

Oral History Number: 300-001
Interviewee: Mabel Goldie Peterson Holliday
Interviewer: Paul Fugleberg
Date of Interview: July 1993

Paul Fugleberg: I'll be making some notes on the paper here too as we talk. Now your name is—

MH: Mabel Peterson. Well, wait it's Mabel Goldie Peterson—that was when I was born.

PF: M-a-b-e-l.

MH: M-a-b-e-l. Goldie

PF: G-o-l-d-i-e?

MH: Yes, Peterson. P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n, and my married name is Mabel P. Holliday. H-o-l-l, two L's, i-d-a-y. Holliday.

PF: All right, now let's start way back at Gold Creek.

MH: That's how I got my middle name, I heard, from gold...Goldie. I was born in the Northern Pacific section house on July 15, 1903.

PF: Okay, and how long did you live there?

MH: Well, that's it, I was so young, my recollection begins in Silver Bow. They moved to Silver Bow.

PF: While you were still a baby?

MH: Yes, I hadn't started school yet, but I did finally start school there at Silver Bow.

PF: I noticed this one picture here shows the section house where you were born, and then in the background it looks like, maybe a quarter of a mile away to the west, is the community of Gold Creek.

MH: Yes, well, that was verified. I mean that picture. I asked my son to have it verified by somebody at Gold Creek. That was this year. That was a picture that my mother and father told me that I was born in. I mean, that house, I was born in.

PF: What else did they tell you about Gold Creek? They ever talk about it very much?

MH: Oh, years later they used to talk, and I could hear. They would talk about the Northern Pacific and the tunnels that my father worked in. I guess he worked in them.

PF: What was his title again?

MH: I don't know what he was in the beginning. He must have been just a laborer in the beginning. At Gold Creek when I was born, he was a section foreman at Gold Creek, Montana.

PF: Your father's name was?

MH: O-la-f. No middle name. Just Olaf Peterson.

PF: And your mother's name?

MH: Sophia. S-o-p-h-i-a. s-o-p-h-i-a Anderson—s-o-n.

PF: Did they talk very much at all about Gold Creek itself—what was there, what it was like, how big it was?

MH: Oh yes, they talked a lot about it, but as a child, you aren't taking in everything but certain things you do.

PF: What do you remember?

MH: I remember that the section house was a mile from the town of Gold Creek. That I remember. I remember telling about Dad getting ruptured. He must have lifted something real heavy, and the NP train went right by the section house. They stopped the train there to pick him up. They loaded him there, I guess, in a baggage car. I don't know any more about what hospital he went to anything like that. I don't know if that would be any interest to you. But I was just thinking of what I remember. It was just the things that really would startle you, you couldn't forget. I remember we had a dog that got his leg cut off. Fanny, the dog Fanny.

PF: By a train?

MH: Yes, and I remember that Hogan had a farm right next to us. I don't know which side, but they did talk about Hogan. H-o-g-a-n. Hogan. They always had nice words to say about him, and I remember that and their place or their farm was next or across...

PF: Somewhere close anyway.

MH: Yes. They always had pleasant things to say, but nothing startling that a little kid would remember. This isn't about my memory its Gold Creek. This is when I got older and heard them

talk where I then grasped things. When I lived at Gold Creek—I should have brought you my picture—I was just a baby sitting in a highchair.

PF: Do you remember them telling much about any unusual storms or anything like that or railroad wrecks or anything like that that happened nearby?

MH: Oh yes, they talked about wrecks and tunnels, but I can't say that...Now, we're not at Gold Creek. We're a few years later. I do remember there was two engines that telescoped. I think I was at Silver Bow when that happened—the engines telescoped.

PF: Anything more you remember about Gold Creek before we go on to Silver Bow?

MH: No, those were the points—the dog and...

Unknown Speaker: Your parents were what, Swedish immigrants?

MH: Yes, he was a citizen. He had got his citizen papers. They were married at... [pauses] Oh dear. I have their wedding certificate. You saw it [refers to unknown speaker]. Was that Helena they were married at?

UP: I don't know, but they were both immigrants. Immigrants, and they didn't know each other until they came here at a camp or something. Is that right?

MH: Well, I think they met at Helena because that's...I don't think...My father was a section foreman and he worked on the railroad, but we had relatives in Helena. I think at that place is where he met my mother. They were married at Helena. That I remember on that wedding certificate because I've got that.

PF: Now, at Silver Bow, when you moved over there, how long did you live there?

MH: I started school just a year before we left. We lived there several years.

PF: What do you remember about Silver Bow?

