

Mid Connelly Oral History Interview

September 28 and October 4, 2017

Lois: This is an interview with Mildred Connelly. Today is the 28th of September 2017. We are at her cabin above Polebridge at 10200 North Fork Road. This is Lois Walker interviewing, and we're going to start through a list of questions about her dad and about her mom, and then about her and Walt, and we will see how far we get.

Mid: And I only go by Mid. [Chuckles]

Lois: Has that been true your whole life?

Mid: Mildred is a beautiful woman who was my mother's sorority sister and college roommate, an Army officer's wife whose husband did not make it back from the Philippines. They were rushed out of the Philippines. I, being the third daughter, arrived early fortunately, and my mother said in letters—because that's all they could do was letters—I'm naming her after you." Mid had written in the meantime, "If it's a girl, please don't name her after me. It's such an old-fashioned name." Of course, going by Mid, all the organizations I've ever belonged to . . .

Lois: That's how they know you.

Mid: Yes, it's Mid. The only thing people will say is, "What's your real name?" I say, "Well, it is Mildred, but I go by Mid." "Why aren't you Midge, or why aren't you Midget, or why aren't you this?" And I'm like, please just...

Lois: Let me be what I am.

Mid: People could come to a little league field or whatever, all the regional tournaments and so on, because I was running a lot of them, "Where is Mid?" Everybody knew who I was. You know, you get attached to a name.

Lois: Do you have a middle name?

Mid: Yes, I am named Mildred Clare Weikert Connelly. Clare [Geary] was my dad's sister.

Lois: That's nice. I wondered if he had siblings.

Mid: He had an older brother who was Arthur, and a younger sister named Clare.

Lois: I notice that in the old story, people always said Austin's father came here for a visit and died here, but I learned that's not true. He was living with Austin at the time. He had gone to the east side to visit with his daughter, who would have been Clare, and had a cold when he came back.

Mid: You asked about his connection with the Walshes. My dad was building the stairway at Walshes [on Big Prairie] at the time. Larry and I discussed this.

Lois: This is the big house?

Mid: Yes, that is still there. I've been there.

Lois: That's an interesting staircase. It goes up and turns twice, I think.

Mid: Are you talking about the new house, or are you talking about the old Walsh house that is right off the road?

Lois: It is now. They moved it. It used to be back further, and then Dick Walsh moved it one winter.

Mid: Well, it is Dick Walsh's uncle [brother], John, that my dad was working for when my grandfather died. It was after my grandmother died in Helena and Dad went over. Nobody had paid expenses, and nobody had done anything, so he settled things up and stayed a little while. He encouraged his dad to come over and see what he was doing.

Lois: He seemed to have a good time on the North Fork.

Mid: He was what, 72 or something?

Lois: Yes, he was up there.

Mid: He was born in 1846 I believe, so by 1922 [he was 76].

Lois: He made friends, and he went out and played cards.

Mid: Yes, and he had an incredible voice. One of the people that were up contacted us through Ann Hensen, and Ann said, "Oh, Andrew had such a beautiful voice." My brother Jim did, also.

Lois: Your dad was born in January 1893. At one point you had said to me he was from Avon, but he told the Park he was from Winston.

Mid: They say Winston. Yes, I always was told it was Avon.

Lois: Both of those are near Helena? One is southeast and one is southwest.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: What do you know about Austin's father's story?

Mid: He came from pioneer stock, basically, back in Pennsylvania. He was born in 1846, I think. You know how that relates to what was going on in the country and so on. He bailed and decided that he really wanted to go explore the West. What he did most of his life, as he could afford to get it organized, was he took touring groups. He was a guide. He was responsible for getting things going. With the Yellowstone one they had some skirmishes with some of the Indians that were escaping to Canada.

Lois: Well, this was just post-Civil War. He would have been 20 in 1866, the year after the war was over. I assume he was probably in his early 20s when he started guiding.

Mid: Yes, and that I don't know exactly why that came about, other than he had this enormous curiosity and capabilities. He was like a lot of the people that I grew up knowing, who ran around the Park.

Lois: Are you familiar with the article that was written about his dad in one of the historical society magazines?

Mid: I believe he wrote it. I have it someplace. I didn't think to try to find that, but yes, I have a copy of what is in the historical record in Helena.

Lois: I would like to get a copy. I can probably track it down.

Mid: I was going to say, you will find it's there, and with your background you can get an easier copy than necessarily out of me.

Lois: Sure, that's fine.

Mid: He wrote that. He was a well-educated man, but I think just the whole...stuff. And, of course, the Civil War ending the way it did with Lincoln's death and one thing and another. I don't know anything for fact, you know. It's just that he was a very straight person as far as his viewpoints, and he very much believed in the sovereignty of the United States, and he wrote beautifully.

Lois: Montana was still a territory at that time.

Mid: Yes, but it was a place to go explore. If he had been born just a little bit sooner, he would have been in one of the most fantastic 20 mule team drivers, whatever. He did do other things, not just the guiding. Well, it didn't pay that well, because there weren't that many people who had that same innate curiosity, but he did drive teams. They were often mules.

Lois: How did he and his wife meet?

Mid: How did his parents meet? Well, he decided to return to Ohio after some of these excursions. The only connotations I've seen or heard or that Mother could garner was that he stayed for about a year and a half. He found this beautiful woman that he fell in love with. He convinced her that he could build a house, and he could take care of her, because those were the requirements for a nice person to go that far west away from all the family. So, he met all the protocol, and they came west. I don't know exactly when that was.

Lois: With a wagon train, I wonder? Or did they come by train to St. Louis?

Mid: It could have been, or he may just have had his own wagon, knowing the independence of him. I've never heard that part of the story, even checking the things that my mother and sister did.

Lois: But your mother knew your dad's parents?

Mid: My grandmother died in 1919, within a year of the end of World War I.

Lois: Yes, November 1918 is when it ended.

Mid: Dad came home. He had enlisted in Missoula, so that's where they brought him to. He had sent all his money home to his mother.

Lois: Did he get home before his mother died?

Mid: Yes.

Lois: Okay, good.

Mid: He was home for a while, but he also picked up the book, and by the way, I have a copy of the book here. Have you ever seen it?

Lois: This is about Mary Roberts Rhinehart and her trip around Glacier Park?

Mid: Yes. This was one put out by Chris Peterson.

Lois: With the *Hungry Horse News*. He reenacted her trip last year.

Mid: Yes, I was so delighted with that, because that's been such a piece of that history. My father, you know, picked that up somewhere [a magazine with a serialized article about her trip.] I don't know that it has ever been defined when *per se*, but it was after he was done in Texas and was sent to Missoula and found he did not have money enough to go back home.

Lois: His parents were living in Winston at that time?

Mid: Yes, I think so. Not being really familiar with some of these towns, and you look at a map and think okay, what was it like in the 1920s? But his dad had kind of moved from job to job. There were not the jobs available to drive horse teams, and he was just superb at it. When he worked for a mine or whatever, it was fantastic. That's where I'm sure the leading people would say, "Well, what do you know about?" and he would start telling about places he had gone and checked out. I mean, knowing my father, but never having had a chance to know my grandparents or the older brother.

Lois: This is your dad's brother, Arthur?

Mid: Arthur, Uncle Art, turned out to be a wonderful person, and he had an incredible life. But he didn't think my dad was coming home, so he could sign for the paperwork and the money that was waiting for my dad when he got back from the Marine Corps. And, of course, in transit Dad had to figure out how to get from Missoula to Helena again. It wasn't like "Let's pick up the local serviceman."

Lois: And the trains weren't running very regularly then.

Mid: [Laughs] No.

Lois: But, there was a train by then. We know the train came to Kalispell around 1891, so I'm sure it was in Helena.

Mid: It's a matter of which way do you go.

Lois: But he was in Texas, right? Your dad was in Texas in the service, so he was coming from the east when he came home.

Mid: Yes, he served down on the border with border control. They really thought that Germany was going to invade from the south.

Lois: Well, they had all that stuff with Pancho Villa in 1916, the Punitive Expedition in Mexico with General John Pershing and all that. So, there was quite an Army presence on the border as we went into the War. Do you know what fort he was at, or what city he was near?

Mid: I don't have that. I'm sure it's someplace.

Lois: You don't have any of his military records?

Mid: You know, I'm scratching to see where I could get them, because the inquiries come in. Have you had somebody in this war or that war, and I'm thinking this is crazy. I don't even want to answer it, because I don't want to be involved in the memorial *per se*. But yes, I had people in a whole bunch of different wars, and my dad was definitely in World War I. He was a rifle instructor. When he asked why he hadn't been sent across [overseas], his commanding officer picked up a pad of paper on the desk and said, "Your name is first on the list. If you absolutely insist, I will send you. But, please understand, the reason you are here is because we value what you give to us. Everybody you train, all those young men you train to be able to do everything you can do with a rifle," and of course those were not easy rifles—if you got mud in it, if you needed to check something that was missing, everything my dad could teach was valuable. [See Appendix 1: My Marine Service During World War I]

Lois: In those days they could take them apart and put them together blindfolded or in the dark.

Mid: And they needed to. If you're in a foxhole or you're crawling across the line. So, that was the explanation. "You are so valuable in terms of what you give to these men. Every man that you check out and goes from here stands a chance of coming back."

Lois: Had he learned those skills as a young man growing up in Montana?

Mid: Yes. Partly the same kind of thing—and I don't really want to get off track—but I think of all the things that my husband could do. Yes, a lot of them he picked up from his dad, who was 45 years with the Baltimore & Ohio Chessie system, ran the major shops, and an uncle who worked for the B&O. But also, just the kind of curiosity he had. "How do I make this work?" Designing this place, designing the next one out there, all of these things go to the same kind of inquisitive mind. I'm seeing finally some good strengths in my son. Just the changes we made, the things he had to fix, the bathroom door, because all of a sudden...the last time we were here apparently.

Lois: You have to be able to do everything. When you live out like this, there's no repairman to call—I mean except Ed Neneman.

Mid: For me as a single woman, when I ran into a problem with trying to refill the cistern, which I've done a number of times, he came out. I got him to come out and totally replace the well. Of course, it was a total shock to the people working for the road, that we only had a 99 foot well. That's unheard of up here.

Lois: Yes, it is.

Mid: A drilled well? I said, “Yes, of course.” And, of course, John is echoing yes. We went top grade for everything, but also Walt knew spaces, and I knew some people, and between the two of us—this is an incredible tribute to my father.

Lois: It is. It’s amazing.

Mid: And the Swedish cope is something that came from my father, because he saw it in a magazine, I’m pretty sure. He saw that if you cut a log, you did not have to use a lot of chinking. You did not have to replace it. My father basically didn’t use chinking at all, except on the Park buildings where they absolutely insisted he had to use some.

Lois: It was required, yes.

Mid: But, between all the big log buildings, and so on, that he built later on Flathead Lake he used hemp rope, and it rejects the bugs. It keeps them from squeaking. They don’t settle. I wish I had some of those tools. I do have the little tool that you use to scrape.

Lois: A draw saw?

Mid: A draw knife, thank you.

Lois: Did Walt learn some of these skills from your dad? Did your dad teach him about log building?

Mid: No, not really. We talked about it a few times when my dad was alive and we were living out on the farm, and Dad came out and helped. He rebuilt my kitchen, you know, in a fashion to accommodate my china. I had this beautiful Noritake china.

Lois: I don’t know how he had enough hours in the day to do all the things. When you make the list of things that he did in his life, I don’t know how he slept.

Mid: Well, he was an early riser. He did take a little rest after lunch, if he had time. If he didn’t have time he would come out and go fight the fire. That man could cover 30 miles faster and better, apparently, than anyone. It took me three real hard steps, even when I got to be a modest size, just to keep up with him.

Lois: How tall was he?

Mid: Six foot. He was a 6-foot Marine. He stayed 6-foot, even when his knees began to go.

Lois: He must have been incredibly strong, as well as being talented. He knew how to leverage his skill and his mass, to do the things he did.

Mid: One of the things people ask is “How could he?” You have big trees, and so on, for logs and buildings and some of these other things, because he knew how to walk a woods. Even if he couldn’t mark them, he knew trees that could be used. There are, I think, at least part of three ranger stations that he built in the Park. One of them they totally took out. One of them burned up.

Lois: I think the old St. Mary Ranger Station burned.

Mid: Yes. I have a book.

Lois: But he did the Walton Ranger Station.

Mid: I worked with my dad on that, and I thought I had a folder of regular notepaper kind of thing. I thought I had it, and I'm just sick because it lists [all of his construction projects over the years]. I worked with him in the years that he would come out and visit me on the place, because he died in 1982. [See Appendix 2: Austin Weikert Construction Projects] We bought that place in 1965.

Lois: This is in Washington State?

Mid: In Washington, yes. He would try to be here around Lake McDonald as much as possible every summer. He had more trouble, of course, in the winter, but he loved the winters, and my mother just could not take it. For years they moved here and there after she quit teaching. One quick note on my mother and teaching—most of my remembrances of my mother was when my dad would take her out to the little country schools where she was assigned. When she first came out here, it was to teach at a school in St. Ignatius. She went to sign back up for her second year, but she had gone to a nice gathering at the end of the year and ate a not properly cooked hotdog and ended up with ptomaine poisoning. She ended up in the hospital and hadn't signed the contract yet. She went to the superintendent in Kalispell. She said, "I'm sorry. Oh, we've got one opening—it's up the North Fork of the Flathead."

Lois: What we now call the Ford Schoolhouse?

Mid: The superintendent said, "You should have maybe eight or six kids, but that's absolutely the only thing we've got." Mother said, "I'll take it." She rode up with Bill Adair and had some funny stories. You can ask John O'Hara. [Laughs] He has made up more stories about my mother. Bill Adair said, "You have to stay in the store. I'm going to introduce you around." He went around, and this is somewhere in the story, "Okay, this is So-and-so, he's not eligible. This is So-and-so. He might be. He is."

Lois: Trying to hook her up with somebody?

Mid: She said, "Thank you very much. Hello." Very proper. She came across Hoolie Stine.

Lois: Fletcher "Hoolie" Stine, yes.

Mid: She knew him from the years she lived on Flathead Lake with her parents.

Lois: That's interesting.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: He got around, too. He did so much work on the road. He was quite a fellow.

Mid: Yes. [Laughs] So, she came up and the boarding was simplified. For a month you're staying with so-and-so.

Lois: With each family.

Mid: Someplace I have all of the incidental moves during that year, but you understand school started in August or something like that, and it only went through February. My dad met her at a Christmas party, and I've always been told it was at the line.

Lois: Along the border, and we think it probably was Matt and Mata Brill's place, Kintla Ranch. Because Paul Abbott would have been gone by then.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: He sold out to Brill when he left and went to Alaska, or wherever he went. My understanding is that your dad had a cousin who was Gretchen Alleman, who was married to Paul Abbott.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: So, your dad did know somebody up here when he came.

Mid: Yes, he knew of them and felt like he could check in with them, but he latched onto the fact that there was still open homesteading.

Lois: Land available to homestead, yes.

Mid: He went to Columbia Falls or Kalispell, wherever he had to go for that.

Lois: Kalispell is where you applied.

Mid: He checked on it, and went up to take a look at it, and absolutely fell in love with the most beautiful tamaracks.

Lois: It's a beautiful place.

Mid: It is. It had the basic capabilities and a nice little spring that goes right by it, Trail Creek.

Lois: He signed on it before he went to look at it, or he had already looked at it?

Mid: I know he found out about it and went and looked at it. I'm pretty sure that he went clear back down, because he needed to get a job, too.

Lois: Well, that's right, because he got here in 1919 and his homestead entry is 1920, so he filed and then he went through the proving up process, and he went down to present three-year proof in 1924.

Mid: Right. I thought I had all of these names right on here.

Lois: Yes, we do have that. I've got the names of his witnesses.

Mid: Yes, his witnesses. Of course, the tragedy there was that while they were gone a tree fell.

Lois: Oh, the Holcombs. The tree that killed the Holcombs' son Fred.

Mid: The Holcombs, yes.

Lois: The Holcombs were living in Columbia Falls by then, right?

Mid: A lot of things. But as far as his mother goes, she died in 1919. He had to go back for the funeral to the Helena area or to Avon, wherever it was. A lot of this was kind of uncertain. They didn't stay. It goes back to the fact that they owned property over there when he was younger. He went to school through age 14, and they had a house fire and lost everything. That's where his father lost the original manuscript, that fortunately the Historical Society had a copy of. But it also changed the whole dynamics of who could bring in some money. Dad thought, "Well if really can train animals, if you can break a horse or a dog or whatever; it's a horse whisperer kind of thing. But mostly, the story that got published—and he was a little bit of a show-off—but the truth of the matter is, if he was working with a team he was as gentle as you could be, but firm. He absolutely knew what he was doing and told them so, and just talked them through it and went on his way.

Lois: He obviously understood animal behavior.

Mid: He did. And so much of it came through. Just one quick note, when I was little and we lived down on Flathead Lake—and I will get to that in a minute—he would come in from a long busy week or something, and my mother always had something ready for him to eat. But he would come in, he would wash up, and he would say, "I'm going to go talk to..." I don't remember what he said, "I'm going to go tell stories," but that's what he did. We were allowed to stay up, not running around playing or whatever, but stay awake until he got home. I don't remember nearly enough of those little stories, but he would tell these incredible stories about things, like a little tiny porcupine, and actually that porcupine had no real quills.

Lois: It was a baby, yes.

Mid: A baby, and he handled it. He fed it. He put it in a can so it was safe overnight and warm and let it loose in the morning, and if it was still there when he came back—and it was for several days, because it was where he was working. This became another one of these incredibly wonderful stories. He saw grizzlies relatively close, but you know there are certain ways of dealing with any wild animal, and he had the natural instinct to know how to quietly vacate the scene and leave them to their life.

Lois: So, he would tell you stories about his experiences in the woods?

Mid: Yes, and squirrels doing interesting things in the trees as he walked by, just all the animals and the natural beauty.

Lois: Some of these are in the stories that your mother recorded, the manuscript that I just worked on.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: The story about the porcupine is in there, so she got some of those written down.

Mid: Yes. Part of it was as he got older he had some arthritis, but he had a little notebook with thoughts and memories and so on. He would take it out, and he had a pencil that he carved the end. [Laughs] Until he was almost—well, he was 89 when he died.

Lois: That's amazing.

Mid: But the other incredible thing is for his last 25 years—because of the accident and the puncturing of his lung, and the repair time, and the fact that there was only one percent functioning on the top of that lung, and they had needed to do surgery to stop the pneumonia in the healthy lung.

Lois: We will get to that, because it's on the list here. He met your mom.

Mid: And they got married in Whitefish.

Lois: He had been living on the North Fork. He filed on the homestead in 1920.

Mid: Yes, but she didn't come until 1928.

Lois: He did some work for the Forest Service. He also worked for the Park.

Mid: He trapped.

Lois: He trapped, and so yes, he had lived there. If he was born in 1893, he was 27 when he filed on the homestead, and he worked that another eight years until he met your mother. It's a wonder he didn't meet somebody before then.

