

Oral History Number: 089-001

Interviewee: Willie Clanton Spaulding

Interviewer: Gladys Peterson, multiple

Date of Interview: February 17, 1978

Note: This interview was conducted by several interviewers. The only identified one is Gladys Peterson. The rest have simply been noted as Unidentified Speaker, or US.

Willie Spaulding: —my father grew up in Missouri, just over the line, and they weren't very many miles apart. My father went west, like lots of young men, and went to San Francisco. I don't know how he got from Missouri to San Francisco, but I know from San Francisco up to Portland, he came by boat. Then he got from there over to Plains, Montana, and was working on the NP [Northern Pacific] Railroad. At that time, that was the western end—the railroad built from the east and from the west, and that was the end of it in the west, at Plains. At that time, the town of Plains was called Horse Plains—there were so many wild horses there. Then from there, he got over to Fort Benton, and then...I don't know how. Actually, he never talked much about any of this. I just have gotten it here and there. But he got to Fort Benton and filed on a claim—on a ranch there—and the Indians chased him off of it. So he went to back to Missouri.

He had saved 1,000 dollars, and he went back to Missouri and married my mother. They came out west by train, got to Billings, and that was about the end of the NP Railroad from that end. In any case, they couldn't have gone from Billings to Fort Benton by railroad, there wouldn't have been any. So they got off in Billings, planning to go overland to Fort Benton, to try and get this ranch back again. They were told not to go right then, because there was an Indian uprising between Billings and Fort Benton. So they stayed on for a while, and as a result, they just stayed there. Never did get out of Billings.

My father's first job, they said, was hauling water from the Yellowstone River in barrels to the few people that were in the little town of Billings. That was the first water station for Billings. [laughs] My mother always referred to it as the town of tents, when she arrived there as a bride from Arkansas. But there were a few houses. There were a few houses and little stores with rooms above, because I remember her telling me about that—at first they lived in a room above a store there on Minnesota Avenue. So there were a few little buildings there.

Apparently my father bought land there, because he built...the ranches we had were, they were not claims at all, they were land that he bought. They were on the edge of Billings, oh, maybe out three-quarters of a mile from what was then the heart of the town. Of course, now Billings is out 15 or more miles beyond where our ranch was. Billings has grown so fast and spread out so much.

Unidentified Speaker: Do you know what started Billings in the first place, Willie?

WS: What's that?

US: What started it? How did they start Billings?

WS: Yes. The first town there was Coulson, on the Yellowstone River, and that was the end of the river travel for boats that came up that far on the Yellowstone. There was a company called the Coulson Packet Company that ran boats on the river up as far as Coulson. That is right on the edge of Billings now, as a matter of fact. They had a little town started there, and as a child, we were always shown the stump of an enormous big old cottonwood tree there by the river because that's where the boats come up to that old tree. But I can remember some little store buildings there with the false fronts on them and that sort of thing. Then the railroad, as it was built through Billings, they decided to have the town there on the railroad, where Billings is now located. So they started the town, and for quite some time, they had mule-drawn streetcars from Coulson to Billings. I can remember—always on New Year's Day—the Elk's Club used to have a big parade, and they always had one of those old streetcars in the parade.

But Billings was actually established in...I've wracked my brain—I had nothing to refer to—but I've wracked my brain for a little bit of a history, and I've written down some things here. But Billings was established as a town in '82 [1882], and it was named for Billings, who had been a former, oh, manager or something of that kind. It was said it was named after Frederick Billings, a former NP President. We were always told that he said if they would name the town for him that he would build a library, and he did and it was always called the Parmly Billings Library—I think the Parmly was his son, I think it was named after his son. It was a very nice building and a good library, and it's still there right by the tracks. A very good building, and it's used now as a museum. It was quite a fancy building, almost like a little castle with high roofs and a turret on one corner and all that sort of thing. It was built in grey stone, I remember.

Let's see if I can read this... [pauses] Well now, the town, apparently, when they established it there, they planned it—somebody planned it pretty carefully. There were avenues on either side of the tracks. One was Minnesota Avenue—that was on the south side of the tracks—and Montana Avenue was on the north side. All the avenues ran east and west that way, and all the streets ran north and south. It was all very logical, the way it was laid out and planned. See, it was kind of part of it, you know. It wasn't like Missoula that just grew up around a trading post. It was planned. So to this day, it's, I think, quite easy to find your way. Although there are some of the new divisions there that were put in all mangled, kind of. But by and large, it's a pretty well laid out town. It wasn't long before there began to be a difference between the North Side and the South Side. The south side was definitely on the wrong side of the tracks. [laughs] Because I can remember, when I was just a little child in school and all, there was quite a bit of feeling and rivalry between the North Side kids and the South Side kids.

US: I raided Dale Johnson's [University of Montana archivist] file and got a few pictures. Here's a photograph of Montana Avenue with the railroad station on the right in 1910. Pass it around so everyone can take a look at it. A little bit after Willie was talking about now, but not too long.

Gladys Peterson: Willie, could you tell us something about your father's ranch? Who ran it, what he raised, what he had on his ranch?

WS: Well, it was a hay ranch. He raised alfalfa. Because he was a sheep man, and the ranch was just strictly raising hay for the sheep. Oh, we had cattle too and horses. He dabbled into a lot of things, but he was primarily into sheep, and so we had these big alfalfa fields and raised this hay for the sheep. In the winter time, the sheep were seldom ever...oh, sometimes we'd have a few there on the ranch close to the house, but mostly they were quite a few miles away, out where he had leased grazing ground and the hay had to be hauled out in the wintertime to the sheep.

GP: There is a picture of your father in this book, isn't there?

WS: I don't think there is, is there?

GP: Well, there's a story about him, at least. I'll find that.

US: His name was Clanton (?)—

GP: Yeah, Clanton, right. [pauses] One of the Clanton boys. [laughs]

WS: Well, in case any of you...I don't suppose you would. [laughs] I was going to say if anyone recognized that man...It was always said in the family, and I've read it too, that there were Clanton brothers that rode with Jessie James.

US: Yeah.

[Background laughter]

GP: There's a story about her father in this book. You had a brother and two sisters?

WS: I had a brother and two sisters. There were four of us in the family.

GP: In your memoirs that I have here, you told about your relations with the Crow Indians.

WS: Yes, that was because of the sheep. My father leased grazing land from the Crows, and that way he knew quite a few of the Crow Indians. We had many business dealings with them.

