

**Oral History 244-11**

**Hazel Marsh Collection**

**Interviewee: Hazel Marsh**

**Interviewer: Jim Scott**

**March 23, 1990**

Jim Scott: Well this is tape number eleven. It's March 23, 1990. This is side one. Hazel is going to begin. I guess we're at October, '79, when she moves into Missoula after having sold the Bearmouth property to the Bearmouth Land and Cattle Company.

Hazel Marsh: The purpose of these people that decided to buy the property, or the reason is, that land was right at that time, would you say, a seller's market?

JS: Yes. Wasn't it in 1980 about the height of inflation?

HM: They only intended to turn it over right away or to sell it to different people for home sites. It didn't turn out that way. However, they did sell my house, the one up on the bluff: they sold that to a man from Hamilton. Apparently he loved the place but he didn't like the neighbors and the area, so he sold it again to a man who does heavy construction and has all kinds of trucks and that sort of thing and that doesn't much say it at all. He turned the garage into an office.

JS: Did they divide up the land in any other way besides the part that was your house?

HM: Yes. Later on they sold about three hundred acres to Gene Tripp, I guess...the man who bought the old Guinane place. I guess they sold the old Bearmouth town site from Spannuth including the old placer diggings south of where the old school was. The man did some exploration there in the old diggings and spent one summer there. He had a settling pond that he was forced to have because of the environmentalists. He gave up and went away and I don't know whether he ever completed his contract to buy that land or not. I don't know whether it

belongs to him or to the Bearmouth Land and Cattle Company. They also timbered it all off, they took every stick of timber that could be sold I guess, all of sections eleven, two, and fifteen. Actually on fifteen there was just enough timber to make it scenic, which would have helped with selling home sites. But they just skinned it all off.

JS: Where are these sections? Are they visible from the road?

HM: Yes. Section eleven is right where the old swimming pool was, right under the rock cliffs...

JS: Yes.

HM: Section eleven all the rock cliffs, and section two is right north of it, and fifteen extends up from the area where the dredge camp was located and goes along the frontage road to over where the gravel pit is now, over where they took out the pumice rock. That's the property on that side of the river. It extends further on the south side, it extends out down to where that old building used to be and on up Harvey Creek for about two miles. Anyway, I don't know what happened to [inaudible]. That's about it I guess. There was a big to do about the government picking a likely site to replace the activity that's up Blue Mountain. Blue Mountain is a rifle range and it was getting too congested there so they thought the Big Valley would be an excellent place. Then Granite county rose up in arms and they didn't [want it]. The government didn't want to go against the area people so they abandoned that site and the Bearmouth Land and Cattle Company, of course, were disappointed because they intended to make that sale. Ask me questions.

JS: Well, ok. Let me think here. Let's postpone as long as we can the next moving of the white house, because I take it that's quite recent.

HM: Yes, that was after I sold. I didn't even know it was being moved. People came and asked me where the white house was. I said, "Well I don't know, isn't it where it always was?" They said, "No." And then I found out that it had been moved. I can't remember the man's name who teaches at Big Sky high school and there's a part time minister, some denomination I don't know,

but he holds services on Sunday, and he kept saying that he wanted some pictures but apparently he got an ample description from Freddy Weaver, who was a source of all information as far as myself, the ranch and the history. [laughter]

JS: Well let's see, what else is there to ask about the '80s? To your knowledge have any more parcels been sold? Other than the moving of the house, your house up on the hill that you mentioned, and then what else?

HM: The whole Harvey Creek area was sold to Gene Tripp.

JS: Oh, he did buy the Harvey Creek area?

HM: The whole area.

JS: What's he going to do with it, do you know?

HM: He pastures a beautiful herd of cattle and then I think he has irrigated pasture, too. I don't think he puts up any hay. And of course up above it is owned by the people who bought my new house. So that whole area has been sold. But they still own what we use to call the Big Valley: let's see, sections fifteen and eleven on the north side and two, twenty-three, and twenty-four they still own.

JS: To your knowledge are they desperate to get rid of it? Is this money on their hands?

