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Oral History 405 - 01

Interviewee: David Lake, Sr. (August 6, 1879 - December 16, 1970)

Interviewers: David Lake, Jr. and grandson David Lake

Date: February 1968, Age 90, at his home in Harlowton, Montana

David Lake, Sr. 's Resume:

Lumbering, Railroading, and Cowboying, 1895 -1902

Big Snowies Homestead, Lumbering and Haying 1902 --1915

Big Snowy Mountain Lookout, Summer 1915

Ranger at Muir Ranger Station, 1916 -- 1919

Ranger at Judith Gap, 1919 -- 1936

Ranger at Harlowton, 1936 -1940

Upper Musselshell Irrigation Project (Martinsdale Dam), 1940 — 1959

City of Harlowton Mayor, Chief of Police, Justice of Peace, 1940 -1959

(My Dad was...) just a memory, died when I was 6 years old (12?). I started working as soon as I was old enough to go to work. First job was on a farm at \$11 a month, and the next job was another farm, I got \$12 a month, still have \$5 of it coming! The summer of 1895, I put in a little patch of spuds, potatoes. I got them sold because of the grasshoppers, I took a team and wagon and sold them, I finally got about \$25 out of them.

There was a Congressman from northern Michigan down there visiting his friends nearby, and I talked to him about the north woods. He said as soon as I come up to the north woods, you'll have a job. So I said, but I thought I'd try it. It was in November, the middle of November, I decided to go. Winter hadn't set in yet, no winter snowstorm. I took my few belongings and my shotgun and I went to the depot and bought a ticket. I bought a ticket from **Bogeys** Trucking, to the Upper Peninsula in Michigan (1895).

Couple day getting there, the car set me off in the middle of the night at the depot for Bogey's Trucking, all that was there was the depot, nothing, no houses, no nothing. Black like a black cat, colder than the devil. I didn't know what to do, nowhere to go, had to wait until daylight before I could do anything. I went out and found a stump, guy had left a little wood and I made a fire. I sat by the fire all night. A flagman out on his beat, told me to go straight north 5 miles, then into the timber about 3 miles, and I'd find the mill. I had a few things to carry, not a suitcase but a "war sack" we called it, a "war bag".

I started out, about half way up the road I met a team coming down, they come down from that mill I was going to, they had to come down for some mail I guess. Picked me up going back, we went to the mill. The mill was on the old Military Road, still called Military Road. It was cut through the forest for several miles, from the Civil War. They 'corduroyed', logs put in side by side. There were wet places and holes in this corduroy, wet places in the spring of the year you couldn't travel it 'ataP. Had to make the trips out and in during the winter, because it was impossible to get out during the spring. Road was pretty flat, it held the water and didn't runoff, and they'd get bogs.

There was a boy at the mill named , Tyler Printer?, the owner's boy, he was two years younger than me. He was showing me around, and we took our guns and we'd get a deer if we could find one. We went a few miles from the camp, down the road a little was a logging camp, looked like they just ate, everything left. We wanted across the river, we were on the Middle Fork of the Ontonagon? River. The river was running really high, high enough so we couldn't wade it, and on the left side, on the east side it was deep. There was a boat across on the other side, made out of boards, the homesteader on that side used to go back and forth with.

The way the river was running, we wanted to use that boat. We wanted to go across it, about the only thing we could do build a raft. We didn't have any nails, didn't have anything, no hammer, no axes, no nothing. So we found some logs, floated the logs down the river and wired them, had lots of hay wire, old hay wire. We wired some sticks across it, put some planks on the top we found down at the old mill, and lay it down, about big enough to carry us.

So we started out to go across the river, right below us about a hundred yards there was a rapids. Water was running fast, it was deep and running fast over rocks. We had to get off above those rapids or we'd have a bad time. We started out and we got hung up right in the middle of the river on the rocks, middle of the river, water was deep on both sides of us, the wind was blowing and the water was cold, snow coming.

We poled it back and forth down across, we had to portage, and had to carry our guns and pole it across, which was tough to do, we didn't have slings on our guns so had to carry them in my hands, couldn't do much of a job poling. We finally lifted off the rock, started down, and we got down about 50 yards down the way, the water was 6 to 8 feet deep, and some rocks jutted out into the river there. He aimed right for those rocks and I asked "Boy, where are we going?". He looks at me and says: "When we hit those rocks you better get off, and you can't miss, once we hit those rapids we'll go over!" Wasn't far, and we knew we'd be goners!

I handed him the pole while he made a run for it and he jumped, about 3 feet between the rock and the boat, and he laughed and he made it without falling, and I had to do the same thing. So I done the same thing, I hit the rocks, the rocks was dry so that was the one good thing, high enough out of the water to be dry. Had to pick a spot through the rocks to get to the shore.

We watched our raft go down disintegrating as it went down through those rapids, all that was left was kindling, nothing left of it, disintegrated. So there we were on the other side, and we had to take the man's boat on the other side to come back on our side. And had to leave it in the wrong side, had no way of leaving it on the other side, so we got the boat. I didn't know the man, he did, the other boy knew him, told me his name, didn't know when he'd be coming and want that boat, we left it on the wrong side and went home. We had to do that, didn't want to do that but we had to. Never heard anything about it, never heard of him anymore, don't know how he rescued his boat, but he got home.

I still think about that raft in the chilly water, cold, ice cold water, a man's only supposed to live about 15 minutes in that cold water. We didn't have to try it, and we didn't try that anymore either! Well, we got back ok to the old station in town. No deer though!

We cut a lot of maple logs, contracted to cut up a bunch of maple logs so we cut a bunch, good quality maple, stuff like they put in gunstocks, pretty stuff. Pulled it into the building, thawed them out, the fellow had to do this because we didn't have any dry wood. We'd saw a little bit, then dry it out, then saw a little bit, and so on. Try to get as much as he could out, and then he kept pine logs. My job was to cut the slabs up in four foot lengths, and throw it out for the firebox, so they could fire the old boilers, big old stationary boilers, threw a lot of chopping blocks in there.

He lost the mill, tried his luck out on the rocker setting? End on bridges? Even though he did most of that, it didn't bother me. He failed on that, and I came back to gave him a hand. When he set the carriage up on the saw, it went so fast it would almost threw you off. Anyway, I come back one day and the office said he'd fell on the saw, nearly cut in two. End of that!

But we sawed a bunch out, and hauled them to the river on a sled, 4 miles to the river, picked a spot, then picked another spot, another place on the river, near the timber, another place on the road. We hauled the lumber out. We had an order for square timbers, square timbers were 28 inches at the top end, and 70 foot long, smoothed on four sides.

There was a Frenchman there done that slab work, broad axe work, we'd picked a place to saw the trees, hemlock, no red pines. Face up to the butt end, cut off the butt at 3 feet across, had to cant it at 28 inches, to get the wood out of the trees, from a bunch of logs. There couldn't be but a few knots in a tree, it was supposed to be for spars on ships. They sent them down to Quebec I believe, Montreal or some place. I helped then to hunt and saw down the trees.

They had squares, some old four foot axes on the trees, on each side, chopping big notches in, he had an old broad axe. He was a little Frenchman, wasn't as big as me, but he was a good broad axe man. When he got through on two sides, he'd turn it around and cut the other two sides, putting a chalk line on it and mark it so he could cut right to the line, had to be square, not 28" on one side and 30" on the other; it had to be squared, 28" all around, just like it had been sawed, smooth, smooth as a piece of glass, just like it was planed. I admired that guy how he could edge. We made a lot of them, and after we were done we put them on trains too.

Later on in Livingston, my uncle came out, he went to making , and we got through the winter sawing logs down in , and we had to load this stuff. I remember one of those incidences we had happen, we cut a lot of hemlock, and cutting hemlock in cold weather, it's just like a piece of glass, it would break, and when it broke, it just cracked like breaking a piece of glass. They'd lodge, trees would lodge in other trees, and headed for a bad wreck. There were logs were up there and we couldn't get them down.

Well, it was up to me to climb that tree, walk up it, above the tangled butts, about 20 feet off the ground to where the top end was lodged up against another tree, and cut the top off. The whole thing would go with a bang. The further I could jump, the shorter we could make the throw line. I'd tried that a couple times, trim the limbs as I went up, chop it up both sides, I can't do that now! Cut it on both sides, crack! It went down. The top and the rubbish would fall on the ground, and I had to jump!

I decided that was dangerous, the next time I tried that, I climbed another tree. I had a spot all picked out, when it cracked, it broke, why I'd just throw the axe and jump into the straggler tree, go down the tree. That went better, safer anyhow. That was dangerous work, although I got through without getting hurt. I wouldn't do it, but they looked to me to do it, I don't know why, but they did. Didn't want to get hurt themselves I guess!

My uncle and I took a job loading this lumber on (railroad) cars. A couple carloads of lumber were piled down at the siding, to be loaded. It was four miles, we had to walk down, take our lunch with us, come back that night, and the road was breaking up. There was two foot of snow on the side, the road was just mud, enough to make it almost impossible to walk on it. It was thick with deep holes of water. It was running water for 4 miles to your knees, halfway to your knees at least, work all day and go back the same way. Well, that ought to killed us, it didn't but should have. When we got home, it would be just starlight, no feeling in your feet 'atal', just about frozen. Lay in the logs (into the wood stove), get warm, and we survived that.

