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Interviewee: W. C. "Cap" Evans and Frieda Evans

Interviewer: Jane Benson

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Note: When referring to the Civilian Conservation Corps, Cap Evans says CC while Jane Benson says CCC.

Jane Benson: I'm talking today with Mr. Cap Evans from the Ninemile Remount Depot. Mr. Evans, one of the things I wanted to know that I didn't get a chance to find out from you before was just exactly how the operation of the Winter Range was. I haven't talked to anybody specifically about how that was run, how it was set up, or how it was administered. Anything you could tell me about it, we'd really appreciate it.

W.C. Evans: Well, the Winter Range was of course...the original winter range was established prior to the time the Remount was.

JB: Oh, it was first?

WE: Yeah, it was established about 1930, I believe. It was up on what we call the Bruens Ranch (?) that's out in Niarada. First, it started out just as pasture. They paid so much a head to this Bruens man who owned the place. Then about 1932 or somewhere along there, they discontinued the pasturing phase of it and leased the land. Rented the land from him. In 1935, it become...Well, the Range wasn't ample to carry the stock they had. Then, well, the Remount itself come in and they started it in '29 out here as a rental proposition. Just offered it—

JB: Yeah, right. Winter of '29, '30 is when they start talking about it as I recall.

WE: Yeah. Then the real Forest Service winter range that we'll talk about now was put together in the fall of '35 and the spring of '36.

JB: That's after you became superintendent then?

WE: Yes. Again, it was all leased land. But see, we moved from the Niarada country then down to the Perma area, and practically took that range that runs from Perma back through the hot springs. It took that whole area in there—some 40,000 acres was in that.

JB: Would you do something for me? Would you show me on the map exactly where the headquarters of that was because I'd like to drive over there and I haven't figured out whether it was closer to Perma or Dixon. Okay, here's Missoula, here's the Ninemile, here's Paradise,

here's Perma. Can you show me where that...where would you drive in, for example, if somebody—

WE: The headquarters—you go to Ravalli and then turn down towards Dixon. Well now, the first headquarters was at McDonald Basin. Now that's—

JB: Now I mean...Okay, I mean during the time when you were superintendent, where was the main operation taking place? If somebody had wanted to drive out there and talk to the foreman, where would he go?

WE: The winter range?

JB: Yes, at the Winter Range.

WE: Well, there's no one there now.

JB: I know there isn't, but I mean at that time if somebody had wanted to.

WE: Well, then first you went to McDonald Basin. That's about halfway between Dixon and Perma. Right after you go through Dixon and then...when you first come to the river, if you look across the river, you'll see a building and a lot of corrals over there. Now, there's nothing there now. That was the Stover (?) estate. Well, we turned that estate back, turned that land back to the owner and put the main headquarters in out of Perma. Now you go to Perma, and you go across the river like you were going to hot springs.

JB: On this bridge?

WE: Yes. Just after you get across the bridge, the road to your right. That don't go no place, but into where the headquarters was.

JB: How far from Perma is that?

WE: Oh, I suppose three and a half miles.

JB: Is that all?

WE: Yeah. You come back up the river.

JB: Okay, so you'd head back over here, right where it says Perma on the map would be right about where it was then, is that it?

WE: Well, here's the road to hot springs.

JB: Yes.

WE: Instead of going to the hot springs, you come back up the river like and right there. You run into all the buildings and corrals. That belongs to the Pack River Lumber Company now.

JB: Oh, I see, okay. At the time then, during the late '30s when you were there, what did they have for facilities out there?

WE: For the Winter Range?

JB: Yeah, at that winter range at the headquarters.

WE: They had a full complement. In the summertime, on average there was about five or six men there. Of course, there was always CC [Civilian Conservation Corps] spike camps there, and it varied from 15 to 30 boys. There was roughly 300 miles of fence on that winter range.

JB: Oh, all the way around it?

WE: Yeah.

JB: Did you say there was a CCC camp there?

WE: What?

JB: Did you say there was a CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp there?

WE: Yeah, a spike camp.

JB: What does that mean?

WE: Spike camps was where you took some boys, and you attached them from the main camp and put them out in the area where a project was.

JB: Were they from the Ninemile CCC camp?

WE: Yeah, they were from the Ninemile CC camp.

JB: What was their job up there at the Winter Range?

WE: Oh they built all them fences, corrals, buildings. The buildings there were, of course, more of a temporary nature. But they had cookhouses and the bunkhouses and the barns, and then we moved all of the breeding operation to the remount depot...or to the Winter Range, I think

about spring of 1937. See, it had its advantages. Out here you had to feed every one of them. There you did not. You had to run them on the Range year round.

JB: Didn't some of the hay though, that got cut up here at Ninemile, didn't it get taken over?

WE: Yes. We'd always take probably 150, 200 ton of hay over there.

JB: Every winter?

WE: When I say everything run on the range, your weaners—colts that you're weaning [unintelligible] and feeding them—and then you always had, what you call, the hospital for horses and mules that weren't doing well, and then you had to bring them in.

JB: I remember you mentioning that.

WE: There was always about three riders who did nothing but just ride that range all the time looking after our stock in the wintertime. The summertime, there were always two or three there also. The big labor job was maintaining building fences. That had all been area that had been open to homesteading when the reservation was open to homesteading in about 1911, 1912. In that 40,000 acres, there was probably 40 or 50 individual owners, different homesteads. At that time, the livestock interests were a pretty low ebb. Cattle wasn't worth nothing, horses wasn't worth nothing, and these places had all just become idle. The Forest Service, when they put this thing together, had two men work on that all one winter, getting these individual leases from different owners. Of course, the big owners was the Stover estate. That had several thousand acres in it.

JB: Stover?

WE: Yeah. They had a pretty good-sized area in it. But there was just any number of 180- and 240-acre homesteads back in there. We took it and just enclosed it in just one big area.

JB: Now what winter are you talking about now? What would that have been?

WE: Well...the whole thing was put together in the fall of '35 and the spring of '36.

JB: Okay. Now, during the time that you were a superintendent out here, who were the foremen at the Winter Range that you remember?

WE: At the Winter Range, the first foreman was a fellow by the name of Herb Stone. And [pauses] he, I believe, is dead.

JB: How long was he there?

WE: He was there about three years. Then a fellow by the name of Ern Hoyt was the foreman.

JB: Yes, I remember that name.

WE: And following Ern Hoyt was Les Wolfe.

JB: These were all during the time when you were superintendent?

WE: No, Herb Stone was the superintendent. I was a foreman at the Winter Range.

JB: Now how does Boyd Thompson fit in here?

WE: Boyd Thompson was the ranch foreman at Ninemile.

JB: Oh, so he was not associated with the Winter Range?

WE: No, no, he was not.

JB: Okay. But I thought that at least for a while he was in charge of the breeding operation. Maybe that was when the Remount was first established.

WE: That was when they first established it down here in Ninemile. Before they moved it to the Winter Range.

JB: So when the breeding stock all went up to the Winter Range, then Herb Stone was the foreman in charge?

WE: Yeah.

JB: Okay. Did he stay there all the time? Did he live up there and do all of his work there?

WE: Yeah, he stayed there. Then after I got hurt, he come to Ninemile and was going to take over out here at Ninemile, but he had some pretty bad problems and well, drinking problems. He didn't last a little while, and that was the end of him.

JB: That's Stone? Wonder where he ended up. Do you have any idea?

WE: I think he's dead.

JB: Oh. Are there any of these people left who were foremen at the Winter Range?

WE: Not a one. They're all gone.

JB: That's too bad. I'd like to talk to one of those people.

WE: No. There is... [pauses] Even the men that worked there, I don't think there's any of them left.

JB: Seems like there must be, if I poke around far enough I might find somebody.

WE: Les Wolfe, he passed away here a couple of years ago. Ern Hoyt—

JB: He'd been a packer, hadn't he? Hoyt?

WE: Yes.

JB: That's what I thought.

WE: Yeah, he got in trouble up there, and they had to replace him. But he didn't live only three years after that.

JB: Oh, I see. Then, as I understand it, in the '50s, along about '55, there were some attempts on the part of the Forest Service to buy that winter range in final sale. What became of that?

WE: They got a bill through Congress that authorized the purchase of the Winter Range. The land men down here started out to put it together to buy it. One of the restrictions on it was that they could not...they had to have the consent of the community down there before they could buy it. Actually, Boyd Thompson and I blocked the sale of the...blocked the purchase of the Winter Range.

JB: Want to tell me about that?

WE: Well, it was just too late. Had they bought it years before, it would have been fine, but at the time they were going to buy it, there was no more use for it.

JB: I was going to ask that. How come they waited till the '50s to want to purchase it?

WE: Well, that's just how fast the government works.

JB: They were phasing out the Remount Depot by then.

WE: [laughs] But they would have bought it since they got the authorization to buy it, but Boyd Thompson and I took it the stock association down there and they opposed it and that killed it.

JB: I see. Whose idea was it to purchase?

WE: Well, I guess you could say all of us because at the time, when we started...Well, let's say it this way. The whole Remount Depot operation was 20 years too late because it had come in just in as the settlers were phasing out. Airplanes and roads and whatnot was taking over. I say it was 20 years too late. There was no money. They didn't have any money to put in an operation of that kind. Then when the CC program come in and the Forest Service started to get a lot of money, that's when they established the Remount winter range operation. But it was right at the tail end of the need.

