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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 086-017, 018

Interviewee: William "Bill" Longpre and Lena Marceau Longpre

Interviewer: Jane Reed Benson

Date of Interview: July 26, 1977

Project: Nine Mile Remount Depot Oral History Project

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

William Longpre: There's no way telling me if it's operating or not though.

Jane Benson: Yes, there is.

WL: Oh, there is?

JB: Yes. I'm talking today with Mr. William Longpre, who probably knows more than anybody else around here. Matter of fact, Mr. Longpre, I think you know more than anybody in town. The history of the land where the Remount Depot is and if you could tell us all about that, that would be great. The whole thing.

WL: Frank Tremblay was the homesteader before the turn of the century I suppose in about...as I recall the old-timers, about 1889.

JB: Tremblay?

WL: Tremblay, Frank Tremblay.

JB: Are there any Tremblay left?

WL: No, he was a bachelor. He was crippled and he sold to my uncle, and then he stayed there until he died. My uncle's name was Pierre, Pierre Longpre, and the next was Burt Alan (?). He came in from Wyoming and bought the place.

JB: That would be Alan.

WL: Alan.

JB: About when would that have been? Do you have any idea?

WL: Well, it was right around 1920 I would say, somewhere in that neighborhood. Then Jack Ray. Alan kept it probably five years, then Jack Ray and Jack Ray had it just a short time—about two years. Then Ralph Scheffer bought it. Ralph leased it to the Forest Service for one year and then...or two years, and then they bought it.

JB: I think it was a couple of years. I think the final sale wasn't...oh, I've seen some papers talking about the final sale. Seems like it was around '34 by the time it finally all got settled.

WL: Oh, is that right?

JB: Yes, you know they had to negotiate with Washington.

WL: I guess you're right because the CCs [Civilian Conservation Corps] were there, and they had come in the fall of '33. So, it probably was in '34. Then, of course, they moved in a lot of CCs and start clearing land and fencing and building. Building the Remount, as it is, pretty much like it is now.

JB: Then, did you know most of these people who had previously owned the land? I didn't ask you that last time.

WL: Yes.

JB: You knew all of those people?

WL: Oh yes. In fact, we moved there on the place—the old original place just east of the Remount—in 1910. Then I suppose it was...This Tremblay must have lived until in the '20s, and then of course, the others I knew. Alan lived there for, I guess, five or six years or something like that. Then Jack Ray. Jack only had it a couple years though.

JB: So, your family, then, has been next door, just east there, since about 1910. Is that right?

WL: That's right, but my father owned it long before that. Before the turn of the century, but never would we...just a cabin there. We used to live in the valley and he'd go up there and hay, but it never was called the home place. It was just an extra place.

JB: Did you build a home up there in 1910?

WL: Then in 1910, we built—built up, cleared land, everything was stumped. There was very little land cleared. Burnt the stumps and plowed the land and leveled it, which is now Neil Moore's (?).

JB: Yes, right. Now, which of these people are still around out there? Is Ralph Scheffer still there?

WL: No, his son. He has a son that's on the old Scheffer place, originally just east of Huson. Jack Ray, he's...oh he's still alive. I think he's in Seattle. And the Alans, of course they've died long ago.

JB: They're gone now. Now, the other Longpres out there, is Moses a brother of yours?

WL: Yes, he lives on Pattee Creek, and so does Dick, live on Patte Creek. Both retired.

JB: Is there a Dan?

WL: Dan lives down in Missoula here.

JB: Okay, because I'd run into all these names and I wasn't sure how...what the relationship was. Then if you lived right next door to the Remount, you know a lot about it. [laughs]

WL: Yes.

JB: When did you go to work? Let's talk about that. When did you go to work there, and what did you do?

WL: Well, I went to work, I was one of the first people hired to work there when it started up, and I guess that was in '30. There's just the general farm work but mostly cleanup. It hadn't been taken care of too much. Ralph Scheffer did live there, he just kept a hired man when he had it. So there wasn't much the first year. Oh they did, they finally had two trucks and they did truck some stock, but most of the stock they had them days was stock that they rented from the natives around the Frenchtown valley and reservation. Then they start buying saddle horses for a few that year. But, the next year they went into it a little stronger. Of course then the next couple of years...then the next year, the rangers, this guy that maintained or manages Remount...The first ranger was Butler, Charley Butler.

JB: I think he came over from the Custer Forest as I recall, someplace over at eastern Montana.

WL: That's right.

JB: Did you know Charley Butler?

WL: Oh yes, I worked for him.

JB: How long was he there?

WL: He was just there one season. He was transferred and then they brought in Jake Williams [Jesse "Jake" Williams]. I think he came in from Grand...from... [pauses]

JB: I'm not sure. It's probably down someplace, but I don't remember.

WL: Idaho, anyway. I'll think of it. Then he was there until he died, but I don't remember what year he died, if the Remount was pretty well built by the time—

JB: It's written down someplace at home. I think it was the summer of '35.

WL: That sounds about right.

JB: Yes.

Hello, glad to see you. [speaking to unidentified individual]

Okay then, one of the things that you can tell us better than most people also is what that ranch looked like when they first leased it. What was there? What buildings?

WL: Oh, there was a lot of them. There was big barns, and there was a pretty nice farmhouse, bunkhouse and hay barns all over the place. That was the main thing they raised there was cattle and hay, but it was considered pretty well-built farm place. Of course, there was no...practically no fences, so the first thing they started doing building fences.

JB: Oh, and who did that?

WL: Yes.

JB: Who did it? Who worked on the fences?

WL: Well practically all the packers. Everybody that was hired there. When they wasn't fighting fire, they were building fences.

JB: Wow. Do you have any idea how much land there was in that range? How many acres?

WL: When they first got it I don't think it was a section, probably three-quarters of a section. Then, of course, they start fencing up which was Forest Service land around that, and they fenced in, oh, I would say four or five sections. More than what they already had.

JB: It had already been Forest Service land?

WL: Yes.

JB: Oh, I see, around.

WL: Well, I say Forest Service land...It had been ACM [Anaconda Copper Company] land, but I think the Forest Service had traded some other land for it.

JB: Yes, I've seen papers about those trades on the land.

WL: Anyway, they got stretching out so far that the natives got up and protested and stopped them from fencing in the range land, see because—

JB: Oh yes, I remember you talked about that the other day. Well, was it that some of those ranchers were depending on that that land for grazing?

WL: Grazing. We had permits to graze on that land, you know, you payed so much per head. It was very, very little, but nevertheless it gave you a right to graze it.

JB: Yes, about when was that then that they, well, that they put a stop to it? Can you put any date on that?

WL: I would say, '34...no, '35 I think is when they...around in that time. '34 possibly. Anyway, the CCs are the ones that were doing the fencing. That were doing all this fencing, they were putting in jack fence—it was rail fence.

JB: Is that the kind where you have that X?

WL: Yes. Then that lasted about ten years, and then they went to wire fence because these poles and these jacks was all rotting. So now it's all fenced with the wire fencing.

JB: You mean jack fences just don't last more ten years?

WL: Well, about that.

JB: Oh, I didn't know that.

WL: No, ten, twelve years. Yes, that's about the minimum.

JB: What were the first jobs you did when they hired you?

WL: Well, just cleaning up and driving truck. The first truck driver they hired was Harold Dunn (?). He was from Missoula here then and he got the first truck. Then later on the next truck come—that was a GMC—and the next one was a Reo. They called it a Reo Speedwagon.

JB: A Speedway...oh, a Speedwagon. yes.

WL: Speedwagon. I drove that. Then the following year they got, I think, four more trucks, and I don't remember what make they were. I think they were... [pauses]

JB: Doesn't matter. These were the ones that would haul—

WL: GMCs.

JB: Were these the ones that would hold about five head of stock?

WL: That's right. Six if they didn't use an equipment box in there, but most of them had that equipment box to put the pack saddles in. So actually there was five. They hauled five head. The first year, they rented a lot of these pickup, ton-and-a-half trucks, and the Forest Service or the Remount had a lot of crates built. Some held one horse. You'd lead him in there and put a bar behind them. Some had two, but they were pretty awkward. They were awful heavy to load up in these trucks. They had no system. It was just man-power.

JB: What do you mean by crates?

WL: Just an ordinary...Well, you know what these horse trailers look like?

JB: Yes.

WL: Well, just a box of that horse trailer they'd push it into one of these pickups, like the horse trailer without the wheels, and they'd put a mule or a horse in there. Or, if it was a two-man...two-horse outfit, they'd put two.

JB: So each horse had his own little compartment.

WL: Own little compartment. Just barely. It was tight.

