

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: 422-069, 070
Interviewees: Bob Reed and Peggy Reed
Interviewer: Suzanne Vernon
Date of Interview: November 8, 2001
Project: Upper Swan Valley Oral History Project

Suzanne Vernon: I'm interested in the fisheries, because we have other comments on the Swan River fishery.

Bob Reed: My radical comment on it is that they say we've got great fishing but they (who?) weren't here until after they decided that brook trout were no good. When brook trout were part of the fishery and everybody liked them and enjoyed fishing, but now they've decided that brook trout and the bull trout intermingle so they want to get rid of the non-native brook trout. And they are doing it. They've gotten all of the...between the logging practices of clearcutting and so forth that has dried up so many of the little streams, either that and also I firmly believe that the Fish and Game has poisoned some of them to get rid of those brook trout. I know they were wanting to, I don't know if they did or not, over in the Bob Marshall or Scapegoat.

SV: It's been proposed.

BR: I don't know if they ever did it or not. But I believe they have here. When Elk Creek used to be a real good fishery. You could always catch fish there. Peg's dad, we'd take him up and drop him off (at Dog Creek).

Peggy Reed: It was his favorite spot to catch little fish.

BR: Yeah. Where the upper, where Condon Loop Road, where it circles back, and then it comes up here on Lion Creek. We'd drop him up there at Dog Creek and he was 65 years old, and it was quite brushy but it cleared out down there. Pretty quick, three or four hours, he'd show up here down at the road, with all kinds of fish. All you could ever eat or want. Brook trout and he kept everything from four inches on up and enjoyed them. We ate them.

SV: So what year was that?

BR: That would have been in the 1960s.

SV: But you guys were up here long before that.

BR: Oh yeah.

PR: 1940s.

BR: Her folks came up and built this in 1945.

SV: What was their last name?

PR: Reynolds.

SV: How did they find out about the Swan?

PR: Well, my dad hunted up in the Bob Marshall and he loved to go hunting every fall. They wanted a hunting lodge. They knew Fox's across the road (on Lion Creek) and they owned all of this property then. So they bought, or leased this land here, and built this cabin.

BR: This hadn't been surveyed yet. It was just generally known where the section lines were. And so . . . Fox's had homesteaded 160 acres (see Kortbein) . . . that's Rod and Gene and their folks. Peg's dad, then, and two other people from Polson – Buck Black who was the Gambles store owner and Bill Gregg . . . what did Bill do? Anyway, the family still has property up here, too.

SV: I've heard the name Gregg, just up the road. They were from Polson, too. Did you grow up in Polson (to Peggy)?

PR: Yes.

SV: What did your dad do for a living?

PR: He had a cream route to start with. And then when he retired from that, he was County Treasurer for four years. Charles. And then he ran for County Assessor, and he was still Assessor when he died in '72.

SV: So he built the cabin in 1945? Was that the first year he came here?

PR: No.

BR: No they came into Polson and his folks homesteaded a ranch in Polson, up on the hill out of Polson in 1910. So he'd lived in Polson since then. They were then . . . they'd ride over, he always had horses and pack horses and stuff, from Polson and come over here in the Swan for hunting, fishing and whatever. There was a road, somebody put it in there (in the Century of Change summaries), that (the road) it ended here at Lion Creek. I don't believe that's true. The road always went through right behind Fox's.

PR: It went to Salmon Prairie.

BR: The road always went through right behind Fox's and it forded the creek, there weren't any bridges. So you drove through the creeks. But the old road went through from there to Salmon

Prairie. When we first came up here in 1949 and 1950, why the road was then just dirt and it took you all day to get here from Polson.

PR: Well, it went down to the Mercantile (then it was the Buckhorn).

SV: In 1949 or 1950, it went all the way through then.

PR: Yes, we used to go down to the Community Hall for the dances.

BR: Oh yeah, we'd go to the Community Hall for dances and to Liquid Louie's.

PR: The old Liquid Louie's.

BR: It was tough coming up through and that's why there were two roads. We always called it the upper and lower loop, up to Dog Creek. You'd cut off at Goat Creek just this side of Swan Lake, and you could either come the lower loop – but you could only come in there in late summer or fall because you couldn't get through the creeks in high water. So you always had to go the upper loop, up through Napa, where the trail went off to Napa, and where they went back into Goat Creek. You'd come back out at Goat Creek down there where the ranger station is now. That's always been there.

SV: So to go north, you would go...

BR: Past Simmons Meadow, and then from Simmons Meadow you would go right there where it's at now, the road crosses Goat Creek where the State Forest is. Then you could either go straight ahead, but it wasn't straight like it is now. There was a lot of rolling in there, you crossed a lot of creeks, and it was creek bottoms and you had to go through them, forded them. So in high water you didn't go through there. You had to turn right and go up Goat Creek, and go up over the top on what we always called the upper loop. That was about five miles further, I s'pose, but it was dry and you didn't have to worry about fording those creeks. You only crossed Soup Creek up there at the campground. The campground has been developed. You didn't have to ford Cilly Creek, Squaw Creek and those different creeks.

