

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 422-122**

**Interviewee: Bill Potter**

**Interviewer: Adam Lieberg**

**Date of Interview: December 17, 2005**

**Project: Upper Swan Valley Oral History Project**

Adam Lieberg: How did your family get to the Blackfoot Valley?

Bill Potter: Oh, my dad was a surveyor on the Milwaukee Railroad, and my grandfather came out here for one reason and another I don't know. But through acquaintances, other people, they found that this place here was for sale. It was one homestead. Since then, of course, there were three or four of them we put together after that. It was true my father knowing this country and being in Missoula for a while on the Milwaukee Railroad as a surveyor.

AL: Do you know who the original homesteaders were?

BP: [unintelligible] took from Sontag (?).

AL: Do you remember what your dad said about what this place looked like before he decided to move the family out here?

BP: Was nothing here except a cabin up in the north pasture, which Sontag...a barn and a springhouse. Nothing but it.

AL: What was your first job?

BP: My first job?

AL: Yes.

BP: Well, in those days, the kids were all expected to do their job, and you'd just come home and play. My job was to fill the wood box and keep it full at all times. That was my first job, and I didn't get an allowance or anything. Nobody got an allowance. Part of the game, if you were proud of being part of your organization and you weren't demanding something extra, so I never got paid. I don't mind it. I learned a lot.

AL: What was the rest of your family doing when you were a child, when you first got here?

BP: Ranch. Raised pigs, horses, chicks, cattle. You raised hay. You raised grain, thrashed it. We had 70, 80 pigs, hogs. You had to feed them. You did your own butchering and everything else so I learned all the necessities of life very soon.

AL: Did you have to go to Missoula for the groceries that you couldn't supply yourselves here at the ranch?

BP: Oh yes. Staples, stuff like that, you had to go to Missoula. We only went maybe once a month.

AL: What was the road like to Missoula when you had to go get those early groceries?

BP: You spent one day going in doing shopping, then another day coming back out. So you spent the time in Missoula a lot of the time. Spent the night.

AL: You'd take horses down there?

BP: At one time, my mother, she'd take horses down to Potomac, then they'd get on a train and go on in. Then you'd get into Bonner, and you took a train there and went into Missoula. But lots of times you got stuck on the road and whatnot. It wasn't like it is now.

AL: When you had to stay the night in Missoula where would you stay?

BP: At the Florence Hotel at that time. That was on the burned.

AL: Oh, and that was downtown?

BP: And now they rebuilt...Well, there it is again. Now it's an office building. It used to be kind of the center location because the Mercantile [Missoula Mercantile] was right across the road from it. So you would get a stay at the hotel, do all your shopping at the Mercantile, which had everything from soup to nuts, got everything ready and packed out, and then you could leave the next day. When the roads got better, then you make a round trip in a day.

AL: Do remember how much it cost to stay at the Florence Hotel?

BP: No, I wasn't in the business of paying for it. (laughs)

AL: Well, you weren't making wages anyways.

BP: When I started making wages, my dad never gave me a job. He gave me a contract. Whatever it may be: building a fence or planting a field or whatever. Here's your contract. When the contract is filled, you get paid. If it isn't filled on time, you owe me.

AL: Do you remember your first trip into the wilderness?

BP: Yes, whatever you call the wilderness. [laughs] I mean, Bob Marshall or the...?

AL: Just your first kind of extended backpacking trip into the woods.

BP: Well, the first time I remember, Jeff and me was in Elk Creek up there in the Swan Valley. Then we came from...I don't vaguely remember going up there because we rode up there on horses. Oh, I was about eight. Then we came across and went over to [unintelligible] and spent some time there and then came home. The other time I remember going to the South Fork [unintelligible] down to [unintelligible] and then down through Big Prairie and out Holland Lake. I was, I don't know, eight, nine years old then.

AL: Who were you with and why were you guys going into the mountains?

BP: I was with my father, mother and there was a packer [unintelligible], name of ...I forgot the name of the packer.

AL: That's okay. Were you guys hunting and fishing, or what was the purpose of your journey?

