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**Oral History Number: 131-002**
**Interviewee: Glenna Moore**
**Interviewer: Gladys Peterson**
**Date of Interview: September 11, 1984**
**Project: Depression Years in Montana Oral History Project**

Gladys Peterson: —this morning to Mrs. Glenna Moore, who lives in Missoula, Montana. Our main topic will be the Depression. Glenna, you're a native Montanan. Where were you born?

Glenna Moore: Billings, Montana.

GP: Billings? What was your maiden name?

GM: Smith. Glenna Smith.

GP: Glenna Smith. You once told me your mother came to Montana by the Missouri River as far as Fort Benton. Can you give us a little bit about her early life in Montana?

GM: Well, it was always a disappointment to my mother because she was born the last child after the boat arrived in Fort Benton. And she thought she should have had the trip up the river, but she was born after they arrived here. Her family came by boat from Galena, Illinois, and apparently it was a very successful boat trip.

GP: So she actually was born in Montana? I see, well she did come up the river, didn't she?

GM: [laughs] In a sense, she came up the river.

GP: How did your parents get to Libby? I understand you lived in Libby.

GM: Well, my father was supervisor of the national forest there, and that's how come they moved to Libby.

GP: Oh, they were married in Billings.

GM: No, they were married in Kalispell, and he worked for the O'Neill Lumber Company at that time and then took what they called the ranger's exam and passed that and was appointed…was then given an appointment.

GP: And he was sent to Libby?

GM: Yes.

GP: I see. When did you move to Missoula?

GM: Oh, about 1920.

GP: 1920? And you had a sister?

GM: Yes, Charlotte.

GP: Charlotte? So you went to elementary school in Missoula?

GM: Yes, the Prescott.

GP: Out in the Rattlesnake, and then you went to Missoula County High School?

GM: Yes.

GP: What did you do after that?

GM: After high school, well, I got married and so did my sister, so neither one of us finished college. She married Albert Spaulding, Dean Spaulding's son, and he finished in anthropology at Michigan.

GP: You got married right after college. Now, were you in college during the Depression?

GM: Yes, our house needed a roof and the car fell down, all in the same day [laughs] during the Depression. Which was more important, the house or the car? And there were two of us, and it was kind of nip-and-tuck. My father was a forester and he was cut ten percent, which is, even at that time, was a very rare thing. Of course, that was reflected in the first September check, but we made it.

GP: Do you remember when the Depression started?

GM: No…I don't remember—the 29…The October 29 crash. At that time we were too far away, and the family never had an interest in the market at that time.

GP: I see. Do you remember anything about the crash, how it affected Montana that early, at all?

GM: Not that early, no.

GP: When is your first recollection?

GM: It would have been about 1930 or '31, was when we really began to feel it here. The churches and people took care of people, there was no Poverello Center at that time, except for St. Patrick's Hospital and I think that they gave food away at that time.

GP: Were most of these people employed in the lumber industry at the time?

GM: Yes! Yes. And I think it was interesting that they could go up Pattee Canyon, they could go up Rattlesnake, they could go up Miller Creek, and they could cut enough wood to maybe make two trips a day and that would be ten dollars because they would sell their load of wood for five dollars. Most people were burning wood at that time, if not in their furnaces, they were burning it in the houses—stoves and heaters and that sort of thing. So ten dollars or five dollars was worth a handsome piece of money. And they bought groceries, of course, with it because most of them had loans, I suspect, that were not too high for them to pay off.

GP: Do you remember anything about them being on any kind of relief at the time?

GM: No, I don't remember. Either I was not aware of it or…It wasn't until about '36 that I was aware of WPA [Works Progress Administration], for instance. And I was married in '36…previous to '36, and we went right into the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], which was the big thing here in Montana.

GP: For the young boys?

GM: Well, yes, and the fact that part of that money went back to the parents—25 dollars for the young man, and then 25 dollars to his family. In some cases, like in Arkansas, that made a lot of difference.

GP: What was your husband doing before the CCC?

GM: He was a coach and a history teacher at Three Forks.

GP: And you lived there for—

GM: No, that was before we were married, and then he came here and went to school and got a master's degree in history. Never taught again. Too bad.

GP: And it was about that time that he got the job with the CCC?

GM: Yes.

GP: And where did that take you?

GM: To Phillipsburg. Then from Phillipsburg we went to Stryker, which is out of Whitefish, and then, eventually, we closed a camp at Priest River, Idaho.