GP: Well, some of them, that you witnessed, were not business either. How about that gift exchange that you saw at Pryor Gap. Could you tell—

WS: That was a big powwow that was held at Pryor Gap, which is, oh, I suppose 30 miles to the south of Billings in the Pryor Mountains. I don't know what it was all about, but I think it was

around 4th of July—I know it was in the summer time. They said there 7,000 Indians there from all over that part of Montana and the Dakotas and probably some from Wyoming. They had this big powwow, and they danced for seven days and seven nights there. They had made a kind of a U-shape up there with poles and poles across and pine boughs over the top to make a shelter. Then under that, that was the place where the visitors and the squaws and so forth sat, and that formed an arena for the dancing. It really was a big affair. One thing that they had—and I read since that it would never be permitted again—was a gift stand, where they have each other gifts. I never could make out who was giving to whom, but I did see squaws get up off the blanket which they were sitting on and take them out into the arena and give them away. The government wouldn't permit it again, because they gave away all their things and then they came to the agency with their hands out to be outfitted again. So they never permitted that again. But they did have a big time there. We drove over with the wagon and team—my mother and all the children, I guess, and my aunt. We had a tent, and people came with their tents and camped there and stayed there right with the Indians and looked at what was going on. There was a good deal going on at the time. [laughs] They took all the horses, I remember, that people drove over there, and their own horses too and took them out away from camp some place to graze. They had the Indians out there them so they wouldn't get away. Then every day they'd bring in the horses they were going to use in their races and so forth. They'd come whooping in with a great [unintelligible] of these horses every morning. They seemed to have it all planned, what was going to be done each day.

Oh, I was going to tell you about this gift business. The main gift was a spring wagon that had five dollar bills tied around the wheels and up and down the wheels. [laughs] One gift was a bicycle, and there was only one Indian there that could ride it. He rode it round and round, he was the hero of the day. [laughs] But the most interesting thing to me about that was what we saw in the way of Indian customs. One was the Crow Indian women, if they lost a child, if a child died, they'd cut off a joint of their finger. Oh, I've seen many, many squaws with their hands mutilated like that. You'd ask them how many papooses they'd had and they'd hold up their fingers for those alive, and then they'd point to the ones that had been cut off. So we saw part of that ceremony there. The squaws had cut their fingers—we didn't actually see them do the cutting—but they were standing over the campfire with their hands hanging down like this and the blood dripping into the fire and they were chanting. Another ceremony that my aunt saw was that some of the young braves that had to slash themselves across in kind of patterns, and the blood was running down. They too had a campfire and they were chanting. I don't know what that was all about, but I did know about this. I asked Mr. Malouf [anthropologist Carling Malouf] about this—the fingers—if the other Indians did it, and he said he had never heard of any other Indians in Montana that did that but the Crows.

At that time, Plenty Coups was there, and he had a great big teepee and inside the teepee was...running right around the teepee was a length of beautiful carpeting. It extended from the ground up as high as the width of the carpet. You know, carpets used to come in strips and they had to be sewn together, and this was a strip. His tent was real elegant, and I'm sure that made

it much warmer too, because it would keep out the draft. We went with my father to his tent, and were taken inside to see everything. I don't remember what else about that powwow.

GP: Tell about your Aunt Rena (?) [unintelligible] big tent.

[Overlapping conversation]

WS: [talking at the same time] Well, my Aunt Rena [unintelligible]. Oh, about the scalping?

GP: Right.

WS: Well, she lived with us a good many years until she married, and she was the kind who was always out and around, seeing everything that was going on, whether she was supposed to or not. [laughs] I think she was always hoping she was going to stumble on something terrible. [laughs] So at this time, at this pow-wow, there was a Mr. Tehnike (?) in Billings who made all the saddles, and he made beautiful saddles. Every cowboy just prized his Tehnike saddle, and he wouldn't have been caught dead on any other kind of a saddle but a Tehnike saddle. Well, Mr. Tehnike got ahold of a big round tent, kind of like a circus tent, and had it erected so if it rained they could dance under the tent. My father came out the day after we went, and we were crowded in our tent and he didn't bring another tent with him, so he got permission to sleep in this round tent. It was fine weather, and they weren't using it at all. So he just drove his wagon in there and the horses were taken away, and he and my brother were sleeping under a tarp on the ground by the wagon. It was getting towards dusk in the evening, and an Indian came through the tent. I suppose he wondered who that was, and he got down—and they had gone to sleep!—and he got down on his knees and was looking at them to see who it was. My aunt saw this. She was always out and around, seeing everything. She saw it, and she came charging in to the tent to get somebody to go out. She was sure they'd been scalped. [laughs] We stayed there, I suppose, about three days, and then we went back home. I don't think we stayed for the whole thing. But I always remembered it, and it made quite an impression on me. It really was something to see.

US: How old were you at that time?

WS: Pardon?

US: How old were you at that time?

WS: I don't know exactly, but I would guess that I was probably around 11 or 12 years old, something like that.

US: You mentioned that the Indians weren't allowed to take any weapons into town when they came in.

WS: No, no. they weren't allowed to go into town...to wear their guns into town. This one Indian used to always come by our ranch and leave his...he had a pair of pearl-handled revolvers, and he'd leave them with my mother. He was a brother, supposedly the brother of the chief, and I suppose it was his name. We always called him [unintelligible]. [laughs] So I suppose that was his name.

GP: Willie, you mentioned the other night that there were some trains that came through Billings with prominent people on them. William Jennings Bryan, and—

WS: Oh yes, well those were in political campaigns. Yes, his came through, and...I think Teddy Roosevelt did too. They'd come through and stop, making these whistle stops. Just like they do now. Always the trains, you know, they used to have this [unintelligible] on in the back...what'd they call it? Observation place. They'd be out there and the whole family so you could see them all, and they'd make their speeches from there. Oh, I remember, we used to get real excited during the campaigns. We had torchlight parades down the street, and everybody was there, with the torchlights and everything. We'd walk to the opera house, and then they'd have the speaking in the opera house during the campaigns.

GP: Didn't you say something about the schoolchildren, what they did? They'd chant?

WS: Oh, you mean during the war with Spain?

GP: Oh, that's what that was.

WS: Yeah. That was about 1898, wasn't it?

GP: I think so.

WS: I think it was. Yes, whenever there was a troop train, we were all marched down to the depot. We all had a little flag in our hands, and we had this song to sing, "hurrah, hurrah," something about the war with Spain. "Hurrah, hurrah, we'll break the tyrant's chains." [laughs] [unintelligible] while we were marching. [laughs] Yeah, we went down there many times and sang when those troop trains would come through.

GP: You said something too, about you remember when they were trying to establish Montana's capital. Some of the wheeling and dealing that went on about that.

WS: Yes, I remember that. Now, if I remember right, that was in 1903, wasn't it?

GP: I don't know.

WS: I kind of think it was 1903. I don't remember so much the talk about it, but I remember somebody had a pug dog—pugs dogs were common for pets in those days—and can remember

seeing this pug dog and attached to his collar was a blue ribbon and on it was written in gold, "Anaconda for Capital." [laughs] But Anaconda didn't get it.

