

Maureen and Mike

# Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

## **Archives and Special Collections**

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: [Archives and Special Collections](#)

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

The following transcript was provided to Archives and Special Collections by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society with its associated audio recording.

**Oral History Number: 422-048, 049**  
**Interviewee: Joe Waldbillig, Jr.**  
**Interviewer: Suzanne Vernon**  
**Date of Interview: November 5, 1999**  
**Project: Upper Swan Valley Oral History Project**

Suzanne Vernon: Could you tell me again who your folks were?

Joe Waldbillig: On the Waldbillig side, they came up from Philipsburg and Drummond. And of course, my mother, the Lynns, she was a Lynn on the Cottonwood Creek, there, outside of Ovando. They were raised there.

SV: What was your father's name?

JW: Joseph J.

SV: Okay. I was looking for that middle initial. Do you know when he was born, or how old he was when he died?

JW: Gee whiz. As to that, I couldn't say.

SV: Do you remember when he died?

JW: It would have to be around in the late twenties. I'd say in the, I think around 1929.

SV: Was he living in Ovando then?

JW: No. He was living in Missoula. They came down from Drummond, Ovando – they had bailed out of the Swan River – they came down to a big ole house on 1629 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street in Missoula. Two story house.

SV: So, your mom was Ethel. She was a Lynn. And then she remarried after he died. And her name was Bradshaw. Did she live quite a bit longer than your father?

JW: Oh yes. She died when she was 86. In Missoula.

SV: Do you know what your father's nationality was?

JW: German. Born in this country. Mother was Irish, naturally. They didn't get along too well, for that very reason. Bothered me, because the Waldbillig side, because that means in German, cheap forest, inexpensive wood. So, the Krauts, they kinda got ahold of me in Europe. They leaned on me pretty heavy. Because, "Jude, jude," they'd give me that business you know, all the time. But as far as I know there was no Jew. . . It wouldn't have made a helluva lot of

difference cuz I was getting' a bad time till somebody found my dog tags with the Protestant on it. That cleared it up. WWII. Scared to death all the time. In Europe. Middle East. All over that part of the world. North Africa. Iraq. Iran. I was in the Persian Gulf when it wasn't popular at all. (Patton?) Yes. Thank God for Patton. Yes. Part of the time. But I would be transferred or attached. Military called it attachment. Particular divisions. Move you around, depending on skill. (Was in Europe when the war ended.) Airfurt (sp?), Germany. May the eighth. Church bells rang. Sounded good. I'd thought they was all melted up for gun shells, but they weren't. Nice sound. That would be East Germany, I guess at the time. Airfurt. I asked my Aunt, Eva Collins, I said, "You know, I'm kind of ashamed of that name now." She asked why. I said, "Well, I felt like I had some of that Nazi blood running through my veins." She laughed. "Joe, you don't need to let that panic you. The folks (her folks) came from Luxembourg. There was a village there by the name of Waldbillig." That's the reason why the grandparents came here in the first place. Quite a few in New York. Several boys. They walked out of Luxembourg because the Kaiser was conscripting, you know. World War I. They got smart and got out of there.

SV: How did your folks get to Montana?

JW: Immigrants, I would say. I never did hear. . . Good question. I know there are some of the brothers to the originals that were here, up in Canada almost to the Arctic Circle. There's a Waldbillig tribe up there. One of them stopped two or three years ago and visited me. Quite a clan of them up there. A lot of them in New York.

SV: When were you born?

JW: October 15, 1920. Missoula.

SV: So that was quite awhile after your folks were up in the Swan.

JW: Had five boys, five of us boys. Oliver is my younger brother. Then there was Emory, John (the oldest) and then Leonard.

SV: Do you remember stories of how your folks got to the Gordon Ranch?

JW: Doctor Gordon was alive at the time. They were there. He was a doctor, I think he had his practice in Butte. Many, many doctors came in from Butte. Doctors, surgeons. I thought the dude thing was a recent. . . but it isn't. They had to ride in on horses to get in there, or by the stage, which is drawn by horses of course. The wintertime the stage was a sleigh, of course, because there was five foot of snow on the road up there. Weaved in among the trees.

