

Peter Moore and Ruth Tacheny Oral History Interview

September 13, 2017

Lois: This is an oral history interview with Ruth Tacheny and Peter Moore at Peter's home on Red Meadow Road in the North Fork. Today is the 13th of September 2017. First tell me how you guys are related, and are you descended from the same Tacheny brother or from different Tacheny brothers?

Ruth: My husband George and Peter's mother are brother and sister, and their father was George Tacheny, Sr., so I'm related by marriage. I'm a Tacheny by marriage.

Lois: Once upon a time there were four brothers who came to the North Fork: George, Eugene or Gene, Victor or Vic, and Joseph.

Ruth: Right.

Lois: Do we know what their birth order was, who was the oldest?

Ruth: I don't know that off the top of my head. Peter?

Peter: I know there's about 13 kids in that family.

Lois: So, there were other siblings besides the four of them?

Ruth: I think there were 12. Actually, I have a picture of them, but I would have to look at something else to give you the details.

Lois: I know that Eugene was not the oldest, because there was a thing in the paper saying that an older brother of Gene and Victor was a passenger on the Wednesday stage.

Ruth: Well, I think George was one of the older ones.

Peter: Yes.

Ruth: So, it would have been Gene, Joe, George, or Vic, and then Art—it could have been Art. He was one of the older ones, I think, too. Am I right about that?

Peter: Yes.

Ruth: And then Leroy was the youngest.

Peter: That's the only one I know for sure.

Ruth: I could find the order of birth out. That's not hard to do.

Lois: What was your mother's name?

Peter: Katherine.

Lois: With a C or a K?

Peter: With a K.

Lois: And she was George Jr's...

Ruth: Sister.

Peter: She still is. I mean, she's still alive.

Ruth: They were the only two kids.

Lois: Do we know anything about the parents of these 12 children?

Ruth: Boy, I don't know much.

Peter: You know, you're asking the wrong person.

Lois: Where did the family live at the time?

Ruth: Mankato is where they started out, Mankato, Minnesota, but I don't know any details. Somebody might.



The Tacheny family of Mankato, Minnesota. The four sons who came to the North Fork are in the back row of this photo.

Lois: That's okay. There was this couple, and do you know their names?

Ruth: Peter, it was Peter Tacheny and do you know his wife's name?

Peter: No. I would say Helen because everybody is named Helen.

Lois: Helen or Ella or Ellen.

Ruth: I don't know that off the top of my head. It was Peter though, wasn't it?

Peter: Yes. My great-grandfather was Peter Tacheny.

Lois: Okay, and they had 12 children, among them these four boys.

Ruth: Right.

Lois: It sounds like they came out here either during or after World War I? We were in the war until November of 1918. You said something about them having been in service. Had they been in service, those four?

Peter: That was my understanding.

Ruth: Your grandpa was. I have his discharge thing at home. It says when he went in and when he went out. This is George Sr. There are pictures, and it's like in 1918-1919, but I don't know the exact dates. But I think they had been out here before that. Hadn't they homesteaded before that?

Peter: They were here in 1918.

Lois: George filed first in August of 1921, then Gene and Victor filed on the same day in October of 1922. Joe filed in June of 1922. So, it was between August of 1921 and October of 1922 all four of them filed.

Peter: Now, when you say filed what does that mean?

Lois: They were given a homestead entry number, which means they went down and said, "I want to file on this homestead." Then that started the clock clicking, and they had to prove up if they were going to permanently own the land.

Peter: You gave me some stuff a week or so ago. What that said is they filed in May or June in 1918.

Lois: You are absolutely right.

Ruth: I was going to say, I've got pictures in 1917 and 1918 when they were out here.

Lois: Okay, I'm sorry. The later dates are when they made three-year proof. George filed in May of 1918, Gene and Victor in June of 1918 and Joe wasn't until 1920, May of 1920.

Ruth: I think he went into the service right after that to get some of his time in, his homestead time.

Lois: So, you think being veterans gave them a leg-up?

Ruth: I have a booklet at home. There were a couple of them. It's called *Serviceman's Homestead Rules and Regulations*.

Lois: Cool.

Ruth: Which I could show you. I will bring one out. I didn't bring one out, but there were three or four of them, and it said that their time in the service counted toward their homestead time. Also, if they did agricultural work they could do that for five months out of the year. They could go someplace to do that and that counted towards their homestead time.

Lois: I know up here if they worked on the road that went towards their taxes.

Ruth: Yes. There were different things they could do. This little booklet—I mean, I didn't read the whole thing; it's little print like this—but it sounds like if that's when he homesteaded, then maybe he went into the service shortly after that.

Lois: But you think they came out together, or near the same time?

Ruth: I thought the story was always that they walked up from Columbia Falls.