SV: The maps from the thirties shows that route. Let's back up just a little bit. Where were you raised?

BR: Dayton. My dad came into the Flathead Valley in 1890. The railroad brought him here. He and his dad had a freight line from North Dakota. They came in one year ahead of the railroad. They came into Kalispell and settled. I don't know what happened to my grandparents. My dad was fifteen then, and I really don't have much history on his life. The main thing was when George Ostrom had the paper, in Kalispell, and he'd always put the old timer's news, in "100 Years Ago," that at a dance at Demersville that Tom Reed threw a dance and a good time was had by all. He then migrated down the...well, he got married and I don't know anything about

that time. They wound up in Dayton prior to 1910, because he built the Reed Hotel there. It was open in 1910 when they were homesteading the reservation. And after that he had a sawmill at Black Lake (?) and my brother was born there in 1924, and he also had a thrashing outfit that thrashed the Flathead Valley and down in Polson, Mission Valley, and he had that in 1914 and 1916. We've got a picture of that, if you'd like to see that. So then I come along in 1928 and he had been divorced from his first wife and married my mother. We lived at Proctor and Dayton until 1939. And then my dad died in 1942. So my mother and I, the war started, just my mom and I was left. Her name was Jewell. We went to Polson, and she worked at the hospital there for a long time. (Bob and Peggy met in Polson). Peggy was just coming into high school and I was graduated.

PR: I didn't really know him in high school, it was after.

BR: After the Navy, I came home. I served on a destroyer, right at the end of the war.

SV: Did either of your parents come over here to the Swan fishing in the early days?

BR: You bet; Peg's folks were over here a lot. They were over here camping and the whole works. Of course there wasn't any place to stay except Swan Lake.

PR: When I was little we used to come up Swan Lake and stay in a cabin, a cottage they called them then. I was pretty small.

BR: I think it was the Deer Lick, whoever owned the Deer Lick in those days.

PR: They had little cabins . . .

BR: A bed and a stove was in them. We came up from Dayton, that was me and my two brothers, in about 1935 or 1936 I s'pose, and then we would, from there, come fishing up the river up to the High Banks, what we called the High Banks, which is now, well, just at the hill at Squeezer Creek, just where the road goes back to Squeezer, up the hill there and turn in. Right now there's a logging outfit put in there, logging camp where they have a little trailer in there the ones doing the road work up here.

Do you know where Fenby's mill was? Fenby's mill was just the other side of the High Banks. High Banks was right here (indicates on map) just off of the Lion Creek-Piper Divide. That's it. That's why by the map, they got the line a little bit wrong. In my opinion the Divide should be a little bit further north. That's more of a ridgeline that goes through there. It just about comes down off of Van Lake Road and if it would swing north another mile it would then go across on the High Banks and that's more of a ridge there. That's where the river just cuts curtains and swings back into the east side channel and that's where there's a high bank there. From that High Bank west is flat, and where they talk about in this assessment (the Upper Swan Valley Landscape Assessment) how the river meanders and would change courses, well that was one

of the main areas that did that. And right at the corner of Section 8, the Shea place, Joe Shea had a ranch on both sides of the river. Just about at the top end, the south end, of that wide flat where the river changes, is where he put a bridge through across to get to his place on the other side. From that point where his bridge was, north, that whole flat area was log jams. You could. . . that's why you came up to this High Banks, to get down to the log jams to go fishing. Once you got there, then you had to find where was the channel. Because they would wander around through there. Some channels would be just a little creek, and the main channel would be somewhere else. Each year you'd have to go find it, because it would just wander around through all that whole maze of log jams. Every spring it would be high water, and the trees would come right down where the channel was, that's where they'd lodge. That was great fishing. You could go there and you could walk on top of those log jams probably for all of Joe Shea's place and clear down to where the river started coming together again as one solid stream. It was the best fishing. You could catch anything in there from Bull Trout to cutthroat to brookies to rainbows, to anything. And in the front of those log jams where the river went into them, there'd always be a pond. Man, some of the best fly fishing – oh, it was tremendous.

PR: It was lots of fun.

BR: You just took your pick. You could bring home a 20-pound bull trout or a six-inch Eastern brook, whatever your hunger pangs was for.

PR: But no more. . .

BR: We've got pictures over in the cabin of when we were, Peg and I, and her dad and I used to fish that a lot, and his friends. Peg and I. Because it was . . . Peg doesn't like to walk on log jams, so as soon as we got down to the river and the log jams, that's where she'd perch. She'd take her pole and fish there and I'd come back when we'd get ready to go home, and there she'd be with a whole basket full of fish, all kinds of fish.

PR: It was fun.