SV: But you could get between the trees? Your mother and dad were married in Ovando? (I believe that's right). They moved to the Swan shortly after they were married? (I believe so.)

JW: My oldest brother, John, was up there at the time. In fact, the Indians saved his life. I think Mildred wrote that, too. (See Cabin Fever book).

SV: Can you tell me what your father looked like?

JW: We'll go to the old album. . . .Which has been robbed. There are some of them lost. Some of them been. . . . Some of them marked. This is at the old Lynn Ranch in Ovando. That's the older brother. That was taken in the Swan, I'm sure. That's the older brother. That's the Airedale dogs.

SV: Did they tell about bears?

JW: I think there's one in there with the bears on the side, and mountain lions, hanging on a building. The one whole side mountains lions, and another, bear hides. A lot of them grizzlies. Huge. They were huge hides.

SV: Did the dogs help keep the bears away from the buildings?

JW: Oh yes. In fact the dog is the one that Mother used to bake bread. Father was working with the survey crew, for the Northern Pacific railroad. That area hadn't been totally surveyed. Over in the South Fork of the Swan River. Or what they call Bob Marshall now. They were working on that. Course with pack strings. But they'd show back up the Swan there, at the ranch. Mother would bake bread. They lived in a cabin there, she said. That homemade bread would waft out on the meadow there where the Indians were camped. And the old bucks would just follow their nose, they'd come over, smelling that bread. Mother said so many times she turned around, she felt a presence, when she took the bread out of the oven. There'd be a big old buck standing there with a smile on his face. Scared her half to death. So she'd just end up, put a nice tea towel over the bread and give it to them. Afraid of her life, you know. But then the squaws would come over later, maybe within that same week. They'd bring her beaded work. Buckskin gloves. Moccasins. Beautiful. Course they weren't moochers, you understand. The waif (sic) of the bread out on the meadow was too much for those buck Indians. They had to come over and have some of that. She said to me, she said, "Joe, the awfulest thing about them, they never did knock on the door. They'd just walk in." I said, "Mother, how were they going to knock on a tipi? It would be just a tent, canvas or deer hide or whatever. It would be pretty hard." "I know you'd stick up for them," she'd say.

SV: They must have camped fairly close then?

JW: Oh yes. (Had all their tents with them)

SV: I wonder how long a time your mother was there all by herself.

JW: That was the whole point. She said, "You either get a dog here that will bark, or I leave," she said. "The next horse out would be me on it!"

SV: And these dogs (Airedale) were very protective?

JW: I guess. That's a picture of our father there. He was short, about my size. I'm a runt. I'm the runt of the family. "Gyp" was one of the dogs. Log cabin, was on the Gordon Ranch I'm sure. Mountain lion.

SV: Did they talk about what kind of livestock they had at the time?

JW: Horses. Used for packing. Absolutely essential.

SV: I read somewhere that Holland, when he was homesteading, had thirty or forty head of cattle in there?

JW: Possible.

(pictures of Airedale puppies.) Photo discussion. Deer hides. Whole carcasses. In the Swan. Anytime you see those ponderosa pines, sizeable, the pictures are at the Gordon Ranch.. Still a lot of them there. Heavy racks on the deer.

JW: I get a little perturbed with the game department. They tell me they were smaller deer then than they are now. I can't see that they are.

SV: Tents, were these part of the survey crew?

JW: Yes.

SV: There was more than one survey in those years.

JW: They had planned on a railroad up there. That's how they acquired all that land in the timber. Take that picture with you if you want to duplicate it. As you can see in there, it's (album) been pretty well robbed.

SV: I can see by the fence in here. . . some of the other Gordon Ranch photos we have have that old fence. Vertical poles. I wonder if that other picture was taken on the other side.

JW: People. George Warner. Zeigler was another one. A German, used to come in as a dude for the hunting. Warner? Well he, . . . Mrs. Mannix's sister's husband, which would be a cousin, you know. . .

