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The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the [Northwest Montana Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association](#) with its associated audio recording.

Oral History Number: 453-017

Interviewees: Jan Walters and Clare Walters

Interviewer: Beth Hodder

Date of Interview: September 23, 2021

Project: Northwest Montana Lookout Association

Clare Walters: Okay. The first thing is that we were on lookouts two different times. I was on a lookout in 1963, and we were together on a lookout in 1967. So, all your questions will have two kinds of sets of answers. And they're quite different.

Beth Hodder: That's fine. Both of you just go ahead and give your own stories as they come for whatever lookout you were on. You were on which lookouts?

CW: Well, in 1963, I was on Johnson Lookout, Johnson Peak. It's in the Flathead National Forest and the Tally Lake Ranger District. And in 1967, we were on Whitefish Lookout. Same National Forest, same Ranger District. One of the interesting things, I think, is that I was raised in Whitefish and I grew up there. So was always around all of that kind of stuff. My brother had been on Ashley Lookout, which is also in the Flathead and Tally Lake. He's five years older than I. So I went up to that lookout. I've been there, and I've been hiking and backpacking and all that kind of stuff forever. But Jan has a different story.

Jan Walters: Oh, yeah. I grew up in Seattle. I was better-- I feel kind of nostalgic. Bear with

BH: That's great.

JW: I was better at learning how to ride the bus or the ferry, or, you know, all that kind of thing. I had never seen a moose in my whole life. I had never seen bear. I've been to Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. That was my association. And I'd never even seen a gun. And one of the first things that happened to me is, I had gone to town to get food and do laundry and everything. I was going up the lookout road in the car and I come around the corner, and there's a big man in the middle of the road, pointing a rifle at the car. Scared the liver out of me. I mean, the funniest thing is he was Elmer [Knoffle] who knew Clare's father and he recognized the car. He said, "Oh, you're okay." He was actually up there because people from one of the hotels on the lake had been dumping raw sewage on his land. He was there; he was going to catch 'em.

CW: Fix the problem.

JW: Fix the problem himself. But he had his rifle. And that is sort of, you know, I'll never forget that day. I'd never seen that before.

BH: I can imagine. So, I was just wondering if maybe an easy way to do this would just be to start with you, for 1963 on Johnson, and just we can talk about that, or do you think it would be better to combine the two of them?

CW: No. I think doing one at a time makes a lot of sense.

BH: Why don't I talk with you then, since that was the earliest?

CW: That sounds good.

BH: How did you end up being a lookout up there? And where were you?

CW: I just graduated from high school in '63. So, it was right after I graduated from high school and I went to work. I'd put in an application to work for the Forest Service, clearing trails and going to be a so-called smoke chaser. And the opportunity came up that they had not hired anyone to man Johnson Lookout. They did have someone on Ashley. Ashley and Whitefish Lookouts are the other two lookouts in that Ranger District. So, I took that opportunity. I knew kind of what it was like, because as I said, my brother had been on one. I thought that sounded good. So, I did that.

BH: Now, tell me about Johnson. How did you get there?

CW: We hiked in; the shortest route was about two miles from a road. But the standard way to get in was about five or six miles. When we went up there the first time, they took all the--we went to grocery stores and bought all the food that was going to be required for two months up there. I had no idea what I was doing but I had good advice from people that knew what they were doing. And they loaded up a pack string at a guard station called Star Meadows. We went in with a pack string. I hiked, and the pack string came up a little bit later. And that's how I got in.

BH: Had you ever worked with a pack string before? I know you didn't take it.

CW: I didn't then either. They had somebody who knew what he was doing. But I helped load the containers that were put on the animals, on the mules. And then we hiked in and waited until the pack string got there.

BH: And then how long were you up there?

CW: We started in just before the Fourth of July, and I came down in late August. And I came down because I was starting college in Tacoma at Pacific Lutheran University. And I needed to get a couple things organized before I went to college, so that's when I came down toward the end of August. The fire season wasn't quite over when I came down, so they had to send a replacement up for just a few days. But that's a whole 'nother story. And that became a mess. But anyway, we did that. So, we were up there for about two months.

