

# CARL AND LINDA PITTMAN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

August 15, 2012 and September 2, 2017

The first interview was conducted by Linda Nelson and Gary Haverlandt and the second interview by Lois Walker.

Linda N: Good afternoon. My name is Linda Nelson. Today is August 15, 2012. I am here interviewing for the first time Linda and Carl Pittman. This interview is taking place at 9340 North Fork Road, Polebridge, Montana. This interview is sponsored by the North Fork Landowners Association and is part of the North Fork History Project.

Gary: And my name is Gary Haverlandt.

Linda N: Today we have interview questions for Linda and Carl, and we thought we would try interviewing the two of them together. They have both been in the North Fork for a long time. So, Linda and Carl our first question is tell us about your early background. Where and when were you born? Linda would you like to start?

Linda P: I was born in Los Angeles, California, because there were no hospitals in the desert area where we lived. I was raised on the Mohave Desert near the Los Angeles area. I grew up there and lived there for many years.

Carl: I was born June 7, 1931, in Collinsville, Oklahoma. I grew up in Oklahoma City, had scholarships to UCLA, Occidental [College in Los Angeles], attended Oklahoma State College and the University of Central Oklahoma. I earned a bachelor's and master's and half of a PhD. That's about it.

Linda N: Linda, how about you? You went to school. I remember hearing you say something about being a nurse.

Linda P: Yes, I went through basic school. They had no kindergartens at that time. It was 1 through 12 at two different school districts is all. Then I started taking college classes after I was grown and married and finished the nursing degree in about 1975 or 76 and then went to work in the nursing field for 25 years there in Southern California, two or three different hospitals that I worked in.

Gary: When did you come to the North Fork for the first time and why?

Linda: We came for the first time in the late summer of 1964. It was because we were looking for some land where we could spend the summers, since we were free in the summer. Carl was a schoolteacher, so we were here looking for affordable land that we could get. It was the year after the big flood, the 1964 flood. That was our main reason for being here, to find a place to recreate and build something. We were thinking of a campground, but we only did that for a few years here.

Carl: The float trips made us the [most money]. I would take people floating before anybody else would get on the river.

Gary: Is that right?

Carl: Yes. Everybody wanted to know how the river was there, and then they would go see.

Gary: So, you worked with the tourists?

Carl: Tourists and people up here, you know. The interesting thing about the 1964 flood was Mel Ruder, with the *Hungry Horse News*, got the Pulitzer Prize for [coverage of] the flood that killed many Indians on the east side and several whites down around Kalispell. That end of Kalispell [Evergreen] was all under water. That was a bad flood. The interesting thing about it was the people up here at Coram saw government cars going through like mad. They said, "What's going on?" So, some of them jumped in their trucks and drove up the river where those trains came out of the tunnel. The tunnel was shooting water clear across the river. It was that much higher than the tunnel, so it was acting like a hose with a lot of pressure on it. So, they said, "We've got to get out of here quick. We have to warn everybody." They went down to Coram to tell everybody get on high ground quick or you're going to be dead. It was 200 or 300 feet above that tunnel. It was really a bad flood. And the North Fork Road from the bridge down to Polebridge had all been washed out, just solid rock. That's about all I want to say about it.

Linda N: I'm curious how you found the North Fork.

Linda P: We found it through looking in the Stout Realty Catalog. They had some cabins and a home with it advertised along the North Fork River. Those cabins aren't there now. They burned in the 1988 fire, but they were across the road from the Ben Rover cabin and they were for sale, so we came to look at them, but by the time we got here they had sold. [The Wilderness Cabins owned by John and Trudy Stonestreet]

Carl: I'm glad they did, because whoever stayed in them got ate by 10 million mosquitoes. Back behind there, there was a slough, and between the logs about this open they just fed them all night long. Everybody that came out of there lost all their blood.

Linda N: [Laughs] Okay, so what are some of your earliest memories of the North Fork?

Linda P: Well, it was a lot of camping at first, while we were building. Our son was six months old when we bought the land, and we came back the next summer to start building something, so he was about 18 months. My mother and father came with us. My dad had built homes much of his life, and the weather was pretty good, typical rainy June and then July and August were nice. We had a normal amount of mosquitoes, and we did have a little raft with us. My father and Carl rafted the river once in a while for recreation, but we had a lot of fun just building something where nothing had been before, and we didn't have to do much clearing. There was a clearing down in front where some logger had a big slash heap, so we ended up using wood out of the slash heap for our bonfires. We had a bonfire going pretty much all evening and through the night and in the day sometimes.

Linda N: And this is where we are today. We are sitting on that property?

Linda P: Yes, the same property.

Carl: We was pretty smart in those days. We asked the seller to get the people to go to a lawyer, draw up rights to the spring, all the way up to the stream, and they did, so they signed it and we

got copies of it. Twice I had to give our neighbors over here, who bought 40 acres after we bought our 20 acres, a copy of that. I would be going up to work on the water system. “What are you doing on my land?” So, I would give him a copy of it and say, “Read this.” He never said a word after that each time. See, the stream came through the lower section down here, but I wanted to go all the way up there to get plenty of pressure for my electric system, and water for the showers and toilets and everything else. I would go fishing in the Park at 5:00 in the evening, and by 6:00 we would have enough fish to feed the family. We would set the table and eat at 6:00 o’clock. Fish was in there in those days.



**The Pittmans began construction on their property in 1965, when son Matt was 18 months old. Concrete blocks were just the right size for sitting on and for weighing down the other end of his teeter-totter.**

Linda P: Lots of fish, whenever you needed fish.

Gary: What was the North Fork like, as you remember it in the early days—the roads, the people, etc.?

Linda P: Nice, friendly people. Within a few days after we started camping in here Frank Evans had come down. He told us a lot about their get-togethers, usually every Saturday night either at the Hall or sometimes it was over at the McFarland guest ranch, which was still operating on the Park side. The road was really quite good. The loggers who were logging fairly heavy up here at that time would oil the road, usually sometime in June, and once that was done the road was a very good road and had very little dust. You did have to sort of be ready to pull off to the side when a big logging truck was coming down, and we were told if you had any problem they would stop and pull you out if you got stuck by pulling over, but we never had that happen. Yes, very friendly people, and get-togethers on Saturday were a really welcome chance to get to talk with other people. We must have had a radio to listen to once in a while, because I remember we would tune in to the news, so it must have been affordable. I can’t remember what it was like, in our camp or in a tent.

Carl: We had Army tents in those days with netting over them so the kids wouldn’t get eat by mosquitoes. Our shower was some posts laid in the ground and a black tar paper and three-quarter inch line coming in wrapped around the ground. The sun heated it up. You could get in there and could burn yourself, if you didn’t watch it, you know.

Linda P: I remember the hot shower we had.

Carl: Everybody would stop and visit with us. They would get out of the car and come in around the campfire, and we would all visit. It was quite a show. Later on, I'll tell you a trick I pulled on everybody.

Gary: Okay.

Linda N: As you think back to that period, what North Fork residents made an impression on you? Was there that character that stood out while you've been here on the North Fork?

Linda P: Yes. Like I said, Frank Evans was very welcoming and told us a lot of things that were helpful to us. We got to know the Newtons, Frank and Ethel. They had homesteaded north of Moose Creek somewhere. Another interesting guy was Wally Nolan, who was related to Ted Ross [his father-in-law] who owned the store. I think he married one of Ted's daughters. He would come visit, and he was a really hardworking guy. He moved a lot of cabins. He moved the McFarland main room of their guest ranch over, which became the [North Fork] Hostel.

Gary: That's interesting to me. He drug it across the bridge?

Carl: Across the river.

Linda P: He would take the logs apart and bring them across the river when it was lower in the winter time. I think he did a lot of that.

Carl: He came up here and got a few extra logs for extra supplies if it got messed up or something. Dot and Cal Oien.

Linda P: They owned the store for a while.

Carl: Bob and Betty Olson.

Linda: And the Wurtz [Frank and Ella] family. We would visit with them once in a while, and they would come by here. I know Carl bought a pair of their moose skin moccasins that he made, or I guess they shared the work on that. They quilted all kinds of hide pieces together and made a big 2½-foot-sized pillow that we bought from them. It was really comfortable. It had deer, moose, and elk hide. It was beautiful. We had that for many, many years.

Carl: We would sit on our porch here and visit, and the kids were just enthralled as they told the story about how Slim Link got killed by the grizzly up there on Mud Lake. It was quite a story.

Gary: Were there any of the homesteaders you knew north of Trail Creek?

Linda P: A few times we visited, and Carl once bought a little motorized bike from Tom Reynolds. He was a retired ranger. We knew the Holcombs [Harry and Lena], but they're not north of Trail Creek, and the Wurtz's. We visited Joe and Blanche McDougall in Canada one time, driving up with Cal and Dottie Oien.

Carl P: Ann Hensen and Ben Hensen, their big place there.

Linda P: Yes, the Hensen family.

Carl: But they were here way back. He didn't get to town for 10 or 12 years after he had grown up there as a kid.

Gary: I remember them.

Carl: They set cruise to Alaska going hunting from there on horseback and stuff.

Linda N: How about any other homesteaders near your place here?

Linda P: I'm not sure. Did the Ladenburgs [Tom and Joan] homestead their land down here?

Carl P: I don't think so.

Linda P: I don't know who was the original owner of these pieces. We bought from the Greenes.

Carl: He was the head of the post office.

Linda P: Charles was the postmaster at Columbia Falls, and Rose Greene. They owned all this land here, and we bought 20 acres of it.

Linda N: Okay, so what was daily life like, and how was it different from life in most parts of the country? You sound like you've given us a little bit of a picture. Is there anything else you want to add to what your daily life was like when you got up in the morning—cooking, shopping, groceries? What was that like?

Linda P: We had to go to town, Columbia Falls or Kalispell, for supplies. We did some laundry by hand, and by the time we were here three or four years we had an old wringer washer that we could use to wash. We had plenty of firewood always, if we wanted to cook over a fire, but we did have a little camp trailer with a little stove that we used, too.

Carl: In the evenings we would sit around the campfire.

Linda P: A bonfire every evening, yes.

Carl: And the grizzlies would walk by. This is a major path from the Park up the hill here, for the grizzlies. They'd come across the oxbow here. There's three islands there, and they would come right up past our fire and look at us and look at the fire, like, "What are you doing here? You know this is right in our way." We would go in the cabin—Grandpa put up a little cabin for him and his wife, and we would get in our trailer and the bear would go on. When our dog's hair would raise up, we started going in after that every time.