SV: This Mr. Zeigler was a dude?

JW: A German. Actually a count. More pictures of him in there.

SV: If we come across other photos that are similar we can start to match up people.

JW: Some of them are rather faded. Lion hides. Terribly faded.

SV: The Airedales must have been used for actually hunting these bears. . .

JW: Oh yes.

SV: Looking at more pictures.

JW: An old .25-.35 Winchester, carbine there. It's still here.

SV: That's the old lever action.

JW: Yes. And that's definitely the Gordon Ranch. Buildings. . . there were several of them there that weren't really in the complex of the Gordon Ranch. That one in particular still standing. Usually what happens when they have no foundation the building settles as it rots out. That's the reason why they, I think they did it purposely. The next generation coming up would have to build a new house.

SV: Was this a cabin where somebody lived?

JW: It could be ole' Charlie Anderson's place. . . is that name familiar? Charlie Anderson, when the game warden arrested him because he found some ham of venison in his oat bin in the barn. Arrested him. Made him walk to town. The game warden took him to Missoula (as we are) still in Missoula County. He was arrested. Charlie chose to walk back. The fine was \$25 when he got to Missoula. He chose to walk back, and then added up his time coming. . . the game department owed him money by the time he got back to the Swan. Mother always told that story and then laugh about it. (Note: Charlie may have been employed by the government at that time, too.)

SV: Fish photo? Are those fish? (Yes) Big fish. They look like it must have been a big fishing party or something. That's a lot of fish.

JW: I think there was another in there with the guys stretching them. I think they took that . . . Mother kept mentioning chub. That there was such thing as chub in the lakes. Have you heard that expression. They'd get them and put them in barrels. You know? Freeze them for the winter. So they'd have a barrel of water out there. They'd have fish through the winter. Along with the corned beef that they'd get at the Lynn Ranch at Cottonwood.

SV: I never heard of people putting fish in a barrel. . .

JW: Yeah. It would freeze. I imagine cold enough up there to do it.

SV: They must have chopped the ice out around the fish. . .

JW: I would say.

SV: So when people tell me about going out and getting their winter's supply of fish, it was this kind of thing.

JW: In fact it looks like some have been dried or smoked there. They look rather slim and long.

SV: I think you're right. Because they are spread. The ones that are facing the camera.

JW: They look to be me like they've been. . . gutted, for sure.

SV: Did the Indians do any of that preserving stuff while they were there?

JW: Oh yeah. Deer. German count. Zeigler. When Doctor Gordon had the ranch. He died of cancer, mother said. I believe in Butte.

SV: He sold the ranch to Mr. Witherspoon.

JW: That was a doctor also. Mother mentioned that many times. Butte. And Renick was another from Butte. In fact one of the Renick's heirs showed up here one day. Interviewing me. Nice talk. The Renick building, last time I was in Butte, I see that up high, on the building, it said Renick building.

SV: One of the pictures that you gave us for Cabin Fever had some of those people. Who took the pictures?

JW: Good question. (Deer photo) Very faded. Father, there. And in particular, mention this if you wish, cuz it's true. That's a set of elk antlers, right? The game department tells me, some of the young guys, there weren't any elk in that part of the world until 1917. They planted them. (The pictures are much earlier.) That is a survey picture, I'm sure. With the tent. Definitely the Gordon Ranch.

SV: Actually two sets of elk antlers in that picture. One is much larger than the other one. Five on one side. Six maybe. But these tents. . . I did find some other pictures from 1908 survey. Showed these tents. Maybe we can match these up. (more pictures. . . hound puppies.) Snags from old burn in one photo. Next photo: Gordon Pass. Father in the middle.

JW: They got in on a fire up there one year, also. Packed in fire fighters. Wasn't too many people there at the time. Escaping it was the big thing. Getting out with their tools. (Look in Browman, date of this fire.)

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

SV: Pictures. Good picture of father, John, and dog.

JW: That's a burn, too. I believe it's up. . . South Fork. Mountain lion carcass. Yeah, it was a burn. Gordon Pass, almost over. Merry Christmas to you all, from Tom and ? Addressed to Mr. And Mrs. Waldbillig.