Peter: Just the fact that they filed within a month of each other, they all were here at the same time coming out of Kalispell.

Lois: Well, you wonder. Perhaps they came and worked down there for a while, then heard about the North Fork and then decided to look for land up here.

Ruth: Well, at least George worked in mines down by Butte, just because there's papers that indicate that. I have no idea what the other ones did, but it kind of sounded like they were a group. I think they were probably together.

Peter: They were the brothers. They probably followed the lead, and I think George was the lead.

Ruth: Yes, and I don't know how long he would have worked in that.

Lois: This sounded like a good deal, so they said, "Okay, we'll go too."

Ruth: In some of his stuff you can see that he had some union dealings.

Lois: We don't know exactly what motivated them to come up this way, except the word was out that there was land that could be homesteaded.

Peter: Well, they were in their early 20s, so they were kids. They had nothing else to do, mostly.

Lois: Did they write any letters home? Did anybody ever turn up any letters to their family?

Ruth: I haven't ever seen anything. George and I ended up with the trunk, and that's where this stuff was. Some of it was up in the attic here and there in the house, so it all ended up in the trunk, and I never really looked at it very much.

Lois: Do we know how large these homesteads were? Was it a full 160 acres that each of them filed on?

Peter: Well, this is 160.

Lois: Do we know where these homesteads were in relationship to each other?

Peter: Well, George's was here.

Ruth: I think Arne [Boveng] says they're on Joe's property.

Peter: Joe's was adjacent. In other words, George's was the half-mile square 160-acre piece that was the southwest corner of Section 1. Joe would have been the same, only he would have been Section 1 southeast corner, so those two are together. Those coordinates are on that piece of paper that you had. But Vic's was down on the North Fork Road on the other side of Red Meadow, like where the airstrip is.

Lois: I assume where the Putnam cabin is now?

Peter: Yes, that was part of it.

Lois: The cinderblock structure.

Peter: Gene was adjacent to that, because Vic took on Gene's property, too, at one point. So, they had the property that would have been all the way out to the Red Meadow Road where the airstrip comes, then over to where their cabin is, and then across the other side of the road where Cimino's was. That area was those two brothers. That area would have been 320 acres.

Lois: And you think Vic's went all the way down to Red Meadow Creek?

Peter: Yes, I think it probably went across the creek a bit, but at least to it.

Lois: Well, there are some of Helen Huck Ramon's stories about other children in the area. She described one that I think was kind of up where Richard Tuerck is today. Anyway, she knew where the other children were in relation to where they went to school and such. Did these guys marry? We know that Victor married Helen, right? Did they meet up here?

Peter: She was from Columbia Falls.

Ruth: I guess I always assumed she was from this area, because he always stayed here.

Peter: Yes, she was from Columbia Falls. He stayed, and the rest of them went back to St. Paul.

Lois: Did they have children, Vic and Helen?

Ruth: They had two daughters, June and Marilou.

Lois: Did they live up here year-round at any point?

Peter: I don't think so, no. That little cabin that they had, Larry Wilson had a picture of it.

Lois: Yes, his picture says 1923 on it.

Peter: Actually, the family just burned that cabin down within the last ten years. They knocked it down and burned it. It was still standing.

Lois: Where did it sit in relationship to the cinderblock cabin that's there now?

Peter: If you drive up the driveway to the cinderblock one, it was on the left.

Lois: Like in the same yard?

Peter: Yes. There's a little tin building that you can still see that they didn't knock down, that would have been kind of behind that cabin. The cinderblock one was probably built in the 1950s, would be my guess.

Lois: So, they had a place up here, but for the most part they lived in Columbia Falls or in the valley?

Peter: They lived in Whitefish.

Lois: Especially when the kids had to go to school.

Peter: Yes. This was just a weekend cabin for them. It was close.

Lois: I'm just thinking if he had to prove up in order to have real title to the land, he had to meet whatever those requirements were, although his veteran status probably helped.

Ruth: Yes, if he was in the service. I have no idea.

Lois: I think they took it easy on those guys.

Peter: Yes, I think they did. Because Grandpa's cabin was never built to the top, to the roof. My understanding is that they built a two-story log cabin on Vic's property, the brothers. It was an effort to put one place up that was going to work for them. Now, whether that was good enough for the government or not I don't know. Evidently it was, although Gene had a little place down on Red Meadow Creek, down below them. That place burned in the 1988 Red Bench Fire.

Lois: Was Gene married?

Peter: Not out here.

Ruth: He was married to Jenny, but I think he was married when he went back to St. Paul.