BH: What can you tell me about the lookout itself--what it looked like? What was in there?

CW: Sure, I can send you a picture too. I think Johnson was a little bit unusual, because it had a cabin, like we would normally think, that sits on stilts. That was on the ground. And then it had a tower that was made out of steel construction that was ninety feet tall, off to the side. And so, I had my responsibility, I have a picture that I can I can send to you. It's an electronic version. And if you want me to email that to you, and I'll email you a picture of the Whitefish Lookout and then maybe a couple of shots of what we could see.

BH: That would be great.

CW: And Johnson was--it was fairly bald on top of the mountain. There weren't very many trees. So, they made a helipad on top of the mountain also, and I have no idea why that was there. But there was a helipad, and I was supposed to maintain that also. And chop down some of the trees was part of my summer responsibility. I had to go up the ninety-foot tower three times a day, at least. I spent a fair amount of time up there. Most of the time I was down below and it had the standard equipment that was in a lookout. It had a firefinder, had a stove, a wood stove. We had a radio to communicate with Whitefish and the Tally Lake Ranger District. We also had a telephone. The telephone was just a galvanized wire that ran from insulator to insulator through the trees. And it connected me to Star Meadows and Ashley Lookout. So, there were three of us on this telephone line.

CW: We could talk over that as much as we wanted at any time of day that, you know, people were available. We used that for social events. We also played chess at night over the telephone. All chess locations are lettered and numbered, so it was pretty easy to play chess over the telephone. So, it had a firefinder, stove, bed--little cot, and a table. And that was about it. And then the same kinds of things were on top of the tower except there was no table, no bed, no stove. It just had a firefinder, the radio and the telephone. I'm sure you know the firefinder's an azimuth-sighting device that's in the center of the lookout tower. I assume that it's pretty well surveyed in so when we report coordinates of things they know where we're starting from. The other thing that Johnson Peak had--it had a weather station. And so every day I was supposed to take readings from the weather station and radio those in the late afternoon. I think 4:30 was the time that I was supposed to radio that information down to the Ranger District.

BH: So just in terms of the lookouts, there were two of them is what you're saying. There was the lookout or a cabin, however you want to say it, that you lived in, but it also had a firefinder. As well as the tower--which was actually supposed to be the lookout, the tower itself? Or both of them?

CW: I think both of them. I was told the reason they built the ninety-foot tower was I could see over the hill in the opposite direction. I could see to the west, and from the top of the mountain that was obscured by trees, and they apparently didn't want to cut all that timber down. So,

from the ground I had good visibility to the south and east and those directions. But I could not see very well to the north or west. From the tower, I could see very well in the other directions also.

BH: How did you access both of them?

CW: The one on the ground was just through a door. The tower had steps just climbed back and forth. It wasn't a ladder. There was a staircase that went up ninety foot.

BH: Did it have a trapdoor or something that you got in?

CW: Right, It had a trapdoor.

BH: That must have been kind of daunting the first time or so to go up there.

CW: It was and when you made the trip several times you know, you didn't want to make it too many times, whatever time was needed up there looking around and so on. And of course, it didn't have anything like--there was no food or anything up there, so most of the time was spent down below.

BH: Right. So, what were your duties? You said you had to do weather?

CW: Yes. So it was watching for fires. There was a whole bunch of very small trees, it was almost like a small stand of lodgepole pine that was just to the southwest of the lookout of the ground station, the ground part of it, and they wanted me to cut that down. I worked on that daily for a long time. It was a pretty big area, but I managed to chop all those trees down. I had that to do and then, you know, just all the tasks of life. And, as I'm sure everybody understands, water is a big issue because you're on top of a mountain and water is never on the top of a mountain. It was about a mile to the spring that I had access to. In the early part of when I was up there, I would go down once a week with a large can. It was called an Indian pump, to bring back five gallons of water. Then I realized, well that doesn't make a whole lot of sense, so after that I just went down every day, almost kind of like a morning walk--go for a walk down to the spring and fill up a two-gallon canteen and take it back up. So, I just took a hike every morning and brought back two gallons of water.