JW: Survey crew photo. That's got to be over in there (South Fork) NP/FS survey crew.

(Nephew of the oldest boy is in his seventies? Should I talk to him?)

JW: That's winter travel in the Swan. The snow wasn't all that deep at the time, either.

SV: Would that be an old telephone line?

JW: Sure looks like it. Old grounded telephone line. (Did mother remember phones?) Oh yes. Her brothers had to maintain the telephone.

SV: Did you mom ever talk about how she felt, first white woman.

JW: She said she was the ONLY white woman in there. (Can't verify other. . . ) I'm sure that shortly thereafter there were other ladies. There was only one way out, only horses or walk. That was the drawback. When John was born, the oldest brother, he got pneumonia, I guess. But the Indian that showed up to play poker with my father had come over to mother. She said this Indian came over, and said "Baby, sick" and put his dirty finger in his mouth. That's how he took his temperature! That almost got her. Boy, he put his blanket back on and went over across that meadow there that's in that picture there. Across the meadow, said he'd be back, on his homemade snowshoes. He come back to the cabin with this pouch, it was a buckskin pouch. It was kind of pink powder in it, she said. He wanted to know, asked Mother, if they had a spoon or something that they could mix this. So she got him a tablespoon, and with his dirty finger, she said, and some water, he wanted some water, to stir with his dirty finger. She said that she was almost hysterical over this Indian with his dirty finger and that powder. How did she know but, like Father said, well, what do we got to lose, he isn't going to make it anyway. About three times, at about that interval, he'd get up from playing poker (he beat the ole' man all the time) he'd get up, about time to get the spoon again and with his finger, stir the stuff up. In the morning, why, about 6 o'clock, John opened his eyes and smiled at him. She said, she knows now that if it hadn't of been for him, because there was no chance of getting a doctor in there. No such things as helicopters. She knows that the Indian saved his life. That's for sure. He had pneumonia, she explained.

SV: The Indians were camped nearby?

JW: January. I'm guessing, because there was no. . . the doctors would come in for the hunting season from Butte. Renick, and Witherspoon, those guys. I don't think they bothered to traipse through that deep snow with their horses.

SV: I'm wondering why the Indians would have been there. . .

JW: Historic. They'd stayed there. . . you know, the reservation wasn't something that was really. . . when you think about it, it was a kind of a no-no. They were put there because they wanted (government wanted them) to be there. They were moved out of the Bitterroot. Falsified documents and that sort of thing. Governor Stevens . . . Terrible thing to do to those people.

SV: So they had some freedom in the Swan River. . .

JW: Camping out, to them, with lots of wood in there.

SV: Did anybody ever talk about which trails the Indians used, to come. . .

JW: By Placid Lake, I'm sure. That was the main trail at the time. Closest to the reservation at least.

SV: How many years were your folks in there?

JW: No one ever mentioned it. I have no idea.

SV: The earliest other caretaker. . . was the late '20s (actually 1913-1915). It almost looks like your folks could have been there ten years?

JW: I couldn't verify that.

SV: Your brother would have been in school there.

JW: John never mentioned that he went to school there. I think he started at Drummond. That's the first place I can remember that I was alive and moving. I was getting a bath in Drummond in a sink! My mother was giving me a bath. I can remember, it was very vivid. There was a bucket. I was getting a bath. Probably getting kinda roughed up with that water. I couldn't tell what age I was. I was alive, at whatever time that was. (Joe went to school in Missoula.)

SV: Where did you work?

JW: Forest Service, I think, was the first job I had. Lookouts, pack strings. Maintain trails. Saws, axes. Cleared trail. Lochsa. Bud Moore. Bud Moore saved my life, I'm sure. I got involved in a road building job from the Lolo side over to the Clark's Fork side of the mountain. They had

dynamite stacked up under huge canvas. The elk would come in every night and paw, break the . . . made out of wooden boxes, the dynamite would come in. Those elk would strike that so hard they would break the boxes. I think they were salt hungry. I was sweating and I thought Oh boy, the elk hit that just right. 80-pound blow. But Bud came up and took me down to the ranger station, and I stayed there for the rest of the tour of the Lochsa.