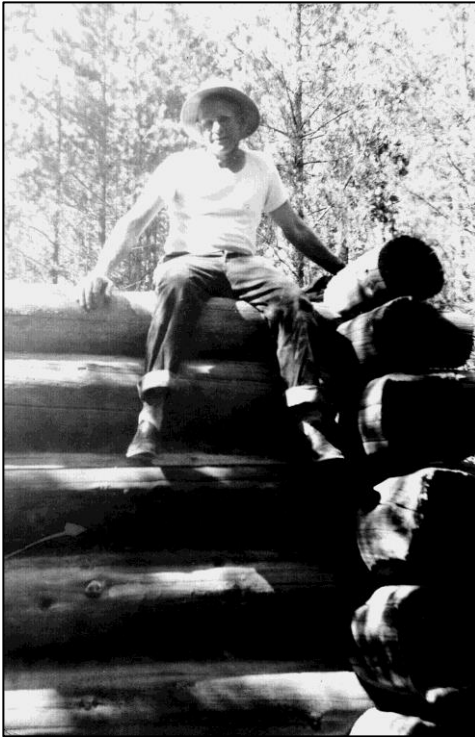
Peter: Yes, Vic stayed here. The rest of them didn't, so they wouldn't have been married here.

Lois: How long did George stay here, do you think? You say he started to build but he didn't finish a cabin?

Peter: No, the cabin didn't get finished.

Lois: On this property, yes. So, what year did you come out, and when did you build your cabin? Were there any structures at all on the property when you came?

Peter: Just the one that he started that was this high.



George Tacheny sitting atop a wall of the cabin that he started to build but never completed.

Lois: Well, I notice a log structure back behind your cabin with a shake roof, a small one.

Peter: That's my outhouse. I built that. I came in 1979, and I started building this place in 1980. I spent three summers putting it together, to where there was a roof on it and I was living here. Otherwise, I camped here.

Lois: Who helped you?

Peter: Family. I came out on my own, and everybody said, "No, you're not going to go out there." But when I was here they were curious, and so they started coming.

Ruth: They all came out.

Peter: Just about everybody, close family, peeled logs and notched corners on the walls and that kind of thing.

Lois: They had to see what little Peter was up to out here.

Ruth: They stripped logs. That was a big activity one summer.

Lois: You built it from logs here on the property?

Peter: All of the logs and the lumber in this cabin came from here. It was milled here.

Lois: You set up some sort of a temporary mill?

Peter: I had loggers milling here.

Lois: You came about the same time as John Frederick. And the Wilhelm's [Ron and D'Ann] were here, and the O'Hara's [John and Joyce] were here, and the Costellos [Jerry and Joyce] were here.

Peter: All of us came about the same time. Frank [Vitale] and Ellen [Horowitz], Greg [Ouellette], Matt [Isbell], Cheryl [Watts]. Everybody my age came right around the end of the late 1970s.

Lois: But you had land to come to, which they didn't.

Peter: Exactly. Too bad for them. [Chuckles]

Lois: That's a real leg-up.

Ruth: You've got to have the right grandparents. [Chuckles]

Lois: How did you come to acquire the land? Was your grandfather still living at the time?

Peter: No. When he died the land was deeded to George and Ruth and my mother and father. My mother and father at one point in time, a number of years ago, decided that they would take their names off of the property and give it to their children. So, that half of the deed was the Moore half of the deed, as opposed to the Tacheny side, that went to myself and my siblings.

Lois: How many siblings do you have? You mentioned a brother.

Peter: There were four of us.

Lois: What a cool thing, though, of all the things they could leave you.

Ruth: It's a good thing to get.

Peter: We're looking at 100 years next year.

Lois: I know. Yes, that's right.

Ruth: Do a little celebration.

Lois: A party, yes.

Ruth: There will be a little party, yes. We've got to put that together.

Lois: It's good that we try and peg down as much as we can and get your pictures. Then you can self-publish a little booklet or something for the family that has the story, or as much of the story as you know. What I find is that when you start asking questions then people do come forward and say, "Well yes, I've got some pictures at my house." It kind of generates interest.

Ruth: Yes, there might be more. Your mother had a couple of albums, but I don't know what was in those.

Peter: I've got a picture of grandpa up in the loft here that was taken at that time. John found that picture probably out of my mother's stuff, and he did a photograph of it.

Ruth: Yes, I think I have some of those, too, that he did. I think he gave us all one of those.

Lois: Was your granddad was still living when you built the cabin?

Peter: No, he was gone. He died in about the mid-70s?

Ruth: I think so. I'm trying to remember.

Peter: Well, your kids—Johanna was alive.

Ruth: Yes, Johanna, because we have that little movie of him and Johanna at her birthday party, I think about 1975, because I think I was either pregnant . . .

Peter: I'm guessing the mid-70s.

Ruth: That's what I think, too.

Peter: But Grandpa never talked about this property.