BP: A trip on vacation more or less. I don't know. It's just something you did. My dad just liked being in a wilderness for a long time and doing those surveys ahead of the Milwaukee Railroad. He wasn't to get out in the country. He liked to get away from people, completely away from them. At that time you sat on the [unintelligible] when you had to clear the trail. Now you send a guy on to [unintelligible] when you can pass pack trips. I mean it's entirely different world. You have a trail go through there, and nobody had been on it for weeks maybe. Then part of that limestone was an old fire, and there was a lot of old broke timber—dead timber—that would keep falling down. Every windstorm you had downed timber. We had to always clear the trail. I think the first person that we met in there or knew was Joe Murphy (?) and Slim Goodman (?). He laid out a trail into Big Prairie, and eventually he built some cabins in there, which were claimed by the Forest Service and they tore them down when he left. At that time, Donahair (?), I remember there was a mowing machine and a hay rake there and some old buildings. Whether they're there now or not I don't know. But they came in through the North Fork I think.

AL: Yeah, I've done that trip before. Joe Murphy is Joe Murphy from Ovando?

BP: Yes, he was. He was the head...Joe Murphy was. He had a place up there on Kleinschmidt (?) [unintelligible]. Then he moved down to where he is now. He was one of the top packers in the country and probably would still be if he [unintelligible]. He was quite a guy.

AL: Did you ever go into the woods with him?

BP: Yes, I did.

AL: Do you remember any specific trip?

BP: No, because instead of having a pack outfit here, when we had one or two guests, I would be assigned when I was young to take care of a guest and Joe would go in there with a big pack outfit for fall hunting. So I was told to just take care of the fishermen that was with me, and I would make sure that he got his fish and whatever. That was a job I had that Dad sent me on. I remember riding a horse that they...There was times at that time that people like to play pranks, and they put me on a horse who was well known to blow up. I got wise to it because everybody packing were kind of looking over my way all the time I was saddling the damn horse up. When I put my foot in the stirrup, he was gone down the trail. I went through the camp and tore down a little bit of here or there and the other thing trying to stay with him for half a mile up the trail and things kind of calmed down. But it was kind of mean thing at the time. [laughs]

AL: And the Murphys, they liked to play a lot of pranks.

BP: Well, Joe Murphy and the two boys, or the three boys, that were with him, they were a great bunch.

AL: You said you would take people fishing. Do you remember where you would take them fishing? Was it the lakes or the rivers?

BP: When they went in there, went into the White River. We went in and camped at the White River there, and then they fished up and down the White River then came back out. Down the Big Salmon, camped there. Fished there. It was no problem catching fish. You had to the hook behind a tree or they'd bite you. [laughs]

AL: It was good fishing?

BP: Oh, it was excellent fishing. I mean you couldn't miss him. [unintelligible] big bull trout. We used to take and illegally try to spear them with a sharp stick that we cooked in the fire. We did it. Most of the time we rode in bareback, and wound up getting dumped off in the river. We'd get a big bull by doing it.

AL: Why would you decide to ride in bareback?

BP: I didn't want to get my saddle wet.

AL: Oh. Do you remember catching any other...were you catching cutthroats and bull trout?

BP: Oh, there was cutthroat and big rainbow and bull trout. But the bull trout was the most fun because they were 15 pound, 20 pound. You could take and shove your fist down their throat.

AL: From what I gather, you preferred to go into the Mission Mountains. That's your favorite place to go. Is there a reason behind that?

BP: Yeah. I can go into the Mission Mountains, and after I get past Glacier Lake, I don't see anybody. I could spend a week in there and never see a soul. In the South Fork, you can't do that. The trails are dusty, there's people crawling all over you. And so far...but I imagine there's going to be a day when you're going to have to get permission to get into the Missions. You got more rules and regulations, but I've got to the age that I don't have to worry. I've been there, and I have no reason to go back.

AL: Have you heard of a lake called Sunshine Lake in the Mission Mountains?

BP: Sunshine? No.

AL: I imagine you started hunting at a pretty young age.

