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Interviewee: Daniel Yuhas

Interviewers: Beth Hodder and Kjell Petersen

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Kjell Petersen (KP): So, welcome all you lookout enthusiasts. I'm Kjell Petersen with the Northwest Montana Lookout Association. I'm here in Kalispell [Montana], and I'm joined today by Beth Hodder, who's joining us from West Glacier. Beth is the project manager for our Oral History Program. She works very closely with the ScholarWorks program at the University of Montana where all of our recordings are stored. And then we link them back to our website. Welcome, Beth.

Beth Hodder (BH): Good morning. Hi, Dan. Just a little bit of background on what we're doing here today. So all three of us, Kjell, Dan and I have been volunteer lookouts with the Flathead National Forest program. And Kjell and I are also on the board of directors for the northwest Montana Lookout Association, which produces these oral history interviews. So we're very excited to have you with us today, Dan.

KP: So, Dan is our victim today, Daniel Yuhas. And he is joining us from Columbia Falls. And he's going to bring a kind of a unique perspective to what we do here because he was a lookout as an infant, and also now as an adult, which might be stretching the definition just a little bit. But anyway, welcome, Dan.

Daniel Yuhas (DY): Thank you, glad to be here.

KP: So, before we launch into the program, I always like to give the person we're interviewing something to think about while we do the interview. And, Dan, I would like for you to think about and share with us as we close in an hour or so, since you've got fairly good knowledge of lookout time, what a new person, either a new young person who's looking for a job as a lookout, or a mature type person who's looking to volunteer, if they've never been on a lookout before, what items they might want to consider so that they're not surprised when they crawl up on that tower for the first time. So can you give that some thought and then we'll bring it up again, at the end. How does that sound?

DY: That sounds good. I've got a couple of cheat notes. Because I thought about this since our last talk together.

KP: Okay, cool. So, like I mentioned earlier, Dan has a perspective that I don't think that we've really discovered before. He was first introduced to the lookout world as an infant, and then later came back as an adult and has been staffing as a volunteer. So, Dan, you want to start out by talking a bit about that infant world that you became a lookout in.

DY: I will do that. I was first in a lookout in diapers in 1947 at the beginning of the fire season, on Desert Mountain Lookout above Hungry Horse and Martin City on the Flathead National

Forest. I have no personal memories of that experience. So, I'm relying on family legends or family lore, as Beth calls it. And I guess it kind of entered this the realm of--Gee, should I really believe this or not? There were one or two photographs that my folks had for a long time. Old black and white Brownie photographs of the lookout and the family car and a small tow-behind trailer that had all the family's goods in it to get up to Desert Mountain Lookout.

They were the family stories, and you kind of begin to disbelieve those when you hear them so often. You wonder if they're really truth. So, when I returned to the Flathead in 1973 with my then wife of a couple of years, we drove up to Desert Mountain Lookout and met the young couple who were on duty there and they said "Oh, you were here back then, let us show you something." They went back to the lookout tower and brought down a scrap of mirror. Well, actually it was a pretty good-sized piece. A mirror, with a bunch of names scratched on the back. And quite interestingly to us, on the back were my folks' names in 1947 and my name. So there was a graffiti that kind of added some credibility to my family's story. By golly, they must have been telling the truth after all, was my thought at the time.

I then went on and taught in Martin City [Montana] for seven or eight years and continued with the school district, and had very little to do with lookouts except driving up to lookouts to enjoy the view that the people stationed there would have. Later, I got recruited, I should say encouraged, to sign up on the waiting list for the volunteers that man the lookouts on the Flathead Forest--some of the lookouts at least. And after waiting several years, my wife and I were finally reached on the waiting list. And we had a chance to experience that again, sort of in honor of my folks, sort of satisfying our own curiosity. And we're glad we did.

I don't know how many other lookouts can say that they served on a lookout in diapers. The family story about that was that there's always a scarcity of water. Even back then my father had to drive or hike two or three miles to get back down to a spring to supply the water. And with that precious water, my mother would wash cloth diapers; in those days there weren't disposables yet. And the family story is that she spread them out on the beargrass to dry. And I can't believe her patience as a young, young mother, to first of all say, Yes, I'll go serve on the lookout with my husband, and a baby. But then to face all the challenges of the days of Coleman lanterns and Coleman stoves for cooking and hand washing cloth diapers and all the adventures that comes from that.