SV: Do you remember any stories about trappers on the Gordon Ranch.

JW: Charlie Anderson was a trapper for the most part.

SV: So he was a paid trapper, not just there for the company? (Yeah.) Some people told me he had some big, special-made bear traps?

JW: Got one of the bear traps, down at Oliver's, in the basement. Huge thing.

SV: Is it a bigger trap than the Newhouse traps that most homesteaders had?

JW: Oh yeah, it was huge. Still there. They even welded up, in the later years, welded longer teeth on it. So it would. . . the trap is a vicious thing.

SV: What was their motivation?

JW: Bears were quite destructive. Anyplace they wanted to go, why they'd get there. I personally like bear. I don't know, kinda like a dog to me. I've had tame ones. Ride around in the truck with me.

SV: You must have found them when they were young.

JW: Yes. Their mother had been shot. The brother told me, get the lariat rope. There's a little bear down below the house. So I got the lariat rope. Threw it on him. Wouldn't even tighten the hondo on it, cuz he was so light. Reached down and got him by the scruff of the neck. We were milking cows at that time, Guernsey cows. Rich milk. He'd be there all the time. So, put a collar on him to keep him from getting run over on the road. Every time I'd lengthen out his collar, he was on the fight. He didn't like it. Being kinda stupid like I am, my brother would say, Now, I'll throw the blanket on him. You jump in his middle and loosen it. He'd already thrown the blanket. . . so I jumped! Bloody hands. . . but I still like bear. They come up here for the apples. They like the apples. Tore the door off my back porch. Tore it right off. The dog would look at me like, hey, you gonna tolerate this sort of thing. The dog wanted him out.

SV: Another story that I heard about bear trappers in the Swan was that somebody came through there with a mule train in the early years. . . with something like 300 bear traps.

JW: No. That's kind of fantastic. Out of this world. There were drummers, drummers coming through. Salesmen. I know Mother mentioned always "a drummer" I don't know, a salesman of any kind. Whether he was Watkins, or whatever he was, he was a drummer. They always talked to them drummers, because they had news from someplace else. There was no newspapers. Brought the gossip from the next county. Sometimes very important what they had to say. So they always listened to a drummer. Cost them money in the long run, because he sold them something.

SV: Where did they buy most of their supplies?

JW: (Doctors from Butte, resupply.) Some things that they thought was essential. I imagine aspirin was a big thing.

SV: They did a little bit of partying?

JW: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SV: So what about the massacre.

JW: I guess it was five lost in the fight. Four Indians were killed, and of course, Peyton himself. Mother maintained it was the . . . Her story, it was a teenage, young Indian boy, that started the shooting in the first place. He was back of his packhorse. When they seen this Peyton coming in they knew it was trouble. So, anyway, he shot him in the middle. Hit the belt buckle, according to Mother. The bullet ranged around to his spine. It wasn't fatal, but he fainted. And this Indian squaw seen him fall. After all, he'd shot four Indians. Four of the men there. So when she seen him fall, she went up to him. He was a two pistol man, like that. She went up and took his pistols when he was laying there. Shot him through both lungs. Took care of him.

SV: Your dad had to give an account of all that.

JW: I got the.(court documents) . . out of Butte. The U.S. Marshall was at Butte. You can get that by sending for it. Give them the date. 1908. I've got that.

SV: You gave us a copy of that.

JW: Oh, is that right? But it came out of Butte. It was federal.

SV: Did that change the relationship between your folks and the Indians.