BH: Where was the spring in terms of direction, was it you know, north, south, east, west, of the lookout?

CW: It was to the north northeast of where I was.

BH: Have you been back to the lookout at all since you left?

CW: No, I've never gone back.

BH: I'm always curious about whether those springs still exist. I know that some of them do.

CW: I'm sure they do.

BH: So were there other outbuildings up there?

CW: There was an outhouse but no other outbuildings, no other cabins or anything like that.

BH: Did you sleep in the one that sat on the ground then; you said there was a bed in there?

CW: There was a bed in there. The one on the stilts had a very small cabin. I bet it wasn't any more than six feet on a side. It was a very small contraption on top of the stilts.

BH: I've seen pictures of some of those towers and I think that they look like they're not even very sturdy, but it must have been. When the wind blew did it blow it much?

CW: It swayed a little bit. I don't even think there were any guy wires. It was just bolted together, a big steel structure.

BH: How did you cook your meals?

CW: There was a woodstove and one of the greatest things about it was there was a--I think it was a 1938 publication--it was called the "Lookout Cookbook"; that was up there and it showed how to make bread and how to regulate an oven and all that kind of stuff. And as a matter of fact, Jan still uses the "Lookout Cookbook" to bake bread. It was a great little cookbook. It was a woodstove that was used for heating when needed and also for cooking. There was no refrigerator or anything like that. Refrigeration was, someone had buried a milk can in the ground, thinking that the ground was cooler than the air. And that was supposed to be where I kept eggs and a couple things like that, that needed some refrigeration. But I think eggs was just about the only thing I took up there that required refrigeration for any long period of time.

BH: What types of meals did you cook besides bread?

CW: You know, I really don't remember a lot about what I cooked. I know I made whatever you can find out of a can. I know that the big treat was the times that I opened a canned ham. That was definitely a treat. I'm sure I had any kind of canned protein I could, and a friend came up once and brought a steak. That was very lovely. And I was always looking for grouse or something like that that would be some fresh meat. And I did successfully kill one grouse to have some fresh meat, but that was it.

BH: So I'm assuming you didn't have anybody that would come and bring you vegetables or whatever.

CW: I think I saw who hiked in and then we'll come to that story in a little bit. But people who came up there to visit me--I think there were probably five that I saw over the course of the

summer. And my boss came up one time. His name was Johnny Pike, and you'll hear some more stories about him. He's, in my mind, he's legendary. I think in Jan's you'll hear that story. He came up for kind of a visit and inspection to see how things were doing. He sent someone up, a friend of mine, a high school friend, he sent up on a little scooter to bring me some fresh meat once. The friend that I had had an accident on his scooter on his way up and he fell off and had a puncture under his arm. I patched him up before I sent him back. He remembers that. I saw him not too long ago and he remembered that being patched up on Johnson Lookout before he took his little scooter back.

CW: I was saying about the people who were there. The other thing that happened while I was up there--as I said there was a heli-pad. I had two different times that helicopters came. The first time they dropped a guy off and he had a piece of electronic equipment he was setting up and they were testing it. They were going to use this piece of electronic equipment to find fires, find forest fires. So it was to replace the lookouts, I guess, and so they brought this piece of equipment up and some technician worked on it for a while and then they left it. And then they came back, I believe a day later and were going to pick it up. Of course what had happened in the meantime is the wind had blown something off and {undecipherable}. Because whatever the device was, I strongly suspect it was some kind of a thermal imaging system that they were testing out--some kind of a thermal scanner that was going to survey that area.

