

**Oral History Number: 210-001, 002**

**Interviewee: Joseph "Joe" Zelezny**

**Interviewer: Reverend W. Paul "Ned" Jones, Mrs. Jones, William "Bill" Zelezny**

**Date of Interview: August 13, 1954; August 31, 1954**

Ned Jones: This is August the 13th, and we're sitting in the dinette at the cabin on Flathead Lake. We've been here now for several weeks, enjoying this wonderful spot, and we have a dear old neighbor here. He's visiting us this afternoon, and we want to get his voice on this recording and have him tell a few of his experiences. So Mrs. Jones is going to ask him a few questions, and then you will hear his voice answering and telling his experiences.

Mrs. Jones: Joe, you certainly is an old timer in this country, and I'd like you to tell us about the year that you first came to Montana. I guess you came a few times, didn't you? But you tell us about that.

Joseph Zelezny: Well...the first time I came out here, I took my vacation and came to Montana to help my second cousin out with his harvest. Stayed my vacation, helped him through with the harvest, and I went back again. So the next year, I took the same trip. But at that time, travelling was very slow and we had a stage from Ravalli to Polson, and from Polson to...we had to take a boat to Demersville. There was no Kalispell there then.

NJ: What year was that?

JZ: That was in 1897 and '98—'97 and '98. Then ten years afterwards, why, I came back again. I stopped at the Yellowstone Valley, Livingston. Stayed there a couple of years and waited for my brother to come out to join me that fall, and that was in 1899. I came to Flathead then, been here ever since.

MJ: What made you decide to settle in this part of the country?

JZ: What date? That was in 1899. Yes.

MJ: And why did you happen to take this part of Flathead? Instead of another?

JZ: Well, on account of the seasons. The seasons were so much milder here than they were across the range and pleasanter all around. Of course, the Flathead scenery, which is great. Fishing was good, hunting was good, and it just took my fancy—kept me here ever since.

NJ: Joe, when you first arrived, what was it like around here? Did you have to cut your way in through the woods, or—

JZ: Yes. Very much from the main road here, we had to make our own road. That was a little over a mile. Of course, we made it wherever it was least expense attached to it to make it in

here. We've had a hard road ever since until it got more settlements, and they helped get these commissioners to act on it and we finally got a fair road in here. It's not where it ought to be.

Bill Zelezny: Pretty good though.

JZ: Yes.

NJ: Now Joe, when you built your house over there, how much timber did you have to buy, or did you cut it all out of the trees?

JZ: It was all timber—heavy timber and small timber and brush all together. You can get house logs there and [unintelligible] to saw logs.

NJ: You did that all yourself, to build your home?

JZ: All myself and built the home. I cut all the logs that first winter. Had them rigged up, and next summer I put it up.

NJ: About how much land did you clear then?

JZ: Well, I cleared 15 acres altogether. All by hand work.

NJ: Did you have a pretty good successful time? Were your crops good?

JZ: The crops were good after we got started. The first three years, they weren't so good on account of so much turpentine from the needles of the trees saturated the ground and it hurt the growth of the plants.

MJ: When did you get married? You were alone for a while, weren't you?

JZ: Yes. I batched it until about 1907. Then I got me...well, you might call it, a wife. Sure, got me a wife. [laughs]

NJ: That's what they call it in the old country, isn't it, Joe? A wife?

JZ: Yes, yes. Of course, we lived together 38 years, and finally she passed away.

NJ: How many children?

JZ: Four children.

Male speaker: And what are they doing now? Where do they live?

JZ: They're all working for themselves, doing for themselves.

MJ: Joe, didn't you plant quite a few trees? How many trees did you plant?

JZ: Well, in 1900, we had cleared enough, so I planted 1,000 trees here—fruit trees. Just apple trees [unintelligible]. This was all into apple trees, clear over here to Crum's (?) place. [unintelligible] through here—most of this now, and on the other side. But of course, they winter killed and wasn't replaced here. My place, I kept replanting them, which means I had trees longer.

MJ: You had quite a bit of difficulty getting those things started, didn't you?

JZ: Oh yes, on account of the deer and other pests. Deer were the worst on the trees, fruit trees. Which they are yet. They're worse now than they were then.

MJ: How did you market your apples those years?

JZ: Well, we had a team and wagon was our only transportation then. For a good many years.

MZ: How long did it take you to get to Kalispell from here?

JZ: Well, we figured on a big day of it, if we had good luck, if we didn't get stuck or rolled off behind a tree or a big rock, so we had [unintelligible] right it up again, why we generally make it by about nine, ten o'clock that night, on account of the roads being so bad. You couldn't make no headway travelling. Of course, the Roundhouse was there at Kalispell then. It is a good marketplace, but it took, as I say, might call it a day and half. Start out here two o'clock in the morning and get there, if you had good luck, about nine, ten o'clock.

MJ: Did you ever ship anything by lake?

JZ: Yes. Finally, after they got to boating and picking up our stuff that we had to sell and take it to Somers. From Somers, the railroad would take it to Kalispell. So that made it easier.

MJ: Were there very many settlers in here in those days?

JZ: No. There was just two settlers in here when I first got here. Of course, that's winter—before spring—there were three more came in here.

MJ: Who were they?

JZ: They were the Wards (?), Hermans (?), and different names. Tates (?), Reynolds (?).

MJ: What about the children when they went to school? Where did they go to school?

JZ: They all had their schooling right here in Rollins, that is elementary schools. When they got big enough for high school, why, we homesteaded out on the reservation and sent them through high school there at Lone Pine.

MJ: Who was your first teacher?

JZ: Here in Rollins was my sister. She was the first teacher here. We helped establish the first school district here. I was trustee for 20 years as chairman.

MJ: Did you have any troubles?

JZ: [laughs] Don't know I better record that or not.

MJ: I think you...tell us a little bit about it, Joe.

JZ: What?

MJ: Tell us a little bit about it.

JZ: Well, of course we had trouble in this way. There was two elements here and they both wanted to rule, and you couldn't do that. One or the other would have to rule. And there were at sore points over it. Mostly Advents [Seventh Day Adventists] here then and they wouldn't vote on Saturdays, and the other element had the best of us there, you see. They beat us. And I told them, "Now here, if you don't straighten up and get out to vote and help establish this [unintelligible] district, well I'm going to quit right now because they'll get it anyway. But with your help, if you turn out, we've got them beat in numbers." So of course, they finally concluded they'd turn out and vote. I says, "You can elect two of your men, you've got good enough material there, makes good school trustees and get two of them there. That'd be the majority. If they should get the third one in, why, you'd have a majority anyway," so we beat them. Of course there was a lot of hard feelings over it, and even there was a fight over it. Fight in the school district. But we finally won out and got the upper hand of them and stayed there for 20 years.

NJ: When was this present school building built that they have now?

JZ: The latest one? Well, I don't know. I was down on the reservation, and [unintelligible] uncle built this, so I don't know what year. I don't know what year it was.

BZ: When your children were born, were they born right out here?

JZ: They were all born right here in this neighborhood. Three of them were born here, and the oldest one was born right north of Kalispell, at La Salle.

BZ: Did a doctor come out? Or had midwife?

JZ: No, we had a doctor out there, and then the missus would go through confinement here in Kalispell.

NJ: Well Joe, did you ever have any trouble with the Indians?

JZ: Oh yes, lots of trouble. They used to come around and wanted us to get off of here, that [unintelligible], the rest of it was their land. They wanted us to get out. They bothered me, oh, every day for a week or two. They made three families lose their homes by leaving it. Got run out by the Indians. Afraid of them, you know. Of course, I wouldn't be run out. I was just as tough as they were, maybe a little tougher. So they left me alone. If I negotiated, they made the Indians [unintelligible], made them stay on their reservation and not bother the whites.

NJ: Well, this never was reservation territory.

JZ: No, no. Oh yes, it had been before.

Male speaker: Up to Angel Hill?

JZ: Until they changed the line. They thought they was going to change the line to Angel Hill, and instead of that it's a mile south of Rollins here, you see. The reservation line.

NJ: Well when the Indians came in here, Joe, were they pretty rough with you? Or how did you have to deal with them?