JW: Mother, in particular. My father thought ole' Charlie Peyton was all right. He thought Charlie Peyton was okay, because maybe he drank with him or whatever it was. But Mother hated him. It was back to the dirty fingers, back there looking for illegal venison or elk or whatever it was there. For that main reason she didn't like him. He'd just swagger in. Didn't

bother to knock. Just walk in and start looking things over. Gonna make an arrest or a pinch, that was the attitude he had as far as she was concerned. But she didn't want to see him get killed. She kept telling him, "Charlie you stay here tonight. The Indians are all packed up. They are ready to go over into the reservation. If you leave them alone." Oh no, he wanted to deputize my father. My mother said, no (she was eight months along with baby, you know, with John). "If he goes, I go." Well, he didn't want anything to do with that. That's when he deputized Herman Rudolph. He was another German. Count or whatever. He had something to do with Germany. He was no help. She said, he. . . at either Rumble Creek or Glacier Creek he came across. She said he never had a wet stitch of clothing on. The stream was pretty high at the time. So he had to be moving. . . (laughs) when he cleared the creek. When the shooting started he got the hell out of there. It wasn't his thing. (Not clear what he's talking about. He may have had to cross Holland Creek.)

SV: Then there's several versions of the story after that. About where the Indians were buried.

JW: Mother said they came back over and dug them up. They dug them up and then they had a. . . she said she was really scared about that. They were whooping and hollering. Had more a less a ceremony, digging these people up. The Indian police she said were real nice gentlemen, from the reservation. They had to come over to investigate it. The shooting or the killing or whatever you want to call it. As far as I know that was probably the last skirmish they had with Indians in this part of the West. Nothing like Wounded Knee or anything like that. But it was a skirmish I would call it. I keep hearing this massacre stuff. Think of hundreds.

SV: Did your father know any of the Indians who were killed.

JW: Oh yes. Moon. . . or something. He was kind of the honcho for the bunch but Peyton killed him.

SV: Who became the game warden after that?

JW: Nice man. Part Indian also. Harry Morgan. Nice man. Liked Harry. He always wanted me to come and visit him. Had a cabin some place in the Blackfoot. A gentleman. The old timers up there, they said if they got to bragging about poaching a deer or an elk or something, Harry would lean on them pretty heavy. He'd hear that scuttlebutt around and he'd find them and arrest them. Get them good. Yep, Harry Morgan.

SV: How did your father die?

JW: Suicide. On Tenth Street in south Missoula. Shot himself.

SV: Did your folks have any hobbies? Can you tell me more about what kind of people they were?

JW: She done a lot of sewing. Course, all the women did at that time. And of course she had a piano, or an old pump organ. . . played with those things.

SV: Probably didn't have the piano up the Swan. . . ?

JW: I think they had a pump organ. I can still see them pump organs with the rug material on the pedals. And some more gadgets that you pull out.

SV: Did they ever talk about what they did for fun?

JW: There were dances. Like Ovando. Summertime, they planned on it. Took a while to get there. Dances at Ovando. They'd hear through the grapevine at some certain date. They'd be there. Occasions, where the situation presented itself. They'd be there. It burned down, the old dance hall, at Ovando.

SV: Somebody else had told me, it might have been Bob Newman. . . Did they talk about any favorite horses?

JW: Oh yeah. Pet horses, that's for sure. Penny, was one in particular. Mother mentioned that many times. Gentle enough she could ride it without it throwing her.

SV: Did they ever try gardening up there?

JW: No. It's limited. By the time the snow goes off, it's July. Does Pennypacker ring any bells? It seems to me he was a merchant of sorts that she would speak of. Seemed like it was around Drummond. . .

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

SV: The Indian woman spoke English?

JW: Oh yeah. They'd come over to borrow her (Mom's) kettles to cook with. One in particular was a copper boiler, bigger than a kettle. The bucks would come over and get the bread. They'd take it over to the camp. They'd bring her (mom) gloves, and little pillows, with buckskin with beads all through. They are still down there (buckskin items are stored at Oliver Waldbillig's house, in a trunk, Joe said) last I seen. I ought to give them to somebody. Museum or something. They are in an old trunk.