CW: And then another time the helicopter came up and dropped off a young man and he was to go down in the drainage just to the northeast of where I was and collect some soil samples. Exactly why he was collecting soil samples I don't know but that was his job. So he was getting ready to go do his job. He asked me if he saw any grouse if he could shoot one for me, and I said "sure." So, I was below the lookout down there busy chopping the trees I was talking about and I heard some gunshots from across this little valley. And I thought, oh, good. I'm gonna have fresh meat tonight. Sometime later, it seemed like quite a while like an hour or two later, it was quite a while later, and as I remember it, I looked and he shouted at me. I looked up to the cabin, the piece that was on the ground, and here's this guy standing up there. I could see even from where I was, he had blood all over his t-shirt. So, I hiked up there.

CW: It turns out that he had encountered a bear over in this drainage, and the bear had chased him up a tree. He'd shot the bear, whatever this gun that he had, but he didn't know whether he had killed it, so he was afraid to come down the tree. He stayed in that tree for a long time. He finally shimmied down. The blood was when coming down this little tree, he had scraped himself. Anyway, I did my Boy Scout thing and patched him up a little bit, and then radioed down to the people that could contact the helicopter that he was associated with. They came and picked him up. They were all just terribly grateful for all of this, and so on. Then they came back the next day with a guy that had a real rifle and said, well, they had to go down to find this bear and make sure that it wasn't just injured and it was really dead. They went back down there, and the bear in fact, was dead. They came back up, and they were just all grateful. And they asked me what I needed. If I needed anything, they would bring it to me. So, I said "water." They brought me 20 gallons of water.

BH: Oh, nice.

CW: Yeah, that was a very nice gift. So that was my encounters with people while I was up there.

BH: So that's all the encounters that you had.

CW: Yeah, that was--I had a friend of mine. Another friend came up and spent a night and-- I don't know if anyone else has talked about St. Elmo's fire.

BH: Yes. Tell me about your experience.

CW: Yeah, the night that this friend of mine was up there we experienced St Elmo's fire. I'd heard about it from my boss. And he said you probably won't see it. It's a very rare occurrence. Well, virtually every thunderstorm that came by I saw St Elmo's fire, so I saw it pretty frequently. That's an impressive, impressive thing to see.

BH: What did it look like?

CW: Like a blue glow on the end of the antennas. The radio antennas that were sticking up in the air. There was just an eerie blue glow.

BH: So you could actually see outside the lookout where the antennas were? You could see the blue glow?

CW: Yeah. Especially when I was in the tower. I mean--because it was all so small. And the edge of the roof-- it was all metal. The roof was metal also so that if it got really, really quote unquote "hot," then the roof glowed, too, the edge of the roof.

BH: Wow. So, when you're in this metal tower, and you're in the middle of a storm, what did you do to keep yourself safe?

CW: We had made sure we were grounded. There was a manual switch to ground and turn off the telephone. I had a switch to make sure that if lightning hit the telephone wire it would not run up to the receiver where I was sitting. We sat on a stool in that tower also. I thought it was kind of funny. Maybe it wasn't funny, but it had insulators, upside down on its feet. Those big things that you see on telephone poles from way back when, those were on the bottom of the legs. I hadn't thought about that in a long time. I sat on a stool, made sure you were grounded and disconnected the telephone and waited the storm out. Yeah, we were supposed to be up there during storms.

BH: Up in the tower.

CW: Up in the tower during storms.

BH: Did you have many storms?

CW: Yeah, I mean, that part of Montana--they're pretty frequent. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms are pretty common. I don't remember how many times I was up there during storms, but I know we had 'em pretty frequently.

BH: How about fires? Did you have fires while you were there?

CW: I found one that was a legitimate fire that, you know, I reported but I didn't see any others. So I had one; it was a small fire. They sent a small crew out and took care of it right away.

BH: Now, you mentioned that you played chess at night. What else did you do to keep yourself occupied while you were there?

