

Maureen and Mike

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**Interviewee: Greg Morley**

**Interviewers: Beth Hodder and Ann Fagre**

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Beth Hodder: This is Beth Hodder. I am here today with Greg Morley to talk about his experiences at Jumbo Lookout in the Flathead National Forest. I am a member of the Northwest Montana Forest Fire Lookout Association, and we are interviewing this person for a project that we have based on oral history.

Greg, if you could, would you please tell us a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up?

Greg Morley: Okay. I grew up in southern California in Culver City, where I spent the first part of my life, and then after that, in Palos Verdes, through teenage times.

I've always been interested in the outdoors. I knew every vacant lot around and everything that lived in them. And I spent a lot of time at the library to find books to help me out with what I was seeing. I've just always been fascinated with the outdoors and developed an idea of someday wanting to live where there were forests and mountains.

BH: Where you were was all city?

GM: Yeah, it was all suburban and urban. Palos Verdes was not highly developed yet, so I was out close to the cliffs, and did a lot of snorkeling, diving, climbing up and down the cliffs looking for crystals in the cliffs and things like that. So, when it came time to pick a university, a college to go on, I decided forestry. Missoula seemed like a good place, and I had relatives in the area, too, so I could live with them and make the whole thing work well.

BH: What did you plan to do with the forestry degree?

GM: I wasn't sure yet. That just would kind of develop over time.

BH: Kind of like everybody else who goes to college [laughs].

GM: Yes. That's right. It's too young to know what you want to do with your whole life, but it seemed like a good place to start.

BH: How did you decide to become a lookout?

GM: That was part of the summer job set. As a forestry student, we were offered various things to do in the summer. I worked for—let's see—I worked for the Flathead Forest—I think it's

Flathead Forest anyway at the time. It was Big Prairie District, and they had fire training at Condon Station at that time, and so I did trail work first summer back there, constructing new trail, reconstructing old trail, and learned a lot about the area. We used horses, hiking all the time, and we were flown in [to Big Prairie], and I think I walked out at the end of the season. But this was when it was a Primitive Area, not a Wilderness Area yet. That didn't happen until '64 when I went up on the lookout there. Then the summer of '64 was the time of the big flood, too. And flooding was major through the South Fork of the Flathead [River], as well as everywhere else in western and eastern side of Montana here. So, I had signed up for Jumbo [Lookout] with that summer, but it started out as a pretty wet summer, so they didn't put me up there right away. I went out with another acquaintance of mine back there, another student, Len Soucie was his name.

BH: Len Soucie?

GM: Yes. But he and I then took a couple of pack horses and riding horses and went through a lot of the trails to try to get them open again and get the phone lines up—the Number 9 wire. We worked along the main trail for a couple of weeks, I think. It seems like it. And at the end of that time, I was back at Big Prairie, and then I went up on the lookout.

I went up by pack train [with] everything that I would need up there. I don't remember being much involved in picking out what food I would have or anything like that. I think the ranger was on top of that.

BH: Probably because you'd started already working at Big Prairie?

GM: Yes. And so, it [trail] went to the south part of the Bob Marshall. Let's see, it's pretty much between Basin Creek and Youngs Creek where the lookout is, and then the trail up to the lookout is about five miles long and very steep all the way. I recall when we approached the lookout, there was a small thunderstorm coming in at the same time, lightning starting to flash all around. We were in a rush to get up there where it was safer around it, and the packer just unloaded everything pretty quickly on the deck around the lookout and went back down. That's the last I saw of anybody for quite a while. It is a remote place.

BH: So, you can only get there by trail?

GM: Yes.

BH: What are distances? If you have an idea?

GM: Of how far I was from any place?

BH: Yeah.

GM: Let's see. I can't think of it right now, but, oh, at least 60 miles or so from the Swan Valley. Well, it would be the Clearwater Valley, the Seeley Lake area. Over on the east side, we were up against the wildlife refuge. What was the name of that? And then straight on out to the plains and Choteau out there.

BH: So, the wildlife refuge I think is—

Ann Fagre: Theodore Roosevelt?

BH: Yeah, the ranch.

BH: Yeah. Teddy Roosevelt.

GM: Anyway, the big ridges over that way that I could not see over. Then to the north was Spotted Bear [Ranger] District and Mud Lake Lookout, which was a much lower lookout. I was high above timberline and perched right up on top of the peak.