My uncle and I were going to take a job clearing some land for a fellow, about 2 miles away from where we was. They couldn't keep us at the log depot, mill site, anymore, they had cabin about a half mile away, and we went back into that and we were supposed to cut the brush and do some clearing. We walked out there, I was carrying two double bladed axes on my neck, my shoulder, and I slipped. See here (pointing to a scar), that's what happened. The axe cut me before I could yell out. They were going to cut it off, but they didn't. It ruined me for awhile. We quit that job too. We didn't have any money, we didn't have anything 'atal', we were broke.

We were all going into town then. Come along in July, **Harlister Voat** had another little sawmill, needed one or two (helpers), and Chad Robertson and I was going to go with him and go into town. It was a chance to go get a job in **Lewing** that was twelve miles away. We were two days making that trip, two days getting to **Lewing**, camped on the road one night. Corduroy road was all afloat, logs lying down with one end down and one end up, broken ends down in the water, we had to ease along, you couldn't make a mile an hour, but we made it finally.

My brother and I and my uncle, the three of us, we all got a job in the wheel mill I don't know how it come we got jobs at that wheel mill because there was a hundred men in that town looking for work. Nothing doing in those days, that was '95, the summer of '96 (following Silver Panic depression of 1896). We got a dollar and quarter a day for ourselves, ten hour days, started work at six o'clock in the morning.

I had the job of cutting bows, making what we call a bowing shield dogs? Cut them to the proper length, thickness of the stays, we made bow stays and buggy stays and **chutney** Stays, everything, just on an endless chain. I had to stand there and take 'em away, keep the space clear, and pile up boards for turning those saws. They were stacked close by but had to be moved. Had to work fast. They never thought of customer service after they cut them. I got a dollar and a half, better man I guess.

About that time I picked me up a **chutney** boat (drag sleds) and putting them on cars for the track mill, would be on the track for twenty four hours and caught a ride, got on the train and

load them. I made it about a month or so, and down in Axiom? They had a big dam, where we got our logs up on a chute, to go down with the cable get a log and pull it up on that chute, and the **Downaires** Company, nothing but a technician, they had a dam and a lake of water, the dam was about 7 miles below what they called the **Vertebre** Rivers, on logging. They watched the water below, they got their logs all out and they cleaned up and they pulled the water out of the dam. Then this left **Schuster** High and dry, couldn't get a log to him, he had to shut down. Now **Dixon**, a couple months later. We had to take part of our pay in geese, didn't get much money out of it.

The best of everything came back to me, didn't it?! Didn't have money in those days, way it was. They just left me sitting up there by myself. After that I had to go on back. I had no money in my hands when I left home, I didn't have any then, oh a few dollars. I took care of my brother in groceries and a mackinaw coat, and things he needed, and then I got on the train to the country of Duluth, job, guys would do anything a bunch of guys were hiring out to go to Montana on a gang, rail service (fall 1896).

McKinley had got elected that fall, and they arranged for him to go in; no, no, elections were coming up, they were anticipating his election, and the Northern Pacific planned to build a bridge out here on the Little Missouri River. I forgot where, oh sixty miles from Glendive, up there in the badlands, right in the middle of the badlands. Bad lands too! At a little town they call Medora, it's there yet. It was 2 - 3 days getting out there in the old (railroad) car they gave us, but we finally arrived in Glendive, we wanted to go on west. The boss asked at the depot if they were hiring then; they said "Which way you wanna go?" They had a steam shovel working out on the truckers? He asked if we wanted to go to the steam shovel, he had a dirt job there out of Medora, fifty miles east. We had come from the east, he sent us back to the east! He knew we were working guys, when they got McKinley elected, get him in the that got on, we would work.

The guys coming from the west, he send them back west with the steam shovel, so we had to take the third job. We had three months, 90 days beginning in August (1896), 150 men. One of the things, they needed holes for the new piers, starning?, have to tamp them in, you had two, I guess they are still and always will be. Those guys did good, they dug holes, 16 foot long and about 12 foot wide, take our all the dirt and truck it, and big rocks, right into bedrock, sand rock, hard sand rock. Had to pump, had a little engine had to pump to get the water out. Then we had trainloads and trainloads of sand and gravel and rocks. Between crew changes, we had to get up there and upload it, off the bridge, trying to fill the uphill piers.

It just so happened, putting in a railroad, Medora was adry.... town. You could not drink in those days, there was the prohibition states, North Dakota was then, so there wasn't much drinking doing. There was a farmer.... out in the flats there, he'd sell but not in town. So several of us decided we'd take a handcar, the pumping handcars, hook it on each side. They'd unload there load at night and leave I.. .by the tracks So we actually put one on the track, we weren't supposed to use them 'ataP, but we put one on the track and went down. We struck it out, we had a couple of hours, couldn't see a thing, nothing doing shop, the buildings all up, the was in the east, take it back. We started back.

Meantime the other bucket boys decided they were going to come down in the middle of the night, and we met right in the middle of the bridge! we couldn't, bang! Threw the cars right off the track, boy, stopped everything, threw us off which was lucky for ourselves. Another was in the tanker tool bottom, he didn't get up, looked like he was dead, but we didn't think of him for very long, we had to get that track car back on the rails and get out of there before the train come. We had to do that because there would have been a wreck if we hadn't, they come 'aboiling' down through there and would of wrecked us all.

So we got the cars off the track and got in the clear. We all heard the train coming up, down through the canyon, the headlights coming around the bend, and we just got ourselves in the clear, saved the day that time. Well we did this, and it was chow time when we got home. We'd been skinned up, but we didn't talk about it. Work came early, real quick. Who'd ever listened to half of those things like that, while you're doing something you shouldn't do. Well, 'West Coast Perry' and another guy and I, we got in the worst darn troubles, I was seventeen that year.

We quarried all the material, all the rocks, all the sand in the , , about 20 feet high, about 12 feet off the ground, no about 16 feet off the ground, and about 12 feet down in the hole. It was alright as long as the horse was on the runway, they give us a point, couple of weeks on the barge, , sand into the big , about 6 to 8 feet, sand was and water boy with the bucket, putting the water on, the old time stuff all right, best I could do.

Sun came up, it was a natural big bowl , same thing with two tiers to build, took in more piles. Had to have two teams running then, little horses to pump the water. I graduated to a pump man, with their pump engines. I don't know what they were called, big pump anyhow, pump lots of water, they'd keep it going, keep it from sagging in, pick it up, if it clogged up why you'd have 5 minutes, then everything would be under water.

They had to have deep dug-outs so they could drive those piles down. At that time I had the job, the first job I ever had driving an engine, and I was a fireman then. They had the work all completed, and they brought down some camp cars, three or four camp cars, bunk cars, and we were eating up at the hotel, up in the valley about a quarter mile off the tracks. Then these camp cars were dragged to We thro wed our sacks down, throwed everything out, later they , here comes that fast moving storm. Two days so windy you couldn't see across the street, cold and blizzard, terrible thing.

We thought we'd go and take a job at a place learning to build snow fences. Then the blockade came, from Fargo, North Dakota to Mandan, it was blocked (Thanksgiving blizzard of 1896). All the cuts and ditches were plum full, ditches full, snow to ten feet deep. I saw the line, when we got there you stepped off the snowbank onto the caboose, or rather onto the engine, the cab of the engine, level. The boys in the snowplows couldn't get out, they stayed in the cab until we shoveled them out. They'd 'blowed' so hard, hit in so hard, that snow came out in big chunks, the snow plow was kicking it's links. It had four big what they call "hogs", big train engines, eight-wheelers. They'd run about a mile, snowplow ahead of them, when they neared a cross cut, they 'disc'ed' down to the rails, so they went right through the drift, with a big steam blower blowing off and pushing with a Number 9. They'd hit that drift without hardly scratching it. They'd get about two engines length into the drift, they'd be stuck.

It took all hands out to shovel them out, ninety to a load, 15 to 20 below zero all the time. Worked at that for three days, then it was time to report into our station, at a place called Suicide?, looking for heat but there was no there, there was fifteen of us. The hurricane winds that blew from Chicago let up, and we had drew a piece of Mandan, setting aside oh about forty miles, I remember changing (trains) election night at Mandan.

Then we had to clean the yards out, smoke and snow all over the yards, a lot of snow, the train table wouldn't operate at those temperatures. Still snowing, blowing snow, hard, blowing snow underneath the platforms, looked like waves on an ocean, up and down, up and down, it was frozen way down giant rotary. Had to clean up without making a mark on it. We stayed at Mandan for weeks. We hauled there out of the big ditch, dumped it off, shovel it all, shovel it all. We got to be snow shovelers, about 120 men to shovel snow. Then the boss came along one morning and says "Boys, I'm sorry" he says, "think we're getting down to half a day and we can't get many more out of it".