Gary: Yes, that would be pretty scary.

Linda N: Was it a hard life at that time, do you remember? Was it difficult or easy?

Linda P: It was harder than being at home, but worth it, because we got to have all the beauty and the river and get together with people, so we didn't think of it as hard. But we were just summer residents, so it wasn't a year-round thing.

Carl: In those days the road was so good it was nothing for us to jump in the car and go to Trail Creek and visit with what's her name . . .

Linda P: The O'Hares [Richard and Merry] or the Gaffaneys.

Carl: Yes, the Gaffaneys [Larry and Florence] were wonderful people.

Linda P: Yes.

Carl: No dust. Dust these days—not this year—but it would go up 300 feet and it fills up that deep on the rocks on the river—you couldn't even see the rocks—and it was crystal clear before that, you know.

Linda P: The river was always a beautiful color, and the rocks were clear and you could see fish. Every time you were on the river you would see a lot of fish down there, big dollies [Dolly Vardens] and cutthroats and whitefish.

Gary: Tell me about the North Fork social life, the Hall or parties.

Linda P: Oh, practically every Saturday there was something going on. People would get together. They would always have snacks, unless it was a potluck or something. They would use a record player and the generator, and they would square dance until late hours.

Carl: Back in the olden days they would square dance until daylight, then they'd have breakfast and get in the wagon and go home.

Linda P: Yes.

Linda N: My gosh.

Carl: Our nephew was here, and he said he looked up on the Internet the coolest place in the nation. Night time average temperature for the summers is Polebridge, Montana, 42 degrees.

Gary: Is that right? I believe it.

Linda N: With all this action going on here in the North Fork, were you a member of any organizations in the North Fork?

Linda P: The North Fork Improvement Association, that was the group that maintained the Hall. A lot of the people built that Hall, I guess. It was there when we moved here.

Carl: It became the North Fork Landowners Association. They tried to keep everybody out, see. You saw how that worked.

Linda P: I think that's the only organization we belonged to.

Linda N: One of the things that I'm curious about is how did you communicate with North Forkers? I know Linda said you had these wonderful dances every Saturday night. Was that automatic every Saturday night? Did somebody come and tell you, or did they leave a note in the mailbox? How did you communicate with your friends up on Trail Creek?

Carl: We'd go up and visit them.

Linda P: We did drive the road a lot more than we do today, because the conditions really were better then than now, once it was oiled each year by the loggers. And we sent a lot of notes back and forth through the mail lady.

Carl: Or mailman.

Linda: I think the only phone available was at the store [Polebridge Mercantile].

Carl: Yes.

Gary: What did you do for other fun?

Linda P: Once in a while we would drive down to Bigfork and see one of the plays they were doing, and Whitefish once in a while would have something going on. We would hear them on the radio. We did take the *Hungry Horse News*, too. Two or three times a month we would go in for some kind of entertainment in the valley. I can't recall how or when the NFIA first made up a schedule of things, but I know that for many years the community would get together for a picnic up at Bowman Lake. Hazen Lawson would often roast a whole turkey for that, and it would be a potluck.

Carl: Hazen and Ruth were really nice people.

Gary: Yes, they were.

Carl: When we put in our campground people would stop by. When I was putting it in we had outhouses around, so I had this kid working for me, and another kid too, but the one kid would get down inside the vault, about five feet deep, and he would get down underneath there. We'd hand him boards, and he would fill in so no animals would get in there or anything like that. Then he would "Ha ha ha" and open up the lid of the toilet, and he would "Hello," and we would laugh like mad. I said, "You know what? Let's get these people that stop in to visit with us, like Dr. [Ray] Hart and Dr. [Bob] Funk." They would all stop here to visit with us. We would sit around for campfire time, then I'd tell them, "Hey you guys have got to go with me. I want to show you the campground. The county made me dig clear to China. I want to show you the campground."

We would take off and show them the campground. I would show them our tables and our fire pit and everything. And we would walk by the outhouses. Well, we would get down to this last one here, and we never let anybody use it, see. When we would leave the kids would keep sitting there and stirring the fire. When they would see us clear out of sight they would run out there and lift up the lid on the toilet, and the one guy would crawl down in there and close the lid, then back the other guy would come to the fire. When we would go by and he saw us back there he would come back behind us, and I would know everything was all set up. So, I would say, "Hey, you've got to see how deep we had to dig this hole to China. I mean, this county is really bad." "Okay." The worst one was Ruth Lawson. I opened up the door and held it for her, and she went in there. I said, "Here's a flashlight," so she lifted it. I said, "Look down in there." So, she lifted the lid and looked down in there, and what was his name?

Linda P: David.

Carl: "Hello," he would say. My God, she hit that door and knocked me down, ran over me with her wooden foot, you know, just stomped me in the ground and kept running. She ran about 100 yards, and everybody says, "It's just a joke, it's just a joke, you know." And another guy knocked me down. It was the other kid's dad. He was a little guy, about 95 pounds. He knocked me down and ran over me, too. I knew it was going to come. I would open the door and get clear back, and he still got me. [Laughs] That was our standing joke, and then everybody would bring their friends in to see it. "I want to show you the campground," you know.

Linda: We also did some hikes. I remember one of my favorite hiking partners was Helen Ramon.

Linda N: Oh really?

Linda P: We used to get together and go pick huckleberries in August.

Linda N: Gee, that's interesting. Well now, let's move on to some of the major fires, floods, ice storms, or any other major events that you experienced in the North Fork.

Carl: What was that date in the summer when all these trees fell down on the road here? We was going to town.

Linda: That's fairly recent.

Carl: They will want to know that, too.

Linda P: That was your birthday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, and we had a heavy wet snow come.

Carl: 10 or 11 inches, I think it was. It knocked trees all the way down. Ralph Hemp had a chainsaw. He cut the logs, and we would throw them off the road. We got to town that way.

Linda P: We haven't experienced any flood here. Once in a while if we get a lot of heavy rain our hillside will sort of seep water out of it. We're very close to a hill there. It will get wet in the woodshed and things when you're walking around in water.

Carl: When the big floods came it would pick up the North Fork Road, about 100 yards of the pavement, and take it out in the field. Just take it out there 100 yards or so and drop it. There it was, perfect. You could make your road like that if you wanted to, you know.

Linda N: Did you see that happening?

Carl: No, we got there after it happened. We had been to town, came back up and then stopped—they said, "Don't go in, because it's flooding." So we went around it and came up to down there, what's the name of this big turn down there?

Linda P: Rabbit Hill.

Carl: Rabbit Hill, and we could see it was a mess. Water was coming from the left, not from the right where the river was, so we stopped and there was a guy up there, a single guy up near Val's [Val Cox] that come up with a big truck. He said, "What's going on?" I said, "Well it's flooding. Water coming from the left, that's the main river coming in here." He said, "Yeah, I've got to get



up and feed my dogs,” so he went on through. I said, “Boy, I hope he makes it. He did. Then he sold out later, or he died I think. He said he had cancer. You remember his name? [Jim Little?]

Linda N: So, your road flooded right here in front?

Carl: No, it never got up here.

Linda P: Down south of the Ladenburgs.

Carl: It went across the road two or three places there.

Linda: Fairly recent. The first 25 years or so I don’t remember any big fires, except in 1967 we could see the Huckleberry Fire, but that sort of went into the Park and didn’t come up this way. Until 1988 and the early 1990s we seldom had any concern about forest fire, seldom ever saw crews going out to put something down or anything.

Gary: Were there any other important events to you here?

Linda N: So, generally pretty happy days at the campground and lots of friends and visiting, and lots of hiking. Next let’s see, leaders and characters. Sometimes small communities do have their characters.

Carl: Well, the hippies came in. They all built up there . . . where was I selling that land?

Linda P: On Moose Creek.

Carl: Yes, Moose Creek. They bought a bunch of that land, and they brought in rice and flour and stayed for the winter, put up these slap-to log cabins. You could throw a cat between the logs. The lady stayed until November, and the kids left in about December. The guys left and we haven’t seen them since.

Linda N: Did they own land up there?

Carl: Yes. They just panned on it, you know, made a down-payment on it and that was it.

Linda P: Some of the young people that came did get land and eventually built and stayed.

Linda N: Any strange characters that you remember?

Carl: Well, if you go by the guy we bought this place from, I mean he was crippled up from logging. He would take about six-inch steps.

Linda P: The realtor.

Carl: The realtor, yes. He had in his books [a story about] the stilt man. Way back when the store was in the Park, they had a boat tied up there. You would come up on the North Fork side, you would fire a rifle, a one-shot rifle setting up against the tree, and they would get in the boat and come over and get you. You would go back over and get your supplies and come back and go up to your homestead. Well, Mr. Wurtz would walk to town 30-40 miles and carry a 50-pound sack of flour, different food sources, all the way back. He didn’t have a horse in those

days. He finally got a horse, and that made life a lot easier for him. I forget what I was leading up to here.

Linda N: Walking the North Fork? How long would it take when you went into town driving?

Linda P: A lot or days it was less than a few years ago. It's been pretty good the last few years with the road improvement, but it was not very different from an hour to get into Columbia Falls for us most days.

Carl: I was going to tell you about the stilt man. This guy stepped out on the porch over in the Park at the store and said, "Hey get out here quick! That nut is over on the other side." So, they looked out and the guy had a wooden lodge pole, about 20 foot long, strapped to this leg, and he strapped another one to the other leg. They said, "What are going to do?" He said, "I've got it under control, got it under control." So they said, "Hey, we'll come and get you. Just wait a minute. We'll get the boat and come and get you." "No, no, I've got it under control." So he pushed off on the bank and made a step, made another step, tried to make the next step and bloop, over he went and there was two logs floating down up in the air. They said, "Oh my God, he's hung up on a log down underneath there. We've got to go get him." All of a sudden one of the logs floated off, and they thought, "What's going on?" First thing the other log floated off, then here he came up just a-going like mad, you know. What was that realtor's name?

Linda P: Charley Green.

Carl: I had four of his books. There were really good stories about the North Fork. I loaned them out and nobody ever returned them. Charley Green. Get a copy of those [*Montana Memories*, 4 volumes].

Linda N: And he was from here, the North Fork?

Carl: Well, he logged up here and everything else, but he knew all these stories. These are really old-time stories.