Lois: Really?

Peter: No, never. I never heard anything about it.

Ruth: I didn't either. I used to go over and do my laundry there when we were first married, so then I would have lunch with him and Gene. [Chuckles]

Lois: So, he went moved back to Minneapolis?

Ruth: St. Paul. But you know, I didn't know anything about this. It would have been something to talk about.

Lois: Yes, if he came out here as a young man.

Ruth: He wasn't real forthcoming about information.

Peter: He didn't talk about any of his prior life. He moved on from that. I think after he went back to St. Paul after being out here as a young man, he got married and started a family. Maybe the place was a dream of his that kind of withered on the vine, because he just didn't have the time to come back here.

Lois: Well, it was hard.

Peter: Well, the thing is he had a wife and kids.

Ruth: And a business to run.

Peter: And a business, but Vic stayed. Vic didn't go back home to Minnesota. He stayed here. He got married here. My grandfather focused on a cabin that he bought in Wisconsin with a friend of his. It was nearby, and that became his place. That became his homestead. But when he had to pay his [Montana] taxes he just sent them a check, so he was always up-to-date on his taxes.

Lois: Which aren't much here in Montana, comparatively.

Peter: They weren't at all, back then. We're talking 20 bucks a year, or something like that.

Lois: Especially with no structure. It was just forest land.

Peter: But he had enough foresight to pick this piece. You know, he had a choice of places and he picked this piece with a creek running through it, and he always paid his taxes.

Lois: Well land, like they say, they're not making any more of it. What did he do for a living?

Peter: He was a contractor of cement. He did block work, built a lot of steps and sidewalks and basements.

Ruth: And foundations. He did half of the east side of St. Paul, I think. [Chuckles]

Peter: Interestingly enough, Vic did the same thing in Whitefish. That was his business in Whitefish. He did a lot of work on the Hungry Horse dam.

Lois: Well, you know, being in a river valley there is a lot of gravel and sand. It probably was a good profession to go into.

Peter: Yes, if you knew something about it.

Lois: If you had the capital and knew something about it, yes. So Hungry Horse dam was built in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Good for him. Yes, I wondered how he got into the business. So, Vic and Helen had two girls and made their home in Whitefish, but kept the place up here. They had a cabin they could come to.

Peter: They spent all their time up here when they could. They loved it up here. They were here all the time.

Lois: Good. And eventually they built the cinderblock cabin.

Peter: Yes.

Lois: That was a good idea.

Peter: When I came in the 1970s, Helen was gone and Vic had dementia. He was in the hospital, but their kids were up here all the time.

Lois: And obviously it survived the Red Bench Fire in 1988.

Peter: Yes.

Lois: Richard Hildner says that he knew Vic very well.

Peter: It's possible.

Lois: And that he had homesteaded in 1918-1919. Richard started coming in 1958 with the Foremans [Orville and Helen]. He was out of Jacksonville, Illinois. He helped build them build what they call New Main, their cabin up there, in 1960, and he talks about working with Austin Weikert and Walt Hammer and Ollie Terrian, and how they all worked together. He was just a kid. He was like 12, and they would take him out on Trail Creek to gather stones to build the fireplace and that kind of thing. But he went to all the events and the dances. Helen and Orville were active in the North Fork Improvement Association. I notice that Vic and Helen were pretty active members of the Improvement Association from 1957 to 1965. They paid their dues every year and showed up at meetings. That's right in the window when Hildner started coming, so that's probably how he got to know them.

Peter: Well, Helen Ramon and I hung around a little bit back in the 1980s. I helped her when she was living up here. She showed me a picture of herself. She said that she remembered the Tacheny boys when they were up here.

Lois: Really?

Peter: She was probably four. The one thing she always remembered about them, they had these big work horses when they were working in the woods here. She would come over when they would be done from work. They would let her take the horses to the stream to get water. She was just a little kid, and these horses were just huge.

Ruth: Big horses, work horses. But they probably were real tired at the end of the day.

Peter: Yes, I'm sure they were.

Lois: Back in those days, any young buck that you could get ahold of to help you do things, you grabbed them. I'm sure Hildner, as soon as he finished that cabin, word was out that he was a there every summer. So people probably said, "Hey, come help me," or, "I will pay you to come do this." So, he probably got to know a lot of those homesteaders pretty well, just because they were old and he was young labor.

Peter: Yes, they were old.

Lois: They were getting old. That's what I found about doing the history of the organization, which got started in 1947. You had the homesteaders who were left, and they were dwindling, and then you had all the people that had come during the war years and immediately after—the Hazen Lawsons, the Frank Evans. Who else came in the 40s? The Foremans came in the 40s. So, you were starting to get this mixture of the old-timers who were still here and the new people who were coming in before the surge that came in the 1950s and 1960s—pretty neat stuff. The Holcombs and their daughter Esther, who married Ralph Day.

