP: They lived there from the time I was born until I was seven and a half years old.

GP: Getting back to the anecdotes now. Do you ever remember your mother talking about childbirth at that place and the midwife or anything like that?

FIP: Well, no. I was pretty young. When my sister was born I remember. That was the doctor, the same one.

GP: Oh, it will come to you later.

FIP: But he came I remember that we had to stay out in one of the rooms and they put blankets across the doors.

GP: So you couldn't see?

FIP: Yes, we couldn't see. And I remember them talking about it and my sister is four years younger than I am. But I can remember that.

GP: Was she the only one then born there?

FIP: No. Harvard was born there.

GP: I mean you were.

FIP: Yes, I was born in the sod-roof but then when my folks moved to bigger, then there was two, my sister and brother. The year that we left there—

FoP: It was 1919.

FIP: Before we left there we had dry years, really dry and I can remember one year that—the year before we left—I can remember my mother and my dad on a knoll and we had flax then. And I can remember still to this day how beautiful those flax were—fields and fields and they are blue. They looked just like the water today on a lake. And they were so happy that they were going to have a real good crop. And then later that same summer we had an awful hailstorm, just awful. Some of the hailstones came through the roof.

GP: Is that right?

FIP: I went out later and I can remember being with my mother and my dad and my mother's crying. There was nothing you could see of the flax, just the weeds sticking up all over. The next spring my dad went to the bank to see if he could borrow money for seed and they wouldn't (unintelligible).

GP: Would that have been in Enid or Lambert?

FIP: One of them. The county seat he had to go to. No, that was the bank, excuse me. But I really don't remember that. I was younger. I don't remember it. But then the bank wouldn't loan any money. So the bank came out and dad was paying the bank for the land and I can remember the day they came out and told us that we could have four horses. And we started out with two cows, a wagon and whatever we could put in the wagon and we left. So that's what we did. And everything else was left.

FoP: During the years of World War I a lot of early day farmers in that part of the country started out because of the drought.

GP: Now if we can back up. Now you said your dad was paying the bank for the land. In other words, he didn't have to prove that up. He actually bought the land. Is that correct?

FoP: He must have mortgaged it, because he didn't file up on it. I suppose. He probably mortgaged the ranch to buy (unintelligible) for seed. But when he came the next to the bank they said no.

GP: Now, I'd like to. I don't want to forget to ask you about the covered wagon part of it. Do you remember your mother? You were too young. You weren't even born. Do you remember your brothers or your parents talking about the trip out in the covered wagon?

FIP: That's when we came, that year when the bank told us we had to...that's when my dad built the covered wagon.

FoP: Her covered wagon experience was going from eastern Montana to Wyoming.

GP: Oh, I see. Okay. So then did your family come out on the train from Wisconsin?

FIP: Yes. They came out on the train and then my mother came later on the train.

GP: I see. So we have that straight. Do you remember your mother talking about or do you have any remembrances yourself beyond those that you've mentioned about how you survived even for that short period there where the flax failed and your dad couldn't get the loan?

FIP: Well, I can remember it was hard, yes, but I don't remember an awful lot about it. I remember mother worked in the fields too as well as dad. She helped because she liked outside. She liked working on the fields. Oh there are lots of things, different things, but just trivial things that I can remember. I can remember how the eagles used to come down and steal our chickens and go off with them.

GP: Yes, those are things that are important to remember. Can you think of any more?

FIP: Yes, I can remember one time in particular when my brother and I had one of these old fashioned beds that you could put the back up and just the (unintelligible). We were out in the yard playing and this chicken just came tearing up to get out the way. This eagle just swooped right down, and the chicken ran under the bed before it got there. It just scared us to death when it came swooping down. Mother always said, "You be careful, one of them will pick you up some day." They were bad, the eagles.

GP: Calves?

FIP: The calves, too.

FoP: Oh yes. They would pick up young ones—young sheep, young calves.

FIP: We have our calves—I should say cows and calves—not a lot, and horses and pigs and chickens. I don't think we ever had anything outside of chickens.

GP: Now about year would that have been when the hailstone hit and you were having those problems?

FIP: Well it would have been probably in '18, because we left there in 1919.

GP: You left there in 1919, and you say your dad built a covered wagon?

FIP: Yes, he built the bows and the (unintelligible) canvas over the top and a spring seat on the front.

GP: Now did he know where he was going? Had he been done in Wyoming?

FIP: Yes. He had been to Wyoming, or correspondence, I don't know which. But he had a job waiting for him in Wyoming.

GP: In a town?

FIP: Yes, Greybull, Wyoming.

GP: Greybull, that's west of the Big Horns, isn't it?

FIP: Yes.

GP: North central. I've been through there. It's north, I know that. I've been through there.

FIP: It wasn't a big town.

GP: No, and it still isn't.

FoP: It's west of Sheridan.

GP: Yes, it's the other side of the mountains from Sheridan. Yes. And he was able to get a job down there before he moved down there?

FIP: He had a job waiting for him when he got there.

GP: What would it have been doing?

FIP: Oh, he was a fireman.

GP: A fireman. And in the meantime World War I had begun. Did that have any affect on your lives at all?

FIP: I don't remember much about that. I was kind of young. The only thing I remember was when that hailstorm came. My brothers, when the hailstones came through the roof, they started screaming that the Germans were coming because of the hailstorm.

GP: Now, how many children together with your parents moved to Wyoming then?

FIP: There were five of us.

GP: Five children?

FIP: Five children. My brother was just small.

GP: Do you remember the trip in the covered wagon?

FIP: Oh you bet I do. I remember many things about the trip.

GP: Now that was quite a trip, too, in miles.

FIP: It took us from spring until the latter part of September.

GP: This is 1919?

FIP: Nineteen nineteen, yes.

FoP: They had to make their way. Her dad and the two older boys worked on farms and thing along the way.

FIP: Just worked their way. And maybe we'd come to a farm and they'd help irrigating or haying or whatever. Maybe we'd stay there two or three weeks and then we'd move on to the next one.

GP: Was there always room at a farm for you seven people to live there?

FIP: We just stayed in a tent in our covered wagon.