Let's see, all I can remember about that is the beargrass story. What a dryer.

KP: That's pretty awesome. Dan, that was 47.

DY: That would be 1947. And I would have been eight months at the time.

KP: And that was just one summer.

DY: And I think that was the only summer when he was married that my dad did a lookout. He had been stationed at Mount May at least for a season or two, back in the Pentagon primitive area [presently part of the Great Bear Wilderness]. And those were in his pre-wedding days.

And on the time that he was able to get out from there, the family story is that he would hike out down through Gooseberry Park and Schafer Meadows. And then on out to [U.S.] Highway 2 at the confluence of Bear Creek and the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, and then either hitchhike or grab a bus to get to Wolf Creek, Montana, where his sweetheart, my mom, lived then. And I understand that they would go to the Wolf Creek School dance and enjoy each other's company there.

They had gotten acquainted as high school students in Helena, my dad because he lived in Helena and my mom because she lived in a rural area out near Wolf Creek where there was no bus service to get to a high school. The Wolf Creek School only went up, I believe, to eighth grade. And beyond that you had to go board with someone in Helena or Great Falls to attend high school and she chose Helena and worked for board and room there and that's where she and my dad got acquainted. And that spurred this great desire of my dad to hike out from Mount May, his lookout post, to Wolf Creek.

So that's part of the family legend as well. My daughter and I had many years later in the early '80s hiked up into the Pentagon primitive area and tried to get at least close to the lookout site where my dad had served. We didn't hike over to Mount May. We stayed on the main north south route from Schafer Meadows. We did find trilobite fossils though, which my dad had hauled out on one of his trips when he finished his Mount May stint. He had hauled out a few trilobite fossils from the trilobite beds in his guitar and in the process ruined his guitar. He brought the family keepsake of trilobite fossils along with a story of how he got them.

BH: Here's a question for you Dan. I remember hearing stories about Mount May. Was it a regular lookout or a tent camp when your dad was there? Do you know?

DY: That's an excellent question. I haven't looked it up. And that never was discussed in the family from what I remember. You know, it was just that was the station and I don't know whether he even had a nearby phone to phone in sightings of fires or to report fires or whether he had to drop down into Gooseberry Park to make those calls. So that's something I'm in the dark about.

BH: Just curious.

DY: Oh, right. On to the next spot, I guess. Kjell, did you have a direction to go next?

KP: Well, I was just thinking, if you wanted to just run over some of the duty stations that your family had while you were young, when your dad was in the Forest Service.

DY: All right. That's a good point. Most of this interview, I suppose isn't so much about lookout experience as it is growing up Forest Service. My dad's career was in the Forest Service, and since my mom hooked her wagon to his star, she went along with the whole adventure, from the lookout on Desert Mountain and on.

Most of the time we lived on the Glacier View [Ranger] District between Columbia Falls and Canada, roughly paralleling Glacier Park on its west side. In those days, the ranger station was more centrally located than it is now. In fact, now it's not even a separate district; It's been combined with another district, the Hungry Horse District. But at that day and age, in the Glacier View District, the operations center was at Big Creek Ranger Station. And for four summers that I remember, my family spent summers there with my dad as the Ranger, and we had all kinds of "in-camp" adventures. My dad always called that "in-camp".

The couple of the things that I remember were that the electricity supply at that time, was a big single engine, diesel generator. And when somebody goofed up and two of the women in camp would try ironing at the same time, it would overload and shut down the generator. And you never saw so many elbows and rear ends, as would scramble across from the district office there to the generator to get that thing going before the diesel cooled down. Otherwise, barring any goof ups on ironing, it seemed like that generator ran 24/7 and supplied at least a few light bulbs, and the radio and the district office.