JZ: Well, they were rough in a way. They'd tell me to get out, they wanted to put their teepee up. I told them as soon as they put their teepee up here, I'd shoot them and throw them in the lake there, and teepee too if they ever tried to put up their teepee. But they'd molest us other ways. They'd come in and just try to raise a rumpus and, like that man would ever camp here over winter, he come up there early in the morning. I was just starting to cook breakfast. I had a bucket of water there on the stand, and he opened the door—never knocked—and got in there and got a hold of the bucket by the rim and shoved it all over the floor.

NJ: This was an Indian.

JZ: Indian, yes, yes. So of course, it made me mad, and I jumped into the woodbox and got ahold of a good stick of stove wood and hit him over the head with it and laid him out. Then I thought I hit him a little too hard that it might have killed him. I was beginning to get a little scared. But he finally come to again, and I showed him that stick of wood and I said, "I'll hit you again if you don't go."

He said, "Oh yes, me go, me go," and he finally went. The next day, why, five Indians come up. Well, I didn't know what to think for a while there, so I had a nice green club there handy and I took that club and I went out there and asked them what they wanted. The others all told me, "Indian land, you get out." I thought that's what they was going to do, you see.

I went up there and asked him. "Oh, nothing. Just look around."

I says, "You've got nothing to look around here with." I said, "You see that stick? First Indian says this is Indian land and me get out, I'm gonna hit him right over the head with it, as hard as I can." So they didn't want me to get out.

NJ: Well Joe, did they have any legal right to...you had a deed to the property, didn't you?

JZ: I had my papers.

NJ: But they were just trying to scare you out of there.

JZ: Scare us out, that's all. Yes.

NJ: I suppose you had many encounters with them after that.

JZ: Oh yes, yes, very many. That is, quite a few. At that time, we had mail here once a week, and we had to have mailboxes there at the main road, so the mailman could deliver in there. They'd bust that mailbox down as fast as I'd put it up—smash it right down. Then another time, I was breaking a colt and going to Kalispell with it, and a rider come along and he's got in behind the doubletree and the wagon and tried to push me off the [unintelligible] there. Behind Sammy Johnson's (?) there. [unintelligible] ran away, and he didn't take much. So I had a good stick breaking—willow, big willow. Something to correct the colt—I was breaking it. Didn't whip it much, just to tickle it a little once in a while. I took that in both hands, and I landed over the back of him, over his back. Why, he squirmed like [unintelligible], he got out of there finally and got behind the wagon. Oh, he was mad. His mouth was just a-frothing. Froth on the mouth, just like a wild man, and was going to kill me. "I kill you! I kill you!" he says.

I says, "All right." I drove up to a tree and tied my horses up. He was out there cussing me—he was behind the wagon. As soon as I got them tied up, I took that willow and was going to give him the darndest lashing that he ever got in his life, but he wouldn't stay. Galloped off. Went on. I told him, "I'll catch you someday. I'll fix you." I said, "Someday I'll catch you. You wait," I said. But I never did catch him. Whenever we'd meet, he'd go way around the timber there, wouldn't come past me close, would go way around. He wasn't going to be caught. [laughs].

MJ: Joe, tell Ned about the time when you came home and the Indian met you on the road.

JZ: Oh, that was on top of Angel Hill. Drunken Indian met me up there. I was going to Kalispell, he was coming from there. He hollered, got in the middle of the road and held his hands up. I stopped the team and asked him what he wanted. Well, he says, "You steal my horse," he says.

I says, "Yes, I steal."

"Yes, you steal my horse."

I had a colt along, I says, "That colt out there"—it's in the brush, out of the road—"that your horse?"

He looked. "Yes. That's my horse."

"Is this your horse?"

"Yes. That's my horse."

"This your horse?"

"Yes, that's my horse."

I says, "Come around here. You can't see from there. Come around here and look them over. Where you can see them." Of course, I had to do something. I didn't know what to do. I know shooting arms at all or anything, and I had to do something, had to scheme something. I had him come back there to where I was sitting on the right side and look them horses over. While he did that looking over, I jumped out of the wagon box, and I knew I could knock him out if I could get close enough to him. See, he had a six-shooter and a big bowie knife on him, and I was barehanded. I hit him in the breast it'd knock him down, but as I landed, you know. I see he was helpless like a baby. Trying hide his face and didn't make no resistance, but I was acting like I wanted to hit him and he was warding it off, I didn't. He backed off against a fallen tree there, wind fall, and he [unintelligible]. He hollered, "You my friend!" So of course, I quit then. By god, he was my friend, too. He never did do anything.

NJ: Did you have some pretty good friends among the Indians?

JZ: Yeah, some of them. He was one of them, afterwards. He used to come up and have lunch with me every once in a while. I was going to scalp him and do everything with him, but it never come to that. He got his hair cut, he didn't have any braids. I told him, "After dinner, I'll scalp you." I got up, I looked him over, I said, "No, no, I don't want you. You're no good. All same as white man," I says. "I'm going to get Indian scalp," I says. [laughs] No good. No, after that, he remembered me no matter where he was, whether he was drunk or whether he was sober. He was the most quarrelsome Indian on the reservation there.

When I was building that schoolhouse, I batched right over there, and I was cooking my breakfast. And old Lame Louie, they called him, he came up through that...that was all timber, heavy timber, from Rollins. Came from over there—north, northeast, and east. You'd hear him howl like a pack of coyotes. He come down, he saw one of the neighbors there out doing their chores and he up after them. Run them in the house. Went and slammed the door on them and rode around and "I kill you," he says, "I kill you." Then he wouldn't come out until he saw another neighbor over yonder, he took after him. Went up there and run him in the house, gonna kill him. By that time he saw my smoke there on the beach, he turned his horse full speed up there to where I was. I was down there cooking my breakfast. When he got so close, I got up on my feet. Because the way he was going, right heading for me, he'd run right over me. I got up on my feet and stood there, and he stopped and recognized me, says, "Hello!"

"Hello, Louie," I says. "You're drunk again?"

"No, no, no." He wasn't drunk. I was busy cooking and had a tin cup there, and he wanted me to go and get him a tin cup full of water. He had raw alcohol in bottles, he wanted to dilute that in the water, you know.

I handed him the cup, I said, "You go, I'm busy here." So he give me an awful look but never said a word. So he took the cup and poured in about one-fourth full of alcohol—that raw alcohol—and drank it. He wouldn't go down and get his own water there to dilute it with. It wasn't long, he was going to go to reservation, couldn't get on his horse. Meantime, the others, when they seen him coming to me, why, they was hollering for me to leave there, that he'd kill me. Gonna kill them, he says. So I had to help him on the horse and gave him the reins of the horse and he took them and started down towards Dayton, and got over to where the Crescent Bay, they call it, that other bay where they snagged the fish with. Fell off the horse, right in the middle of the road. [laughs] Was some girls there from Dayton visiting some friends, and they were in the lumber wagon. They got up to him and asked him to get out of the road. He was going to kill them, and it scared them to death. Gracious, they were scared. They come thundering around there, I haven't eaten my breakfast yet, wasn't through with it when they come. Seen there was something wrong up the road, and I asked them what was wrong.

"Oh, there's an Indian there and he wants to...he's going to kill us." Gonna kill us.

I tell them, no, he wouldn't kill nobody. Says, "Turn around, and I'll get you past the Indian. You want to go home, and I'll get you past the Indian." So we drove up to him and stopped the team and I went up to Louie, I said, "Louie, you've got to get out of this road. Somebody'll run over you. There's nice grass just a little ways out of the road." I says, "You come up here. Give me your horse, I'll lead him up there for you." He gave me the reins and he crawled up there on his hands and knees, and I gave him the reins and he got a hold of them. I said, "Now, be good," I says. I told the girls to go on home then, and they did. They went past him. So I told them he wouldn't hurt nobody.

Is that recording yet?

NJ: Yeah.

JZ: He wouldn't hurt nobody. Of course those was great incidents that happened every once in a while that way.

MJ: Joe, tell us about the time you scared the Indians in your garden.