GP: I see. And how did your mother cook?

FIP: She cooked on the campfire.

GP: On a campfire.

FIP: Oh she used to (unintelligible). The things my mother went through.

GP: That's quite amazing.

FIP: Wash. I remember I used to help her wash the clothes. We tried to find where there was water, where we'd camp over was water and she'd (unintelligible) and scrub it with it a board.

GP: Would this have been on the farm property?

FIP: Usually. If they worked on the farm why we stayed there on the farm property.

GP: Did the farm owners accommodate you pretty well? Were they sympathetic to your mother in any way?

FIP: Oh, they were very nice.

GP: Were they?

FIP: Most of them were very, very nice and sometimes if they had extra (unintelligible) or something like that why they'd just give it to us, you know. I can remember one place—I can't remember where it was at—that we stayed with my brothers and they made spears and they fished with spears in the water. The water runs very, very slowly and we got there and they speared these fish. I don't know what kind of fish they were.

FoP: Probably suckers.

FIP: I don't know. We ate them.

GP: Now did your dad choose farms along the route that would have been along to the route to Greybull?

FIP: Oh yes.

GP: Did you always stay on the route?

FIP: We stayed as much as best we could on the way to Greybull. Over the mountains and tipped down into Greybull.

GP: Were some of these farms that you stopped at in Montana?

FIP: Oh yes.

FoP: Most of them in Montana.

FIP: Yes, most of them.

GP: I see. This was 1919. Was it in the spring that you started out?

FIP: Yes. It was in the spring of the year.

GP: And on a day when you only traveled how many miles a day could you make?

FIP: I don't know.

GP: You don't remember. They talked about that.

FIP: I don't remember that. I was small.

GP: About ten miles a day in a wagon?

FoP: I think with a team and wagon that would be.

FIP: We had four horses and a wagon and two cows went behind. What happened was the one cow...and I can't remember that either because I was pretty young—

GP: You were pretty young.

FIP: I was only seven and a half. So I was pretty young, but I remember so much about it. I remember them. One place we stopped we were there for seven days. It was not on a ranch, but my brothers went out and gathered—just off the ground—agates. Cigar boxes. Many, many cigar boxes of agates right off the ground in Montana.

GP: Did they realize that they were valuable or just for fun?

FIP: Just for fun. They had no idea they were valuable for anything.

GP: Before I forget to ask this, how in the world did your dad ever find out they needed a fireman in Greybull?

FIP: Well I guess correspondence. I don't know. I really don't know. It may have been through relatives or something, although we didn't have any relatives in Wyoming. But we did have relatives in the eastern part of Montana.

GP: You did?

FIP: Yes. I don't know how far it was. It seemed like an awful long time between our place and theirs because we didn't go there too often. Their names were Benderbus (?).

GP: Were they relatives of your father or your mother?

FIP: My mother's sister and her husband.

GP: I'm always interested in these things. Is that what gave your dad and mother the idea of coming to Montana?

FIP: It may have been. I really don't know. I wouldn't be surprised if it did.

GP: Of course at that time too, the forests were getting depleted in Wisconsin. That brought a lot of people to the Bonner area and Milltown area. Around the turn of the century they were coming up for that reason. Well then, I'm sure you were too young to remember, but it would be interesting to me to know how they did get to Greybull. Did they go south toward Hardin and then that area down to Sheridan Wyoming?

FIP: No, we came right down over the mountains right into Greybull. I remember that.

FoP: Well the mountains. You went through the Beartooth Mountains and that's the range in between Sheridan and Greybull. They crossed that because they were on the east side of the mountains. They crossed them to get down.

FIP: Where is Dayton?

GP: Oh, I know where that is. That's above Sheridan.

FIP: Is it?

GP: Yes.

FIP: Well that name seems to stand out in my mind, but I wouldn't be sure. Is it right close to the mountains?

GP: I think it is. I should know exactly because I've spent a little time in Sheridan when my husband was working in that area. It's not very far from Sheridan. It is on the highway now I think. I'm sure it is.

FoP: They came from their homestead down to Greybull. They would be going southeast, in a general direction.

GP: They would have had to go through the Crow Agency and the Hardin area.

FIP: I just don't remember that. That name. I should've looked this up first.

GP: No, that's all right. It's just so interesting to me because it sounds like such a rough trip to make with seven people.

FIP: It is, of course. For myself and children it was fun.

GP: It was fun?

FIP: It was fun. Really it was fun.

GP: Your parents must have been very good-natured.

FIP: Oh yes. I remember when we went through the mountains. Up in the mountains and we were at camp and in the wagon, mother and dad in the front seat and us behind and we see these Indians coming and they had travois.

GP: A travois.

FIP: A travois, yes and they would have the squaws and she had a baby in her arms and they were making all kinds of motions. My mother was just frightened to death and so were we. My dad kept saying, "It's all right, it's all right. Now don't be afraid. They're not going to hurt us." They just kept making all these motions and talking with us. We couldn't understand their talk or anything. Just before we got ready to pass them they kept pointing like this. Dad looked back, and he turned to my mother and he said, "They are trying to tell us we left the ax." So my dad stopped the team, walked back and got the ax and motioned thanks. Oh, the Indians had the biggest smiles on their faces, they were so pleased that we understood. And that is very—

GP: That's very plain in your memory.

FoP: This story some of the image people had of the Indian being a savage.

FIP: Of course that frightened my mother, and my mother had a little baby too, you know. My brother was just small.

GP: Did you say that the Indian women were carrying babies and were they pulling the travois?

FIP: The squaws were sitting on the travois.

GP: Oh, they were sitting on them.

FIP: This squaw had this baby in her arms.

GP: Who was pulling the travois? Do you remember?

FIP: There was just one.

GP: A man?

FIP: A man.

FoP: No, they always tied them to a horse.

FIP: That's what I said.

GP: Oh, to a horse. I see.

FIP: Tied to a horse and he's sitting on the horse. (unintelligible) like you used to hook up a buggy.

GP: Sure.

FoP: It goes on to the horse's back and then hooks on each side and the poles (unintelligible) and then they lash the poles together.

GP: I didn't know who was pulling the travois. That's what I was wondering.