JB: I think I understand. There was a lot of use and need for mules all during the 19...well, from 1905 on, wasn't there?

WE: From 1905 on that was the means of transportation.

JB: That's when they needed the Remount Depot, is that what you're saying?

WE: Up until the late '30s, mules as a pack animal was the Forest Service's main transportation. But then they got to building roads, and the airplanes come in. That's why I say it was 20 years too late.

JB: But when you say that some people wanted to purchase that winter range, was that with the idea of continuing a breeding project? Or what was the reason for wanting to purchase?

WE: Because they got the authorization.

JB: Finally came through? Is that it?

WE: What you'd had there if they'd bought it, would just have been a big tract of land with a big high fence around it excluding everything out of it. It would have been about the same thing as the [National] Bison Range is. It was just taking that big block of land out of circulation—the government. If they would have boughten it...had the stock association not opposed it, and they opposed it because Boyd and I went to them and told them it was senseless to [unintelligible].

JB: Do you mean that at the time the purchase was first proposed, though, it would have been a good idea?

WE: Oh yes, it would have been a good idea.

JB: How long had this been in the mill? When had you first proposed that it be purchased?

WE: It started when we first started leasing that land, '35.

JB: It took 20 years to get authorization to purchase?

WE: Yeah, it was about that long. [laughs]

JB: Okay. I get the picture. Is there anything particular about that ranch operation that is memorable that people should know? Do you have any recollections? At the Winter Range.

WE: The winter range operation? Well, first, it was a great restoration of that range. At the time the Forest Service took that over, there was no management of it at all. A lot of it had been terribly overgrazed and sheep on it, and it was probably at the time that the Forest Service turned it back, it was the most example of range management that there was in this part of the country. By the time they had brought the native grasses back, it was a real—

JB: How was that done?

WE: What?

JB: How was that accomplished?

WE: Just by managing the grazing on it. See, we cross-fenced that, cut it up into spring, summer, fall, and winter range, and rotate the stock on it. Just giving the grass a chance to grow, come back.

JB: Did you make some of those decisions? Were you involved in that?

WE: Oh yes. We made a range reconnaissance survey of the Winter Range, which typed it and then managed it on the basis of that survey—that range survey.

JB: How long did it take to get it back to that good condition? When was it at its peak, let's put it that way.

WE: I'd say it reached its peak probably '48, '49, somewhere in there, and [unintelligible] private individuals now drive by there and see the conditions back in it.

JB: I think I've been in that area. I think I've been on that road going up to hot springs. Don't remember it well.

WE: Well when you go to hot springs, as you go up through Camas Prairie, look off to the right, that whole range of mountains through there, that's what was the Winter Range. We call them mountains or grasslands. I think I did know at one time, but I've forgotten, let's say there's several hundred miles of fence we put in on that place.

JB: Yeah, there must be. What were the relations with the ranchers like at the time?

WE: At that time they were very good, because the average price when we leased that thing was about 30 cents an acre a year is what we leased it for. That was the only way a lot of them realized even enough money off their land to pay the taxes.

JB: So it helped them out financially?

WE: Yeah, a lot of the owners in there weren't resident owners. They were all over the country, California. They was every place. They had their homesteads in there. They were getting nothing for them. They were just being overrun by, oh, whoever had stopped in. It'd give them a little income. Today, I think, if you wanted to lease that land, you'd pay, oh, three dollars and a half an acre for it.

JB: Who owns that land now, did you say?

WE: Pack River Lumber owns the biggest share of it.

JB: But not all of it?

WE: No, no. They own all of the south end. Then the north end of it, I really don't know. There are two or three parties who acquired the land on the north end. I don't really know who's the other ones.

JB: If I were to drive up there and get on that road from Perma heading toward hot springs, would I be able to drive in and see the area where the Winter Range was? Could I get access to it?

WE: Oh, I'm sure you can, because Brown who's Pack River Lumber, he has a range rider in there at the old headquarters.

JB: Are some of the buildings still there?

WE: Oh yes. Buildings, corrals—they're all there.

JB: Oh, because I'd like to ride up and just take a look at it.

WE: I'm sure you'd be free to go. There's not too much that you can see. I don't believe they built much roads.

JB: Yeah. Where does this Brown live if I needed to contact him?

WE: Well, Brown himself, I think's in Spokane. But he has a man there at the old headquarters all the time.

JB: Okay, so there'd be somebody there at those buildings?

WE: Yeah.

JB: Oh, I see, okay.

WE: They may have 1,200 head of cattle on there. He may have 200. He just buys and sells cattle. I've notice them from going by there. One time you'll see cattle all over the place, and then there isn't any.

JB: I was thinking of taking a ride up there and stopping there just to have a look at it, and then going over to Polson. As I understand it, Boyd Thompson's widow lives over in Polson. Do you know her?

Frieda Evans: We just saw her the other day.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WE: Yeah. We can give you her address. Boyd and I were very close friends all from the time we were worked together out there until his death a year ago.

JB: I'd like to talk with her. If I can, I will probably try to get up and talk with her.

WE: They've got a son-in-law married to one of Boyd's daughters, George Vincent (?), who lives out of Polson there. He worked out here. He worked both places—the Winter Range and the Ninemile. Not for any great period of time, but off and on he worked both places. He'd give you some pretty wild stories. [unintelligible] [laughs]

JB: What's his name, George Vincent?

WE: George Vincent. George is a very fine fellow, but he'll give you some pretty wild stories.

JB: [laughs] Okay. Is there anything else about the Winter Range, do you think, that's important for people to know? You told me last time quite a bit about the shoeing and the operations that went on up there. I don't have them on tape, but I'm got them down in notes. Is there anything else that you can think of?

WE: [pauses] Oh, I really don't know. It was just a horse ranch operation, that's about all.

JB: Well, the mules were raised there too, weren't they?

WE: Yes. When I say horse ranch, that's what I mean.

JB: It includes both, doesn't it?

WE: It includes both.

JB: Right, right. One other thing that—well, there's lots of things I need to know—but I got really curious about those horses. You were describing the horses that Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace got you. Two or three other people have mentioned those horses too, but everybody disagrees on how you pronounce the name and how you spell it. I have been through I don't know how many books, and I cannot find anything like that. Do you have any written records anywhere, or can you tell me anything about the Nonius [Nonius; Hungarian horse breed] or Neonius?

WE: Yeah, Nonius is the name.

JB: Is there any way you can get me information about those horses?

[long pause]

JB: How do you spell it? Do you know how to spell it?

WE: [unintelligible] It's N-a something.

JB: Is it N-a, you think?

WE: Yes.

JB: Well I've gone through dictionaries, I've gone through—

WE: And they're a... [pauses]

JB: I believe you said either Austria or Hungary.

WE: Oh, Austrian cavalry horse is what they... We had... But I don't know whether any of them records are left or not.

JB: Well, this brings up another subject. I'm sorry to say that I'm finding very little left. There's nothing in the oral... There were records up there of supplies purchased and even the breeding stock, and that stuff is long since vanished. I'm sure some of it's just destroyed. It got old, and there was no reason to keep it.

WE: They were registered horses. And the registration papers for them were down here.

JB: Wonder where they would have ended up?

[long pause]

JB: Is there anybody else who would have a lot of information about those horses that I could talk to? Besides you?

WE: Gosh, there's just nobody left. I was thinking of Ed McKay, but Ed's gone. He was the last.

JB: Are there any of these people who might have squirreled away some of these things in their own homes, instead of leaving them down in the offices or putting them in the official records, they might have just kept them?

WE: I don't think so. They just wasn't that kind of people.

JB: Well, I didn't mean in the sense of stealing them exactly. [laughs]

WE: [laughs] I didn't mean to infer that, but they were...All of the people around there were stockmen, and that didn't mean nothing to them—what's here today is here, and what's gone tomorrow is gone. That's the end of it.

JB: So you don't have anything around here tucked away any place?

WE: No. I know they brought the papers for a lot of the American saddle stock and wanted to know if I wanted them. No, I didn't want them. I suppose they discarded them.

JB: I suppose they did. That's too bad now, because, well, because I can't find information about those horses. I'm going to keep looking. Next time I'm in Bozeman I'll go over to the School of Agriculture and see what they've got. There's nothing in this library at the University. There's very little information about horse breeding, and I can't find that name—

WE: Is there anything left at Fort Keogh?

JB: That's a possibility.

WE: Because them horses—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

JB: —over here?

WE: No, but see, that was the Department of Ag...that was directly the Department of Agriculture. Fort Keogh and Wallace, of course, was Secretary of Agriculture so there was a connection between Fort Keogh and the horses.

JB: I'm going to pursue that one, because I'm going over to Miles City. I come from over there, and I'm going to be over in Miles City this coming weekend. If I were to call somebody ahead of time, so that they could start looking through the records, I might be able to find something.

WE: I wouldn't be surprised if you wouldn't get some information there.

JB: I'm glad you mentioned that. Thank you for telling me. I wouldn't have thought of that.

WE: I don't remember just what it was, but there was a connection between Fort Keogh and the horses when they come into this country.

JB: It was the BIA, Bureau of Animal Industry? BAI? Something like that?

WE: Yes.