CW: I read a lot. And I, you know, I regret now that I didn't keep a journal or anything like that. That should have been something I'd done. Nobody talked about that. But I didn't do that. I played cards by myself, Solitaire and things like that. But most of it was reading.

BH: Good stuff to do. Well, how about wildlife? Did you have any experiences outside of grouse and one bear?

CW: Yeah, there were deer around on a fairly regular basis. And I did see a lynx, and I took a picture where I thought the lynx was and I'm looking at the picture now and I can't find it. But anyway, I'm sure I saw a lynx one time. But I didn't see anything else up there. I didn't see any bears. That's the [undecipherable] story about after I left. Allegedly, the night that I left, the guy that replaced me said that a bear broke into that cabin that was on the ground where he was sleeping. He climbed up on top of the roof to escape the bear, and the bear ransacked his food and all that kind of stuff. So, they sent up another guy with a rifle. They sat in the cabin waiting for the bear to show up again. It didn't show up, and then it rained. So that was the end of the event for them. But they were amazed that I had missed the bear [undecipherable]. I'd never seen the bear around at all. I know that when we first got up there, there was a so-called bear-proof door that we had to take off the lookout. And that was a essentially a door that had nails pounded through. If somebody tried to hit it they got the spiky end of the nails. We had to take that off before we opened the cabin. Just opening up the thing. I didn't have trouble with rodents either.

BH: Well, that's good. Yeah. And you talk about the spiky mats and that. My husband worked for a while in the Bob Marshall. They had those for bears in front of cabins. They call them the welcome mat. So, I guess it's kind of the same thing.

CW: I'm sure it was the same kind of thing. Yeah.

BH: Did you have any special stories or anything that we're missing here for just for Johnson?

CW: I think the big story for me is that helicopter event and especially the guy that got treed by a bear. The other, it's kind of a coincidence, I guess. Later in my career, as you know, I was a research scientist working for an Army Research and Development Lab in Northern Virginia, where I spent 40 years of working life. And that lab was called the night vision lab. We were developing thermal imaging systems. So, I am betting that I saw a real early version of a thermal imaging system on top of Johnson Mountain in 1963. I didn't see it again until 1990 or something like that. They were much more advanced when I saw it as part of a career.

BH: But the light went on and you said I bet that's the same thing. The early version. That's pretty cool.

BH: So, I'm assuming your experiences there led to your wanting to go to be a lookout with Jan, then, on Whitefish Mountain.

CW: I think that's probably right. My summer job was working for the Forest Service. And I'd spent the other two summers between those years at Star Meadows. A couple of us were stationed up there and we were smoke chasers. Then the opportunity to be on Whitefish Lookout came up so we grabbed that.

BH: And were you two married when you were at Johnson or did you meet sometime in there?

CW: We met sometime in there. We met at Pacific Lutheran University where we were both students. And we got married in '66. 1967--also the summer that we were on Whitefish Lookout. That was the so-called summer of the grizzly or night of the grizzlies in Glacier. That happened, I believe in August, early August when we were on Whitefish Lookout.

BH: Yeah. Could you hear any of that from the communications going on that night?

CW: No, that was all National Park. So that was not part of the radio network we were on. But you know, we were close enough to town like Jan said, you could drive to the lookout. And we had a radio, commercial radio that we mostly heard.

JW: We heard news. And once a week, I went to town and got food and did laundry and water. I brought water from somebody's hose. Carried it. We had a propane stove and refrigerator and a real radio. We could hear local news. And I could buy the newspaper when I went to town--went to the library. So, we were much more connected to the outside world.

BH: The amenities of being up there.

JW: It was more like camping in a nice cabin.

BH: So, what can you tell me then about Whitefish? Well, you know, the cabin. How did you get there? You said you drove but what was the route to get there?

JW: A little windy road from town. It wasn't very far. Just a few miles up the road. It was a one-lane road. So, you had to learn if you met somebody, you had to learn where you could back up and let them pass you or whatever. But it was real close to town. Local people came to visit, family came to visit, everybody. You know, it was just easy travel and you drove the car right up to the lookout steps and there you were.