So we went to Minneapolis, we'd been working for a \$1.35, here we could get nothing, could not find anything. It was the first of what they called the 'Panic', depression like what we had here in the '30's', no work in the country (Silver Panic of 1893). We needed to have something to eat, they didn't have welfare in those days. They didn't have welfare, they didn't have anything, no help, you did what you could, things were in pretty bad shape. You'd couldn't get a job at a \$1 a day. Now days they would even think about it. People wished they could go to work for a \$1 a day, \$1.35 a day, and take it quick. We didn't know what we was doing when we quit. There was a guy next to me going west, most of the guys went back to Minneapolis, and most of them had families back there, most of them Swedes, had a lot of Swedes in the bunch.

We weren't going to get much out , we looked around where we could go. We got passage to Billings, and I in the baggage car with the equipment. We got out the cushions and hid in the blinds, that's a blanket, we were wrapped up in blankets. The baggage car was the first car below the engine, the coal car is ahead of the baggage car; we hid in the baggage car under the blinds. He had a gun with him too, he had his piece, he kept it from when he went back east and got himself a rifle All I had was a 'war-bag'. We in the blinds. They knew we were on it too, the brakeman got on the baggage car himself, and we had to get off. In fact, at sixteen miles out, he threwed the blinds out himself to catch us the fact that we did stay on it just as long as we did. We jumped off and caught the car behind him, with our pack on. We waited under the blinds ourselves with our packs off until we could leave. So we lost the blinds. We had to go down and sleep in the coal car that night, it was December too (1896).

Nothing open, (we arrived in) middle of the night, we set out in the morning and there was a coal train came down from Red Lodge , we caught the coal train. Now we could have had a nice easy ride up on that coal train, but we wouldn't do it, we were contrary. If we didn't have the war bag, we could have paid the 50, 60 cents and we could have rode it all the way up, that hundred miles, but no, we weren't paying. But we kicked ourselves, we trouble with the and then we had to fight with him to get up there. We had to dodge him, he knew we was on the train, that coal train goes slow, the winds were blowing, oh gosh, and we had to climb down the side, on the ladder. He was coming down making his rounds with his light you know. He walked the whole length of

that coal trail trying to find us, that much and we rode all the way up there at night. But we did good, we was smart, but he got wind of us on the coal train at the docking. Another trainman said "Oh boy, he's mean". But he didn't catch us! So, another story!

In Livingston, no work, no nothing, so I was still going to hunt deer, so I went to a gun shop and bought a rifle, one of the big ones, a 45-75, big Model 65 Winchester center pin. I found that you'll never know your worst nightmare. We sent a diagram with it to Leon, being quietly related to him. After about five miles, on the south side of the homestead up there, cutting wood, hauling wood in late December and selling it. He would come to see to him, and two o'clock in the afternoon we set out on the fifth of December. Black before we got half way, we didn't know where we were going, we didn't know what we was going to find or anything, wind still a blowing, really cold for one thing.

Around about nine o'clock that night we saw a line shack, cabin, with a light in it. He said 'Yea, we could stay there'. He had another cabin by there, he said we could have that cabin to fix it up, make a quarters for ourselves, and "Crips," I said, "well, we'll camp here for awhile". I went hunting one day, around Christmas day (1896), I went hunting, almost got lost, didn't get back til 9,10 o'clock at night, didn't know the country, no deer. I kind of give up on the idea of hunting deer. We got six and there were five ahead of us.

The boy who was with me was a miner, he was an Englishman, he was a miner, liked working in the mines. He headed over to Trail Creek, to see if I couldn't get a job, he heard that the mine was working over there. So he went to Livingston and he drove a coal wagon up to the mines, 19 miles, up this valley floor for oh, 10 miles, then 6 to 8 miles up in the hills, to a little place up there called Trail Creek, an elk crossing and all kinds of timber around it. Another time when we come up there, thinking there was going to be a mine opening up and we'd get a job. Well, I didn't want any job in a coal mine, but I went up anyhow. I had about \$50 dollars I guess all told, \$40 to \$50 up there, and got his junk together, hiked together to Livingston twice with a coal team. We dug and dug, we did that in March (1897). And a fellow lived close by, I forgot the name, I haven't had that name in my head for years and years; they had him working there too, and he went to school near too I guess. Anyway, all the little shacks they had, were all empty, the ones usually occupied by coal miners, were all empty.

Says I'm going to get a horse. He did, he found a horse, he bought it. Brought it down to the shack with a wagon, tied it to the back end of that shack, and we a headstalls and bought some oats and got it heated up. Snow plowed out by the rest of us, flag at night, we got some straw, there would be no hay. Well I wanted a horse too, so they told us about a man down yonder in Big Coulee named Brown, would have been Ben Brown, he thought. He had a horse ranch up there, he thought he'd give us a good deal. I said "Yea, I'd go", he said it was about 30 miles from Big Timber.

Well he had this horse, was riding the horse around the horse ring, the woman that owned the horse named him Chestnut. Told him I'd go with him over this divide and down on the Big Coulee and get the savvy on Chestnut. The boys were loading the car with coal, two or three teams. I rode down with them, on a sled, load the coal. I walked down the track about a half mile to this little boarding point, called Chestnut, a mining town. I found the lady, Mrs. Murphy, Dale

Van Dyke? Remembers her, he came from there, she ran the boarding house. She owned this here horse out on the hill, out over the way. I bargained with her to buy the horse, she wanted \$5 for the horse, he was an old buckskin - appaloosa, awful thin, oh boy! He wasn't anything 'atal', but I needed a horse for me.

Previous to this, she asked, well the **Maxy** Boys, living along the Yellowstone, to bring the horse in. Said when you do, she offered five dollars for the horse for bringing him in. Well I bargained for the horse, paid her \$5 for it, here come a fellow down the trail leading a horse, he said he'd been hired to bring the horse over, he had a saddle horse to bring. So she just sold the horse to me for \$5, she paid him \$5 for bringing it in, and I had to get on the horse and ride him home bareback. But she just gave the horse away!

Started snowing before I got home, when I got back up where the coal was being loaded, they were gone, and I had ride the horse bareback, with a sharp backbone, all the way home, up to the tent where we were, in a snowstorm. Bad night! Well, wasn't a very nice ride either, don't recommend that 'buggy ride'.

I kept the horse about 2 weeks I guess, got a sack of oats, some straw and filled him up a little bit, and I tried him out. I hesitated to go handling the big old hag, I don't know what became of him, never heard of him anymore. I rode to Livingston that day, I rode to Big Timber the next day, stayed all night in , I didn't have much to take with me. I heard that big building isn't up there anymore. I headed back with my 'war-bag' tied on behind, started out over the hills.

About two days getting out to the Big Coulee. They told me to go straight over the divide and follow the wagon track, go down in the canyon, you've seen that canyon, go all the way up, further up, way up, about ten miles up where it comes out on the divide, started out where Gibson? Is now, the sheep ranch there.

Anyone who wasn't good, didn't belong riding there on horses. He was going up and I was going down. We used to laugh at this, I said "Two steaks if you can do it", well, he wouldn't do it. This was the upper ranch, I went down there and tied my horse, wasn't much I could do about it. He went further down and spent the night, that was four miles below, he said it wasn't as tough down there, wasn't in the winter, he didn't have any trouble after he got down.

Guy at the ranch he said I could have the work, a job working for him, working on a horse, he could get me a pony, better one than I had. Well, the horse he gave me was 'pigeon toed', he was turned in this way, like this ..(gesturing). He was broke all right, but every time you started to put your foot in the stirrup, you had to get on, because if you landed behind the saddle, he started out at run.

I worked for him a month and picked up the horse, then there was a sheep man there had a bunch of sheep, and he had to have some help lambing. Tough one to spend well, it was far away, not much travel, didn't get to town very often. I worked for him for a month at \$35 dollars a month, lambing , and then we went to Big Timber, and I helped move sheep to the sheer plant and back, and checked on the over in Melville. And he went to Big Timber and come back, and just before the Fourth of July (1897), why, he paid me off and I went to Big Timber too.

They were holding a three day celebration in Big Timber, waiting for the McKinley bill to pass, so the sheep man would get an increase in the price of wool. They were getting 70 cents for wool those days, and when the McKinley bill passed, they got 'words' for it (McKinley Tariff Bill), wool jumped up to 14 cents, that was a big price. Calves were about 75 cents, 50 or 60 cents anyhow.

I knew a guy down at Shawmut who wanted a man, couple men, and I wanted a job. That was old Joe Widdicombe, you know where his place is down here. We went out there, two days getting out, still young teenagers, I didn't have a horse because I helped ride in within a bunch of horses and I'd had to leave my horse with the outfit, was going to take a bunch of 'brass' horses over to Bozeman way to sell them. I helped wrangle them was all, turned my horse in, didn't have a horse. I did have a horse over at Big Coulee but I didn't have him with me. I worked with Joe that summer and fall, stayed there that winter (1897-1898).