Mid: Well part of it was because he was in and out. He was roaming, gathering stories.
[Laughs]

Lois: So, your mom started teaching at Ford School in 1928. She would have gone through the end of that school year. Then did she go back to town or something?

Mid: Okay, the end of that school year was like February.

Lois: February 1929, then. When did they get married? Do you know what month they got married?

Mid: Actually, I think it was almost immediately. He discovered, or he was afraid, that she was going to go back east to get a job, so he proposed, and she accepted. They were always very—I mean they would look at each other. Okay, he did two or three things. He still smoked a little bit from having been in the Marines. Not a lot, because he couldn't afford it and he knew it wasn't good for him, but he did a little. I think he must have smoked a cigarette up there, and she said, "I'm sorry, I really can't, my system just doesn't handle this," and he quit. He walked away from it, and he never smoked again.

Lois: She moved in with him, and they lived on that homestead together?

Mid: After they got married in Whitefish they came right back up to the homestead and had a party, a gathering, I believe.

Lois: That was in 1929. Your sister wasn't born until 1931, so at least for two years she was up there through the winter, and she learned how to be a real homesteader.

Mid: But she was also on job sites with him. She was the cook and then the manager on a number of jobs.

Lois: These were contracts in the Park that he had, or for the Forest Service?

Mid: It probably was Forest Service, but I know they did some of this. The other thing is that first winter he insisted she go ahead; he put her on a train and she went back to Indiana where her parents were, because her little brother, who was 12 years younger than she was, was running into problems in school. Uncle Bill was one of these brilliant, intense youngsters. While mother was there and in college, she went to the library with him, because he was not allowed to check anything out.

Lois: He was ADD [attention deficit disorder]?

Mid: At the age of four he could read a book, so she would get books that were quite elaborate. He would kind of suggest to her. And yes, he was allowed to go with her, but she had to sign for them and they were her books. She would leave the library every week with enormous amounts of adult reading. This young man, by the time he was in I think maybe third or fourth grade, was constantly being sent to the principal's office. He had read so much he just couldn't stand a teacher saying that a whale was a fish, for example. He raised his hand very politely and said, "A whale is not a fish. It is a mammal." [Laughs] Okay, she sent him to the principal, and her mother said in letters, "Bill is too bright for himself, but he just won't understand that he can't do this." And I'll tell you about her. Arsenal Technical was the high school put in where they had arsenal equipment that they were building during the war.

Lois: This is Indiana or Illinois?

Mid: Indiana. They did not go back to Illinois [after they left Flathead Lake]. They went to the Indianapolis area, and my grandfather ended up being a banker. I don't really know how much pretraining he had on that. I know that when he was out here there was a whole bunch, but that's another story.

Lois: Did your mother go to a normal school?

Mid: Then she went to the University of Indiana.

Lois: In Bloomington, down in southern Indiana?

Mid: Yes. Just real quick on Uncle Bill, because she was out, and Owen had been married a year or two, whatever it was, and he was having so many problems, and she did go to the expense of the stamps. She wrote copiously. Unfortunately, I don't have many of the originals. I left them in the charge of my sister Barb. Correspondence between Big Mid and my mother I have no track on them at all. If I just had those extra things I know that I would be more inspired to go ahead and finish the stories, because these are little vignettes, and they are wonderful.

Lois: It's like a jigsaw puzzle, yes.

Mid: I've been able to do some of that. Anyway, the point is she went back on the train, and she visited, of course, her parents, and they absolutely decided with my father's approval for her to bring Bill back here. He spent the whole winter, and there are some incredible stories, about her falling in the creek and Uncle Bill.

Lois: Yes, I saw that story. “Frozen Britches.”

Mid: Yes!

Lois: I didn’t know who Bill was. It just said “Bill with us.” How old was he by then?

Mid: Well, he was 10. When she had him in the cabin, I’m pretty sure he was 10.

Lois: Oh my gosh.

Mid: She taught him and, of course, gave him life experiences. My father adored him. So, they went through that incredible winter and things just blossomed. They went down through all of where the glaciers washed the walls and so on, on the way to visit Aunt Clare. My mother, of course, had read copiously and continued to borrow books from libraries, so she was able to give him a geography lesson on top of everything else. When he went back he never even enrolled in college. He was post-high school, I’m sure, just barely, and he made contact with the Eli Lilly Company. He cleaned floors. He talked to people, and because he was very bright and very knowledgeable, if something came up that he could check, he went to the library, because he could check out books then, and he built his own personal education. He worked for Eli Lilly, and during that period when my mother—that was 1935—was pregnant with my brother, and through 1936 when she was carrying me, which was an unadvisable pregnancy, but happened thankfully.

My brother Jim really struggled. And the thing was that my mother wrote copious notes and letters. Bill took those and went and talked to the folks at Eli Lilly. He knew that they were developing sulfa. The first early tests. He talked to them about it. As I say, he probably was a 19-year-old kid, but he had such a good background. He was so well-spoken, and he enjoyed being there and doing anything they asked him to help with and keeping everything immaculate. How many men who are geared toward that? Everything just meshed, so Uncle Bill had them contact mother’s doctor, who was Dr. Ross, and said, “Can you give us some information, because we are selecting people to try this drug?” Through the auspices of Eli Lilly and my uncle, the doctor got permission to use this, because there seemed to be nothing that would keep this little boy alive. It worked, but what they eventually discovered was he had a faulty valve. In fact, what happened at the very end, he was 89 and was having his third aortic valve replacement. That’s off the record, but the point is he lived a long life partly because of the connections. Connections are so much a part of our life.

Lois: So, we’ve got the homestead on Trail Creek. Your dad started there by himself in 1920. What do you know about the structures he put on that property? I know that he built a cabin. I see that he built a barn at one point.

Mid: Yes, and I think it pretty well demised by the time any of us were back up there. I know that the house I was in before it was turned into a smithy [by the Hoilands].

Lois: It’s still standing today. It’s still there.

Mid: Yes, I was going to say, I think it’s still there. It’s a little hard to see a puncheon floor and some of the other things that he put in there, but it was secure enough. They used

blankets and so on to wall-off one area so they could keep real warm, because it was one of those bitterly cold winters with a lot of snow.

Lois: They were living there when your oldest sister Barbara was born in 1931? Were they still living on the homestead?

Mid: For a month or so before the birth my mother was living with some sort of an assistance right by the hospital in Kalispell.

Lois: This is because while she was pregnant with Barbara they were involved in an accident coming up the North Fork Road? You think it might have been north of Big Creek, where this accident happened?

Mid: Yes, it was, because that's they were taken, to the Big Creek Ranger Station, for a little triage and so on.

Lois: Essentially, the car went off the road?

Mid: Well, they came around a shale cliff. The descriptions my mother gave are good, but I've never been able to figure out where it was, because they've changed some of these things, but it was real narrow. It was a gorgeous October day, and they thought they would run up and get a few tools that my dad needed, because he had two contracts over on the east side to finish and still had time. They took a friend from Kalispell, and the three of them were having a wonderful drive. They came around the curve and there was a big rock. Mother said there absolutely was not time for him to stop. I mean little tires, big rock, narrow road.

Lois: We still have big rocks that come down there.

Mid: Yes, and I think my mother even thought it might have been the steering wheel. They really feel like he was thrown out and the car came down on him, as massive as his injuries were.

Lois: That's what crushed his lung.

Mid: The incredible fact was that all three of them lived.

Lois: Apparently it broke his ribs, among other things, and then when he was in the hospital a nurse tried to get him to sit up, and it punctured his lung.

Mid: They knew that he had a lot of broken bones, and it wasn't just ribs. But it had punctured nothing. Mother crawled over to him and covered him with her coat. [Gets emotional]

Lois: This is in the middle of nowhere; it's just nowhere.

Mid: But it was during hunting season, and some hunters coming down saw the youngster; I think her name was Mary. She had crawled up to the road, and they managed to see her and stopped and saw what was going on and knew that there may still be people.

Lois: They had to get him out of there.

Mid: They didn't want to try to handle it by themselves, so what they did was go down to Big Creek and what's his name—gosh, names.

Lois: This is one of the rangers that was there? Or Hoolie Stine?

Mid: No, he was over there. The Evans property.

Lois: Chance Beebe?

Mid: He was one of them, but I think it was somebody else, but the point is it was certainly somebody they knew and trusted. He ran the Big Creek station.

Lois: Everybody knew everybody back then.

Mid: Yes, and you get so far away from it and you get so involved in other people sometimes. I don't get scrambled—I just don't remember some of it.

Lois: Well, your mental hard drive has filled up with a lot of other stuff since then.

Mid: Anyway, a couple of them stayed there, and one of them took the truck and went on down. He called it in from there, somehow, and asked for a doctor to come up to the North Fork? By this time it was absolutely pouring buckets. The weather was just really nasty. That was part of the reason they were hurrying to get up there and get back, because they knew there were storms coming in. A bunch of them came up, and the doctor, who was brand new to the valley but the only one that they could get ahold of, said, "Well, I'll come up." He did the triage and so on. I'm sure in the process of telling the story some of this doesn't really come totally clear, and it wasn't something I wanted mother to dwell on. They decided how they could handle particularly him. My mother was scraped and banged up and had a permanent scar, and one finger that didn't work even with an electric typewriter, part of the reason she didn't want to try to do the other. Eventually, of course, she had an aneurism that kept growing and growing. One surgeon said, "I'm not even going to touch this," in Tacoma and closed and said, "Okay, you have six weeks to get well, and I'm sending you right this minute to the University of Washington."

Lois: This was later in your mother's life?

Mid: Yes, but 50 years after each one of them had been in that accident there were major repercussions to their health, and yet he lived to be 89, 25 years of that on half of one lung.

Lois: So, they must have lifted him out of there on a blanket or something to carry him up to the road.

Mid: They actually rigged a travois so he was not being bounced so bad and got him down to the hospital. He seemed to be doing fine. He was not internally bleeding. They let my mother go to a quieter area in the hospital and be treated.

Lois: What month was your sister born?

Mid: She was born the 26th of June.

Lois: That's right, she has the same birthday as your mother.

Mid: Yes. My mother was from 1905 to 1931, so she was 26, I guess—26 on the 26th of the 6th month. [Laughs]

Lois: So, the accident was in October probably, and the baby was born in June.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: And your other siblings were . . .

Mid: Barbara, and then Elizabeth Dean was born December 8, 1933, and Jim was born November 11, 1935.

Lois: On Veteran's Day.

Mid: And I was born the October 26, 1936.

Lois: And then eight years later was your youngest sister?

Mid: Yes. Of course, that was after Dad had been in Utah and came back and mother got pregnant.

Lois: What was her name?

Mid: Mary Catherine. Her birthday is October 22, 1944. She was named after the other long-time best friend of my mother named Catherine, who arrived when my mother was in the third grade of summer school.

Lois: So, your mother was like 39 when she had her?

Mid: Yes. Of course, you don't blame yourself and yet you do, but I didn't know that measles were going around at school. I went to school and brought it home to my mother. Mary Cay was the one of all of us—and she's still alive—who had complications on everything. Eventually, during part of the year my mother would go to California and stay with Mary Catherine, because it was better for her. But that was a bit later. But the point is, she had five kids, with four of them in fairly rapid order.

Lois: Barbara was born in 1931, so at that point did they decide they weren't going to try and stay on the homestead anymore and moved to town?

Mid: Because of the accident, she needed to be close to a doctor, and she needed to have not constant care, but definitely be seen and whatever, then she got pregnant again. By then she still was basically under a doctor's care a great deal of the time. He was that kind of a doctor. And I don't know some of that history.

Lois: You weren't even around yet. Did they go back to Somers?

Mid: They contacted my grandparents. They knew that my grandparents owned some property—it's really right at Lakeside. They said, "Okay, use it and go ahead and build a house for Ruth and for Barbara, Dean, and Jim." I was born and lived in that house until I was five.

Lois: Were you born in Kalispell?

Mid: Yes. It was a beautiful, charming little house, and we had a great big straw house where we cut ice and kept it in sawdust. I was trying to dig up the proper name for those. I can remember that. It kept us with refrigeration, and occasionally ice cream in the summer.

Lois: But your dad just kept on working.

Mid: He did, reasonably, but there were periods that he did improvements around there. We had a huge garden and, typical of my parents, kids coming back from school would stop and say, "Your carrots are doing so well. Is there any way we can just pull one?" I think she had already told them, "As long as you take just one to eat for your own good health," and so on. We had huge gardens, and my dad was an incredible hunter, of things we don't even think about going after today. He was a master of waiting until the right seasons, because you cannot take rabbits just any season. But yes, we had rabbit. We had deer, of course, in season only.

Lois: Did he ever get an elk?

Mid: I don't know for sure. I don't really remember seeing that, but I know that we always had fresh bread and milk. We always had a cow, so we did also have beef being raised and all that. They had a nice acreage there. We stayed there until after my dad tried to join the Marine Corps and was shipped off to Utah. His contract with the field services, or whatever—it was not with the Army or the Marines, but it was to build housing for detainees in Utah.

Lois: We talked about the Japanese internment camps.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: We went into the war in December of 1941. You would have been six at that point.

Mid: I was going to say about six, and we had moved by that time. My grandparents decided they wanted to sell that property, and we had friends that were helping us. Jim Sherwood, who took care of the Lake McDonald Lodge—that was one of the joys of the winter. We would always get to go up and see Lake McDonald during the snow and slide down their hill, just to check it and make sure there were no break-ins. All these extra little things that, because they knew Dad and trusted him. He built the boathouse there. Lake McDonald was technically in the Park, but it was private.

Lois: Right, he built for the Park, but he also built for private individuals, and one of the stories that your mother told was how he did the work for Charlie Russell and his wife on their cabin.

Mid: Yes.

Lois: That would have been likewise in the late 1930s, when he did that work? There's a nice description, and I can take that out of the interview, where he talks about what she asked him to do and what he did to that house. So, he maintained his friendships there and you guys would get to go up?

Mid: Well, like the Sherwoods, before they started a holy row in the family, which eventually came about. There was a third generation son who was Dr. Something-or-other, but he couldn't claim the name James Sherwood.

Lois: Oh really?

Mid: There is a book out, and somewhere I have a copy. I'm not real happy with it, but it is the James Sherwood that I knew as a youngster at about my age, but he's gone. I read something in the paper that he's been gone a year and a half or something now. He did call me back and say, "Come down to my house." He was making some adjustment one summer, and I met with him up here and he was so surprised.

Lois: Going back to the homestead just briefly, did your dad ever talk about the other neighbors that he had there, like Fred "Big Nose" Johnson?

Mid: Oh yes. Trail Creek, okay, but no such person as Big Nose Johnson.

Lois: Fred Johnson.

Mid: They absolutely refused to use that. They said he was one of the nicest people they ever met.

Lois: He was there very early.

Mid: He was one of the early people that they got to know and they liked.

Lois: He was good friends with Paul Abbott and Matt Brill. They talked about the road going from the river out to Fred Johnson's place was five or six miles. But obviously he was the closest neighbor they had, except for Frank Clute who was at the border, and there was another guy at the border, Nelson maybe.

Mid: I think it was Fred Johnson—I think my dad had gotten caught in a snow slide and managed to work loose, but that's where he ended up. He said, "Don't even think about it, because I mustn't or my wife will know, and I need a couple days to kind of get over the shock." Well, you get buried in snow for a while and you were working. There's a story someplace, but I don't know that it's in any of this.

Lois: It wasn't in that.

Mid: Yes, about him being buried and being able to figure out how to keep working so he could keep an air pocket. I'm pretty sure that's it, and Fred took care of him and made sure that he was fine before he took off.

Lois: Wow.

Mid: Of course, Tom and Marie Peterson were absolutely in my life. We came up here at least a couple of times a year, all through the early years of my life, while they lived on Trail Creek—you know, the cream of the crop.

Lois: They were a real institution, they were. The interesting thing about Marie is that she was one of the only women who actually filed her on homestead.

Mid: I know.

Lois: It was on Tepee Creek, and then after she and Tom got married she did a swap with the Forest Service to get a place adjacent to his.

Mid: I think somewhere I have that story, but I certainly remember my parents talking about it.

Lois: She wrote a little book of her own called *Homestead Memories*.

Mid: I have a copy of that, yes, and loved it and wished she could do some more. I was so sad when she died.

Lois: It was so sad because her dad was killed in an accident, and then she was killed in an accident. So, Matt and Mata Brill?

Mid: Mata was responsible for the trail crews, many of which Dad took out. Now, you definitely need to know the connection with Bill Yenne, who was in charge of all of the trails in Glacier National Park.

Lois: Right.

Mid: My dad is mentioned in two just explicitly beautiful parts of Yenne's book.

Lois: Yes, I have that.

Mid: I made contact with Bill and took my mother down. We both got signed copies. Unfortunately, I loaned mine to somebody, which is a big mistake, and I never got it back. But they reprinted it, and I did get copies of it. He was housekeeping for somebody along what I call Officer's Row.

Lois: The Park headquarters?

Mid: No, down in Kalispell. Just as you edge into Kalispell there is a whole row of some of the big houses, mansions. It was about two or three houses away from the Conrad Mansion, which I've never been to but I still hope I might.

Lois: It's interesting, yes.

Mid: But the point is, he was there, and I had made phone contact. I told him I would like to bring my mother down while she was visiting and staying with me when we were in the trailer. She never was able to. She died the day before her birthday in 1986, and our road was constructed later that summer. But we had our own pressure washer, and she walked up that, and we got to go up to Helen Foreman's. She had been friends with Helen since they were teenagers when my mother went back to Indiana. Helen Foreman, of course, was Uncle Vaughty's [L.O. Vaught] niece. She was only three when they left, but they certainly made friends. They went to summer camp together. They had all these excursions and so on, and some of them got written up, but Mom formed this incredible friendship with this incredible woman who became mayor of Jacksonville, Illinois, three times. It relates back to the Jacksonville connection. Every summer they would come up to the camping area at the end of Lake McDonald, our two families. I think I told you the kids were stair-stepped.

Lois: Yes.

Mid: That was before Mary Cay. It was just wonderful, and Walt and I would go up after we got pretty much established here, or at least were coming in regularly and found out the Foreman grandkids were coming in. Helen did get to come up here briefly. We weren't really finished, but she was so tickled.

Lois: Oh good. To this cabin here?

Mid: Yes.

Lois: Let's go back to World War II. Your dad took a contract job, or he worked for a contractor who was building camps in Utah before we went into the war.

Mid: I'm trying to think of the proper term. I may have it in the piles—I have three safes at my house. One of them now is locked, because I forgot to tell them don't take them off the hinges, just empty them. No, it doesn't have anything in it. But one of the safes is an extra big safe and has a shelf, so all of this stuff and a bunch more is there—a whole box this big on that bottom shelf, and then more stuff. What granddaughter Ashley was doing, and doing beautifully for a while, was trying to organize some of that, but she really needed to do some other things. She is wonderfully involved now being a cook and server at a little place called Buckets in Ridgefield. There's interconnections with family, and so on, and her high school coach in softball. They just go on.