HM: Yes, it is. They would very much love to get rid of it. They were supposed to make a balloon payment in '89, I guess, and instead of making a payment we agreed on a new contract, with an increase in the interest, of course, another ten years period.

JS: Tell me about the other side of the highway. Actually what I mean, Hazel, is really the north side of the service road. What about the house that I use to call Mrs. Goff's house? And then there's that brick telephone substation or what is that little building that's brick?

HM: It was a relay station, I guess, or a booster station. At one time, we owned that whole area that was before any sale was made. I guess it's a postal telegraph or telephone company [?] area but it's telegraph I'm quite sure. The telephone bought that little area on which they built that brick building, which was the Bearmouth [?]. They abandoned that a few years ago, offered it to me and I didn't want to buy it. I had reserved that because of Mrs. Goff. I don't know why I did it, but she didn't have any way of moving her house and so I exempted that little area in there from the sale of the land for her convenience. And then later on the people who owned or operated the placer mining activity between Bearmouth and up Deep Gulch, all along the gulch, they wanted a place to put their mobile home and in exchange for some assessment work they were supposed to do on the old mine, I allowed them to move there. They did the assessment work, but it turned out pretty drastic. They had built a big building on the site of the old hotel where the dredge company's accommodations for their employees, and they said it was for a machine shed. I found out a few years ago they had a heavy business in marijuana and dope. That shed was built to raise marijuana. They had a contract with someone in Spokane to whom they supplied it, and also locally I guess.

JS: Where was this shack? I can't place this.

HM: Well it's still there, I wanted to have it torn down, but they want it for evidence I guess. It's right; you know where the trailer house is?

JS: Now we're talking about where Mr. Cameron's trailer house used to be — up on that hill?

HM: Yes. Well after that there was a brick foundation left there when they moved it (the old hotel) and they built it on that old foundation.

JS: When did this bust take place?

HM: About two years ago. In the interim I had never gotten out there because I had had several surgeries—knee replacements, and was kind of tied up here.

JS: Well let me ask you who actually owns what I called, I guess incorrectly, Mrs. Goffs house and the property, if that was exempted from the sale to the Bearmouth Cattle Company?

HM: I own the land. And I guess Mrs. Goff's son, Charley, lives there or exists there and has some horses in the place that used to be beautiful. The name of the man who had it, the old man, was Hendricks and then his nephew took over the operation and he's the one who left pretty unceremoniously when this drug bust came up. He sold his lease he had with me, (which expires in '93,) to a man by the name of Bill Sharrord in Billings. He has never carried out his part of the agreement nor has he made any offer to pay any rent. I wish we had gotten his address: I'd love to write to him and remind him of his obligation.

JS: What does he use that piece of land for?

HM: He lives in the trailer house.

JS: Oh, he does? And Mrs. Goff's son is still in the white house?

HM: Yes.

JS: Does he feel like his existence there is precarious? Or does he...

HM: Oh, I don't know, he pays the rent. He has raised his own rent about three times. It was first, I think, \$50 a year and then he sent me \$100, and the last time he sent me \$200.

JS: What does he do for a living?

HM: He works on the highway construction.

JS: Oh, he does. So up on that little hill then, there's Mrs. Goffs son, there's the man who is in the trailer that you were just talking about, and in that brick building is the caretaker for Garnet we were talking about before?

HM: Yes, according to you.

JS: Yes, right.

HM: Oh, I have a letter. I'm going to get that letter right now.

[tape turned off]

JS: What is his name?

HM: Gerard is his name, Bill Sharrord.

JS: Did you say he works for the highway?

HM: I don't know where he works. I have no idea. I've got to write it down or call him or something. You never had the pleasure of meeting Frank Fitzgerald?

JS: No, I haven't.

HM: He's quite the character. He's a cousin of the Lannens.

JS: Is he?

HM: And he claims a relationship to me. [laughter] He always calls me his cousin. His folks, in about 1904 I guess, they operated a saloon at Garnet and built quite an elaborate home up there, kind of a show place. I don't know if you've seen it, it's up that gulch that runs up to the right.