The lookout was really neat. It was, and still is, a building just tied to the top of the rock. The living quarters were right inside in this one building, and the lookout's there, too, the alidade is in the middle of the building, and a porch all around the entire building. So, the layout of the building inside—everything is low enough so it didn't obstruct any of the windows, and so anytime during the day you can look out and see everything out there.

BH: Must have had quite an expansive view.

GM: A wonderful view, long distances everywhere, and just all mountains everywhere you could see. Like I mentioned, in '64, it was a real mild summer, so we didn't have a lot of fire starts. I found a few, and would locate them, call them in. Mud Lake would triangulate it, and then [get them] taken care of. They were all quite a distance from me.

I did experience some pretty good thunderstorms up there, and this lookout has lightning arresters all around it—lightning rods and heavy copper rods—that went way on down until they could find some soil to sink them into. So that attracted the lightning, too, and when there was a storm going on overhead, the antennas and these rods would just start vibrating with St. Elmo's Fire sparks shooting off of them, and then a number of direct strikes, too, would hit the building. They were a little bit scary, but the lookout who had been there the year previous to me—his name was Bob Peck, and he was a good friend of mine—so he told me what it would be like. It frightened him completely one time, he said, but there's a stool with insulated feet on it, just glass insulators, and you stand by the alidade and off the floor. Lightning hits, and you might have balls of fire go across the room and slam into the cook stove. Some iron grounded equipment in there. The alidade, too, is grounded.

BH: So, those balls of fire, were they St. Elmo's Fire?

GM: Yeah.

BH: I never really quite understood that.

GM: Crackling across the floor, so it would be nice not to be in the way of them. [Both laugh]  
And a strong smell of ozone going on and blue crackles in the air. But no fire starts or anything.

Let's see. Everything was self-sufficiency up there. There was a nice little four-burner wood cook stove, oven, and anything you'd need for cooking. The fuel supply I had to take care of by hiking down the mountain to get into the small trees down below, to find dead trees, cut them down, and haul the whole tree on up to the lookout. Well, they were small, like six inches around or something. Just carry them on up to an area we had just below the deck. There was a place flattened out for receiving the horses and doing any work like this. Somebody had built a stone wall around part of it for shelter there against the winds. So, I made a woodpile out against this stone wall. There was a sawbuck there already and a nice splitting block, so I took care of the firewood that way. I had lots of time, so I could do all of that. I remember there was a nice counter space in there for the kitchen with a sink and a hand pump for the water. There was a tank under the counter.

BH: Oh. How did you get water in the tank?

GM: I had to carry it up in five-gallon containers. There were a number of containers up there, and I think the packer brought water up to begin with, so I had about 10 or 15 gallons to begin with.

Then, the previous lookouts had written advice up there on where to find things: where to find the outhouse, where to find the spring to get water—the closest spring—which was close to half a mile down the mountain, on the opposite side from the trail, but not down the cliff. They said bring a strainer along. You have to scrape all the needles and everything off the top of the water. And a dipper. And then I'd just sit there and fill a five-gallon can.

BH: Did it take a long time to fill it?

GM: I think so, but the spring would stay full all the time. It wasn't very big, trickling out of the ground there and going off down the mountain. Again, there was plenty of time to do things, so I don't remember being hassled by anything like that, and there's always interesting [things] in the woods all around. But I'd fill the five-gallon can, put it on a pack frame that I brought up myself. There were Forest Service pack frames there, but they were the old-fashioned wooden ones. I had a fire chaser frame all loaded up and ready to go, but I never did have to use that one. So, I'd bring up five gallons at a time.

BH: How much did the tank hold then?

GM: I don't recall.

BH: At least five gallons.

GM: At least that, yeah.

And then, let's see, for communications at that time, I had an air net radio. I don't remember if I had a radio to contact the ranger station. I don't think I did. I think it was just the air net, which was a great big outfit, a big steel case with tubes and a great big battery. I didn't use it very much, but it was on most of the time to receive signals. It was just for talking to pilots. And then the phone—Number 9 wire crank phone.

BH: For other lookouts and Big Prairie, Condon? That sort of thing—the Number 9 wire phone?