Lena Marceau Longpre: You know, if you turn your machine off when he's through, I'll show you some pictures.

JB: Oh, yes, we'll do that. Did you find quite a few? Okay, we can do that anytime, look at the pictures. Yes, okay.

So you were driving trucks and cleaning up pastures?

WL: That's right. But, when I started driving truck, I was made truck foreman, and I was ranch foreman at that time too. So between the two that kept me quite busy. I had to see that the trucks were serviced and gassed and always ready to be...to go out.

JB: How long did you do that job?

WL: Well, I done that for about...well, until the CCs got going good, and then I was transferred. I done that truck driving about two years, and then I was assigned as a reserve fire foreman.

They kept several there during the fire season, and they would send us out, emergencies for different fires. Then I was...I had charge of one of the plow units.

JB: Yes, I'd like to know more about the plow units.

WL: For a couple years. Well in fact, I had the last one that... when they quit it.

JB: When would that have been, now?

WL: I suppose, must have been close to the '40s.

LL: Is he talking loud enough?

JB: Yes.

WL: 1940.

JB: How long did you use the plow units? Total.

WL: Well, four or five years, but I wasn't on it all the time. The first one that was on was Alvie Crowley (?), and when he left and went as a superintendent for the CC's camp, I took his place.

JB: Okay, now some place I ran into the name of Hugh Redding also.

WL: Yes, Hugh Redding.

JB: Did he also run the plow unit?

WL: Yes, and another fellow by the name of Valentine and Fred Waylett (?).

JB: Waylett?

WL: Fred Waylett. He died here a few years ago in Hamilton. Let's see...I think that was all the fellows that worked on the plow units at different times. Waylett was only there one season.

JB: Was he?

WL: Alexander (?) was on there one season and Fred Waylett was only there one season, but at one time they had two set up of plow units.

JB: I wish you would describe the plow units because see, nobody around has seen those except you and a handful of other people.

WL: Well plow unit—there was a truck and we had a trailer that we hooked onto the truck. We had to load the horses before we could hook on this trailer behind, and that trailer was equipped with the 25-man outfit. In other words, you could go to a fire, and you had equipment there for 25 men to fight that fire.

JB: So you didn't even need a string of pack mules then if you had that plow unit? Is that what you're saying?

WL: I know, but there was a lot of times...there was a lot of places we couldn't get this plow unit, you see? We had to get pretty much...In fact one time, we walked into Moose Creek. We had a 28 mile hike there, but we couldn't take this equipment. All we took was our horses and the plow. Two horses and the plow, because you...These horses in that steep country, they were big heavy draft horses, and you could only work them a little while—maybe an hour or two—and then change off. See, you keep changing off so you could keep on going.

JB: Okay, now the two horses didn't work at the same time. They worked one at a time?

WL: That's right.

JB: What kind of horses were they?

WL: Well, they were...oh, I wouldn't know. I suppose kind of mixed Percheron and Belgian and stuff. They were draft horses—big horses.

JB: You have any idea where they got them?

WL: They got one up at the Bitterroot and they got one down here in the Grass Valley from Eldrich Deschamps (?). I remember I went down with Jake Williams, and we tried them out there on a plow. It was a good honest horse. He wasn't balky or anything. We also carried with us two workhorses—two pair, them big horses—and one saddle horse. This saddle horse, as soon as we got onto the fire, was turned over to—they called him the fire chief—the man in charge of the fire. So he had a saddle horse. When we left, we generally took it back with us.

JB: Okay, so when you went out then, on a call—the plow unit—you'd have a saddle horse, the two plow horses, you'd have the plow, and how many people?

WL: Yes, well it was the truck driver and the foreman and the plow shaker and the teamster. So there was four, four of us.

JB: The teamster controlled the horses?

WL: Yes.

JB: What'd the plow shaker do?

WL: Hung on to the plow.

JB: Why do you call it shaker?

WL: Well that's because there was a lot of shaking to it, so they'd call it a plow shaker.

JB: See I've never watched anybody do this.

WL: What?

JB: I've never watched anybody do that.

WL: Yes. Well, you do that on a farm with a walking plow. You didn't call it a shaker, but that's what it actually was because it really shook you.

LL: See, here's the truck and the plow unit. [shows photograph]

JB: Oh, is that loading up the plow unit? Let me see. Oh sure, and then you'd put a trailer on the back to haul more equipment, is that it?

WL: Oh gee, I forgot that.

LL: And this is the first man that did it.

WL: That was Charley Butler.

LL: That's the first man that was there.

JB: Okay, why don't I turn this off for a second?

[Break in audio]

JB: Thanks for the photos. A minute ago you mentioned a man named Wilkinson, was he one of the...a foreman?

WL: He was a foreman when he come there and he was instructing for packers, instructing packers. He was an old packer from Superior.

JB: Do you know his first name?

WL: Wes Wilkinson.

JB: Wes Wilkinson

WL: Yes.

JB: What other people from that time do you remember? Among the packers, especially among the packers.

WL: Oh, there was Johnny Pritchard and Bob Hansen (?) and Ern Hoyt and Mike Murphy (?) and Valence Tibbotts (?), Dick Beller (?). That's about it I guess, probably some more would come to—

JB: Those were some of the first ones? Who else was driving truck?

WL: Dee Stewart and Vern Ward (?) and Emory Peterson (?) and myself. There was only about six trucks the second year. First year was two, and that's about it.

JB: You must have been around then, when they got the new big trucks—the ten-head trucks?

WL: No, I was not.

JB: Where were you at that time?

WL: I was on the ranch. [laughs]

JB: Oh, right, next door. Okay—

WL: No, I was on what finally became my ranch west of the Remount, see.

JB: Oh, you had land on both sides?

WL: We had a ranch on both sides and when we divided up—the boys and Dad—when Dad retired, I was given the one west and Dan was on the one east.

JB: Okay. What else do you think we should talk about here? You've told me about the building,s about what it looked like...oh, I know. You're also one of the few people who knew Jake Williams. I'd like to know all about Jake Williams.

WL: Well he was very well liked, everybody liked Jake. He was quite a sport and he drank a little, but didn't interfere with his work but socially, I suppose, you would say. Oh, he never missed a rodeo or circus it seemed like. That was his life, and he'd been a packer for years.

JB: I was going to ask. Was that his background? Was he a horseman?

WL: Yes, but he worked...He was in the cavalry in the Army, and I always thought that maybe that's how he come to get that job at the Remount, because you know Major Kelley [Evan W. Kelley] was an ex-Army man too. I think that had a little bearing on him getting that job. But he was capable. He was capable, he was a good boss, he was kind of strict as a boss and as a playboy he was two different men.

JB: How old a man was he when he was out there?

WL: Oh, Jake must have been in the...

How old would you think Jake was then? [speaking to Lena]

LL: [unintelligible]

WL: Oh, probably in his 40s, I think.

JB: So he was a pretty youngish man actually when he died, wasn't he?

WL: Oh, yes, he was only—

LL: Well, he was a sickly man.

WL: He had the...Well, I don't know if you'd call it emphysema now. They didn't then, but he had an asthmatic condition and he could hardly breathe at times. You'd wonder, "My gosh, is he going to choke or..."

JB: Oh my. Was he like that the whole time he was out there?

WL: Well, more or less.

LL: Oh yes, his fingernails were blue and his eyes kind of popped out of his head. [unintelligible] his wife was a nurse so she could take care of him.

JB: How did he happen to...What caused his death? How did this happen to come about then?

WL: He come to a circus in Missoula here, and he caught cold. Of course, he never come out of it. He developed pneumonia, and it killed him.

JB: Was he brought into town?

WL: Oh, yes. I helped load him in the car, and between coughs and everything, he looked back and he said, "I'll never see this goddamn place again." So he must have known.

JB: Okay, then when he left, then that's when Cap Evans [W.C. "Cap" Evans] came, is that right?

WL: That's right.

JB: And did you work for a while when Cap Evans at the Remount?

WL: Well, no, not at the Remount. At that time when Cap Evans took over, I was CC foreman—

JB: Oh, that's right. How did the CC...Excuse me...

WL: —and I stayed with that until that big CC Camp folded up. Then I left the service. I went on the ranch.

JB: Okay. Tell me a little bit about how that CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp worked. How many people were up there? How'd they divided it up?

WL: Well, the three companies that come in there. One stayed all summer and winter. But then, the two outside ones would move in there in the fall and leave and go back in there, like one in the Bitterroot and one around Superior. They had the summer camps, but in the winter they'd move into Nine Mile CC camp. There was 200 men to the company, see, so it made it—

JB: Six hundred?

WL: Six hundred men. I heard that that was the biggest CC camp in the United States.