JZ: Oh, I don't want to [unintelligible] on here. It's against the law then, it's against the law now.

NJ: Well listen, Joe, did the Indians bother you the most, or did the bears bother you the most? Did you have much trouble with the bears around here?

JZ: The deer was the worst.

NJ: Deer was the worst?

JZ: Bear never bothered us for a long time. They come and into eat maybe some apples and go on. Never come back again. But deer is the ones that bothered—they'd horn and girdle the trees and finally kill them.

NJ: But there's always been bear around, hasn't there?

JZ: Oh yes. Always have been bear. Yes. For a long time there, I cooked nothing but bear grease to cook with.

NJ: Well how old are you now, Joe?

JZ: Well, I'm 85 now.

NJ: Eight-five years old. And you've lived here about 55 years, haven't you?

JZ: Just about.

NJ: In all of your travels, do you think that there's any place that is more beautiful or more attractive than this place right here?

JZ: No I don't. This suits me the best of any place I ever been. I've been in a good many states during my days.

NJ: Now you have one daughter down in Superior, Montana.

JZ: Yes.

NJ: And have one son down in Lone Pine.

JZ: Lone Pine. And one—

NJ: And one son down in Pullman, Washington.

JZ: Pullman, Washington.

NJ: And one daughter in California.

JZ: California, yes.

NJ: And you're holding the old fort, the log cabin that you built so many years ago.

JZ: Yes. Still living in it.

Male speaker: Yes. Well.

[Break in audio]

NJ: All right, Joe, now you tell that in there.

[audio gets distorted and very loud]

JZ: I made a mistake about where the last three children were born. They were born right here in the house where I'm living now. The old log house. And that's [unintelligible] corrected.

NJ: [too quiet to hear]

JZ: Midwife said we didn't have any wood mice.

BZ: Tell us about the dugout boat you made when you first came here.

JZ: Oh, that has to go on another record, that's a fishing outfit.

NJ: Go right ahead, Joe, and tell him.

JZ: [unintelligible]. We used to didn't have them. We got them on there.

NJ: No—

JZ: Where we used to fish?

Well, yes, in the early days, we made us a dugout—flat-bottom boat. We used that, made out of a big, log tree—a big tree. Hewed it out and used to fish in it. At that time, we could catch any amount of fish by a torch light, and we generally go out one evening and supply ourselves with fish for the whole year. That's all.

MJ: Go ahead.

JZ: For the whole year. That's all there is to it.

BZ: Tell us about spearing the fish.

JZ: Well, wasn't no spearing in there. We caught them.

BZ: Tell about spearing the fish [unintelligible] the log.

JZ: [laughs] It always was against the law then. It is now.

BZ: Well we won't tell a game warden.

JZ: What?

BZ: We won't tell a game warden.

JZ: Well, they may hear the record.

Male speaker: Well, we'll tell them it's somebody else.

MJ: That would be interesting, Joe. Those days, they didn't have laws.

JZ: At that time, why, it wasn't against the law, as far as we knew, to spear them. So we used a spear on those fish, and we got through with our fishing in two or three hours. It was something unusual laying there on the bottom. And my brother, another friend that was with me, with us, he stayed with us that winter, they [unintelligible] about it. I handed him the spear and I says, "Sock that spear into it. See what it is." He did, and it shot out of there like a shot out of a gun. Pretty near upset him, took him in the water. He didn't hold him, he tore loose. That was the first big fish we seen in this lake. The biggest fish.

MJ: How big was it?

JZ: It was about 10, 12 feet long.

MJ: What kind?

JZ: What?

MJ: What kind?

JZ: Oh, I think he was a sturgeon. That's what I think it was. I can't tell, couldn't describe another fish like it. Still didn't look exactly like a sturgeon either, but it couldn't have been nothing else.

[Break in audio]

JZ: Oh, I forget now what I was going to say.

MJ: Turn it off. Listen—

[Break in audio]

JZ: —at that time, it was no trick at all to get fish all you wanted, any time of the year. They were so plentiful you didn't have to go very far to get a mess of fish. Same way with the deer and bear. So we had meat galore during the first 10, 12 years that we lived here.

BZ: Tell about scooping the fish out of the river with a pitchfork.

JZ: How?

BZ: Tell about scooping the fish out of the river with a pitchfork.

JZ: Oh, that was that [unintelligible]. Yes, at that time, we could go to most any stream and catch all the fish you wanted, especially when they were spawning. For instance, at Lake Ronan, we would go up that little creek and scoop out these natural cutthroats that weighed as high as seven, eight, and nine pounds apiece. And they'd scoop them out with a pitchfork on the bank. Catch what they wanted and go home and processed them, pickled them, preserve them for future use.

BZ: Tell about moving Aunt Anna to Demersville in the old launch.

JZ: [laughs] That was quite an experience. Yes, when my sister, when she moved, she rented her place here. She moved to Kalispell. So I had a launch—a flat-bottom barge—and we's gonna move her up the river to Demersville from here at Rollins. We get the barge loaded, about 34, 3,500 pounds, and here'd come a wind—southwest wind—and we couldn't go on account of the mouth of the river was so fierce there. When a little wind here, it was just regular breakers rolling over there. Open boat, why, one breaker would fill it all up and sink it. So we'd have to

go and tie up again, and unload. We did that for about four or five days, pretty near a week. Same thing was over and over. So I noticed how the weather was acting, so I told my sister, "We won't load that barge until way after dinner. And as soon as the southwest wind ceases to blow, why, we'll pull out and get into the mouth of the river, anyway, and then we're safe," which we did and it worked.

That was getting late in the year, in December, and kind of a risky trip to take on account of water's beginning to freeze. We was liable to get froze in any time in that river. We had to break ice lots of places. So we got up in there, and I gave them instructions to be sure and be there, because I could make it in a day—that 28 miles of crooked river, from the mouth of the river to Demersville—and be there with the teams. The boys, of course, they were young, they was inexperienced, and they loaded up in a hurry and forgot a trace of chickens. They got as far as Lakeside, where it is now, before they noticed it. So they turned around and come back. And we had to unload. Nobody there. Go across the river and get dry wood and make a big fire, and have her stuff around it so it wouldn't freeze. Vegetables such as potatoes and canned goods and different things. So we had quite a time getting rid of that after we got it there.

Then the roads were bad in those days, and they took one of the teams from a lumber yard there to big wagons. Was going to haul it all in one load. I told them, "No, make two loads out of it." So first thing they do—why, they wouldn't take my word for it, advice—so they got stuck and they froze half of their vegetables before they could get them unloaded and get them back to Kalispell. Froze half of them. Of course, I couldn't see them through to Kalispell. I had to go down the river so I wouldn't be froze in. Then I had to break ice different places. Got down to the mouth of the river, and the weather was so rough I had to camp there for two days before I could get through that mouth of river. There was breakers there pretty near as high as I see it, just rolling. Open boat had no business in there. So I was contented, there was good duck shooting there. I got me, oh, a couple dozen ducks, and so when the weather quieted down, I pulled on home. That was enough for that year.

BZ: In the old days, what boats operated between Somers and Polson?

JZ: Why, in the early days, there was the old Klondyke (?). I think they called it a John Carter (?) and State of Montana, I think. Montana and the Carter, they were good boats. Good sea-going boats. Round bottom and everything. Klondyke was an old stern wheeler, just a freight boat. More than passengers, because they had a big deck there for the freight. That was at that time, so...

BZ: Could these boats make the trip in one day?

JZ: Yes. They did.

BZ: Round trip?

JZ: They made the round trip a day. Yes. Even the old Klondyke did, only took longer to do it than the others. The others would plow right through. They were all covered boats. They had to be. They couldn't make the mouth of the river if you wasn't.

BZ: After they put in the bus lines, of course, they discontinued the boats.

JZ: After what?

BZ: After they put in the bus lines, they discontinued these boats.

JZ: Oh, yes. Before the buses started, why, at that time, the boats were beginning to accumulate again. One time we had eight boats, different boats here, [unintelligible] this lake. They'd stop and get whatever you had to send, and they'd bring anything you wanted to buy. It made it handy. But just soon as the trucks commenced to operate, cars began to be used, why, they put all the boats out of commission. Passengers was the best pay then, and passengers would rather take the dry land than the water. They were afraid of that rough lake. It toss them too much. Make them seasick.