The heat in the cook house at that time was not relying on electricity at all. So, all they needed over there were the lights and propane tanks to do the cooking for all the people that would come for dinner. I can recall that the workers would make their own lunches over at the cook house. I can also recall that my then baby brother found out that there were cookies to be had over at the cook house. The cook, Evelyn Montgomery, had a complicated enough last name that my younger brother could couldn't say it and so he called her "Gummy," and he would walk over to the window of the cookhouse with his blankie in hand and holler up at the window. "Hey Gummy. You got any cookies?" And Evelyn Montgomery was a great soul and she would supply him with a cookie. I don't know whether he she ever made him go get permission from his mom or not.

My brother was pretty much the charge of my mom. My sister and I at that time were eleven and twelve years old; this would be 1955 to 1958. And the only time that we were really responsible for my younger brother, who was then walking around and carrying his blankie with him, was on Wednesdays which was a laundry day. And my mother, after arranging to run the washing machine would wash laundry and hang it on the clothesline out back. And they charged my sister and me with watching our younger brother, Mikey. We did pretty well most of the time. But one day to our panic we thought we lost Mikey because we couldn't find him. In those days there was a sawed-off stump between the ranger dwelling and the cookhouse. That stump was the home of a salt block for so long that the salt permeated the wood and animals would come in even during the summertime and lick on the wood even if there was no salt block. A mother moose and two calves would come in. She'd bring her calves in and teach them that was a place to come and lick. And of course, my sister and I panicked thinking oh my gosh, maybe the moose got Mikey. And oh, my word maybe Mikey fell in the creek and drowned. Big Creek was a pretty ferocious creek in those days at least for short people like us. We searched and searched and couldn't find Mikey and at last found two legs sticking out from underneath the wet sheets on the clothesline. And looking back there of course the feet belonged to my baby brother Mikey. He was standing there sucking his thumb and rubbing his wet blankie

against his cheek as it hung on the clothesline. And of course, my sister and I were very relieved. I don't know whether we ever shared with mom that we actually lost Mikey or not but he showed up, thank goodness.

KP: I'm guessing you never told her

DY: We probably tried to save face by not confessing. There were few kids to play with at that time. You can play with your younger sister, play Indian princess and cowboys and Indians so long before that gets to be kind of boring. And you look for other things to do. I thought that maybe I could contribute by doing something besides mowing the baseball field and I got coached on how to trap, in hopes of trapping the ground squirrels out of the stock corral where the pack stock was kept when they would arrive in the early summer. And I learned how to trap and did it successfully. I'd check my traps faithfully every day. And whacked on the skull of the unfortunate individuals that happened to come up out of their burrows and get caught in the trap. And finally, one day went I up to check my traps and found a mother ground squirrel, dead, but being nursed on by three of her young whatever you call baby ground squirrels. And of course, the soft side of Dan showed up. I grabbed the three babies, put them in my baseball cap, and bicycled them home and fed them with my sister's baby milk bottle from her dollies. And that bottle was never the same again. I built a cage to keep them in and fed them all summer and I am sure that my father scratched his head wondering why we were raising ground squirrels when before they had been the scourge of the stock corral. At any rate I've never been quite the same about wild animals since.

BH: Can you tell us a little bit about the baseball field and then also the stock corral. Where were they located in say relation to the other buildings there?

DY: Oh, good question. The stock corral was up beyond the motor pool area where what I used to call the grease monkeys used to change the oil in the trucks and the government vehicles and also used to fuel up before they took off for the day. It was further up the creek and beyond that was, or just about even with it, was the stock corral. A little bit beyond that was an open dump. And if you were brave, you'd go up there on your bicycle and check what was thrown out and what was interesting, but if you were too brave, you'd discover that there was already a bear in the dump, checking out any recyclables there.