She told my father to get a dog there or I'm not going to stay. The Airedale dog, when the Squaw came through the fence, the dog bit her, right on the rump. She (Mom) felt terrible about that. But she got the squaw in the house. All they had at the time was iodine, that was the great remedy for everything. So she poured some iodine on the poor squaw's rump. She let a howl out of her like it was terrible. That hurting ointment. The notorious hurting medicine. Burned, you know. The white man had notorious hurting medicine, it didn't help them, it hurt them. Tincture of iodine was the biggie. Squaw didn't want no more of it. But the dog, it broke the skin.

They never went over a fence. Indians always go through a fence, or under it. Kinda like an antelope, you know. This squaw always come back, anyway. But she didn't want any of that medicine. She'd bring her own. They had powders and dried roots, and whatever. Probably very effective.

Trying to think of the head man's name that was with the railroad survey crew. I'm at a loss to come up with.

SV: In some pictures, there is a man by the name of Jack but no last name. In some pictures, the man identified as Jack looks a little better dressed than the other fellows.

JW: The old railroad surveys' engineers, they knew my father. They would come back here and visit later. They'd known my father, they would come back here and visit me. Introduce themselves as to who they were. It seems to me that the guy's name was Ruttenberg, that was the chief of the survey crew. They'd come around there later. I remember an old Dodge car. Disk wheels.

SV: Some of those people liked that area and wanted to go back again?

JW: Oh yes. Kraft Creek? Now that's where the man lives, where the Indians are supposed to be buried. (Lundberg) Manchester, the guy that was here, was doing a story on the Indian killings, and he thought it was farther away than that. He wasn't sure. According to Warner, they were

under the water. His dad made this impoundment, water impoundment, for irrigation, and the Indians were buried there.

SV: Somebody gave us pictures, we didn't use them in Cabin Fever.

JW: Tipis? Yeah. (Joe has them. Found them on second visit.)

SV: If I remember right, those poles are where the killings occurred?

JW: Right.

SV: I found an old picture from 1908 of these men identified as a survey crew standing next to what is said to be an Indian burial site. Pole structure, covered with cross poles on the top.

JW: The Indians of eastern Montana used to bury people like that. But I've never seen that, (what SV described).

The sheriff had to come in and investigate. Mother mentioned that many times. (Talking about the incident in 1908)

SV: She must have been scared.

JW: Oh yeah. After the killing up there, the Indians that came back to bury them, were very noisy. They whooped and hollered and carried on. All sorts of incantations. Whatever the Indians did.

Mary Finley was, this is ironic, because I used to. . . when I lived on Tent Street in a big old two-story house (Missoula) I'd look out in late June or early July, look out across the Bitterroot tracks, there'd be nothing out there the day before, but then there'd be Indian tipis pitched out there, where the mall is now. And they'd be out to pick the Bitterroot. Gather the Bitterroots. Mary Finley used to make me moccasins. She was a girl at the time on the Indian killing. Just a girl. But I never did put it together. She was probably 90 years old at the time (in Missoula). But she could sew that moccasin. She'd make me moccasins. Very thin small stitches. Buckskin. Beautiful.

I keep thinking about the people today, saying about the pollution. The inside of those tipis from about halfway up was brown with smoke. How bad it was on eyes. They didn't live very long, and that sort of thing. Mary Finley had to be 90 years old but she could still, with the buckskin needle, could sew.

SV: Did they just make moccasins for you because they liked kids, or how did you get these?

JW: That was quite a thing. I'd bring a deer hide. They wanted a deer hide, the first thing. I'd bring a deer hide. I wouldn't shoot it myself, but somebody—you know they just threw it away, like garbage. So I'd bring them a deer hide. 'Course I was small, so it didn't take much of that buckskin to make moccasins for me.

I was very proud of them buckskin moccasins. I went to Franklin School. The buckskin smell—the smoke and all that thing—I don't think the teacher liked that idea. Kept telling me I'd be flat-footed if I kept wearing those moccasins. Finally they'd send little notes home to my mother, that I shouldn't be wearing them stinky, terrible moccasins. I'd end up with a pair of tennis shoes. They were worse. Get kind of rank with sweat. Finally the school teacher said, "You can go back to the moccasins!" Moccasins kind of blanketed that stench of sweaty feet.