Peter: They were friends.

Lois: Esther had one daughter, Nonie, Wynona Mathison, who married Jack Mathison. She says whenever they came up the North Fork with her grandfather, Harry Holcomb, "We always had to stop and see the Tachenys. There was just no question, you were going to stop and visit coming up the hill there." They were not only good friends, but evidently Harry Holcomb and Vic worked together a good bit.

Peter: The photo you sent me, Vic would be the little guy standing behind him looking over his shoulder. Vic was short in stature.



**Friend Harry and Lena Holcomb and Vic and Helen Tacheny.
Vic is the shorter gentleman behind Harry Holcomb.**

Ruth: Yes.

Peter: He was shorter than Helen.

Ruth: Well, they were not real tall people. Grandpa was probably one of the taller ones.

Peter: He wasn't very tall, either.

Ruth: No, but I think Babe was pretty short.

Lois: So, the two Tacheny girls, Vic and Helen's girls, married locally and are still in the area?

Peter: They're gone.

Ruth: They're in the area, but they are buried.

Lois: So, the Tacheny decedents that are still in the Whitefish area are . . .

Peter: Grandchildren. They are my age.

Lois: Do they ever come up? Do they have a connection?

Peter: They've got a connection. They're not using it much. Vickie is my age, and she's the oldest of that family. The grandchildren and her son Bradley come up here. He's got a connection, and he lives in Whitefish.

Lois: Some of those are Putnams? Is that one of the names?

Peter: James Putnam. The Putnams built a cabin there...

Lois: Back behind Vic's cabin, the two-story thing.

Peter: Yes, they built that in the 1980s.

Ruth: Jamie comes up.

Peter: You never see him, because he's back in there. He doesn't come through here. I run into him once a while.

Lois: Is that still 160 acres, or 320? Or did they sell it?

Peter: Vic sold it all out from underneath the family.

Lois: Is that some of what Dick [Sapa] owns now, where the airfield is?

Peter: Right. He sold it to Murland Searight. Searights, basically—if you talk to the Tachenys—stole that property from Vic, because he schmoozed...

Lois: Well, he was a Navy guy and an officer, and he was an Olympic diver.

Peter: And he was an asshole.

Lois: He was a smooth guy. I don't know much about him, except I've seen articles about him in the paper.

Peter: Well anyway, he talked Vic into selling him his property when Vic had dementia, and the family said, "No, no, no Vic, you can't do that, you can't sell it to him." Being a

Tacheny, if everybody told him not to do it, then he was going to do it. He sold the property to Searight, and Searight ended up selling half of it to [Michael] Cimino, and then selling the other half to Sapa. So, I think the Tachenys only have about 10 or 20 acres left of that.

Lois: I was looking at it as I drove up, and you can see where it obviously burned all around there [in the 1988 fire].

Peter: It burned right down the Creek. It burned Gene's little cabin down below them. He was down right on the creek.

Lois: Had you come out as a young person, or when you came in 1979 was that the first time you had been here?

Peter: No, the first time I came was with my Uncle George and my brother. We did a backpacking trip in the Park. Then my parents came and picked us up at Vic and Helen's. We were staying at Vic and Helen's in Whitefish. We spent a week in the Park with my uncle, then he took off with his friend and my parents came and picked us up, and we went out to Seattle for the World's Fair. That was in 1962.

Lois: Oh, that long ago.

Peter: I was 13 at the time.

Lois: Yes, you were pretty young.

Peter: That's when I decided I wanted to live here.

Lois: You said, "I like this."

Peter: Yes, because we came up here with Vic and Helen while we were here, and I went running around down by the creek and fishing.

Lois: Did you come to this property at the time?

Peter: No. We just went over to their cabin.

Lois: I'm glad you knew a good thing when you saw it.

Peter: Yes, me too.

Lois: Ruth, how long have you been coming out, or when did you first come up?

Ruth: I'm trying to remember. We did a hiking trip in Glacier. I think it was in the early 1970s. We drove up here and walked through the property. We were looking for the cabin, but we never did find it, then we just went back to Polebridge. But that was it, until Peter started building the cabin. We came out that first summer with your parents and Sam and Badge.

Peter: That was 1980, I think. Everybody was here in 1980.

Ruth: Yes, that was the first time we came to camp.

Lois: When did you build your place, Ruth?

Ruth: That was in 2003.

Lois: It's on the same property?

Ruth: Yes, it's all one big piece. It's still intact on that 160 acres.

Lois: Did you have a family yourself? Were your husband and kids involved in any of that?

Ruth: A couple of our daughters and my son-in-law helped build the cabin. George was not able to help at that time. He was sick, which is kind of what prompted us to build a cabin, because it was too hard for tenting.