BR: I'd go fish around to some of the other holes a little bit. Also, ahead of the log jams it was flat, like I say, the river flattened out and there was always a pond there. It might only be a foot deep and you could wade the whole things. You could be fishing there, I wasn't a fly fisherman, but I'd always try, and there'd be more fish jumping out of the water. You just couldn't believe it. My friend that came up with us one time, and I took him to go because he had cancer and his leg was all casted up and everything, so I took him where he could fly fish and he said (Bob gets quite emotional)...I can still see him. He said, "Let's go get the shotgun, let's catch them that way!" There was so many jumping out of the water. You couldn't catch them with a fly rod but we could have got them with a shotgun. Anyway, he's been gone quite awhile.

Peg's dad was the fly fisherman, and I was a base fisherman.

PR: He really liked fly fishing, and he was pretty good at it, too. (Her dad.)

BR: He had some of those old fly books, and the type of flies then, my gosh, they were great big huge things, bigger than your thumb you'd have for a fly. Big old things. But they were big fish. Our lures that we'd use then, were as big as the fish they are catching now. The daredevils and plugs were five or six inches long. We've got, still have, Peg's aunts' whitefish pole. It's a bamboo pole, about as long as from here to the door over there. And they'd fish at Beck's bridge when the whitefish would come up the river. They'd just take the bamboo pole and I think she'd use a grub and a sinker, or rock worms, and whip those whitefish out. You never hear of anybody fishing whitefish in the Swan River now.

PR: She caught them and they smoked them.

BR: They were big, a pound and a half. Mountain whitefish. If you ask Harold Haasch, he'll tell you about whitefishing over in the South Fork. I've never done that. He talked about trips they'd make over there, he and Russ and the crowd.

They (aunts) would catch them (whitefish) also below our place but it was difficult. Our high bank, we have a high bank here too, but it's very difficult to get down to the river. You have to crawl down the steep bank or out at the mouth of the (Lion) creek and it's steep and it's brushy. It's hard to get down there, especially if you get any age on you. I don't get to do it anymore.

PR: I don't do it anymore. I never liked it to start with.

SV: How did you know to go to High Banks when you came over here with your brother?

BR: It was just the place to fish. There wasn't that many people around to worry about. We'd be there. If you wanted to catch some fish, and within a half an hour, you'd have all the fish you could possibly want, fishing down through the holes in the log jams. Now the point that I wanted to make relative to this book (Century of Change or the Landscape Assessment?) is that nobody talks about that. There's one part in here about floods. It was the flood of 1964 that changed all of that. It wiped all of those log jams out, the whole river, after 1964, became just a straight – like it is now. And that is one of my points, when they talk about the social things and what has happened up here. Prior to that, when they put this highway through, and it wound up in 1959 complete, you could fish the river. But the only places that people would fish the river was at the bridges. Piper bridge, Fatty Creek bridge or Cedar Creek bridge whatever you want to call it, those were the two access points to the main river except on down at Porcupine. There was only those three bridges across until you got on up to Salmon Prairie. So the two in the wilderness, because none of this had been logged off, was at Cedar and here, and at Piper. People would drive down and fish, so they'd fish the river, but they wouldn't get more than 100 yards from the bridge. Up and down, people would be on foot, and that's all the farther they'd have to go and they had all the fish they'd want. So the river was basically wild and free and good fishing. If you could get to the river anyplace except right at the bridges. The bridges were

also good fishing. One reason was, when the fish and game would plant, that's where they would plant their fish. They'd get in there with their trucks and tanks and they'd dump all their planters in right at these bridges. And so that's where the congregation of the fish were, and also where the fishermen were. But if you wanted some real good fishing, then get away from those bridges by a quarter of a mile, and you was in some real native fishing. You didn't know what you were going to get a hold of. Prior to 1964. In 1964 that's when the big floods in the South Fork and the North Fork and Columbia Falls and everything – that's where the guy that owned the Hungry Horse News – he made his notoriety from that flood. Well, it happened up here too. Up here at Lion Creek, Lion Creek was not a real good fishing stream because, we said, it was too cold and too fast. But there was, then, it hadn't washed out like it is now. It made a lot more curves, like right here at the cabin, it went towards the mouth, made a big bend here, then went down. The creek slowed down, and there was a good fishing hole all the way around the cabin here. You got in front of the other one (cabin) and there was a bank and brush, and plenty of habitat for the fish to hide. So you could catch brookies and cutthroat in here. Then with that flood, it washed out all the logs that were right here in front of our place and piled them up in front of the other cabin right below here. They caught and made a big log jam there and one of the things, that we should be able to remember that year, we were up here, and stink? My God. We tried tracing down where that stink was coming from. And it was dead deer in that log jam. I had to basically tear out that whole log jam to get that dead deer and that stink out of here. It was just a great big old doe, was one of them that I got out, and I think there was two of them. I don't know if they got caught up in the flood, or how they died and got in that log jam and there they were. Did they ever stink.