CW: The road to the lookout was just off the access road to the ski resort on Big Mountain, Whitefish Mountain Resort. And it had a sign saying "Whitefish Lookout two miles" or whatever it was. We had a number of people that just came up there as visitors.

CW: Tourists.

JW: We had two little boys who came and they were camping, and I was appalled, because nobody would have let me go in the woods by myself when I was 10 years old. Anyway, these little boys were camping, but they forgot to bring oil for the pancakes. So, I gave him a little container with some oil.

CW: They climbed up to the lookout.

JW: Our cabin was only 45 feet off the ground, so I gave them oil. The next day, they came back to give me the container. Inside the container, they had a frog. They dropped it off the lookout. They want to see what happened. They definitely were little boys.

BH: What was their experiment? What did it show them?

CW: I have no idea what happened to the frog.

JW: They were all excited.

CW: I think it was pretty squished after 45 feet.

BH: I didn't know if you got to see the results or not. So, I was up at Firefighter Lookout once. I was volunteering up there. I had a pottery glass in my hand. I put it on the rail, and it fell off. And it was like 40 some feet there, too. It was a nice glass. I thought, Oh no, I could see it down at the bottom there. And I thought, you know, it's just got to be broken. It was fine. And it landed on rocks. So, who knows what happened to that little frog?

JW: Probably smashed. I think my biggest thing was that I had to go to guard school because I was also an employee. And I learned a lot that I'd never heard before, like the formation of the clouds and all of that. Our final exam was--they gave you coordinates and you were to go through the woods with your compass and find a fire. There was one other girl in guard school--it was all guys. You know, in 1967, they didn't have many girls who would do that. So it was just the two of us. I had already been embarrassed by her because she had put her hand up and

asked in the class how she would iron clothes on Ashley Lookout. And I knew that wasn't a good question to ask. But anyway, at guard school, your final exam was the coordinates, they gave you the coordinates, you were to go through the woods and find the fire. This other girl, her name was Beth, she said, or her ranger said, "My girl doesn't have to do that." But Johnny Pike said, "My girl will do it." It was a real lesson for I was 22. What a gentleman. What a wonderful message to give a young lady. So Johnny is really special.

BH: So, you did everything then that Clare did as well. Johnny expected that backup? Johnny expected you to do exactly the same as Clare?

JW: Exactly. Right.

BH: Oh, good for him. And good for you.

JW: I think it was a real message. That other girl kind of looked at me like, "oh."

BH: Did you find the fire?

JW: Yes, of course I did.

CW: You were taught well.

BH: What was life like for the two of you up in Whitefish Lookout?

JW: We did a lot of reading. And we played games. And we had a lot of visitors. One of Clare's friends from high school came up many nights to just sit around and watch.

CW: Talk, talk. We smoked cigarettes in those days.

JW: We had a social life, in a sense. When I went down to town, I'd see his parents and got to know people in town. And that was really nice. Because it was a whole different world, really.

CW: My parents weren't living anymore when we were up there. So all the people that we saw were more friends from when I was growing up.

JW: Yeah. My parents came to visit once from Seattle and drove up there. That was kind of interesting. Clare's aunt came with cousins. We were close enough that we had a lot of interaction with other people. And we had time we couldn't leave. We couldn't both leave at the same time. But we did hike around the lookout, pick huckleberries and, you know, do that kind of thing.

BH: So, did you make huckleberry pancakes or anything?

JW: Oh, yeah, and huckleberry pie.

CW: There was a good huckleberry patch right below the lookout.

JW: We had a bear. But it was a very quiet little bear. That kind of, you know, explored the garbage pit every once in a while.

CW: And you saw a moose on the road.

JW: I did. I had never seen a moose in my whole life. You know, it was in the middle of the road and I'm supposed to keep going. It was the ugliest animal; I couldn't believe it. But I knew enough to just wait for him.