Lois: So, you've been coming out every year ever since?

Ruth: Well, not every year, but quite often. I guess there were a couple of years we didn't get out because he was too sick, but almost every other year. I've been out the last four or five years every summer. We like it. It's very peaceful.

Lois: It's sort of a magical place.

Ruth: My kids come out. Well, three of them come out.

Lois: You talk about the magic of the North Fork. There was a kid who came out in the late 1980s and was staying at the Hostel, I think. He went hiking in the Park, fell off a cliff, and killed himself. His truck was still here. He was from, I think, Nebraska. Anyway, John Frederick that year was president of Glacier National Park Associates, so he was in touch with the parents and they said, "Just donate the vehicle to the Association. We don't want it back." It was an old Jeep truck. So, they did that and eventually John bought it from them. It's that yellow Jeep that used to sit over at the hay barn on Square Peg. . . .

Anyway, when John sold that property, the new owner said, "Could you get all of those dead vehicles off of there?" Bill [Lois's husband] went down and hooked it up and dragged it over to Square Peg, and eventually he asked John if he could just buy it. He thought he probably could fix it up, so he got it going again and put new tires on it. It runs. John's sister came out here recently to visit him, and one night they decided to go up to Kintla Lake just for grins. John's been interested in getting one of those little teardrop trailers. They were at the lake and Bonnie noticed a teardrop trailer and went over to talk to the owners. They got to talking, and she said she was visiting her brother John. And they said, "That wouldn't be John Frederick would it?" It turned out to be the parents of that kid. They've been coming to the Park every summer since he died, in his memory.

Ruth: Wow.

Lois: That's almost 30 years ago, and they just happened to be at Kintla Lake when John and Bonnie went up there.

Ruth: Yes, that's kind of spooky.

Lois: I'm getting a little bit off the track here. Have you ever lived here year-round, or just in the summer?

Peter: Yes, I did in the mid-1980s, up until the early 1990s, off and on.

Lois: Who plowed the road then?

Peter: Me. Or not. Either it was plowed and I could get in and out of my driveway, or I parked at the end of the road and walked in and out.

Lois: You got to know Frank and Ellen pretty well, I imagine.

Peter: Well, I was here the year before they showed, so we're close neighbors.

Lois: They were here full-time for, I think, 11 years. She said they stayed up here winters.

Peter: Yes.

Lois: When did you start tending bar at the saloon?

Peter: I got a job at the saloon from Karen Feather in 1985. The first year I was there, or the first number of years I worked there, Karen was in the kitchen and me in front, that was it. I tended bar, waited and bussed tables, and she cooked and washed dishes.



Peter bartending at the Northern Lights Saloon.

Lois: I remember you well. We started coming in 1987, I think.

Peter: I did it all the way through numerous different people until 2009, or something like that. How many years is that—25?

Lois: What else did you do to earn a living?

Peter: That's all I could do. [Laughs]

Ruth: Well, you paint.

Lois: Yes, you paint. How did you get into painting?

Peter: Well, you start when you're a kid, and you just keep painting. It's just been my vocation, my life.

Lois: When you go into peoples' homes here on the North Fork, you see a Peter Moore piece here and there, but they go back quite a ways.

Peter: Well yes, they do. They go back to the first year I was here. I was sitting in camp painting, so that's 1979.

Lois: Have you kept any sort of inventory of your works?

Peter: I kept track of them in terms of what year I painted them by putting a date on them. I think 1996 is probably the last time I wrote a date on any of them, but there are paintings out there that I have no idea where they are or who has them.

Ruth: He probably can't even remember them.

Peter: No, I can't, but sometimes, somewhere or another, I see one. It's an image in a publication or whatever. "Oh, I forgot I even did that, and I forgot he or she had it."

Ruth: Do you take pictures of each one?

Peter: I do have most of them.

Ruth: I was going to say, now it would be easy to do with a digital camera.

Peter: I've got a flash drive with most of the stuff that I've done over the years. I think the only one in here that I don't have a picture of is the one on the easel, because I just finished it. I'm going to have to take a picture of that today, maybe.

Lois: I've seen a lot of the people paintings that you did, and trees and the road.

Peter: That's a lot of what I do. Up there, that's Jim Putnam, Marilou Putnam's husband. He's the last one of those families that's still alive in town.

Lois: Who is this couple?

Peter: That's Aunt Leona and cousin Kenny.

Lois: And this is your driveway going out to the road?

Peter: Yes.

Lois: Wow. That's a lot of paint.

Peter: Yes.

Lois: Tell me about defending your property during the Red Bench Fire. I know you and Cheryl and Frank were kind of a Red Meadow brigade out here.