BP: Yeah, I was, I think, around 16 when my dad gave me my first rifle.

AL: How was the early hunting for you as a teenager?

BP: No problem. No problem.

AL: Do you remember what you used to kill in a year? Would you try to get a deer and an elk or?

BP: Well, yeah, I tried to get a deer. I usually did. When it was necessary, I could get a deer and an elk every year. It was no problem. [unintelligible] I used to go out and look for something unusual, and if I killed something then it spoiled the rest of hunting season, so I'd wait for the last every couple of days before I really got serious. Had a lot of fun doing it. I could hunt all day and never see a man or a track. That's the way it should be. You're not following somebody else; you're not hoping that somebody's going to chase game into you. It was entirely different situation.

AL: Do you remember what the game populations were like when you first started hunting as a young man?

BP: Well, there was a lot of deer. There wasn't many elk, but there enough. We had no problem getting an elk. Way over in the Blacktail Mountain, and we were sure enough to get an elk that we'd take pack horses. When I first hunted, there was an awful lot of people coming out of Bear Creek...or now excuse me, not Bear Creek, Elk Creek. Elk Creek was full of miners, and do you think they went down to the shop to get meat? Come on. [laughs] So that kept the elk population down pretty much. See when that Elk Creek was in its prime, they said there was over 600 people in that creek bottom. They had the game depleted. Then after that, the mines kind of went to pieces, then the sheep came in and they cleaned out any forage that was leftover. In the process, they killed the bear and they lived on game. So they had a tough time for a while there of getting back, but the elk were in Chamberlain and there were no mines in

there. Can think of only one. [unintelligible] Creek, all that area was pretty free from people. There were some mines in there, but there's a big chunk between [unintelligible] Creek and here and it was no problem. I know where to hunt elk. So I had no problem.

Then they come back, and now they're now they're more than enough because they're changed. They changed the elk from a wild animal, semi-tame animal because they spend most of their time down here in the hayfields. When I was hunting, you never saw an elk in this bottom, and that's the human man that's done that. They've raped the country up there. They've seeded knapweed, [unintelligible], toadflax, god knows what all and planted alfalfa and good grass down on the valley floors. So where'd the elk go? They come out of the mountains and down the valley, and that's what caused the trouble. What the Fish and Game people got to do, what they were supposed to do, or should do, is quit butchering the top of the mountain. Get rid of the weeds. Why even planting, and save by enticing the elk back up where they should be. They aren't going to do that. As long as the rancher is going to feed the elk and the deer. It's a problem and a serious problem, but I don't think it's a country up there—it's been completely destroyed now.

AL: That's from the industrial logging that's going on?

BP: Yeah, logging. Every time they go up there, they log more and more and more, but they don't take care of the weeds and they don't take care of the brush. Now you got a second growth in some areas and that's all sicker and hell. What used to be an open timber you could ride through, you can't crawl through it now and nobody's going to take care of it. Maybe someday a fire will take care of the whole thing, and you have to start over again. It's all [unintelligible] logging. It's not the logging; it's timber management. That's what I've tried to prove that they can be doing better than you cut every hundred years and to hell with the rest of it. Time. I don't know. I got lots of complaints on that.

AL: How has your timber management evolved over the years?

BP: This land here was cut in 1885 and dumped in the river, and they cut whole growth only. Bull pine would sink so they didn't take it, and the smallest they wanted was 11 inches to the top. So they took a high-grade. They high-graded it, but it was raised from one person, Jimmy Robb (?). When I was young, he was 80 years old, and he was one of the loggers here in 1885. He said it was the most pitiful stand he'd ever been in. Uniform old growth. Since then I'm still working to get it back that way, and it's going to take another 50 years before I even come close to taking it pretty as...since I can't do it because I'm not going to live that long. If this timber is not under the same management to the life of the tree, you lose it. I don't know of anybody's going to live to be 150 years old [laughs] to cut timber. I've put 60 years into it, and I'm just crawling out of that and building now a stand of timber that I can get back to an even age—out of the even age and into uneven age stand. Up in Section 3, I've got...that's old growth. There's trees there that are 400 or 500 years old—lots of them. They're going to stay there.