MJ: Where did you get your mail in those early days?

JZ: We had a man by the name of Eugene McCarthy (?). His home, where he was born there—I think what I heard—there at Proctor. He carried the mail horseback from Kalispell to Proctor at that time about once a week. That once a week service continued until the early 1900s—1902 or '03. Then they began to have two trips a week. Since then, of course, they improved the roads and stuff, we have it every day now. Had it since then. [unintelligible] operated since 1911, '12. Then we had good service. We have it yet. Receive mail every day.

[Break in audio]

MJ: What did you travel in first?

JZ: Well, a stage. I'd take a stage. First two times I was here we had a trail on the other side of the lake—east shore of the lake—to Big Fork, and we had to take saddle horses to make that trip. Then from there on, there was a stage to Kalispell...or to Demersville. It wasn't to Demersville either. Out to Holt. What they call Holt. You would take a boat from there to Demersville. That was the way it was. They have a bridge there now.

MJ: You had a team first, I suppose.

JZ: Yes, I had my horses and wagon, that's after I settled here. I was here twice before to help my second cousin harvest during my vacation from Denver. Then I'd go back to Denver again.

MJ: What year was that?

JZ: That was in '87 and '88. Then I didn't come back until '97. I stayed two years on the other side of the range. [unintelligible] in the Yellowstone Valley was my stopping place. But I worked from there on to Billings, where the work was handy and where was the most of it. Carpentry I was following, and of course, I followed up where the work was. So I stayed there for two years, and in 1899, I rigged out my schooner again [unintelligible] and came over here to Flathead in the fall of 1899. Been here ever since.

MJ: Where did you stay when you first landed here?

JZ: Where did I stay? Well, we camped here at Rollins. There was an old bay there where that doctor lives. There's an old cabin in there. That's where that bay took its name from, that Lone Cabin Bay, they called it. Until the Dewey's Mill got established here, and since then they called it the Dewey's Bay. But originally, it was Lone Cabin Bay. That's where we camped the first night, and my brother had a chance to buy a homestead right out from a man by the name of Wert (?). And that homestead that I am on now, that was vacant—that was subject to enter—so I settled to there. Our lands joined together. So that's why I come here, and I liked it so well, I haven't moved out yet. I don't think I will.

MJ: [laughs] What did you live in until you built?

JZ: Well, we had a little cabin on this place, this homestead right that he bought out. Right here next to this side of the orchard. I spent the first winter in there, had pneumonia in there too. Had a fireplace that kept fire all night, and I got over it without any doctors. So the doctor said the only thing that saved me was because my lungs expansions was [unintelligible]. He said, "That's the only thing that saved you. Without remedies." Said they had room enough so it wouldn't choke them up.

MJ: How much land did you have on your homestead?

JZ: Just 40 acres, even. I bought a fraction of a section from the Northern Pacific Railroad. At that time, it was for sale, and I had a chance to buy it, so I bought it right there and then. It's a good thing, because they took it off the market soon after I bought that. I'd have been shut out from the lake entirely if I hadn't of bought that place.

MJ: How many acres did you clear then?

JZ: Well, I cleared it out for, well, around 500 trees—about four acres that first year. That first winter. Of course, my brother helped me and that other man who stayed with us. He helped me. There was three of us.

MJ: How did you do that?

JZ: Just by hand. Axe, cross-cut saw, maul and wedges. That went together to be a timberman.

NJ: Lots of good old elbow grease.

JZ: Elbow grease, yeah.

NJ: Lots of it.

MZ: What year did you build our house?

JZ: Our house? Well, it was while we was clearing. I saved all the building logs we had there, about an acre and a half. Built my log house for me. [unintelligible] 16 by 32, L-shape. That'd be three 16-foot sections. Always an L-shape. I cut them all off right there where the house is, about an acre and a half. Saved them, and next spring, why, I built the house up. Set out the trees and then built the house.

MJ: Was this before you were married?

JZ: Yes. Yes, I didn't marry until, oh, seven, eight years afterwards.

MZ: How many of the houses in this neighborhood have you built?

JZ: How many what?

MJ: How many houses in this neighborhood—part of the country—have you built?

JZ: Well, that's hard to tell. Right here in Rollins, I built one, two besides my own. But I built quite a few in country between Creston and Kalispell. And from Somers on to Kalispell, quite a few houses there on the valley. Lots of them. I can show you one yet, you can see it from the main road standing there. This old house here at Rollins, one of them is still standing. Then Mrs. Ulrich's (?) house is still standing. Well, that wasn't built later on. That's a nice house, well-built and everything. You go down by the lake shore, why, you can see it yet.

MZ: How did Angel Hill get its name?

MJ: How did Angel Hill get its name?

JZ: Oh, Angel Hill got its name by...there was a name by the man of Angel, and his partner—he had a partner, I forget his name—They were establishing a cattle ranch west of Kalispell, over in Pleasant Valley. This Angel, he come through with a...followed up and bought them a nice white horse and new saddles and chaps and everything complete. Got through Dayton here, where the Kootenai Indian camp was, and he inquired the way to Kalispell. So they directed him the right way, all right, around the lake here. That was only way the road went that time. They took

fancy to his paraphernalia, and they concluded they'd have it. So they had passages through these mountains—there's three of them between here and Kalispell—that they could use. So they took one of them passages and waited for him until he showed up, and shot him off the horse and robbed him. Took his horse and everything, and robbed him. He must have had, they claimed, about 18,000 dollars on his person. They took all of that—the two Indians. Of course, they were gamblers, the Indians do. As long as they have any money, they'll gamble. Same way with the squaws. [laughs] They was flashing such big bills when they were at the gambling tables, and everybody was wondering where they got that money from. Couldn't imagine. So of course, when this Angel's partner notified them that he hasn't made his appearance—and they knew when he started—why, they laid a suspicion on these Indians. They arrested those two Indians and tried them there at Demersville, and found them guilty and either shot or hung them, I don't know which. Both of them.

Then, of course, the Indians were going to go on a war path. They were on a war path. All painted up and had their war dances, and the people had to barricade their families and old men and children there at Demersville. Set a guard around them, and all the able-bodied men they could get together, why, they set them out to guard those passes. To keep them on the reservation. At the same time, of course, they sent for help to Helena for cavalry at that time. They come in. That took day and a half for them to get down here, and we had to hold those passes until they come. Then when finally they came and relieved us.

We had some great experiences on that guard there. I went on guard there after two o'clock. I was the farthest guard out. We could hear the war whoops and war dance all night. We looked everything over when I went on guard, couldn't see nothing suspicious, and when the light changed, why, there was a stump there and it looked like an Indian squatted down. More we looked at it, the more it looked like an Indian, so I took a shot at it. Of course, when I shot that report went over there to Dayton. They could hear it, those three or four miles, and they quit their war dance right there and then. Never another sound from there. Then when we examined the stump the next morning, after the cavalry came, I seen I hit that stump right square in the center. If that had been an Indian, he'd have been a dead one. Right there. [laughs] So we were glad when we were relieved, anyway. It wasn't very pleasant situation to be in, but we took it all Indian fashion. We kept concealed just as well as the Indians could conceal themselves, and they couldn't make no surprise attack. If they had of come, we were all good shots, and there would have been an awful lot of bloodshed right there and then.

MJ: What Indians were they?

JZ: They's Kootenais. Kootenai Indians.

NJ: Was this battle with the Indians, that was the result of these two that were hung, or shot, because of the robbery, is that it? Is that what stirred the Indians up?

JZ: That stirred the Indians up for four days. They killed those two Indians that killed Angel.

NJ: Did they quiet down after that?

JZ: Oh, yes. They had to. Yes, they were afraid of the cavalry. I guess they were threatened to be deported out of here. See, this wasn't their reservation at all. They was just tucked in here to one corner to keep them out of mischief, from roaming over the country. They were just tucked here to keep them out of there. So they threatened to take them off the reservation and send them back to Canada. They were Canadian renegades. The meanest Indians that I ever saw. I saw a good many tribes. The fierce Sioux and the Pawnees and all the tribes in Oklahoma. Apaches...Oh, I don't know what these other Indians are that weaves those blankets. What are they?