FIP: Yes, a horse and I can remember that horse had kind of rust colored spots on it. Very tall and slick looking Indians. I'd never seen that kind so that's why I remember.

FoP: At this time I'd like to mention history tells us that they had about four or more years—up to six years—of real strong drought in eastern Montana, especially over near Dakota about that time. During all of World War I was practically all drought, not just one year.

GP: Yes, and that actually lasted into the '20s, the early '20s, too, didn't it? As I recall people telling me about that. Before we get to Greybull, you knew of many other families that were leaving for the same reason—leaving eastern Montana at that time.

FIP: Well I can remember one family. I can remember them putting their furniture and stuff on the wagon. They evidently had not so far to go because it wasn't covered or anything. And I can remember my dad and my mother talking to them. But what their names were I couldn't tell you.

GP: Again before we get to Greybull. Did the bank get possession of that property?

FIP: Yes.

GP: They did.

FIP: They took possession of the property in (unintelligible). Oh, I can remember one ranch where my dad worked and my brothers. Of course my brothers weren't very old, but they did some things you know. I can remember that they had a wolf.

GP: A wolf.

FIP: A wolf. And they had it on a long leash. They had a roof built over it and a corral. But it was on a leash and it would go round and round and round all day long. And they had a fox.

GP: Was this as you were moving to Wyoming?

FIP: Yes, in the covered wagon. We stayed and helped those people on the ranch—my father and my two brothers. My mother—at that particular place—helped cook for them. They couldn't be the Depression time, but I know they had quite a few people. It was a big place, and she helped cook. I can remember the little girl—one of the little girls—went out in the shed. She was playing and she found a dynamite cap. She put it in her mouth and bit it and blew a part of her head, and we had to take her into the nearest town, of which I don't know where it was.

GP: That happened while you were there?

FIP: Yes. She blew part of her face off. I can remember that so well. You know with kids the weird things are impressive to a child.

GP: Did you see her later?

FIP: No. We never did. Well years later mother and dad talking about it, that she was pretty good. She came out of it pretty good.

GP: Well, when you got to Greybull...unless there is something else you want to say about the trip?

FIP: Well, we got lost in the mountains.

GP: You got lost?

FIP: Yes, and it was snowing.

GP: And it was getting into fall or late summer?

FIP: As we were going over in the wagon. We got lost in a snowstorm and it was really snowing and mother was of course, real concerned—we didn't frighten little children. Finally we ran into a ranger and he directed us down to the station. And the next morning it was nice and sunny and he directed us which way to go—my dad. And we started off.

GP: I just thought of something else. If you went through the Crow Agency in Hardin country, did you have any contact with Indians in that area?

FIP: The only Indians we saw were when we were going through the mountains. That's the only Indians we saw. We didn't see very much of anything, except for farms, between farms, things like that.

GP: Sure.

FIP: Another incident I remember when we were going through the mountains we came to a place that the trail was fallen and rocks like this. And down over the edge—way down there—and see wagons that fallen down the hill. And my dad took ropes and made—I guess you'd call it a winch—tied the wagon up around the trees on the top of this hill. And all of the children and mother and all of us had to get out and walk and the boys—the two boys—led the team across to keep the wagon from sliding down the cliff. And there were wagons down there.

FoP: There used to be a place up here along Flathead Lake that was the same way.

GP: Well, I've been over that road a number of times and it's still a pretty what I would call treacherous—my husband probably wouldn't.

FIP: There was no road there. It was just more or less a trail. Oh, I would stay probably from that side of the house to this side, just made of rock, just flat.

GP: But your older brothers and your dad stayed on the wagon, though.

FIP: Well my brothers lost the rope somehow, I don't know. I suppose it wasn't very long. And dad just led the team across. And we came close. A few times it slipped and I can remember mother starting to cry.

GP: I can imagine.

FIP: But we made it.

GP: Was it wet?

FIP: No.

GP: It wasn't.

FIP: No. It was a nice day. But what was so scary was to look way down there and see the wagon all crumpled up all down below. And (unintelligible).

GP: Sure.

FIP: There's many many things I remember. But it comes back as I start talking about it on that trip.

GP: Can you think of some more?

FIP: Well.

FoP: I'd tell her about the teacher's remark.

FIP: Oh. Oh, yes. When our oldest daughter was in high school here in Missoula, she was to write a theme about something that happened about her family—her parents. So my daughter wrote about me coming across in a covered wagon and the teacher wouldn't accept it. She said, "You know, your mother is not that old." She thought Hazel had made it up. So Hazel came home very hurt, so I told her well you just give me the teacher's name and I'll call her. So I called her and told her. I said, "She is right," and she was still hesitant. I said, "Well, I was just a small child. The bank took over the place. We left. My dad had a job in Wyoming." So I said, "We built a covered wagon and we spent all summer getting to Wyoming." Then she apologized. She said she was so sorry. Well, I can see her point.

GP: Well, I'm sure she probably felt the same way I did because I was thinking of a cross-country trip, you see, and with the railroad in existence at that time. It is an amazing story. But now that I understand where you were and where you went it certainly makes sense.

FIP: Of course now the only train came in while—I think—that was quite a ways from where we lived, I know that.

GP: But there was a railroad at the time. And of course, by that time too, the northern one was in existence. Was that Northern Pacific?

FoP: Northern Pacific was the one that came through here. Great Northern.

GP: Great Northern, yes. That's what it was. So anyhow I believe your story now because I know where you went. Are there some more things that you can remember about the trip?

FIP: Oh, there are probably many of them I haven't even. I was going to sit down and think of them, make some notes, but—

GP: What did you eat?

FIP: Well, whatever we could get from farmers and such like that. They were usually pretty good. The days, of course, varies, at that time of year.

GP: Of course you had your cows. Did you have milk?

FIP: Well, we had some cows. We had to have milk because mother was not nursing the baby so we had to have milk for the baby. But whatever happened with the other cow, I don't know. We may have had to sell it or something. And we were at lots of places—ranches—that gave us feed for the cows and horses. Most of the time they ate off the prairie.

GP: Well it would certainly be a slow trip--hauling animals in the back of a wagon.