JB: About these records, you know, I've been up to the RO [Regional Office], looking for information...What's her name, Beverly Ayers up there?

WE: Who?

JB: Beverly Ayers. Do you know her?

WE: I know the name but—

JB: Yes, she works in the historical files, and she said that for several years there had been a great big green notebook about this big—heavy bound book. It had recorded in it the names of every animal—the mules and the horses both—numbers, registration numbers when they were foaled, even the names of the animals. That thing sat around there for a long time, and then she said she hasn't seen it now for two or three years and nobody knows what's happened to it. There was no record that it was destroyed or that it was sent, like, to the federal record center or anything like that. She's looking for it. I don't know where it is.

WE: I'll tell you who you ask for it...that was what we called the Master Record. Well I told you the last time here when we started a system of serial numbering the animals so that everybody wasn't branding them. We set up this master record.

JB: Was that the book?

WE: Yes, and...That's the book.

JB: Wonder what happened to it? Would you have any guess about that?

WE: If there's anything left...You see, they're still...they still winter quite a few stock. Well, not many, maybe 100, 125 head out here at Ninemile. It just might be that that master record is out there.

JB: I sort of doubt it, but I'll ask. Next time I go out there.

WE: Ask what's his name.

JB: Waylon (?)? Larry Waylon (?)?

WE: No. Oh, he looks after the stock out there, not Johnny Christensen, because Johnny isn't there anymore.

JB: Harrington?

WE: Harrington.

JB: Oh, Don Harrington?

WE: Yes, ask Don if he knows what's become of it.

JB: I'll do that. They've dug up other records for me out there. Nobody said anything about that one. I have a hunch that if it was there, they would have found it by now, but maybe not. Could've gotten tucked away someplace.

WE: Because they were still following that system of numbering animals. Oh, last time I had anything to do with it was in the [unintelligible] season of about '64 or somewhere along there. They were still following that system of numbering animals then.

JB: Okay. I'll do some more digging about that.

WE: That record was one of these card-ex [Rolodex ?] things. It wasn't very much. You just had a big book and then there were these individual sheets on all these different rings that went around through it. I think they call them card-ex files.

JB: I don't know, I'm sure that's probably the one she's talking about. Can you tell me about...Is it Irwin Puphal?

FE: Yes.

WE: Yes.

JB: Was he a ranger, district ranger out there when you were there?

WE: Yes, he was a ranger at Ninemile, there.

JB: Can you tell me anything about him? I don't have any information about him at all.

WE: Well, I can tell you that he's retired, lives in Thompson Falls. He was a ranger there...He came there the same summer that I...I suppose about '35, '36, and '37, I think, he was a ranger.

JB: How did it come about that the ranger district worked right alongside the Remount Depot? Is that the way it was?

WE: Yes, I think that probably Clyde Fickes had a lot to do with that. They started that building program out there, building the Remount. First, they acquired that ranch—they bought that ranch—then they started that building program. The ranger station at that time was at Frenchtown—up on Mill Creek out of Frenchtown. Well, that wasn't no place for ranger district headquarters. I imagine Clyde had something to do with moving it, promoting, putting it out there, and building it into all into that one area.

JB: So while you were superintendent, Puphal was the ranger, is that right?

WE: Right.

JB: How did that work out? Were there ever conflicts trying to do your jobs, or was this...Did you ever overlap on the kind of things you were trying to do?

WE: No, well, you had little arguments about things, but no, there was no problem up there. They was distinctly two separate organizations. The only connection between the two was the cookhouse.

JB: So administratively, you were just totally different.

WE: It was totally divorced from one another.

FE: Well hell, Jack Henman (?) was out there too while we were there.

WE: Yes, Jack Henman followed Puphal.

JB: As a ranger?

WE: Yes.

JB: Is Henman still around?

WE: Yes, he lives up Flathead Lake. There's another fellow here that the ranger district part of it is concerned, could give you a more detailed accounting of it than anybody I know of, Vic Parent [Victor "Vic" Parent].

JB: Oh, I think his name is somewhere on my list of people.

WE: Vic is probably here during the summer. He goes down south always in the winter, but I think Vic is probably—

JB: Had he been a ranger for quite some time?

WE: No, he was the assistant ranger, the alternate or whatever, but he was there all, all the time. Vic was the real horse of the Ninemile District. I'm just thinking who could tell you whether Vic's here or not.

JB: That's all right, I think I could—

FE: I think he's probably home, isn't he? Down around Frenchtown.

JB: I could run it down. Did Gifford Pinchot come through once to visit?

WE: Yes.

JB: Were you there?

WE: Yes.

JB: Would you tell me some about Pinchot and about the visit, the whole thing?

WE: I don't really remember much about it. I was there with "Major" Kelley [Evan W. Kelley] and Bradeen [Orrin Bradeen], but there was just a constant flow of them people coming through there. I remember Pinchot coming through there. There should be some pictures some place.

JB: Yes, I found a photograph. I think it's dated in 1937.

WE: I know they took some pictures of it, but there was nothing that registered, particularly in connection with his visit other than Gifford Pinchot, of course, we all respected him.

JB: Yes. But you didn't really get to know him ever?

WE: No, no. I think that's the only time I ever met the man when he was out there.

JB: But there were lots of people like that always coming through?

WE: Oh yes. They were coming through there all the time.

JB: Did ever start to feel like a circus?

WE: What?

JB: Did it ever start to feel like a circus?

WE: [laughs] Yes. As I said before, prior to that time the Forest Service was, had no money. Very meager appropriation. Well, then come this landslide of the CC operations and then all emergency relief money coming into the picture, why, then it expanded and that become a showplace of the Northwest for the Forest Service. That was really the first thread of any kind that they had in that part of the country was that it was there when they built Ninemile.

JB: Has there ever been anything else like it in the Forest Service?

WE: No, not exactly like it, but now you go on any ranger district out here, and it's a complex of those. There are a good number of buildings and then 25 or 30 people around it. Then ranger station up to that time was a log house, most likely, and maybe a bunkhouse and a cookhouse and a ranger that was...He may have two or three men around the ranger station, that was all. There was no engineers. There were no amenities, no specialty people.

JB: Well the Forest Service has never been in the livestock-raising business any other time either, have they?

WE: No, no.

JB: So that makes it pretty unique.

FE: They had these show-me parties about every week or so, maybe 70, 80 people go through the house—

WE: They pioneered the...the cargo dropping and that stuff in the airplane business was just coming to being pioneered. We were always dropping hot meals. One time we had a big...had 200 people out there, and they had Johnson's Flying Service with their old Ford Tri-motors. They flew the hot meals out from town and dropped them out there to us.

JB: Dropped the meals? Is that right, Mrs. Evans?

FE: I guess so. [laughs]

JB: I was going to ask you about the airplanes. Now, when did they first start dropping cargo from planes as you recall?

WE: They started experimenting with it about 1929.

JB: Oh, it was that early?

WE: But it was truly...The man that pioneered it was Howard Flint. He started the pioneering with a freefall where they would try to drop stuff freefall.

JB: What does that mean? No parachute?

WE: No parachute. It never took hold. You got going good until just about 1935, somewhere along there.

JB: Well then, if the planes could drop equipment and the mule trains could also take out equipment, how did it get decided which one would get used? Who decided that on a fire?

WE: There was a small operation when the airplane took it in them days. If they dropped any tools and equipment into a fire, it was a very minor. Whenever a fire got of any size, it had to go to the [unintelligible]

JB: So it was mainly a matter of how much stuff they needed that decided?

WE: No...Well, that would be one thing besides where it was located. You just couldn't drop everything everywhere. Then the free fall stuff, you had to have the right kind of an area, and also it was limited to what you could drop freefall. Then they got to using the parachutes, but again, you were limited to how much you could...All you had was the old Ford Tri-motor airplane. That's all you had. You didn't move very much stuff with them. You couldn't move it. Their land-range was limited to where they could get to.

JB: So, someplace where they couldn't get a plane in, that's where you need the mules, is that it?

WE: You always had to bring it out, there was no...The mules had to go in and bring it out, which you may see this summer. You're going to get a real...if you get a real bad fire season, then you'll be smoked in to where they can't fly. It'll be, oh, [unintelligible] or after before you can get into any of these areas if you get big fires.

JB: Never thought about that, just because you can't see through the haze. But then we don't have all those mules to send out either, what are they going to do?

WE: Well, there's an awful lot of roads now too.

JB: That's true, that's true.

WE: There's a lot of areas that there isn't any roads, but there's a lot of roads. But they can have problems yes, with transportation [unintelligible]

JB: I never thought about that. I remember the Sleeping Child [hot springs in Montana] fire. Not well. I was not living in the state at the time, but I remember watching the news on television all the time. Now, by that time, were there mules used on Sleeping Child fire? Do you know?

WE: Not to any great extent. There was pack stock on it, yes. The last fire that was primarily pack stock supplied was the Higgins Ridge (?) fire.

JB: When was that?

WE: At the same time as Sleeping Child.

JB: Early '60s.

WE: Yes.

JB: Where was that one, now?

WE: Oh that's...you know where Moose Creek is?

JB: No.

WE: Elk Summit?

JB: Up Lolo? Near the divide?

WE: Yes. It was the back of Moose Creek. Up [unintelligible]. I was still working then, and I know I hustled around and got them...oh, I don't know, 100, 150 head of pack stock had back in there. Mostly the dude wranglers, we got them to come in and go in there and pack them.