GP: They were all CCC camps?

GM: They were all CC camps.

GP: Could you tell us something about, not only his work, but the set-up at those CCC camps?

GM: Yeah. It was set up…the military was in charge of the food and the discipline, and the Forest Service was in charge of the work progress, and Ken was educational advisor. He graduated—I think it was—ten kids from the high school there at Phillipsburg, and did all the things an educational advisor would do. Got books, got library privileges. Then the Forest Service trained them in mechanics, which was fantastic because they were good mechanics. In fact, when we were at Stryker, those boys were from Pennsylvania, and they were all being trained as mechanics. Boeing was over there as soon as the war was announced, getting those kids because they were trained. And they were disciplined. We didn't really have discipline problems. I mean, they were working and there just weren't discipline problems, but they were aware of military procedures.

GP: Was that the army—the U.S. Army military?

GM: Yes, it was the army and sometimes it was the National Guard, young lieutenants, or, sometimes, it was regular army, who would come out and just take charge of the camp.

GP: How old were the boys?

GM: They started at 16, I think, and went to 21.

GP: And you said some were from Pennsylvania. Did they come from all over the country?

GM: Yes, we had boys from Arkansas, and we had boys from Rochelle, New York, and Pennsylvania, and our best boys were from North Dakota. They not only knew how to use things, but they were accustomed to working. It was a beautiful camp. It really was.

GP: Were there boys from Montana?

GM: No, not in our camp. Now, there were some here in, but the theory was that they wanted the boys to move around—to see other parts.

GP: Of the country?

GM: Yes.

GP: What would you say the oldest age of the boys was?

GM: Oh, about 20, 21.

GP: So, they were all pretty young?

GM: Yes. Hardworking, did fantastic things all over the country. All over the country.

GP: What were some of the things they did?

GM: They built dams, they built parks, they built trails, they fought fire. Mostly it was trails and camps here in Montana.

GP: Over at Phillipsburg, that's what they did, trails and camps?

GM: Yes. Ninemile—they built that Ninemile Remount Station out…I can't remember where else they were. Up at Stryker they were building trails and campgrounds.

GP: Did you live right in the camp?

GM: Well, no, we were able to rent, generally, not too far from the camp. I taught in the evenings, and Ken taught in the evenings. It was very pleasant, except that we were terribly isolated.

GP: What were you teaching?

GM: Oh, I taught, I think it was, about 20 boys from Arkansas how to read and write. It might be interesting to know why they wanted to read and write.

GP: Yes, it certainly would.

GM: They wanted to be able to sign the payroll and to read comic books. So I never had any training as far as working with illiterates at 16 years, and so I got comic books. From there, we went to, oh, about a fourth grade, and they just learned so fast! It was just amazing!

GP: They wanted to learn.

GM: When they finally got over that initial stigma of not being able to sign the payroll or to read comic books, they just went to town.

GP: Were there any ethnic groups among these boys?

GM: No, no, we didn't have any. One Indian from North Dakota, and that was all.

GP: What about your friends and relatives and, perhaps, even the people in Phillipsburg during the Depression. How were they managing?

GM: Well, that mine—I wish I could remember it now—they were still mining it there in Phillipsburg, and while we lived there, there was always entrepreneurs coming in with some money, but not enough money. They would go and try to start it up again. But it never went in all the years that we lived there. The Forest Service was there, the railroad was there, the ranchers were there, down in what they call Flint Creek Valley—beautiful ranches. So Phillipsburg, mainly because the population was stabilized—there weren't people coming and going—got along pretty well.

GP: Did you know any people whose lives, besides those in Phillipsburg, were relatively unaffected by the Depression?

GM: No…Well, yes, because we took two relatives from Missouri, who were desperate, had enough money to get this far, and they stayed with us and they worked out at the sugar-beet factory when they were making sugar. From then, they stayed on in Montana—there were three of them—and stayed in Montana, and a few actually got jobs.

GP: Was it hard to get a job in the sugar-beet factory?

GM: Well, yes, you had to put your name in and just be ready to go, and, of course, you're supposed to have a car. I used to drive them out every morning and go and get the—they got a ride back into town—but in the morning I would drive them out. It worked out all right, as far as jobs went.

GP: Now, are you talking about the sugar-beet factory that was out on Mullan Road?

GM: Yes.

GP: I see. What did you do for entertainment during the Depression?