First we had to tear out that log jam and get them out of there. We were using that water, that's right above our pump. Our drinking water came out of there.

So that's one of the things that I don't believe that there is anybody in the fish and game that remembers what the Swan was like prior to 1964. And I don't know, there's darn few people up here that lived here part of that time. Rod (Fox) over here, he remembers how we used to go fishing like that. Bud didn't live up here then (Moore) so there's not very many in the Condon area. Leita and her sisters (Anderson-Clothier).

The whitefish would move up, and god, we'd catch some great big old bull trout. Nothing to it. Catching bull trout, you'd throw those suckers out in the bank, we didn't like them. Didn't like to eat them. Also there was squawfish, and whitefish, and big old red-bellied cutthroat, natives, and Eastern brook. We didn't catch any pike or anything.

PR: I don't think there was any then.

SV: What would be a chub up here?

BR: Well they were just little bitty things that they used for bait, called chubs. Kind of all head, and a fin. Not up here. But then also you could—Peg was mentioning how her aunt loved to fish

but she had to go where you could walk. The amount of bait, we had that at one of these meetings here a year or so ago, the gal that lives down here at (?), that took on the German name. Kathy Kinsfogle, and she came up there to one of the meetings, and somebody brought up a handful of rocks that didn't have any bait, and there wasn't nothing alive in there. And I agreed with her, because it used to be you could go to the creek out here and pick up a handful of rock worms anytime and they'd have big salmon fly hatches. Those salmon flies would come up or whatever they call those big different flies. The fly fishermen would just have a ball. But the rock worms for us bait fishermen, we'd just pick up a handful of them and put them in a tobacco can and go fishing.

SV: You are talking about when you lift up a rock, and those little bugs that are covered with pebbles, and that's what you were using for bait.

BR: Yep, and then they hatch. Those are what the salmon flies were.

SV: And they aren't there now?

BR: Not nearly what they used to be. And that's my argument to fish and game and I had one discussion with them. . . relative to the

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

BR: . . . is that anybody floating the river they should be checked at the bridge where they take out and if they are caught with a chainsaw in their raft they go to jail. And he (fish and game) said we can't do that. We can't tell them what they can carry on their raft. I started a petition but couldn't get it going. I said, let's make it so you could either fish the river, or you can float the river, but you can't float and fish. Because these guys are coming through in rafts with four people, and two rafts to a group, twice a day. And I said they are fishing these holes out. When you put eight fishermen in a hole twice a day, and pass up all the rest of the stream that you should have to walk to, it's just too much pressure on the river. And he said, we can't do that, because we get too much revenue from these rafters. There's a commercial aspect of it, and it's too good. We can't tell them how they can fish. So that didn't go. So I said, if they want to raft the river, well, that's fun, that's a nice ride, really lots of fun, but you can't fish from the raft. If you are going to fish, walk. And that didn't make it. But I say, that's one thing I'd like to see in here somewhere, they just don't know what fishing was. If they don't put any habitat in, which they won't, because that's what I mentioned, take anybody that's got a chainsaw that's cutting these logs out . . . I wanted them to make these jams again. He said, we can't do that. I said, well, we've been down through there and we see where the chainsaws have been, they cut the river out every spring so they can make it free-flowing so you can raft it with no portaging. You don't get any habitat. They said they couldn't do that. He said that the fish and game also does that (cuts the log jams out) because they are in with their swimmers, running surveys of the river to count the fish, how many fish per mile, and there's lots of fish in there. We can count them, and he said we have to cut some of those logs out or we can't get our boats through. I said, well, good god, here we are trying to get some fish and the fish and game is cutting out the best thing that is happening to the river. If they cut them out every time a log jam starts, we'll never get any habitat. It just becomes a free-flowing fast streams and the little brookies, well they don't want brookies, the small fish the cutthroat and stuff like that have no place to hide. And in my opinion, up comes the pike and the bull trout, the carnivorous things. And what they think is good fishing is just mediocre at best, especially when they are not letting brookies – they don't want brookies – and they have every creek now closed on this side of the river (east) and they haven't opened them. They closed Lion Creek the year we came (back) up here in 1984. They were going to do a test and they haven't opened it since. But they don't post it. People stop and fish out here in front. I have to go and run them out. They ask how come? Well, it's just a rule. And it's not right. Why don't they put up signs? Well, people just tear them down. Well at least they'd tell somebody. And then there's the outfitters. Mainly the one up there on Lion Creek. I know that he catches fish for his dudes, hunters.

SV: I have another question about log jams. How long do you think some of those logs jams at High Banks had been there?