AL: Why is it important for you to try and get your forests around here back to that?

BP: Well, years ago, when we found out, it was 1924 we started working the dude business, realizing that farming is not the greatest return on the ground. So the idea was to start building a piece of ground that's got enough value and beauty in it that people come out and pay you to ride through it. That's why we started the dude business. So my ambition is to kind of leave something for the next guy, and if I didn't put it in the conservancy then I could sell it piece by piece in houses and that does not appeal to me.

AL: Have you been able to harvest timber and make it kind of an economy out of it, and at the same time be still heading in that direction towards the stand that you want to have?

BP: I [unintelligible] the same yield out of this piece of ground is getting better every year. I have successfully, by building special equipment to cut my costs down as much as possible, that it's...the timber stand is paying for itself. A lot of work. But it is paying for itself and another 50 years it'll be well on its way. If it's kept under the same management, it'll survive, but it's not gonna survive if it's every five years, every ten years, you got a new forester. You know it's kind of like a horse. If you have a horse that's about four or five year old, you put him in a corral and old Joe Blow gets on him and runs him around the corral and does what he thinks he should do, the next day somebody else gets on him and does what they think they should do. You do that about ten times, you got either a dead head or dirty mean son of a gun. That's the same way with timber. Timber stands under the same management, if they last ten years, they're lucky. Then somebody else comes in. I was once, someone asked him, "What are you going to do up there?"

He said, "Well, they did such a bad job of logging up here that we're going to have to log it all over again." Now, how in the hell can you do that? [laughs]

AL: Lots of people, especially lately, are talking about that insect and beetle problems with timber stands for whatever reason. Do you have a lot of beetles in your pine trees here, and how has that changed over the years that you've seen?

BP: We had one of the biggest infestations in the country and pretty well documented. I was told to go and clearcut it, and I said, "To hell with it, I'm going to cut it my way." I got rid of the pine beetle. There's always going to be pine beetle. You've got to be after it all the time, but that was an epidemic. Now I just got spots. I think by our management and quick response to the pine beetle that I can...that's not my problem. The biggest problem I'm concerned of is fire. If I can get corridors through and I've got the proper tools to put out a fire, I think I can get...the pine beetle won't be my problem. I think that we're on the right track because we've had six or seven fires here all within a quarter of an acre which could have been blow up. So I think I can manage the fire, and it's proven itself. I've got the stand of timber in such a way now, and I think I can get access to any part of it immediately [unintelligible].



Of course, I've learned a great deal from the University—

[Break in audio]

AL: —your kind of partnership with Hank Goetz and the University [University of Montana]?

BP: Yeah.

AL: How many different people come out a year did you say?

BP: We've had I don't know how many, but a good many parties and groups have come out to look at the stand of timber and so I must be doing something right.

AL: You said that you've learned quite a bit working with people like Hank's and, I know Carl's over here. Carl Fiedler (?) as well.

BP: Yeah, because they go elsewhere, and they set up down here at University. Every time they set up some kind of a study, I go down and watch it. If I don't like it, I don't have to do anything with it. They're doing it to prove, even though they know it might be wrong, they got to prove it, which they do on their ground and that's what it's for. I've got the privilege of going down there and saying, "No, I don't want to do that," or, "I want to do this." So it gives me a big boost and saves me from making a lot of mistakes.

AL: There was a question that I wanted to ask you earlier when you started talking about fire, and obviously you have a lot invested around this 80 acres and the ranch and the business and the homes and whatnot of the ranch here. But how do you feel about fire elsewhere on the landscape? Obviously, your neighbors are Plum Creek. How do you feel about fire on that private land, and how also do you feel about fire on the public lands and even in the wilderness? And should everyone kind of be taking the same management, or do you have anything you'd like to talk about in terms of that?

BP: I have not much control or say about what to do about that. [long pause]

AL: Is there ever a situation where you think a fire should just be...let it take its natural course?