I got a letter from Ben Brown then, he was going to have a Post Office down in Big Coulee, old Mike **Tye** was going to be Postmaster, and he wanted someone to carry the mail, and he thought of me, heady stuff. I hadn't seen him since the Spanish war. So I went over to see about it. The members would leave a barrel out, would pay a \$1 a month. They lived 5-10 miles away from the route, from the mail box, so then I had to ride the distance, go 4-5 miles to get my dollar. Well it wasn't a very quick way to get rich, but I stayed with it until, oh the middle of July I guess (1898).

During that time they had a high water, Sweetgrass got up, had a heck of a hail storm there, Sweetgrass got up and Ben had sent me in with a team to Big Timber to get some a supplies. Needed some hard money too. I drove his team into Big Timber and got supplies, filled up the box of the wagon, a light wagon and two horses, and coming out there was a big cloud in the northwest. Before I got a mile out of town, that thing struck! Hailstorm! In fifteen minutes there was 2 inches of hail on the ground! I tied my team up to a fence, went into a house right close by there to get out of the storm. I put all my coats and such I had with me over the goods, dry sugar and stuff, to keep the hail and wet off of it. I was in my shirt sleeves. It hailed for about an hour, there was 4 inches of hail when it got through.

The horses were starting to jump, rearing and struggling and struggling, trying to get loose, string things out, get away from there. One of the guys, a boy, came out and helped me unhook them and drove them under a shed. Four inches of hail! Finally it quit raining, quit hailing, and I stayed on that side of the river that night. Next morning the water was 6 feet deep, in the middle of a place called Otter Creek, about another mile from there, and I had to cross it. Didn't like that very good, I had to tie everything up on the boards on top the wagon box, to keep the goods from getting soaked you know.

But I crossed it, got situated back over to the Sweetgrass, once I looked across the mouth of the Sweetgrass, about a mile above the Post Office on the other side of the river, there was a team too, couldn't cross. I had to go back with the mail that night, take it back and go 4 miles down below the Post Office, where I had to do the same thing, pile the stuff on boards, water was way

up in the wagon box. Took the hill road home, had to do that, but I finally got home with it, didn't wind up losing any, had five or six days on that trip! That was a tough one.

Another time, a few days after that, I went out horseback on the same route, the water was still high, and I didn't dare cross that regular Sweetgrass crossing coming out. I used the dry land route, the mail would go up one day and back the next, stay overnight down there at the Post Office. One of the boys said there was a better crossing about a quarter mile below the regular crossing in the field, and they'd show me. More safe they thought.

I had a big mail sack, hooked onto my saddle to carry the mail in. I started to cross that nice, pretty, safe crossing, and my horse was swept off his feet right now! He was swimming the first thing I knew. We really got it going! At first I thought I'd put my feet up to keep my legs from getting wet, but I had to stick them down, the deep water was right up in my saddle, right to the horses back. But he went down about fifty yards and found a solid spot, thought I'd have to turn the horse loose and grab the bushes and pull myself out, but I didn't. After he found this spot we got back in the middle of the stream again, this time I went a little further up and made the crossing, had 30 miles to ride to avoid the storm. Made it all the way home, 30 miles that day, that was another tough one.

Along about the first of May (1898) they wanted me to go to Billings, get a team, go to Billings and get some supplies, get some sheep shearing mail order. About forty miles to Billings, is what is was. Remember I showed you how steep it was where we had to come down that road, that was the only way in there at that time, all the way in there on the north side. That was an awful steep hill. Anyway I came down that same hill with a four horse team, loaded with stuff, I was scared to death. Had materials we didn't need any more, siding and lapping and feed. If anything happened, we'd been gone for sure.

Anyhow, I went to Billings, hauled that load all the way in, one night in Billings and back. When I got down there, we just heard about Admiral Dewey's big battle in Manila Bay. People were all excited, the Guard Company, they had a Guard Company in Billings then, said that day we could go and join Roosevelt's 'Rough Riders'. I wanted to go, but gosh I couldn't go. I had another man's team, I was 40 miles from home, I had a load of supplies and I had to take it home. I couldn't just turn it loose. I had a mail job to take care of, they depended on me to get the mail, it had just changed over then, and they were depending on me to deliver the mail, so I just had to stay. I thought about it a lot. Well, shortly after the war ended, I didn't have to go, it was a short one! I got out of that all right enough, but I was left in kind of a bad spot.

Anyhow, around about the middle of July (1898), why I saw I wasn't going to make anything on that mail job, I had to do something else. I couldn't collect in the pail by the head, \$2 a head coming and I couldn't get it, I'd ride 2 to 3 miles to find them, I just gave it all up and quit. When I quite, Mike quit, he was Postmaster. Mike lived in a little cabin just below the Ben Brown place, I don't know if you saw it or not, the little cabin down there. He held down a Desert claim for the 79 Ranch is what he was doing, and as soon as he got patent to it, he would sell it to them. He said "I'd rather be Postmaster," see. He made a dollar or two.

One instance that happened while we were there, I came home one night, about three o'clock in the afternoon, nice weather and warm, made good time with Ben Brown's brother-in-law. Ben Brown got married the first of April that year, I was there when he got married, he'd brought a young wife in from Missouri. While we were gathering horses one time, we ran across a guy who'd come up from Lavina, he was carrying his suitcase and he was way up in the hills, he was lost. Turned out to be Ben Brown's brother-in-law, coming out to the ranch to ride for him, like I was. So we talked to him, told him how to go to get to the home, but we had to follow those horses in, we had about 300 head. We had 5 of us to track, or they'd get away on us you know, bunch of them off the range.

Well, he was there, that was along in June (1898), but this was another time, he came down to the lower place, he said "They want some saddle horses", he was looking after some stock up in the pasture, and there was a bunch of deer around, in what they call 'Hell's Half Acre'. Don't know if you've ever seen it or not.

And there was a place up on the hill, had about a 25 foot space, a neck in there, within 30 to 40 acres, including a little hill in the middle of it, in what they called 'Hell's Half Acre'. And he'd shot a bunch of deer on that, going up there across that narrow neck, and he wanted his wife to see him shoot one. He had a gun with him, didn't have a rope for some reason, all riders didn't have a rope. Well, he had his wife and his sister with him, Albert Wicker? did, he had to get a buckboard to take her up so she could see a deer. She hadn't seen any yet. Had about a dozen deer on him. They were getting down to a jump, 25 to 30 feet, rim rocks, all around.

I just grabbed that little that you had, so I went down to **Mike Klines** and got another gun, and he got his pistol. Had to go around about to get up there with a buggy and **surrey** of any kind, an awful poor trail. Both of us arrived about the same time. Ben took his wife out with him, stopped his red wagon right in the way, where we were coming, grabbed his gun you know, and he took his wife and sister over the hill. I heard him shoot a couple of times, pretty soon the deer were all coming our way, out on the hillside about 100 yards away, and I was going to try and kill one. So I shot down there with that 30-40, I missed em, shot over em. Albert Wicker was with me, he wanted to try it, he shot a couple of times, he missed em. Neither of us got one.

They went back over the hill again, and pretty soon Ben shot another one. He come over the hill, him and his wife come walking down to where we were, to see where they'd go. We looked down the hill, quarter mile away, and the whole bunch started out running, and they jumped off that rim rock! They jumped right over it. Wounded and dead down there, about a hundred yards down that steep hillside, oh it was steep. We had a dead deer down there, we had to get him up. How were we going to do it!

It was miles around the ledge, no way of getting a wagon there, with no horse we couldn't get him home. If we backed off the ledge and took another horse and went back around, by that time it would be dark. If we could get it up to this rim rock there, we could throw our lines down, we looked for our ropes, didn't have any ropes. I didn't have my rope, I don't know why, we didn't none of us have a rope.

But he had a good strong pair of lines on his horses, he took them all apart, hooked them all together. Now I said "If you'll lower me down around the rocks on the left side, around through the rim rock, there's a spot where you'll be able to see us, and we can drag the deer from down there". I spent an hour getting down there, boy it was steep, oh gosh. I found the deer and dressed it out, had to pull him up, oh about a hundred yards. The best I could do was one foot, I had to get up with one foot, I couldn't get in a place where I could make a tie, had to climb up. I finally got where I could wrap around this rock now, so I could get back to where I could climb out, the only place. Had to climb out with the the tack Looked like it might get to the deer to tie around so we could get it up.

Went slow, slow, slow, easy, I kept the other foot. I'd slip on the rocks, had to be turned around, a lot of work, I had to climb up there alongside it. I got to where I couldn't go any further, they would have to pull that deer up and out of the way before I took a fall. They let another line down, and they went to hauling to pull him up. The line held, I got a hold of it, and got myself up. Just to think, all three riders there, horseman, didn't have a rope. The one thing you never went without, you always needed a rope in those days, you had to have a rope, a saddle rope! And we didn't have one.

I think I've last been there since, when I the stock up at **Glendale** was down at **Fred Miner's** place down there. I remember exactly where it was. He wanted to pick me up there sometime, but he never come to do it. Well, so much for that!