JB: I wouldn't know about that.

WL: Yes, that's what I heard, and I wouldn't be surprised because they generally didn't keep that many men in place—the CC. But there, they had winter work that they could do. It was a big camp. It took a big crew just to supply it...Well, fuel, wood, to keep it warm. Then they cleared land or cut poles or made jacks all winter.

JB: All winter long?

WL: Yes, unless it got desperately cold which happens once in a few days once every winter when they probably wouldn't go out but you pretty near had to take them out of there or they'd wreck the camp! [laughs] You know, they were all young, full of vim.

JB: What kind of projects did you work on with these guys when you were a foreman of the CC?

WL: Well, I took out...I had a crew...Each foreman had a 25-man crew. That's what the truck, see, them [unintelligible] trucks, so you a full load. Each foreman is assigned a [unintelligible]

truck and a CC driver. Then that way there was 25. But a lot of times some of the men or foreman were sick, well, you'd probably have to take out two crews. It was clearing land and made all them jacks for them fences. They kept building cross fences and whatnot, dividing them pastures and cutting holes to make the fence. That was about the extent of it. Oh, in the fall and in the spring, we probably had a crew digging trenches or irrigating ditches.

JB: Oh, well, that reminds me of something else I wanted to talk to you about, that was the irrigating. Seems to me you knew quite a bit about how that place was irrigated.

WL: Yes, I had a crew that irrigated, and that was during Cap Evans' stay. They even had us irrigate at night with flashlights, Cap Evans.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WL: Yes. [laughs]

JB: Wonder why.

WL: I don't know. We had night crews and day crew.

JB: Was this when they were trying to build up the pastures?

WL: Yes.

JB: Is that what you were irrigating, the pastures?

WL: Well, no we wasn't irrigating pastures then, it meadows—just meadows.

JB: Hay meadows?

WL: Yes, and it was all irrigated the flood system. There was no sprinkling system then. Well, I guess it worked out. Then of course, they'd clear some land and there was...it's a rocky country. Well, you was forever picking rocks. A crew would go out there—25 men—and probably three dump...two, three dump trucks, and they'd throw these rocks—the ones that wasn't too big. The ones that was too big they had sledgehammers, you had to break them up so that they'd be small enough so you'd throw them in the truck.

JB: What'd you do with all the rocks?

WL: They made rock fences in some places there.

JB: Between pastures?

WL: Well, it was, yes, but they were never in sight. I don't know why they didn't put them so you could see them from the road or something, but they wasn't. Oh, there was, I think, a million tons of rock.

JB: These hay meadows that were irrigated, had they've been hey meadows before on the old ranch?

WL: Yes, yes, and some that we cleared and made into meadows.

JB: I understand a lot of heat got raised out there.

WL: Yes. Still, they didn't feed much of it at the Remount. They took it to the winter range.

JB: Well, that's where most of the stock was, wasn't it?

WL: Yes.

JB: Later on, anyway, yes. Were you ever over at the winter range?

WL: Well, I used to go to Bruens when they had the Winter Range at Bruens, the Big Draw, but I never had the occasion of going to Dixon—what was really the Remount winter range.

JB: Yes, later, well not many people, I don't suppose, had been up to the Bruens ranch. I mean, not now, not many people would remember the Bruens ranch. That was the first winter range then, wasn't it?

WL: That's right.

JB: Whereabouts was that?

WL: In the Big Draw they called it.

JB: Where's that?

WL: Well, it was out from Elmo about, oh, eight, ten miles if I remember, towards Niarada. It was a good winter range, and stock would come out of there in good shape. I never knew that they fed any hay. Doggone it.

[lawnmower noise in background; break in audio]

JB: We were talking about the Bruns Ranch. Can you tell me anything about what that place was like?

WL: Well, it was a huge place. I don't know how many acres. It was thousands and thousands of acres. They called one part of Hog Heaven.

LL: This is what the house at the Remount was like. This is the Longpre house. This is not their house, but it was very similar to that. That's the way it looked.

JB: That's what was there when they first rented the place then.

LL: Yes. But that was Longpre's house but their houses were similar. The porch and—

WL: That was made in 1910, '11, I think.

JB: Okay, I forget when the Winter Rangewas moved down to Perma. I can look it up someplace, but you didn't spend time over there then, is that right?

WL: No, no time. I knew most of the foremans worked up there.

JB: Yes, who would that have been at that time?

WL: Well, there's Monte Peyton for one, that was foreman up there for a while, and then Les Wolfe was the—

JB: Oh yes, he was the main one, I think.

WL: Yes, Benscotter [Howard Benscotter] was up there, but I don't think he was ever a foreman. I think he was just a laborer.

JB: Down back at the Remount again, this reminds me, since you lived there in that valley you'd know more about how people got along with Remount Depot and so on. You'd indicated there had been some trouble with the grazing rights. Were there any other difficulties with that Remount being in there?

WL: Well, not so much. There was a little on it for water, but I don't know if it's worth mentioning.

JB: Mainly, it was a problem with the grazing rights then, is that it?

WL: That's right.

JB: Yes, yes. Did the Remount Depot itself ever be a member of the Stock Association there while you were around?

WL: No.

JB: Someplace at home I have some minutes of meetings of the Ninemile Stock Association.

WL: And the Remount...because they were interested in having the Ninemile Stock Association build a vat to dip their stock, and they agreed that they would dip so many hundred head of stock to help pay for this vat, you see. Of course, the Stock Association...In fact, we were all charged a...I forget whether it was a two-bit fee per head for dipping. But everybody dipped their stock first two, three years, and then it just died down. Nobody seemed to use it anymore.

JB: Dipping for what?

WL: Ticks and lice and—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

JB: —much stock in that?

WL: Not that I remember. I think they did the first year and that was pretty much the end of it. I don't know why.

JB: Where was it located, the vat I mean.

WL: It was located just about a mile and a half east of the Remount, towards the Sixmile. They put it centrally located, pretty much. Well, they put it to where it was handy to get water. See, it took a lot of water to fill up.

JB: Did you help in the building of that thing?

WL: No I didn't. My brother did, Dan. The Forest Service didn't help, and then there was a Scheffer, and a...gee, that's about all I know, but I know there was more than that. I think my uncle that had owned the...he was kind of a handy man, a carpenter, Pierre that had owned the Remount. He was up there visiting or something volunteered to help them build it.

JB: Okay, the other day when I was talking to you, you told me a story about some blacksmithing tools. Would you tell us that story again? About the tools that got stamped. I forget how it went.

WL: Oh yes, well, Fickes had sent an old ranger up to the Remount, I guess, waiting for a station—the ranger was, Tom Myers (?). Of course, he didn't...Jake didn't ask him to do too many things. He kind of picked out the easy jobs. Anyway, Tom asked him one morning what he had in line, and Jake couldn't think of anything and he said, "Why the hell don't you get a stamp there, and stamp all them tools in there," he said, "before we lose them."

JB: This was a Forest Service stamp? Government stamp?

WL: Sure, Forest Service stamp. So Tom says, "Okay, I'll do that." He went out there and they had borrowed all our forging tools and—

JB: Why is that?

WL: Well they had a set for one blacksmith, but they were so busy that season that they hired...they had two blacksmiths. So they only had one outfit for two blacksmiths, and Jake says, "Well, my god, haven't much sense having two blacksmiths that can't work, because there's only one outfit, one forge, and one anvil, and all the tools."

So I told Jake, I said, "Why don't you go over across and see Dad." I says, "He's not using his outfit too much, maybe you can borrow it." But they always made me go-between.

"Oh hell," he says, "you go. You can talk to your dad." Dad had a very strong French accent, and sometimes they didn't understand him.

LL: He understood English pretty well.

WL: Well, I know, but sometimes he'd forget and start talking French to them. I went over, and Dad says, "Sure." So we come back, went over there with the pickup, and loaded the anvil and loaded everything and took it over. So this old Tom when he started...they didn't tell him that half of these tools wasn't theirs, so he stamped everything before they—

JB: Did you ever get your tools back?

WL: Yes, we got them back but we always kind of hated it because people would think we stole the darn things from them.

JB: What was your dad's name, Mr. Longpre?

WL: Absalom.

JB: Absalom, okay. A lot of Longpres out there.

WL: Yes. There was three girls and five boys in our family and Pete—that was Dad's brother—he had four boys and two girls, so that's quite a few. Then the Scheffer's were cousins.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WL: And the Roses.

LL: There's a whole community was related one to the other. [laughs]

JB: Mrs. Longpre, since you're sitting here, we might as well chat a bit. Did you come from that area also?