MJ: Navajo?

JZ: Navajos, yes. Navajos.

BZ: Do you remember the Oklahoma land rush?

JZ: How?

WM: The Oklahoma land rush.

JZ: [laughs] Oh yes. I was in that myself. Yes. It opened up in the fall of the year, and I wanted a piece of land, and my partner that I was working with, why, he knew...he was from that country. So he knew I wanted a piece of land, had me go with him. He had a good team and a wagon, and he says he knows all that country and "I got my claim picked out," and there's an awful good claim right to the side of his that's almost as good. He wanted me to take that, and that'd be the best bet for us. So we got there and was in that rush when the signal was, they fired off a cannon and then everybody go for himself—pell-mell. Run over people and run into one another and break their rigs up. We got ditched in coulee there that was tall grass and wash out through there and we didn't see it until we got onto it. We went to turn around and another team come and knocked us over in there—in the ditch. Took us three days before we rigged out our wagon and could fix it up so we could go on. By that time, why, there was three squatters on his claim he was going to take, and two squatters on the one I was going to take. All swore vengeance if they didn't get off, they'd shoot them—shoot one another. They were all there first, they called it their claim. So my partner, he asked me what I thought of it. I told him I didn't think anything of it. I didn't want none of that in mine. I'm waiting to get out of here as quick as I can. So he had some folks living there, he hadn't seen for—

[Break in audio]

NJ: This part of this recording has been made on August the 31, 1954, in the cabin home of Reverend and Mrs. W. Paul Jones on Flathead Lake.

MJ: Joe. We want you to tell us some of those good old bear stories that you've told us. We've enjoyed them so. We'd like to hear them again.

JZ: Well now let's see. [unintelligible].

MJ: Which one was the most exciting one—experience you had?

JZ: Well, the most experience I had was—is this taping now—was in Colorado. We had never had, what you call, narrow escapes, because at one time I was within eight to ten feet of a bear. He raised up on his hind haunches, but I killed him right in his tracks. So he had no soul. The others, it seemed like I always hit them so hard it took the fight right out of them. They got right out of there as quick as they could get. So I never had no narrow escapes with a bear. But one place there, the old hunter there, he had an order for a big bear skin—silver tip—if he could get it, was 75 dollars. That was big money in those days for anything like that, for a bear pelt. So he had me help him get that bear. So I told him, all right, I wasn't doing anything that winter and I'll just go with you. So we filled up our knapsacks with grub and cleaned out our rifles and took our shells along and took his track middle of the afternoon. Followed the tracks until it got too dark to track anymore, and camped right there on his trail until it got light enough the next morning. Then we took his track again, and by that time we were in New Mexico. There was a canyon there...I think they call it the Chaco (?) Canyon—24 miles long. We were quite a ways up from the mouth of it then.

The next day, why, we took his trail and went the full length of the canyon, 24 miles. Finally, I discovered his den. He had his den made on top of the ground on a southwest slope of the hill. The hills were by themselves, they're not very high. But they still hilly though and cut up. I pointed out to my partner, I says, "There's his den."

He said, "All right." He took his hat off, cap off in one hand, rifle in the other, and was going to run up there and get that bear.

I told him, "You can go if you want to. I won't go to his den. He knows we're following him, and he's a vicious bear." Now, I says, "If you're foolish enough to go there and be torn up, go to it. But I'm going to take the safe side." I said, "We'll climb this hill. It's pretty steep. And we'll have all kinds of chances to kill him before he can get to us. Up that hill." So he concluded better take my advice, so he went with me and we got opposite that, above his den. I took a boulder, and I threw it onto his den there—hit it. He was out quick as a flash. If we'd been there, why, he'd have tore us to pieces before we could have even shot more than once. So he didn't want him shot in the head, they was going to mount the head and all. Shoot him somewhere else. So I shot him back of the shoulders. He gave a pitiful whine. I see I hit him a dead shot so I won't shoot anymore. Of course, he got excited, and he just went to blazing away at him, nearly emptied his gun. Swore he hit him every shot. I told him, "You never touched a hair. You was shooting the tops of trees off." He was shooting way up in the air there. He wanted to be me

dollars that he did. I told him, "All right, I'll bet you. Fifty dollars be the easiest money I ever made." So when we skinned him there, the only bullet that hit him is where I shot him, right back of the shoulders and tore his heart all to pieces. With his heart torn up the way it was, he run fully 200 yards before he keeled over dead. Last time he shot, he fell, he hit a tree there, sapling there, about 12 feet high. He shot the top right out of it. There, I hit him that time. So we had quite a time getting the pelt out of there. It was heavy. We had to hire some Mexicans out there to help us. So we skinned him and took the pelt and gave them the meat. Come back over what they call the Santa Fe Trail. Come back by the way of Trinidad, Colorado. That is where the trail was. Went back home. That was quite an experience with that bear hunt.

Of course, we had quite a few experiences since then. One place, here west of Kalispell. When I first come here, I was working in Kalispell then. A contractor McKnight (?), he said—him and I hunted before, so we...he says, "Joe, let's get our rifles and I've got a good team. We'll go west to Kalispell there and get some deer. Material won't be here for eight or ten days, we can't do anything, so we might as well be up there and spend our time." They put me on the stand. They went around through that big gully there in timber country, and they were going to chase the deer out and chase them up over me—where I was. So they got all stationed, and I got my location up there on top. Big windfall blew over, and I could stand in there and shoot through the limbs, or the roots of the tree. Heard something coming and brush cracking, and I thought sure there's our deer now. Instead, there was a bear! Come right up there, and of course, he smelt me as soon as he got that opening and was weaving around, and I shot him. Right there in his tracks. Next one come up, I thought that might be the last of them, but I didn't go up to the bear. I kept hid. Next noise come, another bear. I thought to myself there must be a deer come up pretty quick. So I shot that bear and got him the first shot. The third time the brush cracked, here come the third bear. I shot him and rolled him over, but he got up again, but I shot him again. He laid there then. No deer in sight. Bear had that corral for themselves. So we had to go to another range the next day to get our deer. So we come in with a couple of deer and three bear.

Then we had several experiences, oh, off and on. We were out hunting, there was kind of a smart aleck in the party, and he was going to initiate me in bear hunting. Gonna scare the witch out of me. He thought I was tenderfoot, that's what he called me. Instead of that, I killed more bears than he ever did. Of course, I saw a number of bears up there in what they call the Teakettle Mountains (?). That's pretty close to where the aluminum plant is going up now. Of course, they told us to go around this way, all by myself. I didn't care. I saw several bears, but I couldn't get a good enough shot at them, I wouldn't shoot at them. Finally we got to the end of their range, and he must have run onto a bear with some cubs there. First the guy knew, here he come pell-mell, and bear right after him. He shot once, but he didn't have time to shoot again. He just took for his heels. Run back where close to where I was, and I shot it in the neck. That killed it. So of course, McKnight told the us, "It's a darn good thing the tenderfoot was with you. You'd have been torn up." He told him that, "He killed more bear than all of us put together in his days. You can't call him a tenderfoot." [laughs] So ever since then, why, I always pull the top notches. He claimed that I was the best shot in the state at that time. I don't know

that I was or not. I could shoot, I know. But I didn't care anything about the best. I could hit my target when I shot at it—had a good shot at it—and that's all I could do.

MJ: Is it dangerous to go near the dens and try to catch them?

JZ: Yes, it is. If you're trailing a bear and he dens up, or goes and hides, you want to be very careful because he's going to lay for you. Now, there's an instance right here, right here in Rollins. [unintelligible] over here and his nephew, they were out here north of our place here, hunting one fall. Come early snow, and they tracked the deer...or that bear that had a den there in the rocks. Instead of going around, which they ought to done, to be on higher ground, upper ground, he went followed his tracks right into the den—into the crevice of the rocks. Of course, the bear made a charge for him, he never had time to shoot. All he could do is be jumping out of his way to get away from that bear, and he fell off of a cliff there about 35 feet high. Backed off, and the bear wouldn't go down there after him. By that time, his nephew killed the bear. Knocked [unintelligible] out, but it didn't kill him. He come to again. He's heart and hale yet. He lives here in Rollins. Now, there's an instance right there. Now, I was always very careful not taking any chances in my days.