MH: We lived in a section house, and it was a railroad town then. Seven railroads converged, is that the word? Went through Silver Bow.

PF: Which ones were they?

MH: Well, the Northern Pacific, Milwaukee, Oregon Short Line, B.A.N.P.—

PF: Union Pacific one of them?

MH: I'm not sure, maybe it was. I'd have to look this up.

UP: There is a UP there now.

PF: The UP is in Butte, yeah.

MH: I know seven, that figure is definite that is. They had a lot of railroad men there, and there were three boarding houses.

PF: Did your mother run a boarding house or something?

MH: Yes, she ran a boarding house.

PF: This was other than the section house?

MH: It was in the section house.

UP: Didn't you say that was their favorite place to eat in town?

MH: Yes, the men did say that. I remember them. That was their favorite place to eat because my mother gave them a good meal, and she always was good at steaks and what men needed when they worked hard. She had a lot of work to do. It wasn't an electric stove; it was just a large coal stove—coal and wood.

PF: Did you help her at all?

MH: Oh, I was too little. You see, I didn't start school until the last year.

UP: How about your sister?

MH: It must have been very little that she did. I have one sister. She was born in Helena. My father sometimes would get up in the morning and help my mother turn the pancakes. [laughs] He helped her.

PF: How many boarders did they have?

MH: Sometimes she—not always now—but sometimes it would come into 50. She had a...Yeah, doesn't that sound terrible. She had a girl wait on table, and the girl's name was Elisabeth Metz—M-e-t-z. Her home was in Rocker—R-o-c-k-e-r. Rocker. That's between Butte and Silver Bow. There used to be a man that would sell meat, and he'd come to Silver Bow to deliver the meat. I remember that. I think there was some...I'm not sure about vegetables, but I do remember the meat and it'd come in hindquarters. Then they'd have to hang it in the—

PF: What would he do, haul it in in a wagon? A horse drawn wagon or...

MH: Yes, but it wasn't very far from Rocker to Silver Bow, which was a very short haul. Then it got into the meat...I remember seeing the meat hanging—big slabs of bacon hanging in...what did you call that room, cooling room?

UP: Ice room? Ice...

MH: Oh, yes...Well now I don't remember. Icehouse...Well, it was cool. Or was there an icehouse? Right now, I know in Dixon there was an icehouse. There must have been, or they couldn't have kept the meat. But I remember seeing the hams and the bacon slabs and the hindquarters. My mother [unintelligible; audio distortion] slice all that.

PF: Let's stop a second and see if this—

[Break in audio]

PF: You know it is really funny when you play a recording, and you don't quite know how to expect what you think you are going to sound like. You're always surprised by what you sound like.

UP: I know. I sound like a little kid.

PF: Then how long did you go to school at Silver Bow?

MH: I started the primary, no kinder...What is it, the first primary I guess. Not the first grade now. I remember starting, but somehow they took me out. They thought I was too young, and I had to wait until I got ready for the first grade. Then I started the first grade and—

UP: That was a one-room schoolhouse?

MH: Yeah, a one-room schoolhouse, and it used to...It stood near the Silver Bow railroad tracks. Not too far, well maybe you couldn't throw a stone, but the tracks and the schoolhouse. I remember that we'd have to cross the tracks and walk along the sides of the track to get to school. It was a brick schoolhouse—one room—and Miss Johnson was the teacher then. The postmaster was Lindberg. He had two children—two girls—and they had a store. Oh, I remember that well.

PF: How big a place was Silver Bow?

MH: It was just made up by of railroad people. That's all that really...Oh, they had a saloon yes, and on Saturday nights they'd shoot someone every Saturday. Yes, it was a wild Saturday, but it happened many times. There'd be shootings at that saloon on Saturdays. I remember that.

PF: They had a saloon, a store, post office?

MH: Oh no, that is not Lindberg's. The saloon was another thing by itself.

PF: But I mean the buildings that were there were a saloon building, a store building, post office, a school. Were there any churches?

MH: I don't remember. I didn't go to any church.

PF: Or very many houses around there?

MH: There were a few houses, and then these two boarding houses and the men had their bunkhouses. Well, it was just...

UP: Probably bigger than what it is now.

PF: Yeah, I don't even remember seeing anything of it now.

MH: It's just wiped off now, but it was the railroad that just made it alive.

PF: Where did you go from there then?

MH: I did start the first grade there, and I went as far as the spring and we moved in the spring of 1910. What does that make me? 1910. I was seven years old then. No, I didn't have my birthday yet. I was six. 1910 is right. 1910 in, say, April—April 1910. Dad was always interested in this land that was going to be open for settlement in the Flathead reservation, and he wanted to get in that direction. We went to Missoula, and that was just a temporary stopover. From there he was to go to Dixon—Dixon, Montana.