GM: Yeah. It could. I talked to Mud Lake a few times, but not very much. There was a lookout over in that [Sun River] Wildlife Refuge, too, but I forget very much about that one. The phone line had a big knife switch on it on the wall, that if there was a thunderstorm in the area, anywhere in the area, you could unhook that, open that switch up so you don't blow your phone up from a lightning strike. But good communication all the time. I talked often to the ranger station. The ranger at that time, I think, was Dolan.

BH: Jack Dolan?

GM: Jack Dolan. Yeah. He was in there I think for the first time that summer. Other rangers were the summer before. I recall one of their names, it was Hasley. He probably didn't last very long. He was second for the summer in '63, and then a really good ranger before him.

Jack Dolan was really a neat guy. In fact, one day in July I woke up to snow all over the ground. The whole place was covered in snow, really deep, and the phone rang. I lifted it up and I got a really robust Christmas song coming through [All laugh] from one of the guys down there. They could see that the peaks were all covered in snow.

AF: Was that the end of the season?

GM: No, that was in July at the time.

BH: So, it melted off.

GM: Yeah. It didn't last very long.

BH: Long enough for the song, anyway.

GM: Yeah. Most of the rest of the day, I think, it was up there.

A lot of the days I was up in the clouds, too, and you couldn't see anything out. Just heavy fog, and those kind of days, I could just go off exploring, or take care of my mail. I had a mailbox nailed to a tree, an old coffee can down on the main trail. At the bottom of the mountain. Anybody who was going by that had any mail for me would just stick it in there, and if there was mail there to going out, they would pick it up. It would get moved that way.

BH: Did the packers, then, or a packer put mail back in the box, or did they come up and bring you things?

GM: No, nobody ever came up. I think I might have been resupplied once during the entire time up there for food, but I'm not sure. I started out with really nice fresh foods to start with. I had with a chunk of meat, but there's no cooling facilities there. There was a screened box under one of the counters and a screen underneath, so it's good airflow. I hung the bacon and the beef in there. Of course, it was all used up in the first week or couple weeks except the bacon. That keeps really well. It's just a slab on the skin, and you just cut off what you need.

When I first arrived up there, too, we found that the bed—it's a built-in bed, a mattress on it.

BH: Like a wood platform type thing?

GM: Yeah. Just built out of wood, wood sides.

BH: A wood slat on the bottom?

GM: Yeah, and I had a sleeping bag along with me that I used up there. But the bed had been already used quite a bit all through the winter by a marmot. We didn't know what it was at first. There was a hole in the floor that had been torn through the floor, and his droppings all over the place surrounding the corners of the bed. So, there was some cleaning to do there and nailing up the hole in the floor. Then, it wasn't but a few days after moving in that I was sitting at the table, and I heard all this crunching, cracking sound going on somewhere on the lookout, and looked around and up pops this big hoary marmot through the floor. He was getting back to his place again. [All laugh] So I chased him out and had to repair the floor again. I eventually ended up shooting him, which I regret now, but I could have done things differently maybe. So I had his skin up there on the wall all the time.

AF: He remained inside?

GM: Yes.

AF: He finally got in.

GM: Yes.

BH: What did you do for meals?

GM: A lot of canned things. I did a lot of cooking. There was a really good Forest Service cookbook, and that's where I learned to cook quite a bit. Canned milk, lots of canned things. Then when the meat ran out, I had canned hams, Spam, all kinds of different things that come in cans.

BH: I heard of people having brown bread. Is that what they called it?

GM: There was something like that, yeah.

BH: Boston bread.

GM: Yeah.

BH: In a can.

GM: I baked bread up there, too. So, I had a lot of real basics, too, and then potatoes, and eggs. I think they kept pretty well for quite a while. I don't ever remember any problems with food at all, made pancakes a lot, and at the right season, I'd add wild berries, whatever I could find down the mountainside in there. So that worked really well.

BH: No varmints?

GM: No.

AF: Varmint meat. [All laugh]

GM: I was sure tempted one time. I was into archery quite a bit, so I had a bow and arrows up there with me, and I'd practice sometimes. When I'd wander around in the woods, I used to carry that with me. I sure had a good setup with an elk once down there, but I thought better of that when I was out of meat.

I'd see lots of wildlife up there. No grizzlies, but I did have black bears up there wandering through. In fact, early one morning when I was up in a cloud, couldn't see outside, it was all foggy, had bacon on the stove with the other things cooking, and had this strong feeling of being watched. I turned around and there was a black bear at the window on the far side with his nose just pressed tight against it, just watching me really close. I'm sure he could smell everything going on in there and wondering if he could be part of the party. But he eventually left.