JB: This reminds me of some other things I wanted to know about. During the time that you were a superintendent...As I understand it, in later years, the supplies would get cargoed at a warehouse and trucked out, separately of course. The mules would go out from the Remount Depot. Now during the time that you were superintendent, did all these firefighting supplies and kitchen supplies also come from the warehouse?

WE: Yes.

JB: Were they already cargoed there and ready to pack, or how did that get done?

WE: No, no. All the packers cargoed their own. The fire equipment—the 25-man outfits, you’ve heard of them and [unintelligible]—they were designed and put together with the...Pack-train transportation was what they were designed to accommodate, but the groceries and the supplies, why, the packers had to put that together themselves.

JB: But the stuff came out on a truck, right?

WE: What?

JB: The stuff came out in trucks?

WE: Yes. It’d come by trucks or come on the railroad then in a railroad station or wherever it happened to be the...prior to, oh, let’s say the late ‘30s, there was very few roads in the forest. The main transportation was railroad. You’d go by rail into whatever the closest station was to where the fire was. Libby would be at Troy, or wherever it might be. Well, they may have been some kind of a road that they could take it back a few miles and then establish a base camp. Out of this base camp, that’s where everything would go into the pack-train and then go out.

JB: Okay, so the packer then would have to...he’d have to cargo his loads, weigh them, balance them, all that stuff, right there at the base camp, was that it?

WE: Generally, if you got into a project fire, why, you had what we’d call cargo-doers. They were packers, but instead of pulling a string they’d put the orders up the cargo orders.

JB: What did you call the guy?

WE: Cargo-doers.

JB: Doors?

WE: Do-ers.

JB: Do-ers. Cargo-doers. Okay.

We were talking a while ago about the stock association up at the Winter Range. As I understand it, all during this time there also was, of course, the Ninemile Stock Association. Now did you people work closely with that stock association? What was your relationship like with them in the Ninemile?

WE: It wasn't very active to be honest with you—the Ninemile Stock Association at that time.

JB: At the time you were there, I mean.

WE: No, there was...The only connection that I remember working with them along was dipping stock for wood ticks—for ticks. We had a dipping bath down there between the stockman and the Forest Service combination building.

JB: Where'd it get built?

WE: It was right down, oh, a couple of miles from headquarters.

JB: Farther up the valley or down this way?

WE: No, towards Sixmile. The road goes across to Sixmile and then down on that. It was on the old Edgar Scheffer place, that was.

JB: Did the Forest Service help pay for this? This sort of thing?

WE: Yes. No, I don't know if they paid for it, but they provided some help to build it. Then they charged the association and they had a...I don't know, 15 cents or two bits or something a head that they would charge to put your stock through there. That paid for the dip. It was just a deep, concrete trough about, oh, probably the deepest part of it was up around seven feet and probably as long as this room. A chute come up to it where you'd you push the stock up through there and shove them off into that. Then you get them through and come out the other end.

JB: They have to swim across it?

WE: Yes, [unintelligible] get a stick and shove his head down to get him plumb under. [laughs]

JB: So, while you were out there, did some of the Ninemile stock go through this, these dipping operations?

WE: I put them through there the first year I was there. Never put them through afterwards.

JB: Oh. I have records at home that we got out of the...well, what's the Ranger Station out there now? But it's the whole minutes of all the meetings of the Ninemile Stock Association, and apparently, it sounds like all through the '30s and '40s at least, and some into the 50s, there were regular meetings held. There was always somebody from...well, I don't know if they were from the ranger district?

WE: That would be from the ranger district. They handled the grazing on the...There would be quite a lot of connection between the district and the [Ninemile Stock] Association, not the Remount and the Association.

JB: Oh, I see. Okay, so the administrative thing there made a difference?

WE: Yes.

JB: Okay. You mentioned once about the—how these horses that were brought...You can tell I'm interested in the horses. [laughs] That these stallions were servicing farmers and ranchers in the area. How did this happen? Did that stock get sent out or could a rancher call up and ask to bring his mares up, or how did this work?

WE: Well, it worked two ways. Of course, he could bring his mares there, and then we farm stallions out too to the different areas.

JB: Did the rancher pay for the service?

WE: What?

JB: Did the rancher pay for that?

WE: No, no. The only strings that was attached to it was the Forest Service would have the first chance to buy the foal.

JB: Oh, and if they didn't want it the farmer kept it?

WE: Yes. Or if he didn't want to sell it, of course, if he wasn't...but if he was going to sell it, the Forest Service had the first chance to buy the foal.

JB: But he didn't have to sell it if he didn't want to.

WE: No, no. See, we had stallions...oh I think the furthest one was—away from here—was probably over at the Big Hole. Had one over at the Ralston Ranch on Big Hole. Had them up Blackfoot [River], and down in Frenchtown valley.

JB: Can you tell me about Lloyd Noel? What was his job?

WE: Well, Lloyd Noel—

JB: Is that how he said his name? Noel?

WE: Yes, Noel. See, when I left...When I went to Ninemile to the Remount Depot, Lloyd Noel come in and took my place in the regional office, which would have been assistant supply officer. Then, he had that job until Bradeen went to the [unintelligible] rubber project.

JB: I've heard about that.

WE: And then he become the regional supply officer.

JB: Noel did.

WE: Yes, and he held that job until he retired in...oh, I don't know '64 or 5, somewhere along there.

JB: So during the time that you were superintendent, where was Lloyd Noel?

WE: He was here in the regional office. He was assistant to Bradeen.

JB: Okay. Is he still around?

WE: Noel?

JB: Yes.

WE: No, he's dead. So is his wife.

JB: Were you in on the phasing out of the Remount Depot? I'd like to know more about that, about the decision and how it came about. When?

WE: Well, first I'll say it was...It took about five years to do that, which was too late. It should have been gone several years before it was. But the decision, of course, was made by the regional forester with the Washington office, that's where the final decision was made. Lloyd and I promoted it, to discontinue it, because...well the last eight years I'd say—somewhere in there—about eight years that they kept the Remount Depot operating, there never was a pack string went out.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WE: Yes. I say never. They may have went and done some packing, but the forest fire concerned there was no pack trains went out.

JB: There must have been a few, Don Harrington has described some that he went on. He was driving truck at that time.

WE: Yes. Oh, I wouldn't say they did...there was just no activity at all.

JB: Not like before?

WE: No, no activity at all. I know years that they never was a string went on a fire. There were some years that I know that I never went out.

JB: That would have been in the, what, late '40s? Early '50s?

WE: Oh...I would say, in the middle '50s.

JB: Why is that? Mainly because of airplanes?

WE: Yes. Of course there was were several years there that there was no big project fires, and smoke jumpers made a great difference too. When they brought the smoke jumpers in. And roads. Roads probably done more than anything, and they built these roads in there. Now, you come to the equipment. The big Cats [Caterpillar—the [unintelligible] Cat. Well, you've got a road going up the creek here and you've got a fire over there, well, you can take them big Cats and you just push a road over to the fire, that's all. You're going to take the Cat to the fire anyways, so you push a road over to the fire with it.

JB: Right on the spot. Right at the time.

WE: That really probably took the need for pack stock out, more than the airplanes did, was roads.

JB: Yes, I kept hearing about the planes. Nobody has talked that much about the roads.

WE: The planes put an awful lot of stuff in on the fire, but there was still no way to bring it out. You had to have pack stock. The combination of the roads and airplanes put the pack stock out of business.

JB: How did people feel about it when the Depot shut down?

WE: The Remount?

JB: Yes.

WE: OH, I never heard no comments for or against it. Actually, whenever you close an operation down, some people's going to get hurt. It just had served its purpose, that's all you have to say about it.

JB: Maybe most people realized that by then?

WE: Yes, it served its purpose.

JB: Now, you weren't in on the establishment of the Remount Depot, were you?

WE: No, not when they first put it together. As the Remount existed, why of course, I was there all through the construction of it, but the original purchase of the—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

JB: —establishment of the Depot, though, apparently there was some opposition to ever starting it in the first place. What do you know about that? What were the arguments for...Well, I know the arguments for it, but what were the arguments against establishing it?

WE: The opposition to starting the Remount Depot, of course, was in the Forest Service itself. As I mentioned in our previous conversation, the Forest Service at that time was primarily custodial. There was the different forests, but each forester was a little island all of his own and he resented anything that going to take anything away from him. He resented any kind of centralization. They all wanted to operate independently. That's the opposition. It comes from the forest, because they could see money—dollars—going out there, which they'd like to have out here.

JB: Was it primarily a matter of money, do you think?

WE: What?

JB: It was primarily money?

WE: Primarily money, and they were losing something.

JB: Did they feel that they could supply the stock? I mean, it was pretty necessary to get those pack stock out there.

WE: Each forest figured he was self-sufficient, but they weren't. That condition existed in this region until Major Kelley come. When Major Kelley come, he started tearing that little house down. That's where all the opposition—jealousy more than anything, I guess you could say.

JB: Yeah, nobody likes to give up any power certainly.

WE: Every forest figured that he had the best mule buyer, he had the best pack stock, he had the best packers. It was that kind of rubbish.