PF: To homestead or to—

MH: No, that's still with the railroad. He was still with the railroad, but there was a stopover in April...I remember that, April and May, and I was going to school in Missoula then. I was still in the first grade...or was it? No, I must have been in the second grade. I made two grades in Silver Bow in one year. Two grades, the first and the second grade. You see, I had been in the primary and they took me out. When I got back from the first, I was able to...So I made the first and the second grade. So when I got to Missoula, I was in the second grade, and that was just two months. Then I was into the third grade. But I do remember distinctly, we lived on Chestnut Street in Missoula. Could have been 205 Chestnut Street. I remember Hailey's Comet that came over at that time. Oh, I remember that distinctly. It was at night and we all went out in the front lawn. I saw some things up there, lights, but it didn't seem to...My parents were excited and the neighbors, and oh, I was excited with my dog.

UP: [laughs] Was he barking?

MH: No, I don't think. I just had fun with him. I remember that, but the older ones were excited. I didn't—

PF: Do you remember seeing it at all?

MH: Well I remember seeing lights and pointing, but I can't say it was anything spectacular there at Missoula to me. The dog was more to me. But it was Hailey's Comet, that I do remember. I also remember that in—it must have been August—they had that terrible 1910 fire in the Forest Service. Wallace, Idaho. The sunshine, everything...well what I mean, the ashes came over all the way and darkened the sun. I know people were exclaiming about that and reading it in papers how the sun darkened. I remember going out there. There was something coming down, dust. They said it was ashes.

PF: that must have really been something [unintelligible].

MH: That was. Later on, years later on, when I worked for the Forest Service, I heard about that 1910 fire, and the fire fighters sometimes wouldn't listen to the foreman. They'd be so frightened that they would start running, and the foreman said, "Don't. We're going in this tunnel." The men were scared. They were going to go on their own. In this particular...Pulaski I think, P-u-l-a-s-k-i. Seems like he was the man in charge. He forced the men into the tunnel. He had a gun, "Get in there." Then they have blankets, and they wet the blankets in a creek and they hung it over the tunnel to keep the smoke. The men that got in the tunnel and that were forced in the tunnel came out alive, but those that ran, many never made it.

Years later, still in the Forest Service, they found a place—a resting place—for these fire fighters who lost their lives. They went out and special crews—special men—to dig up these spots. They buried the men. They dug them up, and they took them to a special place the Forest Service had for them to give them a correct burial. I was working at Newport, Washington, for the Kaniksu National Forest at that time, and some bodies came through and they were brought into the funeral home there at Newport until they could be taken elsewhere. I know there was one clerk there at the office who said, "Do you want to go down and take a look at what they brought in?"

I said, "Will they let us?" Well, he said he was in charge there, and so we went down to the funeral home. I don't think anything was done wrong. He was going to see really what was brought in because I think the office wanted to know, but I was the one who was tagging along. I remember seeing into that coffin. It was in a box...it was in a box. I remember seeing a long form, and I remember the head. It was just a skeleton then. See, it had been in the hills for a long time. Oh, maybe it was this...I think this is something—it was full of cotton. It had been

smashed. He'd hit on the head with a tree, and it was all filled with cotton. Oh, I remember that, and around here, he had a leather vest so I didn't see his ribs.

UP: Now, what does this have to do... [laughs]

MH: Why did I jump over there? There was some reason why I jumped over there.

PF: You were talking about Missoula, and then that led into the—

MH: Oh, that 1910 fire. So that brings the date correct. The 1910 fire, Hailey's Comet and that was...

PF: What about Dixon?

MH: We were getting ready to move to Dixon. We must have moved there in August, because I started school in September in Dixon and I was in the third grade then. So the dates are okay.

PF: Your dad was still a section foreman?

MH: Yes. I started to school—third grade—in Dixon. Dad was interested in this land up there in the Flathead. It was open for settlers—homesteading, squatters.

PF: That's where I live up there.

MH: That's what?

PF: That's where I live up there, Polson.

MH: You do?

PF: Yeah.

MH: Oh, for goodness sakes. The Polson dam.

PF: The Kerr Dam.

MH: The Kerr. I remember Papa had his tent. To squat on land, you have to have a tent and some other equipment, and then you would go up at the night time into this place that's being opened and you squat on that land—that's your land, you get there first. So I remember squatters. You got there. Other people were running with tents too.