FIP: It was full because you know after all the horses go very slowly.

FoP: And with the cow tied down behind it, as I said, ten miles worth a day would be a big day.

FIP: But that one place with the Indians is the only thing I can remember where this and then of course when we met the ranger. Other people were just farmers, because some of the farms were pretty big over there. Some of them were large.

GP: Now when you got to Greybull, was there a house waiting for you there?

FIP: We rented a small house, a fairly small house and dad went to work for the fire department and they bought...I don't know. All I know is we had about four or five cows later and we ran a little dairy. We sold milk; we sold cream. And mother used to once in a while make butter and dad worked at the fire station.

GP: Did she do much canning?

FIP: Oh yes, whenever she had cans. We did lots and lots of canning. Let's see, we had lived there. That was before Nettie was born. Mother was pregnant with her when our house caught on fire and burned down and we lost everything excepting (unintelligible). It just happened to be. My mother always said God was looking over her shoulder, because it was in the spring of the year or so. We wanted to sleep outside and Mother said, "No, it's too cold to sleep outside," but she finally consented that we could sleep in the granary. It was empty. So we slept in the granary that night and that's when the house burned. Mother and Dad were the only ones in the house, and she was expecting. They crawled through the bedroom windows and she took a few baby clothes with her, and that's the only thing outside of the clothes we had and our sleeping blankets.

GP: Were they on the first floor of the house?

FIP: There was only one floor and it burned. And then the neighbors and everything was real good about helping us out and we lived in a tent that summer and then they built a house between the neighbors all got together and my dad. They built another house, and that had one large living room and kitchen combined and then there were two or three bedrooms. I can't remember. We lived there for...I don't know how long it was that we lived there. Then we

went from there up on a ranch in Wyoming—up what they call Shell Creek. Shell Creek, and we lived there one summer. My dad was a (unintelligible). We lived there one summer and then dad got a job in Billings with the city and then we moved to Billings.

GP: It's amazing how he could do that. A perfect stranger and get a job.

FIP: Well I don't know. He didn't have a job when he went there. He went on the train looking for a job. He found a job, and then he told us when we came back to the ranch and we went on the train from there.

GP: You didn't have the covered wagon on that trip?

FIP: No, we went on the train from there to Billings and we lived in Billings four or five years.

GP: Now your mother then had some of the children born in Wyoming. Is that right?

FIP: Just one. Just the one, my sister. She was born in Wyoming. The rest of us were born in Montana.

GP: So some were born in Billings then too.

FIP: Yes.

GP: I know you have a large family.

FIP: Let's see. There was Virgie. Virgie was the only one was born there.

GP: In Billings?

FIP: In Billings and the rest of them were born in Missoula.

GP: In Missoula?

FIP: Yes, and my dad was working for the city in Wyoming. He had trouble when he was quite young. He left home when he was 17, and he hadn't seen his folks since he was 17. So when we were in Billings he said, "We'll go to Missoula and then we'll go from there to California," because his folks had moved to California. They lived in California. But we got as far as Missoula, and we never got any further. My mother had asthma real, real bad. In Billings it was really bad. We got to Missoula, and it was much better. So Missoula and then Tommie was born in Missoula, Cheryl was born in Missoula, and Lyle was born in Missoula.

GP: Now your dad was working in Billings and you were on your way to California for a visit. How were you traveling then?

FIP: Well from Billings to Missoula we came in a car.

GP: In a car?

FIP: But from Wyoming to Billings we took the train and I can remember that trip very vividly because I was so sick. Riding in the train made me so sick. My dad had to carry me off the train.

GP: Did they have open windows and were they burning coal?

FIP: I really don't know. I don't remember opening so you could look out but oh I was so sick.

GP: What do you remember about Billings?

FIP: Well I went to the Broadwater School. That's where I went to school first. By the way, I didn't go to school until I was eight years old. I'd never been to school.

GP: I really haven't asked any questions about your schooling.

FIP: I had never gone to school until I was eight.

GP: Of course now were your brothers too young to go to school in eastern Montana?

FIP: They rode by horseback.

GP: They did.

FIP: (Unintelligible) We got to Billings, and I went to Broadwater School for a while. Then we moved, and I went to the Garfield School for a while and went to the Taft School for a while. Then we moved to Missoula. There's a lot of moving in my lifetime.

GP: Yes, you certainly did and for such a large family it's quite a wonder. Was your dad able to get work when you moved over here?

FIP: My dad. He didn't have a job when he first moved here. We didn't even have a house when we moved here because we were figuring to go to California.

GP: Did you know anybody over here?

FIP: We were going to California. Missoula was as far as we got. We had to set down. Winter was starting. We lived in a tent out on the west side about where the Electric Co-op. Down on that (unintelligible). There was nothing down there.

GP: Oh. I'm not sure where that is, but anyhow, on the flats.

FIP: And we lived there in that tent until just before Christmas. It was cold.

GP: I can imagine.

FIP: And then we moved from there and went up Miller Creek.

GP: Was your dad working during that period?

FIP: Odd jobs around then. But then when we moved up Miller Creek he got a job as a foreman at a little mill up Miller Creek. And we lived up Miller and went to school up Miller Creek and we were up there two years, three years.

GP: What kind of a mill was it?

FIP: Oh, lumber mill.

GP: Lumber mill.

FIP: Then he got into hauling logs when we lived up Miller Creek. Then he left there and went up Marshall Creek and he hauled logs out of there for a long time. Just hauled logs and sold them to the mill. And that's what he did for quite a while. That's where I met Forrest and that's where I got married.

GP: I see. So this takes us up to 1931.

FIP: That's right. I did a lot of moving.

GP: Yes, you certainly did. And even though the '20s were supposed to be the times of prosperity, it wasn't that way for you, was it? Or your mother? I don't know how your mother could go through all that and continue to bear children under the circumstances under which you were living. But I know as I've mentioned before. You got married when the Depression was just really hitting people, didn't you?

FIP: Yes.

GP: Did that affect you in any way?

FIP: Oh, yes. It was hard.

GP: When you got married when you living up on the ranch? And by that time your in-laws weren't there.