BP: No, I've never let a fire take its natural course because in the summertime if you see one, it might take a pretty good chunk out of you. I've put up a lot of fires on state ground, put up fires on Plum Creek ground. They don't even know about it. I just go put them out because I'm there first, and I'm always taught if you're there first with the [unintelligible] you got the job done. I don't sit around and talk about it for two days before I go do something about it. I agree with them that a lot of fires in the wilderness area should just let them burn, and it's been doing it for hundreds of years so there's no problem. You're not trying to make a living out of it. As far

as the Plum Creek ground, heck, a lot of it there's not enough wood on it to burn. So what the hell. Let her burn.

AL: Have you ever worked for the Forest Service?

BP: No. No.

AL: Do you remember of any Forest Service lookouts around this area that are no longer here?

BP: [pauses] No. I think there...The lookouts that they got, I think there's one on [pauses]...down here at the end of Nine Mile. I think it's gone. Belmont, Belmont Lookout, I think it's gone. Mineral Peak, I don't think there's one there. Up in where I usually hunted up there.

AL: There was another question that I want to ask you about fire, and then we'll move on to something else. But would it be possible for you to come up with an average in terms of how many fires during a summer you think start around this area?

BP: Fires I would start?

AL: No, natural fires caused by lightning.

BP: Yeah.

AL: Do you have a rough estimate of how many lightning-caused fires you think happen around this area, around the ranch or that would affect the ranch?

BP: Oh, you might get two or three now right around the ranch or right close within my area, but most of them, none of them I know were quarter of an acre before you get them down. Course, I built [unintelligible] and I got three tankers [unintelligible] put on it and a crew. I'm not just sitting around biting my nails when I see a fire.

AL: How is that different than the way you and your family dealt with fire when you were growing up?

BP: Well, the difference is you had a handsaw and a grub hoe [unintelligible], and the will to put the fire out.

AL: Was it about the same kind of average of lightning two or three times a year?

BP: I can say, yeah, it's about the same since I've been doing it. We haven't had a fire...this acreage that I own hasn't seen a major fire since 1885 when they would probably burned—from what I see—stumps and stuff. They might have lit some of it then.

AL: Okay, back to some of your pack trips. Do you remember your best trip that you ever took into the wilderness?

BP: They're all best. [laughs]

AL: Is there one that sticks out in particular?

BP: Not really. No. You run into the same problems, same fun. I don't remember anything that I didn't enjoy.

AL: How about wildlife encounters on those trips?

BP: Wildlife encounter. I had no trouble with anything, and when I went in there hunting, I always picked up what I wanted. Game. I had no problems. But then there were not so many rules and regulations either or people. You'd just turned your horses loose, and they're all trained to stay in a group because you did that before you left. Now, it's all different. You gotta pack hay in there, and it's just different, that's all. Now, it's gonna get worse, not better. It's overrun now. I'm waiting for the Missions, which I used to go in there and you could spend a week in the Missions and see no one or hear no one. Now you do. From what I gather, it's getting in places at Glacier Lake, they got that now so that they put a camp trail—a good trail—and then they moved in and the lake was full of beer cans from people shooting them in the lake. They finally now got a rule, or did have—I imagine it's still there—that you can't camp on the lake. You got to camp a quarter mile away from because it completely destroy it. The first time I went in there, I had to climb over rocks to get there.

AL: What were those early trails like that you used to follow into the mountains?

BP: Well, the first trail that I went into Turquoise and to Glacier Lake, I came from Cap Laird's and that was the old Indian trail that came over the top and went down to Cliff Lake and down the valley there. The other lake trail that we came from the other side was [pauses]... a known trail, but I've forgotten the name of it now. I'll think of it after a bit.

AL: Yeah, let me know.

BP: [pauses] Conko! I think it was the Conko Trail that came up underneath Frog Lake and went across to [pauses]...I'll think of it after a while. My mind is slipping. Harding Peak. Went up just under Harding Peak and came down to Frog Lake. Then went over to...came out where that lookout up there that's not in existing anymore. [pauses] The name of that? [unintelligible]

AL: White Pine or White Bark?