I often wonder, not about the capital, but when all the institutions were parceled out over the state, Billings didn't get any. It's a wonder that I wouldn't remember talk about that, because Billings people were very aggressive, and...well, they always called them Billings Boosters, and they still do. They stand back of their town, and they get things done there. It's a wonder they didn't kick up an awful fuss about not getting anything. You see now, of course, Helena got the capital, Missoula got the university, Bozeman got the agricultural college, Dillon got the Normal [School], and Warm Springs got the insane asylum, Galen got the TB [tuberculosis] hospital—that might have come a little later, I don't know. Deer Lodge got the penitentiary. Even Miles City got the reform school. [laughs] Billings got nothing.

US: All the power, though, was up there in Butte and Anaconda and—

WS: Evidently. But still I'm surprised that I don't remember something about them making a fuss about...However, there was a man in Billings, a Mr. [unintelligible] who evidently thought he was going to push something through, and he got money enough to start building a penitentiary at Billings. He got up a big building made of stone and up two or three stories high—at least two stories high—had a tower on one corner, I remember, and rooms down below that we thought were dungeons. We used to go down there and play. It never was finished. It never was finished. It never was used. I guess he couldn't swing the money for it. But I have a feeling that he was determined he was going to get something there for Billings. That stood there empty for years then someone took it and finally made it into kind of a country club.

US: The college didn't come until later, Eastern Montana College?

WS: Oh no, oh no. I've forgotten just when that was started. To me, it's a comparatively new thing. But you know how they're pushing to get it made into a university, and they'll get it. I'd be willing to bet on it. Those Billings people will get that. I believe. They've always been working together and back of their town. Well, I always think of the time when, here in Missoula, the Florence Hotel burned. That hole was there with a big fence around it for at least two years, or maybe three, before they finally got together and decided what they were going to do and rebuilt. Well now, at practically the same time, the Northern Hotel in Billings burned, and in six months they were building it, rebuilding it. I always thought that so typical of the two towns. Missoula, they just [unintelligible] over every issue. I never felt that Missoula as a town stood back the University as much as it should. Billings, when they got Eastern, they were so proud of it and believe me, they're back of it, all the way.

GP: Do any names stand out in your mind of civic leaders in Billings? Early civic leaders? You don't hear too many individual names, do you?

WS: Well, those mentioned in that book are a pretty good example. They're pretty good.

US: The Bair Ranch, up at...well, I'll say Two Dot--Martinsdale. Now, that chap had quite a bit of business dealings and—

WS: Well they lived in Billings originally—Charlie Bair. They had two daughters. Yes, they lived in Billings and had a red brick house there, I remember. He got started in the sheep business, and now, they still own the...I don't know when they moved and got that ranch out there, because they had ranches closer to Billings. But anyway, they still have that ranch, and the two daughters still live on it. Neither one married, I'm told, and that they're gotten to be rather peculiar women and live very much to themselves.

US: They were conservationists for a long, long time. They used to pick up bottles along that highway between Harlowton and Hot Springs.

WS: They did? Well, that does sound like what I've heard of them. But believe me, when they come to Billings to do their banking, if they don't get there during banking hours, the bank is opened for them.

[Laughter]

WS: Right to this day.

US: [unintelligible] ranch building out there.

WS: Is that so? I've never been there before. But I remember the family very well.

US: He came off the railroads. He was an old railroad man to begin with.

WS: He was supposed to have gotten his start in a rather shady manner. I've forgotten now how it was, I've forgotten the details. [pauses] He was a Jew, and he knew how to work things and got his start, so I just can't...it's just in my mind faintly, but I don't remember the details. They lived there in Billings for quite a number of years, really. I've heard the story about the daughters through my nieces that live in Billings, and they have seen them there when they would come into the bank and they would open the bank after hours for them, so they could do their banking and so forth. He made a great deal of money, I think.

GP: Willie, you've mentioned the Chinese population in Billings.

WS: Yes, there were always lots of Chinese in Billings—Chinese men. I never saw a Chinese woman or a child, just Chinese men. I've been thinking about whatever brought them there, and I wondered if they had come in originally to work on the railroad, perhaps. Because there's no mining around there, like there is some places where the Chinese came in. So I suppose that

they had come in originally working on the railroad. There was really quite a colony of them, and they had stores with Chinese things in. They had laundries. They had restaurants and things like that. That was about what they had in the way of their business. Oh, and then many of them hired out as cooks. We always had a Chinese cook on our ranch in the summertime. Especially during the haying season, we always had a Chinese cook. Lots of Chinese worked for us.

There was this one Chinese man who came to town, his name was Tom Kwong (?), and he came to our church. I belonged to a Baptist church, by the way I was the first person to be baptized in the Baptist church in Billings. I was baptized in the Yellowstone River. Well, Tom Kwong came to our church. He was a Baptist and a very fine man. Then he soon began bringing other Chinese men to church with him. So finally they got the idea that they wanted to have a little school. A lot of them wanted to learn to read and write. So they asked our church people if they would teach them, and we said we would. They rented the room on the South Side. Most of their establishments were on the South Side. They rented this room and we went there in the evenings and taught them. I think maybe two or three evenings a week, all summer long. They bought a little organ, so I played for them. They learned to sing hymns, and they were very appreciative. They really were.

GP: How about that Chinese cook you had that borrowed the horse?

WS: Oh, well this one we had that I always remember especially—he's the only one I remember by name, and that was because he said his name was Henry Constantine. [laughs] I don't know where he got the name, but he was a Catholic. He was the only Chinese I ever knew that was a Catholic, but he belonged to the Catholic church. So he would want a horse every once in a while to ride to town to go to mass. The men would always give him a frisky horse, hoping that they'd have some fun, but he managed to stay on the horses all right. He'd get on the horse and ride to mass and then come back again. He'd say, "Oh, feel he good," after he went to mass. [laughs]

GP: You said that they had a Chinese New Year's celebration over there too.

WS: Yes, they always had on their New Year's. They always celebrated in a big way. At all their establishments, they had Chinese candy and lychee nuts to give away, and all the kids in town, we just made the rounds with our hands out and got candy and nuts at every place. That was part of their New Year's celebration.

US: They shoot firecrackers off too?

WS: Oh, they shot off firecrackers and everything. Yes, it was a big time, big time.

GP: Were they the ones that gave the watch to your sister?

WS: No.

GP: Who was that?