Gary: Did you ever celebrate holidays up here, Christmas or whatever?

Carl: We came up for Christmas one year, and we went up to the lady's house, the big 2 or 3-story house up there for dinner. Remember?

Linda P: Oh, the most recent time we were here for Christmas, just you and I?

Carl P: Yes.

Linda: The Lawrence place [Dick and Barbara]. We came back in about 1994 or 1995 and spent Christmas.

Carl: At the Hemps. That was quite a story, climbing up that hill there in our little Forerunner.

Linda P: In about 1972 we came up. It was fun to cut our own Christmas tree, and the children made their own ornaments. That was fun, and we were very comfortable in our cabin. We went up mainly to the store area and socialized up there. I remember once Roy Cooper, who was our

neighbor for a while, had a sleigh. He got horses and took the kids and Carl for a sleigh ride up to the store. That was fun.

Carl: Yes, then the ex-superintendent had a snowmobile, and we went snowmobiling.

Linda P: That's right. Yes.

Linda N: How about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, what was that like in those days?

Linda: That was fun.

Carl: These nuts shooting 10,000 rounds.

Linda N: Was there always a parade here?

Linda: No. This was before the parade. They had a fish fry every year. The guys would go out in the morning and fish, and I think all the fish they used for the fish fry were fresh from the river that morning.

Carl: There were at least 50 people every time we was there.

Linda: 70 people there, and for a while Carl also conducted a skeet shoot for the guys to go up on the old Mathison homestead (now Kummerfeldt's) next door to the Hall. They would be up there, and I would get games together for the children, and we played games while they were getting ready to fry the fish, and it was a big full day. We started working on it from 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning until 1:00 or 2:00 the next morning. The kids were asleep on the benches at the Hall with the square dancing going on. Yes, it was a fun, full day.

Linda N: I can almost taste the fish.

Carl: I forgot that July 4<sup>th</sup> when the ladies got stuck up here at the north end of our place.

Linda: That was close to July 4<sup>th</sup>. It was July 3<sup>rd</sup> one year.

Carl: We'd had 10 inches of snow. Well, they came walking by down here and Dick and I were standing out there. Dick Smith, that was my partner. He had the big house down there by the road. He's dead now, but we said, "What's up ladies?" They said, "Well, we're stuck." I said, "Stuck? What are you driving?" They said, "A Volkswagen van." I said, "Oh, you're not stuck. Let's go and I'll get it out for you." So, we went up there and I just rocked it a couple of times and got them going. We got down here, and they took off, but it spun a little bit and they thought they was stuck, you know.

Linda N: Did you say 10 inches of snow?

Carl: Yes.

Linda N: On the 4<sup>th</sup>?

Carl: Yes.

Linda N: My goodness. Do you remember any close encounters with animals?

Carl: Every night [Laughs]

Linda P: Well, we had very few encounters, but in recent years about 1995, after the flood, there was a grizzly in the field near Hay Creek eating ground squirrels that had drowned in their holes in that field. He was out there about a week. We hadn't seen it for over a week or so, so I decided it was safe enough I could go jogging again, and Carl used to ride the bicycle along. So, we started out.

Carl: And two dogs, two nice dogs.

Linda P: And my two dogs with me jogging, too.

Carl: These dogs were great. If they'd see a squirrel go across a mile down there, they would take off after it you know.

Linda P: He was on the bicycle and got ahead of me as he passed Moran Creek, and then a little ways up there...

Carl: It was downhill, so I let it go freefall.

Linda P: I heard him start to yell a few things, and this big grizzly was coming down the hill on the left side. It must have been 300 or 400 yards that it came chomping its jaws and growling at Carl.

Carl: The trees were about this high, and he was knocking them down as he was coming.

Linda P: Yes. Carl was trying to stop the bicycle and get his pistol out in case he had to shoot.

Carl: I had a .44 magnum.

Linda P: He finally got it, but I heard him say, "Oh God, he's still coming."

Carl: Linda was 100 yards behind me with the dogs.

Linda P: When I got up there to him the bear stopped on the old North Fork Road, which was in the trees a little bit. It stood up, and there were four of us, us two and the two dogs, but the dogs didn't see the grizzly or sense it there, luckily.

Carl: Can I tell a little bit now?

Linda P: Yes, the bear went down on all fours then and started walking down the old North Fork Road toward where our house is.

Carl: It scared me so bad, charging right at me, coming down the hill. I always faced traffic—I was going on the left-hand side and he was coming right at me. So, I jumped off the bike. One second later I had my .44 magnum in this hand and the bike in this hand, and I'm saying to myself, "What do you do?" Okay, one in the ground in front of him. If that doesn't stop him, pour into him, and do the last one in my mouth, because if you wound a grizzly he will tear you to pieces. You don't want to live. He tore 300 stitches in this guy down below us here, what's his name? He looked like a zombie in the paper. He was bandaged from his head to his toes. The

thing had been shot once before and there was five of these guys hunting across the field in the trees. They heard some fumbling around over there, and they came up on him, and this grizzly just ripped him and tore him to pieces. They shot the grizzly, killed it and took it to the taxidermy over in Whitefish, and they found an old bullet hole in it. So, he was mad. He was going to get the next person and just tear him to pieces see. Anyway, when Linda came up he looked at her. He looked at those dogs, and those dogs never saw the grizzly. They kept looking the other way. One of the them said to the other one, "Do you see anything?" "No, don't see a thing." Dern dogs. [Laughs]

Gary: What kinds of changes have you seen over the years that you've been here, major changes?

Linda P: A big decrease in logging, that's for sure. Then we saw after that a lot of road deterioration go on, and then an increase in traffic and building, building homes instead of cabins.

Carl: Every year the amount of people, the amount of camping, doubles. Started off there was four people up here, and they all had different views. They all fought—man and wife, man and wife. The next year there was eight, the next year 16, 32, 64, 150,000 now, see. At every take-out now there's 50 cars put in, 50 cars take out.

Linda P: More ease of communication has gone on. A lot of the emphasis, especially with the association—it once was called the Improvement Association, and they would work together to try and get the road improved or whatever they thought was needed. It's turned into more of conserving things as they were at that time.

Carl: Keep them out.

Linda P: They thought they could keep people out of here, if they didn't do any improvements.

Carl: The Forest Service changed their view. The first big fire we had up here, a forester was riding in the back of a pick-up truck and a tree fell on him and killed him at nighttime. So, they stopped ever fighting a fire at night. That's the time you fight fires. It dies down and you go in and put it out. You've got to take a few risks in life, you know. But they had stopped that, so when this big fire was coming at us, coming over this hill right here by the store, the helicopter comes down, he about turns over and finally gets out there. The Forest Service pulled up, and they camped up here [at Moran Meadow]. They saw the fire coming, and so they pulled up the camp and went back to town. Every night I would go down there and look at the thing. It was 200 or 300 feet above the trees, that's how much fire was coming out. The gas went up about a mile and exploded over Logging Creek, too. The people from Whitefish and Kalispell called us, "What's going on up there?" They said it looked like atomic bombs going off.

Well, we'd go down there at 2:00 or 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock in the morning, Linda and I, and if it was closer we were getting ready to get out of here, but I had my fire stuff all set up then to fight it, you know. I'm down there cussing at the Forest Service, and a girl walks up behind me. I'm standing there talking to a local firefighter. They saved every house, the local firemen. I don't know about Whitefish, but Kalispell, Columbia Falls, Coram, all those fire departments. The local volunteers came up here and saved every house, even with the big fires coming at them.

So, the girl walks up behind me and says, "Can I quote you, Mr. Pittman?" I said, "Well, if you leave the four-letter words out," so she quoted me. The next day Larry Wilson comes out from the Sheriff's command center and says, "Look what you've done." I said, "Man what's all these tents?" He said, "Well, you did it." I said, "What?" He says, "Yes, look here." So, I read it. It said, "Local man says federal government firefighters run every time they see smoke, but local firefighters fight it," so then God told the Forest Service, "By God, you get in there and fight it. Help those people all you can." Larry told me, "Go get you a pair of pants. Get you one of those shelters you can get into." They checked it all out to me, and we got to keep it. They got a set for her, too. They're feeding us now, too. Before that it was just the wives feeding the local firefighters. Then they took off the "you can't fight fire at night." They went ahead and fought fires at night, just because of that. That went across the nation, that picture. I never got a copy of it. I've got to get over and get me a copy of it one of these days, frame it and put it on the wall.

Linda N: Is there anything else you want to add to our interview today, either one of you?

Linda P: I can't think of anything else.

Linda N: Carl, what about you?

Carl: Nope, I think we got it all in there. Roy Cooper, he was a great guy. He lived next door to us. When the Giefer grizzly came along here he smelled our moth balls. He left it alone and never touched it. Went over there and got Roy's cabin, his tent, his trailer. Over the restroom there's a little window up here, so he reached up and tore the whole wall out. Ran that way, ran into the kitchen, knocked the door out, threw all the cabinets out in the yard, got his grease out of that, you know. Then he came over to Mary Smith's. Hit the wall there, hit the back door, knocked into two rooms there, went into the kitchen, and she put out a few moth balls. But he pulled out a tray of silverware and it banged, so he went out the same door he came in. That was the only place on the North Fork—he broke into 20 or 30 cabins—but that was the only one on the North Fork he went out the same door he came in. He went out the kitchen door.

Linda N: What is that theory again about the moth balls?

Carl: Well, I read this 40 or 50 years ago. A guy up in Canada, a logger said, "I got tired of going off in the bush there and putting my sleeping bag down and getting poked all night, or in my tent, so I decided I was going to sleep on the path that the grizzlies use all the time. But I threw some moth balls out all the way around me. I was ready to move if they came." He said they would come down, "ugh, ugh," then they would go all the way around, just breaking brush all the way around, you know." So, I said, "That's it." Ever since then I've been putting a moth ball about 10 foot from the house, all the way around. Except when we leave I would dump them on the porch here and around the windows. We had one come in this door. He got to running so fast he knocked that door off, and he didn't go in the house.

Linda N: Well, I think this concludes our interview for today. Gary and I would both like to thank you for sharing your stories with us. I know for me it's been most enjoyable and a learning experience, as a fairly newcomer to the North Fork. I can't tell you how much we appreciate taking your time. And on behalf of the North Fork History Project we would also like to thank you.

Linda P: You're welcome.