BP: No.

AL: Ponderosa?

BP: No. [pauses]

AL: You tell me.

BP: I'm trying to remember the name of it...There's a lake in there that's named after it. I'll think of it after a while.

[long pause]

AL: Do you remember any other Indian trails through this country?

BP: Well, that Indian trail there that came from down into Lindbergh Lake, which used to be Elbow Lake at that time, and it went up to what we called the helicopter pad then it dropped down from there to Island Lake then went over the pass there to Cliff Lake and then [unintelligible]. That's when we follow...I went up that trail and then from Cliff Lake I went to the top of McDonald with a group of novices, which was great fun for them because they'd never done anything like that before. The other one [pauses] was [unintelligible] Conko Trail now, but that one's been there for years. That was an Indian trail, travel.

AL: Did you have many early encounters with the natives?

BP: Yeah. I remember when I was a pretty young kid, a group of Indians came down and they were going across the valley and going over towards the Bob Marshall I guess, hunting. It was in the fall. Dad was talking to them, and the upshot was they had one woman there that just had a baby the night before and she was walking and that big old goat was right and it made me mad. [laughs] She'd just had a child that night, and here she was walking along, carrying the child [unintelligible].

AL: How did your father get along with the natives?

BP: Fine. We got along. They hunted here. They used to camp up here on the Clearwater. They had the sweathouses and so up there, and they hunted here on the ranch. They were always very kind about it because they always brought down, left a piece of meat on the table when they left if they got anything. They used to spend a week or so there when their sweathouses and whatnot, and then they'd pick bitterroot, roots and stuff in the spring, and they'd do that. But we had no trouble with them. You knew where they were, what they were doing, everything. Probably we had less trouble then than we do now. They seemed to be a very good bunch.

AL: Do you remember where they were they would go to pick the bitterroots?

BP: Bitterroot? That bitterroot, Blanchard Flats was full of bitterroot. Now, it's all plowed up, or destroyed. Now it's knapweed. [laughs] Knapweed and mullein.

AL: Any camas digs? Do you remember—

BP: Camas? Yeah, there's a lot of cams there. There's still some here and there. [unintelligible] gets in the meadow, you got to get rid of it there, it's not too good to be in the hay.

AL: It's not good for livestock?

BP: I've been told that that it's got its problems when you get too much of it, if it's in hay where they can't separate it. They don't go out and eat it necessarily, but we try to...Hemlock.

AL: Oh, you were talking about Hemlock Lake?

BP: Hemlock.

AL: Was that the Hemlock?

BP: Yes. Now, you as a professional, you mean to tell me you don't know hemlock? [laughs] You should have written that down. I'm surprised—

AL: We're going to have to erase that off the tape.

BP: [laughs] I'm surprised that you don't know that. I was kind of hoping you would, but that's where it came, came down through Hemlock and down. There was another trail because we came from the east side...or the west side there and went over the top of Conko Trail and across there and down Hemlock. There was a Hemlock Lookout and a Hemlock Lake. You came down that creek, and then you went down and crossed the road over to Holland Lake. They did them tours in there, or studies long ago, that they spent the time at Holland Lake and then they walked across the valley to go to the Missions. But they never mentioned Cap Laird. So I don't know when Cap Laird first came into the country, but it was many years ago. Because the road to Cap Laird's was just this side of the trail because we knocked the bottom of a car once going in there—took the bottom out of it. That was years ago, and it took a couple hours to get up there.

AL: Is there any other stories about the natives that stick out in your mind, either that you heard or witnessed while living here? Conflicts with the homesteaders or the law?

BP: No. Didn't have any problems with anybody. Just offhand anyway.

AL: Do you remember some of the other homesteaders that lived around this area when you were growing up?

BP: I used to work [unintelligible] the Cahoons were up here in the draw [unintelligible] place now. I used to do a lot of fishing and hunting with Elmer Cahoon and Ralph. I think Ralph was the first one that took me elk hunting for that matter.

AL: Do you remember that trip?