I jumped ahead to my experience on the district to what I remember clearly as an early teenager, but actually we lived several other places on the district as well. Further down towards Columbia Falls on the Canyon Creek Road, we lived in a converted truck van, the trailer that's towed behind a cab of a truck, that had been converted to a primitive living space. And I remember at that time, I was well, preschool. We lived on Canyon Creek while my dad was a scaler on the district, and he would come home at the end of the day, and meet us at the road, which was virtually where we had the trailer parked and find out what had happened during our day and hug us both. And I can remember to this day, the smell of his cruisers' vest, which was canvas and always smelled like the pitch on the ends of logs that he was scaling during the day. Normally, he would have spent his lunch break picking huckleberries into his hard hat. So he

would show up with a partial hardhat full of huckleberries at the end of the day. I can remember that well.

In those days, we didn't have refrigeration. So, I remember that my mom would make things like Campbell's canned chili made with Campbell's soup and a little bit of hamburger if we were lucky, and pork and beans. I remember there were some very simple things that we ate, but the treats are what I remember the best. I can remember that the main treats were a frying pan fudge that she would make on the Coleman. I think it was a Coleman stove at that time, I don't think we were dealing with propane in those days. She would make frying pan fudge. Periodically, the family would make homemade root beer. And that was another big treat when we were out in these sort of primitive sites. My dad would find a place in the creek that we could have a little kind of a grotto to store the cured root beer and I can remember that was a big deal.

It was also a big deal when we were stationed at Moran Workstation, which no longer exists, Moran Creek, roughly halfway between Big Creek and the Polebridge store. Moran Creek was a workstation in those days. And I can remember living there and hearing telephone calls come through the crank telephone that hung on the wall and was housed in an oak box. What I can remember about that was that we still enjoyed root beer out of the creek, which was stored in a little cooler made by a section of galvanized culvert with holes punched in it so the cold water would flow through.

I can remember one particular call that came through on that telephone. It was night and I had fallen. I must have been about six years old at the time. I fell out of the upper bunk onto the floor, whacked my head and was lying there with a cold washcloth on my head and my mother holding my head in her lap. The call came through which turned out to be a call for my dad to be called up to go to the Korean War. So that introduced another adventure in our lives as he went off to Korea and we moved temporarily to Helena where my grandparents lived, so we had some family support there.

Let's see. I think those were the only places that I recall being stationed up there with my father's career on the Glacier View District. Some of them stand out because of events like root beer and frying pan fudge. Others stand out in my memory because of kindness that people extended to us. At the ranger station at Big Creek, I can remember by name several people because they would always offer us chewing gum. One was a fellow named [Scoops Scovil] who would always offer us a piece of gum because he traditionally had that with him I guess. And it was either going to be Beemans Pepsin Gum, or Blackjack, which was a popular gum in those days. I think it still exists. Before he went to give us a stick of gum though he always asked if we were eating our vegetables. He of course always got a positive answer to that.

Those kindnesses and being invited to go along with the seasonal employees to hike into a fishing lake in Glacier Park, those are the things that stand out most vividly in my memory. To this day, I look back as possibly those were chances to brown nose their boss. If we invite the kid along to go fishing on an overnight into Grace Lake over in Glacier Park, maybe that'll stand us in

better stead for employment next season or something. But I always looked at it as kindness and had some of the great adventures of my young teenage years, going back into Grace Lake and having phenomenal fishing, that I've never been able to match since.

Let's see, anything else. I remember that the trip, monthly trip, I think, from Big Creek to Columbia Falls and Kalispell was a real expedition. It was twenty-one miles of breathing dust, because none of the North Fork Road was paved at the time. And in the later parts of my career, I remember they treated a little bit of the road near Big Creek Ranger Station with a salt that attracted moisture. And I can't remember the name of the salts that were sprinkled on the road, but they were hygroscopic salt that attracted moisture and kept the dust down. Unfortunately, they also attracted the deer and the other wildlife would come down to lick on the road. So I'm not sure whether there was a net gain ecologically or not, deer that would become goners or people having to breathe less dust.

Let's see. Occasionally, as a teenager, my mom would give me permission to go down and fish in the river, the North Fork, and I had a certain set of rocks upstream from the confluence of Big Creek and the river, that I would jump from one rock to the other, and try my fishing flies that I had tied back at home at the ranger station. And I was quite surprised how much the 1964 flood had changed all of my fishing jumping rocks. When it came through in our absence, as we lived back east for a couple of years, that really changed the course of the river. And I'm sure it changed the fishing as well.