JS: Yes, yes you can see that.

HM: Kind of a nice looking house.

JS: When I skied up to Garnet we had to go up Secret Gulch, no I don't mean Secret Gulch, anyway right past Beartown it's the first Gulch, Cave Gulch and when you go up that road you look down on this really fancy house.

HM: Well he goes up there to and lives all summer and he's kind of the public relations man who mans a little information booth and tells all sorts of stories. He left there when he was five years old and he never came back until after World War II. He made a great deal bringing in groceries to the folks and taking real good care of them for a year or two. He said it didn't do him a bit of good. They didn't leave him a thing. I thought maybe that he did deserve something... but it was so contrived, you know, so obvious.

JS: Nothing charitable? In intent.

HM: I don't think it was charitable, but anyway I gave him my Scout so he wouldn't feel so left out.

JS: When he was talking about bringing groceries in, was this while you were on Sussex? Or when they were still back at the... ?

HM: No, I was away in Seattle. He was taking advantage of the opportunity. It was real nice of him.

JS: Where did he get the money to build that nice home?

HM: He didn't build it, his folks built it. They built it when they operated the saloon there. Then when the camp went down they left. Boarded it all up. When he came back after the war I don't think he really had any other place to go [so he] went up there and restored it, made it livable. He

started and built out a new, very attractive little room with a rock floor and then he built a beautiful fireplace.

JS: About how old is he now?

HM: He's about three years older than I am. He's an old man. Well he was quite... they call him the professor. He is quite verbose. But he was gone all those years and you know.

JS: Where is he in the winter time?

HM: He bought a little home in Drummond.

JS: So Hazel, of all the property at Bearmouth then is it only the Goff house and the land right around it that you still own?

HM: I own.

JS: How much land did you exempt with the Goff house?

HM: Oh, they say two and half acres, but I have more than that. I own the water rights.

JS: Yes. What will become of it when...?

HM: I expire?

JS: No. I was going to say when the Goff boy dies or leaves?

HM: I don't know. I'd like to clean up the whole place. It's such a mess. I don't really know what to do with it; it's one of those things. But I am going to write to his family and ask what financial arrangement he wants to make if he going to continue to live there. He'll have squatter's rights.

JS: Is that true?

HM: I should go out there really. I really haven't been able to drive out there.

JS: We're going to have a big itinerary when we take a springtime ride out there. We've got a lot of places to go with the white house having been moved once again. We already talked about that I guess, and we'll visit it sometime this spring. We're just about up to date, aren't we?

HM: I sold my house on Skyline and moved into Brookside.

JS: When was that?

HM: Just a year ago. In March of '89.

JS: Can you think of some reflections or concluding sentiments? We don't have to actually have anything for the tape. When you're writing this you can conclude any way you want. You know when you do write this up I really would like you to put in more personal details like you said before we started this tape for examples... that you had to sew flour sacks together for sheets... you know this kind of thing.

HM: I'd hate to do that to them.

JS: Well, I didn't understand it as any kind of reflection on Kate Lannen, until you said something, like she was unusual or funny in her ways. I thought you were just telling me in those days the luxury of sheets was not available to everyone.

HM: Well they had sheets that I never got to use. They had sheets for the people who came to rent a room and they had sheets on their bed.

JS: And you had flour sacks?

HM: Yes.

JS: But in any case things like that I think probably anybody under [age] fifty would find really amazing.

HM: I find it amazing myself. I'd forgotten about those things for so long, then when they occur to me I [inaudible] like a lot of other things I don't even want to talk about. How could I have been...? Well, you have to love somebody, you know, and I had no aunts, uncles, grandmother, grandfather, father, mother and she was just the object of my affection, that's all. And there was a lot about her to admire. She was quite a person. She came there when she was real young, she didn't have any education, or any contact with the normal world, and always was independent. They always had more than anyone else around them, because they came there so early.

JS: What was Chris' middle name? Did I ask you this weeks and weeks ago?

HM: I don't think he had one.

JS: But it was Christopher?

HM: Yes. I don't think we know of any middle name.

**End of tape eleven**