MJ: Joe, didn't you tell me something about an experience that Mr. Eudie (?) had with a bear?

JZ: Oh, that was right here out of this orchard. At fall, at times, there was a couple here that come every snow. I stationed myself but I was still guarding this side, why, the bear run on the other side of me. If there'd been two of us, we could have shot him right here. But you see, Eudie was the only one was helping me, and he went and took his track and followed around and I was going to head him off, but he didn't come where I could see him to shoot at. So he tracked him through the woods here half a day, and that bear wouldn't den up. He'd just play hide and go seek with him. Go around through the thickets, and where there's a windfall you get behind it and just...you could see in the snow, where he'd put his paw on and put his head right on his paws and looked to see where he was, and when he got so close, why, he'd pick up and go again. So he followed him all that afternoon until he got tired out, and then he come back satisfied he couldn't get a shot at him. That was right here in this orchard, our orchards here. Between here and Swiss Camp (?) on the left side of the road is where he took for there, when he got out of here. That's where he was playing hide and go seek with Fred Eudie. [laughs] He couldn't see him. I never tracked him. I found better ways, but I wouldn't fool with him. If I went bear hunting, I prepared for it. Go in four or five of us, and we'd always get a shot then. He couldn't escape all of them.

MJ: You were working in Glacier Park one time, didn't you?

JZ: [laughs] Yes, I was. Near Glacier Park there. I was [unintelligible] some mining timbers for Butte. My nearest supply camp was five miles, and I couldn't keep myself in grub. I would go out to work and come back and everything was ransacked. The bears got in there and eat everything up for me, and I'd have to be hungry. Or else walk five miles, and after you worked

heavy all day, you didn't feel like walking that five miles. So I wanted the guards there to get me a .22 rifle or something, I could kill some snowshoe rabbits or a pheasant with so I wouldn't be out of grub altogether. I would eat a meal, anyway, such as it was until I could get some more supplies. So he finally gave me a .22 rifle with some 322 shorts. They were very liberal. So I wait for the bear every chance I get after supper and before it got daybreak, and I peppered those bear with that .22. They couldn't hear that. Some of them I emptied the whole magazine onto them. Every time I shoot, they'd run faster. [laughs] I finally got them so they wouldn't come near the camp. No matter where they saw me in the woods, they just made a beeline away. They didn't want nothing to do with me. [laughs] Yes, I tried all kinds of schemes, but that worked the best.

I made two deadfalls, one deadfall, put on a ton of rock, I thought. He sprung the trigger all right and got under it, and he didn't stay. He dug the dirt out, where he could get his feet braced, and upset the...leaned off far enough so the rock would roll off, and he got out, went out of there. I don't think he ever got out again, come back again, because I had some spikes running through [unintelligible], and he'd run against those spikes and he'd tear his hide on that in two or three places before he got through. Another place, or another time, I built a chute there and put the bait in the back end of it and put the trigger there and a door up, and when he hit that bait, pulled the trigger, why, the door shut behind him and locked him up in there. So I had everything spiked, I thought, but I didn't put a spike in the last log up there—the top log in one corner. He discovered that, and he lifted the whole business up and got out. So that wouldn't work. But the .22 is the one that works.

MJ: Joe, do you have much experience of bears around your place?

JZ: Deers?

MJ: No, bear. Do they come around your cabin much?

JZ: No, I never had no experience after dark with a bear, never saw one, in fact, after dark. I'd hear them once in a while, tearing out. Once I shot a deer north of our place here. We was living on the reservation there then, and I think Bill was with us. So I shot the deer at dusk, and come down and I bled him. Come down and got my supper and took the wheelbarrow up. I think Bill went with me. We built a [unintelligible] bonfire to skin the deer and dress him out, and we could hear that bear on that steep side hill, walking back and forth, but he wouldn't come in sight. Stayed up there. We could hear him crack the brush. They're very noisy—the bear are in the brush. When they run, why it seems like they put their front feet over like that, and everything is in front, they clear it all. The rocks they roll over and bounce down and sounds like a big bunch of deer when a bear runs through. They think it's that way.

MJ: They have a lot of strength in their paw, don't they? A bear? When a bear hits you? Isn't there a lot of strength in it?

JZ: Oh my, he'll rip you wide open. Yeah, tear you right open if your clothes don't bother him. They'll tear clothes and all. Now there's, for example here, Mike Rumor (?), he lives here now at Rollins. He's got a scar on his back. They were dressed in the fall, their heavy clothes on—it's a good thing he had it, heavy clothes. He found two cubs there in the road. He was going to catch them and take them to camp. He caught one, put it under the tub, and the other one he caught and it went to squealing. Well, here come the old bear. They're never very far. She come and overtook him and give him a swipe with one of his paws, right in the middle of the back and tore all of his clothes and made a gash there that be scar for the rest of his days. [unintelligible] you see that scar right now. He's living right here now, Mike Rumor. You know him, don't you?

MJ: Yeah.

MZ: Did you shoot many mountain lions?

JZ: No. That's one thing I didn't shoot much. I killed one in Arizona, and I killed one here in Montana, right here north of Rollins. But he got away, and I didn't find him until the pelt and everything was damaged, couldn't use them anymore. But I killed him. But if I hadn't run out of snow, I'd have got him that evening. But by next morning, come about four inches of snow, and covered up all the tracks. I couldn't do nothing. But I went in through there, time afterwards, and within a quarter of a mile where I quit, he was dead. Lay there dead. So two is all I have killed—I ever got a shot at.

MJ: And how many deer?

JZ: Oh, deer, I don't know. [laughs] We had deer galore. We never kept track of the deer. Because when there was a big camp of us anywheres, why, one or two of us would go out and kill a deer to be meat for the whole winter. So we never kept track of them at that time. In fact, there was no limit. I don't think. We never heard of any at that time. When they put the limit on, to kill 12, the first limit. Now, I bet we can only kill one. You have to steal it. I steal.

MZ: Did the Indians here make birch-bark canoes?

MJ: Did the Indians ever make birch-bark canoes?

JZ: Well, I never saw them use any. I found a birch-bark canoe in along the driftwoods along the shore here once. That's the only one I saw here. But it was a very crude affair, and I don't think it ever worked. Because the bark wasn't long enough and wasn't big enough. The trees are too small. But they had it built in a canoe, all right, and it just got away or else it drifted away. But I never see them use those canoes on this lake.

MZ: In Nebraska, did the Indians help you fight a prairie fire once?

JZ: What?

MZ: In Nebraska, did the Indians help you fight a prairie fire?

JZ: Oh, in Nebraska we lived there among the Indians. In fact, we lived there among the Sioux. They claimed everything north of the Platte as Sioux territory. And south of the Platte, the Pawnee Indians claimed that territory. They were two fierce tribes. That is, big tribes. The Sioux were the fierce ones. We were living in what's called a Pebble Creek, and our land run pretty close to the creek. So there's what little round the knoll there, they call that the Indian holdout. So when we settled, why, we didn't fence that in. Left it open for the Indians to come there, and every fall, generally, the Pawnees would encroach on the Sioux territory and kill buffalos. The Sioux would mass up, gather warriors out, and that'd be their camping grounds for one night. That Pebble Creek.