\*\*\*

## FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH LINDA PITTMAN

September 2, 2017

Lois: This is a follow-up interview with Linda Pittman on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2017. This is Lois Walker, and we are at her home at 9340 North Fork Road.

I made some corrections to the transcript of your original interview. Oh, you found out where Carl was born, good. Oklahoma State, college and university, Central Oklahoma. Those are two different schools?

Linda: It changed.

Lois: Oh, I see.

Linda: It became a university. Yes, he was finished by then.

Lois: One of the questions I had, he didn't really talk about his teaching career, where he taught and what grades he taught.

Linda: Right. That's on this page, your additional questions. I did answer that one. He taught in Colorado, Arizona, and then California.

Lois: Wow. Like at a junior college or high school?

Linda: High school, and then later in his career in California he did teach at the community college at night. He taught a class or two.

Lois: What were his subjects of expertise?

Linda: It was business. Business math and various machines, and he got into a little bit of computers there in the latter part, and bookkeeping—mainly business classes.

Lois: Did he ever do anything in administration in a high school?

Linda: No.

Lois: But that's what allowed you to come up here in the summers, was that he was teaching.

Linda: Yes. He was free in the summer.

Lois: Your job was such that you could take off in the summer, too?

Linda: Yes. I didn't go back to work until the kids were 14, 11, that age, and then I went to work in nursing. Part of the condition was that in the summer I would be free to come up here, and that worked fine in those days, because the acuity of patients always went way down in the summer time and they were having to lay people off of work. So when I wasn't there it made it easier for them, and for me, too.

Lois: Have you ever had an opportunity to use your nursing skills up here on North Forkers?

Linda: Very little. Yes. I didn't ever do any emergency-type nursing, but just medical, mainly with heart patients.

Lois: Well, I imagine it was kind of nice for Carl to know when you were out rafting the river that there was somebody with some medical experience.

Linda: Oh yes.

Lois: Should the occasion rise.

Linda: Yes, when we were rafting I carried some things, you know, resuscitation things and epi pens and stuff like that if we needed it. We never had to use it, so that's nice.

Lois: Well, if you are prepared then you don't need it. If you weren't prepared then you would need it.

Linda: Right. [Chuckles]

Lois: Tell me when and how you and Carl met and when you got married.



**Carl and Linda in 1960, two years after they were married.**

Linda: Well, we met through a friend I worked with at the time, and she was married to a teacher, so that's how we met. They were friends of ours for a while, and we were married in 1958.

Lois: Oh my goodness.

Linda: A small wedding, and we were married until he passed away.

Lois: How many years?



Linda: 57.

Lois: 57 years, oh my gosh. Tell me again when he died because I don't have it on record here.

Linda: December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.

Lois: His ashes are here?

Linda: Yes. We have a huge larch tree on the hill behind us. It's off of our property line a little bit, but we used to go up there. We suspected there was this big tree, and he tried to dissuade us that it's just the soil behind the tree on a mountainside. But Mathew and I kept looking and looking, and after about two years we finally saw this big tree. It takes me about three times stretching my arms to get around it. It isn't too much taller than the others, because the top was knocked out with lightning.

Lois: It sounds almost like one of those cedars that we have around here that get so big.

Linda: Yes, pretty big. It's a larch, so that's where his ashes are scattered.

Lois: That's nice.

Linda: Yes. He loved getting up there. The last few years of his life he couldn't make it up there.

Lois: Tell me about your children. When were they born and what are their names?



**Pittman family passport photo, 1977**

Linda: Mathew was born in 1963, and Melissa was born in 1967.

Lois: I'm sorry that I've never met them. Do they come up?

Linda: Oh yes. Matt was here this summer, almost three weeks in late July. Melissa didn't make it over this summer, but she was here last summer.

Lois: What year did you buy your property?

Linda: In 1964.

Lois: Okay, so the kids have been coming from the time they were little?

Linda: Born, yes. Matt was six months old when we bought the property. And you had a question about who we bought from—the Greenes. We didn't get to know them really well.

Lois: This was Rose Greene's family?

Linda: Rose Greene and her husband, who was a postmaster in Columbia Falls. This was their weekend cabin.

Lois: Had there been earlier family? Did they have family that homesteaded, or was this property that they bought?

Linda: I don't know who they bought the land from. They may have homesteaded it, but I doubt it.

Lois: But they still own land on the other side of the road?

Linda: I think the family does, yes. I know they had a daughter who lived in Alaska, and she retired down here, but I don't know any of the other children.

Lois: Well, we can trace it at the plat room if we wanted, but I just wondered how much property they had to start with.

Linda: I'm not sure. The Sonnenbergs [Gus and Elsie] bought that piece over there, and that's at least 40 or maybe even 60 acres, where Stan Stahr is today.

And the Harkers are across the road. He was a plumber and had a plumbing store in Whitefish. Their children still own that, I think.

Lois: I think they do, too. Jeremy, is that his name?

Linda: Jeremy, yes. They had ten children.

Lois: Oh my gosh, the Harkers did?

Linda: One of the girls married a guy, and they had bought the property that is now Caldwell's property.

Lois: Out on Numa Peak Lane?

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Were your kids of an age to know the Harker kids?

Linda: One of their grandsons came over once—I think that was the family from Alaska—and played. He and Mathew were going to spend the night in the treehouse. Carl had built a treehouse. He connected three trees with some 2' x 4's and a floor and put a ladder up there. But in the middle of the night the other boy, the Greene's grandson,

wanted to go home, so Carl had to take him. Matt wasn't too happy about him bailing out, but anyway it was fun. That's the only time that they played together.

Lois: When did the Stahrs buy from the Sonnenbergs?

Linda: Oh my. I'm trying to think.

Lois: They were both still living when they moved back down valley, the Sonnenbergs? Elsie, was that her name, and Gus?

Linda: Yes, I think they were.

Lois: I can't remember who passed away first.

Linda: I think he did. We didn't know them really well. I think the boys were 15 or 16.

Lois: Their boys?

Linda: No.

Lois: Your boys?

Linda: Yes, I called Robert [Rego] one of my boys, too. He was here with us for a couple of summers, because I don't know if you want this on the recording.

Lois: I wanted to ask about the Regos, how he happened to come out with you.

Linda: When the boys heard that the place next door had sold and I said his name was Stan Stahr, to Robert that sounded like it had to be followed by Private Eye. So, I've always thought of him with that name. I've always worried that I might address him like that. [Chuckles]

Lois: He would understand, I'm sure. The little piece where the Smith's cabin is, was that part of your property originally?

Linda: It was, yes. We sold it to Richard and Mary Smith, and then Rego bought from her three years ago.

Lois: And you said that Dick Smith essentially built that cabin himself?

Linda: Yes, pretty much. My dad helped him with the foundation and the fireplace.

Lois: It's a nice cabin.

Linda: It is.

Lois: He obviously knew what he was doing.

Linda: Well, he helped build the house they have in Priest River, and she still lives there.

Lois: You were friends there? Is that how you knew them?

Linda: We were friends from Carl's early teaching days. Carl had taken a class at Central State, and Richard was there, too, and Mary went to school there. Dick was 6'7"—he

was taller than Carl, a big guy. So, when Carl went into the Administration Office at the school where he worked, he saw Dick sitting there and asked what he was doing there. He said he was applying for a job, and he got it. So yes, we were friends from that time. Their boy was maybe four or five years older than Matt, and we've known them since he was a baby in California.

Lois: It's a small world, huh?

Linda: Yes. When they came up on a vacation one time he said he would sure love to have a piece of property to build a cabin on, too, so they worked it out.

Lois: This obviously was before the 20-acre minimum lot size was adopted.

Linda: Right, a long time before that.

Lois: And where is Mary now?

Linda: She is still in Priest River where they built their home. After they left southern California they moved up there.

Lois: He's been gone a number of years, hasn't he?

Linda: Yes, he has. It seems at least 12 or 13.

Lois: Going down the list, Carl said something during the interview about having land on Moose Creek or Trail Creek.

Linda: He probably mentioned that he sold land. He had a California real estate license, and he did that part-time a little bit down there. Then a man, his name I think was Harry—I'm not sure of the first name, Harry Medland, I think—bought some property on Moose Creek and subdivided it. He had Carl as an agent up here to show people. The only person I can remember he sold one to—I think he sold another one or maybe two, I doubt more than that—was the teacher, Paul Mueller.

Lois: Okay.

Linda: Yes, he sold that piece to Paul.

Lois: That's actually east of the North Fork Road, just south of where Allen Jacobson is.

Linda: Right. I don't know if all of those pieces were owned by Medland or not.

Lois: There was a fair amount of subdividing done on Moose Creek, and as you go out Moose Creek on the left where Tommy Diossy and Greg Ouellette and the Hildners [Richard and Suzanne] are, there are a whole bunch of 20-acre lots back in there. I don't know if that was part of his, too.

Linda: I don't know. But that's where that came from.

Lois: Tell me about Helen Huck Ramon. You mentioned that you went hiking with her. Did you have occasion to know her parents, Milton and Ethel?

Linda: I didn't know her mother. By the time I met her, I don't think her mother was still living, but yes, we met her father.

Lois: He was pretty active in the NFIA [North Fork Improvement Association] at the time.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Going through the records I see a lot of references to him. He had an insurance company, evidently, because he sold the policy for the Hall to the NFIA. What's interesting to me was when they bought the first record player. They decided they weren't going to have a live caller all the time [for square dancing] and be able to play records. Evidently, he fronted the money for that and bought the record-player, because there are records of payments to Milton Huck, \$15 a month or whatever, until they got it paid off.

Linda: I didn't know that. I wouldn't be surprised.

Lois: An interesting fellow.

Linda: Yes. I enjoyed doing several hikes with Helen. She liked to talk and laugh, and I felt comfortable that we weren't just going along without making enough noise to keep bears away because she was there.

Lois: Well, she'd been up here from the time she was a child, so she obviously was very knowledgeable.

Linda: Yes, and she talked about going to school in those one-room schoolhouses. I think the one that I remember her mentioning was down here on the old Lawson place.

Lois: The Polebridge School.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: At one time there was a school on the road going back to her cabin that they called the Red Meadow School.

Linda: Oh really?

Lois: Also called the Prairie View School, I think. Now whether she ever went there or not, I don't know.

Linda: I didn't remember hearing about that.

Lois: So, you don't remember seeing that school?

Linda: No. I think someone told me that there was the remains of an old school there. I don't know if it was her or who. There was also a school at Funk's up there, but she didn't mention that she ever went to school up there.