There was a family of goats that spent a lot of time on the peak up there, too, as long as I was not outside. When I was inside, the kids would come up on the porch and they were kind of frisky and they 'd look around and watch me in through the window and the adult goats would be out just away on the rocks out there. Sometimes they'd go over the cliff edge, disappear over the side. That was straight up and down, went down for a couple thousand feet, and you could walk up to the edge and try to look down there. You can't see the face of the cliff at all. I don't know how they did it. They'd be down there looking for plants or whatever they're doing.

BH: So, the kids, you said, would get up on the porch.

GM: Yeah, they were curious.

BH: It was like a catwalk?

GM: Yeah, like a catwalk type of thing.

BH: How high was that off the ground for them to have to climb up?

GM: It was just some steps going up to it. Only a couple of steps. It's only three feet or so off the rock.

BH: It wasn't too hard for them.

GM: No, they'd just walk right up there. It was just a big flat area around the lookout with a railing around it, so I spent a lot of time walking around on it, glassing the terrain with big binoculars to just watch for fires. A lot of times I'd just be watching people, because I could see pack trains, hikers. Mostly, it was people by horseback, traveling the trails way down below, and coming at Youngs Creek or the South Fork Trail.

A number of times I did see bears down there that would be in an area and see the packer come along and the bear would just disappear off up into the trees. The pack train would go by and the bear would come back out again. I'd already been on trails a lot down below the summer before, and I did notice my horse a lot of times would get real skittish in an area, so I knew why then. They could sense that the bear's up there watching. That was interesting.

Then I had to watch the area. Let's see, it was just that summer I think, that the area became an official wilderness area. The Wilderness Act was passed, so it changed the way things were done. We used to use chainsaws back there, and then those couldn't be used anymore.

The private pilots at times would set down on the airstrips back there. Basin Creek had an airstrip and so that became outlawed. I was to call in anytime I saw an aircraft land there. It was only one time that a private plane landed in there, so I just called it into the ranger station. There were a few times when planes would approach the lookout and talk to me on the radio.

They were private pilots, and they'd buzz around a little bit and waved, and I'd climb up on top of the rooftop—it was a flat roof—and we greeted each other anyway.

One time that summer, all I knew was that they were the brass, some of the top-level Forest Service people were touring the area, and it's probably because of the Wilderness Act. The Internet radio came to life and a voice said that they were coming to visit me, and look out to the northeast, I guess, a big valley out that way. And I said, "I don't see you." And they said, "It's a big plane. Look down." So there was a DC-3 coming up the mountainside like this, and all these guys were in it. They buzzed right over the lookout in this big plane, a twin-engine DC-3. It's pretty old. And then they went on over and landed at Big Prairie, I think. That was kind of exciting.

On the days when it was not much to look at out there—it was awfully wet, no fire danger—then is when I would go down to the bottom. It's a five-mile hike down, and I'd take a jar of water and stash that halfway down because there were no springs along that route, and I didn't have a water bottle or anything. I'd go clear to the bottom, take care of the mail, and turn around and just come right back up again. It's a very steep climb but interesting.

BH: How long do you think it took you to do that?

GM: I don't know. Probably not very long, only a couple hours. Well, the round trip would probably be three hours. I went through a lot of good huckleberries, so I'd resupply that way. There were some old burns there on the side of the mountain, too, that you'd go through, but if the sun was shining much, it could get pretty hot there on the way up. That's why I left the water jar there, too.

BH: Now, you mentioned that you also hiked up there. Is there a ridge or ridges?

GM: Ridges, yeah, ridges that I'd follow along. Let's see, going one of the directions—I think north—on a ridge just above that cliff that goes straight down, a little saddle down below, not very far down from the lookout and still within sight of it, I found a jumble of rocks that had a lot of travertine in it, and I noticed a lot of cold air coming up out of the ground right there, too. Travertine forms as a cave formation, so I spent a little bit of time trying to move rocks out of the way to see if I could open up any cave there. I knew there were big caves on the cliff down below me. I'd seen them before from the trails way down below, but they were way up on the cliff side. I never did open anything up there, but in looking around there, I also found a lot of fossils in the limestone that make up that mountain. I collected a bunch of really neat Mississippian period reef type fossils [from the] ocean, which were really interesting, so I had a little collection of those inside the lookout. That was fascinating down there. I intended to get back up there in years since then to look around there but never have.