Other things-- I think that's all I have in my notes.

KP: Well, if it turns out Dan, that covers your notes, it would seem to me that your time with your dad in the Forest Service really programmed you to deal with the kind of hardship and not having all the modern conveniences which probably made moving back into the lookout world not seem strange at all. So, if you've covered what you were interested in, in your Forest Service time, maybe you could start winging us back into the lookout world when you started to become a volunteer.

DY: I have one more thing that I should mention. That was that so many of the duties besides laundry and ironing fell to my mom. One of the duties that she had during those years that we spent at Big Creek was that come fall it fell to her to pack us up and move us back to Hungry Horse so that my sister and I could go to school. And those days, there wasn't a choice of riding a bus or taking the shortcut over the Camas Creek Road which didn't exist yet. And I remember that it fell to my mom to pack us up and get us moved into a house in that Hungry Horse Project which was then mostly vacated by the Department of Interior. By that time, the Hungry Horse Dam had been finished and so called "government village," with all those nice little houses was no longer used by the folks that were building the dam. Many of the houses were empty but some were still occupied by Forest Service, and a few of the dam employees that operated the dam still occupied those houses.

But I can remember that we went to school in this little wood frame building, the Hungry Horse School, which always appeared to us to be quite a firetrap. In those days, though, there was a couple that lived in the same houses that we did in the government village, and taught school there. Actually, all three of the teachers that taught up to sixth grade lived in those houses. The family's name was Nordstrom that lived right next door to us. They taught third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade. Another lady named Michaels taught first and second grade in those days.

But I can recall, having to go to Hungry Horse in the fall changed my sister's and my view of going to school in the fall. I think it's a point of regret for lots and lots of kids nowadays. So, they say, oh, gee, that marks the end of our summer vacation, and we no longer have all this unstructured time. For my sister and me it was wow, we get to go back and see all of our buddies from school. And we get to play baseball with somebody and get to fight over who gets to use the school glove, the Snagger, and find out how really bad we were at playing baseball. It was a great deal of fun.

I can remember we used to gather shaggy mane mushrooms along the reservoir road because they would come out in the fall. And we would eat those and learn to like them a lot. Only later in life eating morels become an interesting thing. We did find out though that in the natural world, you don't keep a washtub full of shaggy mane mushrooms overnight in the back of the car, because they all auto-digest and turn into ink, hence their name, "inkycaps."

I guess that's all I probably need to remember about going to school and living in the winters in Hungry Horse. Made some of the best lifelong friends there though.

KP: Well, I think you were lucky you had some really cool parents and that passed on to you.

DY: You mentioned going back to the later in life lookout experience: in spite of all the family lore, I never really appreciated how tough life must have been for my folks on the lookout that they spent there with a baby. And I have to say that my wife and I both have served for the past seven seasons as volunteers on Cooney Lookout down in the Swan Forest. The Swan [Ranger] District and the Flathead [National] Forest and on Firefighter Lookout up in the now Glacier View/Hungry Horse [Ranger] District.

Both are lookouts that you can drive right to the base of so that took off a great deal of the, what do you say, the adventure that my folks had to go through. Nowadays, water is available in cubies. I had to learn what a cubie was at our orientation [five-gallon plastic cube-shaped containers]. But that's a lot better than having to hike down to the spring which is still the situation on lots of lookouts, hiking to a spring. Thank goodness for cubies. Thank goodness for solar electricity; solar provided the battery systems that allow you to recharge your cell phone so that is a nice convenience and recharge your radio on the lookout. That was very, very good. And probably much more convenient than the old days of the landline returned crank telephones that are on some of the lucky lookouts.

Cooking is convenient nowadays, because at least the lookouts we have served on are provided with propane stoves. And thank goodness for someone's invention of propane powered refrigerators. They're smaller than a dorm refrigerator but still great for keeping food in at least in small quantities and keeping it fresh. We also use a lot of ice when we're on Cooney Lookout because town is not too far away to provide ice in a cooler for all the fresh veggies that don't want to find a home in the propane refrigerator.