SV: Do you remember what she looked like then?

JW: Nice looking Indian lady. 90 years old. I'd play baseball with the kids out there. Tweezer, was his name, big fat Indian. Was the umpire. He'd laugh. All we had for a bat was a stick. In fact I think they called it stick ball at the time. Tweezer, these kids sliding and swinging around. He looked after us. Snoosy McClure was up, he lives on the reservation, he used to pack for the Forest Service, he said Tweezer was still alive. I thought that was quite a name.

They never had a beard. Probably the Tweezer was because he used it to pull the hairs out. Individually. He had a mirror, it was big. Good trade stock, mirrors. I never did see an Indian with a beard.

SV: Did your brother John, ever play with the Indian kids (in the Swan)?

JW: Oh, I'm sure. We never looked at them as beneath us, you know.

SV: I would think if the Indian men and women were coming over, the kids would have been there, too.

JW: They were not running over everything. When they told them to stand or whatever, well, they stood right there. There wasn't behavior like the kids do now. They were disciplined, you bet. I always got along good with them. Mostly, because Snoosey McClure, packer, he was up with a packstring at the head of Miller Creek and a fire was going. I was coming down, because I had hay to put up. So I come by where Snoose was coming up with a packstring, horses and mules. One man. They turned him loose with three really green mules. They'd kick you and do anything. Trying to pack them and unpack them was a chore. He was going to camp there for the night. Well, I said, "Snoose? You got another sleeping bag? I can't see you struggling with these animals. I'll stay with you here tonight, and go home tomorrow." He said he'd like that. We found a place to feed the mules in the lodgepole there. We made a tray arrangement. Had some hay bales. Kind of like a makeshift stable. So I stayed the night. Got breakfast the next morning, and he was packing the mules to go to where the fire was. He said, "I'll tell you, I sure

appreciate that.” And he certainly must have, because he still comes back up here to see me. He and his wife. Alvin McClure. They were Scotch traders, was his lineage.

SV: A lot of Scotch people.

JW: Oh yes. Scotch and French. They got along with the Indians rather well. The Scotch started the trading posts across the country.

SV: Do you remember the story of that?

JW: Well, my father’s name was Joe and his brother, my uncle, was George. They done all this trapping and packing and surveying and stuff in that part of the world. But how I got onto it, originally, when I was just a youngster, more or less in the late teens. The Forest Service employed me. Eldon Myrick called me into his office and said, “Hey, Joe. We have a name here on a mountain up there that looks something like your last name. We understand it was an Indian name meaning “big billy goat.” I said, “It’s gotta be wrong.”

“No,” he said. “We’ve talked to a lot of people.” They overhauled the maps right away. They called in the map service in. It was going to be Waldbillig Mountain. “Did you have anything to do with that part of the world?” he said. I told him my father and uncle were up there. That’s where that name comes from. It’s above Little Holland Lake. Big Holland, Little Holland, and then the creek. It’s the left hand mountain, I guess, as you go north, northeast.

SV: Did you ever hear any stories about what kind of trapping your dad and uncle did?

JW: Oh they were up in the high country. So it would have to be lynx, martin. Quite a bit of beaver trapping, too. That was a winter job. The old uncles up there, the Lynn Brothers, at Cottonwood, were beaver trappers.

SV: There were quite a few ponds in that area. On Holland Creek. So maybe they didn’t have to go too far in the winter?

JW: Beaver, I seen beaver go for \$80 a hide, you know. At that time, it was fantastic. They had to be skinned properly. Blanket beaver hide was round. They stretch them. A good hide, would bring \$80. They varied from twenty to eighty dollars.

SV: I suppose there were fur-buyers who came around?

JW: Oh yes. Like the drummers. Contracted, some of them. The beaver. Cattle buyers done the same thing. They guaranteed them so much for their hide, or whatever. They must have taken a beating at times. The price would belly out.

SV: It would be nice to find some of those records.

JW: Ovando was more or less the headquarters for that. The jumping-off place. They called it "town." That was "town."

[End of Interview]