BP: Oh yeah.

AL: What was that like?

BP: Successful. [laughs]

AL: Where'd you go?

BP: I went up to top, around, and back up though...heard of Wales (?)? We got an elk in [unintelligible] Meadow. Took two days to get it out. Had to chop our way through because there was no trail, no roads, no nothing. Now, it's just all...that's before they destroyed it. Now that old country's gone. Nothing left. They butchered it.

AL: What did that family do on their property?

BP: They had a pack string of horses and they packed in the South Fork, and then they had a camp in [unintelligible] in the fall. Lee Cahoon, he packed into the South Fork, and the Cahoon family, they got a place up there at Seeley Lake now. [unintelligible] Leon, Leon Cahoon, he did truck. He trucks a lot of logs out of here. We've had several million board feet come off this ranch of whatever. I'm trying to get the thing stabilized. Elmer and I and Ralph... [unintelligible] I didn't know him too well and then he was killed in an airplane crash. [unintelligible] worked here. Ruby was still...I don't know, Ruby's only one left. The boys are all gone. Elmer died. Ralph did. All three of them gone. I'm the only one left of that group.

AL: Do you remember it being that most of the ranches and homesteads around here, most of them did do they do outfitting type of work and guest ranch thing, or was there some other ways to get by back then as well?

BP: The closest we had is the Morris Ranch down below, which is turned to be the Lindbergh Ranch. He bought the whole thing, and then he put it back into Paws Up now. So that's the only one around here.

AL: Do you remember how the Anaconda Copper Company, how they affected the valley when they were here?

BP: The Anaconda, they were just getting in the mood of selective cutting timber and marking it. They were doing a pretty good job, and you could get along with them and you could sell timber to them and they'd be good market price. We bought lumber from them when we didn't run our own mill, and we leased the land. We were about one of the first people to really lease the land, to fence it. Then we had Champion. We got along with them all right.

AL: How did things change once Champion bought the—

BP: Not too much because Ernie Corrick was at the head of it, and he was a real straight-up. When he meant yes, he'd say yes. When he meant no, he meant no, but he was very cooperative in every way. We appreciated for that matter. I did logging for him, and I had no problem with him. It was a good setup. A lot different than this last go-around. Pretty bad.

AL: Are you referring to when Plum Creek—

BP: Yes.

AL: a—bought that land. How was that? Ten thousand acres?

BP: Oh god, I don't know. The whole country up above, private ownership. Now, it's for sale [unintelligible]. Everybody knows that.

AL: Was there a lot of bootlegging going on in this country that you remember of?

BP: I wasn't in the drinking age [laughs] when the bootlegging was going. There was some at Clearwater up above there on that road. There was a still there. We were cleaning out, getting some gravel out of the road, and we ran into it. The copper pipe and the tanks and everything else. I didn't even know about it until I saw it, but they had a still there. That's the only one I knew of. They could have had more around. Nobody paid much attention one way or another. There was booze, and it was pretty strong stuff I know that from what I heard. But me, I wasn't never...I never entered into that drinking ability.

AL: Bill, was there ever any cooperation going on between the different guest ranches around this area in terms of moving guests from one ranch to the other?

BP: Huh?

AL: Do you understand what I'm saying?

BP: No.

AL: The E-Bar-L Guest Ranch.

BP: Yeah.

AL: Was there ever any partnership with some of these other ranches—

BP: No.

AL: —around here?

BP: That makes it impossible. If you got a bunch of people, you got to keep control of them, and there's plenty of room, I could flap my elbows here without hitting anybody. I didn't need somebody else. When they came here, we had the horses and the riding country and the food. Why move? We went on pack trips and stuff like that, but we never connected with another ranch.

AL: Are you familiar with the Keewaydins? Keewaydins sent guests out here, I think, from like...somewhere back in the Midwest, maybe Michigan or something. They sent clients to this area to some of the different guest ranches around here, and they separated the men from the women. They never came to this ranch?

BP: No.

AL: Never a part of that? Well, that's pretty much all the questions I have for now, Bill.

[End of Interview]