Anyway, she now lives at Battleground, because that's where her dad was and died, and that's her thing. But she comes over every morning, and she agreed to—because her son, little Dale, is nine years old—there's about four generations of Dale Lee Tippens. He says, "Grandma," well, "Great grandma," [laughs] he's so cute, but he's been here since he was tiny.

Lois: Coming to this place, yes.

Mid: And, of course, Uncle Roland is just this extra special thing. She was working on getting transit lined up so he could go to school still in Woodland. Anyway, Ashley was able to get it cleared so he can continue going to Woodland. He says, "I have so many friends, and I have lived there all of my life." He was a tiny little baby when they moved in.

Lois: Did you tell him how many schools *you* went to as a child?

Mid: Well, he was just delighted with the fact that he could, at least for a year or two, because he played basketball with their teams. He just finished baseball there.

Lois: How well did your father know Ralph Thayer? They lived close to each other. They had adjoining homesteads.

Mid: Of course, they knew each other.

Lois: He did so much to lay out the trails in the Whitefish Range.

Mid: Yes. I was just going to say he had Forest Service connections with Ralph.

Lois: Ralph worked at Ford Station. He also said that he built most of the buildings at Moran Station after he came back from World War I, and he worked at Moran.

Mid: Right.

Lois: His career was pretty much in the Forest Service, but they were next door neighbors, so I figured they must have known each other.

Mid: I'm not sure, but if we check contracts on bridges and so on, my dad worked twice rebuilding the pole bridge, once on the Forest Service side and once on the Park Service side.

Lois: Oh really?

Mid: Yes. [Laughs] Long before he was asked to come back—and I'm trying to remember the name; it wasn't Ralph Thayer I don't think, but one of the long-term employees who recommended, "Please ask Austin Weikert if he would come in and be constructing supervisor for those bridges." I can remember how pleased he was with the fact that he got to work with another youthful group.

Lois: That was after the 1964 flood. As Pat Walsh said, your dad was 72 at the time he was doing work on those bridges.

Mid: That was in 1964. He had the surgery on his lung when I was a junior in college, in 1957. Talk about being tough. I know it's kind of out of sequence, but his bad injury happened in 1930. He got patched together, and the next year, by the way, was allowed under the auspices of the engineer who knew him who worked for the Park. He said, "Please, is there any chance that you can give Austin Weikert a renewal on those contracts he was unable to finish because of a terrible accident." I've been told again and again there's almost nobody who ever was allowed to do that with a contract.

Lois: If you didn't get it done, you were out.

Mid: Yes. And, of course, one of the first questions asked after this terrible accident was "Is he really going to get well?" He did everything he possibly could that time and again when he had to have surgery for the lung. After the lung, I came in from Billingham, thinking I could give blood in Seattle. They wouldn't take it because I had been at sea level. My blood has one of these weird things and my blood pressure does the same thing as his, is it bottoms out if you aren't careful.

Lois: And do that, I mean if you need to do it.

Mid: If I don't do it somewhat in sequence and without any big hassle, eating something or other helps my system. But this pill is for rheumatoid arthritis. I haven't had any rheumatoid arthritis in my wrist. They were so swollen I couldn't do what I needed to do for Walt, and we didn't go into business until 1988.

Lois: Eventually, when all the damage is done it just sort of goes away?

Mid: Well, I've been taking one of these, and I have to have special permission. This is another one that they would charge me a fortune for if I didn't have Kaiser. It's made

by the only one who will put them out—hydroxychloroquine. They came up with this when they started treating people that had been in Panama and needed something for the stuff you get from there.

Lois: Malaria and everything.

Mid: Yes. That's why I am privileged to be able to say I take that pill, and it has worked. I came up here and jumped on a snowmobile shortly after I had that diagnosis, and they gave me ten days' worth of standard medication for swollen joints. I was so swollen I could hardly hold a cup with both hands for a while. But anyway, I knocked it down, and then Walt and I came up on vacation, and I got to play on the snowmobile. We had ordered an extra one, and we had two. I had a ball and came back fine. I said, "I don't think I need any medication," and they said, "If it comes back it will be worse."

Lois: And they were right.

Mid: I had been taking basically a medication that was designed with quinine for yellow fever, but they found out at that time that it worked against rheumatoid arthritis.

Lois: There's a story about your dad building the cabin that was the Customs House at the Canadian border.

Mid: He did. He had the contract. We hemmed and hawed about this when they took one of the two buildings apart. They wondered, "Is that the cat house?" Well, one of them was actually sort of residence and, considering the people who owned it, they ran a girly house for the oil people and all of the people coming through.

Lois: The loggers and everybody.

Mid: Yes. So, in discussion with us, we were pretty much assured that the one that got moved here and since has been built . . .

Lois: That the one that Frank Evans moved onto his property was the one that your dad had built about 1930 or thereabouts?

Mid: Yes, as far as I know. But you know, my dad didn't even want my mother to meet . . .

Lois: Madame Queen? [Mary Powell]

Mid: Yes, Madame Queen. [Laughs]

Lois: So, he must have known Billy Kruse and Tom Reynolds.

Mid: He knew all of those people. Tom Reynolds was a favorite of both my parents, but he was so quiet and reticent that he didn't come out very often.

Lois: And he didn't come to this area until 1928?

Mid: In that general time.

Lois: And he worked for the Forest Service mostly.

Mid: Yes. But as I say, my dad worked for both the Forest Service and the Park Service, but much more for the Park Service, really. I guess because of the nature of the contract—you know exactly what it's supposed to be. You put in your bid, and it happens to be a low bid. You take it, and you absolutely stick to every rule and make sure that it meets every qualification they want. I think only once or twice in all of those did he ever, in essence, go back and fix up and finish a job. And the only thing they do on those back country snowshoe cabins—which is what they are now calling them again. I came up here with that verbiage before and people asked me what I was talking about? Because they use them as trail cabins when they are repairing trails and so on. And they should be multi-use, but they are snowshoe cabins.

You know, it was just a fact of life. He knew if he needed extra help who he could get. Some of those people were relatives of—I'm trying to think of a couple of them. Sometimes they were available, and my dad knew if he needed extra help, especially when they were floating all the equipment across, testing the river current, trying to figure out if they could build that one.

Lois: Which one are we talking about?

Mid: It wasn't Walton, but there was one that is no longer there. They came in and took it out. It did not burn out.

Lois: This was south of Polebridge? You were describing how they set up a system to float stuff across the river when they constructed that particular ranger station?

Mid: Exactly.

Lois: What was that? You told me what it was.

Mid: Oh yes, and it seemingly was absolutely beautiful. I think they know at Park headquarters, and I know Scott [Emmerich] knew.

Lois: Was it as far south as Huckleberry Peak, or was it further north than that?

Mid: It could have been. I've not even looked at that story for such a long time, but it was a matter of the preciseness, of being able to say, "Okay, I can safely get the equipment and the material across the river," because they were not being allowed to just go in and cut trees.

Lois: They had to come in from the Park side and float things over to the site.

Mid: Yes. They wouldn't let them build a road to the site, even for horses. [Laughs]

Lois: Well, you know doing government work can sometimes be a real pain.

Mid: It was a challenge.

Lois: He must have been pretty easy-going about that stuff.

Mid: One of the things I've said in recent years, they ask, "What about your parents?" Because we talk about characteristics or something, and I said, "Well, if I must tell you this—and I do so reluctantly because I adored both of my parents—my father

was by far the kindest, most giving, loving, firm, and decidedly a disciplinarian if necessary, of anyone I ever met, except maybe my husband.” But the truth of the matter is, I think part of the reason I felt in love with Walt, after 3½ years, was because here was this same stalwart undergrounding that absolutely said who he was. One of the little things with Walt, I smashed a thumb putting firewood in the big stove at the Quarter Circle MC. My job was to clean the dining hall for breakfast.

Lois: As a teenager you worked at the McFarland Ranch?

Mid: Twice, for two years, and the second year I was there Walt was there. Of course, he was not a wrangler. He was a maintenance man, because they had generators for the cabins. I looked across the table at this young man. I should have brought a picture, because he was so young looking. He looked like he was 16.

Lois: I need to get some family pictures from you, because I don’t have any of your mother or your dad, and I know you’ve got them.

Mid: Anyway, it was just a matter of sitting down and saying hello, “I’m Mid Weikert.” Of course, he had met Barb who was working in the kitchen. That was one of the biggest connections. He said, “Well, I’m Walt Connelly,” and glad to talk. He had just one more year to finish at Purdue. He was studying to be an electrical engineer. Somebody said, “His dad runs some of the biggest B&O shops back east,” or something, and he did actually. I was taken aback when they said something about being a master mechanic. I thought, “That’s not the title I was really expecting,” until I began to be told that a master mechanic on a major system runs the biggest repair shops.

Walt was born in Pittsburg and moved to Cincinnati and basically spent his years at the edge of Ault Park. It’s a tiny little park now, but back then it was the world.

Lois: In Cincy or in Pittsburgh?

Mid: In Cincinnati, at the edge of Cincinnati. Well it’s in the middle of Cincinnati now, and I made the mistake of not saying something to Roland and Kate when they were coming through there, until later, and they said, “Oh we would have looked it up if we had made that connection.” Anyway, the point was both his uncle and his dad were tied into that, but of course they also got passes, and that’s how his parents came here for their wedding trip.

Lois: Park passes you mean?

Mid: Railroad passes, so Walt’s parents had their wedding trip to Glacier National Park. And they gave Walt a trip to Glacier National Park as a graduation from 8th grade. His mother said he never took quite all of his heart back with him. [Laughs]

Lois: How many years were you in Utah, or do you remember? You went down there in 1940, when your dad got the job working in Utah?

Mid: We didn’t go.

Lois: Oh, just he went?

Mid: We lived out in Boorman. We had a little house and got our milk up the hill, and my mother taught school. That was the first year she went back to teaching.

Lois: Had you already gone into first grade?

Mid: No. I was in first grade, so six basically. I turned six while I was in first grade. I'm trying to remember that year.

Lois: Yes, I have an October birthday, too. I know what you mean. When she and your dad got married did she stop teaching at that point?

Mid: She did, and that's the reason for telling you the story about Uncle Bill, because that's what she did basically, was that she was a teacher but not a teacher. After the accident they were in need of doctors more reliably than you could get up here, both for my mother and ongoing check-ups for my dad. That was when her parents said, "Yes, you may build a house," and that was at Lakeside. So, we moved. As I say, that was just the year before the war. It was the brink, and they had said they wanted to sell, and so we had then moved over to Boorman. I finally found a list of places where my mother taught. [See Appendix 2: Schools Where Ruth Dinwiddie Weikert Taught]

Lois: So, you stayed there while your dad was in Utah.

Mid: Yes, because we had this beautiful place; then it was easy and we had good people to help us. We stayed there until I was five and then they sold the place. That's when we moved to Boorman, and the first summer we lived in tents. Of course, I was this inquisitive little brat. It was raining outside, and as I drew my finger down the inside of the tent I thought on my mother and dad who had said, "Don't touch the walls of the tent during the rain." [Laughs]

I played on what was left of the tamarack stumps and contracted some sort of rash. Mr. Paski said, "I have just the right thing." He had this terrible smelling stuff, and it was on my head. He put it on my hair and it started turning white [laughs]. My mother assured me it was okay, because by that time her hair was... The funny little things that I will think about forever.

Lois: When your dad came back he built a house on that property?

Mid: No. That's when the sheriff stepped into the situation. Because Dick Walsh and my dad had gotten to be friends way back. It was a true kind of friendship. Dick would give my dad some hints of places he could find to live. This is long before he ran the Veterans Home. I don't know whether my dad went in to talk to him or he wandered up to see how we were doing, because you know he liked our family, too, and he really was a very special person. He was a friend. Yes, he followed the rules; so did my father. [Laughs] So the thing is, he made contact with somebody on Somers Lake who had a big good-sized place. I wish I had found it—we did do some tracking, and I can check with Richard [Dukelow], a friend who lives down there right now, because he's still alive. Sister Barb actually ran into some of them at one of the reunions at Flathead High. Anyway, the family that owned it moved away and wanted somebody to lease it and maintain fences. They had horses.

Lois: Caretake it.

Mid: Yes. I can't tell you how many acres, but a lot. It was a big place just off of where the old road was. They finally took that terrible curve off, just above the fish hatchery. We had more people off the road or in the ditch and hurt over the years, but it ran down to the fish hatchery property and went way up on the hill.

Lois: And the owners were never there.

Mid: Well, certainly not. Anyway, it was quite a lot of acreage, a very inefficient fence, and of course we didn't have money to really put into fencing, but we did some pretty interesting things with what barbed wire we had. But that's the reason we ended up at Somers, because Dick Walsh said this guy is good for this and he needs somebody who can take care of that property. We soon learned yes, we could have a huge garden, which we did. We could even revise the landscape a little bit so that instead of just a modest hump in the land for a root cellar kind of thing, we had the biggest root cellar and the most productive middle-of-the-winter root cellar. Then beyond that he leveled it and we had a mini basketball court for my brother and I. As far as I knew, it belonged to the Sheehans, and the Sheehans were the people who worked the fish hatchery.

So, basically it was John Sheehan, and he had two kids. His wife decided to go cut Christmas trees. She had the ax slip and cut her leg and didn't get it taken care of. She ended up in the hospital and died. So, these two kids didn't have a mother. Grandma came, and grandma was full of cancer. It was one of these series of things, relatively other than a few accidents of one kind or another in my life. No, Dad wasn't there, but Mother was very efficient, and then she ran a good school.

Lois: Obviously. Where did you go to high school?

Mid: Flathead County High School.

Lois: They bussed you from the lake?

Mid: Yes, and not just up the road. You come out through the lower valley.

Lois: They picked up all those kids out there?

Mid: It was a good hour, and in the snow a couple of times we ended up mired sufficiently that we ended up going home, but only twice in four years.

Lois: Yes, I used to ride the bus an hour to school.

Mid: And would you believe, Mother could tell tales about the schoolhouse. Except that they changed the boilers in the bottom sometime or other, it was the same building she had gone to school in in Somers when she lived there as a child. It was an old yellow building.

Lois: I think I've seen it. What year did you graduate from high school?

Mid: I graduated in 1954.

Lois: How did you come to work at the McFarland Ranch?

Mid: Family connections. Jack McFarland was a state veterinarian, and so was his wife Mary. My dad had connections with just anybody who was in the Park.

Lois: Yes.

Mid: They weren't there all winter, but they were up at that ranch.

Lois: That's where the dances were.

Mid: Exactly, and we had a dance there every Saturday night. In truth, when I think back about it, not only did my parents approve, even though they had some questions about some of the things that Jack McFarland had decided as the veterinarian, but I mean Barb worked there for years and years. My sister Dean worked there, and the only reason I ended up being able to work up there . . . Coming out of high school, I had worked at the weekly paper—it wasn't the *Daily Inter Lake*.

Lois: The *Kalispell Weekly News*.

Mid: Yes. But it also had another name for a while. Anyway, I worked in the office there.

Lois: With old G. George Ostrom?

Mid: No. I think that may have been . . .

Lois: He owned the paper, but I think you're right; he didn't buy it until later.

Mid: I don't remember him. I mean, I've met him up here. Anyway, I was trying to put together money to go to college. I'm trying to remember if I worked there the summer before that. I think I did. I caught a ride with a neighbor, because it was too expensive to ride on the bus, because you had to pay for every bus ride. But we had a bus several times a day go right by there.

Lois: From where to where?

Mid: From Missoula to Kalispell.

Lois: Oh, down Route 93 to Missoula. You started at the University of Montana.

Mid: I did start there, but I came in kind of late because I got a scholarship from the Business and Professional Women of Kalispell, pretty much at the last part of that summer. It gave me a tip of the scale financially, because you had to pay board and room, as well as fees and so forth, but it helped me get there. I was one of the not top top, but definitely in the top echelon and so on, and I got real good grades. I had all these people who could give me recommendations, but it really didn't make much difference because...

Lois: You didn't have any money.

Mid: There weren't the resources.

Lois: Right.

Mid: Definitely nothing from my parents. I said, “Look, I hate to say this, but the very first dress I owned off of a rack was graduation from high school.” They looked at me and said, “But I remember you...” I said, “Yes, I had a mother who was a seamstress as well as a school teacher.” And, by the way, she had dropped out of school after two years at college because of her health and decided she was coming back to Montana. She was taking care of her two little brothers. She was trying to keep a job that she had, I think in the library, and go to college. And her health began to fail. She didn’t have the strongest health. Amazingly, she still lived to be 80, but she dropped out of school because her doctor absolutely said, “You have to quit doing two of these things you are doing. You have to quit being quite so helpful to your mother in raising those two little tagalong boys. If you want to stay in school, you can’t borrow from your future.” So, she did quit, and that’s when she came to Montana.

Lois: In those days she could get a job as a teacher even though she didn’t have a degree.

Mid: Well, two years. She already had two years.

Lois: Two years and that was enough.

Mid: And that worked. There were a lot of kids I went to school with that went to college in Havre, which is where I ended up my second year, because after two years they could certifiably go teach, but they had to come back to school. My mother came back to school. She didn’t graduate from the University of Montana until the same year I graduated from college.

Lois: Which was when?

Mid: I graduated from high school in 1954, so obviously it was 1958. Actually, it ended up being the same year I got married.

Lois: So, after the University at Montana you were at Eastern Montana?

Mid: Eastern Montana College of Education, but I found out that they were not yet certified for the third and fourth year.

Lois: Oh geez.

Mid: But it was a wonderful experience. I had an incredible couple of teachers that really showed me the path. A sidebar, I had to have my appendix out the third quarter, so I missed the third quarter. I was in Kalispell waiting to catch a bus or something back to Columbia Falls on recovery, just walking someplace or other, and I ran into Kenneth Rossen, who had been the principal of the high school all the time I was there and long before. He said, “Mildred,” and I said, “Well, hello Principal Rossen, how are you?” So, we chatted a little bit and I said, “Yes, I’m recovering from an appendectomy.” I told him where I was, and he said, “Would you by any chance be interested in coming in and taking charge of our drama department?” This must not be printed, because somebody is going to say, “Oh you’re crazy; there’s no way he would do that,” but knowing the relationship between the two of us . . . I was in speech and so on. The only thing I did for drama—because I also was in band, all the levels—was backstage and I loved it.

Lois: That's the fun part.

Mid: Well it's not only the fun part, but it's something that I learned again as an adult, helping the kids at church. I apparently have some little quirk that I can direct. I can mentally see and say, "Okay, these are the things we need to do. Can we move you just a little bit this way?" I apparently impressed him. He said, "We desperately need somebody to pull together that program." And I could remember of all of the night visitors and these wonderful ones that they brought for years at Flathead High, and they were just really struggling.

Lois: Where did you eventually graduate from college?

Mid: Well, I went to Washington, because I found out that Billingham had four years and was strongly recommended by somebody. It was the University of Western Washington. Of course, now it's Western Washington University. It wasn't just a college. It was called at that time a College of Education. Everything was College of Education, shy of being a full accreditation, but they were accredited for all four years. So, I had some connections made for me, and I went ahead and registered there. I did some tracking, and I could catch a train and go to Everett and then go north and practically be on the doorstep of the university.