LL: No, I worked in an implement store, and I met all the farmers and Bill was one of the farmers that came into the store.

JB: Where was the store?

LL: The store was in Missoula here, and I was the only girl that ever worked in it. I worked there 12 years.

JB: Oh, for heaven's sake.

LL: But, the management had changed, but I'd stay because I knew the business pretty well, being there for so long. Bill would come in with his truck sometimes, coming in from a fire, but he'd stop in to see me. He was way on top there, and then I would go out weekends. I'd visit with Helen Williams and that's how I got acquainted with so many people at the Remount, because they were fun people. Helen and Jake were fun to be with, and anybody that went out there, we all had a good time.

JB: What sorts of things did you do at the Remount?

LL: Well, and she was a horsewoman. She had a horse, and its name was Moby Dick. She could ride that horse like anybody on the ranch could ride. But I can't say that I went, because it was always evening when I went, and this was a high-spirited horse so I never...But, we'd go to maybe Alberton to dinner and then we go to the dances at Stark all together and we'd go to the dances at Alberton—she and Jake and Bill and I. Well, we just had a good time. The men, there was a fun feeling, a good social feeling, between the whole group at the Remount.

JB: Sounds like it.

LL: Yes, there was.

JB: Was this before you were married?

LL: No, it was after.

JB: Then you lived out there?

LL: Well, then I lived out there but not at the big ranch. Then I lived where they used to feed stock in the wintertime in a cabin until we built a larger house and Bill quit the Forest Service.

JB: Yes, so did you raise a family out there then?

LL: Well, that's why I went home. I had a boy.

WL: He lives neighbor with us here now. He owns that...he's retired from the Navy.

JB: Oh, I think I met him out here the other day when I walked up. One of the things that I was curious about that you might know about, I understand the Forest Service tried using burros out there for a while. Do you remember the burros?

LL: Well you remember...I've got a picture of them in there.

JB: Oh, do you?

LL: Yes, one's packed.

JB: Maybe we could find it?

WL: Oh no, that wasn't a burro I don't think.

LL: Well, there was a mule.

WL: Well, that's a different story—mule and a burro.

JB: No, I'm talking about the burros.

WL: No, they shipped them in from New Mexico and I, in fact, I'd come and got them. Trucked them to the Remount.

JB: How many were there, and when was that?

WL: I'm telling you there were a pile of them. They're little things, you know. They had a carload of them and some of them had their ears cropped off by their heads. It looked pitiful. They, I suppose, come...probably some come from Mexico.

JB: Why would their ears be cropped off?

WL: Just a mark to mark them, I suppose. The poor things in the rain, they'd stand there and shake their head and couldn't stop the rain from going in their ear. It was pitiful. But anyway, they brought him in here thinking that they would be a good deal to pack for the lookout people. But they wasn't. They had to give them up. Gee whiz, they'd go down there and load up with the water, and about halfway the mule would quit. They're stubborn. They'd tie them up and go down and get them the next day again, maybe not be able to make the...Whenever they got tired, they quit.

JB: The burros did? Right on the trail, you mean?

WL: Yes. You couldn't turn them loose. They'd have probably went back down the hill, so they'd tie them up and go back probably the next morning and bring them on up or part ways again, so it wasn't practical.

JB: Were they kept out there at the Remount?

WL: Well, just the first...when they first come. Then they dished them out to all these different stations where they needed them for lookouts.

JB: How many altogether were there, do you think?

WL: Well I'm sure there was 30 or 40. Some had little ones, [unintelligible]. Cutest darn things when they were little, just about the size of a big dog.

JB: I imagine. What became of them? If this didn't work out, what'd they do with all those burros?

WL: I don't know. They just melted away.

JB: Was this right at the beginnings of the Remount Depot?

WL: No, it wasn't right at the beginning. I think it was the second...well, second or third year that the Remount had started.

JB: Was it only the one season they tried using them?

WL: No, they tried a couple seasons I think, if I remember, yes.

LL: Now, don't do that because that records [unintelligible].

WL: Does it?

JB: Oh, don't worry about it.

JB: You're valuable because you know so many names. You've told me about packers and about truck drivers. Were there any people who especially worked on blacksmithing that you remember?

WL: Yes, there was—

LL: Pronovost.

WL: Dave Pronovost was one of the main ones. August Winters (?) was another one. I wish I could remember the one that the picture's on there, but I don't.

JB: Well, it might come to you later.

LL: There was one man that you thought of last night that you mentioned that you hadn't talked about.

WL: Oh, he's CC foreman.

LL: Oh, oh, was he?

WL: Now, I can't think of all those names.

JB: Did you ever do any blacksmithing?

WL: No, no. I helped. I used to help shoe, handle the stock, when they were in a rush. Like I told you, I used to jiggle tools, you wouldn't know what that is.

JB: No, I don't.

WL: You've got to be trained. Dave Pronovost, he must have liked me because he always wanted me to be jingle tools when he was real in a hurry for shoeing.

JB: So what's this shoe that's jingled?

WL: You handled it. You hand tools to him, and you have to have the nails. He was the fastest sh...He'd drive a nail in two hits in a shoe. He was just marvelous how fast he was. But you had to have the nail right there so he could just reach around, and you had to know just what tool to give him—the different tools they use in the clinching nails and cutting nails and cutting hoof. He never wanted to have to ask you for those things. You had to have them there, and they were...they called us tool jinglers.

JB: Oh, I see, just like the surgeon and the nurse, isn't it?

WL: Yes, you just had to have it there. It was six nails or eight nails to the shoe. You wanted to be sure. You always had to have an extra one, but with Dave, he hardly ever bent one that he'd have to pull it out and throw it away. He just didn't do that. Then he'd always want me to strike for him at the anvil, when he had a big piece of iron to forge that he'd have to flatten. It takes a lot of hard hitting, and you use a sledge and you hit with all your might. Dave wanted me to strike with him, because he says that I was more accurate than most of them, in striking. So that was my experience.

LL: What did he do with the piece of iron?

WL: What?

LL: What did he do with that piece of iron?

WL: Well, they'd have to flatten to shape it when they were making these trailers and different things.

JB: For anything I suppose.

WL: For various things, they shape the iron into maybe a circle or—

JB: What sort of a forge did he use in those early days?

WL: Well, it was electric. We had an electric plant. There was no electricity there then, but we'd gotten a...the second year, they got a plant—electric plant—generate electricity. It was a... Onan, that was the name—O-n-a-n, Onan. So that supplied us with electricity, enough to run to the forge, the little fan on the forge, the lights that they might need.

JB: Did this make electricity for the whole Depot?

WL: That's right. It wasn't 100 percent, because when you need it the most it seemed the darn thing would play out.

JB: Did you ever get caught in the dark?

WL: So that...Oh yes, and that was one of my jobs. When the darn thing stopped, I had to run to the plant house to get it started again, when I was at the Remount [unintelligible].

JB: Well then, when did they finally bring an electric line from the main lines?

WL: Oh, they brought that in shortly...well, about the time they built the Remount.

JB: Okay, did you tell me that you had helped build that line?

WL: No.

JB: Must have been somebody else, okay.

WL: Bill Russell might have been on that.

JB: Yes, I think he was. I think he's the one.

WL: Yes, come to think about it. But the guy that had charge of **building that line** was **Bill Roulier**.

JB: What's the name?

WL: **Roulier?** How do you spell that?

LL: Roulier.

LL: R-o-u-l-i-e-r.

JB: Must have been from Frenchtown.

LL: Yes.

WL: Yes. But he was a CC foreman. But he was also a lineman.

JB: Who was the district ranger out there at that time?

WL: Well, there was...They changed off quite often. There was Locke Stewart [Locke M. (L. M.) Stewart], Henman—

JB: Which Henman? That Jack Henman (??)?

WL: Jack Henman.

JB: Are these in approximately the right order? I'd like to, if I could, get them straight because—

LL: I didn't know Locke Stewart, so that must have been way back.

WL: Well, now was it Welton (?) or Weller?

LL: I think Welton, it was.

WL: And, Puphal.

LL: Irv Puphal [Irwin Puphal].

WL: Herb Puphal.

JB: Herb? I thought it was Irv.

WL: Maybe it is. How old is—

JB: I'm not sure either. I better check on that.

LL: I thought it was Herb.

JB: I better find out.

WL: Who was that one that was there with the last one, you know, when we left the ranch?

LL: They moved to—

WL: It was Coeur d'Alene.

LL: Smart.

WL: Smart.

JB: Oh, yes, Bob Smart, right. Okay, remember any other rangers that were out there?

WL: That's about the limit. Ed MacKay became superintendent of the Remount after...I think...No, must have been after...