FIP: Just my husband and I and his brother used to (unintelligible).

GP: The younger.

FIP: His only brother.

GP: Because his other brother was dead, wasn't he? His other brother. Well I'd like to talk to you know about how you managed up there during the Depression.

FIP: Well, we raised a lot of our own food and everything and the first winter we lived up there we were snowed in. The only way we got out is we would take the sleigh and the horses and take them down to the first ranch. We had a little truck and come into town and both get like flour and sugar and those things and we just lived more or less on what we had, vegetables—

GP: I suppose you were able to keep carrots and potatoes and things like that.

FIP: Oh yes, and fruit. And we had apple trees and then during the summer of course, we'd go out and fish and then I canned fish and I canned all kinds of vegetables. I canned all kinds of fruit. Anything that was cannable, I canned it.

GP: You know that brings up a question that I've wondered about many times—people doing that, canning. Did you ever have trouble with keeping things or did spoilage in those days? Were you worried about that at all?

FIP: Yes, especially with meat. The only thing I canned is fish because we had some very good friends of ours that lived out of Billings and she canned meat all the time and they lost their daughter from meat that was spoiled. So I was afraid. I canned fish and that was canned many hours over the stove in a boiler. It boiled for a long time in your cans.

GP: And then did you cook it again before you used it?

FIP: Yes. You cook it again.

GP: And you did the same with your vegetables I imagine.

FIP: Vegetables the same. Fruit. You didn't have to worry too much about your fruit spoiling. It kept pretty good. They used what they called a hot water bath. And we canned a lot and of course there were carrots and those things. It was cheap. We just put them in groups and kept them. And sometimes we would cure our pork, by salting or smoking.

GP: A brine.

FIP: A brine with salt and it causes a brine. It's quite salty; it was bad for everybody.

GP: Yes. I remember they used to parboil that meat to get the salt out. My mother used to do that. I remember. Well, did all of your brothers and sisters—and I understand there were ten all together—did they all stay in this area?

FIP: No, I had two brothers in California. I had one sister and brother that's gone. One sister drowned in Wyoming. She went on a trip over there with her husband and they went out in this lake and (unintelligible)—a man-made lake and its (unintelligible) and the rocks. So they went back and they got a boat and they were going to go out and rescue those there coyotes. And because it was man-made the water was coming up. Well the wind came and up and in Wyoming that wind can come up like that and it just was blowing up a storm and tipped the boat. And she had a life jacket. Somebody gave her a life jacket. She put the life jacket on, but she drowned. The only thing that they figured was when they found her body—it was several days later they found her body—she had a bruised place on her temple right here. They were sure that the wind threw her into the rocks. I was only 38 years old when she passed away.

GP: Well that was quite a tragedy. What I was wondering was, whether or not with your large family during the Depression if you helped each other very much.

FIP: Well, we used to take things down to my folks sometimes from the ranch. But, no. We didn't have much to take down anyone. They shared with themselves.

GP: But you met your husband because your brother and his wife were working for him. Is that right?

FIP: Well, that's close, because he came over to our place at Marshall Creek to talk about sending the younger children to school. That's when we met.

GP: Oh, yes and he had that on his tape. That's interesting.

FIP: But my brother and his wife were living up there at the time.

GP: At the time. Well, that's quite interesting. Now you're talking about Marshall Creek. Is that Marshall Grade?

FIP: One of my sisters lives up there.

GP: Yes, I know her. We talked about that the other day. That's quite a coincidence.

FIP: She was born up Miller Creek. And they moved over there when she was just a wee thing.

GP: To Marshall Creek. Isn't that interesting that she stayed there. Now, by any chance is she on the same property?

FIP: No. She's down this way. We were further on up. We lived up there just before you get to the ski area.

GP: That's quite interesting. Were there other families up there besides yours?

FIP: No. Oh, yes. There was too.

GP: Well, they didn't have any children that needed to go to school anyhow, did they?

FIP: No. He was a bachelor. His wife had died. Olson—Mr. Olson and his wife had died. And the house that we were living in—further down from him was his sister's and that was Mrs. Noy.

GP: Now I think that your husband said that you went to work during the Depression.

FIP: Well yes. That was after we left the ranch up there. Now he went to work up there, as I told you. We always during the Depression, we always called it Hoover money because like he told you, you were given a list of what you could buy and you came to town and you had to go up to this office and see this (unintelligible). She would mark off what you could not have—what you could have and what you could not have. It was really hard when you lived on a ranch in the wintertime—even in the spring—if you had a pair of shoes, you couldn't get boots. If you bought a pair of boots you couldn't get shoes. It didn't make any difference if you were barefooted. Then you couldn't have both.

GP: Now this was before Roosevelt came into office?

FIP: Yes.

GP: The earliest part of your marriage was when this was taking place.

FIP: Then of course when he came in you had a check and you spent it on what you wanted to spend. He worked up there and then he worked at the University and he'd leave up there and I stayed up there and took care of things up there. Then he'd come home and sometimes he'd stay home nights now. He'd come back up there. (unintelligible) He came down here. When he had polio, he was really bad. There was a time he didn't know me. He was out of his head.

GP: I figured there was another side to that story.

FIP: He was delirious.

GP: He was delirious.

FIP: Yes, he was delirious. I went so I was afraid to go to sleep at night, but the doctor was afraid to move him and I had known him—the doctor—for years. He was my doctor before we got married. And I had taken care of my mother when my mother was quite ill before (unintelligible). So he knew and he said, “The best thing to do is to keep him right here. You can take care of him. You write down your notes just like a nurse, take his blood pressure and the rest of it.” So I did, and he was delirious. But I’d get so I was afraid to go to sleep at night because one night he woke me up and I heard him and got up and he was trying to put his clothes on. I said, “Well, where are you going honey?”

He said, “I’m going home. The cows got to be milked.”

I said, “You can’t go home.” I got him back to bed. One other night he was going to go outside. Said he was going down to the river. I said, “What are you going to do down there?”