BH: See if anybody found a cave or—

GM: Yeah.

BH: Do you still have your fossils?

GM: No, I don't. I gave them to a girlfriend at the time, and that's all.

AF: So, I was wondering if you'd been back to Jumbo.

GM: No, I hadn't.

AF: Okay. So, or the limestone or travertine.

GM: Let's see. I'm trying to think of any other interesting things there. I never was bored. I really love the outdoors, and I don't mind being alone with my own thoughts, too. Not generally frightened by much.

BH: Did you have any weird experiences up there, like, you know, something that might have frightened you besides lightning?

GM: No, just the lightning, a little uneasy when that's going on. It didn't happen very often.

Neat feelings though, one is that the wind blew a lot up there, of course, and sometimes 60 miles an hour or more, so if you lay down in the bed, or even just sitting in a chair in the middle of the room, you can't see any mountains; you just see sky. And it's just like being in an aircraft. The clouds are at your level and coming along fast. They're always shooting past you or you go right through them, and the building is vibrating, and you have the complete feeling of moving fast. It's just like the lookout is a plane. That was a neat feeling.

Also, with the wind blowing like that, when thunderstorms, when rain would be coming down hard on the wind like that, the windows all leaked like crazy. Water'd just be flowing in through the windows. So after I marked places, at least in my mind, where they were leaking and then did a lot of caulking on the outsides of the windows in nicer times, trying to stop those leaks. But they were old-fashioned, small panes, lattice shake windows, because they all had to get up there on the back of a mule to begin with.

BH: So you said you saw pictures of Jumbo in the Beacon?

GM: Yep.

BH: Were the windows the same?

GM: They still looked the same. And they're protected in the winter with the shutters that come down over them, and the first person up there lifts the shutters up.

BH: What do you think was the best thing that you liked about being up there?

GM: Oh, having a chance to really slow down and think about things and explore life on the mountain. Really experience it all for a long time and not just a short time going up, camping, and coming down. So, you go through all kinds of weather, and the animals—everything from the chipmunks to the bigger animals.

There were a lot of deer that came through there, too. There had been summers when a salt lick was set up there, too. Some of the lookouts would bring a block of salt with them. I didn't that time, but the animals knew that it should be there, and of course, the ground probably had a lot of salt in it from them. Probably why the goats hung out up there a lot.

BH: I think they may still hang out there.

GM: Well, probably do.

AF: I don't know if this was covered when I was out, but was there an outhouse?

GM: Okay, the outhouse. That was interesting, too. It was nice. All it was kind of a little bit of stonework, dry stone, to make a little platform seat area, and more rocks removed from down below. Somebody'd done that a long time before. The seat was in the lookout, and so you'd carry that down with you, down the mountainside to where the location was—it wasn't too far down there—and just set it down there and sit out in the open.

BH: So, it didn't have any walls.

GM: No. There were no walls.

AF: Was there a view?

GM: Oh, a tremendous view, all around.

AF: A loo with a view.

GM: That's right.

BH: Pick which way you want to sit.

GM: That's right. With the lookout up way up there behind. [All laugh]. So, that was good.

I found out on the first day that you have to be a little bit cautious when throwing your wash water out. Wash dishes in a tub, in a pan, and I walked out to the edge of the deck where the

cliff was down on the lower side and it was a nice calm day. I just threw it off over the edge and it came right back at me. The wind blows like crazy, going It went straight up the cliff side.

BH: Is that a constant?

GM: Yeah, pretty much, at least during the day when the sun is up. In the mornings there were a couple of eagles that I got to know really well, and I'd look over the edge and see them way down below me, and they were doing great big circles, but they were on their way up, didn't flap their wings anytime. They'd get up right to my level and just keep going until they were tiny specks way overhead, and then they would soar off to wherever they were going for the day. They always seemed to roost way down there somewhere at night.

BH: So what did you do with the wash water? You couldn't throw it over the edge.

GM: Just poured it carefully down on the ground over the edge and let it trickle away. Just learned those different things early on. I'm always—and my wife will tell you, too—I'm always inclined to keep a good wood pile, so if there was nothing else to do, I'd be hauling wood up there and sawing it up. I left a good pile there when I left.