There was a big prairie fire north of us. We could see the smoke rolling. Of course, we all had fire guards—fire lines, they call it—about 30-foot strip broke up on the grass so they would combat the fire. Even that wasn't high enough in a high wind, and when growth of the prairie was big, why, it would jump that. So these Indians, they saw it coming and they come wanted some buckets and old rags or gunnysacks. They went up that fire line with buckets of water—

[Break in audio]

—and back-fired all around us. All around our place and where their campground was—back-fired and saved us from being burnt out. See, all the hay and the grain and everything was out there, and that would have all burnt up if it hadn't been for those Indians. Well, we got raising a few pigs and one of them stole, burrowed out, went up north of us into tall grass there to raise her pigs, you know. Five or six shotes, pretty good size. Of course, she burnt, and the shotes burnt. But they were still alive and were suffering, so was the old mother hog. They come and reported it, and Mother said, "We'll go and look." She went up and looked at them, and she said, "No, you take them. We don't want them. You take them." So they killed them to get them out of their miseries, and they had their pork roast there at that time. They whooped and yelled, and they were glad to get them. They ate the little pigs and older and all. They like pork. So they saved us from being burned out, and they were well paid for it too. They thought they were.

So one fall, especially, we were...oh, we wasn't low in meat but in change of meat. That's what was low in. Big Sioux Indian come up there, we just had our butchering done and the meats cured, and we had a big slab of bacon hanging on the wall there yet we didn't put away. He kept looking at that bacon, looking at it, and pretty soon he told Mother, "Me swap buffalo meat for that meat."

Mother says, "Where is your buffalo meat?"

He said, "Me get them. Me get them. Me bring them." So all right, she let him have it. Sure enough, he held his word all right. Later on, we were visiting, and at that time there were not much of a settlement. Half a mile was the closest settler we had at that time, and there were sparsely here and there, you know. We went out to see one of the neighbors, come back—that was on a Sunday—there in the shed hung a whole hind quarter of buffalo meat. [unintelligible] full slab of bacon from the hog, it wasn't cut up small pieces, it was full size. They thought it was worth it all right. They brought over that whole quarter of buffalo meat. I remember yet how we used to like it. How we liked that buffalo meat. I hadn't eaten any since then until I got here. Pablo and Stinger (?), they used to butcher a buffalo every year, around holidays. They'd always send me up a big chunk of it too in here, when I was living here at the lake. So that's the last buffalo meat I've had.

MZ: Were you ever involved in the Indian war dance?

JZ: In what?

MJ: In the war dance?

JZ: See the war dance?

MJ: Had you ever gotten connected with the war dance?

JZ: Oh, no. I never was connected with them. But I was interested when I was a boy, when they were having their war whoops and war dances there on at Angel Hill, or that Indian hill they called it. That was, I think, the year after we had that big fire. There was 900 warriors come over there, all painted up. They were having their kiyi after we had our supper, and...what you call them. This Indian come along, he says his squaw was sick. He wanted chickens. So it was towards evening, and she had the chickens and she had an old hen there, a white hen, and she said, "You see that white hen there?"

"Yes," he said.

"You catch him. Take him." So he did. He run that chicken down and took her home to the camp. Another Indian went up to our neighbors, they lived half a mile east of us. That was the closest neighbor we had, and she was there all alone. At that time men were working as long as they could for the railroads. Union Pacific railroad was building through. They went as far as, lots of them as far as Wyoming to get work through the summer until late in the fall. One Indian got up there to beg something, and he was all painted up, of course, and it scared her to death. She had a little child. He was sleeping in a crib. She was so frightened she never thought about the child and run over there where we were—to our place. Then when she come there, why she was lamenting to Mother, she says what she did. Forgot all about her child in her excitement and what is she going to do. "Now," she says, "I'll go with you."

“Well,” she says, “There was an Indian there all painted up. They say when they’re painted up they’re on a war path.”

“Oh,” she says, “Never mind that. I’ll go up with you and we’ll get the baby, and you can come down there where the 900 were,” [laughs] within less distance than from here to Larson’s (?) house—900 of them. But she was satisfied to come back with Mother and stay overnight. Next morning the Indians had their breakfast and moved on. After the Pawnee Indians chased them back across the river to their own territory.

Then the other times, the Sioux made raids on the Pawnees. The Pawnees had a lot of ponies, and they’d make raids on those ponies, steal them ponies. Then they’d mass up and they’d run them back over the river, back and forth, until it got settled up so that no place for the Indians, so they had to quit.

While they were dancing there, Mother was gone up to the neighbors, why, they were in full swing, their war whoops and dances and tom-toms beating. I was sitting there taking it all in, and an old Indian come around behind me and he tapped me on the shoulder. I looked up. He said, “You no afraid?”

I told him, “No, me no afraid.”

“Ha ha, you brave boy,” he says. “You brave boy.” [laughs] So I got acquainted with the Sioux, and they knew us for miles around. Ever Creek Ranch (?).

MJ: [unintelligible].

[Break in audio]

MJ: What did you say about Sioux?

JZ: The Sioux, as a rule, they were a very fierce tribe, but I noticed they never tried to—

[Break in audio]

MJ: Joe, didn’t one of those Indians recognize you years later?

JZ: Yes. He did recognize me. That was the time they moved them to South Dakota near the Black Hills. I don’t know the...Pine Ridge Agency, I think they call it. I was coming into the state then, overland by prairie schooner, and I met about 30 of them, Indians. They had a permit to leave the reservation and go and hunt in the Rocky Mountains to get eagle feathers. That was the feathers they used. They had a permit for that, and they’d go out there every fall to get eagle feathers. Of course, they were going to have some fun with me, or I don’t know why they wheeled the way they did. Anyway, they wheeled, just like when they made their regular

attacks. Around and around and all full swing going and every circle they make they'd come a little closer, little closer. And all laying flat on their horses, and [unintelligible] around. Guns concealed on the other side. So I made up my mind. You're on a war path that way, why, you'll get me anyway, but I'm going to get as many of you as I can before you get me. That's what I made up my mind to do. So after they got so close, I stopped the horses and held my gun straight up in the air, out of the seat there. They seen the sign there, and they quit. One old Indian come up there, where I was, to my wagon. First thing he ask was, "Where you teepee?"

I told him my teepee at Pebble Creek.

He says, "Where you go?"

"Oh," I said, "I'm going near Sheridan." I said, "I'm going to catch fish this long."

"No," he says, "this long." [laughs] Brook trout, you know.

"No, no, no, no, fish that long. This long," I said.

So he chuckled, and through his throat something I didn't understand him, but the others did and they all come in. Some of them, they could talk pretty good English, and they wanted to know where I was going. I told them I had an uncle there at Sheridan, Wyoming, and I was going there to spend a few weeks, going to fish. But in the meantime, they wanted to know about Pebble Creek. They said, "Pebble Creek here? Indian hill here, and your teepee here?"

I says, "No, no, wrong." I said, "Pebble Creek here. Indian Hill right here. My teepee right here." They nodded their head, and they see I was right. Then we had quite a meal for them there. They calmed down and had a good visit. Went on, asked when I was coming back, I said, "A month or two, maybe two months. I don't know." They went off satisfied. But they could have killed me there, but, as I say. But I made up my mind to get as many of them before they could get me anyway. So—

[Break in audio]

NJ: We just stopped for a breather. Our good old neighbor Joe Zelezny has been talking quite a while, and telling us of his experiences, which have been many and varied. We've certainly been very glad and fortunate to make a tape recording of some of these stories that have made up part of his life. Now right here too are his son Bill and Bill's wife Virginia. So we're just going to get Bill [William Zelezny] to say hello and Virginia to say hello so their voice will be on the recording too. Bill, we're sure glad to welcome you back to the Flathead. What do you got to say?

BZ: Well, I'm glad to be here, Ned. I don't believe I can match the stories.

Virginia Zelezny: I don't have anything to say. [laughs]

NJ: Bill, your life hasn't been quite so long or so full as your dad's, has it?

BZ: Well, I'm afraid the frontier has changed.

NJ: But you had your beginning right here in these woods in the log cabin. That's where you were born, that's where you lived your childhood days, and this spot is very dear to you, isn't it?

BZ: That's right, Ned. I grew up here. Grew up in a little old log cabin.

NJ: Virginia, wouldn't you like to say a little on here? Just say hello. Tell them where you're from.

VZ: Hello.

NJ: Where you from?

VJ: Well, I'm from Iowa. [laughs]

NJ: How do you like this country, Virginia?

VZ: All right.

NJ: This is God's country, Virginia. If you never was in it before, you're in it now.

VZ: [laughs] Well, I liked Iowa too.