PF: Yeah, they had a lottery, too, where these people would register. They'd get a number for these different homestead plots, and then they would draw numbers.

MH: Oh, is that it? I don't remember that part, but I remember the tent and the equipment that he went up...He got—

PF: A lot of them then would move in onto their plots with tents. It wasn't a land rush type deal, but if they got a number then they would move to that sight—establish their homestead, their tent, or build or shack or whatever.

MH: That's maybe what it was. He had his number, and then he went there. I see. Well, that's where he built his house. Well, he didn't build it. He had a man who lived up there; he built it.

PF: Where was it?

MH: Moiese Valley. South Moiese Valley. South Moiese. It was seven miles from Dixon.

PF: They're looking at that area up there now for oil.

MH: Yes, we had to drill a well...Well, let's start before. I'm still talking about back in...We're still in Dixon, aren't we? I was in the third grade, and Papa was...Well, that's it. In March, is when this happened. We moved up in March to Moiese Valley. That must have been 1911. That must have been 1911, but the house was built. It really was a nice little house—two bedroom.

PF: Did he still work for the railway?

MH: Yes, he still...He didn't give up. But he would come up every weekend and live there on Saturdays and Sundays. Then late Sunday, he would go and my mother would drive him down in the buggy. I was mostly always alone. I had a sister too. Yes, we lived in Moiese at least three years—Moiese Valley. I started to school right away there in the spring.

I've left Dixon and gone to Moiese Valley...Well, he went there a little earlier to build a house. It must have been April then that we got up there, because I started school and it wasn't a full term. It was the end of the term. That was 1911, and there were no school houses. There were no fences. Everything was just...My sister and I had to walk seven miles...wait a minute, six miles to North Moiese where there was a school and then back. That was a six-mile trip every day—round trip. First two weeks I thought I was killed. I did. My mother never said nothing either way, because she probably felt sorry too much and didn't want to make me feel worse or [unintelligible]. After two weeks, I was okay. I look back in that as the most happy childhood. We went to school on this long walk, and there we'd hear that beautiful meadowlark. You've heard it, and I have never heard a meadowlark before. Then we saw these buttercups and other wildflowers as we were walking, and before we knew it we were at school.

UP: [unintelligible] as you went along.

MH: What?

UP: But you played as you went along.

MH: These flowers just were so thrilling and the meadowlark that I didn't know it was six miles. All of that. There were no fences, but there were wild cattle that would roam from the...what was that, D'Aste, Charlo, or over in that Mission way. They would roam and go across this big...You wouldn't call it a prairie because it wasn't dry. What would you call it? Open space? Then they'd go down some sand hills to get to the river to drink, I guess, or maybe it was good grazing. Then later in the day, they'd come up over the sand hills, and you'd just see that dust a-blowing and they'd [whistles] across that open space again.

PF: Did you ever see buffalo from that Pablo herd, or were they out of there by then?

MH: I saw buffalo at the buffalo range [National Bison Range].

PF: So the Pablo herd had been rounded up by then. I don't remember just when they rounded that up. I think it was about 1908 though.

MH: Oh no, there were no buffalo over on South Moiese. These were just wild cattle. Maybe the Indians owned them, I don't know. But it had to do with our going to school because that is when my mother used to worry, because the cattle would sometimes come up from the watering hole or grazing hole and you could see that long row of dust. The cattle would be a long thin row. They wouldn't be really thick but they were wide, and you could see that wide cloud of dust. When we were walking, when we saw that dust, we also heard hoofs, and we knew they were running on their way back for the night. But it got common. We didn't think much of it. The teacher would never let us take our dogs to school, or anyone take their dogs to school. Most of the kids were North Moiese. There were very few South Moiese. It was the South Moiese who walked—South Moiese kids—and it was my sister and I that walked and then farther over, some other children walked from South Moiese. We had no companionship at all, just my sister and I. In the winter we'd start out walking, it would be dark, and I know my mother would put a lamp in the window so we could see. If we looked back, we could see our direction.

One afternoon when we were coming home from school, we saw this big cloud of dust, and we thought, well, it looks like we're in the middle here and that isn't a very good place to be. They never attacked you, those cattle. They wouldn't bother you at all. But if you were in the middle, they wouldn't make any effort to move around you. Oh boy! My sister and I looked at each other, and I can't say we were afraid but we knew there was no time to run. We couldn't run because the line was too long, and we were in the middle. The funniest thing, we looked down, and there was a dog right out on that prairie. I remember it was a black and white dog. It was terrible touching. When you're in a spot, where did the dog come from? I've never forgotten that. The dog ran and he didn't run in the middle of the thing. He ran to the edge of the line,

and that moved the cattle that way. Boy, did the hoofs beat when they went by. We never saw the dog again.