I was called down early, too, and I don't know the dates that I was there during the summer; I know it was all of July and into August, and then I was called down because nothing was happening fire-wise, and put on the trail for a little while over on the Gordon. There was some reconstruction going on there. Then it was about time for school to start and I went and hiked on out through Holland Lake over Gordon Pass.

BH: And that was your one and only year up at the lookout.

GM: At the lookout was only one year like that. Now when I'm graduating from the university—Ann and I were married then—on graduation and a possible summer employment for a job opening with the Forest Service was on a lookout in Idaho, and another job, which we did select, was working for Hill County putting Beaver Creek Park under professional management. So we chose that one, and I went over to Beaver Creek Park, which is a 10,000-acre wild land park south of Havre in the Bear Paw Mountains. I worked there or three years. That was a really neat experience. We both learned an awful lot from that.

AF: Was that year-round or seasonal?

GM: That was a year-round permanent job. But we really missed the mountains, and those people of the plains could not understand that, because they got claustrophobia if they came over here; they couldn't get back to the plains fast enough. And we learned how different people are on both sides of the mountains here. There is quite a difference. We enjoyed it a lot over there, really liked getting to know everyone over there, and up against the Rocky Boy

Reservation, we got to know the Chippewa Cree really well. We spent a lot of time over there on the reservation, too, and they over on the Park. So, it was a very educational time.

BH: So then after you left Hill County—

GM: Yes.

BH: What did you do?

GM: I got a job over in Salem Oregon. I then worked for the State Parks of Oregon at the main office as a planner. I was first with the Willamette River Park System. That was a new creation by Governor McCall. There was a pretty famous thing that happened there. The Willamette River had just recently been cleaned up from a lot of pulp mill pollution. First salmon run about the same time we moved back there. McCall ran on part of a platform of the park system, all up through that river system, a major state park in every county. There were seven counties, so I was the planner on that team. Really neat work.

We stayed there for about four years and then decided to go off on our own and build canoes. We wanted to get back to Montana and didn't want to have to work for anybody else. So, we tried that out.

BH: How did you get into canoe building?

GM: Just did it.

BH: You'd never—

GM: No, I'd never done that, but we did paddle a lot.

BH: Wow! You make gorgeous canoes.

GM: Thanks. We did a lot of paddling. I made a few canoes of different types, plywood one, and a fiberglass one. And then I learned about this cedar strip method. There was a fellow in Portland who was making some like that. He was doing it fulltime, and he was a classic hippie, very different lifestyle. I observed his very close and then pretty much sort of copied but also got a lot more information about working with those kind of materials through the library system and did a lot of research that way. Built a few canoes and went up to a boat show up in Seattle while still working for State Parks. Took a canoe up there and displayed it and got such a huge positive reaction. Did a little more marketing survey first and we decided we'd just try it. So quit the job in Salem and moved over to Montana here, first to the Bitterroot Valley area because friends were living in Corvallis and we could land there. We were really on a shoestring for a while, had a little bit of money that we'd saved, but not that much and rented a building on Main Street in Corvallis and started making canoes. And it took off from there.

BH: When did you move your business to Montana, I mean, to Swan Lake?

GM: To Swan Lake? Yeah, about three years later. It was 1972 when we started building canoes, late '72, and in '75, we moved up to Swan Lake. It took us a while to find something we could afford up in Swan Lake. We just kept looking and looking, and then we found a bar, the Silver Spur Bar, that had been empty for a while. The liquor license was gone from the property, and an elderly group of men owned it at the time. It was part of the Swan Lake Resort, I think, is what they called it. The Forest Service campground right now was part of it, and this property was part of it, and a few other properties in Swan Lake were owned by them. They all wanted out of it, all these men were at the end of their lives, and nothing was being operated anymore there, so they helped Ann and I out in purchasing the old bar property, one acre there.

That made a nice shop to start with. We lived in a teepee for a summer and one of the guest cabins on the lake for the winter and built a cabin. We still live in that cabin there, raised two boys.

BH: Are they around?

GM: One is an electrical engineer in Portland, Oregon, and the other is building canoes.

BH: Chip off the old block.