JB: It would have been after Evans.

WL: Must have been after Evans. Evans took it from Jake, and he crippled himself. A bunch of the office from the town went up there, and there was a big hill in that meadow, and there was—

LL: Coasting.

WL: —coasting in there and skiing. Cap, I think, he blowed a vertebrae or something in his back. He was in the hospital for weeks and weeks.

JB: Yes, he told me about that. I think he did. He cracked a couple of vertebrae.

WL: So that was the end of his tour there. But, then after he...then it was Ed MacKay. Ed MacKay was superintendent at the Remount at the same time that Jack Henman was ranger.

JB: Okay. Did you know Hank Viche [Henry "Hank" Viche]? He was out there for a short time. It was during that time when Ed MacKay went off—

WL: I knew Hank Viche, yes but I didn't know he had...You mean as a ranger?

JB: No, I mean that during that time when Ed MacKay went on the railroad project to California, there was a short time in there—a year or two is all—when Ed MacKay went off in the middle there.

WL: Yes, I remember.

JB: Apparently Hank Viche took over as superintendent of the Remount and the Winter Rangejust for that interim period there.

LL: But he didn't live there though.

JB: Maybe he didn't.

WL: I wasn't there then for some reason.

LL: Well, we were there when Ed MacKay went on the river plant.

WL: Yes but I don't remember Viche being there.

LL: Well, I didn't know Viche so he must not have been there.

JB: He may not have been actually down there. He may have stayed up at Perma.

LL: Yes, because I don't know him.

JB: Well, then you've really known a lot of people all through this whole time you've worked here.

WL: Yes. Now, my brother was sheriff in Superior—under-sheriff for a while and then sheriff. He was there for 12 years, and that's how I got to know Viche. He come up to the ranch with Dad. Do remember that?

LL: I cooked supper for them. [laughs]

JB: Since you've had a chance to sit back and watch the operation of the Remount Depot, which of these superintendents and foremen and so on would you say got along best with the people in the Ninemile?

WL: Well, I guess I would have to put Jake Williams—

LL: He was the most popular.

JB: Was he?

WL: —and then Ed MacKay.

JB: Why is that, do you think? What did these people have about them?

WL: I don't know. They had something, something that anybody would wish for, I guess.

LL: Jake had the personality, and people went there a lot.

WL: And he's rough. He was rough. He was just, in a way, he could get by with cussing you and it didn't sound bad. You've seen such people?

JB: Yes, right.

WL: I wouldn't say some of the words. He'd probably meet Dad and he'd say, "Hello, you old bastard," Dad would laugh. He was just—

LL: But, Helen had a lot to do with his popularity too.

WL: Yes, and of course, not Ed MacKay. Ed was always very businesslike, but fun too.

LL: I didn't know him that way.

WL: Oh, yes, he was terrific.

LL: But I liked Laura. I liked Ed too. Laura taught music to my son.

WL: Ed was superintendent there and he'd...Somebody'd ask him something, and he'd say, "Well, what do you think of that, Bill?" He was that type of a fellow. He wouldn't just try to—

JB: That's a nice thing to see. I imagine these people have kind of—

WL: He always wanted you to share his decisions, and if you thought that it was right or you didn't, he appreciated you telling him. He was asking for it.

JB: I imagine these people had a rough job to do trying to sometimes explain government policy and why they had to do something to the ranchers.

WL: No, I don't look at it that way. I think had they tried taking the time to explain it, the people would have went for it better, but they took it upon themselves, like they were giving you that order. That you had to do that because they said so, and it wasn't that way at all. **Bob Biers (?)** come up there one time to the Stock Association meeting—

JB: Who's Bob Biers, now?

WL: He was a supervisor...or assistant supervisor for a long time in Missoula here, but he retired. He used to come to our stock meetings, and I was working at the Remount then. One of

the rangers was up there and he...Bob Biers told the ranger, he says, "Well why don't you do that?" Smart, he told Smart, "Why don't you do that?"

Bob [Smart] says, "I'll do, it if you'll sign it."

"Oh hell no, I won't sign it." An order for something that he wanted to change, but he wanted Bob Smart to stick his neck out and do it but he wouldn't—

LL: Take on the responsibility of that.

WL: No, he wouldn't put his name on it, but he suggested that Bob do that. I say popularity as rangers, George Hankeson (?) was tops, too.

JB: Well, maybe these people were the kind who would explain why they were doing what they were doing.

WL: That's right. That's definitely right.

LL: But when Jake was a supervisor there, there was a lot of range...There wasn't many people—

WL: He was superintendent.

LL: There weren't as many people to deal with as there were later on.

WL: Maybe not.

LL: So he didn't have the time of getting along with people that later on, some of the rangers had.

WL: Jake was very blunt in giving orders, and he expected them to be followed. But still he was liked, just the way the darn thing goes. He just gave you an order and walked away and that was it. Whether you thought it was right or not, that was it. But, you didn't take offense to it, well I don't know, just because it was Jake, I guess.

LL: Well, he was half liquored up a lot of the time. [laughs]

WL: Well, not so much on the job.

LL: No, not on the job. Can—

JB: It won't be! Well, like I said before, this doesn't have to be some beautiful rosy picture. People want to know how it was, so that's how it was.

LL: Well, yes, he took it...He did have a drink every...I'm sure every day.

JB: Well, other people have mentioned it too. That apparently was part of Jake Williams and there's no point in—

LL: But everybody liked him. He was a good guy.

JB: When they built those new buildings out there, I've seen...well, I've seen the buildings out there now. Of course, I never saw them when they were used the way they were before, but I think you were the one that was telling me about how the bunkhouses looked. Didn't you stay in those bunkhouses sometimes?

WL: Yes. During the fire season, I always stayed there.

LL: To me, the place looks rundown now as compared to what—

WL: It was kept very clean. There was a CC boy.

LL: Oh, beautiful.

JB: Yes, they kept up the grounds, didn't they?

WL: Oh, yes, yes.

LL: And the houses were... It looks rundown to me as compared to what it used to be.

WL: Everything was kept real nice and we...I remember when I was with the plow unit, and we slept all in one room, so if we were called, it didn't wake up...we didn't have to wake up the whole thing, see.

JB: So, the bunkhouse was divided up into rooms.

WL: That's right.

JB: How many rooms were there?

WL: Well, it seems to me there was four rooms, or gee, I'm just not certain. Anyway, there was two of the big bunk houses, and one was pretty much for packers and one the reserve foremans and plow unit. See, we were four in each room as I remember.

JB: What was in there? I'm sure it wasn't fancy, but I just wondered what was in there.

WL: Well, there was no place to hang your clothes.

JB: Wasn't there?

WL: No, everybody had a pack sack. You generally dug in that to get some clothes, or a sack maybe to put your dirty clothes and laundry. No, it wasn't very modern-like.

JB: Did you have a decent bed?

WL: Well, they were these Army cots. I didn't mind them.

LL: They were all young men, so it didn't have to be too comfortable.

WL: No. There were clean beds. We had a change of sheets once a week, and they laundered the sheets. In fact, they furnished the bedding, pillows.

JB: When a fire alarm went out, how did...Well, did everybody in there respond to a fire alarm?

WL: Well, as I remember, yes, because they'd blow the horn, and boy, that was a loud one.

JB: That was outside the yard then?

WL: Everybody jumped and put on their britches on the run, I guess. I remember a pack string from the time the horn blew, in ten minutes they were gone. That was loading the stock up.

LL: Yes, they were pretty fast work.

WL: I built a chute that held ten head of stock, and there was a gate. Then you'd run them in there and you just, in a matter of a minute, you'd have them all divided. There was a sliding door that went in behind every one of them, and as you hollered the first one, there'd be somebody there to lead them out and you let the next one in and next one in. They couldn't run away from you. You was right alongside—

JB: You could hold each one, one at a time? Just for a minute?

WL: Yes, yes. As you pull that first one out, you also pull the door from behind them so the next one could step up. Well it was just...Then the truck was parked right close there.

LL: How could you write anything like that up?

JB: I don't know. It'll be tricky.

WL: Well it took a lot of figuring out to build them gates—sliding gates.

JB: Oh, I should think so.

WL: It took us quite a while to build. I remember, I built them with my plow unit men.

JB: Do you have any pictures of that? Nobody's mentioned this before. I mean, I knew those mules went through a chute and [unintelligible].

WL: Right where they come out of the chute, you could put a door there, and it would swing them right into the shoeing shop, blacksmith shop, see.

JB: Turn them either way?