Well I quit up there at Ben Brown's, I up and got another job, I went down and caught my little Piccadilly horse, and the little horse, the other one, I had two horses then. At Ben's I'd had the one to ride, the pigeon toed bronc. I rode it down to the Anedrosky? Ranch, King?, Mike Prine's? place and Bens, opened the gates, climbed on him again, and the next thing that horse started to buck. I hollered at him, he'd never bucked before, I'd never seen him buck before. He threw me off. Then back up the creek, to the gate, back to home again. Got my saddle off him, the and pulled everything off of him. I missed the wire fence by about two feet, if I'd hit the fence I'd have been killed, cut to pieces. Thank God I missed that. Had the bridle in my hands, that's all I had, the horse was free without pulling the picked him out so I could ride again.

I went down finally on the second ride, I had to go see and visit Ben, I told him I was going to quit if I couldn't see the manager. Ben Brown never got excited. Was only getting my pay half the time and , so I went down to work at this place where I could get a job anyhow. They'd said "You can go to work here if you want to", so I turned the horses loose and went to work there, the '79' Ranch, and I didn't go back to Brown's anymore.

Yes, I did too, I went back the next spring. I went back east again that fall, after we had the roundup over in the Lake Basin, and I went to help with the roundup that fall, and they shipped out of **Milo**, after Reed Point, and I got a job going down to Chicago when they sent crews with the stock train. We had long poles, and every time the train stopped we'd go through the train and see that the cattle were standing up, steers standing up, get them going. If they laid down they'd get trampled to death. Had to hook them, and prod them with the pole with the rod on the end of it, get them up. Oh, we had lots of them down, the floor was filled when them, that was a job.

We'd check the train, we'd start at the front end, climb up on the train and work our way back to the caboose on top.

I got to the 'Land O' Lakes' that way, that much, about half that winter, that was the winter the house burned (1898-99). Didn't get back again to Big Coulee again until next spring. I helped Ben Brown round up some horses again that spring, and got myself a line on a job over at Painted Robe. You and I got lots of places, but we didn't get there did we?

David Lake, Jr.: No, we didn't.

We always cut across there. We took a riding job there, went through a big snowstorm, had an awful time. I got back on at Jacob **Ziers**, I hit **Barbers**, then Joe **Challens**, there was still work to be done there. At Harlo, it was J.W. Feeds? After I got through with that I went back to Big Coulee and went haying over there. And **Lesley** came along, had a surveyor with him, they were going to survey some townships, right where the **Kingdon** Ranch was. Any odd section that was in our land, had to let it go back, and the addresses of those that were going to get it, was out of Texas. We went to more Then we went to the river, dear, we came to the water, couldn't cut off the point, cut a line through the brush in the survey of it. He got here, the old man went back to Helena and I got a job down the river for a little bit.

During my time on the '79 Ranch there on the Musselshell, many things would happen. A guy and I, his name was **Stack Harrington**, were working on a fence job down there in the brush, picking up the old wire. The boss came down and says "Stack, you're fired!". Stack was a good hand too, but the boss was mad. "Had a fight with your cook up here, and sent him down the road. You can follow him, he's your partner! Dave, can you go up to the ranch house and start cooking? Got to get the bread in this afternoon".

So I dropped the tools and went up to the ranch house and started to cook up a batch of bread that was ready, ready to put in the oven, 'pert near' ready anyhow. I fried , I shoed the flies off the bread and got it in loaves and put it in the oven and baked it. It so happened I did know something about making bread as I had done this, a couple years before that I was working in and we had to bake for ourselves. I learned how to do it, in a way, not too good but in a way. So I stayed in the cooking job for a month, then I was back in the saddle , this was about the first of October, sometime in October (1899).

Meantime, the '79 Ranch Big Dry roundup came in, and my, we had about a 500 head of cattle, had to ship spring cows and calves, they'd been on winter pasture. I stayed about a week there, there was a snowstorm, after a week we got through that, and a thrashing machine came in. The Webber boys from the Snowies, you remember Lou Webber here, he was a young man then, Nick was his brother, had a eight horse thrashing outfit, they went up and down the (Musselshell) river thrashing, lots of little jobs they had with the grains and the oats, and there was another week getting that thrashing done, meantime I had to cook for them, so I had quite a job. I was all alone on that too, but I got it made. Pretty soon, about that time his wife was ready to come home, she came in and I went back out to working on the job again.

They raised potatoes and cabbage and vegetables for the Painted Robe Ranch and for the Big Coulee Ranch, they didn't raise any in the Big Coulee, raised everything on the Painted Robe. So they loaded up 2 to 3 wagons, there was a guy there names Cheyenne Pete, if that wasn't his real name, I never heard any other, but I knew him well. He had a four horse outfit, no, a six horse outfit, two wagons, and he got a third and fourth wagon from the 79, and he wanted a driver. I'd never driven a four horse team before in my life. **Odie** wanted to go with him, and he said he wanted me. "Ah" I said, "I can't drive a four horse teams". He said "Yes, you can, you just hang on the line, keep each one by itself. You hang on the lines, if you get outside the line, you get your coulee outfit, drive across this way and get used to it". So I did, I went across the country down where Lavina is, no Barber, down where Barber is, going across county up to the 'Lone tree', that was a landmark in that big area of no trees.

Got to the 79 Ranch on the that night and I delivered that stuff. I didn't know how well it kept, but they had a cellar full of it, cabbages, big cabbages, spinaches, and everything. Cheyenne Pete went up one ridge in another direction, I didn't know where he went, never saw him since, he was a good guy anyhow, an old timer in the country.

I went to Lavina to pick up some supplies. One thing I picked up was that phonograph I was telling you about, and took it up to the ranch. I drove from Lavina, from the **Pengill** Ranch to Lavina and then back up the river to the town of Ryegate and up through. It was sundown when I got to Ryegate. I noticed one of my horses was limping along, going kind of slow, and acting like it didn't feel good. By the time I got there, I should have stayed there, at the barn of the outfit I'd been working for at Ryegate. I was going to stay all night at the **PB** Ranch, and 'Well' I said, 'I think I can make it home, I'll head out I guess, 16 miles". I started out and got about half way home, and the horse kept getting sicker and sicker, dragging along. Instead of putting him on behind and leading him, I kept him along in the lead, he was one of the leaders.

When I got home at eleven o'clock, I called the boss out and said I've got a sick horse. They said I shouldn't have taken them home that night, what was wrong with me? Crippled him, someone stayed with him, he died of something else, but he was a dead horse. I felt bad then, and that ended my career as a teamster for that outfit. The big boss, **Pat Webber** came over that morning and I told him, I said I had a colicky horse. "Oh" he said, "that'll happen, you can't help that, we don't mind that at all", so he didn't mind, I didn't either.

About that time they wanted to go to the Snowies, first we went to Big Coulee with a list of supplies. Was to get supplies from the Crededor? Brothers from Billings. Had to deliver that, and if I remember right, was to off-load some supplies at the White Deader? Ranch and get more supplies and come back to the Big Coulee, and when I got home he wanted to go to the Snowies, to Careless Creek. I'd never been on Careless Creek and I'd never been in the Snowies, a day's ride up there. He wanted me to bring the wagon and four horse team, and I said I might when I got there. But before I got there, it was getting dusk and I got lost. I ran into a fence, way down the bench, an old stone fence, become a rock fence that was getting right to the ranch, so I did. And when I got to the ranch about dark, then we 'divvied up' (the supplies).

I made two trips to the Snowies for big timbers. They did something on the river across here at the bridge, and then I had to wait until it got unplugged, that was in November (1899). But by

that time there was, guess I left out one part, the cattle that was brought up, one half were worked before we went to the Snowies. Put them in a shed, had a full deep corral full, full of white water head, and put them in the shed and the corral outside, and they had to be brought out of the shed and run through a chute to separate them, to get the poorest ones out and keep them at the ranch, and the rest of them were put out on the range out south on the ranch, on Fish Creek or Rock Creek., which was under a 'Number 9' fence at that time.

Oh that was such a big area, took in a 20 mile spread, and we all had to go out and help bring them in. Boy, there was a couple of horses brought in from the roundup on the Dry Fork, the Big Dry roundup county. We couldn't keep them in a bunch, had a bad mule. They'd beak loose, we couldn't corral them with those horses. One of them would stampede and lead the horses out, we couldn't get them into the corral, the other would try to kick you when you got off him. They didn't tell me about that!

So come my turn to bring those horses in so we could lasso them in the corral in the morning, it was my turn for wrangling, we called it wrangling, and come my turn to bring in the bunch, get up about five o'clock in the morning and go out and get them, had the night horse tied up. I got down to the ranch with the bunch and got half of them in the corral, that one broke back, went back against the fence about a quarter of a mile, and back, and I knew I couldn't bring him in. I knew he was going to be quick, I couldn't do it. I went back and got him, bring him back to the bunch again, I was all alone.