But it brings to mind the days when there wasn't refrigeration at my folks' stations of employment. And we used to use ham a lot because ham could be just kept cool. Since it was preserved and cured, it didn't require the refrigeration that modern fresh meats do. I can remember, at the Canyon Creek Station when we lived in the truck van, having to take a nap and looking up through the air vent in the back. The family ham was kept right next to the air vent. And I can remember saying, "Mommy, there's an animal looking at me," as I'm lying there in bed, looking at me down through the air vent. It turned out to be a pine marten that was examining the ham, and probably helping himself to a few bites.

But that brings to mind a book called *The Lookout Wife* written by a young lady who spent several summer lookout stints with her husband and wrote about it. She was, I think a New York Times reporter that married a lookout and lived on a lookout. As she wrote *The Lookout Wife*, she recalled asking a local grocer to send up a ham. And he apparently sent up the largest ham that he could find to make as much money as he could, I'm sure. And then they had it so long during that summer that she and her husband, who was the lookout, even gave the ham a name. And I think they called it Junior. We never named our hams but I can remember following that same example of using ham as one of the sources of meat.

KP: Danm that lady is Jean Keller Beaty. She has actually done a fundraiser for us at the Belton. Very nice lady. Interesting as all get out, and I have a signed copy of her book, in my house.

DY: I think I can match you on that. After reading *The Lookout Wife*, I remember writing to her. She lived in Canada then at the time. I believed she had moved there to live with a daughter. And she sent the loveliest answer letter back to me. And we shared that during the time that she remembered writing *The Lookout Wife*, and the time that I grew up with the Forest Service that was a much kinder day and age--a time when there was a great deal of pride in working for the government and working for the Forest Service in particular. She responded to that pointedly and I treasure that letter and shared it with other people that are part of the group. Steve and Barb Penner had lent us the book, so that we could read it and that's where that all started.

KP: One of my favorite stories from her. She was a journalist with one of the big papers in New York, and she said that people who wrote stories about her would always spell her last name wrong. It's Beaty; they would always spell it Beatty. And after she did an interview, she always said "the last name's Beaty--one T, Damn it." She said if she didn't say Damn it, they would not pay attention.

DY: I love it. That whole business about a kinder day and age and pride in government service brings to mind something that I would pass on to any possible inductee into the whole world of serving as a lookout. And I'm reminded again and again that you as a lookout person may be the only real person that a visitor meets that represents the government, so I'm sure I'm quoting my dad that you are the face of the federal government. And keep that in mind when you greet people and you visit with people. And like folks that go overseas and spend time visiting from America. They are the face of America, not what is shown in movies, and shown by politicians and reporters, and the news. And anybody can say, oh, I know somebody from America. Well, it's the same thing. Folks who meet a lookout who's positive and puts that good face forward, they can say, I know somebody that works on a lookout. I've seen the view from the lookout and I see the enthusiasm of people that do that job. So that's one of my things to pass on to new inductees into the world of serving on the lookout.

Beyond that, and a surprise to us, was how much that fourteen and a half space by fourteen and a half is your home. And what you do to convert it into your living space, and how you make that known to visitors who come up, on invitation, come up to the tower. We do it in a couple of ways. Usually, we take flowers with us and put them down there at the base of the steps to declare this is somebody's home. This isn't just a temporary bunkhouse, or just a temporary government office, somebody lives here. And I think we get a little extra enthusiasm and a little extra respect for our living space by making that known at the beginning.

I have a question that I always ask before I invite the people up to the tower, on the times that we can have them in the tower, or at least on the catwalk, and that is are we having any fun yet? And I don't know who in the world I pick that up from probably you, Kjell. At any rate, between making the declaration that this is somebody's home and making the invitation, I think that folks come up with an enthusiasm and a respect that they may have arrived with already, but evidently, that's reinforced because we've never gotten a grumpy person on the tower. Folks have always come up with such enthusiasm and so many questions about the devices that we use and how we report fires that we spot and wanting to know how many fires we've spotted. I still have to confess that my partner Jill, my wife, is a real fire spotter.