PF: That's where you say thank you lord. [laughs]

MH: Yes, and of course, we went home and we told my mother that, and she was not surprised. She wasn't surprised, because I imagine she had kind thoughts for us as we went. But that summer we went to see a farmer—a rancher there—and my sister and I my mother. My sister and I looked at the dog, and we said, "That's the dog! That's the dog that came to our rescue." So we told the farmer, we said—our story you know. "Oh," he said, "that wasn't Jocko." He said, "Jocko never leaves the farm." Of course, we never said anything, but when we left the farm, we said to each other, "That was the dog. That was the dog." But we never saw any dogs out in that open space before or after, but that one time.

UP: Sounds like a story from the house and prairie [*Little House on the Prairie?*].

MH: It sounds like I'm telling a story, but I's those touching things that a child remembers and you can just speak it off easy.

PF: You mentioned, before, drilling a water well or something. [unintelligible].

MH: Let me tell one more story about this walk, and then I'm through with school. It's another thing that touched us, but not as much as this first one. My sister and I were coming home from school, and there was a farmer who had a bull. He was supposed to be a bad bull, but here he'd gotten loose and here right out in the middle of the prairie right just about 100 feet from the road we walked on—the dirt road. There he stood there looking right at the road, and we thought, well, that's our road, that's our way to go home, and there's no other way. So we just kept on walking. When we got within just 50 feet of the bull, he laid down. He put his feet down, you know how they go first and then laid down, and he started chewing. He didn't say anything. There were many other experiences, but those were the touching ones you don't forget.

Now, we're getting back to the well. There was no water up there. People had to, well we did, have barrels in our wagon and go down to Mission Creek. We'd be driving down toward the Mission Mountains when we were leaving our place—going in that direction—and then down that, there was a hill, and then turn to Mission Creek. Back your wagon up into the creek. Then a bucket into the barrel. Oh, I remember that so clear. There was an Indian house or cabin near there. I remember that. Indians were very friendly with us. We liked them. They were very friendly. One time, my mother forgot her bucket. She got down there and was going to throw water in the barrels, and there was no bucket. So she went over to this Indian house and she didn't know how to talk, but she reached down to show and they saw the wagon backed up. They knew what she wanted, so they gave her a bucket.

That was too much work—hauling water—so there was a well driller that went around and drilled wells for different people. We had him stop at our place, and our well was 165 feet deep. They had casings that go down, and then your bucket is a casing too. When it hits the bottom way down there 165 feet, it opens and it fills up. Then you wind and you wind, and then the long casing is full and you lift it over to the barrel and open it. But we did see oil kind of floating on our water. Not much, but if you kept drawing water for a while, there was oil.

UP: How come your dad didn't drill for oil then?

MH: Oh, they didn't think of it then. That was just a nuisance then. We drilled for water.

PF: [laughs] Couldn't drink the oil.

UP: Yeah, but that was the time the oil boom was down in Texas.

MH: Oh, it was?

PF: They sunk a few Wildcats in the early days up in Montana and a couple down in Moiese Valley. With what they had to work with and how deep they had to go and so forth, they would find traces but nothing that they wanted to go back for more. Now, they've discovered...See, the popular theory was, and has been all through the years, that the entire Northwest part of Montana is underlaid by these, they call, super belt rocks, impermeable. Can't get oil from them. Well, this Colorado geologist about six years ago did a study. He worked for three years for Union Oil to just survey the situation from the surface area. He discovered these surface outcroppings about [unintelligible]. He did various studies and so forth, and turned his findings over to Union. They wouldn't believe him. So he continued it on his own and he's got seismograph companies now that have come in, and they've corroborated his findings to the point that there is such immense structures on there that they [unintelligible] anything else.

[Break in audio]

MH: I never heard them talk about it other than if you draw too much water you're going to get oil. Not thick, but there'll be oil scum. A film. That's all I remember.

UP: Just seems funny. Down in the Texas and Oklahoma at that time all these towns building up because of the oil. People going down there by the gross, working at the oil fields. Just like my grandfather did. He was working at the oil fields at that time.

PF: This would be a real boom up here if it turns up, but it has oil, which is kind of scary.

MH: The man who helped build our house, his name was Carter. He was a farmer who lived not too far from us. Is that going?

PF: Yeah.

MH: He was digging his own...he was digging a well. He was down there himself. He didn't have this drill, the drilling machine. He was down there digging, and he got overcome with gas and he died right down there. Now, would that have anything to do with—

PF: Yeah, methane gas probably.