WL: You could turn that switch and that gate there either way, or else if you were loading pack stock, you'd turn another way and it'd go right to the truck, see. I think Jake, Jake Williams, was there when we figured out that chute. It was real nice, and I think they still have it if they—

JB: I don't know. I've been out to the corrals, but I didn't notice how the chutes were arranged and so—

WL: Well, it would be right off of that...It would be right north of the...running south. They went in the north end of that chute and come down south, and the blacksmith shop were right there.

JB: Yes, right. What else did you build while you were up there?

WL: Corrals. Gosh, I built corrals. All I could think of at night was corrals. [laughs]

JB: Gates.

WL: Gates. Oh gosh, we built gates. Yes.

JB: And what about the barn?

WL: No, well, that barn, the only part I built of that barn, I hewed those beams that's in the middle of the barn—full length on each side.

JB: Would you tell me about those beams? All about that?

WL: We, my crew and I, hunted for a week to get four pieces that was straight enough so that we could hew them square, and we got them way up on Butler Creek and that's where they had built that big irrigating ditch later on. We hauled them in there with...on a wagon and an old tractor they had that had shipped in here from the south when they fought the corn borer

years and years ago. They were international tractors with steel wheels. Long spikes on them, and that's the only tractor we had there for several years.

JB: Were these logs that you got...I think you told me they were ponderosa pine, is right?

WL: Yes.

JB: How big were they when you finally hewed them out?

WL: As I remember, it was eight by eight, so they had to be that big in the top end in order to...In order to square, you had to figure out so that they square eight inches. Hewed on four sides. I don't know why they had them hewed on four sides. It seemed two sides would have been enough.

JB: Maybe they wanted them to look extra nice.

WL: I suppose.

JB: Suppose? How long were they?

WL: Seems to me they were 40 feet. I wouldn't say for sure.

JB: I've been out to see that barn. It's a beautiful barn.

LL: It used to be beautiful. I haven't seen it. It was so clean.

JB: Well, it looks good to me. It looks almost new.

LL: Yes, it's a beautiful barn.

WL: Then later on, come to think about it, I poured the concrete floors in it with the CC crew. I didn't do it myself...I was the boss of these kids, I didn't know too much about cement, neither. I don't know why they dished that out to me.

LL: For you to take responsibility.

JB: Yes, maybe so.

LL: Because you lived right close by, and they could lay a finger on you.

JB: Was there any trouble pouring that cement?

WL: They wasn't floating it—leveling it. I had no idea. Kids knew as much about it, probably more than I did about it. Between the bunch of us we done it. Put about a four inch—

LL: It has to be done fast.

JB: Was this for the big barn?

WL: That's the big barn. Now they tell me, they put a subfloor on top of that or another floor on top.

JB: I don't know. Was it you that told me that got poured in the wrong place? Had to get moved?

WL: That was the foundation. When they first built the barn, they made a mistake, and they...It was out of line with the other buildings. You either had them all east and west or north and south. But, this one was eight feet out of line when they noticed it, and the cement was all poured so they had to bust it out and pour it over again.

JB: Oh, I bet that was a little embarrassing.

WL: Well that engineer got out of it pretty nice because my plow shaker and I had helped him pull the rods and chain. He says, "Well that's what you can expect when you don't have no experienced rodman and chainman.

JB: What other things did you do out there? Is there anything we've not talked about that you did? Jobs that you did?

WL: No, I guess that's about it.

LL: Planted the trees.

WL: Oh, yes—

JB: Oh, did you plant trees?

WL: —I hauled all them trees from the Garden City Nursery here with a CC crew. We'd come in with two trucks every morning, and we'd load up one truck.

LL: I had a picture of them serving lunch, but I don't know where it is.

JB: Oh, do you?

WL: They were getting all the trees, all the shrubbery from them, and that's what's around the Remount now. We even went out in the woods and got thorn bushes and serviceberry bushes and chokecherry bushes and everything that was imaginable here. Sumac, staghorn sumac and...You've seen those.

JB: Yes, I know what you mean.

WL: You know what they mean? They look just like the horn on the deer when it's in velvet. Oh, them fir trees there that we planted are, I guess, 30 feet high now.

JB: Yes, I suppose.

WL: They were just little things when we moved them in there.

JB: So you'd take your 25-men crews from the CCs?

WL: We'd come up here and dig, and of course, we'd have to leave to go back. You had to have them kids back in camp at 4:30.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WL: So, no matter where you worked, if you had just two hours work a day—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

WL: Then there was three companies there, and you were assigned to eat your meals with the men of...with the company of the men that you were working with. But I'm telling you, some of them was rough. Boy, that was some awful stuff. They never threw three or coffee...tea or coffee away. They'd have coffee in the morning, and then we didn't eat—we ate lunch most of the time out—and at night you had the tea and the coffee mixed.

JB: Oh, that sounds awful!

WL: They had tea for dinner. That was it. That was always at camp. At night, they'd mix it, and they'd serve it. Well, we got so that we didn't mind it.

JB: Get used to anything, I guess. [laughs]

WL: We never had steaks. Very, very seldom you ever got steak. It was stew—stews. They'd get a bunch of CCs around the block—cutting block—with knives and they'd put a hind quarter on the block and they cut them all in little chunks. It just made you mad, and that went into stew.

JB: Just as well could have been a steak, is that what you're saying?

WL: Well, sure or a roast or something.

LL: There were so many people to cook for.

WL: But they had 200 men to feed, and the cooks and the waiters and everything, they was just CCs. Some of them didn't know beans about cooking.

JB: Yes. Well, now these people all ate up in their own camp, though, didn't they? I mean, did they...they didn't come down and eat at the Remount?

WL: No, no.

JB: They were separate all the time?

WL: Oh yes, yes.

JB: That's what I thought.

LL: Oh, the food that you got at noon to feed them when you worked from the Remount, would you get it from the Remount or from the camp? I have a picture of you serving.

WL: No, no, no. In the winter, we'd set up a tent, and we appointed one of the boys to keep...We had a barrel stove and we kept the barrel stove going all from the time we got there in the morning until at night. It got so it was kind of warm in there. The ground would get thawed out, and we'd provide some kind of a table—blocks or something—to eat off of. Then they'd bring the lunch in. There's another truck would could come in about noon and bring our lunch from the company that we was working the men.

JB: I mean, you just set up this tent wherever you were working?

WL: Yes, that was when the weather was cold. We didn't do it in the summer. We cleared all the land that was back up...what turned out to be our ranch.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WL: Yes, Forest Service. They even raked that stuff with garden rakes, the ground—hundreds and hundreds of acres—but they had 600 kids so they'd covered a lot of ground.

JB: Did you eat sometimes down in the cookhouse of the Remount Depot?

WL: No, not when I was with the Cs.

JB: Well, I mean it anytime.

LL: Yes.

WL: Oh, yes, they had a good cooks. First cook was a woman...No, the two first cooks were women, and they were good cooks.

JB: Do you remember their names?

WL: No.

LL: The man was Dona Mack (?)—one of the men. Stella cooked there for a while too, Stella.

WL: Well, she was assistant, she wasn't the head cook.

LL: Well she was alone there, I think, Bill.

WL: Oh well, maybe the one had left in the fall. The first woman that cooked there was from Avery [Idaho], I believe. She was a good cook. Then the one that cooked when they built that new cook house, she was from Idaho somewheres too.

JB: I've never talked to anybody who can remember the names of cooks in those early days.

WL: The only one that I remember was just Dona Mack and he was a CC. A terrific cook.

JB: Well now the Remount's cookhouse, what was it like? How big was it? What was inside there?

WL: Well, it was just it was about 30 feet long by—

JB: Now, do you mean the tent, or do you mean in the building?

WL: The building.

JB: Yes, that's what I meant.

WL: About 30 feet long by 24 I would say, and the cook had a little room in the back corner. Then opposite of that was the supplies and then in front of that the kitchen and then the dining room. It would feed about 20, I suppose—seat about 20.

JB: The cook lived there though?

WL: Right in there. She had a bedroom.

LL: A lot of times the people from the offices in Missoula would go down there for some reason or other, and they would eat at the cook house but that was a big time for them.

JB: Yes, I understand there was lots of that sort of thing, wasn't there?

LL: Yes.

JB: All these visitors that would come out. Were there ever too many visitors?

WL: Well, it didn't seem to. I've seen hundreds, seem like, come from the office.

LL: But then sometimes they'd have a potluck, a picnic outside too. I remember that. Maybe the forces here from Missoula would go down there and have a picnic.

WL: Whenever the Major would come down, they generally put on a big play for him.

JB: Was he out there a lot? Major Kelley.

WL: Quite a bit.

JB: Yes. Well, this thing was sort of his baby, wasn't it?