“I’m just down to the river.” And I was afraid too. So I put my bed right up next to his bed, between so that if he woke up and tried to get up I would know it. And then him talking about by the hand. Well the doctor—thank goodness we had the doctor—it was Dr. Richey. He said his arm has got to be up here all the time. If it falls down here those muscles will tighten in there and he’ll never be able to raise it again. So he said, “Do you think we could make something with a bag of sand?” I got a ten pound bag of sand and I put this (unintelligible) and would have to change that and to push back up three and four times a day so the muscles in his arm would pull that right down. I had to watch it all the time to keep it up there. We were quarantined in.

GP: Oh you were?

FIP: Yes, they quarantined in at that time.

GP: And that’s why the little girls stayed up at the ranch.

FIP: Yes, they stayed up at the ranch. We were quarantined in and we had neighbors that were right next to where we were. He used to go to the grocery stores. And he found me. I was washing on a board. So this fellow went to Mercantile—they sold washing machines. And he got us a second hand washer and brought it put it on the porch. Oh, that was a godsend I tell you. To be able to wash all of the sheets and everything like that. And he’d get the groceries. I’d put out what we needed. And the milkman.

GP: Left the milk on the porch?

FIP: Yes. I couldn’t draw. I couldn’t draw either. Then when they lifted the quarantine. Then when they started giving treatments—that was before we had the nurse come. And I would give him his exercises. He had one leg. And the other side (unintelligible).

GP: Who constructed the pulley for you?

FIP: You know, I ask myself. (unintelligible) don't come in. Well then, like I said, his hands started drawing down. So again the doctor took the step and said if we can something that can pull him up. So he took a piece of plywood and I cut it and pounded it and put straps here and here—one here and one here and one here, so it really pulled. Then I'd exercise that about four or five times for each finger and then I'd strap him back onto his board so it wouldn't curl up until he got over this. And then it was after quite a long time. Then we moved over here after we got out of quarantine. Then we had a nurse come—Mrs. Stoutenberg. You've probably heard of her.

GP: I've heard that name a lot, yes.

FIP: Bless her heart, she was so nice. That's when I went to work. I would get up in the morning and dress the children and (unintelligible) sometimes I wouldn't have time. He had to heat on him every morning, just like a half a barrel.

GP: Kind of like a tent?

FIP: Well, it was more like a barrel cut in two and it would just fit over him from here. And put that over him and turned on the light so he could reach the switch and turn it down in case she didn't get here sometimes. I caught one little girl on one side and one on the other side. And I'd go to work. Well if I didn't have time to. Sometimes I'd be late. I didn't have time. Mrs. Stoutenberg she'd come back and if I didn't have to do it she'd dress then. Then I had the one little girl pretty well trained, but then when Grandma she had her pretty well trained. Then when she came back to Mom and Dad she didn't. So sometimes she'd wet her clothes and the nurse would change her.

GP: They were pretty little, weren't they?

FIP: Yes. She was only a year and a half old. I worked at the Lowell School and then I would come home at night and we had let some folks take the chicken.

[End of Tape 1]

[Tape 2]

FIP: She would come and work until I got home. She'd come in the mornings. She ate lunch here. Then I would ask her to cut the potatoes and things like that. But I felt kind of bad. She got so she didn't pay attention to what she was doing to anything else. So we finally came to the conclusion that Forrest could do a better job with just his arm, because he had his arm in an airplane splint at that time. It was a just kind of like a beef trough. Up to here. And then it was stretched like that. Metal up to here.

GP: Could he get out of bed at all at that time?

FIP: Yes, and the nurse would help him out of bed and she would put this brace on. Then he took care of the children until I got home from work at night. We just (unintelligible) so we didn't hire anybody. He could take care of the children, and when I get home I'll get my washing and ironing and everything all done after work.

GP: Now this was still 1936 or was it '37 by this time?

FIP: Oh yes.

GP: Into '37. In other words you nursed him for a long time.

FIP: Yes.

GP: Months.

FIP: Oh yes. He wore that stick for 14 months. He had it on every morning and night.

GP: Now, was it difficult for you to get a job?

FIP: Well, I got a job through the WPA. And I worked at first at the Central School. I worked in the principal's office, and then in the library. And then I left there and went over to the Lowell School and I worked in the principal's office only at the Lowell School. And I'm no good on names. I was trying to think of the principal's name. Forrest, what was the principal's name down at the Lowell School when I worked there?

FoP: When you worked there?

FIP: Yes.

FoP: Mr. Russell Neal.

GP: Oh yes. I've made a tape of Russell Neal in his life.

FIP: Well he was the principal at the Lowell School and I worked there for him.

GP: Now I'd like to ask you something you about women in the WPA. I've got a little information from a few people about that. But, I know they were working the library—the Public Library. And one woman told me that her mother worked for the WPA—this woman was a child at the time—and it seems to me it said her mother was doing some sewing for the WPA.

FIP: Yes. When I first went to the WPA I did sewing and they had their first ever shop at the Catholic Church, I believe. Yes, it was a church, one of the women was in a church.

GP: St. Francis?

FIP: And they had about pretty close to 30 women I think.

GP: I'm just wondering why those particular women were able to get on. I would think there would have been a lot of women who would have wanted to get into the WPA.

FIP: Well that was WPA.

GP: Well, I know, but I was wondering why there wouldn't have been more of them. Was it hard to get into the WPA for a woman?

FIP: Well, yes.

GP: You had to have special circumstances?

FIP: Jobs that a woman could do for the WPA.

GP: And in your case your husband wasn't able to work at that time.

FIP: No, he wasn't working then. And I worked in that sewing room and what we did is we made clothing in the sewing room.

GP: And who got that clothing?

FIP: Poor people.

GP: Distributed through the Welfare Office, I suppose.

FIP: Yes. I was considered the seamstress since I'd been sewing since the time I used to try to make buttonholes like my mother. I remember when I was seven years old because I couldn't make them as good as she did, I'd cry. But I remember that very well.

GP: There was a lot of pride in those days. My mother gave me a guilt complex about buttonholes too.

FIP: So I went to work and of course I went to sew. And what we would do—it was assembly line. Certain ones did certain things (unintelligible). Well then I left there and I went to work in the schools.

GP: Now, how did that come about?