WS: No, that was Mr. Lostead (?), who had a clothing store right on Montana Avenue, almost across the street from where this library was built. During the Christmas week, every year, he would give candy—a little sack of candy and nuts—to all the children. All the children of town, I think, came there. Then he'd have one good gift, something valuable. I don't remember how it was chosen, but one year it was a beautiful watch and my younger sister got the watch. We were so pleased about it. But this Mr. Lostead, he was one of the leaders in Billings. A very fine man, very fine.

GP: I remember, when I read the book *Centennial* about the English people who came to Colorado, and I was interested to see that you mentioned some English people who bought property around Billings.

WS: Yes. Well, this one family did. Maybe others, but I just remember them, because they bought some of our land. Then there were a lot of Englishmen there during the Boer War. They bought a lot of horses from...we had a lot of horses at that time too, I remember, but they bought lots of the horses to ship for the soldiers in the war. A great many of them were brought in to—we had a very big corral—and a great many of them were brought into the corral to be broken. The way they broke those horses for these English soldiers was to rope a horse and wind the rope around the snubbing post in the center of the corral and keep pulling on it, tightening it, until they choked the horse until he was ready to fall. Then they'd put a bridle on him and a saddle, and somebody would get up on him. He'd stagger a few steps, and they'd get off, and that horse was ready. I often wondered what those English soldiers thought when they tried to ride those horses.

GP: Willie, I had forgotten about where that house was, where they had that unusual quilting arrangement.

WS: Oh, that was in Livingston.

GP: That's about your trip to Yellowstone. You have to tell about your trip to Yellowstone.

WS: Well, we had two trips to the park with horses and wagons, and this is the first trip to the park. We got to Livingston. It was 118 miles from Billings, I remember. Took us, of course, several days. Camping at night, every night, putting up a tent and cooking over a campfire. Well, we got to Livingston, there was this family that had been old friends of my mother and aunt in Arkansas. Her name was Meiser (?), and we stopped with them for a day or two. As I said in this thing that I wrote—the thing I remember was the arrangement they had for quilting. Over the dining room table, they had a wooden frame with a quilt stretched out on it, and ropes at each four corners and it went up to a pulley arrangement up in the ceiling. When they

didn't want to quilt, it was pulled up all of the way to the ceiling. If anybody wanted to quilt, they got it down and it went on the table. Real neat arrangement. I had never seen that before. Or since, as a matter of fact.

GP: You have to tell about the eating along the way. One night her brother shot a rabbit?

WS: Yeah, he shot a rabbit. That was the night we had such a good supper with the stewed rabbit and dumplings.

GP: Can you imagine that, catching and cooking a rabbit?

US: You went in down through Gardiner, I guess, that way?

WS: Pardon?

US: Went in down through Gardiner to the park?

WS: Yes, yes.

US: Did you go all the way to Old Faithful?

WS: Oh yes. On that first trip we went as far as the lake. Then we had to turn back, because we'd gotten a late start out of Billings, and they said that we'd better not go any farther, there was probably snow up ahead. So we turned around and came back. But the next time, we made the complete loop, in at Gardiner and out Gardiner, clear around. [unintelligible].

US: How long did that trip take you?

WS: It took us a month.

GP: A month, from Billings.

WS: Took about a week going and a week coming and about two weeks in the park.

US: You rode horseback most of the way, I guess.

WS: Yes.

GP: Sidesaddle, too. She and her sister rode sidesaddle, because your mother said you were too old to ride bareback.

WS: At that time, we were supposed to be ladies and ride sidesaddle. However, the second trip, which was a year or two later, by that time, well we didn't have women's lib [liberation], but at least we were on the way, I guess. We were back riding astride again by that time.

US: Was there lots of wildlife?

WS: Oh, yes.

US: You almost lost your horses on the one trip there, didn't you?

WS: Yes, that was when we were coming home, the last night out. The horses were picketed out, and I suppose they knew they were close to home. All but one pulled up the pickets and got away. We got up in the morning, there was nothing left but my mother's driving mare, which had never had...she'd never had a saddle on her. My mother was not a rider. She never did ride horseback. She was a very large woman. But she threw a sidesaddle on Queenie and got on somehow, took off after the horses and rounded them up and brought them back. She was a real pioneer. My father wasn't along on these trips. He couldn't be bothered.

US: Were there hotels in the park?

WS: Yes, there were hotels. Yes, there were. Quite large ones, too. Of course, at that time, that was before cars. They had the coaches that went through the park and different kinds of wagons and carriages and things like that. But they had these great big coaches thought that were, oh, they were so elegant. I don't know how many people they held. The seats were wide enough to hold at least four people sitting side by each. They kind of came up in the front and up in the back somehow. Right up in the back there, up higher than anybody else, there was a little seat would hold one or two people. Oh, how I wished I could ride up in that. But they'd start off—I don't know how many horses were hitched to them—they'd start off with a great flourish from the hotel with all these tourists and [unintelligible]. Make a big thing of it.

GP: Were there a lot of bears, more bears around?

WS: No. No. I saw more bear in the park many, many years later than I did then. Yes, I did. But there were some. There were some, but not like there were later on. But we saw elk, and I think we saw some moose and deer and the like of that.

GP: I'd like to go back to those English neighbors of yours just briefly, because I think you should tell about those pancakes.

WS: [laughs] the pancakes. Well, this English family, a man and his wife, bought some land for us and they had a ranch out there. They were living there. In fact, they running it as a ranch. A couple came over from England, friends of theirs, to visit them. The first morning they were there, they had pancakes for breakfast. This couple from England looked at them and left them

alone. Finally the man took a bite out of one, and maybe he was so hungry or maybe he found his courage, I don't know, he took a bite. He turned to his wife and he said, "Well try one, my dear. They're not as nasty as they look."

[Laughter]

US: You know, there was one famous citizen of Billings that you haven't mentioned yet. She had a mesa named after her? Maybe you can tell a little bit about her.

WS: Had what named after her?

US: A mesa named after her.

GP: A mesa. Mesa.

WS: Oh, you mean Calamity Jane?

US: Calamity Jane, yeah. How about Calamity Jane?

WS: Now, to find out more about Calamity Jane from that book than I ever knew. Now, I grew up knowing there was a Calamity Jane, but never to my knowledge was she ever that near Billings. But I'm sure it's true, because he goes into quite detail about it. About her coming into town. But I never knew she lived that close to Billings, I always knew about Calamity Jane just like I knew about Liver-Eating Johnson and people like that, but I didn't know about Calamity, that she ever lived that close to Billings.

GP: That just wasn't Hollywood. That was really around then, that story about him.

WS: Who's that?

GP: Liver-Eating Johnson.