WL: I think so. He approved it. Where there was some of the big shots...I know there was two and I can't think of their name now, but I think Stockdale (?) was one of them. Was there such a one as Brown?

JB: I don't know.

WL: A big man. They fought it. They fought Fickes. Fickes was for it, and so was the Major, I guess. Anyway, I know it went through. I was talking with Clyde here not too awful long ago, and he was telling me that these two that fought it were very much for it after they'd seen it going.

JB: Oh, yes. What were the arguments against setting up the Remount Depot?

WL: Well, I don't think they approved of centralizing the stock. Before that when the spring of the year come, each station more or less looked after their own stock. Well, I don't mean the stations, the Lolo forest for instance.

JB: Each forest?

WL: Each forest. Now for several years, they'd buy our hay where we originally got the farm, and they'd send a man up there to feed and they'd bring the stock right on the place and feed the hay right there. That's what they liked. They didn't like to have all of that...Region one is pretty big. They were bringing them stock in there for...They'd all hit the Remount and they'd all be stamped. At that time, when they first started, they stamp the hoof with a hot iron, but they finally found out that it was damaging the hoof. Some would burn it too deep, and it would disfigure the front—it was on the front foot. They finally got neck numbering, which was the proper way. We tried different methods. We used liquid. We'd dip the brand in this liquid and just touch them. We'd shear it really short, and they'd just touched that and that liquid...But you'd have to tie them up that liquid would burn like—

JB: It was an acid, wasn't it?

WL: It was an acid, but it wasn't as bad as the iron I don't think. Then that was permanent, and it didn't hurt anything other than when they first put it on. Then when these districts had come back to get their stock in the spring, well, they'd sort them out by the number. You see, there was no trouble.

JB: I think Cap Evans told me that before he came that they used to get different...They'd get a new brand every year, and then later after he came, they put just one number on an animal and that stayed with him for life.

WL: On neck. That's probably true.

JB: Remember that? He was saying that they used to end up with a lot of brands on them.

WL: Well, I never knew that they branded. They put U.S.—U.S.F.S.

JB: I don't know what it was.

WL: U.S.F.S. and a hoof brand. That wasn't necessary at all, but then most of them had U.S.F.S. on all of them. They branded them on the—

LL: Thigh?

WL: Yes, left thigh.

JB: So when you were setting up the Remount Depot then, some of these forests...What? Did they want their stock close to home? Was that it do you think?

WL: I think so because they get funny ideas. Like old Homer McClean, he was packing for Ed MacKay in Lochsa, and he was a good packer, but he had his pet mules, and he didn't want nobody to be abusing them mules. That was just part of him. Bill Bell, another terrific man, he was a saddle maker too.

JB: Yes, so I understand.

WL: Real nice work.

JB: What do you remember about Major Kelley? Did you get to know him?

WL: I got to know him probably as well as any of the old fellows that had worked there. I used to truck him—him and his mule and his horse. He'd always take a trip every year in the mountain, and like he'd get trucked to the Divide in such a place. Then he probably wind up in...I'd go pick his stock up in Avery or like...or be next time would be somewhere else. One time it was in Idaho here. Well, Avery was in Idaho too, but this was Yellow Jacket they called it. We took his stock in there, and he took a long trip and different times. Then when I trucked, he'd ride right with me. See he was...I liked Major.

JB: He must have been a very interesting person.

WL: Well, he was Army, and that part I didn't know anything about, see. He's been a major. I think he demanded service more than he probably would have hadn't he been in the service.

JB: You must have got along with him okay.

WL: Oh, yes. I liked him.

JB: Did you work a lot with Mr. Fickes when he first came out?

WL: First come, yes, yes. I liked Clyde.

LL: We went on little trips with Clyde and his wife, and Helen and Dick Williams socially. Then they'd come down on Sundays, so we had a lot of association with Fickes and his wife. He'd come to the picnics, and we'd play ball.

WL: And the kid...And the boy Jimmy.

JB: Who's that now?

WL: That was Fickes' boy. He'd come and spend the summer on the Remount, so I got to know him.

LL: I don't remember the girl's name. Mary Ellen?

WL: Mary Catherine.

LL: Mary Catherine.

WL: She married real well. I think they are in—

LL: They've sold the restaurant.

WL: Oh they did?

LL: I heard they did.

JB: During these early times then when the Remount was first established, I understand that very year there was a Packers' Day. Is their right?

WL: Oh yes, packers' contest.

JB: Yes, how long did those go on? How many seasons?

WL: I think three seasons. That was more fun. It's just too bad they didn't have moving pictures.

JB: Oh, what did they do?

WL: Well, we had put hitch racks...I think there was probably six or ten pack strings contesting, and each guy drew and some of them mules were sneaky. Gee, they were goosing. They'd get them all tied together, and they had to run so far down that meadow and back. The first one that made that trip without losing all his packs won the contest.

LL: Well they used to have a packers [unintelligible] from one horse to another. Now, I mean who can pack the horse fastest as all that.

WL: Well, that was the whole pack string. That was the whole pack string. So god, I've seen them go there, and they'd make the loop too far and it's kind of a whiplash—just every mule would roll over. Every mule would fell.

LL: Well, that's terrible.

WL: Yes, they was going too fast you know, and it seems like the last one has got to run that much faster, you see.

JB: Was this to make sure that things had been tied on properly?

WL: I suppose.

JB: Did it ever get to be like a rodeo? Was there any of that sort of thing?

WL: Well, then they had little rodeos. They got a bunch of these outlawed horses from Miles City from the cavalry, and they'd been spoiled. I am telling you pretty near every weekend during fire season we had a booking contest there. Packers would volunteer. A lot of them were pretty good bronc riders.

JB: How did they happen to get horses like that? That wasn't on purpose was it?

WL: Well no, the cavalry was going out of business, so the Remount inherited all that stock.

LL: Wasn't there one rider that used to be in the movies too? One that wore a handkerchief around his head, and he came here and [unintelligible].

WL: No.

LL: [unintelligible]

WL: Oh, Kirtley.

LL: Yes.

WL: Uri Kirtley (?).

JB: When had he been in the movies?

WL: No Chuck Jennings you're talking about. Chuck Jennings had seconded in the movies where they take them falls and everything, and he was all busted up.

JB: A stunt rider.

WL: a stunt rider. Yes, a great big fellow, and he was packing. Should have been rich, but he could hang on to a dime. Chuck Jennings.

JB: Did you also know a man named Charlie Johnson (?) who broke horses out there?

WL: Yes.

JB: Were there other people like him who were hired just for breaking new stock?

WL: Oh yes. Eddie Lindblum (?), Andy Peterson (?). He left the Remount and went to Choteau and became sheriff there. He was sheriff for years. He left after Jake died.

JB: Remember any other people that were specifically hired to break stock?

WL: Well, Tibbets (?). Tibbets could get on a horse, so help me I never seen...He was real light—tall but light in weight—and honest he could actually get on a horse without a horse knowing it. He could just slip on a horse so easy, and he was good breaking horse. He was kind. He never roughed them up or anything. I remember one time Fickes was coming out with somebody else to buy some horses from these fellows that were packing then that had come in from the reservation with a herd of horses. They rented the horses to the Forest Service and then stayed on to pack. Of course, Fickes would have them ride them out. Saddle them and ride them out in the circle there in the yard—

JB: There's a robin on your screen.

WL: Oh yes.

These guys would all get Tibbets to ride their horse out because he could do so much better than anybody else.

JB: Probably made the horse look better. [laughs]

WL: He's the one I was telling you is a millionaire now.

JB: Oh is that right?

WL: Yes.

JB: How'd he manage that?

WL: Well, he was a gambler. When the Depression hit the eastern part of the state, he put in every dime he could get a hold of and bought that land for back taxes. He says, "I was just in debt so bad I figured, well, I'll either make or break," and he made. He owns 22 sections of land there now—good land. He owns the elevators in Miles City and the sales yard in Miles City now.

LL: And we were invited there and didn't go this year.

WL: After we go visit him, I never feel just right. I'm well enough to take the trip but maybe I will someday.

JB: You must have known Boyd Thompson.

WL: Oh, yes.

JB: Now what was his job out there?

WL: Well, it was just...He did a little packing.

LL: He was not a popular man.

WL: He wasn't, no.

JB: Well, I'm mostly interested in his job. What he did.

WL: He done a little packing, and then he got to be a ranch foreman at one time.

JB: Think of any other people that ought to be mentioned? Anybody? We've talked about so many people.

LL: You're going to know an awful lot about the Remount.

JB: Oh, I feel like it, yes.

LL: Did you talk to this fellow at the Eagles Manor?

JB: Yes, Mr. Russell.