MH: They never talked much about that. He just died down there and not much air and—

PF: No, they've encounter in well drilling of water well drilling operations, they've encountered pockets of gas down there which—

UP: [unintelligible]?

PF: What?

UP: That's the first sign of oil.

PF: Yes, that's a sign that it could be.

MH: Well, that wasn't too far from us. He died.

PF: What else do you remember about that Dixon area and—

MG: We stayed three years up here in Moiese. I think you have to stay three years to really claim the land, don't you or something?

PF: Yeah, I think so.

MH: It might have been a little...

PF: Prove up on your homestead.

MH: Prove. Then we moved back to Dixon because my sister was getting up in the grades, and she needed high school. Anyway, we moved back to Dixon, and we moved in a section house there, which used to be a hotel—railroad hotel. It was a very large building—many rooms, three floor—and we had so much fun running up and down. We weren't used to all that, and we had running water there. It came from the railroad tank. Oh dear! Another farm lady when she came to visit us saw Mam turn the faucet on, she said, "Oh!" That was wonderful.

PF: Did you sell your farm?

MH: I think we rented it at first. Rented it and then finally sold it. Not right away, we rented it first a few years and then sold it. Then we were back in Dixon, and we were a happy home once again. We didn't have far to walk to school. No more six miles. Oh, but I did forget about Moiese. They did build a schoolhouse closer, well, on South Moiese, and we didn't have to go to North Moiese. So we only had three quarters of a mile to walk then. It was just about a year and a half that we had to do six miles, but a school was built in South Moiese.

PF: How long were you back at Dixon then?

MH: Back at Dixon? I don't know what year we got there. Three years later. Anyway, we got back at Dixon, and we started school. Was I in the fifth grade? It must have been the fifth grade, and I went through high school. How many years that is?

PF: About seven years.

MH: Then I went to business college. We were still at Dixon.

PF: Where did you go to business college?

MH: Spokane, Washington.

PF: Kenman?

MH: No, Northwestern. Then I went and got home and I didn't want to go to work. I thought, oh, how wonderful it is just to sit and read magazines. My sister would come home from Missoula. She was working there. She said, "There's a job here."

"Oh, why do you ever come home and bother me?" This doesn't mean much, I should skip it, but it was part of the agony. Papa thought, "Well you'd better get some work, or you'll forget what you learned." After a year they didn't tell me about jobs, they just dropped me. Then I thought, oh my goodness, this is worse than it was. So I got busy and went out on my own, and I went to the Forest Service in Missoula, Montana, and took a test. That was just because they ignored me. I mean, my parents. They didn't push me anymore. Read all your magazines until you die. Then I went out on my own and I passed the examination, and I got a job at the Savenac Nursery. You know where that is. That's in Haugen, Montana.

PF: H-a-u-g-e-n?

MH: Yes. Haugen, Montana.

PF: The what nursery?

MH: Savenac. S-a-v-e-n-a-c. That was a government nursery at that time, but right now, it has moved to Idaho. It was there. Savenac nursery at Haugen, Montana.

PF: What'd you do?

MH: I was a clerk—a stenographer clerk. That's better, a stenographer clerk. I really thought that was wonderful. They used grow these little trees. Oh, just the biggest expanse of beds and beds and beds and then taller little trees, and in the spring time they would lift up the trees and bundle them and send them out to the forests for forest men to plant in the...reforest the burnt-over areas. It was a wonderful experience there at Savenac Nursery, and they had bunkhouses for the men. In the springtime, they brought in the cook, and they had the men come in. I stayed all the time. Mine was a permanent job. They had a nice little office there at Savenac Nursery. Very nice.

PF: Did you have your own house or what?

MH: Well when the cook—she was a lady cook—when she came she lived upstairs in the cook house and so that's where I stayed in the summer. I had my own room, and she had hers. Then in the September and fall when everything moved out—the men—there was nothing to do and the cook moved. Then they had a special little bunk house for the clerk to live in. It was fixed up. It didn't look like the men's bunkhouses. That's when I used to my snowshoes to go to the outhouse. It was so far. The snow came up to the top of the windows, and I couldn't walk out there so...

UP: Didn't you need your snowshoes when you went to school at Moiese Valley?

MH: No.

PF: It doesn't snow much up there.

MH: No. But at Savenac. You know they told me sometimes it went down to 40 degrees below zero at Savenac, but they didn't feel it.

PF: Real dry?

MH: Yeah, I guess.

PF: After you get 20 below, it doesn't matter much anymore. How long were you there?