Lois: What was your major?

Mid: My major was, of course, education, but basically I was into history. What was my minor? Because I wasn't in science, but I ended up teaching science. [Laughs] But basically history. I stayed away from the math and science, even though I loved some of it. Of course, at the University of Montana the course in geology just absolutely set me up for life. It was so dynamic. People say, "Well, that was because you had 150 men there," and I said, "No, I really hardly paid any attention to them. I had three people in the core group that we went excursioning; two of them were men, and I do believe the other was a woman." Anyway, I'm trying to remember technically—I feel like I had a degree in education with a minor in history.

Lois: It will come to you. When your mother went back to teach school again in 1940-1941, where she did teach?

Mid: Well, it was at the little school in Boorman. It was where we had been able to find a house not too far from the teacherage, and mother got the job teaching while Dad was still trying to finish up and see if we could get this homestead started. Then the war came. The year following the declaration of war my mother went back to teaching, and she had me as a 1st grader, Jim as a 2nd grader, Elizabeth Dean as probably a 4th grader, and maybe six more.

Lois: So, this was a multiple-grade school. It was a one-room schoolhouse.

Mid: Yes, and that's basically what she taught. Right now, one of the people who is up here, Allen Jacobson, he said, "If I hadn't had your mother in junior high level, I don't think I ever would have made it."

Lois: Where was she teaching that she had him in junior high?

Mid: Somewhere. I have the whole list of her different assignments, because they moved them every year. They did not let them return.

Lois: That's crazy.

Mid: And the thing was, she never drove; she never had a car. She sort of had not really fully a panic attack, but sitting behind the steering wheel just did no good for her. So, when she went back to teaching, and this was after my third grade when she was there to cover for me, because all of a sudden I couldn't spell. They wouldn't let me write. I had never learned to print, because I had promised my dad that I absolutely was going to write him letters, [and I did it in cursive.]. And so first grade—okay, this is the way you form an 'A'. Mother, I promised daddy I would write him a letter. "Well you can write." My brother was one year ahead of me, and he had basically learned some of this. He was looking at me like, "Sis!"

Lois: So, you did cursive from the beginning?

Mid: Then we moved to Somers when I was 3rd grade and I immediately got in trouble in spelling. [I would write the words in cursive, then try to print them beside that.] Of course, sometimes it lapped over into other things I was writing, but basically spelling. I didn't want to bring home my report card. My mother said, "All right, where is it?" I gave it to her. "What is this? You are the best speller in the whole family." I know. So, we talked about it, and she made arrangements for somebody to take her to the school. You paid for phone calls from the fish hatchery, but she got the principal and made an appointment. She went to the school and discussed the fact that I was a natural born speller. I might not be able to pronounce things. [Chuckles] My husband says, "Let me pronounce and you write it." [Laughs] Anyway, the point was they got it corrected, because I had to show her some of these papers. I was flunking because I would write real fast, then I had to look at every single printed letter. I did not know how to make them. I might get four words right by the end of the thing, but I would keep going back. I could write real fast, and those were okay. I tried to tell the teacher. I don't know whether she thought I was being a smart aleck, or this was the rule and how could she let it go. But after I flunked one six-week period I was allowed to write the words with no issue put on it, and gradually more and more of the kids saw. "Can we learn how to write?" The teacher was very gracious about it by that time, but she absolutely was closing her mind. Everything I turned in she had to mark down because of no printing.

Lois: You told me once that your parents moved to Columbia Falls in 1955.

Mid: Well, that was when my younger sister was in school and Dad was working at Plum Creek. I was away at college.

Lois: You would have been 19 at the time.

Mid: Dad got this job. The biggest reason really was he knew his health was not good. This was before his surgery, which he didn't have until I was a junior, which was 1957. But the point was he began to realize he didn't have a steady job and he didn't qualify for social security. He had a very small veteran's pension, and almost no guarantee on that. A lot of the years he did fairly well, but we didn't save a lot of money. Of

course, we did pay him rent on the place that we leased down there, and it's not cheap to raise kids, even though we had a huge garden. Any place we could go pick fruit we went, and we canned and canned and canned. If you want to know what canning is like [chuckles] my mother, my sister, and me canned.

We always went to church on Sunday evening. Dad always tried to be at home so he could take us to church, because he was the only one that had a car. Then he would take my mother and my little sister and go out to whatever teacher's position Mother had, and it varied all around the valley. I knew some places, and Mary Cay was the one who came up with some of it for me. Anyway, she was at the school and living in the little teacherage right next to it. There always was a little teacherage, and she and Mary Cay stayed there, and Mary Cay attended classes merrily year after year.

Lois: And you kids were on your own there at the house?

Mid: Yes, except my dad was there to get us up. We all followed a regime. It wasn't a regimentation kind of thing, but it was absolutely a perfect way for a family to fill the cracks. I don't think any of us really ever resented the fact that by 6:00 o'clock in the morning you'd better believe you'd hit the deck. He had partitioned the upstairs that had been two big rooms, because they had had 12 kids in that house eventually, six boys and six girls, and they had a great big closet for each one of them. We took out the partition in the closet and make an extra room, and he divided the other two rooms so we had five rooms, and that worked very well. We had eventually four kids, each with their own bedroom, then we had to adjust things a little bit because of Mary Cay. And he remodeled the downstairs. It was a very accommodating old house. I was really sorry one time when we came back and they had burned it.

Lois: Aww.

Mid: Transient people had come in, and actually I think it got lit off. Anyway, there was a big barn across the road. We raised turkeys and chickens. The turkeys were a total disaster, but they came early and we had to hurry, and you know turkeys are not easy. We hadn't quite finished some of the flooring. But we always had cows. We always had chickens. There were times we raised pigs, just a few, until we discovered we could never keep them in the pen. We raised a sheep or two, and it broke my heart. I said, "I don't want anything to do with this." I only reluctantly ever held a flashlight while there was butchering going on. I had the same kind of reaction when I took biology. Everybody said, "Oh, don't you just love this?" I said, "Yes, but..." [Laughs] The only thing I almost enjoyed was when we had to pull the shirt and pants off of a frog. Awful. No, bookwork was fine for me.

Lois: They moved to Columbia Falls.

Mid: They moved to Columbia Falls. I still had stuff stored at the old house on the lake. I shipped some of it to Billingham, and I shipped some home and checked one great big container to Hawaii, but that was basically from Billingham. I'm trying to remember. I was in college.

Lois: You kind of lose the bubble when you are away from home. You said your dad worked for Superior Lumber?

- Mid: Yes. But I can't give you a date on that, and of course they are out of business long since. But I'm sure there's some date, and they may even have it at the *Hungry Horse News*. In fact, one of the pictures that I ended up with was him . . . I know he worked for Superior for a number of years.
- Lois: And he worked with scouts, too. There's a picture of him in the *Hungry Horse News* in 1962, I think. He was doing something with the scouts. They were having a tug of war or something. I can't remember the exact picture. Or maybe that was Ralph Thayer. I confuse my people sometimes.
- Mid: I'm going to say basically no, because of his erratic schedule. In these intervals, of course, he built some really gorgeous full log houses. And I never questioned the fact that he could get permission to cruise for the trees he needed for some of these great big houses.
- Lois: He did that through the lumber company, or this is on his own?
- Mid: Probably through the Forest Service. I think most of that was before he ever worked for Superior. He also worked for Plum Creek sometime in there. As soon as I started having a job, it wasn't that I lost track of him, because I would see him on the weekends at least, but there were years when I was the only one that definitely showed up at the old house on the weekend.
- Lois: Because your brother and sister were probably married by then.
- Mid: My senior year in high school I lived at Baldwin's in Kalispell. His dad was Charles. I think Charles was killed by somebody, and Roger was the son. I worked for Roger and Ann Baldwin on East 5th Street, or whatever it is. I go by there and I think, "That's still a modestly nice house." But they had a lake house not very far from where this old house was, and I babysat occasionally for some grandchildren. But the biggest thing I did for them was when they would have big gatherings. Sometimes they needed extra help in the kitchen, and I could wash dishes and so on. I had to be careful, because they had crystal and things like that, and I wasn't used to anything quite that fine, and I did break one. Actually, that was up at Ann's house and I felt so bad. She said, "You are aware those cost \$5?" I said, "Ann, I am so sorry." Look, that's what she paid me a month. She paid me five bucks so I had lunch money.
- Lois: For high school.
- Mid: But I lived at Baldwin's most of my senior year in high school, so that's the extra little punch in there, that I saw my dad. I generally tried to go home on the weekends. Somebody would be going down from some area, or my brother would be coming by. He was working when they were clearing the Hungry Horse dam area. I loved the Baldwin family. Mrs. Baldwin, of course, owned a pharmacy and some of those things, Mrs. Charles Baldwin. They were very prominent in that era in Kalispell.
- Lois: What all private residences or homes did your dad build? We know that he helped with the Foreman's place at Sawtooth Ranch.
- Mid: Right.

Lois: Rachael Potter says that she believes he built the cabin that they live in on Tepee Lake.

Mid: I should have been doing a lot of this stuff in the last two years, and I really neglected things because of my own health conditions. I'm trying to rebuild a frame that used to be 130 or 132 pounds, or 135 occasionally. I had lots of muscle and so on, and all of a sudden I'm trying to gain to 120. And you know when you lose mass, you lose a lot more than just fat.

Lois: Eventually I would like to compile a list of structures here in the North Fork that he was involved with.

Mid: Yes. I can't verify that last one.

Lois: The Potter one. Because I also heard that Walt Hammer worked on that one, so I then I didn't know. Sometimes people get confused when they are telling me. Lake McDonald—you told me that he did work up there.

Mid: Yes, and the name there is Sherwood. I know that the guy who owns it now is the third wife of James Sherwood. They totally disowned some of this other and so on. These are actually that family. It was based on the development of one of the most famous baking flours.

Lois: Did he work on any of the lodges at all in the Park?

Mid: Yes, he did. I would just have to get you that. There was one, the main lodge on Lake McDonald. They have totally changed the entrance. That has actually changed in the era that Walt and I have been in this area. They asked him to come and do the countertop, I'm pretty sure, in the entryway. My understanding was he managed to use wood that was exceptional, and that was pretty much of a work of art. Of course, he didn't build the one down in the Northern Lights Saloon. Karen Feather did that.

Lois: She had old receipts and stuff underneath the glass bar top.

Mid: She found a Bon Ami box with receipts. Well, there were three on the top that were my dad's. The Health Department absolutely insisted, of course, they had to cover it, so it's buried permanently. But it was enchanting, not just because my father was on there, but because of all the people that were on there. People would ask, "Well what did he order?" This was an order with Adair to get down valley and bring back up, because they were busy up here. He didn't order much in the food stuffs. Once in a while something like flour, but mostly he would make at least one trip to town. But a pair of gloves, a knife, probably something he broke, just major things.

Lois: Like a lantern?

Mid: Yes. It wasn't bacon, and it certainly wasn't anything you could make booze out of.

Lois: Well, Adair sold shirts and hats, and he sold ammo.

Mid: Mostly he made one trip to town for the clothes he needed, and he pretty well kept with the same sturdiness in gear and one good outfit.

Lois: What did he do for food? From 1920 to 1929 he was cooking for himself.

Mid: He was a fairly decent cook. I will guarantee you that, because as I grew up my mother was gone more. There were times when he was there through breakfast, but in truth breakfast was very often one of the cereals. We had oatmeal. We had cream of wheat. Cornmeal mush, and I loved it, because you could make extra and then you could slice it and fry it real quick.

Lois: Did you get real Canadian syrup to go on it?

Mid: Probably not, unless he had a connection. He did work across the border quite a few times and on the bridges across the river a number of times. One of the poignant stories in some of mother's writing has to do with the fact that he was working up there, and she got the contract that was an incredible one. After the fires down around Lake McDonald, they had a lot of trees and they were making shingles, so it had to be cedar. By the way, my parents made a mad dash for Lake McDonald and escaped the 1929 fire, as many people did.

Lois: Did he lose any buildings on the homestead?

Mid: No. The only buildings that were there have been pretty much maintained, at least to some degree by the Hoilands. Of course, I got to know them quite nicely, I thought.

Lois: Yes, what was the story? It was in 1947. Your dad would have been back from Utah. You were living in the Somers area by then?

Mid: I would say so. Yes.

Lois: But he still had the homestead up here. Evidently there was a period...

Mid: In the meantime, what had happened was because of all the funds they needed to pay doctors and hospitals and ongoing bills, but dad's earning was modest. Too many holes to cover.

Lois: He had five kids.

Mid: It was huge, you know. Even before a lot of that, it was a matter of this enormous medical bill. Keeping them healthy, and getting Barb aboard. Dr. Ross was absolutely incredible helping arrange with the finance company, because he couldn't carry them himself. One time I fell on a bottle, because I gave a skip and dropped the milk. I couldn't stand the idea that our milk was going, and I carved myself open." He told Mr. Paski, when Barb ran up to his house and he called in, Dr. Ross said, "Bring her to the office." He didn't have us go to the hospital. We went to the doctor's office.

Lois: Where was his office?

Mid: Right there in Kalispell someplace.

Lois: I'll see if I can't track him then.

Mid: I don't know exactly how close to the hospital he was. I know that he was brand new in 1930, and he was the only one that was available really, and the only one of the one

or two that answered the call. A couple of them I think basically said, “No, we just can’t handle that.” Probably a Sunday night, you know.

Lois: Of course.

Mid: You’re busy with your family, and there was no quarrel on that about anything from my parents. It was a matter of this was the person who was new in the place, and he said, “Yes, I will try that. I will come.” I mean, there were a lot of other incidents. My sister Dean fell and burned herself badly when we were living down at Lakeside. My brother had a couple of accidents and desperately needed medical care. Dr. Ross was just this incredible person who always responded. By the way, the last time I heard that man he had a really beautiful, deep baritone voice. Maybe it was bass, but anyway, it was gorgeous and recognizable. I was down at Baldwin’s cleaning in the kitchen once when heard him. When Ann came into the kitchen to get some things or just checked in, I asked and she said, “Well, yes it is Dr. Ross. How do you know him?” I said, “Oh, he has been my whole family’s doctor.”

Lois: Do you know what his first name was?

Mid: I don’t. I know that he was still a physician all the years of my life in the Flathead. So, that would be through 1954.

Lois: I should be able to find him in a city directory.

Mid: It’s a little bit like when Chris Peterson put out that article on the Night of the Grizzlies. Who was the doctor? Dr. John Lupinski. Now, how do I know Dr. John Lupinski? Because that’s who my surgeon was when I had my appendix out when I was a sophomore in college. He had been a NATO surgeon, and he somehow discovered this area and decided he absolutely loved it and had transferred in. Immediately after that surgery, I started having problems. He said, “Okay, somehow we have an instrument that did not get sterilized properly. We will get you back in the hospital and get you started on the way to health.” Because I was developing massive infections.

Lois: Oh dear.

Mid: Yes. But he handled it so perfectly, and his approach was so similar. I have a doctor now who reminds me so much of him, the way he handles me. [Laughs]

Lois: The years that your dad was doing a lot of work in the Park in the 1930s, did you and your mom and brother and sisters come up and stay here at the homestead at all?

Mid: Not in the 1930s. I wasn’t born until 1936, and in 1936 we were on Flathead Lake.

Lois: So, you didn’t come up and spend time in the North Fork?

Mid: We came visiting people. Naomi’s grandmother.

Lois: Ruth Coan.

Mid: She was the one who stepped in. My parents came in to pay the bill on the taxes, and my mother took the amount that was listed on the paper verbatim. They waited,

because it took some extra money and they got it. I don't remember if it was exactly \$100 or just over, or whatever it was. It was a huge amount for them, but they had saved and saved it, and they were ready to pay it. They absolutely loved that place. They got to the county courthouse, and the basic answer was, "Well, no you can't. That isn't enough." My mother said, "Well, how much is it?" I think it was less than \$5, but my mother had no more money than the \$100, so she said, "Can we pay you the end of the week?" "Oh no, it's going up for auction." I don't know whether it did or didn't, but you have to be suspicious, very definitely, because there had been problems, and they hadn't been able to live up there part of the time. People knew that it might be going up for auction, and it was a beautiful place.

Lois: Ruth Coan was a schoolteacher, too.

Mid: Yes. That may well be how she knew. I know certainly after the accident, a lot of people up there said, "How can we help you? Can we give you half a dollar, or can we do whatever," because they knew how serious the accident had been. They knew frankly the terror you go through when you have someone that has been hurt.

Lois: He wasn't the first one to have an accident on that road. There were quite a few.

Mid: Oh yes, there were.

Lois: Ralph Thayer was badly hurt on the road. Someone else talked about their car going off backwards [Mel Ruder]. He had his mother-in-law and someone else in the back seat, and they went all the way down to the river. Luckily, Lee Downes was around and heard them. Everyone was okay, considering. We ask periodically about putting guardrails up, and the County says, "Well, you know it's better that there aren't guardrails, because then people pay attention. They don't take it for granted."

Mid: [Laughs]

Lois: Whatever. We've been talking for a long time here. You have to be getting tired. We'll have another session so we can talk more about you and Walt and how you ended up buying your property from Frank Evans and the story of how you found his body.

Mid: Of course, we knew Frank Evans from the time that we were in the Park at the McFarlands. Frank Evans' was where Walt came in when he was an 8th grader and took the trail trip where he went through the Park. He did that two years. He didn't come back the next year, but he went through as a guest and he came back I think two years later and worked as a journeyman. Then I think he came back two years after that and was the packer.

Lois: Wow.

Mid: Yes. He was definitely engrained, but he worked with a packer one year and maybe it was the next year he came back and was the packer.

Lois: So, he knew Frank pretty well.

Mid: Yes, and he knew places. He promised me that we would go to Hole in the Wall. We never did do that, and I felt really bad about that, but he got so enamored with the place and the generators and one thing and another, and the fact that we were in business together testing high voltage transformers. We might be three days away and we needed to be in Burns, Oregon, that kind of thing. People would say, "Why can't you umpire more games?" One time somebody had frantically called asking me to do a Monday night game. I got ahold of them, and they said, "Can you possibly?" I said, "Do you know where Burns, Oregon is?" "Well no." It's clear down in Oregon. "We are due at 7:00 o'clock in the morning to test a high voltage transformer out in the field about 30 to 40 miles away from here. There's no way I can come." And I said, "Are you aware that I retired, and I thanked everybody three weeks ago?" Actually, a little more than that. "Well no, but we thought you might be available for this." I said, "Okay, you be sure you pass the word I'm very thankful people appreciated what I was doing, but I'm not available."

Of course, that whole thing was God-given. But Walt said, "I'm sure we can make a success of this." Before he died, we were almost ready to sell. We had a basic arrangement, but I refused to sell for three years because I did not think the partners that we brought in were handling it in a professional fashion, and we had 100 customers. Not every year did you go see those people. You might only see them every 4, 5, or 6 years. Every 6 years anybody with a major transformer needed to have things tested.