GM: [laughs] Played a lot of cards—just a lot of cards—and bridge, pinochle. We had parties, and in Phillipsburg we frequently would go over to Butte—to Meaderville—and do Meaderville, which was lots of fun. Or we'd all go on a picnic together. But we were like everybody else, we worked from 9 [a.m.] until 10, 11 o'clock at night. But we did play a lot of cards.

[speaks to child] Peter!

GP: What was going on in Meaderville, did they just have a lot of what we would call "country western" places?

GM: Lots of bars and music and fantastic food and characters. It was really a remarkable thing. It was in a short block, not too long. I don't know how many bars there were, probably eight or ten, and people that lived there at that time just wandered from one bar to another bar. Met their friends there. This was the social life of a lot of Butte people, not the people from Phillipsburg, but we would go and we would have this fantastic meal, and then we would go and watch the people and listen to the music and come home 2 o'clock in the morning—big deal. [laughs]

GP: Were you aware of any people that were really having a tough time psychologically making it during the Depression?

GM: Yes, the cousins were very, very depressed. We had quite a time, although around us—around Charlotte and I—but they did talk to my father and my mother, and they were pretty desperate young men, really were. Their car broke down, had to sell it, and they had to get a job. They were pretty desperate people. Not desperate enough to rob or steal, but they were…They were both high school graduates, which was an advantage they did have.

[speaks to child] Peter!

GP: What about with your father? Do you think that he was affected by the Depression insofar as his relationship to the Forest Service went?

GM: No, the Forest Service got money—got some money—and they did a lot of extra things, and he'd hire college students to do these things for him. He was not the sort of person who was ever particularly depressed. He was always hopeful. But he had a lot of college boys that worked for him doing special kind of jobs in the summer, and then they would go back…Oh, and the blister rush was going on! That's a fantastic program they had, never amounted to much, but there is a certain currant bush that carries the host for that disease that the pine trees get called blister rust. And they had the kids out crawling around on the mountains cutting these bushes down. I said to our minister one time, that he said he'd been out here on blister rust…There were four other kids came out on it. It was kind of a dumb program. He said, "No," he said, "put more kids through college than you could shake a stick at," because it was cash they got and they couldn't spend it because they were too far away from any place, and they were not allowed to come into town, they had to get their work done. So, it was a remarkably good program. One of the better programs, I think.

GP: When did it begin to seem that the Depression was ending?

GM: In Montana?

GP: Yes, in this area.

GM: Well, the mills were going full-blast by ’36, ’37, or at least pretty much so. Now, David would probably tell you more about that than I do, but the Cs [CCCs] were still going until war was declared, and I’m sure that there must’ve been government jobs being handled even at that time, in ’42. Yeah.

GP: Do you have any other remembrances of the Depression or those times that you’d like to tell us about?

GM: No, I really don’t. I remember that the families in Missoula were…we did a lot of…well, we’d always done that, gone from house to house—dinner—and the families would get together and would socialize by telling stories and that sort of thing. It was a very…well, we didn’t have any money to go to…and they didn’t have very much in the way of entertainment, except for shows in Missoula.

GP: Was the radio important in your lives?

GM: Oh! Was it ever important. Most important thing in the world. Never, ever went to bed without hearing Chet Huntley in San Francisco. [laughs] And he was broadcasting then, we waited every night until 11 o’clock to listen to Chet Huntley. It was really a remarkable thing.

GP: What about soap operas?

GM: Oh, yes! They had a lot. I don’t remember…*Ma* something—

GP: *Ma Perkins*?

GM: *Perkins*. And *One Man’s Family*…or something like that.

GP: Oh, I remember that.

GM: That was an evening one that came on. And then they had the Lux Play Hour [*Lux Radio Theatre*], which they re-did movies with the original cast. Oh yes, that was a wonderful thing! Marvelous.

GP: Did you listen to *Amos ‘n’ Andy*?

GM: Oh, always. Always. Had a date one time with a boy, we went to the show, and we were walking home and he got in his car [unintelligible]. He said, “I don’t have time to take you all the way home because I gotta go home and watch *Amos ‘n’ Andy*.” I’ve always thought it was the funniest thing, my father thought it was hysterical. [laughs] But he got home in time to hear *Amos ‘n’ Andy*. We did that, we talked about it. Not the Negro, but the jokes. I think that’s it.

GP: Well, thank you very much, Glenna.

GM: You'll edit it.

[End of Interview]