LL: Did he give you a lot of information?

JB: Oh, yes.

LL: He did?

JB: He knew most about the construction, laying the piping and putting in that, yes, the electrical line from up from Alberton. This was the kind of thing he'd worked with. I went out and talked yesterday with Marion Duncan.

LL: Oh, yes.

JB: Did you know Marion Duncan?

WL: Oh, yes.

LL: Of course.

JB: Yes, I sat and talked with him yesterday.

WL: Marion Duncan—

LL: Was a nice guy.

WL: When that Reo truck come out there, Marion Duncan brought it out there, and we took some burros up the South Fork of the Flathead—some station up there. North Fork or South Fork—I don't know where it was, but it was up in there. We stayed overnight, and that was the first time I rode in one of them trucks and Marion had me drive it.

LL: This was the Reo, the speedwagon?

WL: Oh, it was an easy truck to shift. Marion told me, he says "You remember, Bill, you got double clutch this." He let me drive it on the way back, but we took this doggone burro or something up there to this station.

JB: Just one burro?

WL: Yes, just one as I remember in that big truck. Could've taken her in a pick up as far as that goes, but Marion was the first one that ever showed me anything about driving a truck.

JB: Yes, we had a good talk yesterday. He, of course, knew all about the trucks.

WL: His son is manager of that SuperSave on the south side.

JB: Oh no, I didn't know that.

LL: Larry. Larry Duncan.

WL: An awful nice fellow.

JB: Well again, any people you think we might have forgotten?

WL: Well, I don't know. This packers there, if you think they're important I could name you some.

JB: They certainly are. See, the thing that happens is I get lots of names, but every time I come and talk to somebody, somebody always knows more names than I knew before because you'll remember somebody that somebody else doesn't remember.

WL: Well you know if something, Major Kelley, he was used to *aparejos*. That's the type of packs saddle.

JB: Yes, I've read about them.

WL: Nobody knew anything about *aparejos*, so they sent word out and the two fellows responded from Idaho, **Mackie** Williams (?) and Jarett (?). I don't know the other fellow's first name, but it was Jarett. Little fellow, and **Mackie** Williams was a pretty heavy man. They were in the middle, past the middle age then. They come out there, and then they located enough *aparejos* for a pack string. Major Kelley, I guess he couldn't figure out why the *aparejos* wouldn't work just as good if not better than the Decker saddles, which they do now use. So with these experts they figured they'd find some way of using them, but they never could. It seemed like it didn't get over being...A mule had to be shaped just right in order to use an *aparejo*, because they cinched them so tight because that was the only thing that held the saddle from turning was the tightness of it. They were all made out of leather, real beautiful work. So they never packed a string with it out of the Remount, just experimenting. They finally left and the next year Jake, who still wanted to experiment with that *aparejo*. Well, Uri Kirtley claimed that he had been around where they had used it in Idaho, so Jake let him experiment. They found two mules that answered the shape, the build. They kind of had to be a kind of a lace type.

JB: What do you mean?

WL: Well small. Kind of a hollow in their chest.

JB: Oh, in the chest?

WL: You know, right where the cinch fits. They were natural like that, so Kirt [Kirtley] used to experiment with them. He'd pack them on these *aparejo* saddles. He'd put a weight on them—pack different things hay or whatnot—and he'd run them a half a mile to the other end of the [unintelligible]. That was the reason for using *aparejos*, they figured they could run the mules with an *aparejo* where they couldn't run them with a Decker. But Kirt...They led good. They had to lead good in order to run with them. He'd run them to the other end of this half of the meadow there—there's a half mile and back. He done that for a month. He packed different things, and then he'd get on his saddle horse and he just go as fast as he could to the other end of there and back again. But it was comical to watch him.

But that's as much of the *aparejo* as I ever seen. Well that passed...anyway that stage passed on. Then there was Bob Hansen (?), Johnny Pritchard, that were packers, good packers. Homer McLean. Slim Johnson (?), he was from the Riggins. Now that's where Jake Williams come from, Riggins.

JB: Riggins, Idaho.

WL: Riggins, Idaho.

JB: Okay. Dee Stewart?

WL: Dee Stewart was a truck driver. One time they're riding broncs there, and Dee Stewart said "Let me ride him. I'll tromp him." He used the expression, "I'll tromp him," and he was the ex-logger. He always wore cork shoes.

Somebody says, "Dee, you should get on that horse with them shoes. Something might happen."

"Oh hell," he said, "I'll take care of myself." He wasn't any more of a cowboy than anything. He was a lumber jack. He got on that horse, and I don't know what he did. The horse threw himself backwards and broke Dee's leg. You think that wasn't a stir in the Forest Service. God!

LL: Now, I don't know if this is important, but didn't they have a horse polo game at one time?

WL: Yes.

JB: Was this a regular thing? Y

WL: No, it was just in the meadow. We didn't know anything about polo. I was in on it.

LL: It was just for fun.

WL: Just fun. Even Fickes was in on it.

LL: For Sunday. Sunday.

WL: Just pastime.

JB: Sounds like fun.

WL: Fickes had gathered up the hammers or whatever you call them and the balls and brought them out there.

JB: They call it cowboy polo now.

WL: Well, you were talking about those *aparejo* saddles, that reminds me of something that Fickes told me when I talked to him a couple of months ago. He said that he had hoped that the Forest Service was going to hang on to those saddles just because they're rare now. You never see them. He said the last he knew they'd been burned up as excess surplus property or something like that. Couldn't find a one any place.

WL: You know what I seen them doing and that was during the Depression? They had a lot of McLellan saddles.

JB: Those were from the Army, right?

WL: That was an Army saddle, and they were good. They had never been used. So many people up in that country couldn't afford a saddle, and they were willing to pay something for them. Cap, now Cap got the blame for that, but he was ordered to burn them.

JB: Oh, that's too bad.

WL: He didn't dare take them to the dump because he know that people would get out there and get them so he piled them up right in front, right in the middle of the yard, and set fire to them.

JB: Was this out the Remount?

WL: Right at the Remount. When they was partly burnt, then we hauled them to the dump.

LL: Well, another time...A lot of us we were...At one time, we were all kind of hard up. We went...Everybody was going through the Depression, and they burned a bunch of cars, which we could have bought but they wouldn't sell them.

WL: And tires.

JB: Government property?

LL: Yes.

JB: It's hard to understand those things, isn't it?

WL: Well Lloyd Zibenin (?) was the boss then here, and a good friend of mine at the warehouse—Forest Service warehouse. He told them that the reason that they had the burn them just like they'd order a hundred dozen loaves of bread for some big fire, and they didn't materialize, see. The fire went out too soon, and I'd tell you the people were by the hundreds begging to eat. They'd take those...They'd mold—the bread would mold, start molding—so they'd back up to the river with a truck and dump that bread and them poor hungry devils would try to swim out there and get some of them. They wasn't allowed, pardon me, they'd even keep men out there to keep them—bums they called them—from going out there and getting a loaf of bread.

LL: But their reason in doing that was because if it wasn't any good for the Forest Service it wasn't any good for anybody.

WL: That's right. If it was good enough to give to somebody, like a tire or an old car—if it was good enough—it was good enough for them to use.

LL: So they had to destroy it.

WL: So they had to prove that it was no good at all in order to destroy it. I've seen them burn a trailer there. I'd have given them 100 dollars for it as hard up as I was then. They sent a man out there, throwed oil on it and burned it, with brand new tires and the spare tire hanging on it that had never been used.

JB: That's hard to understand.

WL: Like I say they have to show that it was worthless or else they should have kept it.

JB: Is there anything else about that Remount Depot out there, about those days, that you want to tell me about?

WL: Well I guess that's pretty much—

LL: The food was good all the time. They had everything to cook with.

WL: Yes. They had good food.

JB: That's good to know. Entertained a lot of visitors?

LL: Yes.

JB: Do you miss those days?

WL: Well, I can truthfully say I enjoyed them, but I thought after I left the ranch—when I left the Remount—I thought god I'll never...How am I going to make a living. But that was the biggest break in my life when I quite the Remount.

JB: And went back to your ranch?

WL: Then I developed the ranch, and we made a good living then. A lot better, and we was always at home. I guess I was just a natural-born farmer. I hadn't tried everything. In '29, the year before I went to the Forest Service, I was in butchering. I learned the butcher trade, and before that I worked in the mines in Butte, 3,600 feet underground.

JB: Oh my heavens, you did try everything, didn't you?

WL: I cooked in the logging camps when I was a young fellow. I tried everything, but I come back to farm. I guess that what I was supposed to do.

JB: Thanks, Mr. Longpre.

[End of Interview]