We always have a pet with us. At least we did until this season. Louie the lookout dog, our standard poodle thinks that being on the lookout for him at least means looking out for his little visiting buddy dog to come from about a half a mile down the road [from Cooney Lookout]. Its owners walk it up the road and the dog he's looking for is a little tiny thing, only a fraction of Louie's size. But it's his little buddy Benny, and Louie always would race down off the tower and run around and make friends with Benny on Benny's visits and leave each other peemails down there on the bushes, and then finally be encouraged to come back up. Benny, however, was such a short-legged Shih Tzu that he could come up to visit the tower which he thought he owned, but he couldn't go down steps. So, Benny would always have to be carried back down the steps. Anyway, Louie the lookout dog would tell you different from Jill and I, that being a lookout means looking out for the dogs, who cares about fires?

One of the great joys is having people return to the lookout after having visited previous seasons, and share stories about previous lookouts that had served as volunteers up there. We find out that there's a lot of history and a lot of cool experiences that went before us that are shared both by looking in the logbook, but shared by visitors who come up to the tower.

And my big surprise that I pass on to a new inductee is that your duties may require you to be there and be awake during lightning storms and keep track of where lightning strikes come down and check on those the next day. And they may require you to scan the landscape regularly. But the most important part of the experience to me, and the most surprising, is the serenity of being up there to the point that that may be the highlight and the unexpected feature of serving on a lookout that we found and I think that might be a surprise to a new inductee.

It's hard sometimes to remember to be enthusiastic when you get visitors, when you had, you know, just only eight visitors in one day already. It's easy to visit with them and forget. Oh yeah, we're up here for looking for fires. The new record on our lookout at Cooney occurred with a person who followed our duty there. Rhea Ashmore, do I have that right? Rhea came on duty and this season on her very first day spotted two fires. So, we can't match that record at all.

In finding other things to do, I've found all kinds of good carpentry things to do that don't require great eyesight or great hearing. Jill, on the other hand, has the best gift for eyesight and hearing. So, it seems like she is the respondent on the radio. And the other thing that I have to say is that she is the one who's got the fire spotting to her credit, in the serving that we've done.

I guess the last thing I can think of to pass on, and we were only going to cap that at three things. Here's the fourth thing. And that is for a new inductee not to be bashful about relying on the people that you're in contact with. The people with the experience are happy to share and support you as a new lookout. And if you're lucky, you'll get somebody like my mentor on Firefighter who would always say that he could remember making all the mistakes. And that it was probably impossible for me to find new mistakes to plow new ground. He was very good about that, and always positive and always supportive. The other thing is that we noticed that once you leave the lookout for your volunteer stint you feel completely unhooked from the system and you really crave knowing what's going on daily. What fires have been spotted? Who's had great visitors? and that kind of thing. What is the weather like? what is the daily relative humidity and direction of wind? and what kind of lightning activity level? We find ourselves leaving a stint really missing that, and I guess it reminds me that you become part of a forest-wide family, so much so that it's always hugs when you see each other in person at the beginning and ending potlucks of the season. And the most eloquent way of mentioning that I suppose came from Inez Love who remembers a TV show called *The Waltons*. And she always saw the check-in at the end of the day, right at the end of the afternoon, as the "Good Night, John Boy" experience. You hear everybody report in. You know everybody's probably good for the night and you may contact them again by cell phone or whatever to visit further, but that check-in at the end of the day was like the greetings in the Walton family on TV. Thank you, Inez Love, for that.

KP: You've sort of covered what we hope to get at the ending you know, giving people an idea of what to expect if they think they want to be a lookout and haven't been before, so I think that covers it nicely. I will say that your point about when you leave part of your soul stays up there. It doesn't matter how many years ago you were on a lookout or whether it was just a couple of weeks ago, that stays in your blood forever. And I find myself texting Mark on Baptiste or Inez up on Cyclone finding out well, did that fire get close to you? or where was the storm? So that's a really good point. So if somebody doesn't want to have that love of lookout world in their system forever, they should never get close.

DY: Or your way of saying that it must come in the DNA, I think is quite appropriate.