Peter: Well, the fire started right up on the hill there. You can see where it started. It started on the Tuesday after Labor Day, September 6, 1988, and it burned 10 days.

Lois: Yes, it was this time of year. And it went really fast.

Peter: Yes. It came right down across the road here, down the Red Meadow Creek. It started about 2:00 in the afternoon. It was a summer like this, even hotter—more wind all summer. I was sitting here, and I saw a plume of smoke right up there, and I thought, "Okay, that's it. I'm done, I'm burnt out." Because it just went "Poof" like that, and the wind was blowing this way. They put evacuation notices on 90 driveways, and I was number one. Frank and Ellen would have been number two, because that's where the fire was going. But they made us get out of here, and that meant being dragged down to the end of the road and signing a form saying that you'd been evacuated, and then I came back.

Lois: You turned around and came back. So, you stayed here throughout the fire?

Peter: Yes, and beyond.

Lois: How close did it come?

Peter: It came about on the top of the hill here. You go across Red Meadow Road, and just a couple of hundred feet past the road is where it drops down to the creek, and that was all burnt. Up on the top of the hill it burnt almost—well, it's even closer, so literally to our property corner up here, it was just across the road. The first 24 hours of the fire no one was up here. We didn't have any help as the fire was burning across into Polebridge, and there were no firefighting people coming up. Everybody who lived up here to the north was here. We kept a line here and made sure that the fire was not getting any further this way.

Lois: So, you kept it from coming north across the road.

Peter: Yes.

Lois: There's a picture I saw of you, and you are all black-faced like you've really been out there fighting it.

Peter: But the fight was afterwards, because the fire went through here right away. I watched it burn at night, the ridge top above the other side of the creek burning down toward the Tachenys and Ramons. You could watch it at night. You could watch the line of flame going like this.

Lois: Talk about smoke. [Chuckles]

Peter: Yes, it was smokier than now.

Lois: So, the creek actually angles and kind of comes north, because out on the North Fork Road it's quite a distance from Red Meadow Road down to the creek. But you're saying it's just a couple of hundred feet by the time you get up here.

Peter: It goes back and forth, and then it goes underneath the road twice on the way up.

Lois: Does your property extend beyond the road?

Peter: No. It's all on the road, from the road north.

Lois: Who have been your best friends here on the North Fork?

Peter: Well, Frank and Ellen, when they were here, Greg Ouellette and Matt Isbell.

Lois: They are on Moose Creek, technically, but your properties have to be fairly close to each other, even though you are down different drainages.

Peter: Our north property line is the south line of that subdivision that they are on. Teckla's cabin is within 100 feet of our property, and Matt's is over on this side, so they are close neighbors.

Lois: Do you have paths back and forth? Do you walk between properties?

Peter: Yes.

Lois: But you were saying that Teckla, although she's a Putnam, is not a family relation?

Peter: She's not related, no.

Lois: Costellos, O'Haras?

Peter: Well, because I worked at the saloon I knew all of those people, since I was serving them all the time. Back in the early days everybody was the same age and doing the same things. We always got together on some level—the Costellos and Bill Brown and O'Haras.

Lois: And once the Hostel was up and running, I see things in the paper, especially when John was doing the *Hungry Horse* News column from 1983 to 1985, movie nights at the Hostel, and Dr. Dave [Loughran] was around. There seems to have been a lot more community—a smaller and closer community, I guess I would say.

Peter: Living up here, I didn't normally go, I wasn't down at Polebridge all that much.

Lois: You were working.

Peter: Yes, I was working, and the parties that were going on down there were mostly the people down there, the Wilhelms, the O’Haras, and the Uptons.

Lois: The folks in “the meadow.”

Peter: The ghetto people, yes. Our parties tended to be—especially in the winter when you could ski back and forth—Frank and Ellen and these guys back in here, we got together. Either we would get together here or at Frank and Ellen’s. It’s the same now. You’ve got the north Polebridge people—wherever the line is for that—those people do their thing up there.

Lois: Ed Neneman, you’ve known Ed a long time.

Peter: I’ve known Ed for a while. His dad used to come here every summer.

Lois: Babe.

Peter: Yes, Babe, I used to see him a lot.

Lois: Are you a fisherman?

Peter: Not really. I used to fish, take a little flyrod over across the creek here and fish Red Meadow, and jump in. That would be a thing you would do after work. When we were building the cabin we would go over there and jumped in. The whole family would be down there doing their bath at the bathing hole.

Ruth: The kids would go jump in there.

Lois: I can see from your smile these are fond memories.

Ruth: Yes, it was fun.

Peter: A lot of fun.

Ruth: I probably wasn’t jumping in there, but I was probably splashing a little bit.

Lois: Your first tongue-in-cheek presidential bid was against George Bush in 1988?