BH: Did he stick around for a while or did he just let you go?

JW: Just ambled off after a while. He was much less intimidating than Elmer [Knofle]. My saving grace with Elmer, I don't know if I said it, but he recognized the car I was driving because it was Clare's father's old car. And he said, "Why are you driving Sonny's car?" Well, it was ours now.

JW: It was a lot of different mainly because we had the amenities of a cabin that you would find anywhere.

BH: A little bit primitive, but all the amenities were there.

CW: And we had propane. So we didn't have to chop wood.

JW: A small refrigerator, two-burner stove. We did have a wood stove too, for heat. Yeah. And a big huge garbage can-like thing to put water in.

BH: Was there any other building there that you could store things in? Was there a freezer in the refrigerator?

JW: No, no freezer, just a refrigerator. And really, I went down to town about once a week. So no freezer. You could store canned goods, but there was no reason to because you could drive to town. And that would be my day off.

BH: So what did your parents think of the lookout? They didn't stay up with you?

JW: When I grew up, we didn't camp or I'd never hiked around in the woods much. You know. I walked city streets a lot, but not, you know, the woods. I think my parents were--they didn't say a lot.

CW: They must have been kind of shocked.

JW: I think they were kind of taken aback. My dad's idea of a good vacation was to drive to California and stay in a hotel and eat in a restaurant. His idea of, you know, staying in a cabin, he didn't get into that. They never said anything, but I always wondered what they thought when they heard the news from Glacier, and all that that, you know, we were in a scary state. Although we were very safe where we were.

CW: There was a big fire in Glacier that year, too. It was after the "night of the grizzlies," and we had some pictures of a cloud over the range. We couldn't see the fire because of Teakettle Mountain and that range was in the way. But you could see the smoke cloud hanging over that.

BH: Yeah, I think that fire burned quite a bit in the Park.

JW: Weren't there eight fires that you spotted?

CW: think there were.

JW: That was the hard thing, I thought. He'd get all excited. You know, when there's storms, there might be a fire and we got to make popcorn and sit up and watch. Oh, my word--how could you get excited?

BH: That's what you do as a lookout though.

JW: You learn.

CW: This is not a volunteer experience. We enjoyed camping. We backpacked together a couple of times. Not very far--when we lived on the east coast for 40 years. But I always came back. I went backpacking any number of times in the Bob Marshall and then also into the Beartooth Wilderness area, south central Montana. We love that kind of life. Now hikes are a little shorter, not quite so strenuous. But we do walk most every day and enjoy our time communing with nature that way.

JW: More parks.

BH: I'm assuming that there were trails also. You mentioned going down and picking huckleberries and walking down there. But were there trails that you could take from the lookout?

CW: I don't think there were.

BH: Not really, you kind of knew. And the lookout was above, so you were always going down. And there was Haskill Basin where the boys camped that time and, you know, you kind of knew where you were, but there weren't really trails just go through the low brush.

BH: Any special experiences that stick out?

CW: I can't think of any.

JW: No, I just always will remember Elmer, or excuse me, Johnny Pike. I mean, he used to talk about his wife, "me and Minnie, this is what we did this weekend," you know, and he just was kind of salt of the earth.

BH: So he came up and visited a lot also?

JW: He would come and check on us. I remember once we had gone down, we both had gone down to the outhouse. And Clare could hear Johnny's truck coming up the road. And he ran up because we hadn't made the bed yet. And Johnny wouldn't like it if the bed wasn't made.

BH: Sounds like he was a pretty good person, though.

CW: He definitely was. He would bring other people, guests that came from other forests or other districts or something like that. We had pretty frequent visitors from the Forest Service also.

JW: Well, it was easy.

CW: We really liked that. No hiking involved.

BH: That year did you think about going back up to the lookout? Or did you have other life things that were happening to you at that time?