There was a guy watching me out of the window, kind of following, seemed glad when he broke back. I asked him, "You going watch me run my horse down?", but I finally brought him in. He tried to bunch, he was supposed to be impossible to corral him, he'd tried running again before they went in the corral. We got our horses out, needed real quick horses to make this roundup. He expected me out south there, and he gave me that horse that tried to kick you when you got off him. Kick me getting off too. I just didn't like being off and around that horse, had to make a big circle, way out around, the horse was pretty rank, and when he wanted to go, I let him go.

We didn't carry lunches, we didn't carry a water supply, no drink and no eats all day. Cold day, about like today I guess, and there was a big bank of clouds in the north, and I knew we were on the east side, I decided I had to get off, about noon. I decided to get off the horse, got a drink, then I had a fight on my hands. He just 'pert near' killed me! I held on to the long rein as long as I could, it was on top of him and all around him and he was kicking and kicking and striking, and every time he jumped up I think he was going to land right in the middle of me, and he didn't. I don't know how he missed me but he did. He did that until he finally got loose from me, broke the bridle and got loose, and just at that time that 'snoose driver' from Judith Gap come down.

There was about 3 inches of snow there in about twenty minutes, blinding snow, heavy wet snow. The horse disappeared into the snow storm. That was quick, I don't think it lasted long but gosh it was an awful storm. Hal Mayo? was getting out of his cart and Rory? looked up on the hill and seen the horse. He found my horse coming, and was bringing it back to me. He didn't know who I was, but he come back in the direction the horse came from, is how he found me.

Well I got on him again, didn't quit until I got the 'buck' down, got him in a corner of the fence, cut out all the weaklings, mostly cutting heifers. That horse was trying to kill me, so I gave him all he could stand, rode him all afternoon, he didn't try it anymore. Didn't have any more 'laugh' on that but it could've been disastrous, if he'd gotten his hoof into the middle of me, I'd have been done. He didn't, so...

I made two trips up there for **Lotman**, and then learned the way and learned how they were doing it, I didn't know there was one up there. But it went along, until after that, come the middle of December (1899) and the boss notified the two of us, the guy that owned the phonograph and myself, we'd be run out, didn't need so much help in the winter, we were the last men in on the job, we'd be the first out. So we set out, we went up to the ranch up there on Careless Creek, go up and get us a horse, the **Anedestro** Place. Guess the place is still there, then it belonged to a **Portous** Nelson.

We each got a horse, and of course I should have known better, but I bought one, paid \$35 for that horse. Rode him in the corral and I rode him. I thought he was going to be alright. The boys all set around the corral watching, they'd get throwed, but I didn't get thro wed, not then. We let the rest of the horses all out of the corral and he followed them, and he hadn't got out of the gate hardly and he started kicking, that time he did throw me! Crushed my arm so I had a lame arm all the rest of the winter, 'pert near' killed me. He got loose and then I caught him again and I rode him.

They were going to have a big dance at Living Springs (1899), I have a story written up about that. We'd need our horses, go over to Living Springs, we'd see those guys and get jobs. So we went over to Living Springs, winter was coming, 6 to 8 miles. They had big dances over there, they had a big hall there, and people would come from 20 miles around to that dance. It started to snow before we got up there, there was a sheep shed there, shearing plant and sheep shed, we put our horses under the sheep shed, ate a little, and watched the dancing. We come from a country where there wasn't any woman, no girls and no dancing, no nothing for several three years, we didn't know anything about dancing, so we watched them.

There was a feud going on between some of the boys, and each other, and they'd come to this dance to have it out! Lou Webber here, used to be on the ranch in town here, a young fellow then, and he and his brother Nick were on one side, and a fellow named Doc Skillen on the other side, and they was supposed to have a fight. They did have a fight, during the dance, during the 'midnight hour'. Now Skillen got the worst of it, he was pretty drunk and wouldn't be hard to lick. Lou was quite a fighter, he knocked him down, gave up quite a bit, and went back over to the saloon, oh, just across a little way, fifty yards I think, to the saloon and dance hall.

It was still snowing, just pouring down. Lou and Doc were both in the saloon together, they were talking about it, settled the fight, shook hands and everything else, just fine. But Doc couldn't keep his mouth shut, he had to talk a little about him (Lou) getting licked previously by another fellow up in the Snowies, and 'you couldn't always win'. He talked so much that Lou got mad and grabbed a pitcher, a pitcher filled with water, and he made two or three steps, and hit him over the head with it.

Knocked him down, 'pert near' killed him. He laid there just dead, out, knocked out right at my feet, I was down in there watching them. Gosh, I thought he'd killed him. I went outside, watched through the window, they finally got him up, put him to bed. Lou and I washed his hands. 01' Doc didn't come back to the dance any more that night, but Lou did, and he had some more fights. Couple boys named **Ayers**, Charlie and Frank Ayers, and they had a fight with Lou, and Lou got the best of them too, oh he was fighting mad. His brother was standing right by him, watching him to see that he didn't get the worst of it, he was going to help him, his name was Nick.

Oh, a bunch of young guys you know, wanted to fight. Well, they got that settled and pulled them apart, and still there was stuff going on, the dance wasn't over yet, they decided to go back. Hall was pretty empty, but they was talking about how they got to fighting and other things, and there was a half-breed there, named Joe Healy?, he thought he'd liven it up a bit, so he jumped off the platform, down on the floor, took a chair, lifted over his head, and there was a hanging lantern, with a gallon of coal oil in it, right over the top of him. He lifted the chair up high, was going to slam it on the ground and bust it, he give a holler, kind of a war hoop, he hit this lantern and down it come, on the floor.

Right now, within a minute the whole thing was afire, just about burned that hall up. Gosh, the flame was going to the ceiling you know, all around. I said 'I'd better get out of here!', I got out of the door and looked in. One of the boys grabbed the covering on the seats, blanket and things, they scrubbed the fire out, chopped it out, when it got it safe so they could, they kicked the old blankets, full of gasoline and coal oil, out the door. And I of course was standing there looking in, and I got caught with one of them right in my face, like to have got me down too. It was still a snowing, after midnight, and the other fellow, the Foster boy (Herb Foster), and the others, we went in to the dance for the rest the night until daylight, had to because we couldn't do anything else.

That night was what I called 'Introduction to Snowy Mountain Society', it was quite an event!

We went on down back to the ranch with our horses to get our stuff. In the meantime I'd seen this man Stranahan and got myself a job up at his sawmill. He was a young man then, and he'd come to the dance too We went back up to the ranch, I didn't need that horse 'atal' then, I got back up there and I had two horses to feed the rest of the winter!

We put the winter in there at the sawmill through next spring, sawing and went through a lot of logs, hauling them down from the timber. That was 1899-1900, working for Stranahan, and he didn't have anyway to make any money, so he had one fellow there named , I guess I don't remember his name, anyhow he picked up a **curry** outfit, took all of Stranahan's horses, and two wagons and would then haul wool. I remember helping haul wool, all over to the east end of the Snowies at the Elliot Ranch, waiting for a load of wool, and the fire broke out in the first part of July (1900), over on Timber Creek, west of our place.

We watched that fire for about a week, some days it would grow big, some days it was little. It finally come down over the hills and down towards the Fred Weber place, up on Little Careless. Stranahan now thought we'd better go over and help him so we went across. We had two saddles

on the place, one of them was a side-saddle, it was up to me to ride the side saddle. In my stories I said, instead of riding side-saddle, it was best to get up and walk. That was the worst contraption to ride there ever was. I couldn't ride sideways and I couldn't ride in the saddle!

The wind worsened on a Saturday, and took the fire out along the hills coming down to the ranch, people were safe enough for the time being, we went home. And come the day following that, on a Sunday, some of us boys were down riding around, just putting in time, we went back up there we saw one smoke. I said to myself and the boys, "One flame, we could go up there and put that out now", that's all the smoke there was.

But the wind came up that night and on Tuesday it burned a whole long front, about two miles wide. It burned down the ridge and up the ridge, and come across. It went back over again, by that time it was halfway across Little Careless Creek. And then it was a hot days, one of the hottest days we've ever had since I guess, that was when the big fire came. It swept across the whole area there, all the flats, all the timber for miles. It ended up on the line of the old burn of 1885, it was burning up the mountain in a straight line, and stopped there. That was what we called the Snowy Mountain fire of 1900.

Now it's grown up to be trees twenty feet high, maybe thirty feet, down to timberline. The canyon didn't burn that time, it burned two weeks later, as far down as the ranch, and burning lumber for part of this. We looked up and the canyon was a burning, and Timber Creek Canyon was burning at the same time. That was a big fire!

Now the Forest section burned in about two hours. Couldn't do anything to it, couldn't go through it, and couldn't get near it. Wish we had, it was just spreading with big flames. Looked like a shooting raw volcanic eruption. The sun went under and you couldn't see the sun for half a day, the sun never shined, this started about noon. Timber Creek didn't burn but about half, but Careless Creek burned complete. The remains are still there, you can see it from a long distance. Well, it went along until fall.

Tom **Halvichek** told me one day, he'd give me a job if I come down to his place. I asked Bill **Halvichek** if I worked with him, if I'd have to work in the black timber. He said "Yea I would". He was going to log that winter again, be logging in black timber. Charred the bark of all the trees, and it was thick enough so a person just couldn't avoid getting black, right through your clothes, you'd be black all day long, all the time. So I started work in the black timber, I learned from it, I took a job with **Halberts**.