JB: Oh, I see. Do you think they felt a little insulted, like they're somehow suggesting that we can't handle these fires ourselves, this kind of thing?

WE: Yeah, there was jealousy. There wasn't only a little jealousy, there was an awful lot of jealousy between the different forests. It went right down to the ranger districts. I worked on the forests in the '20s, and there was very little cooperation between ranger districts even at that time.

JB: Oh. Would you say that Major Kelley was the one that really made that difference then?

WE: Oh yeah, he's the one that tore it apart, and he was sent here to do that.

JB: That's interesting. How did he change it?

WE: What?

JB: How did he change it? What did he do that made it different?

WE: Well, you'd have to know Major Kelley.

JB: I wish did. Wish I had.

WE: He knocked a lot of heads together. [laughs] Each forest was a little island all of its own, as I said at one time, and they tried to build up their own...Well, when Kelley come, it become one big island. Kelley made all the decisions.

JB: Well, how did he get the cooperation though? Was it just because he made the decisions? How'd he get everybody to cooperate? That's what I'm wondering.

WE: If you didn't cooperate, you didn't stay. [laughs]

JB: I guess that's one way to do it.

WE: Because he had the backing of the chief's office clean on through to the secretary's office, and you just didn't buck him, that's all.

JB: Was this typical of all the regions in the Forest Service at that time?

WE: I think so. I wasn't familiar with the other regions, but I'm sure it was from what I can remember of the cooperation between the regions. We had the only—I say *we*—central purchase, we called it at that time, was about the only central service that there was in the Forest Service. Whenever the regions and the forests would get in trouble, they didn't want...They opposed central purchases the same as they opposed establishing the Remount Depot. But when they got in trouble at the central purchase, they come for help. Oh gosh, we sent stuff all over California, to Portland, back into the Lake States, whenever they got in trouble and they couldn't handle it. Whatever their own little unit was, they just couldn't handle it. They'd come to Region One central purchase for help.

JB: They didn't have that same kind of a central purchasing operation?

WE: No. No, they even had their purchasing operation and so forth...They didn't have a regional, it was by forest, and then down by the ranger district. Each guy was shifting for himself.

JB: You've mentioned before that the Remount Depot became a kind of supply center for the region. Well, actually maybe the whole Forest Service. Things like supplying these shoes and the leather work, that sort of thing. Is that true?

WE: Yeah, we supplied the shoes and the pack saddle and all that stuff for all the Western regions.

JB: Who would be the person who could tell me most about the saddle shop and the leather work that was done? Who ran those? Is there anybody around now who would know about those?

WE: There's nobody left. I'm o the only one that's left. I started them. I closed them.

JB: Were those things in operation then during the whole time, from the '30s clear on until the end?

WE: I put the saddle shop in there in '35. The same summer I went out there I put that in there. Of course, the central shoeing operation, it was operating when I went out there. That is, as far as the region was concerned. Then during my time, we got to supplying shoes to other regions.

JB: Right. Lots of them, too.

WE: Yeah.

JB: What else did they make in those saddle shops besides the pack saddles? Did they do other kinds of leather work?

WE: Oh yeah, they made pack saddles, bridles, saddle bags, harness—anything you want.

JB: All of that?

WE: Yeah.

JB: I went out and talked to Coy Rice [McCoy Rice] one day. Do you know Coy?

WE: Yes.

JB: He showed me some leather hobbles he had that he used to use for blacksmithing work—tie up a mule's foot when he was blacksmithing. Did they make all that kind of stuff out there?

WE: Yeah. Them shoeing hobbles were developed there.

JB: Oh, nobody used them before?

WE: They were developed in the Forest Service here.

JB: Oh. As I understand it, Bill Bell ran the saddle shop for some time. Is that right?

WE: Well, Bill come out there...The first man we had in the saddle shop was a fellow by the name of Kirtley (?).

JB: Do you know his first name?

WE: Uri (?), we called him. U.E. Kirtley (?). We always called him Kirt. Then Bill come that fall. Kirt come the summer of '35, and Bill come out the fall, I believe, of '35, or the winter of '36, somewhere along there. Bill, of course, stayed there until he retired. Then Eldon McKee he was the last leather worker they had.

JB: McKee?

WE: Yes. He took over the leather work when they closed the saddle shop out there when old Bill retired. Elvin took over the leather work and done it in a Spokane warehouse.

JB: When would that have been? When did Bill Bell retire?

WE: It was in the '50s, but I wouldn't say just when. Then Elvin moved from Spokane warehouse out here to the Missoula warehouse. Primarily was the reasons we moved it was because Bill...See, Elvin was married to Bill's sister.

JB: Okay, yeah. Right, I've run into her.

WE: We moved Elvin and his saddle work back here to the Missoula warehouse, primarily because of Bill's physical condition—wasn't in too good of shape—so he could have somebody to look after him here. We told him it made no difference where the work was done, so he moved back here so he could be with Bill.

JB: But he was still making harnesses and that sort of thing?

WE: What?

JB: Was he still making harnesses?

WE: No, harnesses had become obsolete by then.

JB: I was wondering about that.

WE: See, at one time, before the big Cats come into the picture, they used plow units. They had big plow horses, and of course, they had harnesses for them.

JB: So when Eldon McKee went over to Spokane then what was he actually making in leatherwork?

WE: Pack saddles. Pack saddles and, oh, parts for pack saddles, bridles, saddle bags, and lineman's belts, and anything that was leather.

JB: Okay. Somebody gave me the name of Dell Cox [Delbert "Dell" Cox], was he a district ranger out there?

WE: Dell was a district ranger out there.

JB: When was that, do you know?

WE: Oh, Dell was out there in the late '50s, early '60s.

JB: Okay, so that was after your time out there. Was it your idea to put in a sign shop?

WE: They had a sign shop here operating in Missoula at the time I went out there. We had it operating in a place down on here Railroad Street, I think they had a place rented down there. Well, that wasn't...It just fit into the picture because we had all of the CC kids out there from the CC camp, and the facilities to put it in, so that's how it come to be out there. Just fell into the picture. I wouldn't say it was my idea. It just naturally become the place to put it.

JB: So you employed the CCC boys in the sign shop?

WE: Yeah.

JB: Oh, I didn't know that. Okay. When you mentioned that before I was thinking that you meant the packers and the drivers worked in there.

WE: No, no. There was a foreman, and there was about three salaried men in the sign shop. The rest were all CC kids.

JB: Oh, I see. Okay. Were there any women employed?

WE: No.

JB: Cooks maybe?

WE: No, no.

FE: You see why I wasn't around. [laughs]

JB: Yeah, now that you mention it, you did actually live out there on the grounds, though, didn't you Mrs. Evans?

FE: Oh yeah, that big house. I was the first one, yes.

JB: But there were no other women around at the time you were out there?

FE: Well, the ranger station and Thompsons up above, in that little house. Of course their daughter was going to school at Alberton. She took the school bus.

JB: You mean the Boyd Thompsons?

FE: Yeah, Boyd Thompson. His family was up there. Then the ranchers and neighbors.

JB: Is that who you were mostly friends with, was the people right in that area?

FE: Yeah.

JB: Did you enjoy living out there?

FE: Oh yes, yes I liked it real well.

JB: Why is that?

FE: Oh, outdoors, and you just do as you please. It was great, I thought, being out. Weren't on a ranch, and still you were out in the country. I enjoyed living out there.

JB: Did they ever put you to work?

FE: No. There's one thing, I never had to do the cooking for all these fellows that come in. They had the cookhouse. Once in a while Kelley [unintelligible], I never had to bother with anybody.

JB: So when there were guests, even, you didn't have to entertain them?

FE: No, sometimes they stayed at our house, but they'd eat over there at the cookhouse.

JB: Oh, I see. Who were the cooks during that time?

WE: We had one cook all the time I was...Well, we had two. I fired the first one about 30 days after I went out there. Then I had one had the same cook all the time.

JB: Do you remember who that was?

WE: It was trying to think it was Pete, but I don't know what his last name was.

FE: It wasn't Peterson (?), was it?

WE: No. He was a real cook. It made no difference whether it was 50 or 200, when it come time to eat there was food and good food.

JB: Did you raise a family out there, Mrs. Evans?

FE: Well we just had one daughter and she was...How old was she? Nine when we went out.

WE: Well that was around '35, so she was about 11 I guess.

FE: About 11. She went to Alberton, then we had her, board her in Missoula for high school. We came back to Missoula then.

JB: So while she was smaller, she went to elementary school in Alberton?

FE: Alberton, yes. She caught the bus right there at the station.

JB: With all the Ninemile kids?

FE: Yes. The Thompsons had three girls, and the rest of the Ninemilers up there.

JB: Sounds like a good place to have children.

FE: Yes. We weren't too far. Nine miles, I think. I'd take the kids down to ball games and things like that. They liked that. They enjoyed it.

JB: Which house was it you lived in?

FE: Well the first big one. I mean, the big white one as you come in the gate.

JB: The one that's the ranger's house now, I suppose?

FE: No, the other one.

WE: No, I think the ranger lives in that house now. I know Dell did. I haven't been out there for years.

JB: Well, I call that one the first house. You drive in, part of the road goes up here and then the road goes here, and there's one house right in that triangle. That's the one I mean. Is that the one you're talking about?

WE: Yeah.

JB: Now when you were there, that must have been a brand new house, wasn't it?