MH: About three... [pauses] Two, I think a little over two years. Maybe two and a half. Well, I was transferred back to Missoula. I was transferred to Missoula where my home was. They thought I had done pretty good. They had a hard time keeping a stenographer out there because it was too lonely, but I had passed the grade. So they though, well, all right, we'll let

you go back to where there are people. There were people at Savenac, but it was pretty empty there in the winter.

PF: How far from Missoula is that? That's on that Mullan Pass isn't it? Haugen.

MH: Mullan Pass...

PF: Or Lookout Pass.

MH: Lookout Pass. That comes before Haugen. I mean, when you're coming from Seattle, there will be Lookout Pass and then Haugen and then Missoula.

PF: Right. Let's see, I think we [unintelligible].

MH: It was a wonderful experience. I got back to Missoula, lived with my family.

PF: Now they had moved then back to Missoula from Dixon.

MH: Oh yes, they had moved to Missoula.

[Break in audio]

PF: —still working for the railway?

MH: Yes, still working. They had offered him a job in the office—in the Northern Pacific office—because he was getting near retirement and he didn't accept that job they offered in the office. Was that a division point, Northern Missoula? Well, they had an office there I do know, above the depot. I mean a [unintelligible], waiting rooms were down there, but he said no. He'd been an outdoor man so long, he didn't care about being confined, so they offered him the Bitterroot section. That's between Missoula and...

PF: Hamilton? The Bitterroot goes down to Hamilton.

MH: Oh, it does? Well, then I guess that was it.

PF: There is Stevensville, Corvallis, Hamilton, Victor.

MH: Did it go all the way to Hamilton? Well, it was the Bitterroot branch wherever it went.

[long pause] But he was near retirement, and he got...We were in Missoula 1922, they moved to Missoula. In 1928, he died. Then he was eight years on that, but his health was failing and he went to Rochester. I accompanied him. They told him there was no hope, and he came back and he worked a while longer. Finally, went to the Northern Pacific Hospital there, and that was

the end of him. But he didn't have any retirement at all. He worked, I think it was 30 years he worked. Charles has that pin. I think it says 30 year's service.

UP: [unintelligible] 35 years.

MH: Oh was it 35?

UP: A 40-year pin?

MH: Was it 40 years?

UP: I don't know. You tell me.

MH: We, that's it. I don't know, but he had that veterans pin. Oh gracious, I think he was working when I was born.

PF: How long were you in the Lolo?

MH: It must have been 30. I was born in 1903 and he died in 1928. I think the pin said 30 years. But he had that pin before he retired, a long time before he retired so he must have been—

UP: And your mother was still living at the time?

MH: Yes, but she took it so hard. My sister got married, and her husband passed...I mean, my mother's husband...My father passed away and then I had such a...Well, I had my ideas, and I went to New York. I had always planned to go to New York. Well, that doesn't mean anything. Let's just skip that part. But it was just too much for her. She went with me as far as Saint Paul, and then I went on to New York and then she returned to Missoula. I kept writing and asking how is Mother because she wouldn't eat on the train when we were going. I thought something was wrong. Too much had happened to her at one time that she couldn't take it. They wouldn't answer my question. That's what bothered me. They wouldn't answer. When Christmas came, I said I am going back and look. So I went back and I saw why they didn't answer, so I never went back to New York. I was with her in 1929, and in '30 she died.

PF: Somewhere along the line here you got married. Where and when was that?

MH: That must have been 1933. I was married in Missoula. But after she passed away and I didn't have to take care of her, I went back to the Forest Service. I returned to the Forest Service. That's when they asked me, "Do you want to have Missoula, or do you want to have Sand Point or Newport." I had a choice. It was terrible to give me a choice because I couldn't, and they said, "Well, your time is up. Let us know tomorrow." So I parked on the assistance forester's door, and I told him, "Yes, I'll take Newport." Wait a minute...Yes, I'll take Newport. That's in Washington. I'll take Newport.

[long pause]

Then in Newport they were going to consolidate the forest so they said, "Kaniksu we won't have anymore. We are going to move you all down to Sand Point." So they did that.

PF: So you got Sand Point after all.

MH: Yeah, I got Sand Point after all, but the thing is, they had too many people for the Sand Point Office—two forests put together. They said now, "Who wants to go home, and who wants to go?" Most everyone coming for the Kaniksu office, they chose going back home. So I said, "I'll go back to Missoula." So I went back to Missoula. I worked for the Forest Service, and that's in 1933, in November, I got married.

PF: You continued working for the Forest Service after you were married?

MH: Yes. Yes. Well, for a while, yes, but then I had a son Terrell Holliday.