BR: They just kept accumulating. The river spread out and was so wide there, a half mile wide. Now it's over on the west side again. There's hardly any water over on this side. And it spread, oh golly, every year it would be a little different, like a whole series of creeks going through

there. So those logs, they were trees with roots, they were just anchored, down in the mud. They'd been there since Christ was a (?). Just forever, since the last big flood, whenever that was. It would be those things also that deposited them there. And then 1964 was a whopper, and just took them out.

But trees come down every year and start to make those logs jams. That's the one thing, now that Plum Creek is logging the bottom, they weren't logging before but now they are. I thought it was just automatic law that they couldn't log the bottom, but now they have an SMZ that they can't log within so many feet they can only take a certain percentage out, that they can't log within a certain distance. But by the time they get through they got it clear cut, so it's a foolish thing. So there was always trees along the river bottom that was washing out. And like this year, down at our place, on our property where it makes the big bend it is always cutting in, and every year we lose one or two nice big cottonwoods or a spruce that tip over down there.

SV: You said one time that the ponds above High Banks, you could wade them.

BR: You could walk clear across the river at High Banks on the log jam, and you wouldn't even have to get your feet wet. When we were looking for the main channel, there would be holes, and you could just wander around through there. It was . . . well, like one place where the trout were isolated. Peg's dad and I and one friend, it was just the three of us, down there. This log jam was just like a corral. And here the high water had went down there and made a nice little, couple hundred feet across and around, and the water out in there when it had gone down the fish in there were landlocked. They were caught and they couldn't get out. There was a little trickle of water coming in but it wasn't enough to keep them alive. Man, Lloyd (Harris), and your dad and I, we stood there and just had a lot of fun, catching them and putting them back. Cutthroat, about 12 or 14 inches long. We'd see them along the side. It was so much fun in those days.

Lloyd Harris had the Chevrolet garage in Polson.

We used grasshoppers for bait, go over here to Fox's and catch a handful of grasshoppers early in the morning when the dew was on.

PR: We used nightcrawlers. My dad used to grow them in his back yard in Polson, and sometimes he'd throw them out here.

BR: We'd plant them out here and try to find them the next year but could never find them.

SV: Did you ever come up in the winter and try to fish any of that?

BR: We didn't because we were living away. We got married in 1950. So we could only come home on vacation and we did every year, two weeks vacation time. My mother was there, too, and she'd come up with us.

SV: Did your dad fish here in the winter?

PR: I don't think so.

BR: After hunting season, they'd come up for hunting season.

PR: He liked to fish in the summer.

BR: There was no road, the road was so hard to get into. There wasn't any road plowing. The road was on the other side of the Fox place, so it was a quarter mile away just to get through there and over to here, when the snow was deep . . .

PR: They would come up in the fall about this time for hunting.

BR: I think there was more snow back then, they were always talking about snow higher than a fence post up here.

PR: We used to get a lot of snow in Polson, and now they don't.

BR: It seems like the weather has changed considerably in the last 50 years.

SV: There was a hard winter there between 1945 and 1950?

BR: I might have been gone, in the Navy. Her dad died in 1972 and my mom died in 1973, so when did we come up here in the winter?

PR: 1978. We were gone before. My mother was in Polson, so we thought we better come up for Christmas. That was 1978 and 1978. We came twice.

BR: Peg's aunt, her dad's sister, was Bernice Elkins (sp?) and her husband. They bought 80 acres of Russell Fox's 160. Like this cabin, before the survey went through, the original lease was described as about an acre on the creek west of the hayfield. And that was fine. And that went on, when I was away, the lease was already written. When they went through and surveyed it for the highway, that turned out that Elkins bought 80 acres from Fox, half of their 160, but then they bought 5 acres and then 15 acres then a 10 acres, then 40 acres to get that 80. When the survey came through, the line that they thought was their house and the woodshed, bunkhouse, was on the other side of the 80. Turns out that the property line was on just about went through their cabin. They bought then 160 feet the other side. Then the next survey came through, and it was still off. So they bought another 40 feet, to get their woodshed on their property. So the line kept coming close to this property. Then Rod did some more surveying, and they moved it another four feet. So then Fox's divided property up (among the kids) and one where Vance's area. They surveyed that piece off for (?), who had their homestead down

on the Fox corner. She died. Anna Ingeborg Anderson Harmon, she was Etta Anderson's sister, Art was her brother. And Tuffy who married Leita. So the Harmons . . . Anna born Sept 22, 1916, and with her five brothers and two sisters attended Salmon Prairie Schoolhouse. She met Orville Harmon and together they built a log cabin near Lion Creek and together became the proud parents of two children, James Ray and Anna May Harmon. Orville died in 1963 and Anna went to nursing school.

Anyway, the cabin they built is on the corner of our place here, and it went down in 1996 in all the snow. The packrats had eaten a lot of it. That 20 acres it was on was Peg's brother's 20. Peg's dad built this house from railroad ties from here in the Valley, I think from Fenby, because Fenby was sawing ties.

SV: Was Fenby here when you came up in the forties?