Lois: Yes, that was considered the Upper North Fork school, as opposed to the Lower North Fork school. Did you visit her at her homestead cabin?

Linda: Yes, every once in a while, and in 1967 when we came with Melissa who was just six months old, she insisted I have a rocking chair for the baby, so she gave up her rocking chair for the summer and let me have it here. That was neat.

Lois: Did you ever watch her work, painting or sketching?

Linda: I didn't ever see her working, but I do have a piece of her work at our home in Newburg. It's up over the vent for the stove.

Lois: Is it an oil or watercolor?

Linda: It's a sketch.



**Helen Huck Ramon sketch that Linda bought from Helen**

Lois: That's very nice.

Linda: Yes, it's nice.

Lois: Most of us only have little lithographs of some of her paintings.

Linda: Yes, and some of her stationery I used to buy at the store.

Lois: Oh, I didn't know she made stationery.

Linda: Yes. There's a picture of one that she's drawn.

Lois: Like little greeting cards? Okay, I think I may have seen one that Ted had one time.

Linda: I recognized her work.

Lois: How big is the sketch that you have?

Linda: It's probably 8" x 12".

Lois: If I had a scan of it, what I'm hoping to do with some of these oral histories is actually put a couple of pictures in, to just break up the text a little bit, you know, make them more interesting.

Linda: I had to see that in here somewhere, because I thought you could put a sketch in. Do you remember seeing it?

Lois: I don't, not as part of the interview, I don't think.

Linda: I don't know where I was looking.

Lois: You just hear snippets. There's not that many people around who remember Helen real well. She was an artist. What can you say?

Linda: Yes, just a little eccentric.

Lois: A little eccentric, yes. Larry [Wilson] says she had a way of inviting you over, or if you happened to be there she'd say, "As long as you're here, do you suppose you could...?" She had a way of having people help her do things.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: It looks like she stayed very active. She didn't die until she was 97.

Linda: Yes. She and I hiked up to the lookout.

Lois: Up to Cyclone, you mean?

Linda: Yes. And from here it's long, because they didn't have the road around there and they hauled everything up on horses from Moran Creek. What are they doing at Moran? Is that a temporary bridge?

Lois: That's the temporary bridge. They're going to replace the permanent one. They said there would be no disruption in traffic and that it would be done in September, but that's an awful narrow temporary bridge. When you look at the cement trucks and the gravel trucks coming up the road, you wonder how that's going to work. If anyone will talk to them about it, it will be Ed [Neneman]. I'm sure he will address that with them. [Laughs]

Linda: Yes. Are they moving it over there? Because that would be a heck of an S turn you would have to make.

Lois: It's just a temp thing. Anything else you want to tell me about Helen? Any memories or funny little stories? What did she like to eat? Did she talk about her kids much?

Linda: Yes, she had four kids, I think, and we would talk about them.

Lois: Vernon Huck was her brother; Vernon and Robert and one other. But she had Noel, right?

Linda: Noel and Ted. And there was an older one. I can't remember his name [Vincent Steven], so there were three.

Lois: And Noel died or was killed, something happened to him?

Linda: He had an accident in a car driving to Spokane in his late teens maybe. I didn't know him very well. But Ted, when he got a little older—12 or 13—we would hire him to help do some chores and things once in a while.

Lois: I know she was working in California and Texas and various places, but obviously they maintained the homestead cabin, so she must have come up whenever she could.

Linda: Yes, she did. She would be up in the early years that we were here, like most of the summer, but she still had a place in town, too. Oh, and I remember she always had this little dog with her named Daisy.

Lois: What kind of dog was it?

Linda: I think she was like a rat terrier—not a Jack Russell, but she could have been.

Lois: She started the Art Department at the College [Flathead Valley Community College].

Linda: Oh yes.

Lois: The College is now 50 years old, so perhaps when she bought the place in Kalispell was when she was working at the College.

Linda: Probably. I remember her getting that job. She didn't have it too long. It seemed that she always seemed to have difficult problems with whoever was in charge of things there, and she was always the victim of somebody's authority or something, and so it didn't last too long, I guess.

Lois: But that might have been why she could come up in the summers, if she arranged her teaching schedule so that she had the summers off. Well, Ted is on my list to interview.

Linda: Has he been up here this summer?

Lois: He's been here most of the time. He's just laying low, you know, but I'm trying to help him. He has a book of stories that his mother wrote about her younger years, and he would like to get that printed along with some of her sketches. I'm helping him try to get that laid out so he can just self-publish it.

Linda: That's nice. I had bought one of Ted's paintings, too, and gave it to Matt. He influenced Matt a lot as far as his choice of reading and got him interested in *Lord of the Rings* and that series. He loved to read, and Matt did, too. We went up and saw him last year. It was the first time Matt had seen him in many years.

Lois: Yes, he's up there. I know they still do some cleaning of cabins and that kind of thing. Well, the Mercantile. I wanted to talk to you a bit about the store. Obviously, you went in the Merc many times over the years.



Linda: Oh yes.

Lois: Ted and Esther [Ross], were they the owners when you first bought?

Linda: Yes, and you could buy ice out of the ice house, which we had to do quite often at first. We brought that little trailer up with us that's parked in the trees there, and it just had an icebox in it.

Lois: With two small children that was a challenge, I'm sure.

Linda: Yes, and my mother and father were along, but I remember when we were kids we didn't have electricity until I was about 9 or 10 in southern California. She would take a pan with water in it, then soak the dishtowels and put them over things, and the breeze blowing through them kind of cooled things, or you could put it in a stream, but our stream was a little ways over. We didn't do much of that.

Lois: So, Ted Ross would cut the ice out of the river in the winter?

Linda: Yes, and it was packed in sawdust. He ran the store most of the time. We would see her once in a while, but not very often.

Lois: Someone told me that she was deaf, is that true?

Linda: Oh, I didn't know that.

Lois: I need to track that down and see if it was true.

Linda: Maybe that's why we didn't see her very often.

Lois: We did an early interview with her son Bob, and I want to go back and do another interview with him. He said she didn't particularly like it up here. It was more his thing than hers, and that meant she had to home school at least the youngest one. They had four children. Karen Feather told me that Ruth Lawson said that sometimes she would come over there to get away from the store, to lay down and take a nap.

Linda: Oh, I didn't know that.

Lois: Do you know anything about how Ted decided to subdivide the land that is now the Polebridge townsite?

Linda: No. I remember hearing that he was selling lots, but I didn't think that was unusual. I thought that's what a lot of people did when they ...

Lois: He had 50 of them.

Linda: Really?

Lois: So you don't have any idea how much he charged for them or who bought them or anything?

Linda: No, I don't.

Lois: Those are some of my questions for Bob. He was grown by then, but I'm hoping he might know the answers to some of those questions.

Linda: The only one that I can think of that might have bought that early was Ivan Windsheimer. I'm not sure.

Lois: Bob Grimaldi bought in the early 1970s, I think. He bought four lots next to each other. Tom Riemer was on the end [of Beaver Drive], but I don't know at what point he bought his.

Linda: I'm not sure either. A lot of people, younger ones like the O'Haras [John and Joyce] and the Coxes [Robin and Valerie] bought.

Lois: They came in the 1970s, most of them. So, did you go to the store to get milk, bread, eggs, that kind of thing, or did you go to town to do your shopping?

Linda: We did most of our shopping in town and just bought an occasional thing up there, and the ice.

Lois: Did you have a post office box?

Linda: We did. I can't remember what number it was.

Lois: We were box 22, I remember. One of the things that Karen Feather gave me is a receipt book for when people paid their box rent. It's just for like 1976 to 1979, and it didn't say what boxes they had, but it shows that they had paid. It's interesting to look at the list of names.

Linda: I wonder if ours is in there.

Lois: I'll have to check. Could be.

Linda: That's interesting.

Lois: And the Rosses sold eventually to the Oiens, right, Cal and Dot Oien, in 1967?

Linda: Right, yes. They were there just a couple of years.

Lois: You knew her, right?

Linda: Yes, we did several things together, you know. I know they took us up [to Sage Creek in Canada], because in the winter they had met the McDougalls [Joe and Blanche], and she was always kind of laughing and said she was afraid of him. [Chuckles]

Lois: Well, he looked kind of sinister, you know.

Linda: Dark eyes and brows, I remember. But anyway, they introduced us to them, and we spent a couple of hours visiting up at the McDougall's once. We rafted the river together one evening. I don't know why; it was late afternoon and we thought we would be down by darkness, but we got so cold. It was early in the year. We had to stop at Frank and Ethel Newton's, and we put our shoes in her oven. She had the

wood stove going, to try to warm up. We had left the kids, Matt and Melissa, at the cabins across from Rovers.

Lois: The Wilderness Cabins?

Linda: The Wilderness Cabins, yes. They had a boy that was a little older than Matt.

Lois: Who owned the cabins at that point?

Linda: I can't remember their names.

Lois: Is that the Stonestreets maybe?

Linda: Well yes, they owned it, but this other couple, I think, were running it for them, because we came to look at those cabins when we first came to the area, but the Stonestreets bought them.

Lois: Yes, Carl mentioned that in the first interview. Where had you launched from that day that you got caught on the river?

Linda: It must have been around Ford Station. I can't remember where we used to launch up that way.

Lois: Where did Carl get his love of rafting? When did that bug bite him?

Linda: It was I think during some vacation time we spent in Colorado. We were looking around in Colorado for land a couple of summers, and camping. Then he bought a little raft. There was a river where we were camping, and we would take little short trips down the river.

Lois: Rafting in Colorado can be interesting.

Linda: Yes. It wasn't anything treacherous or big. It was a small river. I forget the name of that area where we were doing that in, but anyway, that's where he got interested in rafting.

Lois: And then he bought a bigger raft when you got up here?

Linda: Yes, it's a little bigger, a used Army surplus one that you had to patch a lot of times.

Lois: And then he had to get a trailer to haul it on, obviously.

Linda: Yes, right.

Lois: And then he had to build a building that he could pull it into, right. [Laughs]

Linda: Right.

Lois: You know how those things go.

Linda: Yes, he did love rafting.

Lois: So, the Oiens, did they live at the Merc or did they live someplace else?

Linda: They lived at the Merc.

Lois: Upstairs?

Linda: Right. I think she was from someplace south, like Cajun country, and she had at least two sons. I don't think Cal and her were married when she had those boys. One of the boys was young enough to be still living with them. His name was Donnie.