GM: Yeah, well, sort of. He was the one that wasn't going to do anything that didn't make a lot of money, and I didn't think he'd ever be suited to do something like this, but he's just ideal for it right now. He has a business degree from Bozeman, and started off work like that, and he didn't like working in an office and wearing a suit and starting to put on pounds. So, he quit that and went over to Hawaii and lived there for ten years as a doorman in one of the resorts so he could go windsurfing all the time, one of the best places to wind surf. And started his family, decided to come back home, asked if he could learn how to build the canoes and work in the shop and set up his family at Swan Lake, too, and raised them that way. He'd seen enough of the way everything else was and realized what his childhood was. So, that's where that went. So now, he's doing all of the building and I'm just helping out.

BH: That works, too.

GM: Yes.

BH: Getting back to lookouts: if you had to do it over again, would you?

GM: Yep. I think so. That was outstanding. But at the time, I didn't understand that it was the most remote lookout in the Lower 48 here; it was just a lookout. And then lots of lookouts that I've seen since are disappointing looking: too much uptown, too many people that come up to

them, or that you could drive to them. They weren't remote enough. I enjoy that kind of thing, being really back, relying on your own, that sort of thing.

BH: Do you think it affected your life in any way?

GM: It probably did. It kind of shaped things for the way we wanted to live up here, the way I wanted to live and Ann, I think, did, too. Well, it takes both of us to make it all possible. It was both of us with the canoe business, getting that started and keeping it going, and she's still involved in it right now. She has a degree in botany, and is fascinated with the outdoors, too. She was one of the people that helped start the Montana Native Plant Society, back in the beginning there.

BH: Any other thoughts? Anything we missed?

GM: I can't remember any other stories up there on the mountain.

BH: Those are great stories.

GM: Well, getting trails open, I did kind of a crazy thing on opening the trail to the north up Big Prairie along the South Fork up past the White River back toward Big Salmon Lake. The trail is on the east side of the river right there, and we were putting the phone line back up wherever we found it down and getting trees off the trail, just two of us. We got up as far as Big Salmon Lake, and I wanted to see that part of the country over there. The cable car that went across the river right there had broken free during the flood, and the car itself was stuck out in the middle of the cable.

BH: Up in the air or down on the river?

GM: Up in the air on the cable, but the cables that you would pull to make the car go were broken loose and they went down into a logjam on the river. The river was still moving really fast at that time, and so the cable was like a slingshot. It was bowed way downstream. The stands on both ends looked really solid, so I rigged up the climbing gear with a pulley on top—I don't remember where I got that—and went out across and to the cable car, unhooked, and got myself around it and went over to the other side. The whole thing was vibrating with the power of the river pulling on it. I realize now how stupid that was, but got over there and explored a while and then came back. Things had really been messed up up there from that flood, the '64 flood.

BH: Probably changed a lot of channels?

GM: It did on the river, yeah. The trail was mostly in good shape and you could get through—there were a few places where it was wiped out, too—and on the White River, it was a little bit, but you could still reestablish the trail.



Phone lines were down a lot. We had to do a lot of climbing and put it back up.

We saw a lot of grizzly tracks. We never did run into the bears; I think they were pretty shy. They were still hunted quite a bit that time and were not protected, and their numbers were way down from what they are today.

BH: They're doing fairly well now, I think.

GM: Yep. Ran into moose a number of times.

BH: They don't have any bighorns or anything back in that country, do they?

GM: I don't think so. I didn't see any. Encountered lots of elk and then the moose.

One time fishing along the Flathead River on the South Fork, away from Big Prairie a ways, I heard this thumpity-thumpity-thump sound behind me, coming right up to me, and I turned around and here's a young buck. I hadn't had that happen before, and he had his head down and like he wanted to spar with me, and boy, I didn't know what was going on. I put my fishing rod between him and me and started hollering at him and focused on him and yelled at him. Then he went off, and then he came back up again and then finally left.

BH: A little scary.

GM: It was a little bit because you don't know what to expect, and he was focused on me. It was not rutting season, so that was weird.

AF: Any mountain lion sightings?

GM: No, I never did see a lion up there, although I was aware of them. I knew that they were around. They never did bother me until much later when a friend of mine up the Swan here—I'd go out skiing with him in the wintertime—and he was a lot more concerned about telling me a little more what they could do. And then I read more since, too, so I'm a little more careful.

AF: The largest mountain lion ever seen was in the Swan. Enormous.

GM: From what I understand, they're not the ones you have to worry about so much.

AF: The large ones?

GM: Yeah, the older, well-established ones. It's those younger ones that might be hungry and establishing territory and learning whether we're going to eat or not.