PF: How many children do you have all together?

MH: Two. Charles is the other one, but there's eight years difference between the boys.

PF: So did you continue to work, or did you take a leave of absence from the Forest Service while you raised your family?

MH: Yes, I was out 16 years before returning to work.

PF: So actually all together for the Forest Service, you worked how long?

MH: Twenty-two and a half years. It seems like that's the way it figured up when I retired.

PF: A few years in the beginning and then the long gap and then finishing up. You've had quite an interesting lifespan here.

MH: Yes, I have.

PF: Like those Moiese Valley stories. Those are neat. Those are really neat.

MH: During my marriage, we had to move to Alaska. He was with the military. They moved the whole Fort Missoula up there.

PF: When was that?

MH: 1941.

PF: During the war or just before the war?

MH: Before the war. Yes, we were up there when the war started, and I'll never forget it. The long searchlights would go over Anchorage, just all night, just searching. I just thought a Japanese plane was going to...anytime. If they came in the back door, it wouldn't surprise me. We were all just ready for it, and even downtown in Anchorage, they hung blankets over the grocery windows or all the windows. Everything was dark. Finally my husband came home, after war was declared, he was to carry his gun home and his gas mask and all of his other things. He always had to have that with him. To me it was, gee, it looked like the war is going on. It didn't look like home anymore. Finally the home we built in Alaska, we finally sold that, and we moved out to Fort Richardson. That's when the military said that all women and children have to leave. So we were evacuated.

PF: So you weren't there at the time Dutch Harbor was bombed...was it bombed? They bombed it, I guess.

MH: Yeah, then I was in Alaska. We were in the house we built then.

UP: Dutch Harbor?

PF: Dutch Harbor. It was bombed.

MH: Oh, Dutch Harbor. Pearl Harbor.

PF: NO Dutch Harbor in Alaska.

MH: Oh Alaska? I don't remember—

UP: By who?

PF: By the Japanese.

UP: I didn't know that.

PF: Yeah, they invaded, and they occupied Attu and one other island and bombed Dutch Harbor in that invasion. It was two of the outermost Aleutians, anyway, that they moved onto, and then they pulled back again a few months later, I guess, under the cover of the fog bank. The Americans went in there expecting a big fight, and nobody was there.

UP: I didn't know that.

MH: I didn't either. I'm sure I wasn't up there then.

PF: Yeah, that happened, well I suppose, it was '42, maybe '43, late '42.

MH: The war started in December. On December 7, 1942.

PF: '41. Pearl Harbor.

UP: So this was after Pearl Harbor then?

PF: Yeah.

MH: Then we moved up a year before that because we had lived there a year before Pearl Harbor. It was 1940. That's right. We left Missoula...Well, my husband was already up in Alaska because the whole army, Fort Missoula was up there. The women had to...Well, they came later.

PF: What'd your husband do?

MH: Well he was in office. I don't know what...

PF: Army?

MH: Oh yes, army. Just military work, I guess.

UP: He was an officer?

MH: He was a warrant officer up there. When I married him, he was a private. A private. He was a warrant officer and then...I remember he was a warrant officer up there. But we were shipped out. He stayed up there for a while, and then he was shipped...I don't know if he asked or...He went to Georgia to an officer's training school. That's it. He was a second lieutenant, I remember that, and then a first lieutenant and then major. I was so busy sewing these chevrons on all the time because he was so busy changing them. Then he left Blackstone, Virginia, and went around by the Panama...the war was going then. He went around by the Panama Canal and over to Okinawa and New Guinea. They weren't supposed to tell you know, and we didn't even know where our letters were going. You could just say FOB New York or FOB San Francisco, but you wouldn't know where they were. When it came back, he had been in Okinawa and New Guinea and [unintelligible].

PF: [unintelligible].

MH: [unintelligible]. The war ended in August of...'42?

PF: August '45.

MH: Oh yeah, it couldn't be '42. [laughs] '45.

PF: Yes, that is really interesting. I think we got some good material out of this.

[Audio distortion]

MH: —my sister's name in there. Nettie. She was a big factor in my life. N-e-t-t-i-e. Nettie H. H stands for Helena where she was born.

UP: She lived in Missoula until she died, right?

MH: Oh yes, she was in Missoula when she died.

PF: What was her name at Missoula? Did she marry?

MH: Yes, Foss. F-o-s-s-.

PF: Is she older or younger than you?

MH: Older. Three years older. I think something like that. I went too far, didn't I? All of that's...

PF: No, not at all.

UP: She does have an interesting life.

MH: I used to follow her husband—

[End of Interview]