WS: Oh. This is supposed to be true. I read about it just a few days ago in a book Mr. Merriam [H.G. Merriam] edited some years ago, called *Out West*. Did any of you ever read that? It's most interesting. It's a lot of stories about pioneers and [unintelligible] everyday in Montana, and it's most interesting reading. And that talks about Liver-Eating Johnson. He was a man who hated the Indians, and they always had said—this is the way I remember it—that he'd always said that if he'd ever gotten in trouble with an Indian, that he'd cut his liver out. Well, he did get in trouble, and they said that, while the Indian was still alive, he did cut out his liver and he was supposed to have eaten some of it. But in Mr. Merriam's book, whoever tells the story said that he didn't actually eat it, but he did hold it up to his mouth and the Indians thought he took a bite. But we grew up knowing about all those characters. As I say, I never knew that Calamity Jane was that close to Billings.

US: You have an interesting story about making jelly, making your own glasses at the ranch.

WS: Yes. I have a book—I should have brought that—that was sent to me by a man [unintelligible] in Colorado, who were telling about pioneer things. It says there about making jelly glasses out of whiskey bottles. But I can remember helping my mother make jelly glasses out of beer bottles, which seemed to me much more practical. Better shape, you know. We would get the beer bottles out around the barn and the bunkhouse—there were always plenty around—and we'd tie a string around them about halfway up. Oh, dip the string in kerosene, soak it in kerosene, tie it around about halfway up, set it on fire with a match. When it had burned around, we'd drop it in a tub of cold water. It would break right there. It would make a little, neat jelly glass. It was sharp around the cut, had to be a little careful about that. But it was fine. We also made the jelly out of the wild fruits there. We had chokecherries, and we had buffaloberries or bullberries—chaparral is another name for it, I guess—and wild plums. That was the wild fruit around Billings that we used to gather and make jelly of.

GP: Didn't you say you got some of the plums from an Indian?

WS: The what?

GP: The plums, some of the plums, did they come an Indian? Did you mention that?

WS: Indians used to gather the wild plums and bring them into town and sell them. But we had some ranches out south of Billings too, and one of the coulees there, there were lovely plums that we had of our own. Oh, they did make the most delicious jam. That was good. Awfully good.

GP: One thing that we forgot to mention when we were talking about your trip to Yellowstone was taking the pictures. The camera.

WS: Oh yes, my mother got a camera before the first Yellowstone trip. It was a great big box affair, and then a case with a strap to go over her shoulder. And I think it was glass plates, and they had to be developed in these cans with chemicals of different kinds. She took quite a few pictures. I don't know whatever became of them. I don't know that there's any of them around in some of our possessions in Billings or not. I don't remember much about the results. But I thought at the time that it looked to me like an awful chore to monkey around with that camera and those glass plates.

US: Did she take the glass plates someplace to get them developed?

WS: No, I think she brought them all back home with her to develop.

US: Then she did it herself?

WS: She developed them herself, yes. I can remember these big pans she had, or trays, full of these chemicals. Then I remember years afterwards that there were some that didn't...still around, and my sister and I scraped all the stuff off—and it come off kind of in flakes—and used that glass to frame pictures.

GP: Did she have the camera on a tripod when she took those pictures?

WS: No, I don't remember that. [unintelligible].

US: You know, a lot of the towns in Montana are there because of the Ku Klux Klan organization. Was there any activity like that in Billings?

WS: Not when I was growing up, but one time in Billings—and this was after I was married, I was married in 1911, this was after I was married and not living there anymore—they had, for some reason, they had a big meeting up on the Rimrocks up where the airport is now. They had an enormous fiery cross up there, and they really had a big celebration of some kind up there. They said that the nuns in the Catholic church, or the Catholic hospital, which was down just below this, were all terribly frightened. They were all down on their knees praying. But nothing bad ever came of it. That's all I remember, actually, of any Ku Klux Klan's affairs in Billings. That's all I remember.

I remember, many years afterwards—this has nothing to do with Montana history—but when our boys were, oh, six, seven years old, we lived over on [unintelligible] Street, and Fred Reedy (?), who is now Father Reedy in the Catholic church, was about their age—they were very close playmates—and they used to play out in our yard all the time. Right across the alley there was a house—this was before they had all the buildings at St. Anthony's—and there was a house where the priests lived. Well these kids, their favorite play was fiery cross. They'd make this little cross with sticks and tie some rags around it and pour some kerosene on it and prance around, and Fred always insisted on carrying the cross. He was then one of their altar boys. [laughs] I always wished they'd look out and see their altar boy. [laughs]

[Laughter]

US: What's located on the property where your ranch was now? Do you know?

WS: Oh, houses. Houses, houses. The Rocky Mountain College started out...there was a polytechnic school there first, and that was on part of what had been some of our ranch land. Oh no, there's houses all over the place.

GP: You told about cutting ice in the Yellowstone River.

WS: Yes, the ice for Billings was cut in the river—only water we had around there—and they cut it with these big saws and haul it up. There was a great big icehouse in Billings, and they'd fill that icehouse with these blocks of ice. Then lots of people had their own icehouses. We had an icehouse, and it was always filled every winter with these blocks of ice packed in sawdust, so we had our own ice all summer. They'd bring it up always on the bobsled and bring it up from the river and bring it up to our house too. Well, we had our own bobsled for that matter. We always loved to run along by the bobsled and hop on and off. [laughs] We had a lot of fun at that time. But it was nice to have the ice.

US: Does it keep all summer?

WS: Oh yes, yes. Every day we'd go down and dig out another piece of ice and put them in the icebox and so on. Then when the watermelons were ripe, every day some would be picked and put in there and chilled until the evening, and then we'd eat some watermelon. They are beautiful melons still grown around Billings. Very fine.

GP: How about that cutter that was heated in the winter?

WS: Oh, in the wintertime—

GP: Tell them how you heated your feet.

WS: We had this cutter...and there's one at the museum now, you know, and there's also a surrey out there, or was the last time I was out there. But we had beautiful cutters. They were really elegant, the way they were cut with curves and all and beautifully shaped and with scenes painted on them. My mother would put bricks in the oven. Of course we had a coal stove, a range, you know. A Majestic range, way back when they had them. There was a time when I thought there wasn't any other kind of cook stove but a Majestic range. [laughs] Well, anyway, and she'd heat the bricks in that, and she had a piece of carpeting she'd wrap around it and put it for our feet, keep our feet warm, and robes over it. This Queenie—this driving mare of hers—we always liked to drive her to the cutter [unintelligible]. She was a very high spirited animal, and she would trot and those sleigh bells would just have a kind of a cadence to them. She would just trot to beat the bells. She just loved it, you could tell. That was lots of fun to ride.