AF: Figure things out. Yeah.

GM: We see tracks around our place a lot, too. Some people stopped at the shop one summer or fall and asked us about the mountain lion. I said, "What mountain lion?" "The one that hangs out in your raspberry patch," which is outside the road, and they were seeing a lion laying in there at times.

AF: We see the tracks all winter around Montana House [store in Apgar, Glacier National Park].

GM: You do.

AF: Yes. They're around.

GM: Yep, they are. And we see the tracks around our place at times, all kinds of tracks around our place. And then we've had grizzly around the house, too. At one time we had chickens, which grizzlies like and we lost some chickens. So once that happened and we found out what was really going on, we haven't had chickens anymore. We could put up an electric fence, but we decided just not to attract them.

Kind of a tangential story about that, too, Ann got up early in the morning and went out to take care of the chickens and she came back and said, "You left the door open on the chicken house." And I said, "Oh," and walked upstairs and looked out the door, and the door was open, and a grizzly bear was just going across the yard. She'd just been out there, and it was going back for seconds. [All laugh]

Anyway, it ate another chicken, and there were still a couple others left. Fish and Game came out and set up a trap and they put a family trap in the yard, which is a double-barrel trap. They put chickens in the top trap and closed that up there, used them as attractant, but the bear would not go in the trap. It was a two-year-old grizzly that had just been kicked out by its mom, and its mother was a chicken raider, too. The cubs had learned, so eventually the Fish and Game put a snare right behind our house in the woods and the first night, they had him. We could hear all this hissing and growling and angry sounds coming from back there all night long. In the morning, I went up and looked and there he was, caught by his front leg. He ran to the end of that cable.

BH: Toward you or away?

GM: Toward me, because he was cornered. So Ann and I both went back a second time and we were looking at him, and eventually Fish and Game got out there, and before going back to the place, one of the personnel had a shotgun out and they were loading live rounds in it. I said, "Why do you need those?"

"Because snares don't always hold them." [Laugh] We'd just stood right there. Yeah, that wasn't very wise, either, but nobody told us. So anyway, it was tranquilized, and a collar put on it. They wanted to hard release it, right from our place there, but it was Memorial Day weekend, and the [Swan Lake] Campground close by was full of people, so they couldn't do that. They transported it over to the Hungry Horse side where most of the bears go and hard-released it over there. They had dogs and bean bag shot or something like that to give it a hard time.

It came back across the Swan Mountains probably before the truck got back and got down to the end where my son was living and our grandkids there had one of those same chickens from the flock as their pet. That same bear found the chicken that they had and chased it down and ate it. That's eight miles away from where we were. It went from there over Crane Mountain and over to Woods Bay area and started breaking into garages and being a real problem. They finally caught it in another snare and instead of having to euthanize it, they found a place for it in Colorado, let's see...

AF: Colorado Springs.

GM: Colorado Springs. There's a zoo there [Cheyenne Mountain Zoo] and they wanted one. So that's where it is now. His name is Emmett and he was named that when he was tranquilized in our backyard. There was a little boy next door who came over to see him, too, and the biologist told all of us that the bears are really clean; there's no smell to them or anything. Ann gave it a hug. It was great to get a picture of it like that, while it was tranquilized, and it had a cloth over its eyes so it couldn't see anything. The little boy did that, too. He was really fascinated with it, and his name is Emmett, and so the bear was named Emmett. We've seen a few news clippings since then of Emmett, and I guess there's a website with him on it all the time. He's a big bear there who is happy where he is, because he is fed all the time.

BH: A little chicken here and there.

Well, this is wonderful. Any more stories or anything?

GM: No, no. It was a wonderful experience on the lookout, and it also showed me that I could take care of myself back there, too.

BH: That's a big thing that I've heard other people say as well. I think it teaches you self-sufficiency and learning about yourself and what you can actually do.

GM: It does. And I've taken some really nice river trips, too, with some people, too, into the Canadian Arctic all summer long, and I think the confidence I had in doing those things started back there in the lookout.

AF: That's a nice connection.

GM: We've never used guides or anything like that, just do our own research, and rely on ourselves going down the rivers, encountering wildlife, finding our way, dealing with weather, whatever.

BH: Well, thank you for doing the interview. This is wonderful.

GM: It's a good opportunity to remember things.

[End of Interview]