Lois: What was your company name?

Mid: Transformer Diagnostic Testing.

Lois: Cool. Tell me briefly the story of how you guys ended up being the ones that discovered Frank's body after he killed himself.

Mid: We had been up camping at Bowman, and we had been dealing with Frank on the possibilities. He had told us, "Go ahead and prowl the road and come down." Actually, he was up here at least once with us briefly, and he knew us.

Lois: This was 20 acres on the south end of his property you had sort of carved off?

Mid: He described things and said probably that's going to be one of the primary ones, because it had its own little stream right here. He said, "Other than access, but maybe you want to build a cabin over... We talked about taking one of the cabins from the border, because they were running the shuttle and putting one of my dad's cabins. Well, it would have to have been down below, but there wasn't really a satisfactory place, because on Vickie's five acres there's too much of what the spruce trees love, which is dampness. Of course, even over here there isn't a huge amount of space out there. Yes, this is huge up here, but we could get to it. I don't remember exactly when I met Iola, but as kids I met her and her mother. Of course, I have been intertwined with the Hensens and the McFarlands almost all my life. [Chuckles] That's the kind of associations most all of us have who have been around over a period of time.

Lois: So, you were going over to Frank's house to sign papers or to talk about something?

Mid: To let him know that we were going down and the paperwork was done. What's the lawyer's name—he's up here now?

Lois: Steve Berg?

Mid: Yes. Stephen Connelly Berg, referred to us by Iola Mason. That's his name.

Lois: Yes, but no relation?

Mid: No. [Laughs]

Lois: He handled the paperwork?

Mid: We went and saw Stephen Connelly Berg and just chuckled once we realized his middle name was Connelly. We just knew him as Steve Berg. Yes, and that stinker actually left one important word out of the contract. I had to go through the court system briefly to qualify for this property clearance, because just the way it was worded. Eventually I told Steve about it a little bit, but it was such a sad time when Walt died.

Lois: So, you had made arrangements with Frank, but you hadn't paid him yet?

Mid: Steve had not finished with the paperwork, and we went down. The other thing was we were bringing a copy back for Frank to take out to Edna. I saw her a couple of times over the years when she was here with some of her kids, but it was a matter of clearing the deck on that [she was still on the deed to the property]. I do think we signed for it, knowing if we were allowed to. [As we drove up to Frank's place] Walt saw something, and he said, "Stay in the car." We knew that Frank had been fighting with his girlfriend and a boyfriend that she had brought along. We only knew a little tiny bit about that. We just pulled in off the road.

Lois: And he sensed something.

Mid: He said, "I want you to stay in the car." I said, "Okay." He said, "I'll be back shortly." Instinct or just wanting to make sure we didn't spend a lot of time there, or there's lots of reasons it could have been. Some would say, "It's because you talk too much." [Laughs] Which I understand; he's not the talker of the family.

Some of the stories are just enchanting to him. I've told him a couple of them, and he said, "I didn't know that." He walks into the shop that is just almost the epitome of his father. My dad had tools and so on. In fact, I've got a chest that actually pulls open like this, has big handles on the edge. I mean big handles. Two people can carry this full of tools. It sits in my house. [Laughs] It belonged to Barb, and she was moving from a house to an apartment.

Lois: Who is Barb?

Mid: My sister.

Lois: Your older sister.

Mid: And the oldest sister, just absolutely the epitome of an incredible older sister. I went to work at McFarlands because they needed somebody to fill in. I was ironing the last things to go on a trip to California to watch my big sister graduate from college. I talked it over with my parents, and so on. I didn't have a job, and really wanted it. Maybe my mother talked on the phone to him, but anyway I was hired for the summer. He didn't want to hire me for the summer. He already had a cabin girl, but he was really glad before the summer was over. [Laughs] The thing is, I knew it was a secure job if I got it, but to give up a trip to California to visit my big sister, it needed to be important. So that's kind of the sequence. My parents know these people, and so on and so forth. So many of the people—I mean the Holcombs, of course, were always on the list. They were just special friends.

Lois: So, Walt went into the house, and he found Frank?

Mid: He just went up and found him in the yard.

Lois: He was outside?

Mid: It was in the yard. He had gone out the back door and shot himself.

Lois: What did Walt do?

Mid: He quickly ascertained that he was dead and came back and told me what had happened. He said, "Let's go over to the Merc; we need to report it." Of course, the girlfriend . . . I can't remember her name.

Lois: Ginny Tcheng.

Mid: Ginny had gone ahead and done that.

Lois: She's the one that first found him?

Mid: Yes, she was there. They had been arguing about how he wanted to go to China with her. She had brought this young man, or the student, with her partly as a protection against the utterly entrenched ideas that Frank had. He really did have a lot of entrenched ideas. I liked Frank, but it wasn't really what I would call a friendship *per se*. You visit with people and talk with them and so forth, and I admire some of their knowledge.

Lois: Well, he makes for some good stories. I know that.

Mid: Of course, we got the *Hungry Horse News* for years and years and years.

Lois: I noticed your mom wrote in when John Frederick was doing the column in 1984. She wrote a letter to him and said, "I'm working on my history, and is anybody else working on history?" She thought maybe somebody in the Cusick family was going to be doing some history. So, John put a thing in his column saying, "I got this letter from Ruth Dinwiddie Weikert, and if anybody is working on history will you please let me know so that I can send your information to Ruth."

Mid: Yes.

Lois: Do you know if anybody ever did contact her?

Mid: I really don't, other than the couple of people who wrote something, like Marie Peterson. I remember how delighted my mother was when I came over here and there were avenues and so on. She wasn't fantastically well.

Lois: But she got to have her 80th birthday at Ann Hensen's place.

Mid: Yes, she got the celebration, and she loved that.

Lois: Who all came to that?

Mid: Not enough of the people, because I didn't advertise it. I kind of got—oh, he worked for the Park, and they lived down on Lake Five, Jerry Bell or whoever that is. I had stopped there and gotten some pictures of my dad. That's one of the places that he worked. He rebuilt the whole kitchen or whatever. Somewhere I'm sure have some information and pictures of my dad working for them and finishing up a project.

Lois: They knew so many people, and for so many years. Their range of acquaintances was quite impressive.

Mid: Yes. Dad was an outgoing person. He could be a very shut-down person for a while. Of course, my mother was just absolutely loquacious, like her daughter. [Laughs] I've got a story. I want to read this. I want to finish it. I want to work on it. I came from a family of two incredible storytellers.

Lois: Obviously.

Mid: My grandfather, I wish I had had a real chance—as I say, I did get to see him his last year. He had lived so many years beyond living at Lakeside. They lived actually a little north of where the fish hatchery is now. There is a house there that Mary Cay insists looks like it could well be from the area where my grandfather lived. There's incredible stories of when they moved to Lakeside from Indiana.

Lois: I saw that in your mother's stories. If we don't have that printed out anywhere, and all we have is the rough draft, I will start keying it into the computer so that we get it down.

Mid: Let me take a look. I know my son John is going to want one.

Mid Connell Interview, continued

October 4, 2017

Lois: I have a copy of that [Bill Yenne's book].

Mid: I will actually offer this to Chris [Peterson]. I don't think he has a copy, because he was talking about it. But I have one that was signed. I think it went down to the Hostel. I asked, but of course it was just one little book. It was shortly after Oliver took over the hostel from John. This finally got out for reproduction, and I did buy

two copies. I'm not sure where the other one is right now. But there are two very specific mentions of my dad. They are very specific as to how and what he did, that were so helpful to everything Yenne did. I will find those quotations.

Lois: He was amazing.

Mid: He was amazing, but of course the thing about the book that got misplaced is that on the frontispiece he autographed it, "I knew you when you were a young girl."

Lois: I will look. I have access to John's house because I get things for him, and if I see Oliver I will ask him.

Mid: It is a very bright green, which is a little unusual.

Lois: I neglected to have you sign your release form saying that it's okay for us to have the interview. And I'll show you what I've done with all the materials you gave me.

Mid: No problem. My proper signature is Mildred Weikert Connelly.

Lois: That's nice.

Mid: I was Weikert when I signed a teacher contract, so when I started signing papers after we got married, I said something to Walt and he said, "Oh, please use that."

Lois: Well, your mother was Ruth Dinwiddie Weikert.

Mid: Right. She didn't have a middle name, because her parents didn't think she'd ever need it. [Laughs] When she got married she was going to acquire somebody else's name anyway.

Lois: Well, you do have a point there. I took all of your materials and roughly organized them. I have to say this is kind of an archivist's nightmare.

Mid: I'm sure it is.

Lois: It was among the worst I had seen. This inventory is not really well done, but it's to the point where you can see what you have and what's in each folder.

Mid: Okay. Like I say, I brought actually less than half. I took everything out of that safe and put it in a box, and I thought, "Woman, you've got to be crazy. You're not going to be able to pick that up."

Lois: There's no sense doing a real thorough inventory until we have it all. For instance, I found one page which is obviously your mother's description of when your dad proposed to her.

Mid: Oh really? I don't think I've ever come across that.

Lois: They are riding in a wagon, and she is saying she was going to have to think about a teaching contract she's got and he said, "Well, you know you don't have to go," and she said, "Well, yes I do. I have to eat." I would love to have the rest of the story, but there was only one page.

Mid: We will find that, and there are notations, as I say. The biggest thing right now is to tell you that because my kids are just finishing moving and we will be leaving on vacation almost the day after I get back, it's going to be almost impossible to get my guest room cleared enough to even use. It is just a disaster. No one has ever slept in there because I have a hide-a-bed.

Lois: So, you have several houses on your property?

Mid: I built an Adair home, because I had to demolish the old house. It was 100 years old. It had very steep stairs, and of course my kids wanted me to get out from under the steep stairs. Of course, I had moved from there down to an apartment that Walt and I had built, and there were 17 steep stairs, and I loved them. Ed [Neneman] came over and did a lot of finish work on that in the middle of the winter. And the stairs have got nice railings.

Lois: Stairs are good exercise.

Mid: Of course, Walt was still alive, so I didn't move there until after he was gone. But it was this business of more than half again as much as it cost me to build. Actually, it's a three-bedroom Adair home, because I absolutely insisted that it had to be listed as an office. I turned the house around, because I had a view that is kind of bordered between two trees that we planted when they were tabletop, when the kids were little, and they are towering and gorgeous even though one of them is quite bent. I see in and around those mountains Mt. St. Helen's, Mt. Adams, and Mt. Hood.

Lois: Wow, cool.

Mid: And then I built a nice patio outside of the house, so I have a nice bench out there which I use once in a while.

Lois: Does Cheryl live on your property, too?

Mid: No. We bought adjoining property from the neighbors when they quit farming it, and as Walt was dying we were subdividing and finishing our business and hoping he would get well. Technically, getting ready to move down there, but he couldn't handle the stairs. But it has a nice shop. Every shop has a pit, I think I told you. It had three big storage bins, basically that look like three big garages. Well, they are three big garages, but I had two freezers. I had these enormous bins for storing my—you talk about photography. I have so much, and I really need to get back to it. I was a shutterbug. I had two Panoramics. I started with one of the little ones that cost me \$695. I went to one little automatic. I called it an automatic when I listed things when we were taking the ferry. The man said, "I need to see your gun." [Laughs]

Anyway, when Roland was small, about 2-2½, his mother wanted to go shopping at the Sears outlet store, which was outside of Portland. I said okay, I will come along and keep track of his littleness. Of course, he was in and out and so on. I glanced up as he cleared the entrance, because I knew he couldn't dash outside, and here was this—I can't remember how many lenses it had with it, but it was an SLR, and I said, "I am going to get it." It was a great price. I still have parts of that, but I have added new lenses. I have broken this and that, so I have pictures too.

Lois: Do you have many pictures of the North Fork?

Mid: A great many of the North Fork, because this is where I really wanted to take pictures. And I know that I have some pictures that were my dad's.

Lois: I have no pictures of your mom and dad, so it would be nice to have a couple. There's a lot of stuff in this box. Your mom's stuff, what I'm calling manuscript materials, there's one folder that just has—you know, she made a Table of Contents 60 different ways, so I just put them all in one folder.

Mid: Okay.

Lois: Then there's her synopsis of *A Good Place to Live*, which I gave you a copy of the other day.

Mid: Yes, you did.

Lois: And then there's another copy of it, but it has a bunch of notes and corrections, I think from her reading group.

Mid: She belonged to a writer's group, and she took classes at Tacoma.

Lois: I put that in its own folder.

Mid: Okay. [Laughs] My son says, "How much are you going to pay her?" And I said, "I haven't agreed to anything, but I hope it's going to be something..."

Lois: Then there's what I'm calling a near final draft that I think you typed for her, and there's chapters 1 through 14. They still have corrections all over them, but it's the closest thing to a draft we have, but there's only 14. Then there are many, many more stories that I think were destined to be part of this; you just didn't get there. I just put them in folders. For example, Folder 1 and a list of all the stories that are in that folder.

Mid: Oh my goodness.

Lois: If it's something that has appeared up here in one form or another I put an asterisk. See, here's chapter 7, so this may be an earlier version, but there's a bunch that aren't here.

Mid: Yes, I found as many as three copies, and that was before I did any of the typing.

Lois: "We Blessed the Laurels," "The Deer and the Burn," "Forest Fires," "Left-handed." Some of these, like "The Typhoid House," may have gotten incorporated into another story where she talks about her dad telling her not to drink the water, but she did and she got typhoid. But anyway, it's a list of the stories that are in each folder, and they are marked. There are probably 30 more stories that aren't in that draft.

Mid: I have the rainbow maker in my kitchen, rainbows through my kitchen. It's where the sun can hit it.

Lois: There are 11 folders of miscellaneous stories, and if it didn't have a title on it I kind of read it and put in what the subject matter is, even though it doesn't have a title on it. In the front of the box, the first folder is a copy of your dad's handwritten narrative that he did himself, plus his "My Marine Service in World War I" that I gave you.

Mid: That's actually I think the first time I've seen all of that. I'm not saying I haven't seen part of it. Just sometimes Ashley would come across something.

Lois: The next folder has that draft that your mother did, "Meet Austin Weikert."

Mid: Yes.

Lois: That is in this folder, because I consider that her telling his story rather than his own.

Mid: Yes, and that's what that is.

Lois: That's on the computer now.

Mid: Okay.

Lois: Then there's a couple of poems that you guys did about her, and the list of schools where she taught. That's in the computer now, too, and I put the years, including when she had the break and why she had the break, and then another break when she had Mary Cay.

Mid: Okay.

Lois: "The Nice Thing about Mail Delivery in the Early Days" is the on the computer now. There's his proposal. This is what I live for as an archivist—there are two original letters that your mother wrote to the Vaughnts in May and in November of 1929. This was not too long after she got married, and she says "My husband this" and "My husband that," and "He's a six-footer." They got married February 25, 1929.

Mid: I think someplace I have some stuff from her parents, and so on.

Lois: These are two precious letters, and they're in the computer now. I think the thing to do maybe is to burn you a CD, or if you can give me Cheryl's email address I can send them.

Mid: Both Cheryl and Lisa are really good about things. I had a computer, and that's why there is supposedly an email, except it doesn't go anyplace.

Lois: I would like for you to give my card to Cheryl then and have her contact me.

Mid: Okay. I wish I had time with somebody that knew anything about Macintosh. Of course, I was talking to Chris briefly, and I said, "I've got to get back to the Mac," and he said, "I use Mac." Because my daughters all use a PC. When I bought a PC, I bought a bigger one. I said, "Vickie, why do I need this one?" "Well Mom, you can store pictures." Well, of course, what she does is archive pictures, for crying out loud. She's been taking sports pictures, and when they go places she takes pictures of the places they stay in and hands a copy to the people. She's a good photographer.

Lois: We use PCs, so at least she and I will be able to go back and forth.

Mid: Yes, Macintosh and PCs should have no problem.

Lois: There's a folder on teaching in St. Ignatius. There's a letter she wrote to Mary Cay about teaching in the North Fork, which talks a little bit about that contract business.

Mid: Mary Cay is still alive, of course, and she will be delighted to know that some of these things are popping.

Lois: I found various kinds of correspondence. I created a separate folder for the letters to the Vaught family. There's one from Jerry DeSanto, and I thought there may be more, so I created his own folder. Then there is one that is just family members.

Mid: I remember the one from Jerry, because we were working on things together at that time.

Lois: Other people I put here. For instance, there's one from the Newtons. I created a folder for her writing group, because there are things from different people. Anything that had to do with that writing group I put in a folder. Then writings about her that she obviously did later in life; not her childhood memories, but other things. I just called it "Ruth's Later Writings" and stuck stuff in there. There was a whole thing where she talked about her health problems, and I put that in there. Then I created one that was miscellaneous—personal recollections, journal entries. They weren't really stories. There was a folder called "The Navy and Mary Catherine" and "Bob Comes Home." I just left that intact.

Mid: Okay.

Lois: All your *Hungry Horse News* clippings, the "Yesterdays" columns and stuff is in there. The original Campfire book and all that stuff. Then I created one just for obituaries. Whenever I find an obituary I stick it in there. There's the really sad tale that your mama tells about when your dad decided to move to the Veterans Home in 1974 and all the angst that went with that.

Mid: Well, it did solve some problems.

Lois: He was so much older than her.

Mid: Besides which he wanted to still be on the road, and there was just no way. There were times he would appear in my driveway. If I saw that car coming in, before I even talked to him I dialed Barb's home number.

Lois: Did your mom live with Barb until the end?

Mid: Yes, she did. In fact, she was there and I was there, basically so she could continue working and earning a living.

Lois: How far apart were you? You were in Ridgefield and she was in Tacoma?

Mid: Yes. It wasn't that bad a drive. You just have to get through the state complex at Olympia. Not that this is applicable to any of this, but I would still be using her chiropractor. She had to have a chiropractor because of that accident.

Lois: I never saw anybody with so many medical problems. You know she had meningitis, she had typhoid, and the aneurism. How did this woman survive? I see that she's buried in Tacoma.

Mid: Actually, she was cremated and Barb was also cremated and they are in a mausoleum; they are together. My Grandfather Andrew, my dad, and my brother are all buried down here at Columbia Falls.

Lois: In the Veteran's cemetery? I was looking for him. I went to the Veteran's Cemetery and looked. I went to Conrad Cemetery and Glacier Memorial Gardens.

Mid: It's the one right off the main drag through Columbia Falls. [Woodlawn Cemetery]

Lois: I thought that was associated with the Veterans home, but maybe not. I couldn't find him. Ollie Terrian is there. I'll take flowers one day.

Mid: But Andrew and Austin and James, and my brother of course was just buried oh not two years ago.

Lois: And he had polio when he was younger?

Mid: No. What he had when he was tiny and they managed with sulfa and miracles and so forth, was an aortic valve that was not sufficiently formed. Of course, they have no idea why it was the way it was, but he all of a sudden would be purple. He would do that, and in 1935 and 1936 when I was born, on the top of everything else my mother was carrying me.