BR: Yes, just below the bank. The road went through then right by where it is now and he was just over the bank.

PR: Emil Barnowski helped build this cabin. (Varnowski? Not sure of name.)

BR: And the way they did that, he was an old Finn, Barnowski. So Buck Black from Gambles provided the nails, spikes and hardware at that time. Bill Gregg was involved and bought the ties or provided them. Bill, Peg's brother, used his dad's truck or helped him, because Charlie Reynolds had the truck from his cream route, and they hauled the ties in and they got the doors and the windows out of the old (?) hotel at Polson.

PR: There's still Isinglass in some of the door windows (?).

BR: Barnowski lived right down at the corner of the road that goes into Van Lake, toward the river. There's a quarter section line, and they had a house up there. That's also where Terry Hudson lived also.

SV: You got your water out of the creek here?

PR: We did. We have a well now. But in the cabin behind us we still get water out of the creek.

BR: We put in a well because the spring runoff was muddy for so long. (1980) Six weeks of muddy water so we put in a well. Oddly enough, when they built this then, after the war, Buck Black and Charlie and Bill Gregg thought it was a good thing to do to invite in a couple of people who were in the military during that time. They brought in Bill Radar who owned the newspaper at Polson at that time and Dr. Loudemeyer (?) the dentist. They had both been in the service. So there was now five of them in the lease on the cabin. The requirement was they paid \$25 a year lease for the ground and the taxes. Anyway, then in 1965, about, no before then, they had a 30-year lease, so in about 1960, when we came out from New Jersey, 1966,

Russell and Etta Fox wanted to sell the land to Charlie Reynolds, Peg's dad. And he said he was getting old enough he didn't think he had much use for it, and asked if we wanted it. So we bought it. And so we then had to carry that lease, so we had it leased to those five people and it cost each one of them \$5 a year for the lease and then it cost them for the taxes and that was usually about \$8 apiece. So they each of them paid us right around \$12 or \$13 a year for the lease. It didn't go over too good with them, five people. But they had the cabin so they could sleep 20 people. There was five double beds in the back here. So when all 20 would get up there it was pretty close quarters back there. And an outdoor toilet. Well, anyway they all...came for fishing mostly and partying. And the fall hunting. Hunting was big here. But anyway, as the time went by, by the time we bought it, they started splitting up and their kids were grown up. So we bought them out. They figured they had \$350 apiece, so we bought them out. And we figured that was a fair price in 1966.

SV: So where did you work all these years?

BR: I was an engineer for Ford Aerospace. Away a lot.

PR: We left the day we got married. Then we went Portland, that's where Bob was working then. Went to a lot of different places.

BR: Coos Bay, I worked the radar with the Air Force. Then we moved to Tacoma, then Michigan, St. Marie, and back to Tacoma and back to Spokane, then to Tacoma and then to New Jersey. We spent a year in downtown New York. In fact where the trade center went down was a cheese factory store, full block long. And I walked to where I worked, would catch the ferry over to Jersey. And when we wanted some cheese you'd go through there and there was cheese from all over the world, every kind of cheese imaginable you could get in there. I didn't know anything about cheese. Then we were only there a year then they built those trade center buildings when we left. Now they are gone again. Then back out to California. We spent 18 years in California.

SV: Why did you decide to keep this?

BR: We loved it.

PR: We used to come up here every summer, vacation. We were always planning when Bob retired to come back here.

BR: That was our goal. And we finally, we said we want to turn around what her folks had to do. They lived in town and worked down there and only could come up here on weekends. And we said, we wanted to live up here and go to town on weekends. Well, Peg's mother still had a house in Polson, and so while she was alive we probably did go to town every weekend, once a week at least. So we just about turned it around. Now we have, we bought a place down there (Polson).

SV: What's the best part of living here?

PR: Everything.

BR: It's not in town. You can walk anywhere. Leave the doors open.

PR: It's not crowded. We can't see our neighbors. I love the scenery.

SV: But you aren't anti-people or anything?

PR: Oh no, but we lived in towns and cities all the time we were married and it's just nice not having that anymore.

BR: Well, the other folks ask why we keep wood heat? I like to saw wood. If you didn't like to work in the woods, you shouldn't live here. I do I like to saw trees and cut trees. I sell a load of logs every year.

PR: Bob worked in the woods for a logging outfit in Polson during high school and college, so he learned how to do it.

BR: If I had to do it again I probably would have stayed a logger! No probably not, because I got hurt a couple of times, and you always get something busted up. Not much longevity in those days.

SV: Did you think about the fishing when you were away?

BR: No, I'm still not a big fisherman.

SV: But you remember it?

BR: I still like to fish but it's just harder to get there and the fishing isn't as good. Fishing is also catching.

PR: That's the part I like, otherwise I get very bored with it if I don't catch any.