Well I worked there for a year, then in 1901 I went back east. Through an advertising I got a job as night patrol, with a patrol agency in Chicago. I went back there, did that for about three months, middle of September to November. It was awfully cold in Chicago, awfully cold, wind blowing around those buildings, I decided that was no job for me in the first place. I told them I was going to quit and go home, I was close to home. I went home across the lake (Lake Michigan), and spent the rest of the winter. I've never seen Chicago since, didn't want any more Chicago, they all can have it!

I came back down here to Big Coulee again (1902) where we'd gotten a job, let's see, the year I came out, I walked across the lake basin, my uncle and I, stopped at Ben Brown's place for a few days. Went down and spent the night and got a job lambing down there. Finished that up and at that time the surveyor outfit was coming through, and they wanted to survey that township, so we took that job.

I guess I'm getting a little ahead of my story, I told about that once, and how we wound up at the , no I take that all back, that was wrong. I did some timber hauling for the boys there that spring. Come back into Harlowton here, in February, no March, in March (1902) it was, big snowstorm, terrible snowstorm. I went off to deliver some logs and sell them to the OK Bar Ranch, the Crawford Ranch down here by Shawmut.

I made two trips with them, the last one with an eight horse team, that's the one time I drove an eight horse team. Two loads of logs and a caboose, I was gone for a week on that. I stuck to it the whole time and I delivered the loads, all alone, pulled the wagons out, loaded them up again. Finally got them to the ranch, and took it over to the pine hills south of the ranch, they were building a sheep shed over there, a cattle shed.

Then I got that done and I got a job with **Jestor** and earned myself another pony. Then **Merrill** on the **Merrill** Ranch wanted an irrigator so I got a job there. He irrigated his land both on Careless Creek and on Swimming Woman. Then I didn't have a job again, so old Tom Cameron and I got together and went over to the Little Snowies, south of the Little Snowies (1902). We worked about a week at the old Portuguese Ranch, they called it the Stone building, the Stonehouse.

Then I went to sawmilling, there was a sawmill going in over there by the Block cabin (Ed Fowler sawmill). You've been to the Block cabin haven't you, we used to visit **Granny** over there. They just moved in and just starting out with some short logs, doing some cutting there, they needed help so I got a job there, it took me around the Snowies. Then I went to another mill on Spring Creek, the Rogers Station, the Station they had then though. So I bucked logs for Sam **Bullnian** and on around, back to Timber Creek again, made two circles around the Snowies.

Meantime there was a piece of land vacant over on the head of Beaver Creek, and I filed on it. That was where I first started homesteading (1902). I worked a couple years afterwards. Had a good piece of work on the land so I quit work sawmilling, went to work on the homestead. Nothing very serious happened during those years (1902 - 1915), trying to make a living off a piece of raw land, fencing, plowing, and farming. I fell in with another fellow, a neighbor of mine and we worked together on it, finally got a hay baler and baled a lot of hay around the country, I got a wood saw and did a lot of wood sawing around the country. A few things like that, spent the time, then I got married, had a couple of kids.

Come 1915 was getting pretty badly in debt, I had to have more money, so I got a job as a lookout on the Snowies. Forest Service was doing the job then and they wanted a lookout. So I put in a summer as a lookout, working on trail work, a maintenance job in the Snowies. Quite impossible to tell you all the difficulties I had encountered there, but there were plenty. It was a hard job. Used to ride the length of the Snowies every day, from the west end to the east end, I

had two horses, ride one one-way and one the other way. There was a little cabin on the head of Snow Saucer Coulee, you know where Snow Saucer is, and I stayed in there , and put a roof on it.

I stopped that in September, I went back home, went and took the examination. Went to Great Falls twice, 1913 and 1915 it would have been. The first time I failed, second time I made it. I wouldn't have failed the first time, but I didn't know anything about the business, and I wrote to Missoula for some books on what to do, they marked it for me, then it came in the mail just the day after I got home from Great Falls taking the examination, so that didn't do me any good!

In 1915 I worked in the Service for that year, I helped out. And that year I took the exam again, and the next year 1916, I got an appointment. So I quit the **Sewart** Ranch, and **Myrtle** was against it, and went back and moved over here on Hopley in the old house that was there. Cattle were in and out of it. Went and took down the Ranger Station over on Haymaker and hauled it home, rebuilt that house and put siding on it, new floors in and tidied up everything up to make it habitable. Hauled logs a quarter mile, for water we had a spring we fixed to use, heading out every day I had to get a gallon of water before I could start out anyplace.

Had five bands of sheep in the Belts, and two thousand head of cattle grazing that I had to look after. With the five bands of sheep, I had to get them off the range, had to see them go in, had to see them come out. Had to wrangle them all out myself, no help, no nothing. When I started I was going to debt free, I couldn't do anything else.,.

In 1919 we moved into Judith Gap. The Ranger at Blake Creek had went to the War and gotten himself shot, his arm shot off, and his head nearly shot off. He came back, got his job again, lasted about a month and died. His name was Ray Greathouse. So they gavethe whole business to me. All I had then was the Belts, all the Snowies up to the divide. Then I did have a job! So in 1919 I had to move into Judith Gap. Couldn't find a place to rent, so I had to buy a place. I'd figure out a exactly what it was worth, get it almost get it paid for, get it built up, then buy another one. That's when I got this house. Stayed with it in Judith Gap up until 1936, when I got this one all paid for, and intended to keep it while you guys went to college, and I was just broke all the time. Moved the house down here where it is now.

About the only specific danger I had during that period, not a hardship but not very safe, I went to the Bottomless Pit there in the head of Careless Creek, on the divide between Careless Creek and Cottonwood, there's a hole there. Leon (Lake, younger brother) had that north side of the Snowies for awhile, he become a Ranger too, we had adjoining Districts, he had the north side (1919-1924). Someone years before had built a shackle, not a shackle but a windlass, over this pit. They didn't have any rights, came up from the north side, they left their initials (Bernie Williams and William Cameron).

One fellow was going to go down, they were going to let him down with the windlass. They gave him a hand with the operating and lifting. It frayed the rope, cutting it on the rocks going down, he got scared. He got half way down and his lantern went out, all they had was lanterns in those days. The cold air put the lantern out and so he had them pull him up. He had no idea how deep it

was, he ran away and never did come back. That was 30 or 40 years before then. Other made some studies, been in the 1880's, that windlass stood there.

Leon and I were along there one time (1922), and Weholdt, the Forest Supervisor, was with us. You remember Weholdt don't you? He was with us. He said "What's the use of that dam thing" he says, "Hell, we should just as well push it down in the hole". 'Alright, we'll push it down the hole'. It got all the way down but one arm of the windlass caught on the rocks, had to be loosened. Leon was going back to the horses to get a rope to put a rope around me, I was standing there, it was a steep hole, steep incline, loose gravel. Well, I'd loosened that and man!

I slide and got separated from the boys about 15 feet I guess, they was up on the rim looking at me, you have a portion loosening up, going!!" Here I went and caught my foot. Well, all I thought was "Whoa!!" Got an ankle footing just in time or I'd hurled down the hole 100 feet deep. I've had some guys asking me "What would have happened if I'd went down that hole?". Of course I'd been dead. Well we got out of that, that was a close call, really close call! I really got after Weholt. Somewhere, laying around here, I've got some pictures around yet.

There's some boys from Lewistown way, the **Doer** boys and some others, went down that hole. It dropped down a hundred feet deep, went down on a manila had a white ladder, both ladders. They found and took pictures of the old windlass down at bottom and the sign that Leon had made and put up, it had fallen in the hole. They brought that up. Anyhow, someone wrote an article for the Great Falls Tribune (1960), telling what happened. Had my picture and Leon's, about the 'Bottomless Pit'. I still have it around here, an aging antique. Well, that was that. Cave climbers started chasing around the country at the time and , I've forgotten now.

I went up to Flatwillow Canyon one time, there was eight , had a pack horse. Had the job to the rate of dead timber, that crushed it. I picked up a, I had a shovel and a knife, and I slipped over the ropes and packed a pack, a gentle horse enough. A sharp pole sticking out in the trail caught him in the flanks, of course all he did was jump and start bucking. He dropped , and started bucking and bucked the pack off, bucked the axe off, I finally got them all stopped, looked at my horse, and saw the axe had cut down the He had a inch , he had a scabbard on him but it cut through the scabbard and cut the horse too right across here. It **spalded** him, crippled him.

Late in the afternoon, we had a camp, the horses wanted to go, they wouldn't stand picketed and they wouldn't stand hobbled, I had to tie them up. I just couldn't get them to stay on a line, and they wanted to get down off that hill, must have been a bear around, I don't know, could have been. Anyhow, they wouldn't picket, they wouldn't hobble, so we started off for home as fast as they could go. One horse was lame and could hardly go, and I couldn't ride either of them, I had to walk all the way. I'd lead the gimping horse and pack the other one. That was quite an experience, not dangerous but a nuisance. Had to turn the horse loose in the pasture and didn't see him again for a month, when I saw him again he was alright. He got alright, he got well all by himself, I thought he was going to die, he was dying right there, but no.