Lois: Oh no, not again!

Mid: My mother was trying to figure out how to keep this precious little boy alive. But 1931, 1933, 1935 and then not a year later I came along, but as several of my family have said, "But you were always the healthiest of all of us." Until the scoliosis, and then when I walked into Barb's room where she was being taken care of by Cheryl and various things to get a transfer to Cheryl's house because she had asked for Cheryl as executor. In fact, Cheryl had called me two weeks before that and said, "Mom, have you heard anything from Aunt Barbara?" And I said, "No, I haven't. I know that she was having some problems." Just nothing she ever said at Christmas or other things, she was always at my house for holidays. Anyway, she had a breathing problem, and they said her heart was arthritic. She walked five miles a day at least five days a week. After she retired she added several hours at a gym so she got extra, and all of a sudden she has this problem. She lived on the second floor in the apartment she had moved to and she struggled on those stairs and couldn't take long walks. Actually, what she had was hidden colon cancer and she was stage 4.

Lois: Oh gosh.

Mid: It tore me up, because I used to go up [gets emotional], I'm sorry, it was just the idea that she was desperately sick when Cheryl and Lisa and I and so on went down to Roland and Kate's beautiful wedding. That was wonderful and Barb knew, but Cheryl had moved things around in the house she had at that time and made all the contacts. The gals at Tacoma were just absolutely amazed. One of them walked in and said, "That's your daughter?" I said, "Oh yes." And she said, "She's incredible," trying to deal with, trying to get permission for Barb to be able to be taken care of down in the southern part of the state.

Anyway, it was finally diagnosed and Mary Cay said absolutely no, it was not a doctor or anybody's neglect. But I went to see her at least three times a year because of the chiropractor that mother and she had, and I had quit doing that for a variety of reasons. All of a sudden she was so desperately sick, and of course I had had a major illness in there, because my hiatal hernia decided to go upside down and fill up with gunk and major surgery. But anyway, the point was, she was such a healthy individual and she did all things...

Lois: Your whole family was, obviously.

Mid: Yes, the recovery rate.

Lois: Good genes anyway.

Mid: Yes. But with Jim it was the heart thing.

Lois: Who had polio? Your mom mentioned poliomyelitis, that her dad said that and then she said later we called it polio. I don't remember who it was that had it.

Mid: I'm going to have to read it myself. I don't think I know.

Lois: It's in that final draft thing.

Mid: That's fine.

Lois: Would you like this inventory in this folder with the typed things that I've done, or do you want it in the front of the box with the files?

Mid: Oh, let's leave it in the master folder.

Lois: Okay. This does match the file titles, and these are acid-free file folders, archival. I only threw away that many paperclips. [Laughs]

Mid: The only person I can think of, of course my brother Jim had five wives and five kids, all five kids by the first wife.

Lois: Where did he live most of his life?

Mid: He moved around with the Montana Telephone Company for years and years, and his wife had a place on Flathead Lake towards the end of that. As things split one way or another, because the first marriage he got married to a little gal who had a terrible upbringing and had run away and frozen the hand and lost a couple of fingers and one thing and another, and she was 16. He came up to the ranch in southern Montana and

asked me if they could borrow \$50 so they could get married. I said, “I don’t think so. What are you talking about?” Basically, he had a complex for taking care of other people. I knew he was that way with animals but he stretched it. And then the second one he married was someone he had worked with and that seemed to be glorious, seemed to be fine and then she brought her daughter in and her daughter was a drug addict and started accusing Jim.

Lois: But Jim was your dad’s only son. He had four girls and a boy.

Mid: Right. And it was the boy that they almost couldn’t keep.

Lois: Were they close?

Mid: Fairly close, but partly because Jim didn’t have robust health. He would go hiking with us but not—I would say he would just walk with the family. I’m trying to remember, it wasn’t just when he would jump into the cold lake or something that there was a problem. Jim and I talked about this before he died, a couple of years before. I kept visiting, because they would pick me up in Boise, because they lived right outside of Boise for quite a few years and he loved it. See, the first valve replacement was a pig valve. Fifteen years later when that thing went belly-up, they rushed him back to the University of Washington Hospital and they said, “Oh no, we have to use the man-made one.” Well he had trouble with that right from the beginning, because with that you had to take the anti-rejection stuff, and with the other he didn’t have to.

Lois: Really? That’s interesting.

Mid: So, he was going to have a third one, but if he had a bruise or any kind of whatever. One time I was knocking on their door. We were going to go out to one of my grandson’s, one of Vickie’s kid’s, football games, and I knew we were going to be late if we didn’t kind of hurry up. I knocked on the door and then opened it a little bit without any knowledge at all, because I didn’t hear anybody. That was before I started having problems with my ears. He was behind it, and he took a major blow, so we waited quite a while to make sure he wasn’t going to have a problem, because sometimes he would do considerable bleeding and needed to have help.

Lois: Did he learn any skills from your dad? Did he have similar interests or anything?

Mid: Not really. And my dad, there’s questions about who taught him, who did he learn from.

Lois: He was self-taught?

Mid: Yes, I was going to say about 99 percent of it, because he talked to me about that. I didn’t have it on tape or anything, but he said, “When I was working on a log and I looked at the grain of that log, and when I was walking through the forest selecting trees and so on, . . .” I was amazed when I began to realize where he was allowed to go to select trees for big houses. Yes, he picked seasoned good logs and he paid for them. It wasn’t like he had total free selection, I’m not saying every time he did.

Lois: This was on the Forest Service land, too.

Mid: It was Forest Service land, yes, and he came back and did things for them. But it was a matter of he started to learn carpentry before he ever went into the Marines. I have no recollection other than the dialogue with his commander that Mother wrote about, that this is where he was going to go. Part of it was where he was living over there; it's not the big forestry thing that we have over here. Selecting trees and figuring out, "Okay, is this something I can use?" and he logged things so carefully himself. By the way [chuckles], I laugh about the business of his getting bucked off a mule. I think I told you that. He absolutely was known as someone you put him in a corral with a modest number of horses, and there would be several of them he would be able to just walk up and be able to get on them if he wanted to.

Lois: Well, I assume all a lot of the work he was doing in the Park required packing the materials in to where they were working. There was a letter late, after he was at the Veteran's home. I think someone wrote and said, "Austin, I'm so sorry to hear you cut all your fingers off." What was that?

Mid: He had I can't remember exactly what kind of a saw in the basement at Barb's, and he was fixing some furniture for them. Whether he had a little blackout spell or what, it never was determined, but he was there by himself, and he wasn't supposed to be using that equipment.

Lois: Power tools we are talking about?

Mid: Yes, it was a power saw, and realized he had cut two fingers off. I think it was two, and he was amazing after that.

Lois: What a blow.

Mid: Well, and he turned the saw off. He reached down, he picked them up and wrapped them. I don't remember who he called, but it was a neighbor or someone, and they took him right to the hospital. I don't think they were able to save them. Well, I think he had one that wasn't totally detached, so they actually had three or something. Anyway, the point was they couldn't reattach them. So, what did he do? Well, he figured how to button a button. I have a hard time buttoning a button with stiff fingers.

Lois: You buy one of those button things for handicapped people.

Mid: Yes, they make them now. He made his own.

Lois: Did he? [Laughs]

Mid: But they healed.

Lois: It's a wonder he didn't bleed to death.

Mid: I won't say he had first aid training, but I don't know anybody who was dealing with people like Uncle Vaughty who didn't measure up pretty well. That became one of the hallmarks of my dad that he knew that if you got injured, "Okay, let's quiet down and see what to do if you gashed, and so on. It was one of the reasons that I saved that

finger. If you look closely enough you actually can see where a scar healed. Do you know how many years later that thing actually came alive?

Lois: No.

Mid: Almost 30. I was canning or something in my house in Ridgefield, the old house, and all of a sudden that finger was just screaming at me. I thought, “What is going on?” Then I looked at it and remembered, “That’s the one that Jack McFarland helped me take care of.” He patched together a little sleeve twice for me to take care of an injury.

Lois: Yes, you mentioned to Chris Peterson—but we didn’t have it in our interview—that for two summers you worked at the McFarland ranch, 1954 and 1955. You hurt yourself and Jack McFarland flew you out.

Mid: Yes. That time there was this huge barrel stove. We had to build a fire and get it warm before the guests came in from their rooms.

Lois: Into the dining room.

Mid: Yes. You went in and built a fire, and then you did whatever floor sweeping and so on and so forth, and made sure the tables were okay, because there was a crew, including my sister Barb, who served and did the set-ups and all that kind of thing. But as a cabin girl that was your first responsibility. Then you went to the bunkhouse, actually the laundry part of the bunkhouse.

Lois: You changed beds and those kinds of things?

Mid: Yes. We had boxes for each cabin, so we knew how many beds there were, and we just put a little tag on as to how many people were in there, because it varied. Everything was organized by Mary long before I ever got there, but it was pretty precise. But there was one log I was sure would fit, so I gave it a push and my thumb went down with it. It was badly yucked. Anyway, the other time I was slicing ham for the cook, because she realized that I had fairly decent skills. They were serving some big group and rushing, which you often do in the kitchen. Anyway, she asked if I could slice the ham, and I said, “Yes, fine. What knife do you want me to use, and where do you want me to slice it?” I have no idea why, but I slipped. You know, ham can be kind of slippery.

Lois: And cut your left index finger?

Mid: She said, “I’ll get Mary.” I said, “I think if we just pull it back together it will be just fine.” And she said, “Do you know that you almost were at the nail?”

Lois: Ouch.

Mid: [Laughs] So, Jack took me the second time in the plane to go to get the doctor to take care of that, and he obviously did. But the funny part about it is I really had almost no feeling in that at all. As I said, it was so funny all those years later, what is going on with that finger? Fortunately, I didn’t have hot jars or anything in my hand. I had read a story that when something is cleanly cut, if carefully sealed it may not be very

useful for a long time. It hadn't been that long since I read that. But sometimes the nerves will finally heal and they will let you know it. I was fairly calm about it, but this thing was just absolutely screaming at me. Then I finally realized where it was and what it had to be, and I decided well to soak it in a little cool water for a while and salve my conscience that I was getting my whole finger back again. [Laughs]

Lois: As an aside, did they serve like family-style? I mean did they put all the food on the table and people served themselves?

Mid: No, people came in and ordered breakfast, and the other meals they did come in at the same time. But breakfast, as near as I remember, was one cabin vacated and then of course that was beautiful, because then the cabin girl could go to the cabin and get that cabin done. And, of course, there was an outdoor biffy. But I was 17 years old. I don't remember!

Lois: Well, those kind of skills you end up using the rest of your life. I was a waitress for one summer and I am amazed I can still carry all sorts of things and not spill anything. You know, you need to learn those things. Mary McFarland must have been quite a woman. I just can't imagine.

Mid: Yes, she was. There was certainly a question in my mind, because I talked to Mary a number of times in the last years. We moved from Bowman over there when my oldest was ten years old, because Bowman said, "No, you stayed your two weeks or whatever." We would have stayed longer and spent more time getting acquainted. She was absolutely amazed, "I didn't know that you and Walt got married." [Chuckles]

Lois: Tell me about her personality. I never met the woman.

Mid: I would say pretty much dynamic when she wanted it to be. Jack was pretty laid-back. He could boss, but he was in charge of the corral. He was in charge of the crew outside. She was absolutely in charge of the women, and we all had bunks upstairs adjacent to her bedroom. So, when you came in after whatever, and there was seldom much of anybody wandering too far, sometimes we would sit out because it was a gorgeous sunrise or sunset, but we put in a pretty busy day.

Lois: She was direct?

Mid: You have to understand that she was into self-healing, holistic medicine.

Lois: Holistic medicine, yes she was.

Mid: So, a number of her discussions were more in that vein. She might have seen what we were eating at dinner and had a little cautionary, "You have to balance that." She was pretty good about that.

Lois: Yes, I heard she didn't use a lot of sugar in her recipes.

Mid: Oh no.

Lois: She used honey or something.

Mid: And, of course, we said we really didn't need sugar. The pills that she so carefully sorted in her room . . . but only a couple of times a year did anybody get invited to come into her room at all. She had pill bottles that just [chuckles]. So we all said, a little jokingly but quietly, we didn't want to disrupt. We didn't want to be agnostic to the approach she used, because there was no proof that some of the things that had happened to them, it might have helped.

Lois: This is in the 1950s, so that was kind of early for the health food movement.

Mid: Yes, but she was very strong into that.

Lois: Adele Davis and all that.

Mid: Yes. She was maybe one of the originals, I don't know. It was certainly the first time I had ever come across any of that.

Lois: Did you go over to the Merc very often? Did you get away from the ranch at all?

Mid: No, because I was really a little dumbfounded with some of that. We got paid at the end of the year, at a rate of \$100 a month. So, by the end of the summer you walked away with probably \$300.

Lois: They didn't pay you until the end of the summer?

Mid: There was no need to. If there had been something, but you had no place to spend it.

Lois: Your meals were provided.

Mid: And you didn't get a chance to go roaring off to town, except for whoever went down and got groceries, like Walt as the service men. He kept the generator running, made sure all the lights worked and so on. If there was a complaint from a guest, he was the one that handled those things.

Lois: So, he worked for Frank Evans, and then he worked at McFarland's?

Mid: Well, what had happened is his parents spent their wedding trip in Glacier National Park, so they knew how calming it was. They had one girl, Jackie, who was 10 years older than Walt, and then they had this little boy, and he was just a go-getter as far as nature and so on. One other thing, which to me always was a sad thing, he wanted a dog; he wanted a pal. They didn't necessarily live in a neighborhood that had too many kids. He had a paper route when he was maybe not even 12, and a dog followed him home. He asked if he could keep it, and his dad said basically negative. I don't know exactly how he worded it, but the dog was gone in the morning. It had been sheltered and definitely penned the night before. I think that's all his father said, period. "No, the dog is gone."

You know, it hurt. One of the first things we got our kids was a dog when we were living in town. And yes, the kids got to help clean up the mess, and yes the kids learned a lot of things, and then of course when we moved to the farm it was a good thing. We actually had a mother dog who presented us with 12 puppies. But the point is, he had a good upbringing. He was born in Pittsburgh but he was raised next door to Ault Park in Cincinnati. Ault Park on a map today is not very big and I never

actually stopped there when we were in Cincinnati, but that was his playground. He could deal with animals. He could deal with the solitude. He could deal with all of the nature things that eventually bloomed. And when he graduated with honors from the 8th grade, they brought him on the trail trip that Frank Evans had at that time. And hiked all over through a whole bunch of different places. Somewhere I think I've still got some stuff on what he offered. As long as he was behaving himself with Bill Yenne, he had really good trails. But there was definitely a conflict when Frank would say, "I've got to have such and such a trail opened," and it would be one where there had been slides or something.

Lois: I heard this from Kay Rosengren that the Noffsingers had their operation up there at the Bar X Six Ranch in the Park. They offered rides, and they felt that Frank Evans was impinging on their concession.

Mid: Well see, they offered rides. All he offered was walking tours.

Lois: Well, they filed suit against him—no, I'm sorry. It was the McFarlands they sued, not Frank Evans.

Mid: Okay. You know something more than I do.

Lois: Kay said she never could understand why Mrs. Noffsinger and Mary McFarland didn't know each other. They were like the legends on each side of the Park. But later somebody told her, "It's because the Noffsingers sued the McFarlands over their operation."

Mid: Yes, because McFarland's definitely was a dude ranch. But Frank depended on Bill Yenne for a lot of years to get the trails cleared. All he used was packers, and I know that that's an interesting connotation, because if you're a packer for a walking group it's a whole lot of different than being a packer for a horse tour.

Lois: But Walt worked for both of them, though. He worked for Frank originally and then he also worked for McFarland, the summer that you were there?

Mid: Yes, but he had nothing to do with the wranglers.

Lois: He was the infrastructure guy.

Mid: At that age, well he was 20. He had a good mechanical background. He had worked for the railroads for his dad and his uncle. And McFarlands knew him from the time he took the original tour, but in particular from the time that he was the packer for the walking group, because they came into McFarland's at the end of a tour, before they came down to Frank's.

Lois: I wondered if he wrote to them and asked for a job, or how he came to have that job with the McFarland's that summer.

Mid: You know, he may have. I don't think I ever heard, but it wouldn't surprise me. He had worked through college, two different summers—one for his uncle and one for his dad, but both for the B&O railroad, basically. His uncle was a little different, and that worked better.

Lois: This is after his junior year that you met him that he was working there, right?

Mid: Yes.

Lois: Then did you stay in touch?

Mid: Casually. As I got settled I had his address so I just—basically, it was almost like postcards, just short notes. At Christmas time I thought, “Oh well, there’s a nice guy that somebody else has claimed before I even thought about it.” [Chuckles] Because he wrote about going back home and taking up with his high school sweetie. I knew that had probably been a pretty intensive thing, from a couple of things he said. And he certainly was not a romantic grab-you-and-do-whatever.

But Iola Hensen and I were working dual with the cabins, even though she wasn’t technically on staff. She just came over to do it, and we were friends. Anyway, he was growing a mustache. He was going into his senior year at Purdue, and they had two traditions, because we asked him about it. They wanted the senior guys to grow a mustache. He said, “I’m not very much fond of it, but you know I’m trying.” [Laughs] It didn’t look very good. The other thing was white bucks. You’d get those right before you went into classes.

Lois: Pat Boone style.

Mid: So, Iola and I looked at each other and sort of in tandem—I don’t remember who said what—but we asked, “What would you take to get rid of it?” [Laughs] That may have well been me, but it was just one of those flaky things. He looked at us and said, “I don’t know, what you got to offer?” I looked at Iola and said, because we had actually talked about wondering what in the world it would feel like to kiss somebody with a mustache, not that either one of us were that practiced, you know, 16-17 year old kids. Anyway, Iola was 16 and I was almost 18. We said, “Oh, how about a nice big kiss each?” “Oh,” he thought for a second or two. “All right, who’s first?” [Laughs] That’s why he went and shaved the mustache off.

Lois: Oh my gosh. Did you dance with him at the square dances?

Mid: Oh yes. The dances were wonderful. There were a couple of the latter songs at the end of the thing that were from Hollywood musicals that I absolutely loved. After a while I think they just became kind of a favorite of his, and he would search me out.

Lois: These were records, or was it live music?

Mid: At McFarland’s they were just records. They had some real good selections. We didn’t do as much square dancing, as Walt and I learned to do later. We belonged to a really hot...

Lois: That must have been a dream for him, to come out after being at Purdue. Coming out west, that had to be where his soul was.

Mid: Well, his mother said he sure didn’t take all his back with him from junior high. He had a whole park to play with from years, certainly from 10 up, compared to working with the trains and so on and so forth.

Lois: Did you ever get to go riding yourself? Did they let the staff girls go riding?

Mid: On the 4th of July they basically closed down shop except for breakfast, and if we wanted to workers and the staff could ride. The crew would saddle them. We rode up to Bowman Lake for Frank Evans' fish fry. There were stories always floating about something Frank was doing, it seemed like. He was pretty much of a curmudgeon.