Then we would ride on the hay wagons. They put those on runners in the wintertime too. Was a lot of fun to ride on those, I remember. Every once in a while, some group in town would want to have a hay ride for a party and ride around for a while, and then they'd go to somebody's house and have something to eat. Then in the summertime, they would like to have the hayride with the wheels—on the regular wheels too. It was quite a thing. I remember one time, some group wanted to rent...asked my brother if he would drive a hay wagon, so they could have a hay ride. Well, his friend, who lived up the road a ways, they decided they were going to drive four horses. They conceived the idea that they'd hook them up, but each one

would drive his own team. Didn't work very well, I'll say right away. [laughs] Each one said the other one couldn't hold his horses. [laughs]

US: Were they raising sugar beets around Billings when you were there? How did that get started?

WS: Yes. Well, the sugar beet industry started—I wouldn't know, actually—but it must have been around, I would guess, oh, around 1904, 1905, or '06. Somewhere in there. The first factory was in Billings. It was the big one. It's still running, and as far as I know it's the only one left in this state now. Anyway, they came in, and of course they had to educate the people into raising sugar beets. That was the brand new thing that nobody knew anything about. They persuaded some of the ranchers to plow up some of their alfalfa fields and plant them in beets. My father did some. He had some beets, I remember. It proved to be very, very good ground for beets, because alfalfa does enrich the soil. It seems to me, I remember something about saying that alfalfa is a nitrogen-fixing plant that enriches the soil. Anyway, they raised prize beets, and every year the biggest beets would be on display. I remember once our field had the biggest beet, and it was on a window in one of the stored downtown. [laughs]

But they built up the industry, and they put the big ones. It was good for the economy, of course, but we finally lived to see the time when we rather regretted it, because of the foreign labor that was brought in. First they brought in Russians, and the men and women worked in the fields. When beets are planted—after they come up from little seedlings—they have to be thinned. They're too close together. That is what they call stooped labor. They did it with little hoes—with just a handle in the hoe about so long—and they had to stoop over to do it. The Russians were the first ones that were brought in. They knew about beets. They had been raising beets. But they were unpleasant people, and they had lots of trouble with them. Then finally they brought in the Mexican labor. They were just like the Mexicans that you read about nowadays, the migrant laborers. But they weren't all migrants because they'd settled in Billings, and they had quite a colony around the sugar factory, which was on the South Side of town. They had their own church and everything, the Mexicans, they got very strong there. They didn't seem to have any trouble with them, particularly, but they had lots of trouble with those Russians. We just got so we just hated them. [laughs]

US: Is there any Russian group over there now?

WS: I really don't know. I don't know. Of course, a lot of people stopped raising beets. They got tired of it, and they didn't always like the deal they got from the sugar company. A lot of the people gave it up finally. But oh, for many years...oh, in the fall of the year, they were just trainload after trainload of beets that went out. They came in from out around the sugar factory, you know. Awful lot of beets raised around there. It's the same way with the wool from the sheep. There were an awful lot of sheep raised around Billings, and the wool that was shipped out of there, it was said that—and I've read it more than once—that more wool was shipped out of Billings than any place in the world. The wool buyers would come in around June

and the early part of July and buy up the wool, and that was a big time, I tell you. They would be there over the 4th of July, and they would put on a 4th of July celebration for the town of Billings. The old Grand Hotel had a porch across the front, and it was up several feet above the sidewalks. They had steps down clear across the porch, so it made a lot of steps there. Well, these wool buyers would buy a lot of 4th of July fireworks and set them off on these steps. The whole town would be there to ooh and aah. It was really quite a—

[Break in audio]

Note: From this point on, the background noise increases, making it more difficult to hear the speakers.

WS: —sidewalks, and they had steps down clear across the porch, so it made a lot of steps there. Well, these wool buyers would buy a lot of 4th of July fireworks and set them off on these steps. And the whole town would be there to ooh and aah. It was really quite a time.

US: The Grand Hotel is now the General Custer, isn't it? That right?

WS: Yes.

US: That was built a long time ago, when was that?

WS: I don't really know. I was quite disgusted when I found out they changed the name.
[laughs]

US: Was there any trouble between the sheep men and the cattle men?

WS: Oh, some, yeah. Some.

US: You always hear it. Maybe that's why Billings never got anything—Montana was cattle country [unintelligible].

WS: It was the cattle men that hated the sheep men more than the sheep men hated the cattle men. Because the sheep ate the grass down so close that the cattle couldn't eat it. The sheep men could feed their sheep where the cattle men could not feed their cattle, and that caused a good deal of feeling about it.

US: How many sheep did your father have?

WS: Oh, I really don't know. I can remember selling bands of 2,000 and the like of that.

US: Is that all? [laughs]

US: How long did he maintain his ranch there?

WS: Pardon?

US: How long did your father maintain his ranch?

WS: Well, we sold the last of it, or my mother did...In fact, the last of it—the 40 acres where our house was—was platted and sold as town lots in...they started selling that in about 1914.

US: Did he have a summer range up on the mesa or did—

WS: No, we had these ranches south of Billings toward Pryor. As I said, we had that, and then we leased land from the Crow Indians. They had lots of land around there. It was right at the edge of the reservation. So that's where he always had his sheep.

You might be interested in the sheep camp wagons that we had for the sheep herders. It was a regular wagon, and it was built up and covered over with canvas, so it was a permanent thing. He lived right in that all the time. It was very handy. When the sheep had to be moved, the wagon would move and everything was there. There was a bed built across the end of it, and then the other end there was a little cookstove and that was for heat too, if they were cold. And cupboards for dishes and things. I think it was a forerunner of the mobile home. [laughs] Sometimes they'd bring one in and leave it at the home ranch. When they'd bring one in and leave it for a while, my sister and I used to use it for a play house. [laughs]

US: You mentioned in your write-up, outfitting the sheep herders' wagons with supplies? One thing you said, you always had plenty of Arbuckle and [unintelligible] coffee. I gather Arbuckle's chewing tobacco.

WS: Yes, yes, I remember that when every buckboard would be loaded with food to take out to the sheep herders. Those were the brands of coffee then and gum that came with it. [laughs] Of course, that coffee, you understand, was in the coffee beans. You grind your own coffee then.

GP: Willie, do you remember that land was hard to get? Were people acquiring it pretty fast? The other thing I'm wondering about is, do you have any memories of homesteaders who didn't make it and went elsewhere—went back East?

WS: Yes. Well, I know some that sold out and left, yes. In fact, the ranches we had south of Billings were claims. My father couldn't, for some reason, take a claim then. He had too much land of his own. I don't remember what the ruling was. But my brother had one, my sister had one, and the shepherders would file for us and we'd pay them a certain amount.

GP: It wasn't hard to get land then?