FIP: Well they came and asked for anyone that thought they would like to work in the schools and I went. I went down here at Central.

GP: To Central School?

FIP: Yes. I worked (unintelligible) principal's office, and I worked in the library.

GP: In the school, or the public library?

FIP: In the school.

GP: School library.

FIP: In the school library and I was trying to remember his name. It just about comes to me. But, he was a very nice person.

GP: Well we won't worry about that. If you think of it, fine. But you liked the schoolwork better than the sewing?

FIP: Yes. Well I think the reason I liked the sewing was because I was a particular sewer and they were not. I mean it's just assembly line—get it down—and that bothered me. So then I went to work for Lowell School.

GP: How long did you stay there? Until the WPA was no longer in existence or what?

FIP: Well no. When he went to work. When we went to work for the WPA. When he was able to go back to work for them, then I quit and stayed home with the children.

GP: Would they have allowed you to work? To continue?

FIP: No, not when he went to work.

FoP: Only one person in the family could work. Women went to work if their husbands were unable or they had no one.

GP: I see. So, I don't suppose under your circumstances there was any feeling about you working for the WPA at the time?

FIP: No.

FoP: At the time we were just mighty glad to get it.

GP: No, what I meant was there were times when people objected to women working because they were taking work away from the men, but that didn't apply in your case.

FIP: No, because it was work a man couldn't do. A man didn't sew and most of it started out as sewing. And then there was over here at the University, a nursery school.

GP: And women worked there too?

FIP: Women worked there too.

GP: I see. Now one woman told me...I'm trying to remember their name, their son teaches out at Big Sky High School now. He knew I was doing this taping, and he said I should talk to them. Anyhow it's the same woman who told me her mother worked for the WPA. I think she said the pay is 35 cents an hour, and that the women got the same as the men.

FIP: It was 30 dollars a months, wasn't it?

FoP: No, I thought it was 40 dollars.

FIP: Well, when I first started it was 30. When I first started it was 30 dollars a month.

GP: I see. So I suppose you could say that that was at the beginning of equal opportunity when the women got the same pay as men.

FIP: Well I suppose. But those were really hard times and they talk about a Depression now. Unless someone has gone through that Depression, they don't know what a Depression is.

GP: Yes, I have to agree with you on that.

FoP: What they call a Depression here in the '80s, I never could see that it was a Depression, because prices kept going up, they never went back down.

GP: You know, that's true.

FIP: You know you'll hear so many people say, well, yes, but food was so cheap then, during the Depression. Your wages were cheap, but the food was so cheap. But, really it wasn't. When we were on the ranch we had to pay a dollar a day for someone to come help on the ranch and their board and room. They got their board and room and a dollar a day after all. And then you go down to get a pair of shoes and it costs you a whole day's wages to buy one pair of shoes and that's the cheapest pair of shoes you can buy. You could only buy hamburger and bread and butter. They put more than a day's wages toward it. So people don't realize. I don't know it you've ever been to this little market down here on Broadway.

GP: Yes, I have.

FIP: Have you ever read that piece he has on his cash register? White piece about what prices were, what wages were. He worked for the railroad. And it's real interesting.

GP: I'll make a point of reading it when I go in there again.

FIP: I hope he still has it there, because I ain't never noticed it. We were talking about the Depression up there and he told me and I read it and it was real interesting.

FoP: Only people who lived through that Depression can really remember.

FIP: You've been.

GP: Yes, I know.

FIP: If I hadn't been able to sew like I did I don't know what we would have done. Neither one of our girls ever, I made everything myself. Everything was made. My girl, Hazel was in the third grade the first time she ever had a boughten coat.

GP: Do you think your girls can remember the Depression?

FIP: Somewhat. Shirley, when she was here, she says, "I can remember that when we went down to get a hamburger it was a big treat."

FoP: And that's when hamburgers were (unintelligible).

GP: Do you think it had any effect on their lives?

FIP: I really think that people that went through that Depression value things a little more than a human being.

GP: I just wondered if they were old enough to feel it in the same way that you did.

FIP: Well no, not really, but even when they were up to higher in the grade schools they remember how hard it was to get the money to buy shoes and (unintelligible). Like I say, they usually had clothing because I made all of it. And I always tried to make them up to style.

FoP: About two years before the beginning of World War II, somewhere in about 1939, when the Depression moved out of that into an incline or better times. From 1930 to 1936 were really rough times.

GP: Really tough times.

FoP: For an awful lot of people.

FIP: The first Christmas we were married we were not going to buy any Christmas gifts because we didn't have any money. I went saw him and his brother went to town and of course I was pregnant so I stayed home. He came home with a little inexpensive pair of beads and I cried. He wasn't supposed to do it. That's the only thing we had. We didn't have anything different in the way of food or anything I could make, an extra (unintelligible) or something like that.

FoP: I think it was about the third year after we were married or somewhere in there they had a coat down at the (unintelligible)—a cloth coat and a fur collar. I thought it was an attractive coat, and they had reduced it to around 12 to 15 dollars. I wanted to buy her that coat so bad and I made arrangements. I took a load of wood to one of the (unintelligible) and so forth and anyway I bought that coat for her. I was so proud that I could buy her a coat.

FIP: I had always made my own. It was a maroon colored coat and had a fur collar. And sure (unintelligible)

GP: Your wood came in handy many times, didn't it Forrest?

FoP: Well it only took about a day's hard work and another day to haul it to town.

FIP: But you know, one thing that bothered me with some of these people during the Depression. We had fruit lots of time we just couldn't take care of. We just had more than we could take care of. So we'd ask people if they'd like some fruit. "Oh yes," they'd say.

We'd say, "Well, just come up any time and pick what you want to."

They'd say, "You mean we have to come get it?"

GP: Oh, really.

FIP: Yes.

GP: That's amazing.

FoP: In those days we had people like that.

FIP: In those days we had people like that (unintelligible) the day.

GP: That's interesting. As tough as times were.

FIP: Yes, and you mean we have to come get it? We'd feed it to the hogs. We couldn't come down. We'd come down maybe once a month.

FoP: We had 13 apple trees and each one would bear about six or eight boxes of apples.