Lois: Did she ever mention how they had an interest in the Merc or how they came to buy it?

Linda: No, I never heard what attracted them to come up here.

Lois: And why they only kept it two years? I mean, it is a hard job. Did they keep it open in the winter or just in the summer, do you know?

Linda: I think some in the winter, maybe weekends.

Lois: People probably expected it back then.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Because Ted Ross was there for 12 years. I assume he sold gasoline and propane.

Linda: I remember there was a gas tank out there, yes, beyond the porch.

Lois: Anything to make money he would probably sell.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: If he hadn't subdivided that field, then he probably hayed that or had it hayed.

Linda: Right.

Lois: I don't know if they had any livestock or not.

Linda: I don't remember any either.

Lois: Do you recall the Oiens or the Olsons making any big changes to the Merc, I mean the outside of it or the inside of it when they bought it?

Linda: The Olsons added a room behind where the counter is, and it was more of a living space so they didn't have to go upstairs. When we visited we would go up and play cards and stuff. I know the year we came for Christmas we did that, and it had a bedroom, bath, and a small living room. It was taken off later.

Lois: What I heard was that it may actually have been Ted Ross who built the structure originally, because he was thinking of opening a little café or something, but then he never did.

Linda: Oh, okay.

Lois: I know it was taken off in 1982, because Karen said the foundation was just logs and she hired Ron Wilhelm to replace the foundation with concrete blocks, and they tore that addition off when he did that. But you think maybe the Olsons put that addition on, rather than the Rosses?

Linda: I thought so. I don't remember Ted and them doing it. It was there when we came for Christmas and Matt turned 7. Matt was born Christmas Eve, 1963, so it was 1970. And Melissa was about 3.

Lois: Ted and Esther had the store until 1967. The Oiens had it from 1967 to 1969, and then the Olsons bought it in 1969.

Linda: Yes. I thought they put it on. I don't know.

Lois: It's an open question. Let's see.

Linda: I don't know if they are still living or not.

Lois: Someone told me that the Olsons are at the Veterans Home in Columbia Falls.

Linda: Oh, are they?

Lois: I would like to find out if that's the case, and if so maybe have one of you guys who actually knew them personally go down with me and see if we can do a little interview with them.

Linda: Yes, because I saw them, I know they bought a place near that big motel that's on the south end of town.

Lois: Columbia Falls?

Linda: No, in Kalispell by the airport down there.

Lois: The Outlaw Inn?

Linda: The Outlaw Inn, out in that neighborhood like that. It seemed like we went and visited them there. When I last saw them was not too many years ago in Costco.

Lois: Really? [Laughs]

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Do you know when they built their place on Hay Creek? Were they living there when they ran the Merc?

Linda: I think they were starting to build it when they were in the process of selling the Merc. What time did that sell?

Lois: Well, they owned it from 1969 until the end of 1974, then Karen and her husband and the O'Brians bought it in late 1974 and took occupancy in 1975, so they had it about six years.

Linda: I think toward the last part they were building something. I don't know who they bought from, but I know for a while, the guy that used to stay over here that was murdered stayed there.

Lois: Oh, Roy Cooper?

Linda: Roy Cooper stayed there some, too.

Lois: On that same piece of property that is now Mary Bassingthwaight's place today?

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Where was Roy Cooper's place?

Linda: I don't know if he actually had a place up here, but maybe. He was staying at Sonnenbergs' place, in a mobile home.

Lois: Is that what they called Pinochleville?

Linda: Yes, the Harkers and him and who else? They went together, and we paid our share, and they had a water system put in. We still use part of it, but I don't know where it is, because they buried it. But it quit working for a while, and when that happened we put in a second system and just laid it on top of the ground so we could see if there's a problem where it is. [Chuckles] So anyway, they used to play cards.

Lois: In the mobile home?

Linda: Yes, or over at the Harkers', more than likely, but the Harkers used to come up pretty regularly.

Lois: Did Sonnenberg build the house that Stahr is in now, or did Stahrs build that?

Linda: Stahrs built on to Sonnenberg's. For many years they had a mobile home, and I don't know if there was an addition on it or not. Then I think they were the ones who built a little log cabin. And then when Stan Stahr bought it he added onto it.

Lois: He's got a pretty good size barn or garage or whatever that is, a workshop back there, too. And the light is on all day and all night. What's that about? If you come up at night, there's a floodlight back there off that big building.

Linda: Oh my.

Lois: We've always wondered how he runs that.

Linda: I used to hear his generator a lot; I don't hear it now.

Lois: It may be solar, but it's awful bright for a solar light.

Linda: I haven't seen any solar panels. I walk across his field when I go to our water system. We share the same one. We now have a little hydro system off of ours. We run it. That's what these lights are on, but I don't hear his generator going anymore, and for years we did. I thought why does he do that and run that light all night, too? I remember seeing that. But it's still on at night, huh? I guess I haven't noticed.

Lois: Yes, we always notice that if we come up the road at night. Could that be water-powered you think?

Linda: It's possible, but I had never heard him say he was going to put that in, and I don't see any solar.

Lois: There may be some panels back there.

Linda: Yes. Smart.

Lois: Did you know Annette Rover, Ben and Annette?

Linda: No. I think I might have met Ben one time at some gathering, but I didn't know anything about a wife.

Lois: Ben and Annette, of course, owned the Merc before the Rosses did. I don't know at what point. I mean I do know, but I can't remember, they built what's now the Ben Rover Cabin. But I've heard that after Annette died and after one of the Opalkas, maybe Adolph died, then Ben married Marian Opalka.

Linda: Oh, really? I don't think I ever remember meeting an Opalka.

Lois: There's so many brothers and sisters marrying brothers. [Laughs] It gets complex up here sometimes. You need some genealogy charts.

I wanted to ask you, Carl talked about trapshooting events for the NFIA, and I mentioned it to someone and they said, "Oh no." I said, "Well yes, Carl said they did." And there's a ledger that the treasurer used for years, and there's stuff in there about buying clay pigeons for trapshooting and stuff.

Linda: Yes. I don't think it went on too long, but it was two or three years at the fish fry for July 4<sup>th</sup>. The men first would go to the river and catch fish that morning, and it was always so neat to be able to get fresh fish. But then they asked Carl if he would run a trapshoot up there on the Kummerfeldt Meadow, so he did, and I did children's games while they were doing that.

Lois: Had he done trapshooting in California or something?

Linda: No, but maybe in Oklahoma before I knew him.

Lois: So, they had a machine and everything to toss?

Linda: Yes. Well, I think Hazen Lawson and some other guy knew what Carl should get, and they helped him get what they needed for that.

Lois: They would do it for prizes or just for fun?

Linda: I think it was just for fun.

Lois: It wasn't a competition.

Linda: I don't think that there was any prize.

Lois: Interesting. Well, now that I know I will ask some of the other guys. Was Lee Downes in on that at all? Ross Wilson, Sonnenberg, any of those guys?

Linda: I don't remember seeing Lee Downes very often at the fish fry. There was Pa Holcomb and Frank Wurtz.

Lois: Johnny Mathison?

Linda: Mathisons, yes, Sondresons [Lloyd and Ruth].

Lois: Frank Evans.

Linda: Yes. So, they did have a few years where they had a skeet shoot up in the meadow. We did children's games, and then for teenagers we would have a tug-of-war.

Lois: What a great idea.

Linda: Boys against the girls, and it was so funny that the girls would always win. [Laughs]



**Carl and Linda as George and Martha at the 1991 Polebridge 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade.**

Lois: How many kids are we talking, 10 or 20 kids?

Linda: Not that many, but six or seven on each side, I think.

Lois: Who would bring the rope?

Linda: I think Carl got hold of a good big rope, probably from Hazen Lawson.

Lois: That's funny. [Laughs] I wish we had more kids up here now, I really do.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: How did you and Carl fall into hosting the ice cream social?

Linda: I think Dick and Mary Smith got an ice cream churn somewhere. And Ann Hensen had one, too. They got to talking and said, "Well, we should get together and do ice cream one of these weekends," so they did. We went too, and we said, "This is fun,"



and then we said, “Well, why don’t we each year have a pie and ice cream social? We could do it up at the Hall and let the kids turn the crank and make the ice cream.” And that’s how it started. I remember we sent postcards out to people announcing it, because I don’t think they put out a schedule in those days.

Lois: I don’t think so. It was a while before they did that.

Linda: Right. It was pretty popular. I think maybe 30 or 40 people.

Lois: With ice cream and pie, sure. Do you have an idea roughly what year that would have been?

Linda: Let’s see, their home was already finished, I know, so they were staying over there. That was mid or late 1970s.

Lois: The Smiths?

Linda: Right.

Lois: And it’s been going ever since.

Linda: Yes, right. [Laughs]

Lois: That’s neat. I’ve heard John Frederick talk about going over to Frank and Ellen’s, Frank Vitale and Ellen Horowitz. They would make ice cream over there. That was a big deal. It was a popular pastime in the winter when they could just pack the thing with snow instead of ice.

Linda: We did that once. After Rachel Sweet had to move on Barbie Kuzma and I took over doing the hikes, and I remember Pat Elliott saying every year in Colorado her parents would take them out, and they would take an ice cream maker in the early spring when there was plenty of snow. So for I don’t know, five or six years at least, for our social we would go to the Park and pack our cooler with snow. But then we thought, well, it would be fun to have a hike one day up to Link Lake, because that snow stays, and we put it on the schedule. I took my ice cream maker. It was a plastic one at the time, and Barbie Kuzma put hers on. We tied them on the back of our packs. In our pack we had our jug with mix. And then I took some cones I bought at the store, and we had a wonderful turnout.

Lois: That sounds like a great time.

Linda: It was fun. We had plenty of snow.

Lois: Crazy Barbie Kuzma. I had forgotten about her.

Linda: Yes. Oh she’s cute.

Lois: She was.

Linda: And I had my two dogs. The springer spaniel, we let her lick the container when it was finished and she got her head stuck in it and was running around there for a little bit until we could get it off of her. But that was just a great turnout.

Lois: That's a good idea. So, Pat Elliott was also among the hiking club?

Linda: Oh yes.

Lois: The hen hikes or whatever they called them?

Linda: Yes, she attended a lot of them.

Lois: Val Cox, who else?

Linda: Rachel always and Cecily McNeil and her boys.

Lois: Was Edna Evans still around then or had they divorced by then?