WS: Not then, it wasn't. A little later, then a great many people came. The homesteaders came out in a big way, and they took up a lot of the claims around. Of course, we were there first, we had the choice ones. Around the creek. But I remember, during the war, when the price of wheat was so high, a lot of them really cashed in. Wheat was selling for around a dollar 80 cents a bushel then, and they had good crops. They thought they had it made, but that didn't keep up. A lot of them finally gave up and left then. It was a pity, in many cases, where they left the wheat piled up, the bunch grass, and all. Would have been better to leave it alone.

US: Do you remember the droughts of 1919? 1920?

WS: The droughts? No, I don't remember much about that. I wasn't living there then, and I don't remember too much. The droughts never bothered us, because we had these irrigated ranches, you see, in the Yellowstone Valley. That was an interesting thing in the Yellowstone Valley. They put in a ditch, what we always called the Big Ditch, and I don't know when it was put in. It was taken out of the Yellowstone River between Laurel and Park City and brought clear down the Yellowstone Valley and ended right at the bluffs there at the east end of town. We had irrigation for all these...Well, you had to have it for alfalfa. So the droughts didn't bother us, particularly. As I say, I was married and gone by that time. I don't remember about that particular...oh, I still remember droughts were bad times, all right.

US: Did you ever hear of a man named Suddith (?)? S-U-D-D...Suddith?

WS: No, no.

US: From Fairfield Farms?

WS: Was that a field?

US: Fairfield Farms.

WS: Was that near Billings?

US: Yes.

WS: No, I don't remember.

GP: Willie, you came here into Missoula in 1907 to go to school. You were a freshman here in 1907?

WS: Yes, yes.

GP: Could you tell us what Missoula was like, and what the university was like in 1907?

WS: Well, Missoula was a nice little town in 1907, awfully nice place. There was nothing out on the south side. Well, I remember, when we built in the 600 block on Beckwith in 1925, there wasn't a thing between us and Pattee Canyon. Not a thing. So in 1907, there wasn't an awful lot on the south side. As a matter of fact, I remember that, in those days, there was a fence around the campus—a very fancy iron metal fence—and some of that fence today is around the Randall (?) Apartments. The whole campus. And they had the gate, you see, to go in at the head of the oval. At a corner, about where the theatre is now, that was just about there was the corner, and they had stiles to get over the fence—steps to go over. From there into town—it just took off across the prairie—they laid down planks, side by each, for sidewalk effect. It's just about where the Episcopal Church is now. Just went straight in there. We always walked on that to go to town.

US: They didn't have the streetcars in those days?

WS: No. The streetcars came in 1910. Oh, I remember the first streetcar. Oh, it was wonderful. [laughs] Before that, we walked. Students would walk in those days. They don't know how now.

GP: She was telling us about how they made this...They went up Pattee Canyon and down Deer Creek in one day.

US: You told us that one night when we were talking.

WS: Yes, we did. They really walked.

US: Why did you come to the university? Why didn't you go to Bozeman?

WS: Oh, the feeling was very bitter then! That was a cow college.

US: You were a rancher, raised on a ranch!

WS: I know, but I wasn't about to go to that place.

US: Didn't they ever [unintelligible] home economics program there for women [unintelligible] land grant school?

WS: No. They didn't have it then.

US: They didn't have it then?

WS: No. No, no. I don't know. We never considered it as a university.

US: How many students were here when you came?

WS: Well, I don't know exactly, but I think not more than 200 or so. We lived in the dormitory—had a girls' dormitory. It's still there on the campus. It's used as a classroom now.

US: Is it the math building?

WS: I don't know what's in it. It was the first building—

US: First one on the right?

WS: —on the right, as you're going around the Oval, yes. That was the girls' dormitory. It was called Women's Hall [now the Math Building]. About 60—it held about 60. The Dean of Women lived there and had charge of it, and that's where we lived when I went to school at that time.

US: So then there was the Science Hall and Main Hall and what else?

WS: Science Hall and Main Hall and the gymnasium.

US: The women's gym, the old gym.

WS: Well, it was [unintelligible], but it's been torn down now.

US: Yes, a frame building.

WS: Yeah. A wooden building. Then while I was on the campus, the building was built that is, I think now, Psychology—around the Oval.

US: That was it?

WS: That was it. That was it. In those days, of course, they had awfully strict rules. Doors were locked in the dormitories at 9:00. Lights were out at 10:00, and if we wanted to go to the library and study after dinner we had to have permission. They really had rules and regulations. I always remember the convocations we had. Every Thursday morning, we had convocation in the Main Hall, you know, the oval room in there with the seats and all. All the faculty sat on the platform, and we had a regular service with hymns, and I think we always did the Lord's Prayer, and I think a chapter was read from the bible. Then they'd have a speaker of some kind, or maybe they have a lot of information to give the students. The students had to come. They took their attendance! Had to come. Lots of people from town used to come out. They enjoyed those convocations.

GP: How often did they have them?

WS: Every week!

US: Were there any women in the school at that time?

WS: Well, yes, quite a few. I don't know what the proportion would have been, but yes, there were. Quite a few.

US: Were there any women on the faculty other than the Dean of Women?

WS: Yes, yes. Miss [Eloise] Knowles was on the faculty, and Miss [Cynthia Elizabeth] Reiley taught mathematics. Miss Knowles taught art, and Miss [Frances] Corbin taught literature. Yes, there were at least three women that I can think of. The Dean of Women taught some classes too.

US: Then they had dormitories named for them.

WS: Yes! Yes!

GP: What kind of degrees were the women getting? I know yours was in biology. Did they study a variety of subjects?

WS: Yes. They majored in literature, and many majored principally to be teachers. I went two years, then I got married. That's why by the time I finally finished up and got my degree, I was married and had two children. [laughs]

GP: You were a women's libber.

US: Do you remember what the tuition was when you first got here?

WS: Well, I remember that, I think, our board and room at the dormitory was either 22 or 25 dollars a month. I remember that. I don't know what the tuition was. I didn't have to pay any. I had a scholarship from my high school and I didn't have to pay any. I don't remember about that.

GP: Do any of you have any more questions?

US: I'm curious about your earlier schooling.

WS: Pardon?

US: Your earlier schooling.

WS: Well, I went to school in Billings. Went to the public school, and started when I was five. I wasn't supposed to, but my older brother and my older sister, and my brother were going and I

raised so much trouble in the family that they let me go. [laughs] I wasn't going to be left out. So I went, and they said that I never missed a day that first year. [laughs]

US: Did you have to be taken, or were you close enough to walk?

WS: Well, we walked some of the time, and we were taken some of the time.

US: What size was it?

WS: Pardon?

US: What size was it? Size was the school? How many children?