Lois: He was.

Mid: Where did he get all the fish? I don't know. But he ran this big fish fry and kept everybody supposedly happy, and we got to ride.

Lois: And his wife Edna was there then, right? He was married to Edna?

Mid: They were still doing fine.

Lois: And they had their two kids, plus the two kids that they took on after their parents were killed, Floyd and Sharon Luke.

Mid: Right. I had met them. After Frank died we went right in and talked to Steve Berg, because he was drawing up the paperwork for this property. He said, "Okay, everything will be on hold until there's time for..."

Lois: I understand Edna's name was always on that property. Even though they divorced, she still owned half the property.

Mid: Yes, and as I say, he needed to take the papers for Edna's signature. That's why we stopped to talk to him, because we wanted to ensure him we were going to town to talk to Berg and would be bringing back copies for him to take to her. Because he had said within a week he was heading out to Coeur d'Alene. Of course, what he really had on his mind was Ginny. He thought he was going to go to China with her. But anyway, the point is yes, there were a few extra shocks in there.

Lois: You told Chris that you worked for the McFarlands two years, and then you worked at a dude ranch down near Bozeman?

Mid: Up in the hills out of Bozeman, between Bozeman and Yellowstone. Actually, there are some pretty high mountains. It was called Nine Quarter Circle Ranch, and it was at Gallatin Gateway, Montana.

Lois: You were in charge of the children and the youth program?

Mid: Eventually, they just called me the Baby Wrangler. They said, "We decided we would offer a service to families that had at least one youngster who was younger than 10," because there were some youngsters that never rode along with me or anything, but if they were older than three and they could prove they could ride. They pretty well got cleared, and their name came to me. My job was to go down to the corrals early and corral the horses that were supposed to be in my pack. I could take youngsters 10 and under. If they were under 10 but were a really experienced rider, they could go with the trail group, but those were pretty long hikes clear up through those hills. It was only the time that there was a snowstorm, that I knew of. Every wrangler around said, "Be sure you take a coat," because a lot of these people were not dressed for the high

altitude and weather. They were brand new to the ranch that day. Anyway, when they ran into the snowstorm, of course, we did halt. Some of the wranglers kind of got together to discuss what we were going to do. I said, "Find out who has a coat." It seemed like somebody decided they had an extra blanket. It was one of those funny little things that I was telling kids later, when I was babysitting over in Bellingham, Washington. Eventually we managed to get one of the saddle blankets and wrap somebody in that. They came straggling back to the ranch. Some of them had gone out with just sun hats.

Lois: Well, they learned something didn't they?

Mid: [Laughs] I hope they did.

Lois: How did you and Walt end up getting together and getting married in Hawaii?

Mid: Well, just casual back and forth letters. I found out that he went home on spring break to check on this gal he had gotten back together with at Christmas. The note he sent said something to the fact that he went to eight bars, because he knew that she drank. She had been there, but he didn't find her and said, "That's enough." [Laughs] I think that was it. But anyway, so how are you and blah blah blah. That's basically what they were. Where are you now? How are things going? I had to tell him after my sophomore year, because that was the next year. I missed a whole quarter because of my appendix. That's when I ran into the same surgeon that was mentioned in this bear story, where the two girls got killed by bears.

Lipinski was my surgeon. He had been a NATO surgeon. That's who he had worked for, for years and years. Then I think he had heard about Glacier, and for some reason had a chance to take a look at it, and he decided he absolutely had to be there. He ended up being on the staff at Kalispell General. I came in and had all these lovely symptoms, and the test said yes, I did have appendicitis. I can remember thinking, "I'm right in the middle of a play." I could have gone back, except when I came back in with symptoms during a post-op exam he said, "Okay, we're going to get tests on you. You have everything that says there is something not properly sterilized that we used on you." He was so apologetic, and he was just a sweetheart. I mean as far as a doctor that got into a sticky situation that was not his doing.

Lois: Did Walt go directly into the Navy out of college?

Mid: No. What he had to do, he had an astronavigation class at Purdue, and he was kind of struggling with that for some reason. He was taking ROTC at the time, and he really needed extra time to work on that course and work on some projects, so he dropped ROTC at Purdue. The word was, "Okay, there will be a short period of time after you graduate, and if you still want to be Navy and not just be sent into the Army, these are the steps that you can take." The professors were real good about it. They understood that it was more important for him to get his degree. Once he got his degree, he went to Cincinnati and worked there for a while. I used to remember the name because it was a really well known electrical company. Anyway, they were very sad to let him go, but he reapplied and he got the call to go to Great Lakes. He went there, and he did fine.

Lois: So, he went through officer training?

Mid: Officer Candidate School at Great Lakes. To tell you the truth, some of that stuff I didn't look at until after he was gone. I did not realize . . . , well, let's just put it this way: he did better than I ever had any idea.

Lois: How did he get Hawaii as his first assignment?

Mid: Well, when he got through Officer's Candidate School and placed so high, they picked select people who were really good at certain kinds of things, including electronics. He got sent to Philadelphia to bring back a late World War II ship, Destroyer Escort Radar 239. They were putting on radar, because that's the only way we could get information coming from Russia. So, he was back there and I think I heard from him a time or two. But within the confines of what I was doing, I don't remember exactly when the ship left, but he said, "Well, the ship is going to go down through Panama." I thought well, that ought to be a great trip. I knew he was going to be posted at Pearl Harbor. It was the biggest base. When they brought in new destroyers, they brought in the DERs, which are a small destroyer. We even went on one once; they bring fleet ships into Portland every once in a while. I went aboard and started asking questions, and this guy just looked at me. I said, "Well, my husband was in the Navy, and he was on a DER." A fast frigate was what he was on, and the guy said, "This one is a little higher geared, and so on, but it's pretty much . . ." I wasn't on Walt's ship that many times, but they would be at sea and then be home approximately a month, then again at sea. He was at sea when I got over there.

Lois: Did he propose in the mail?

Mid: He proposed after he got in from the sea, properly. He said, "Should I be doing this in front of your dad?" I said, "After so many years of acquaintance and because of where we are, I know my dad will approve. How's that?"

Lois: He had met your father when he was up here?

Mid: Yes. And then there was a sequence to do with when he finished with Officer Candidate School he was supposed to go fishing in Canada with his dad, and he decided he really wanted to come back to Glacier. So, he sent me a telegram and followed it with a phone call. He found out that I was up where my mother's teacherage was, just outside of Great Falls at that time. I don't know where and why they ended up sending her over there. But anyway, there was a little grocery close by, and it was a pretty good-sized school. Barb was up there, because she was waiting. She had been assigned to work with the libraries in Japan, after quite a few years of teaching and getting her master's degree. She had a roommate for Japan, and of course that got canceled when they ended World War II. So, she was waiting for deployment, and where she got was Europe, thank you God. Every time they had a break, she and a friend, sometimes a different one, went to Jerusalem, to Norway. She went to just a plethora of places.

Lois: Was she working for the government?

Mid: She was working under Army auspices. So anyway, she was waiting to find out where she would go. She was pretty sure it was going to be Germany, but she was

waiting for that. She was going to take me from my mother's teacherage back to Billingham and visit. Actually, Juanita who was Ann Hensen's other daughter, was out there. But then came all this communication with Walt. The phone call came into that little grocery. He had alerted them ahead of time. Barb picked it up, and then she got this smile on her face and she handed the phone to me. Here is my mother, and here is my big sister Barb. I'm holding the phone. I mean, I'm wasn't going to try to talk privately kind of thing. So, we exchanged hellos. His first question was, "Have you finished your summer's work?" He knew that was so important, because that \$300 was a big deal. I said, "Yes I have." Then he said, "Okay, big question. Do you want to go to Glacier Park?" and I said, "Yes, I would really enjoy that." I'm sure he was hearing a little bit of whatever my sister was saying in the background. But anyway, then he said, "Who can we get for a chaperone?" I'm getting giggles, because both mother and Barb didn't really expect that. You know, it never had crossed my mind and certainly hadn't been spoken. I said, "Well, would sister Barb do?" He said, "Oh, is she right there?" I said, "Yes, she is, and she's nodding her head, and so is my mother." He started laughing. He had met my mother briefly, but they were just passing through. They were taking a trip and hitting every one of the cold lakes.

Anyway, so he said okay and asked where he needed to be. Once you get past the little grocery, it's just another half mile or so to the teacherage. He said, "Okay, I will be there at such and such a time." And within minutes of that time he arrived.

Lois: Where did you go?

Mid: Well, real quickly he came in. We got thoroughly introduced, and he really met my dad that way. Of course, my dad was recovering from that surgery.

Lois: The lung surgery in 1957?

Mid: Yes. We talked briefly, and I took him over to the schoolhouse and got him set up to bunk. He said, "I think we ought to be out of here by 8:00 o'clock in the morning." Barb and I said fine. We were back in the teacherage at that time. It was a pretty busy teacherage; they were noted for being very big teacherages. My dad, my mother, my little sister, my big sister. [Laughs] Anyway, he said, "I'm going to say goodnight. I can find my way." It had turned really cold, so I went to the door with him and stepped just barely outside. He said, "No, you get back inside, it is really cold." I said, "All right. Goodnight." I closed the door, and within a minute and a half, knock knock knock. He opened the door and stepped inside. "Everybody get your coat on, the heaviest coat you have. We are having a Northern Lights that you won't believe." It crowned. It was absolutely, by far, like nothing we ever had, even when I went to Alaska. If that wasn't an omen [laughs], a gift from the Heavens.

My dad, of course, was out for a little while and said that so reminded him of the time in the North Fork, and my mother too. They went back in, and so did Barb. I stayed for a few minutes, half cuddled against him, and I said, "I don't want you to get chilled." We said it sort of . . . we had this business of saying the same thing at the same time. It started at that time. [Laughs] He sort of finished it and gave me a quick kiss and said, "I'll see you early in the morning." I said, "Fine." He came and he

picked us up, and everything was packed. We knew what we needed to bring personally. He had the camp gear.

Lois: You went on horseback or hiking?

Mid: We went to Bowman, stopped at the ranger's station. There was nobody there, of course, at that time. We had basically gained permission. We camped right at the shore. One of the things he said was, "Well, if our hiking proves to be energetic tomorrow . . ." I'm not sure, but somewhere in there he said, "I think you girls ought to clean up over there" by where the little boathouse was. What he meant was, "I'm going to strip and wash here, because I can throw on pants faster than you." [Laughs] We all laughed. But we hiked up to the left.

Lois: To Numa?

Mid: To Numa and around up there, and the next day we hiked toward Quartz, but that's a long hike. We got to laughing about some things, just enjoying the peace of being up in the quiet and so on, and decided to come on back. It was only a three-day trip, but we all had such fun. Opening my house was always a blessing when Barb had a chance to come down and would take time away from her own congregation, to be there for special events here or in Washington. It was that kind of relationship after that trip. She was in Germany for quite a while.

Lois: Did you get married at a church on the Navy base, on a ship?

Mid: No, no, no. There was some discussion, and there was another couple that needed to get married. They came to us and asked not to share our wedding *per se*, because they were Catholic, but if they could share our reception, which we had arranged. We said, "Sure." I thought maybe I should bring some of those pictures this trip, and I thought no, this is not about me.

Lois: This was in a chapel?

Mid: There was a Navy chapel, and we checked that out with a pastor and so on. There were two reasons not to use it. One, it was way too large for an officer complement of 13 officers. That's a small ship with a real intact family. Basically, all they have there is their wives. Everybody is young, particularly in a new deployment kind of thing, which that ship definitely was. Somebody said, "Have you checked out the submarine chapel?" It might have been the pastor, and by the way, he was Presbyterian and we really needed classes. So anyway, we checked out the submarine chapel which was much smaller, because they had a much smaller contingent. We talked to the pastor and said, "We really do want to go ahead and get married. It isn't a matter of we have to get married, but we would like to go ahead." We talked for a fair length of time, and he said, "I would be pleased to act as your chaplain." So that's where we had our service. The other couple got married at the naval base, and they were just lost.

Of course, you're not supposed to see each other and you're not supposed to do blah blah blah. Well forget that—you're in the Navy. I had been met at the plane by this beautiful woman who was one of the other officer's wives. Ann Nichols became a fast friend, and her hubby was our best man. Ann said she would love to help usher me around. So, she took me to her beautiful house, and we went shopping. Of course,

I had no gown. In fact, there was no set place for me to live, to start with, and she had checked things out. There was a really nice apartment, of all things, right behind a bar. It wasn't at Waipahu, which is where I was teaching; it was Pearl City, but she took me there. We got acquainted and so on. This couple was absolutely delighted to have a potential Navy officer's wife there, and all of the exits left in such a way that they felt they definitely could protect me and that everything would be fine. It was a place I could walk to school.

Lois: So, you got a teaching job there?

Mid: Yes. He contacted me at Billingham. He had come up when he was en route between the two specialist training courses that actually made him almost second in command, because the second in command on a small ship has people duties. You have the captain, and you have the XO who does that, and then the first in command of the other major officers has to have the training for anti-submarine and anti-warfare, and that's what they had sent Walt on, while the ship went galivanting. Anyway, the whole process was defined and so on, and I didn't understand that until a few years later. It was okay, that's just the way it worked. But he made all the arrangements, and he paid for my flight over there. I had to take some extra classes at college, and really I worked at babysitting and cleaning houses. But I didn't have a full-fledged job for that last summer. It was about halfway through that time at sea, which was about 28 days, but as you can imagine, they were often not exactly. So, I got situated in this apartment. That was fine, and I could walk.

Lois: Was this in the DOD school system?

Mid: Just through Hawaii. I met with the superintendent, and he said, "Ms. Weikert, I'm so happy to have you. I have a school where I feel I need somebody who speaks really good English." The first thing he asked was if I would be willing to go another island, and I said, "I'm sorry," then he said, "Well, the one that I have here is up on the other side of the island. Do you think that would be all right?" I said, "Walt has a car, and I think it would be fine. He knows I need to be worrying about..."

Lois: Because he was going to be at sea?

Mid: Half the time, yes, and I wasn't sure whether he would be at sea. It wasn't that many days before he came in off that particular deployment. Part of that had to do with the schedule to get me over on the plane.

Lois: What did you teach? What grade level?

Mid: Well, I taught 8th grade, which I was absolutely in love with. I love kids that age.

Lois: This had to have been exciting to go to Hawaii.

Mid: Oh, it was. When he called me I was in Billingham, and I had an apartment at that time. He said, "If you haven't signed a contract, would you consider trying to get a job over here?" Of course, when I said yes, there went the papers of one of the best schools in Seattle, just out of the University of Montana, because I could work on the 5th year. Of course, I didn't go back to teaching because I wasn't qualified. I would

have had to have spent almost half of the salary. For quite a few years Walt got paid \$7,000 a year.

Lois: Big money back then.

Mid: Yes, but it wasn't good money if you had to go to college, because basically it was going to cost you \$4,000 a year, so there was just no way.

Lois: How many years did he serve?

Mid: Walt served five. There's always a compensatory thing. The last thing he did for the Navy was in San Francisco. He served on a court martial board, and that was in September of 1960.

Lois: Then he went to work for Bonneville Power Administration.

Mid: We spent months back with his folks and sister. He had 14 job offers, the first one in San Francisco before we ever left San Francisco for other potential jobs. He drove across country and ended up saying, "Well, shall we take the one in Kalispell for PG?" He explained the fact that it really was only because of the country.

Lois: Sure, that's why anybody is here.

Mid: But the point was, there was no up on the job.

Lois: No upward mobility.

Mid: He said, "I really need the training, and I think Bonneville," so I was pretty sure when he finished the call that's where he was going to go. He drove around, and he thought, "I'll check out if PG has a parking spot right close, maybe." Well, they were jam full. He drove around Bonneville, and there was a parking spot right in front of the front door, and he got out the car.

Lois: What city was this in?

Mid: Portland, Oregon. The major headquarters for Bonneville Power. He got hired before we came flying back out to join him on our anniversary. He had the plane flight, and he had the house rented and had us signed up for Kaiser Permanente [insurance].

Lois: When were your children born, what years? Is John the oldest?

Mid: No. Vickie was born July 26, 1959, actually in a territory.

Lois: She was born in Hawaii?

Mid: Yes, at Tripler Hospital, both of the first two. Just real quick. It's Tripler Army Hospital. It's known by everybody who ever has any connection with Hawaii. There's almost no Army doctors, but many of them are Navy. But certainly most of the doctors involved with the reproduction side of it, which is one of the biggest, their quota was 400 babies a month.

Lois: Wow. I can't imagine.

Mid: But Marine officers, because they had better steps in their things by being doctors, we found out you go into Tripler Army Hospital. You are representing the Navy and Navy personnel, but you're going to have a Marine doctor. That's fine. But some people, oh my gosh, and you didn't get your own private doctor. I said, "No, you walk in, you sign up, you get a number. They call you. You go into a little booth. You get undressed sufficiently. Somebody will stop by and make sure you are, then the doctor comes in and examines you. You're already weighed and everything. It's very precise, very military.

Lois: Military medicine.

Mid: A lot of people hated it, but I thought it was just great. I had problems with Vickie. She would not turn, and she was up against my rib and my side. She ended up with two hematomas, one on her head and one on her side, which had to be taken off while I was pregnant with John. Just little things that complicate. They were absolutely incredible. So, when I found out what Kaiser was all about, I was delighted, because I had been very happy with Tripler Army Hospital.

Lois: So, Vickie first and then John?

Mid: Yes. Victoria Ruth after my mother, and Barb's middle name is Ruth, so Ruth goes back. Actually, Walt's mother is Ruth, too. So Victoria Ruth on 7/26/59, and John on 7/9/60 when Hawaii was a state. When Vickie was born it was a territory, and if you think that doesn't complicate trying to get a birth certificate. It was just stupid. I mean, the President was not the only one who had problems getting a certificate.

Lois: It's pretty complicated.

Mid: John gets into trouble with the Department of whatever with renewal for driving all the time; it's pretty chaotic. You talk to Hawaii and they say, "Oh well, it will work okay." Why don't you come over here and find out? Cheryl wasn't born until we were over here. Walt had retired from the Navy and joined Bonneville. She was born on 10/7/63.

Lois: Let's see, what do I need to know. You talked about buying your property from Frank Evans in 1982. How did that come about? Had you been looking for a place up here?

Mid: Well, yes, and we had come on a vacation before that, when Vickie was 10, so it would have been 1969. We were staying at Bowman Lake and they asked us to leave, so we went over and visited with Mary McFarland on our vacation. We were talking about it at that time. At that time we walked away because Mary McFarland's puppy dog decided that Vickie was in between her and her bone or something and bit her. She had had the shots and so on, but of course for a little 10-year-old. Anyway, we went back home, and we didn't move until I think it had to be 1980. If Vickie was born in 1959, and we were here in 1969, and we bought the property in 1982, I'm trying to remember exactly when we came over.

Lois: Were you coming summers with your kids up here?

Mid: No. Basically, that was baseball season and softball, and I helped get that organized. Some of these days I will tell you about it. I had to call the big shots in Williamsport

to correct the rules that they were making for the girls, because they wanted every little girl on the infield to have a chest protector.