FIP: In the wintertime we'd be so snowed in up there that if we did come to town we would take the sled. Well we took our car ahead of time—our little truck—and left it down at Ray's, close to where the parking area is to go up.

GP: Yes.

FoP: Right at the end of the road.

FIP: Then he'd come down with a sled as far as that and then we'd take the car and the groceries, put the groceries in the sled and go back to the ranch. I remember the first winter we did that after Hazel was born, and the sled tipped over and she rolled down the bank. It scared me half to death.

GP: Well, with some of those people, is it possible that they simply didn't have a way of hauling the fruit out?

FIP: Oh no.

FoP: Well, some of them, but most of them had some type of a vehicle and they would come up for other reasons.

FIP: In the summer they'd fish or something like that.

FoP: They could hunt and go fishing but they couldn't—

FIP: And then when we lived on the ranch we used to have dances at the old schoolhouses.

GP: Forrest mentioned that the other day. So you did have some fun.

FIP: Oh, yes. We used to have lots of fun. Square dances. We had fun up there. And if I could live up there right now, I would.

GP: You did enjoy it up there.

FIP: I did very much. I liked it very much. We got along. There was a lot of things we couldn't have and it was hard.

FoP: We had more company when we lived up there than we did down here.

GP: That's interesting.

FIP: If we had the house up there, and lived up there, I would do it today.

GP: Well, it's certainly a beautiful area.

FoP: I remember when one of my old school friends, Bill Standiner (?)—his dad owned a large share of the brewery down here and he used to come up and go fishing about once a week or so. And he also brought a half-gallon or so of beer along and put it in the ditch for us and usually after he'd get through shooting, if I wasn't busy milking cows or something when he came back, about that time he'd get through fishing. (unintelligible) one or two long and we'd go down by the creek and throw chips out in the water and shoot at them, practice. Quite of lot of friends that I went to school with and friends used to come up to the ranch.

FIP: They used to come up on Sundays and stay for dinner.

FoP: Sometimes they'd come and stay for a few days.

GP: Well it's nice to know that you were able to manage and that you came out of the Depression with a deep appreciation for what it taught you.

FIP: Oh yes, that's what I say. The Depression taught a lot of people that really. Having all these things that some people have doesn't mean anything.

GP: It doesn't make them any happier does it?

FIP: No, it doesn't make them any happier. They may think so, but when it comes down to it. And we've had to watch our pennies ever since, because he would get (unintelligible) but it was not doing enough.

FoP: Another thing. Yes (unintelligible) I can remember when I working one or two years, we went there, three girls from our office compared wages and one of them said, "I'm going to just see what these results will get." She went to the welfare office and talked to welfare. They told

her she was eligible for welfare help because her wages were so low, but the two other girls, who were getting the same wages, went to the welfare and all three of them did. They didn't go because they had to. They just did it to show (unintelligible).

FIP: That their wages were small, lower—

FoP: Welfare, of course, called the Montana Power office and said, "Hey, is this possible that your employees are so low paid. The girls in your office are so low paid that they are eligible for welfare?" That really got the Power Company to start thinking. The people in Missoula started taking it up with the headquarters in Butte about it, and the next year the general raise on all clerical help. The year I left there.

GP: Wow. That was '70. When did you leave there?

FoP: [Nineteen] seventy-three. I got a 40-dollar raise a month the last three months I worked there.

FIP: I really enjoyed it up there on the ranch. We had hard times, but we had a lot of fun. We really did. We had a lot of fun.

GP: Well, we could continue this interview for a long time, going through the war period and the later years. I'm going to leave that up to you because I know you have so much that you do remember and just ask you if there are any other things that you'd like to say about your personal life or about Missoula life or your family life or what.

FoP: The only thing I think I would say and I believe she'll agree with me on that, we have done a little traveling and especially since I retired and we haven't found another place we think we'd want to live. We prefer to stay in Missoula.

GP: You still like it, even though it's much different?

FIP: Oh, yes. I like it very much.

FoP: We still have a lot of friends. Fact is there is quite a few people who live right in Missoula yet that I went to high school with and there are still people here that she knew in school.

FIP: The thing is that so many of our friends—we had lots of friends—during the war and everything. Most people moved. They've left Missoula. They are not here anymore, a lot of them.

GP: They probably moved to the coast in a lot of cases. Is that true? Do you get more work out there?

FoP: They didn't all the time.

FIP: We had some real good friends—friends we've known them both before they were married and they moved from (unintelligible). He went to school out here, although she went to the University of Oregon. He went to the university out here and got his teaching degree over at (unintelligible) and became principal. He's retired now. But so many of them that's what happened. They just up and left.

FoP: (Unintelligible) before the war.

GP: Well, unless there are some other things that you would like to add to this, I'm not going to ask you questions, like what would you have changed, because I know that you are a very practical person and you did the best you could. There was not much you could change, was there?

FIP: No, there wasn't a lot of pain; you just did the best you could. It's just one of those things. You can't change it. And really the only thing I would say, if I had my life to live over again, I think everyone should at least be together a full year before they have any children.

GP: Oh, is that right?

FIP: Yes.

FoP: She had a bad time with morning sickness before the first was born.

FIP: I was so sick and I never went to the doctor until I was seven months pregnant. I couldn't afford it.

GP: You couldn't afford it.

FIP: That's right.

GP: And this would have been what, 1932?

FIP: Yes. We were married in 1931, in September, and Hazel was born the following August. And that's what I always tell Forrest—the only thing I would change in my life is I would be married at least a full year before I ever had children or got pregnant. I think everyone should do that.

GP: Well, some are and some aren't, I guess.

FIP: That's right.

GP: Maybe this is a good place to stop and I do thank you because you've given me a lot of information that nobody else has.

FIP: Well I could give you more if I could have gone over it a little bit first.

GP: You did fine.

FIP: We've been so busy.

FoP: When you are thinking about 50 years or more you don't always remember each little detail that you should.

GP: Sure. Well, there is still room on this tape, so if you think of it we can add it later.

FIP: But, like I said, our trip in the covered wagon, I know these things that I think about a lot of things. I'll let you know.

GP: If you ever do, let me know.

[End of Interview]