WS: I really don't know. I wouldn't know how to guess. But they had right up through high school, and our room was pretty full. There must have been at least 25 in our room, as I remember, the first room. But the main thing that I remember about going to grade school was that we had to carry our lunch, because we lived on a ranch. We were country kids. As a matter of fact, we were closer to the school than any other kids way over on the South Side. But we were from the country, so we had to carry a lunch. In those days, the school rooms were heated with a stove in each room, and we left our wraps out in the hall [unintelligible] out there, we left our lunches out there. In the winter time, our lunches would be frozen. I'm still mad that those teachers didn't have sense enough to tell us to bring our lunches in.

[Laughter]

US: How many grades were there in one room?

WS: Well, now, I can't remember more than one grade in a room. I can't remember more than that. Billings always had awfully good schools, and we had such a good—

US: And there were a lot of students apparently.

WS: Yes. In our high school, we had credits, I had credits enough from my high school that were recognized at the University so I dropped out for one semester. That's pretty good in those days at a high school like that. They've always had good schools in Billings. Billings High School is not a county high school. It's a city high school. It's the Billings High School. Of course, they have two high schools now, besides the Catholic schools.

US: My aunt used to teach in Billings in 1910.

WS: In 1910? Is that right? Well, I was there in 1910. I mean, in the summertime.

US: She had just graduated from high school in Colorado and got the job in Billings. So she was very young.

WS: Well, I finished high school in 1907. By that time, of course, I didn't know any of the high school teachers.

US: Did you ever get out to Indian caves or Pictograph Caves?

WS: No, I never heard tell of them. I never heard tell of them until long after I was married. Never heard a word about them. I don't think that anybody knew about them. I really don't. Because I never heard of them at all.

US: I researched a book for [unintelligible] 1917, I think it was, and it was very new then. This archaeologist, who made the first study, and was talking about it being overlooked for so many years. [unintelligible].

WS: Yeah. To this day I haven't seen them. Someday if I go to Billings maybe I'll manage to see them.

US: They're very interesting.

GP: Well, are we wearing you out Willie?

WS: No, no, I'm fine.

US: We've got a photograph here of the Bonner Mill in 1917 with the Margaret Hotel there. You remember that, don't you?

WS: Yes, I remember that. I went there for Sunday dinner once. It was a lovely old hotel. Oh, I felt so badly when they tore it down. Felt really sorry.

US: It wasn't too many years ago was it?

GP: When they tore it down? '57.

WS: It wasn't hurting a thing. I don't know why they tore it down.

GP: They probably needed the land.

WS: Well they haven't done anything with it. Got an old Shay engine there, a few things like that.

GP: They must be using that land for that big building—

US: Parking lot or something.

GP: No, there is a big building behind that Shay engine.

US: Right alongside of it—

US: There is an office down in there somewhere.

WS: Well, they could have built it some other place. There was a great big yard around. They could have used some of the land without tearing the hotel down.

GP: You said you used to walk out there, didn't you?

WS: Yeah. When they put the streetcars in, they put a streetcar to Bonner. We'd walk to Bonner on the streetcar tracks, and then we'd ride back on the streetcar. We thought that was fun. We'd go there and buy some things to eat and sit on the banks of the Blackfoot River and eat. [laughs] And we'd come back on the streetcar.

US: Did the car line run to the hotel? Or where did it go?

WS: I just can't remember whether it went clear up there to that turnaround or not. I expect it probably did. I expect it probably did. [unintelligible].

US: Where else? You could go out to Orchard Homes?

WS: No.

US: You could go to Fort Missoula.

US: Fort Missoula on the streetcar.

GP: Same car.

US: When did Lubrecht come to Bonner?

WS: I really don't know, Melvin. About as far back as I knew much about it, he was there.

US: We used to have some pictures of that mill area about the time he was [unintelligible]. Picture of the big old bull trout that he caught out there at the mill. It wasn't quite as long as he was tall, but it must have been close to three and a half feet long. But that was an amusing picture to me [unintelligible].

GP: Our school is acquiring and reproducing about 300 more pictures of that area [unintelligible] oldtimers this year. They had [unintelligible] money from the book, I guess, and the Lions Club is matching it—150 dollars. So they had 300 more pictures at a dollar a picture.

US: Willie? What was the faculty social life like at that time? [unintelligible].

WS: You mean, when I was a student?

US: Was it very formal?

WS: Yes, yes quite formal. Every year in the fall soon after school started, they had a reception, and all the town was invited. It was in honor of any new faculty people, and the faculty all stood in line and they were all dressed in formal clothes. Very formal, yes. Yes, they had that. On Charter Day—they always made a big thing of Charter Day—would have a speaker in the morning, at the convocation hall, then there would be a luncheon for the dignitaries. Then in the afternoon in the dormitory, all the rooms had to be all spic and span and opened up, and at least half of Missoula would come out there and look at every room. [laughs]

US: Was there a men's dorm too?

WS: No. No.

US: So the men students had to commute quite a long ways across the—

WS: Oh yes, they found rooms wherever they could, and sometimes a group would get together and rent a house.

US: Were there fraternities?

WS: Yes, there were. There were two fraternities, and they had houses but they didn't own them. They just rented big houses wherever they could. Then there were two sororities then, and while I was in school, a third sorority was formed. There too for quite a few years, they didn't own their houses, they just rented the big houses up and down University Avenue and around and about like that. Of course, that gave a place for boys, and girls too, to live. Helped out the situation.

GP: I think we've probably wore you out.

US: [talking at same time] —that you might want to look at. This one here is a sketch of one of the first ranches in this area. The Latimer Ranch, which was out near the confluence of the Bitterroot and the Clark Fork. That came out of Dale Johnson's files. Then this other one is the first schoolhouse that was built up in the Flathead in 1884. Log one-room, obviously, schoolhouse.

GP: We might get a copy of that.

US: This is a copy of the original.

GP: I know. We might have to get a copy of the copy. I wonder if we shouldn't give Willie a break. We've waited all these years to get her to talk. We should have had her talk a long time ago, but we certainly thank you, Willie.

US: We should do it again, have her talk more about Missoula in the early—

US: The way it was.

GP: Missoula the way it was.

US: It was really interesting hearing about Billings.

WS: Billings has always been a good little town. And oh, how it is growing. They have industry there. They have, now, besides that sugar factory, and let's see...of course, all the cattle and sheep business. They still have a lot of that. Great big stock yard and a great deal of shipping. Way back when, they had a big meat packing plant down by the stockyards, and they had lots of things going. Now, of course, they have the oil from the oil refineries there that brought in a lot of money. It's really just...really popping right along and growing like everything. I don't know where all the people come from.

GP: There are people who don't regard Billings as even a Montana town, do they, because there are so many outsiders who come in there? Business people.

WS: Oh well, yes, there are because it's just growing, so they have to come from someplace.

GP: Well, I think we should give her a hand, don't you?

[Applause]

[End of Interview]