Lois: Is this softball or baseball?

Mid: For the girls they were forming softball. My youngest was 10 years old, so that was in 1973. John had been in sports. Vickie had been in sports, and we had a farm.

Lois: You had a busy life.

Mid: Yes. So no, we didn't come every summer by any means. We thought about it.

Lois: Did Barb bring your mom up here? Did your mom come?

Mid: Barb and mother would come with us when we went clam digging on the coast. That was one of the things we did in season. We went camping up by Mt. Adams. I went with groups from school and so on. The volleyball team went to Mt. St. Helen's the year before it blew, but we had all these camping things that other kids did. I kind of adopted two daughters. One was Vickie's age, but a particular one that was Cheryl's age. She had a father who couldn't drive much and had had a heart attack and a mother who didn't drive at all. She was actually the first one inside the door when I walked into the church after Walt died. I mean, just this sequencing.

Lois: You bought the property in 1982. You started the cabin in 1986. It was finished by 1991 or thereabouts?

Mid: We didn't have a road.

Lois: Lewis Mason built your driveway up here.

Mid: Yes, and I'm trying to remember actually when it was finished. We didn't use it much, if any. But that's close enough.

Lois: Ron Wilhelm was involved. Ed Neneman was involved.

Mid: Ron Wilhelm was the big source in getting permission to bring logs up and over. We had a problem with, what was her name?

Lois: Can you get over to Ed's place on the ridge from here?

Mid: No.

Lois: You have to go down?

Mid: Somebody decided to put a house in the middle of it. There had been a way.

Lois: The Knapps are there, and the Drayna-Kordas.

Mid: But they are that way. I'm trying to remember who came in. Anyway, the choice ended up being there was a road. What burned in the 1988 fire on this property was the scraps from a little lumber operation of Frank's years and years before, because there was a pile of them. I'm trying to think, but I know that the road was in there and usable by 1988, because the Forest Service used it to come up and knock down

sparklers flying in from the fire. What was his name, lived down just over the hill? I have a painting by her; he died. It's just not coming right now. He had a little pumper truck, and that was how they kept things down, because you know a fire getting really started at night up here was going to probably burn right down, because the property they owned was right down here. As you go down around the corner it's tucked back in. I haven't heard from them for a long time.

Lois: Cooper was down there, Sonnenbergs. You're coming back, so we can cover this later I guess. You said something about Karen Feather owning the Mercantile and the Saloon until 1987. She sold the Merc to Chrys Landrigan, but she kept the Saloon.

Mid: Right.

Lois: She had the Saloon until 1999. I know in 2005 Larry said that Heather Kaufman and Sean Zeigert owned the Saloon.

Mid: Would you believe, and I can't give you the exact sequencing on this thing, but part of the hang-up was the fact that Will's first wife, or whoever she was that wanted to buy the Northern Lights, to buy me out of Karen's contract, there were five different people who had never properly cleared title. It took the person that they all condemned that is now down with Flannery, he was the one who sat over here and contacted me and said, "Mid, this is a mess over here. How do you want to proceed?"

Lois: This was Bob Reiswig?

Mid: No, no. This was the guy that had the music stand.

Lois: Danny Freund.

Mid: Yes, Danny. We hired the same lawyer. This was purposeful, but just trying to get this mess cleared up—there wasn't anybody with clear title to the property.

Lois: So, when Karen sold it in 1999 it was not done properly?

Mid: Right. Some of it was bought by the Kaufmans, and some of it was this. I'm not sure if it wasn't even way before that. Karen's mother ran the Merc. I don't think her name was ever on it. The Kaufmans just absolutely screwed things up. Part of it was in Dan Kaufman's name, and of course he was down in Costa Rica by that time.

Lois: But you did have some ownership of the Saloon at one point?

Mid: I bought Karen Feather out of her ownership on that place, because Heather and her kids and Sean were struggling so hard.

Lois: They were operating it, but you actually owned it, up until the time that it was sold to the Reiswigs and the O'Haras in 2010?

Mid: I arranged it. It was all lawyer-arranged. It was just one of those processes. I walked into a lawyer's office in Whitefish, Montana and met the Reiswigs for the first time. I had been trying to dicker with John and Joyce. Heather wouldn't have anything to do with the O'Haras. She didn't want them on the property. And the nasty things she said about Joyce—she was way too fat, and there's no way she would last in business.

I mean she was just nasty. Then she started in on Flannery, and she denied her access to the toilet. We just won't get into it. There were five signatures we absolutely had to have, notarizing the clear title, so I could sign it over to the Reiswigs.

Lois: I've got to get going. May I take this with your notes on it? I will call you if I have questions.

Mid: We are leaving Friday afternoon. Is there any way you can get a copy of that?

Lois: Sure. I will come up sometime maybe early afternoon tomorrow and bring a copy for you.

Mid: You have my home address. I was really fascinated getting back into that last night, some of the things I thought had perked.

Lois: You'll be laying in bed, and it will come to you. I will put this in the front. It says master file, and the other things I printed for you you can put in here.

Mid: Thank you. What do I owe you?

Lois: At first I thought this is going to be easy. I can pull this stuff together. I've now discovered this is going to be a far larger job than I thought.

Mid: Right. I'm happy with it, but I would like for you to keep track of hours, do something. With Ashley it got down to the point she wanted to follow in the footsteps of grandma who had gone to see great-grandma, but she was real close, so that was good. I took her to Costco and that helped. She never would give me a bill.

Lois: It's just the time. I have so many things to do and this will take all winter. I have other things I need to do.

Mid: I don't want you to have to concentrate on this. You'll maybe have some time before spring. I plan on being back here in May, if I can. In the meantime you have my phone number and you have my address, I believe.

Lois: Yes. The thing is about your mom's book—we have the draft that is chapters 1 through 14, but then all those other stories. We need to decide which stories need to be in there and then separate them out. The other thing is, if someplace in your files you find where somebody had actually printed out some stuff so that we can work with that. If not, we'll have to deal with her handwritten.

Mid: Yes. At the last minute, I'm thinking I can't take all of this. I kind of messed up and I did thank Ashley, and she was very appreciative that the hours she spent in my office reading and trying to sort through what was what. I messed up some of it in trying to get it packed.

Lois: If all we have is the handwritten drafts, to have to type from those would be awful. The only way to do it would be to get software like Dragon Naturally Speaking, where you just read into it and it creates a computer file. That would be the way to do it. I have not worked with that software but I know it exists with voice recognition.

Mid: I got to thinking this was stupid, how did I manage to put this off? I put this off because of the Northern Lights, in truth, and then to get over that fiasco and to become what I felt were healed in my service and my ability to work. Then I plunged into with a pastor that was absolutely, “Mid can we get you to even sit in on this?” Other than being on a nominating committee, he shoved me right into...

Lois: You’ve got the same problem I do—there’s only one of you.

Mid: Yes. Recently, I finally got to the point that okay, all of the property that was ready to sell—you have to realize Walt’s been gone 15 years, and it is a fight with the county every time you turn around. I’ve still got to fight with one yahoo who bought and decided to subdivide. Instead of two nice beautiful properties right next to mine and adjacent on a road that we built and a water system that we built, and one septic, the county decided no, he can do this and he can have this narrow little place running up along the road. I don’t know how they are going to skirt 100 feet around that well, but that’s absolutely required, and his septic is clear on the backside against another neighbor who bought years ago. There’s a fight going on. They have to make access off of the county road, which is hugely expensive. There is one building site on this piece that remains, so I finally have to wash my hands of it. They sent me a registered letter that if you continue to harass and keep people from wanting to buy my property . . . So, I mean it’s been for two or three years, and the health problems I’ve had, and just trying to get through things.

Lois: Yes, thank you for taking time to talk.

APPENDIX 1

MY MARINE SERVICE DURING WORLD WAR I

By Austin Weikert, 87 Years Old

Seven members of three Helena baseball teams all decided to join the Marines in July, 1917. I was one of that team. Together we went into Helena where the recruiting sergeant was to come from Butte to accept enlistments, but he didn't arrive. We were told to come back the next Wednesday, but the recruiter did not arrive that day, either. I told the rest that I was going on to Missoula, and that is where I joined the Marines.

From there I was sent to Spokane, and on to Portland, Oregon. Eight boys were there for the examination with me, and the doctor really knew his stuff. He had us line up in a row and said, "Start the running boys. A little faster, a little faster." I was last, and since I was really in good shape I was accepted.

I was sent to California, and before our group arrived at Mare Island marine base, near San Francisco, some enemy had sabotaged the powder magazine of black gun powder stored in a cave on the base. It was blown up and broke the windows in the barracks nearby. Fortunately, the enemy had not blown up the large powder magazine, as this would have shaken down a lot of the buildings on the island.

Large battleships pulled into Mare Island for work and repairs. About two thousand men were stationed there. Part of our training was on the rifle range. We had a course of sections and groups training. After we were there and had shot quite a few rounds of ammunition, the sergeant in charge of training the men got orders from headquarters. We were to go over to the supply depot and draw our sea bags and sea soap, and we knew from that we were heading overseas; some five hundred of us were going.

We were lined up on the parade ground the next morning and the General in charge of the island made a speech, telling us something was coming up and that we would be taking a ship out of there the next day. An orchestra was playing patriotic songs in the send-off for the men that were leaving.

The next morning we headed for San Francisco to board a ship named *Buffalo*. It was a bow-bellied boat that was built by the Union Iron Works some forty years before.

We pulled out to sea on that boat which had taken the Elihu Root Commission to Russia a few years before. The old *Buffalo* was seaworthy. We got out into the real ocean and traveled eleven days without sight of land, or ships, or anything else. When we hit a storm, practically everybody on the boat got sea sick, including me.

I got a kick out of a couple of fellows from Montana who were with us. They got up onto the bow, which seemed to rise about thirty feet into the air, and rode it like riding a bronc.

There were cots to sleep on, and we were issued a couple of light blankets. The first night we slept on the deck. A bunch of the guys slept on the top deck, with their cots crossways. Some of the ship's sailors would stumble over these cots up there, and they decided to throw the cots overboard! So then we were left with only two blankets, one for under, and one for over us. The best place I found on the boat to ride was just forward of the forward hatch.

We had one exceptionally good poker player, whose name was Charles Witt, from Colorado. He, two other fellows, and I had been playing poker down in the hold of the ship. Charles had come out with the most money, and he had the 10s and 20s pinned to his pants pockets, and the 5s and 1s pinned to his shirt pockets. He asked me if he could sleep alongside me that night, as he wanted to be close to somebody he felt he could trust not to steal the money.

He asked how I was fixed for money. I said like everybody, I was broke. He said we would be stopping at Colon, Panama, the next day and he would buy something for me. The little rowboats came out from the city and pulled up alongside the ship when we arrived. The Marines let down notes and money to buy from the people; bananas, oranges, coconuts and all kinds of fruit.

One of the men said, "Say, we're going to get liberty and it's in the toughest town in the world. We'll be there tomorrow after we go through the Panama Canal Locks." Two half sections of the 30 foot locks would swing open, and the water would pour in. Within ten or fifteen minutes the water would raise nearly forty feet high. It could do the same thing in reverse.

Going on liberty, I had in mind to take an empty seabag to fill up with half a string or so of bananas. We all bought other things we liked to eat also. Little negro kids on the streets were naked. They had small toilets just wide enough to step into. These were right off the sidewalks, next to the buildings.

The next day we pulled out of Panama, and everybody was seasick when we left, as we had been before we arrived in the port. A fellow from Ravalli, Montana was working in the kitchen. He came out in the afternoon with milk pails filled with sour pickles for us to eat, and that helped us get well a lot faster than the Pepsodent tablets the doctor had been giving us!

We traveled up the East coast to Quantico, Virginia, pulling into Newport News. The navigator thought that we could sail up the Potomac River, but it was not possible. That was a huge bay. Lights from all the battleships were blinking and sending messages. The sailors knew what the signals meant, but not the Marines, unless they had had prior naval training. Quantico, at that time, was being built for a marine base. Trucks were hauling supplies to the barracks and mess halls, and sometimes they would get stuck; four-wheel drive "quad" trucks. They had fifteen or twenty men in the road crew, all working by hand to get the trucks out of the mud. I was there about twenty days and then went by train through Washington D.C. to Philadelphia, and then sailed on the fine liner *Hancock*, south to Galveston, Texas.

In Galveston we were together with the Army, whose soldiers were lined up in tents, two to a tent. It was Thanksgiving, 1917. The Marines had to set up a rifle range. Most of the time we were target practicing and running the guys over the rifle range to find out how well they could shoot. We went through an extensive order of drilling. We were set up to train the finest group of men on land, and to destroy the enemy. One of the drills we had was the "bayonet" drill. The Caption felt I was exceptionally good, and he kept me there, along with a few of the older men, in order to train the younger ones.

To keep from getting injured ourselves was important in the instructing. Wooden guns with tennis balls on the end were used for practice, and points counted when a vital spot was hit on the opponent's body.

Among the men were two middle weight boxers, and I was up against them as their opponent. We would get as many as a thousand men in from Parris Island, South Carolina, the Marine Corp

recruit depot. They were transferred around in the program and kept according to their ability to train, before being sent on to France. Every once in awhile we would hear back about someone who had gone overseas.

Captain Gale, an Annapolis graduate, was a real fine captain. He married during this time and brought his bride to Galveston. They set up housekeeping with the many presents they received for wedding gifts. He told me to take the trunk that had been damaged in shipping to Galveston and repair it for him. He also asked me to make him a field desk. I had been a carpenter before entering the service and did some carpenter work, besides the target training.

The Armistice was declared November 11, 1918. Our Marines 110th Company was kept at the post, and it was February 11, 1919 before we were released.

I read a story in a magazine by Mary Roberts Rinehart telling about her trip to Montana, called "Tenting Tonight in Glacier National Park." At East Glacier there was a general store. She wrote about the storekeeper's wife, Mrs. Adair, wearing a gun on her hip. I found out later when I met the woman that she had never had a gun on her hip. She was as mild a lady as they came. I made up my mind then that as soon as I got together enough money, I would like to move up to Glacier Park in Montana, as I liked the sound of that country.

I did make it to Winston, twenty miles east of Helena, Montana, and worked there about two months before going to Glacier Park. I got off the train at Belton and inquired about homesteading up the North Fork, the west side of the Park. Since there was no transportation, I started out walking. Getting tired, I stopped at Charlie Schoenberger's. He invited me in for supper, and said he would take me up to Polebridge, where there was going to be a dance that night.

I later met my wife to be, who was a teacher in the North Fork School, and we later married and eventually had five children. During the years I built log houses by hand for a living.

I have been living at the Veterans' Home since 1974.

APPENDIX 2

AUSTIN WEIKERT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Ranger Stations (2)

Walton, 1935 (W&P/CCC)

Mouth of North Fork (Flathead Station) 1930?

Club House (1)

Many Glacier – built early winter 1934. Burned in 1936 fire.

Snowshoe Cabins (9) – also listed as Trail Shelters sometimes

Lee's Creek, 1929 Rebuilt after 1929 fire.

Lincoln Creek, 1927 Rebuilt 1931

Logging Creek with Ace Powell

Quartz Lake, 1930

Boundary Creek (ts), 1931 5 mi from Waterton Lakes, Art & Ireta, Emil Peterson

Camas-Dutch Creek, 1933

Bowman, Nov 1933

Shelter Cabins (2)

Oastler, 1953?

Judge Pray, 1955?

Rock Shelter (2)

Stony Indian Pass, 1931 contract Emil Peterson, Art & Ireta, a mason. Lost in avalanche.

Boat Houses (4)

Apgar, Jan. 1935

Bowman, Nov 1933

Head of Lake McDonald (small), Feb 1935

Fish Creek, 1935

Service Station (1)

Comfort Stations (2)

Old Headquarters

Sprague Creek Camp

Fire Caches (6)

Mouth of North Fork

Boundary Creek, Fall 1929

Head of Waterton Lake – S&W

Belly River

St. Mary's, 1929. Red Eagle, sold to Don Mummert – moved and reconstructed

Polebridge – burned in 1988 Red Bench Fire

Many Glacier, spring 1931

Two Medicine

Barns (6)

Nyack, 1935, Park Service/CCC, P&W
Walton, 1935, Park Service/CCC, used same plan as Nyack
Fish Creek, 1934 or 1935
Head of Lake McDonald
Mouth of North Fork
Kennedy Creek, 1931
Essex (Walton)

Bridges (5)

Across McDonald Creek – lost in 1964 flood
Polebridge (for Park), 1954 – lost in 1964 flood – on leave from Superior Bldg. 3 months
Kintla trail foot bridge and railing (rustic), 1964
Bowman Lake rustic railing, 1964 – two men helped
Above Avalanche Creek

Wood Sheds (3)

Fish Creek, 1934 or 1935
Mouth of North Fork
Kennedy Creek, 1931

Log Culverts (2 or 3)

Private log buildings

Weikert's personal homestead cabin on Trail Creek, 1920 – first log cabin he built

Madge Cooper's at the Canadian line – 3 cabins, 1935

Two large buildings on west side of road (hotel & café)
One large cabin on east side of road

Sullivan – Helped Denny Sullivan build new cabin for Jean & May Sullivan, 1922

Kirk – Large log house at Flathead Lake, 1950-1951

Lopp – Large log house at Flathead Lake, 1944-1945

Redpath – Medium log house at Flathead Lake

Weikert – Medium log house at Flathead Lake, 1933-1934

Foreman – Lodge on North Fork, 1959-1963

Walsh – Two-story cabin on bench, helped with

McFarland – Small cabin on Big Prairie above Polebridge, before 1954, 1955 season

Lake Five – Neitzling log house; Bells (last he built, 1964?); Corbett – Cabin and house

APPENDIX 3

SCHOOLS WHERE RUTH DINWIDDIE WEIKERT TAUGHT

1927-28	St. Ignatius, Montana
1928-29	North Fork of the Flathead, Rural, Flathead County, Montana [February 25, 1929 – Married Austin D. Weikert – supported his work and had four children, Barbara (6-26-1931); Elizabeth Dean (12-8-1933); Jim (11-11-1935); Mildred “Mid” (10-26-1936)]
1942-43	Boorman Rural, Flathead County, Montana [While Austin was working in Utah]
1943-44	Fairview Rural, Flathead County, Montana [10-22-1944 – Gave birth to Mary Catherine]
1947-48	Bissel Rural, Flathead County, Montana
1948-49	Swan River Rural, Flathead County, Montana
1949-50	Lake Blaine Rural, Flathead County, Montana
1950-51	Cayuse Prairie Rural, Flathead County, Montana
1951	Rural, Flathead County, Montana (about two months)
1957-58	Collins Rural, Teton County, Montana
1958-60	Rose Lake Elementary, Kootenai County, Idaho
1960-62	Harrison Elementary, Kootenai County, Idaho
1962-63	Kootenai Junior-Senior High School, Kootenai County, Idaho
1963-64	Golden Ridge Rural, Montana