FE: Well, yes.

WE: It was brand new.

JB: Were you the first ones to live in it?

WE: No, Williams lived with his wife—

FE: I lived in it, because these show-me parties, you had to keep it spotless. Never knew who was coming, who was going.

JB: You mean these people—

FE: They wanted to see the house. Yeah, they wanted to see...you know, people are curious and wanted to go through.

JB: Was it a nice house, up to date and all that?

FE: Oh, yes.

JB: What was it like?

FE: Well, it had a large kitchen. Had a dining area but no dining room. A nice living room and two bedrooms on the first floor, and there was two upstairs—one was called a sewing room. Then two full bath down and half bath upstairs. They were real mod.

JB: It sounds roomy in there.

FE: Yeah, it was roomy.

WE: It was probably the first real modern house the Forest Service had out in the—

FE: Of course, the CCs kept the yard up. You didn't have to worry about mowing, watering.

JB: I suppose it wasn't customary to build a home for the Forest Service, was it?

WE: Oh yeah, they all the ranger districts had to have a house. But that was probably the first fully modern house.

JB: I haven't seen pictures of the inside, that's why I was curious. I think I saw one picture that showed a fireplace. Did you have a fireplace?

FE: Yeah, we had a fireplace.

JB: But there was just a picture of the fireplace. There wasn't any other indication of what the rest of the house was like.

WE: Haven't you ever been through the places out there?

JB: No.

WE: You'll have to go out and go through them.

JB: I've been out to the...Well, the administrative offices are now, of course, located in what was a home—originally designed as a home.

WE: No, I think they're in the bunkhouse.

JB: Well, I'm trying to get this map straight in my head. I've got drawings at home. I don't know for sure which was which, but there's two buildings side by side that look like homes and those are now administrative offices.

WE: One of them was...The furthest on your right as you go in, that was the Remount Depot bunkhouse.

JB: Oh, I didn't understand.

WE: And the one on the left was the cookhouse and office.

JB: Okay, you haven't been out there for a long time, have you?

WE: A couple years...No, not for several years, I guess.

JB: Oh! Well, you probably would enjoy going out and seeing what they're doing. They're converting...Let's see, there's a building that...as you go in it would be on the, well, as you come into the driveway, just in front of those—the cookhouse and that bunkhouse building—out here, there was a building that was a garage and shop for working on those vehicles. Then, for a while it was converted into something else, and now they're making offices out of it again. It was a classroom for a while.

FE: That was the sign shop.

WE: Yeah, that was the sign shop.

JB: Oh, it was the sign shop?

WE: Although it was originally built as a garage.

JB: That's what I thought. It's marked "garage" on the blueprints.

WE: Yeah, it was originally built as a garage. Well, the time they built it, you could put a truck in it. But the trucks outgrew—

JB: Then you got those new big trucks—

WE: It wasn't long enough for the trucks, so then we converted it into a sign shop.

JB: Oh, I'm glad to know that.

WE: From a sign shop, it went into a classroom. The last time I was out there they had kind of a classroom in there.

JB: Well now, they're doing it one more time—

WE: They're making some offices out of it.

JB: Making offices out of it, yeah, right. You mentioned the trucks, that reminds me, I wanted to ask you something. I keep getting different numbers on how many of those very large Kenworths were actually built. Was there five or was there six? Somebody even said three. I know it was more than three. The really big ones that could carry ten head.

WE: [pauses] There was never over four.

JB: Oh, is that right? Four all together?

WE: Yeah, and I'm not so sure that it wasn't three.

JB: Okay, somebody else swears there were six.

WE: Oh...There were six Kenworth trucks, but they weren't all the big cab-over trucks.

JB: Maybe I misunderstood somebody then that when they said six Kenworths, maybe I thought they meant—

WE: I think there was six Kenworths, but they were conventional, five-head.

JB: So maybe three of the ten-head trucks?

WE: I'm not so sure that three wasn't all the cab-over that there was. Now there could have been four. But I think three.

JB: What became of them when they closed down the Remount Depot? What happened to the trucks?

WE: They were sold.

JB: To a private person?

WE: Yeah, sold them on bids out here.

JB: I saw a memo—an in-house forest service memo—talking about phasing out the Remount Depot, and it said the trucks were going to be assigned to various forests. Are you saying that they decided not to do that?

WE: None of the big trucks went. I wouldn't say some of the smaller ones didn't. But the big trucks were sold.

JB: Do you have any idea who bought them?

WE: Oh gosh, I don't know. Some logger bought one of them. Was going to make a tractor out of it to pull log trailers.

JB: Oh. It would be fun to see one of those trucks. I was wondering if I'd ever find one around anywhere.

WE: No, I don't think... [pauses] No, I sold them big trucks. [unintelligible]

JB: Oh, you were the one in charge of that?

WE: Yes, well, I was contracting officers at that time.

JB: Well those trucks are just unique enough that, in a way, it's just a shame to lose track of them now too.

FE: Yeah, I'll say. [unintelligible]

WE: We had a semi could haul ten head—tractor trailer.

JB: When did the Forest Service acquire that one?

WE: During the same time. The tractor was used to move heavy equipment, and we built the semi-trailer, stock trailer to go...Built it after [unintelligible]. Then we had a ten-head trailer that we pulled behind one of the big trucks.

JB: This is all starting to make sense now. Because it starts now to finally add up to maybe five vehicles altogether that could haul ten head. They weren't all the cab-over engine trucks, but there finally maybe were five altogether of different types that could haul ten head. Right?

WE: Well, there was three big ones and then the trailer and the semi. They would be—

JB: That would make five.

WE: That would make five. Now Charley might remember, because Charley built one of them trucks.

JB: Charley Harrington?

WE: Yeah. But, by gosh, I can remember only three of the cab-overs.

JB: Well you may be right. That's why I'm asking, because I want to get that straight.

WE: Without talking to Charley, I wouldn't...I know there was, I think, three of the smaller Kenworths, but they only hauled five head.

FE: [unintelligible]

WE: I guess maybe there was four of them small ones, because it took two of them to haul a string. I suppose there was four of them.

JB: [laughs] I'll get it straight, I think, eventually. Somebody said that...See, I'm just picking up on little stuff now that I'm trying to straighten out. Somebody said that there was a very expensive horse bought—a stallion—

Thank you [speaking to Frieda]

JB: —and they didn't get any foals out of that stallion. Do you know anything about that?

WE: They said what?

JB: They said there was a stallion purchased for the breeding program, a lot of money got paid for him, and there were no foals.

WE: No, that's not right. The stallion that they paid the big money for was a Grand Menard. No, many, many foals.

JB: That's what I thought, so I wondered if there was some other horse in there that I didn't know about.

WE: No, there was no stallion that had no foals. There may have been some mares that they didn't get foals, but no stallions.

FE: [unintelligible]

JB: Oh, we're going to get goodies. [speaking to Frieda]

So while you were there then, Grand Menard and...Was there another one named Hermes? Were you the one that told me about Hermes? There was another stallion?

WE: Hermes was...

FE: [unintelligible]

[long pause]

JB: That's okay, I was just wondering what was going on while you were there.

WE: I don't remember the name of that Nonius stallion.

JB: Well, I'm sure going to look around for those horses, see what I can find out about them.

WE: There was another stallion I had there, an American Saddlebred stallion and his...Gosh, I don't remember his name. I know where he come from. He come from Brown over Yakima. But Hermes, it seems to me as he was a horse they raised. I think he was raised up there.

JB: Maybe so. Somewhere in a box of stuff I ran into a thick pad of papers called the *Plan of Pasture Development*. It's dated 1939 to 1940. It has to do with the Remount pastures, checking out the condition of them, all the fences, rearranging stuff. Was this your project?

WE: Burdeen and I made that.

JB: Looks very elaborate. Somebody had colored in areas, all this sort of thing.

WE: Burdeen and I made that.

JB: What caused you to do this? Were there any problems that led to that?

WE: Oh, they had to have some plan of order if you're going to develop too. That was for developing the area. We went through the whole area—

[unintelligible]

We went through the whole area up there and decided what was the long-range planning for that particular area.

JB: As far as you know, was this plan carried through?

WE: Never to completion, no. But from the time we made that...you say it was '39 to '40 dated?

JB: That's what it says on the plans.

WE: Well, I think we made that in '37, '38. Yes, you had all the CC labor there. The exterior boundaries were fixed, the fences were built there and the cross fences were built—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

WE: —The time about when the CC went out of the picture, Of course, when that went too, there was no more labor.

JB: When was that, by the way? When did the CC go out?

WE: The last CC camp went out...Well, I was away, that was during the war, about '43 I think. Because they was still there when I left, and they was gone when I came back.

JB: Do you have any good stories to tell about that time? Things that you remember?

WE: I don't know that we ever discussed the actual manner in which pack stock was dispatched.

JB: On the day of a fire? I'd appreciate your version of that.

WE: We had the corrals there. There were five corrals—pens.

JB: Five or four? Was it five?

WE: Five. There was three on one side and two on the other. I don't know if there's any left now. The last time I was there, there was three, but they tore one side of them down.

JB: Yes there are, I think so.

WE: Each one of them corrals, during the fire season, we would keep a string in it, and they'd rotate out. The strings that were in the corral, they were...the packers always would say you're under the gun. You're the first out. It took about 17 minutes to load a string out of there.