KP: Okay, yes. Do you have anything before we wrap?

DY: No, I just have totally enjoyed listening, Dan. And it's always interesting to me to hear what people think is important about lookouts. And you've just very nicely put that together for whoever is going to be a new inductee or whatever, and how important it is to have people who have already been lookouts helping you through. And I can relate to that this year, because I was not planning to be a volunteer lookout, and in the end, I was needed. Leif Haugen asked me if I could go up because they had a person with medical family issues. And so I got to go up and follow--let's see, what's the name, Dan Yuhas and Jill Rocksund. I had all sorts of help. And there was quite the fire going on. The Colt Fire, I guess they call it, down in the Swan Valley. And so, I got to listen to their stories and got information from them about taking care of the lookout, which tends to be quite hot, and giving me information about all sorts of things, which was quite helpful to me. So those things are lifesavers.

DY: Thank you. On that note, the Colt Fire was an incredible experience this year. I'll say more about that, and I probably should have said it sooner. But I see a list of about twenty-five names here that I can remember from my childhood and growing up Forest Service that I remember almost as vividly as I do the fellow volunteers and fellow lookouts that would report in at the end of the day. In my confused senior state, I forgot to mention a couple of very important names. One, of course is Kjell Petersen, and another one, the guy who traditionally and habitually puts forward such a positive face, and that's Leif Haugen, who is the fellow in charge of all of us volunteers. And he'll zoom down off of his remote station at Thoma Lookout, almost up in Canada, and come down and make repairs to the lookout and see you through all kinds of moving-in challenges. I have to say, without several other folks, that would not be the same experience. So, a new inductee probably should hope that Leif Haugen is still in in connection with the whole system. And thank you Leif wherever you are today.

The other big thing that I forgot to mention was that of the experiences that we had, two stick out in mind in regard to fires. One was the Rice Ridge fire which happened down more in the neighborhood of Seeley Lake and went on over, I think, into the Bob Marshall. That put us in so much smoke at Cooney Lookout near Condon Ranger Station that we would report in our visibility reports at the end of the day that we could see four hundred feet or three hundred

feet from the lookout tower. We were really socked in by smoke that would drift up from that Rice Ridge fire.

The other one that I should mention is the Colt fire. We had a front row seat at only about nine miles away. The Colt fire provided us not only an audio with all the radio traffic that went on, but we were able to watch the air traffic coming in to water bomb and retardant bomb that fire and hear what was going on at the ground level at the same time. It was the first time in my life that I got to see a jet deliver fire retardant and the DC 10 size jet came in, I think three times while we watched and dropped that incredible pink load. Other airplanes that we really got fascinated with were scooper airplanes. The scooper airplanes are incredibly maneuverable and could come in and land on Lindbergh Lake, in a very narrow valley, disappear from our sight at the lookout, and then become evident again about two minutes later as they pulled up with a full load of water out of that valley climbing at an amazing rate to go up and drop on the fire.

We had to ask though, why some of the fire retardant was pink that we saw dropped occasionally by helicopters and by the jet that I mentioned, and why some of it was brown. Apparently, we were told that helicopters and scooper planes that dropped the brown retardant actually had scooped so deep that they got into the mud. And were dropping muddy water on the fire. So, there was another experience. Unfortunately, when the fire management team came in, they changed frequencies to a radio frequency we weren't able to hear. So, there we were enjoying a great video on our fire watch on Colt fire. But we were watching it without any subtitles and without any audio. Darn. But what a classroom to sit and be able to watch that fire. Jill and I thought that might be our last season. But after everything we learned by being able to watch the Colt fire, I think we're probably bitten to volunteer for another season, or several. I think that exhausts my list.

KP: Dan, that was absolutely delightful. Thank you for sharing that with us. Jill, thank you for sitting just off camera, making sure that everything works properly there; Beth, thank you.

BH: And thank you, Kjell.

KP: Yeah, this was totally fun. Thanks, everyone who got high with us this morning. It was totally fun. And this is the northwest Montana Lookout Association going out of service. Ten Seven. Thanks. Bye.