Linda: Yes, I think so. She was here a little bit in the summer, but she was working most of the time nursing. Sometimes Joyce O'Hara and...

Lois: Sally Costello? Sally liked to ride her horse mostly, I think.

Linda: Right, yes.

Lois: Wendy Upton?

Linda: Wendy would be on some with her little kids, and Kuzma.

Lois: D'Ann Wilhelm?

Linda: Yes, D'Ann went, too.

Lois: Did you know Rosalind Yanishevski?

Linda: Not much. I remember seeing her, but I don't remember seeing her on hikes, but she might have been.

Lois: She's a biologist. Tell me about Rachel Sweet. I never really knew Rachel.

Linda: She was a neat gal. She lived in Southern California and had these four kids. I don't know when they bought their property. I think it was maybe before we bought ours, but we knew her pretty early in our stay. I can't remember when she started wanting to do these hikes with her kids. That's why she called them hen hikes, because all the gals took their kids along. But yes, she talked a lot, and she lived in that little cabin, but it leaked, unless the moss really got wet and stopped the leaking. They had a living room in their cabin, but they actually slept in an Army tent on a platform next to it. That was semi-camping for them up there.

Lois: It seems to me someone told me she was like a surrogate mother to some other kids.

Linda: Oh yes, that's right. She brought other friends along, her daughter's friends, and I don't know if her sons had friends come along at any time.

Lois: There was someone who said they were so glad she was there because it kind of turned their kid around or something. They sort of really admired Rachel.

Linda: Frank Evans had a couple of foster kids. I don't know if he actually adopted them.

Lois: Yes, they did. Floyd Luke and his sister Sharon, right. I think you may be right. Their parents had been killed in a car accident. He and Edna took the kids and raised them.

Linda: Yes.

Lois: Well, let's see. Rose Greene who owned the property over here was not any relation to Charley Green, the realtor?

Linda: No.

Lois: I did find his books. You know Carl talked about them. John Frederick had three of them and loaned them to me, so I've been reading the stories.

Linda: Oh, that's good.

Lois: The NFIA Board, I have a list of all the officers and board members over the years. It shows that Carl was the South Director in 1983. Some years are not complete though, if there weren't minutes. I've been trying to catalog the minutes, but I don't have them all.

Linda: I did make a note on that, because I also served as secretary-treasurer for three or four years. And I know I turned in minutes and reports.

Lois: The question is who got them, and when they changed secretaries, if it was somebody that isn't here all year, where did they get stored. For instance, I'm missing several years when Bonny Ogle was secretary-treasurer. I said, "Bonny, I know you've got them." "Oh yes, they are out in our attic on McMannamy Draw. I need to go get them."

Linda: Oh my gosh. I'm trying to think who was president at that time.

Lois: When I give the talk next week, I will make a list of the years of minutes that I'm missing and maybe people will come forward and say, "Yeah, I've got those."

Linda: I don't think I have any, because I think I would have turned them over.

Lois: To whoever was secretary after you?

Linda: I'm trying to think of who that was, too.

Lois: I will look at my list and see if it jives with what you know to be when you were secretary.

Linda: I think it was before I was ever a director.

Lois: Really? Okay. Do you know who was the other South Director when Carl was the South Director?

Linda: No, not for sure.

Lois: What's your memory of what were the doings of the organization at that time and what the hot issues were?

Linda: It was mostly just a social thing, planning get-togethers. They didn't talk much, it seemed to me, at meetings about improving the road. They just sort of accepted it. The only thing I can remember is for quite a few months, or maybe even a couple of years, was when there was somebody would bring up the fact that the women's euphemism had to be straightened up, the outhouse.

Lois: "The cows?" They didn't want to be called cows?

Linda: This was before that. It was listing, this crooked little outhouse, and the men would always outvote us, and for a couple of years never getting fixed. I think Ed McNeil finally . . . but, you know, some would call it the "hoo-hoo." Some would call it the—I don't know, everybody has a different name for it.

Lois: Had a pet name just for the gals' side of the outhouse?

Linda: I guess for any of them. So, in my minutes I started just calling it "the euphemism," because we had so many pet names.

Lois: That's what that's about!

Linda: Have you seen that?

Lois: I did! Yes, and I saw the stuff with reference to a "euphemism expense," and I had no idea what they were talking about. Thank you. That fills a hole. [Laughs]

Linda: Yes, so those might be my minutes. [Laughs]

Lois: Well, if you were on the board a lot in the 1990s, land use planning was cranking up then.

Linda: Yes, it was starting.

Lois: Actually, I think the 20-acre minimum was adopted in like 1991 or 1992, so that may have already been settled. One land use plan is dated 1988, so it may be that it was a mute issue by then. I noticed in reading the minutes that for quite a while land use planning was just part of the board meetings, before they actually set-up a separate land use advisory committee. Then they became two separate bodies, and they had their own meetings and their own minutes.

Linda: Right, yes.

Lois: But for a long time they were combined.

Linda: Yes. And we never went to—what's the other group that the McNeil's were part of?

Lois: The North Fork Compact.

Linda: The Compact. Did you ever?

Lois: No, we didn't join the Compact, because by then the 20-acre minimum was in place, and it was not a big deal. Our intention has always been to pass it down to our daughter and her kids. If that were not to be the case, then I might consider putting on some sort of a whatever they call that.

Linda: A restriction, yes.

Lois: A restriction on the deed, a covenant of some sort. How many acres do you have here?

Linda: It's 18.-something now. We've only sold the one off, but every survey seems to change the piece a little.

Lois: So, it was like 20 to start with?

Linda: Yes.

Lois: The river floating that Carl did, it wasn't just you and your own family and your friends and the community float that used to be once a year in August? Did he give rafting tours to other people, to other tourists?

Linda: Oh yes. He and Dick both went and bought a fairly good raft, and then Carl also became a dealer for those people.

Lois: For the rafts, you mean?

Linda: Yes, to sell these rafts, so Hazen Lawson bought one from him. I think the Hensens did, and the Newtons and the Foremans. He sold four or five of those boats. But yes, he just decided that he could make extra money in the summer running float trips, so that's what he and Dick did. They just put up one of those leaning signs—float trips.

Lois: A sandwich board kind of thing out front?

Linda: Yes. Different people would stop in and find out about it, then I would be shuttling cars quite a bit and going and picking them up and stuff, but that was fun, too.

Lois: When did you get your telephone here?

Linda: Oh wow, after the house had been moved back here, probably in the 1990s or about that time. Because Carl's mom was getting to where she needed to be checked on more often, and they went by and asked if we would like a line put in, because they were going on up with one, so we said yes. It was getting more crowded at the stores, too, waiting for the phone.

Lois: Put your head in the barrel.

Linda: Yes. [Laughs]

Lois: Did Carl float other rivers, the Middle Fork and the South Fork, or mostly the North Fork?

Linda: Yes, mostly North Fork. By the time he was doing the South Fork it wasn't for paying customers, it was for his friend. He went into the Bob Marshall with the guy who guided so much in there, Roland Cheek. Roland wanted to know whether it would be feasible for him to buy boats and let them ride in, fish, and then float them out, so Carl took his boat and went with him on an outing with a few customers.

Lois: That sounds exciting.

Linda: He did end up buying boats and doing it himself that way. That was neat.

Lois: Yes. Good ole' Roland Cheek.

Linda: He was a nice guy.

Lois: Any adventure stories to tell about on those floats? Did he ever get caught in the weather or have trouble with the boat?

Linda: He never had trouble with the boat. He had a paying customer once who Carl told to stay behind him, where he could tell him instructions. He and his son were in a canoe. Both of the guys wanted to go in canoes on a several nights' trip, so they had most of the camping gear in Carl's raft. But one of them went ahead of him and then got into a logjam. He and his son got out okay, but that was a dangerous thing.

Lois: Scary, yes.

Linda: On that same trip they were doing okay when they got further down, but his excitement was when he saw a ball of fire coming over in the sky. He thought, "Oh my gosh, that thing is going to hit us." He rowed to one side of the river and then the other, and then he was down by Huckleberry, and he said, "Oh my gosh, it's going to hit that mountain where that lookout is." They were watching, and then it just went on over. He thought it was maybe a missile fired from some country. [Laughs]

Lois: Not a meteor?

Linda: He didn't think of a meteor, but that's what it was. I was at home with the kids, because it wasn't time for me to go pick them up. That was their final day, I think. I heard this strange noise and went out the door to look and see, and the sky just had a smoke trail across it. I thought, "Well, that's strange."

Lois: They can make a big impact if they are big enough.

Linda: Yes. But then after it went on by them, he looked at one of the guys who was a lawyer that was a customer. He said, "Look what you just missed." He had a movie camera around his neck and never thought to film what he was seeing. There was a young guy in San Diego that stepped out and took pictures of it, and he got thousands of dollars for his footage. So that was an interesting tale he used to tell a lot.

Lois: What do you remember about Ruth and Hazen Lawson and the Square Peg Ranch?

Linda: Oh, they were wonderful hosts and always so friendly. They would invite us over once in a while to have tea and cinnamon toast. That was one of their favorite desserts, and it was so nice.

Lois: She was quite a baker, wasn't she?

Linda: Yes, she was a good cook.

Lois: I remember the story about having pies cooling out on the screened-in porch and the bear coming through the door. The bear smelled them and just came on in. Hazen shot it.

Linda: Oh really?

Lois: Yes, the skin was on the wall in the cabin.

Linda: Did you know them, too?

Lois: Yes, we knew them, and we were there for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. They roasted a turkey. It was out in the little gazebo.

Linda: Oh, yes.

Lois: I don't know what year that was, but we've got pictures. I've heard people say that sometimes the annual community picnic was up at Bowman Lake.

Linda: Right, I was just going to say that.

Lois: And Hazen would cook a turkey for that.

Linda: He always brought a turkey for that, yes.

Lois: Did he have a smoker or something, or how did he do the turkey?

Linda: I think he baked it at home and then just took it up there.

Lois: Bless his heart.

Linda: But then someone suggested they go and get corn on the cob. They brought a big tub and cooked corn on the cob. That was fun. And then I think Barbara Lawrence started the deal where the teenagers were out playing in the water and she would grease a watermelon with lard and throw it out there, so they could try and get it and it would slip away. It was a real chore to try and catch that and keep it to eat it.

Lois: Sure, yeah.