JB: Coy Rice tells me he did it one day in eight.

WE: Well, I don't think Coy Rice ever did it in eight minutes because— [laughs]

JB: It was on a show-me day. I don't know, that's what he said. He said he set a record.

WE: No, I would question Coy's judgement on that but—

JB: Would you say 17 would be more the average?

WE: Yes, because the stock were loose in the corral. You had to bring the stock out of that corral, down the alley, into the catch chute, halter them, and bring them out of the catch chute and put them in the truck. Then load the equipment that went with them in the truck. So it took about 17 minutes.

JB: Of course, he was out there at a little later time. It's possible that something could have been streamlined to make it a little faster. I don't know. I can check on it.

WE: No, nothing was ever changed. In fact, it went downhill a little bit. [laughs]

FE: Well, had nine horses going through isn't that a string?

WE: What?

FE: Nine horses in the string?

WE: Nine mules and saddle horse.

FE: Well, it would take quite a while to get those through.

JB: Yes, it would.

WE: If he had the stock caught and tied, I wouldn't say that you couldn't load them out in eight minutes, but take them from the corral and load them out, no, you couldn't do it in eight minutes.

JB: One part of this that I don't understand is, how did...There was an alarm out there, sat up on the pole, right? A siren?

WE: Yes.

JB: Okay, who pressed the button that made that siren go?

WE: A clerk.

JB: Where? Downtown?

WE: No, in the office.

JB: Okay, how did he get the message?

WE: Telephone.

JB: Say there was a fire out here at Elk Summit, how would the message get from Elk Summit, finally out to you at the Remount?

WE: It would most generally always come from the Office of Fire Control here in the regional office.

JB: You mean, a ranger out there at Elk Summit would call the RO?

WE: Well, it would be more likely to come through the supervisor's office. If the fire was at Elk Summit, why, Elk Summit is now a part of the Nez Perce [Nez-Perce-Clearwater National Forest]. The call for the stock would probably come from Grangeville [Idaho], because the connection with the fire is most generally tied to the supervisor's office on which forest the fire is on.

JB: Okay, so that forest supervisor, what would he do then?

WE: He'd call fire control in Missoula.

JB: Okay, and then what?

WE: Then they'd call the Remount.

JB: Okay, and would he just talk to whoever answered the phone out there?

WE: Well, it was always the clerk who set on the phone out there.

JB: Okay. Then what did he do? That clerk?

WE: If it was just one string, he'd blow one whistle. If he wanted everybody, he'd blow three on the siren. See, the men were always working. They weren't just sitting around waiting for a fire.

JB: Oh I understand that. Yes, they were all busy haying or something.

WE: They were haying or doing something else. Now, the code was, that there's only one string going out, there's no use in disrupting everybody. The one blast on the siren would call for Boyd. The packer knew who...They knew was the first under the gun, the first to go out. Call for Boyd and this packer and then whoever else happened to be around, but it wouldn't disrupt the whole...But if you want to have three or four strings going out, why, he'd call everybody in.

JB: And that was three blasts on the siren?

WE: Three blasts on the siren.

JB: Did they ever use two?

WE: I don't remember it ever being two. I know it was three.

JB: Sounds like all or nothing. [laughs]

WE: There's always one big blast on the siren at noon, that was testing it and, of course, it also signaling time for lunch.

JB: Lunchtime. So whatever...Okay, if there were three blasts then, what, everybody just came running?

WE: Yes, everybody'd come in. If they was in hearing distance of it.

JB: What did they do when they got in?

WE: Well then if you were going to put four or five strings out, why, you'd have to...Some of them would go to the pastures to bring in more stock because these that's in the corral are gone to replace them.

JB: How did they get them from the pastures into the corrals?

WE: Riding, saddle horses.

JB: I think somebody said there was a lane that came down, is that right?

WE: Yes, there used to be a lane that went from the back side of them corrals plumb through to Butler Creek, connected all the pastures. You just shove them into that lane and then come up, bring them on in.

JB: Then how did they decide who was going to load up a truck and who was going to put a halter on a mule and all these jobs that had to get done?

WE: Boyd was, of course, the boss man. The packer, he would generally halter his own mules as they would come down through the chute. Somebody else would push them into the chute for him. A barn man, he was always there at the place. He never left. The two saddle men were always there in the saddle shop. They never left. Well if you only had one string, that's all the men you needed to put out. And the truck driver, [unintelligible].

JB: What was your job during all of this?

WE: Oh, I might not even be there.

JB: So you didn't have to give any kind of go ahead or anything?

WE: What?

JB: You didn't have to give any orders or anything?

WE: No, no. We all operated...Pretty much everybody knew what he was supposed to do and that was it. I've seen them go out of there in less than a half an hour from sound asleep in the middle of the night.

JB: Oh, gee! I imagine they got calls sometimes in the middle of the night.

WE: Oh, yes, an awful lot of your stock went out at night. I've seen riders out there at one, two o'clock in the morning, getting stock, pushing stock out of them pastures bringing them up.

JB: I think it was McCoy Rice—

Excuse me.

WE: See also in the summer time, the stock were pastured by strings, and you got them out of this pasture, why, you had string number—whatever it happened to be. You didn't have 60, 70 head of horses in one pasture. You just had one string.

JB: And they all belonged together?

WE: What?

JB: They all belonged together to work with one packer.

WE: Yes, one packer. Well, you'd have the reserve stock, maybe back over in Butler Creek. When you run out of the stuff you had there, split up into individual strings, then you'd have to go gather them and sort them out and put them into strings.

JB: Oh. I was going to say, Coy Rice told me about a light he carried sometimes when he had to go out at night. Now was this a Forest Service issued thing? It was a little...some kind of a battery-operated light that he could carry on horseback.

WE: Oh, just the only lights they ever had was flashlight headsets.

JB: Oh, wear it up on your head?

WE: Yes.

JB: Oh, I didn't know what it was.

You mind telling me that story about the Frenchman and the calf?

FE: Again? [laughs]

JB: I remember part of that story but I couldn't write it all down that day, and I don't remember it but I remember it was a pretty good story.

WE: This old fellow's name was Bouchard. He had the ranch right across the road from us. He had a milk cow, and the old milk cow raised a calf. He came over one day and he says, "You buy my calf?"

"Yeah, buy your calf."

"What do you pay?"

"Oh, I don't know, we'll go call up John R, Daily and see what he's charging for veal, and pay whatever we'd pay for veal." I got the price, and that was okay by him.

Then he said, "Well, would you butcher it?"

[laughs] "Well, yeah, somebody will come over and butcher it this evening." One of the boys went over and butchered the calf for him that evening. He hung it up there to cool. Then, "Now, Bouch, tomorrow morning early, you bring that calf over before it gets warm or flies gets [unintelligible] so we can put it down in the cooler."

"Yeah."

It was right in the middle of the summer. The next morning Bouch showed up with his old Model-T truck, he had this veal in the back of it. Boyd went out to weight it on the platform scale—weigh the truck and the calf and then take the calf off and weigh the truck back and determine the weight of the calf that way. Bouch pulls his truck onto the scale. Had a great, big, heavy fur coat on.

JB: In the middle of the summer?

WE: Right in the middle of the summer. Of course, it was early in the morning, but it still wasn't cold. But when he drove the truck onto the scale, he jumped off and took the coat off and laid it down. Got back in and they weighed him and the truck and calf. Then they took the calf over to the cookhouse and put it down in the cooler and went back out. He drove his truck onto the scale, and jumped out and got the coat and put it on. Well, of course, what he was trying to do was get the weight of the coat on the calf, but he got it backwards.

FE: Didn't he have a few rocks in it too?

WE: Well, I always surmised that. I don't know as he had the rocks in it or not.

JB: Did they give him a bad time about that?

WE: Oh, no. Boyd had a lot of fun with it. Oh, he was a [unintelligible]. One time, he was buying...Boyd was buying them plow horses in those days. He had a nice team of Belgian mares.

JB: Who, Bouchard?

WE: Yes, he came over to me one day, he says, "You buy my team?"

"Oh I might."

"Well, come over and look at them." I went over that evening to look at them. They were nice horses.

"How old are they Bouch?"

He says, "They're six and seven." Gentle old mares. One of them was around...I just rolled the lip back on one, and I could see that the horse was a lot older than six or seven.

"Are you sure of that, Bouch?"

Oh yes," he says, "I raised them. I get the book." He went in and he got a little old notebook he had and he come out and he opened it. I was looking over his shoulder, and he's looking at it, "Yes, that's right, they're six and seven."

I saw enough to tell me that one of them was 12, but I didn't see the rest of it. [laughs] One of them was 12.

JB: Was it in French or English?

WE: What?

JB: Was his notebook in French or English?

WE: Well, the date was English anyway.

JB: Figure out the date. Did you buy the horses?

WE: No.

JB: Say, tell me about that ferry. At the time you were superintendent up at the Remount, were you still using the ferry across the river? Across the Flathead?

WE: Yes.

JB: When did that get built?

WE: When did what?

JB: When did the ferry get built?

WE: There was an old ferry there at the time we leased the place. See, that Stover place was a sheep ranch. There was an old ferry. We rebuilt it, but they was an old ferry at the time we leased the place.

JB: How long was that ferry used?