Another time in 1920, we had a fire at the head of Cottonwood in Leon's District, was his District yet, he was a new there. We got some guys together on horses to go up the creek, no trail at that time up Cottonwood Canyon, had no trail in 'atal', a challenge, hard to get in. Had sheep in

there too, a band of sheep, Winnecook sheep. I picked up two guys here at Judith Gap, they came along for the bumpy ride. They'd been to a rodeo someplace, and were going home, and they were hanging out. They asked if there were a chance to 'find a plank around here' (bed and board) and I said "Yes there is, if you want to go with me, we think we'll dry out today" .

So we went out to Blake Creek Station and got our horses, I had two horses, and loaded them with tools, and got up the trail and got to the fire. Had to walk about 8 miles to get to the fire, getting to be sundown. The wind came up, and started to blow, we camped down below, a couple miles below. No trail up, had to break trail through dead timber, hard going. Well we only got ten men on that fire, way up on the hill in the canyon, way up on top, on top of the ridge. We finally put it out, had to work good and hard all day long, for two days and nights, until it rained. We had it pretty well put out,

The rain put the rest of it out. When it got cool, I had to go home. Those were hardships, camp on the top of mountain, and the mountain top was covered with ice and hail, couple inches deep. The whole mountain was covered with hail. Had to walk the horses the whole distance across the mountain top, and down to the station (Blake Creek). We got down there at dark too, all the afternoon and evening getting down there. Got the fire out! Some people think the Forest Service job is easy, a nice job, but it isn't! It can be a tough one. It wasn't a dangerous job but it was a hardship job.

I had an accident at the ranch one time, that was way back before you (speaking to David Lake Jr.), I should have looked up the date but I didn't think of it. Hauling hay to Lewistown, farming then, baled hay, had two ton of baled hay and a four horse team. I had hay for what they called a corral and livery stable, Billy Woods, he later became sheriff. I think that was the closest call I ever had. Got to the driveway at the door, was going to drive in. I started taking the leaders off, so I handled the **hovvers**, good driving you know, I'd drive right in. I felt pretty smart in those days with my family and few horses.

Well I could alright, but I had the brake pulled down so you couldn't get it to go slow, I couldn't get to the brake pole, wasn't sticking up, couldn't get to it without it being up. That left me with no brakes. I was sitting on behind a bale like this, behind another bale, and I proceeded in, and I got over a little rig at the doorway, started down an incline. Instead of pulling me, you know, now it started to push, the wagon was trying to push me! The cradle of big timbers, about 16 feet wide and about 16 feet thick, smashed together into beads like this. The wagon was rolling down, the horses was holding back alright, all of a sudden they give up, and we had a fine wreck

Another time out in the hills (1918), John **Lars** and I were out riding and looking at old Pete **DeBries** land, grazing land, it was close to their place, and they could use the wrap of fence coming down from the hills, nothing crafty but a good tight fence, some good fence work In the meantime we heard someone hollering way up on the hillside, couldn't see anything but we could hear them hollering, calling for help. Gosh, somebody was in trouble up there, better go up and look". So we tied our horses and went up there.

And here he was, about 200 yards I guess, across the open place and up the trail. In the old days they'd go up on that steep trail up on the hillside up there, above, and get themselves a load of

'snake' wood, poles, dry poles, take them down and snake them down, almost too steep for horses or man to go. Here this guy was coming down with that load, it turned over on him, he caught his foot, and there he lay. That guy laid under the load, the load on top of him, and no way of getting out. The only way he could get loose, was to call to his horse and tell him to go ahead. He went ahead and pulled the load off his leg. Crushed the bone, it was sticking through the flesh all over. Somehow, it was a miracle, he stopped the bleeding.

We went up there, kind of climbed up, we got there, and Lars and I cut some sticks, wrapped them a little bit, and made a splint, wrapped it around his leg, and made a litter. The owner of this place, named Willems, Frank Willems, lived down below about two miles, he was out someplace and he heard the hollering, and another fellow that homesteaded a little west of there, he heard me, he was head us, they both came up, and as they got closer, they could tell what happened. Willems drove his car up there, an old Dodge, he drove it up the trail as far as he could and then he left it. I couldn't drive a Dodge, drove the rest of the equipment, had a double shift in those days. Well, we got him down, couple hours time, brought him down to the car, made him lie down, we'd made a holder.

The other fellow was also wet, hurt around his shoulders, was lying on the ground. He got half way down and acted like he was played out, like he couldn't navigate. I didn't notice it until he fell over. Pretty soon he just said "I'm going to quit", and laid down on the ground. Afterwards I got him down to the car and made him lay down, and the other fellow was there with his bone sticking out, pretty bad condition. Here the other fellow was laying along side of him with a heart attack, turning all purple, flesh was getting black and blue, he was about to croak!

His wife knew that this could happen, so she started back on horseback, as fast as she could with his tablets, come across in time with tablets set up by the doctors for his heart condition. I met her down about a quarter mile below the place with my horse, I had to run across to meet her with a pair of pliers and cut the wire to get my horse through, and meet her down below the hill, to get the tablets back up the hill where the car was. We proceeded together back up then, rode in just in time, he stuck his tongue out and lapped up a couple of them (tablets), in 15 minutes he was one his feet, and he drove the car down, down Creek Gully. I knew we could've had two deaths right there.

It was a nice warm day, it was nice day to be able to save them, no hardships after that. We took the fellow with the broken leg down and drove all the way to Lewistown to get it set. The fellow finally got well. Willems got well too, and he lasted a 100 years living in Billings. He'd be dead by this time, that was a long time ago, in 1918.

I'll never forget the first time I did all the historical stories, about 19 I'd wake up and shake the reality off at night. The Forest Service was getting a lot of stuff together for the Centennial, semi-Centennial (50 Years, 1955), like they had out here, and also I went to the 10 year Historical Society (meeting) in Maine, in Auburn down there.

I holed up one time, I had a I had. Richard and I was out, you were in with us, you were a little fellow then (speaking to David Lake Jr.). Went over to Jack? Coulee to mark a skag of logs. A nice warm day, water running all over the country, not much snow, but just a dash. We get a

little way, wind beginning to pick up, in our old family car Ford, my old, old Ford. It was getting ready trying to start snowing. We walked about two miles up the canyon to the sawmill, a pond setting, drawbridge, seen one you've seen them all. We had to come on back. We got back down to the house where we were going to stay, where we left the car, it was too late to go home, it began to get cold. We'd stayed there that night, then started for home.

Meantime a freak storm had crossed the country from the north, and come down through the Basin and Judith Gap country, and terrible cold, it got 40 below, 30 below anyhow. We made for the Dick **Sentnal's** place, about 15 miles, turned in there to stay for the night. Next morning we couldn't get the car started, hadn't changed oil the night before. We three couldn't get it started, so needed help, and Vic Daniels? put a team on it, dragged it around the yard as fast as he could make it go, we finally got it started. We filled it with hot water, and put stuff on the front to keep it from freezing again, and we were ready to go.

Meantime we found Al **Milley**, lived close by, was going to bring his daughter to school, and his car was steaming about a hundred feet in the air. And he come along there, he was going up the trail there and onto the Gap. I said "Willie, you'll never make it, your car will quit because you don't have any water in it and it's steaming now. You want me to take that girl and put her in my car, I'm going there too?" He said "No, I think I'll make it alright", and he did.

We faced the wind all the way to the Gap, my car wasn't steaming until I got there, then it started to burst. I thought it was going to vapor lock just right by the side of the road before we got to the Gap, had five miles to drive. No snow on the road, but it was awful cold. Meantime, the wind had blown around the house, and the folks there had 'pertner' froze to death. It was rather a close call, if the car would have stopped out in that open, between Careless Creek and Swimming Woman, we would have froze to death. When we got going, we didn't stop anymore.

In 1919, we moved to the Gap, stayed there until 1936, when they combined the districts and put me in charge, had to move to Harlowton. The last four years of my service was in this house from here (home moved from Judith Gap to Harlowton in 1936, continued as his permanent Harlowton home, per his son David Lake, Jr.).

Had several fires, without anything too serious, during that period, I made several night drives to fires at different times, lots of hardships but nothing major. Retired in 1940, and got the water job here in 1940. Was on that job for 18 years (Martinsdale Reservoir Upper Musselshell Water Users Association).

Then I retired from work in 1958 or '59. Since then I've just took it easy! David, you probably remember much of this because you were with me half of the time!

David Lake Jr.: Yes I was

David Lake Jr.: This was recorded February of 1968 when my son David returned from Vietnam. Dad did have a lot more to say, but because of his age and a few other things, I don't think that he remembers everything that went on. This is, for the record, his life history, many

things and incidents that he did, however there is a lot more that could not be said, it would take a very large reel of tape to get it all on

End of Interview