Linda: Yes, that was a nice picnic. They had started that tradition. When we came up in the winter they took us snowmobiling with them, the Lawsons. That was fun. It was a beautiful warm day.

Lois: I know he was a principal or a superintendent.

Linda: A school superintendent, yes.

Lois: But he was close enough that they could come up on the weekends if they wanted to?

Linda: Yes.

Lois: I remember his son-in-law had built a solar shower for him for his birthday. That was the big deal. We all had to tromp over and see the shower.

Linda: Yes, we had one of those here when we first moved in here, because our water is gravity flow from up in the creek here. My dad just thought it was wonderful that we got a piece of land with water rights to that stream.

Lois: You bet. It is good.

Linda: He said, "Well we could get some of this pipe and just put it in," and it came down with good pressure, and he used it for building all the cement structures. Anyway, we realized when we had it coiled around a little bit on the ground, that's warm water.

Lois: Heated up, you bet.

Linda: Yes, so he built a little shanty, put tarpaper around it and a grate in the bottom and put a faucet on it, and we could just take a hot shower when the sun was shining.

Lois: Necessity is the mother of invention.

Linda: That was fun, yes.

Lois: Duke Hoiland told me that he built a balance beam for your daughter, so she could practice her gymnastics.

Linda: Yes, he did. We put it out here in the yard for her to use.

Lois: So, tell me the chronology of how you built here. You said at first you camped up toward the front of the property.

Linda: Yes, and he started building, because Carl and I wanted to build a campground here. We also had friends that lived in Southern California near us in the same little town. He was a forester in Northern California and then moved to Southern California. But we hired Bud Fishel, or his son actually did the work, to build a few roads around, and then we could put campsites in them. So there wasn't anything down front, except there was an old slash log pile where somebody had run a mill for a little bit. And there were a few piles, fairly big ones, of sawdust which were hard to get rid of, too, but we just started snaking out the logs and used them as bonfire material the whole time.

Lois: You said you brought a trailer with you at first. What was the first actual structure that you built?

Linda: The block building, which is falling apart. We roofed that in one afternoon—the shingles—and they are still there. We've never changed them, and it's never leaked.

Lois: And that was like a bathhouse?

Linda: Yes, it was to be a bathhouse, but my father did not put the foundation near far enough deep. He was used to building in the desert, but we have frost heaves up here, so it started breaking up. We quit using it, but it's a really good storage building.



Lois: Your father built himself a cabin?

Linda: Well, just one brief period of time when we ordered the plywood, which would be for the roof, he just tacked it together as a temporary cabin instead of staying in the tent. Then when we needed to put the roof on he went back to the tent, so that was just a temporary cabin. Then we would see the Sondresons taking truckloads of logs to the mill down there, so one day we stopped them and asked if they would be able to just drop off a load of unmilled 2" x 4"s for us. Loyd said, "Sure, no problem." So we hired the Evans boys to come down and help us unload it. That was our first year here. And it was a big load, but we had enough lumber to build this cabin, this room. All these were outhouses. Now they are sheds. And we put those around about five tables. We got those 2" x 4"s, and dad would nail them together and make 4" x 4"s for structure, for five cents apiece.



**A concrete bath house was the first structure constructed on the Pittman property. Their initial intention was to open a campground for visiting tourists.**

Lois: Such a deal.

Linda: He was just in heaven. He loved having all that wood for that kind of a price.

Lois: Where did your dad live, and how was it that he happened to come up here with you?

Linda: They lived in the same town we did there in California.

Lois: So, your mom came, too?

Linda: Yes, and they loved it. They liked camping more than I thought they would. They hadn't done it in years, since we were little kids.

Lois: Well, and having the grandkids, I'm sure it was a fun time for them, too.

Linda: They enjoyed it. We would go down to Bigfork and see a play once in a while or go to a movie in town. It was really fun.

Lois: But this structure [their current home] was originally up closer to the road?

Linda: Right, yes.

Lois: When did you move it back here?

Linda: That would be about 1977, something like that.

Lois: And then the big tall building that he could pull the raft through, when did he build that one?

Linda: Oh, let's see, that would be early 1980s, I think. He had bought those doors from somebody, and then he hired—I don't know where he got the name of these people—some guy to build the structure to fit the doors. They kept having to raise it higher and higher. [Laughs] That's when nobody could figure out what we were building and then the artist in Polebridge . . .

Lois: Bob Schepe?

Linda: Schepe said, "I know—you're building a giraffe barn." [Laughs] So that's what we called it.



**Carl's "giraffe barn" allowed him to pull his raft trailer straight through after a long day on the river. It was constructed to accommodate the tall doors that he had acquired before the structure was designed.**

Lois: Well, you know, it's one thing to come up here on vacation. It's another thing to own property, because you spend all your time maintaining, fixing, doing. I mean it's hard to even find time to have entertainment, because you are taking care of your place.

Linda: Right, yes.

Lois: Which is why it takes us so many years to get things done.

Linda: Yes, right. [Laughs]

Lois: I can tell you, even living here full-time it takes forever to get things done. You start off in one direction, and then something happens so you go in that direction.

Linda: Yes, the conditions change.

Lois: They do, all the time.



**The Pittman property after a logging/thinning operation in 2005 and after their main living cabin had been moved to the back of the property.**

Linda: It dictates what you will be doing each day. [Chuckles]

Lois: So, you sort of had a master plan, but then things also had a life of their own after a while, in terms of your layout of the property. Had you drawn up a plan of how you were going to space everything and how it was going to work?

Linda: We did have a drawing. The young man that came up from Southern California and visited us, he had helped the Forest Service lay out campgrounds, and he was looking at this tree or that tree that would be good to keep in a site and so forth, so he helped with that, but it didn't pay off in those days.

Lois: Did you ever rent to anybody, have campers stay here?

Linda: Yes, we did, a few, but it wasn't worth it to stick around all the time. Because back then, people when they would come up from town would just camp along the stream in different places on Forest Service land. They didn't have to have a designated campground.

Lois: And you would have liability issues.

Linda: And then that started too, yes.

Lois: So, what's Bob Rego's story? He lived near you, where?

Linda: In Southern California. I think he and Matt became friends about 6<sup>th</sup> grade, or when they were in junior high, probably starting then. They just had so many interests in common and spent a lot of time together. I don't remember how old he was when we first asked his dad, who was raising him alone pretty much, whether Robert could come with us for the summer, but the minute we asked, he said, "Well, if he wants to, that will be good experience." So, he came along and fit right in.

Lois: An extra pair of hands, too. You bet.

Linda: Yes. He was a very good kid, real easy to have around.

Lois: Did they go to high school together?

Linda: They didn't. Carl was teaching by then not in Palmdale, but in Quartz Hill, so he preferred Matt just ride over to Quartz Hill with him, and Robert went to Palmdale for a year or two. But they both decided, and it was kind of in the 1970s, when many schools were having problems I think with people being a little bit more rebellious like in the 1960s, with the Vietnam War and all that going on.

Lois: You're talking about us? [Laughs]

Linda: And so, you know, the administration was having a hard time keeping kids from being pretty disobedient, and they didn't think they were getting much out of the classwork, so they both, and our daughter too, and Robert's gal he married, left school after 10<sup>th</sup> grade and went on to junior college, community college. So, they were then in school together.

Lois: When did Robert go into the Air Force?

Linda: After he graduated he went on to school at UCLA. I'm not sure how he got that financed, because I don't think his father could have financed it.

Lois: He probably did ROTC.

Linda: Yes, he did, that's right, and Matt went to Cal State Northridge, and our daughter went to school there, too.

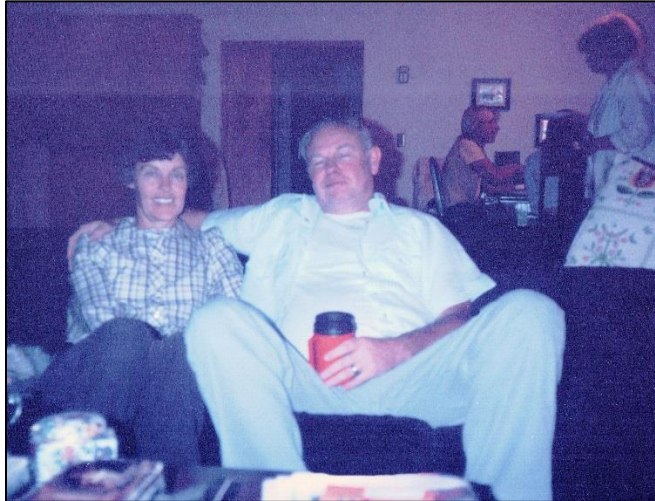
Lois: And you've stayed in touch all these years?

Linda: Yes. They went camping with us a lot in the wintertime. They were without a home for a while. I think I remember my daughter saying that his sister, who was my daughter's friend too, couldn't be in school that day because they were kicked out of their house for something, and he was sick and he just out on a cot in a field. I thought, "Oh my gosh, that's so sad." I knew of this place down the street, about a quarter of a mile away, and this lady had homesteaded there. My mother's family knew this family when they lived there. I got hold of her phone number, or her daughter's. I think the lady had died and I asked her if she would she want a caretaker there. She said, "Yes, that would be alright, if he's a reliable person." So, I asked him about what he could afford to pay for rent, and it wasn't very much, if he would take



care of the place. That's when he and Robert and their daughter moved into that house, so then the boys were really close and did everything together. Found old car bodies and brought them home and tried to fix them up.

Lois: Boy things.



**Carl and Linda at their home in Llano, California, 1985.**

Linda: Yes. They went and got jobs together and stuff like that. But I can't remember if Robert came up here for two summers or three summers with us, but even here he worked for John O'Hara, and he worked for Karen at the store for a while, too.

Lois: Oh good. Are your kids going to take the place over someday? Do they have a real interest in the North Fork?

Linda: Matt does, yes. Even when Carl was alive we signed it over to him already, so he's responsible for the taxes now. [Chuckles] We help whenever we can, but yes. And Robert bought Mary's place, so now they do own places next to each other, which they wanted.

Lois: Well, I think we've covered all the questions that I had. I'm interested in getting some family pictures of you and Carl and the kids.

Linda: I know I have some of when we were building, in the early days and stuff. I will go through those when I get back home.

Lois: That would be nice.

Linda: And organize them and send them, or copy them and send them. I can do that.

Lois: That would be fine. Well, thank you for your time. This is like working a giant jigsaw puzzle.

Linda: You're welcome. Yes, it was fun.