NJ: You liked Iowa too.

VZ: Yes.

[Break in audio]

BZ: Dad, did you ever spend any time in the hills of Kentucky?

JZ: Yes, I have. We took our vacation there. Not vacation, but the time the Oklahoma strip was opened, we didn't get our claim, so his folks lived in Nash, Tennessee—Nashville, near Nashville. So he made up his mind to go there and visit them, and have me go along. He said won't cost you a cent. No matter how long we stayed. So I thought I'd take a rest, and I went with him. So we surprised his folks all right. They didn't know he was in the country. He made his appearance, and of course, the custom was, they had to celebrate for any event of that

kind, why, showed their appreciation with a dance and drinking whiskey. Moonshine, at that. So we got there, and the community was not very many of them, 18 or 20 there. They couldn't raise money enough. We lacked 15 cents of buying three bushels of corn, which each bushel trading it in at the still, moonshine, bought them a gallon of whiskey. Bushel of corn did. So they lacked 15 cents of that. Sent a little boy around to me, and said, "Mister, will you mind putting in 15 cents. We're short 15 cents to get what whiskey we want."

I told him, "Why yeah, sure." I pulled out a dollar and I gave it to him. Says, "Keep it all." So they did and brought the whiskey along. Sent a man out, I didn't know then where he went, but the way he went up into the hills and the woods there and come back with whiskey. Then the fiddlers—it seems like everybody could fiddle then—they had a dance and jamboree right there in the outside. They had the ground patted down for a dance floor, and they had their entertainments right there. Of course, I contributed the heaviest, they wanted me to drink the most of the whiskey and I wouldn't do it. I told them no, I didn't care for any. I'm glad to see them have a good time and enjoy just as much as if I was doing it.

So before we went away, before I went away, of course, I wanted to see how they did it. So I told one of the neighbors there I'd give him half a dollar if he'd take my corn down. I wanted to trade some whiskey and take back to Denver. So I bought five bushels of corn, and that's all he asked was 50 cents. Take the corn down there and take me along and bring me back with the whiskey. They had jugs there and everything and five gallon caddies, and so we unloaded the corn there, and there was a side road through the woods there and we followed that a ways. Come to two big stumps there, and unloaded the corn there and gave orders what we wanted. Went on about half a mile and turned around and come back, and there was our whiskey there. Corn gone, and nobody saw anything, nobody heard anything, nothing about it. But my whiskey was there. So I took it back to Denver, and my friends there—the old [unintelligible], of course—they liked whiskey. I'd treat them. They all said it was the best whiskey they ever drank, where did you get that? They wanted some of it. I told them, if you went to Tennessee, why, you'd get all you wanted of it.

NJ: Well Joe, did you ever go to a colored meeting down there in the South?

JZ: Yes. We went to Nashville, Tennessee, once one Sunday, and that's quite a town. There was a colored church on the outside, and I heard some wonderful singing there in that church. I told them, "By gosh, you fellows go and buy what you want, I'm going into that church."

They said, "No, that's a colored church. They'll throw you out."

I told them, "They can throw me out. They don't have to throw me out. They can tell me to get out. I'll go out." So I went in. Of course, I took the back bench there, back seat, and sat down. They was all rolling their eyes around at me, wondering what white trash that was. It amused me just as much as anything else. But the niggers had preacher, he had pretty fair sermon. Maybe he was instructing his congregation how to conduct themselves and live in this world. It

was all practical work. Then at the close at the end, the singing is what attracted me the most. They had a song or two, and they closed the meetings, but before that they took a contribution plate around. Come and passed me and made two or three steps and halted and looked around and shoved the plate [unintelligible]. He come with a plate, and I gave him a dollar. Surprised him. All of them noticed there was something going on unusual. Noticing and pretty soon he come up and asked me, "How much of that do you want back, Brother?" he says.

I says, "None of it. You keep it. It's for you." He made a step or two forward and looked around at me and he concluded that other aisle. The biggest money they had was ten cents. They had two or three of them in there, and the rest were all nickels and mostly pennies. They were so poor, they didn't contribute very much. Then I was edging on towards the door. I wanted to get outside as quick as it was over, but one nigger had to guard the door and I could get past him. Then one of them asked me, "Where are you from, Brother?" he says.

I says, "Oh, I'm from Denver."

He jumped up and down, and he says, "I knowed it. I knowed you was a Northern man," he says. He knowed nothing about it the way he was rolling his eyes before. He knew I was a Northern man. They invited me to come up again. I told them if I was here, I would. I would have went up just to hear all the singing.

I was joshing at the other fellows. I said, "I'll be the next time I go there, they give me the front seat."

NJ: Joe, do you have anything you want to say that you'd like to put on this record? [pauses] Anything to the family that you'd like to say to your children or anything? Have you got any little message?

JZ: Well, I don't know. The way I am now, why...of course, I've got my home here yet, and my living is depending on children now. So I'm had my last days, and [unintelligible]. I'm liable to drop off any time—

NJ: Well, Joe, we certainly wish—

JZ: What I appreciate is the kindness of the children, the way they've been so dear, and I appreciate it very much.

NJ: Yes, I'm sure you do, Joe. I suppose you just hope that your children will get as much enjoyment out of this place on Flathead Lake as you have had, and they'll have as many thrilling experiences as you have had too.

Have you got a little more to say about that?

JZ: Well, I don't know about the experiences. Experiences won't be so hazardous as they were. Of course, they'll be enough of them as it is, but not as hazardous. I wouldn't want them to be either because that's pretty strenuous on your system to go through all of these ordeals. That way, I don't think they'll be as bad. I see the children like the place; otherwise, I'd have sold it. All I ask of them is to look after, and see that I don't go to the poor house. But before I go to the poor house, I guess I'll take some sleeping pills.

NJ: Well, Joe, I'm sure we have had the joy of getting acquainted with your family, and from our relations with you and your children, we know that your children will surely take care of you as long as you last. And I want to say on behalf of the Jones', that we certainly have enjoyed for our neighbor. You welcomed us to this community, and you've been so kind and generous and so thoughtful. We certainly appreciate all of that.

JZ: Well, that was my motto, to treat everybody they ought to be treated, and try to follow the golden rule as much as I can. That is my motto. Although I haven't got all friends, I've got some enemies—ain't bad, of course—but lots of them have no use for me, but I don't pay any attention to them. I don't hold no grudge against them. If I see them in a tight pinch, I'd help them out just as quick as I would anybody else.

NJ: Well, that's a good spirit, Joe. I'm sure the fish in Flathead Lake, Joe, would miss you if you'd hang up your hook. You've been pretty faithful out there on the lake for many years.

JZ: I used to catch a lot of them here—a lot of fish. I would yet if I could get out because I go out until I [unintelligible] for them and I catch a good mess—good haul. This way when you got out only once in a while, why, some days are off days and you have to hit them days when you don't catch any.

NJ: Now, Joe, I'd just like to say this. You always been used to rowing your boat and trolling, and that day that Marvin took you out with the motor, you were quite surprised the way that motor performed, weren't you?

JZ: Yes, I was. It performed very good.

NJ: And went slow enough for you.

JZ: Yes.

NJ: Yes, I'll tell you, it's quite a thing these little outboard motors.

Now, Bill, you're the man that's operating the microphone right now, we still have a few more inches on this tape. Maybe more than inches, maybe feet. But I wonder if you got any words to say to add to this tape? I think it's going to be quite a family treasure in years to come.

BZ: Well, not much, Ned, except to say that Dad has sort of bridged the period from one era to the next. He came out in a covered wagon and has lived here, seen the development of the automobile and airplane. Now, we're flying jet airplanes, and no one knows what is next. It's quite a jump from the frontier days to the present.

NJ: I wonder just what one of the old pioneers traveling in a covered wagon would think if suddenly a jet-propelled plane flew over them at the rate of about 600 or 700 miles an hour. Surely that would be something to think about. My mother often used to say that, "My, I wonder what people would think who died 50 years ago, if they should suddenly be resurrected and come back upon the earth and to see all of the activity and all of the life that is on wheels."

Now, I'll just sign off now for the moment.

[End of Interview]