BR: Now you go to the river and its artificial lures, you have to turn everything back that you catch. It's just not the same. So we like the fresh air, and so many other things. When I was building this thing, when we started here, the inside of the house looked like the outside. Bare ties.

PR: It was just two bare rooms, and no ceiling.

BR: No water, no plumbing, no electricity. So we started there and I enjoyed that because I was young and healthy and worked 12 or 14 hours a day and there was nothing to it. We lived in San Jose, and I said, I could live here and go to town to get hardware and nails or boards or whatever I needed to build, to the nearest which would be Bigfork, and leave and drive up there, drive by a lake with all the scenery, and be back in two hours. I couldn't go to a hardware store in San Jose in that length of time, you know, for the amount of traffic.

PR: By the time you went to the doctor and shopped and got back again, it was about two hours.

BR: Well, down there, there were three hardware stores nearby. Traffic.

SV: I didn't ask you anything about beaver on the river, have there been changes?

BR: Oh absolutely. The beaver started in Lion Creek. The creek comes down and makes a bend and goes and flattens out on the Forest Service land, just barely. And then back on our part before it goes into the river. There's a flat down in there and at one time some beaver did start. But there isn't any willows or really good beaver food and they never did take hold down there. But down there again off the High Bank that was one of the main things that kept putting those, making the river change every year from one side to the other because beaver would drop trees in it, cottonwoods and whatever else was in the bottom that they liked to eat. And they are all gone. I think part of that is because people with chainsaws and rafts cut them up so they could float.

Another one we did get involved with beaver, friends of ours had a cabin on Cedar Creek.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

SV: Tell me about taking the grandkids up Dog Creek.

BR: Yes, and some friends of ours from San Jose, they were city people, and I told them to come on up and they could catch a fish. This was in the 1970s. Harold was just going down with cancer then. (?) In order to guarantee them that they could catch a fish, the ladies felt they couldn't get down to the river, so we took them to Dog Creek. Right there at the culvert, you can put a worm on and you can catch a brook trout right at the highway. There was lots of folks used to go down there and catch a mess of fish. Anywhere from four inches to eight, maybe ten at the most. Now they put a new culvert in and it doesn't look the same.

Another spot was over on Smith Creek, that big culvert is, by the old Condon Work Station. That used to be a great spot to fish. Again that was brook trout. I've tried, I haven't tried very hard, but I don't know if there is any fish in there either. I honestly believe that fish and game poisoned them to get rid of those brook trout to try and get native cutthroat. That's fine except you ruin the fishing for years. The brookies are gone and I think so is the feed. And that was the other side, here you are trying to raise bull trout and you are taking away their best food source, is brook trout.

Then they've logged Dog Creek heavy clear from the headwaters and down so it's almost a dry stream now compared to what it used to be. There's more water up above. It used to be a good stream there at the highway. The old road crossed back in west of where it is now. Leita would be the one to know about that (Anderson). But I believe it crossed east of her. I'm not quite sure how it got through there. It came down, and there was a nice campground a couple hundred yards, about opposite where Ash's live on Dog Creek, and if you go right straight north till you hit Dog Creek, the road crossed in there and there was a real nice Ponderosa pine stand of trees and a nice campground. Forest Service, I'm pretty sure. Or Plum Creek, if it's logged. Right just this side of Dog Creek, the road went back in and now it's all barriered off. We could drive in, just a really pretty ponderosa park, and a good place to hunt deer. Just sit there and wait.

SV: Was Dog Creek brushy?

BR: I think it was brushy all along. Peg's dad could navigate that all the way. I don't know how he could get a fish pole in there, but he could. A fly rod. I don't know how he didn't get all tangled up in there.

SV: Were there log jams?

BR: It was just a brushy creek. You wouldn't call it log jams. I bet there isn't beaver in there now. I started down through there one time, and backed out. Said to heck with it.

SV: Do you remember people fishing in the area of Porcupine?

BR: Not really. We always came clear up. At Point Pleasant, that was another favorite spot. We used to do a lot of fishing in there. Then up this way, where Squaw Creek crossed, an old friend of ours from Polson, Ray Weidman (?) had a cabin down on the river, right on the river, right where Middle Loop Road comes out. And that was good fishing, but you couldn't get there hardly except to know him and go to his place. Now that is all gated off and you can't get down there.

SV: The river had probably moved.

BR: I imagine it's about the same. It's pretty flat down in there. I think it has its channel and it has pretty much stayed the same. A lot of brush. I'm sure it's moved but not very far, like there at Cedar Creek. It hasn't moved.

SV: You have been pretty active in all the community events. Why?