JW: Let's see. The following year '67. The following year, you went on to get a master's degree. And I had a job. I was a teacher in those days and elementary teacher.

BH: In Montana or in Virginia, then?

CW: Washington state. And in '69, we moved to the Washington DC area. So I went to graduate school out there. The idea that we had originally was in four years, we'd move back to the northwest, probably to the Washington state area, more than Montana, but anyway--moving back--but it didn't work out that way. The careers, the jobs were on the east coast. So we were in Virginia, in the Northern Virginia area, for almost 40 years before we moved back here. Retired.

JW: Actually, more than 40.

CW: Anyway, we probably came back for lots of vacations and enjoyed time in Glacier. And I told about the times we went backpacking in the Bob (Marshall) and the Beartooth and those places, so they were all great things. Good things to come back to.

JW: We were in Whitefish this last month for a memorial service. It was interesting, because I remember Whitefish, the town. as being such a homey little place. We walked around the town Sunday afternoon. It was packed with people. It was Huckleberry Days, and it all looked so prosperous and nice. But people complained, the local old timers, they didn't like all this new stuff. On the other hand, we were in Kalispell, and it looked pretty desolate. A lot of boarded up places of businesses and that kind of thing. That was sad. But Whitefish is booming, like you wouldn't believe. And they tore down Clare's family home, and somebody built a monster mansion on the property.

BH: Oh, no. Where was the home?

CW: It was near the city beach in Whitefish.

BH: Oh, bummer.

CW: My dad had actually built the house.

BH: Well, that's the way it is anymore. I guess the monster homes are moving in.

JW: When we came out to this area, we came from Tacoma because our daughter lives in the area. When we came it was really hard to find a house that would be a modest house for somebody who doesn't want to do a lot of housekeeping and that kind of thing. It was hard. The houses were all huge. And we were downsizing. That is what it is now.

BH: That's true. Would you have done it over again if you could go back to the lookout, was it worth worthwhile enough?

JW: Wow, it was a great summer.

CW: Yeah. Yeah.

JW: It was sad. When our son was born, we talked a lot about the lookout because that was fresh in our minds. So he wanted to go back and see it. By the time we went back and took him there, they had burned it down. Because it was so close to town that people went up there and partied, and it just became a hazard to maintain. That was sad to see that they took that one down.

CW: There's one other little story I remember about that Whitefish Lookout. Jan didn't want to carry the laundry all the way down the 45 steps.

JW: I was carrying a bunch of stuff.

CW: So, she held the laundry bag over the rail and dropped it and it hung up on the guy wire. It was like 10 feet off the ground, so, close to the bottom.

JW: Yes, it was almost there but not.

CW: She shimmied out on one of the support poles and knocked it off. So she could go do the laundry. I didn't witness any of this. I heard it later.

JW: I had to get it down.

BH: Well , you gotta do what you gotta do.

CW: Exactly.

JW: Besides that I had to go to town and get food and water and go to the Hutchinson's. I filled jugs from their hose in the backyard.

CW: Well, I'm really glad that you have this project going. That's fantastic. This friend of mine, Doug Hetrick, is his name, sent me a little thing out of the I think it was probably the Whitefish newspaper or the Hungry Horse News. I don't know which it came out of. Not the Hungry Horse News, because I still take that. It talked about the project, and that's how we made some contacts.

BH: The Daily Interlake had it.

CW: So should I just email some of these pictures to you? Would that work?

BH: That would be great.

CW: I'll figure out how to do that.

BH: Great. We plan to continue this program. It's you guys who really make it happen. I can't be happier than to meet people like you who spent the time up there. I've had the chance to hear everybody's stories because they're pretty amazing. I hope you can enjoy them when your story gets on to the University of Montana's Archives at Mansfield Library and you can see it, hear it, send it to your friends, whatever you want to do. It's all within our association's website (Northwest Montana Lookout Association). Well, thank you so much.

JW: Thank you.

CW: Thank you. Very nice to meet you.

BH: You, too.