WE: All the time that the Forest Service had it. See, we were released the Stover estate...I wouldn't say when, but several years before we closed the whole winter range out. Another sheep outfit up in Kalispell bought it, and they built a road into it. So it was in use as far as the Forest Service was concerned for... [pauses] I suppose, eight years.

JB: Up until the bridge was built?

WE: There never was a bridge built.

JB: Well there's a bridge now, isn't there?

WE: No.

JB: Well, how do I get across to Perma?

WE: Well, you were talking about...See Perma, is ferry basin, where the ferry was at is McDonald Basin. That's all part of the Winter Range, but it's two different places.

JB: Okay, but there is a bridge at Perma.

WE: Yes.

JB: Now. Was that bridge there before?

WE: Oh yes, that bridge has been there for many, many...Well, there's a new one now, but they's been a bridge across there at Perma ever since I can remember.

JB: Oh, well then why didn't the Forest Service just use that bridge?

WE: What?

JB: Why didn't the Forest Service just use that bridge to get stock across?

WE: Well, we never ferried too much stock across on the ferry. We always either took them across to Dixon or at Perma.

JB: Oh, so what'd the ferry get used for then?

WE: To go back and forth. To get...You see, automobiles and everything were over on this side for the highway is. You couldn't get no automobiles over there.

JB: Well, you could take the cars across on the bridge?

WE: What?

JB: Couldn't you take the cars across on the bridge?

WE: [unintelligible] could take a truck or something across on the ferry to use over at Ferry...at the McDonald Basin.

JB: What I mean is, if there was a bridge up at Dixon and a bridge down Perma, how come anybody used the ferry for anything?

WE: Well, because there was no road between the two and it's eight, nine miles. That whole face through there's no road.

JB: On the other side of the river, you mean?

WE: Yes, across the river from the highway. That was all winter range over there and the Ferry Basin, up until the time we released it, that was the spring range. That's where all the stock ran in the spring, and that's where the shoeing camp went. That's where we don all the shoeing.

JB: So you had to have that ferry right there because that's where you did the shoeing?

WE: Yes.

JB: Okay, now I got it. Okay. Say, you know about those photographs, are you going to let me take some of those today?

FE: Well, now let's see, where are they, Cap? I can't find them?

[Break in audio]

JB: Yes, we'd like to hear about the horse breeding up...or the horse-breaking? Is that what you're saying?

WE: No, most—

FE: You want any more tea? I have [unintelligible].

JB: Oh, all right, thank you.

WE: Most people associate horse breaking with bronc riding.

JB: Yes, some do.

WE: Which was true of the old western cow pony. That's the way they were broke. You got on and rode him, and that was it. But real horse breaking is an art of its own. You never let a horse buck.

JB: Now this is how it was done out at the Winter Range?

WE: Yes, well we did most of the horse breaking at Ninemile.

JB: Oh, you did it up there? Okay.

WE: We did most of it there. We had the horse breakers there. You rein the horse first, and when the rider gets on the horse, he's reined. They never let a horse buck.

JB: How did you prevent it?

WE: You've got him reined so you can control him, and very seldom did they ever let a horse jump underneath them.

JB: But what about this strange thing on his back that he's not used to?

WE: You get him used to it.

JB: How did you do that?

WE: Oh, you saddle him. The horse breaker there would have about seven head at a time that he'd work, and that's all he done is work them horses all day long.

JB: Spring? Fall? When was this done?

WE: Oh, mostly during the summer.

JB: While you were out there, who were these horse breakers?

WE: [unintelligible] by the name of Mike Long (?) was the primary one.

JB: And that was his job, just to do that?

WE: Yes. Oh, he was a packer. He packed too, but instead of working in the hay field or whatever we were doing, why, he was breaking horses. Boyd, he generally, of course, was the overseer of it, and he was quite a horse breaker himself.

JB: Well now, I'm curious, if most of these animals were over at the Winter Range, how is it that they were broken at the Depot?

WE: We'd bring them over there—truck them over.

JB: Was any of the stock broken or trained up at the Winter Range?

WE: Oh, yes, they'd break some horses there too. But, primarily the horses or saddle stock were broke at Ninemile.

JB: Any special reason for that?

WE: Well, I had a special reason for it.

JB: What was that?

WE: [laughs] Of course, it was that we had better facilities out here too. But you had...the regular personnel at the Winter Range, they would fit into the cowboy-type people because that was...riding that range, that's what it was, and they just don't make good horse breakers.

JB: You didn't like their methods?

WE: No.

JB: Was this your decision, to do this at the depot?

WE: Yes. There's a great difference between hot-blood horses and cold-blood horses.

JB: What's that?

WE: Well, the ordinary ranch horse that you see is a cold-blooded horse. A hot-blooded horse comes from the thoroughbred.

JB: You're talking about the spirit? Spirited horses?

WE: Yes, and you just don't roughhouse them kind of horses.

JB: What happens if you do?

WE: You spoil them, and when you've got one spoiled, why, you might just as well take him out and shoot him.

JB: Did you go up with a lot of experience with horses?

WE: Oh, I was raised on a cattle ranch. That was my upbringing was cattle. Of course, we had horses too.

JB: Then how did you learn how to handle these other horses?

WE: Well, by talking to the breeders and seeing how they handled them. Them fellows'll try to tell you different, but you just don't roughhouse a hot-blooded horse.

JB: As I understand it when the American Saddlers were brought in, some people thought that was a little strange. These long-legged, big-spirited horses. Did they get used to them finally?

WE: Oh, they never was too many of them that ever went out as saddle horses. There were some went on the forest, but most of that thoroughbred stock didn't go out. The stallions, of course, they were farmed out, and the fillies were kept for brood stock.

JB: For raising mules?

WE: No, raising more horses. Most of the stock that we broke and sent out as saddle horses were half-blood horses.

JB: Did they work out all right as a saddle horse?

WE: Oh, yes. They raised mighty fine saddle horses.

JB: Is there anything else that occurs to you, Mr. Evans, that people need to know about this?

WE: What?

JB: What else do people need to know about this? Anything we've forgotten?

WE: Well, you may have noticed a picture here in the *Missoulian* a few days back. It's a fellow breaking a mule. Did you notice that picture?

JB: Yes, I did.

WE: Well, that's the way not to break a mule.

JB: I don't remember the photograph that well. What was he doing?

WE: He was sacking him, he called it.

JB: Oh, that's right.

WE: Had the horse tied up to post and was back there throwing a canvas at him. That's the way not to break a mule. That's the way to spoil a mule.

JB: How would you do it?

WE: You just handle him. You always keep the mule under control, but you never do...See, the reason a horse gets mean, or a mule either one, it's not that they're mean, they're afraid. It's fright that causes the horse to buck, it's fright that causes the horse to kick, it's fright that causes a horse to run away. He hasn't got a disposition like you'd think of. It's self-preservation.

JB: That's very strong.

WE: You've got to build confidence in that horse or that mule.

JB: Why was the guy doing this in the photograph? Was it—

WE: Well, that was a common practice and still is, I guess, among some of them, is you sack him out. So he would get used to it. He ain't going to get used to it, all he's going to do is get afraid of it. Once you get a horse afraid of something, he never gets over it.

JB: When Fickes was first out at the Remount Depot, he had a Morgan stallion named Resin or Rosin.

WE: Rosin.

JB: Rosin. Was that horse still there when you came?

WE: Yes, he was still there. He went to Mossiker (?), Mossican (?), got that horse up at the Glacier Park Saddlehorse Company. There's two of the—him and Monte. I think both of them actually belonged to the DIA (?) at Miles City.

JB: Why did you not keep using those horses?

WE: Fickes' program...I'm not criticizing Fickes' program. It was probably the best that you could do with what had to do with. There's nothing wrong with a Morgan horse. A Morgan horse is a nice horse, but the Morgan is a type. Is more of a type than they are a breed. They have a [unintelligible] racing, but Morgan horse is a type, as is the quarter horse. You've heard lots about the quarter horses. Well, the quarter horse is a type of Thoroughbred horse.

JB: Came from that, yes.

WE: He was breeding the Morgan stallions to these grey, cold-blood mares and would have produced good pack string horses, but the principal of bringing in the American Saddler was a question of whether you were going to bring in American Saddlers or whether you were going to bring in Thoroughbred or whether you were going to bring in Tennessee Walking Horses. Because the old Major insisted on getting interest created in this area and quality saddle stock. Well, a Morgan isn't quality saddle stock and—

JB: Okay, so he wanted a recognized breed. I understand.

WE: That was about all the choice you had, was a Thoroughbred or a Tennessee Walking Horse.

JB: So was it the Major's decision then?

WE: That brought the American Saddlers in?

JB: Yes.

WE: No, I'd have to say it was mine, because I was out on a trip, went over into the Yakima country and this Brown man over near Yakima was raising these American Saddlers. They looked, to me, like the better of the three horses. Now, it wasn't my decision to buy a Grand Menard because I didn't like Grand Menard.

JB: Whose idea was that?

WE: Well, Herb Stoneby (?), down in Grand Island, Nebraska. I didn't like Grand Menard, and never did.

JB: Why is that?

WE: He was too leggy.

JB: Was the other horse like that? Hermes, was that the other Saddler?

WE: No, not so much so, but Grand Menard was for—

[End of Interview]