BR: I got involved in the Legion. That was when Shorty Hill and Barney Anthony, well they were going pretty good then it kind of stagnated. Then Ken Wolff was one of the main founders. That same bunch of guys were doing real good and it kind of stagnated and they talked me into joining the Legion. Seemed like a good thing to do. And then with the, who started me on the ballpark, Chris Goodman. He wanted to see if we couldn't get a ball park going, and did. He started working on it and made up some plans. We talked to Plum Creek about getting some land. They said not only no, but hell no. Then Chris finally didn't have time. And asked if we wanted to take over with the Legion. That sounded like a good plan for the Legion. That then became an aversion. I really wanted to make that ball park, and we did. And stayed in as commander for nine years. So we got that that far along, then I got tired. All the old World War II guys are all out, now. Dave Nebel and Barney and I, Herb and Walt. Just about all the old World War II guys up here are gone by the wayside.

SV: But you got involved with Ad Hoc up here, early.

BR: That's because I was more of a rabble rouser than anything. I had my kind of radical ideas about a lot of things, and I still have some, like this fishing thing. I still feel quite serious about that, and I felt that we were being influenced bureaucratically by the Forest Service and the Fish and Game and I thought that we were being kow-towed by newcomers into the valley wanting things that were, I guess they were good, but I didn't particularly think so.

SV: Do you remember people floating the river in the 1940s and 1950s.

BR: No, you couldn't get through. You'd portage for half a mile. You'd spend more time carrying your raft around the log jams than you would floating. When, even, my brother, George and I we floated it way after that and you just couldn't float it, even if you wanted to. But you could

fish and you could walk to it. You could get through here to the river and then the next place to get through was at Piper. And if you try to pick you spot by the highway and go down to the river and go fishing, you'd have to hike in. You had to just wander around through the forest. It hadn't been logged or anything.

SV: So when you got involved with the Landscape Assessment committee, your motivation wasn't necessarily the fisheries?

BR: Oh I was just still interested in seeing it developed properly. I'll give you some comments that I thought was important. Dealing with the same thing. I think there should be more restrictions, about habitat. I think there should be some kind of control about putting a 500,000 dollar house up in the woods and then crying for help. Fire protection. How come it costs so much to put power out there.

SV: You wrote a good chapter on roads and trails.

BR: I have maps and stuff around here. There are pieces of it in the Landscape Assessment. Whoever wrote that kind of re-tempered the thing. When the new highway came through, there were several of us said, why...it was the widening of the right of way. They were taking so many more trees out. I was kind of anti-that. No longer, I feel there's so much traffic, this gives the deer a little better chance. But it increased the speed of that. Prior to that going in, there were several of us said, "Why do we need a highway?" Let it go to gravel. That will slow the whole thing down and it will get us back. Because the only reason the road came in to start with was for loggers and Plum Creek, which was NP. And now they've cut everything that was decent and could be cut. They are cutting more than they need now. Well we knew that wouldn't happen but that was our attitude. Why are we paying more money for a highway that the only thing that is going to go through here is a logging truck. People going in and out of here are tourists. The rest of us would get along just fine.

That's the only thing with the environment. Years ago they had a move afoot, we weren't living here, and I think Bud Moore would be aware of it. To try to save all of the foothills as a wide buffer zone for the wilderness. In the 1960s or 1970s. And of course I think Plum Creek, they weren't Plum Creek then, they were probably the biggest ones against it, and it didn't happen. But what I think was wrong, I don't believe they should be logging that high steep country so heavily. Look at the water, how the snow hangs in the trees and the water. . . Plum Creek is going completely away from that theory. You look up on the hill, and clear up to the top of the mountain, you'll see a logging road there. Clearcuts hanging down off of there, clear across there. Didn't think about that during the 1940s. One year Peg's dad and I and Lloyd Harris—Charlie and Lloyd were the best of friends. We left here at Russell's and Etta's place and went into Pony Lake, tried to find it. We'd never been in there before. Russell Fox knew where everything was. He said, well, you can't miss it. You go right up here, you hit the Foothills Trail and you take the Foothills Trail north until you see a game trail going right up alongside those cliffs. He said you can't miss it. Well, Charlie and I wound up, all three of us, wound up on the

north side of the mountains up on top of those cliffs, where we could see Pony Lake way down there. And we still hadn't, we'd spent half a day or more. Lloyd said he was going to go back down and find the right trail and Charlie and I took the pack horse and went the other way (toward home). And down we went, over windfalls. We were coming down off that steep mountain and we were jumping those windfalls. That poor old pack horse. We broke the saddles up and had an awful ride off of there. But to think that when we were up there, to think that anybody would be up there with a logging truck was just unbelievable.

Now the other side, and I don't justify this at all, we were trying to find a trail where there wasn't any. And now they are griping because the roads are there and they can't get through the gates with their ATV's. They should have to walk anyway. I'm against gates, but doggone it they shouldn't be able to drive to those high lakes in a four wheel drive. That's wrong, but you give them the opportunity to go in and then they'll want to go into the Bob Marshall.

That's the only thing I agreed with Clinton. We should leave more of this Forest Service in Wilderness. The forest service is so inefficient.

[End of Interview]