Peter: 1988, yes.

Lois: There was Bush in 1988, Clinton in 1992 and 1996. Gore and Bush (Dubya) in 2000.

Peter: I ran in 2008 and in 2012.

Lois: How about 2004?

Peter: Yes, I was always running.

Lois: I have a picture of you at a 4th of July parade, where you had taken the same shirt from the last campaign and just crossed it out and written the new date beneath it.

Peter: Yes. Moore for President. That was 2008, and then in 2012 I thought I'll do it just to see. Yes. I have a button.

Lois: I still say if you had run in 2016 we could have made some ground. I think you could have gotten some serious votes.

Peter: I could have got Polebridge.

Lois: I would have voted for you. I said, "Why isn't Peter running this year? I would vote for him."

Ruth: The one year. Yes.

Peter: I didn't see anything funny about this year.

Lois: Yes, absolutely. Pitiful, pitiful.

Ruth: It still isn't that funny.

Peter: How well do you know Teddy Ramon? You knew his mom, and her art, their art.

Peter: Like I say, I hung around with Helen more because I had to than anything. [Laughs] At that time Ted was living in Bozeman, and she was up here a lot. She wasn't up here in the winter much, but she was up here all the time in the summer. She would have a hole in the roof, or she needed firewood, or this or that. She would call on me to do that, and she was going to pay me, which never happened. I would go over there and do stuff with her, but Helen was the kind of person—I don't know how well you knew her—but the first thing that would come out of my mouth was, "I can't stay very long."

Ruth: [Laughs] Did that help?

Peter: Well, not really.

Lois: So, there was sort of this dance that went on?

Peter: Well, she was really good at—you would sit down at the table and start talking to her. She was real good at starting to tell you something, then it would go on all these tangents all over the place. It wasn't about this anymore; it was something else.

Lois: No straight line.

Peter: No, not even close. That might go as a monologue for half an hour, nonstop. Then finally, all of a sudden out of the clear blue, she would answer that question right there.

Lois: She obviously had a real attachment to that property, being raised there.

[Friends come into the cabin]

Peter: I'm going to have to say goodbye to you guys. I've got business.

Lois: Gotcha. Do you remember either of you having any dramatic wildlife encounters during your years up here?

Ruth: No. I mean, you see bear and deer and moose, and I saw a mountain lion once.

Lois: No breaking into cabins?

Ruth: Not as far as I know. No, I've never had an animal break in. I don't recall Peter mentioning it either.

Lois: This is really a pretty remarkable cabin.

Ruth: Yes, and all the paintings.

Lois: He did a lot of work on this place.

Ruth: It's a nice cabin. It's cozy.

Lois: It works for him just fine. So, you have a box of photographs there. Why don't we look at your photographs?

Ruth: That's a family photo.

Lois: This is the family, of which they were the brothers. Oh my land, look at them. Do you mind if I scan a couple while we're looking?

Ruth: That's fine.

Lois: This is back in St. Paul. They all do look related, that's for sure. So, the four boys, which ones do you think they are?

Ruth: Yes, the Tachenys have a look. I've got a thing on the back. That's Gene, that's Joe, that's George, and that's Vic. I don't know if George or Joe are the oldest, but I would think it would have to be one of those two. The boys in the back are the ones who came out here.

Lois: That was not that long after the turn of the century, so it was a different world altogether. This must have been taken not too long before they came, because they look to be high school age anyway.

Ruth: Yes, I would guess at least.

Lois: Who are these three boys?

Ruth: I think that's one of them in the middle, but I don't know about the other ones.

Lois: If I have them, then I can pass them around and somebody will say, "Oh yes, that's Pa Holcomb."

[Going through photos]

Ruth: This just says it is a homestead in the North Fork. Somebody might recognize where that is.

Lois: The thing is, the people who are old enough to recognize it are leaving the scene. This says "a homestead near our claim."

Ruth: Somebody might recognize that.

Lois: Gosh, they've really cleared the trees out there.

Ruth: This actually is George Sr. They came back here in the 1950s or 1960s. They were visiting the Park.

Lois: It kind of looks like the Prince of Wales Lodge. Especially if you have any of Vic. What's this group picture?

Ruth: That's in Salt Lake City.

Lois: Are they all family, do you think?

Ruth: I have no idea who that group is. I think this is up here, but I don't know.

Lois: Wow. That is a lot of logs. Somebody should know this cabin. It looks sort of like Frank Evans' place.

Ruth: Especially some of the older people might recognize some of this, yes.

Lois: I can show it to Lee Downes. He'll know it right off.

Ruth: These are all like postcards.

Lois: This is Parker Hill Road. Oh my gosh.

Ruth: I think this is George and Vic when they came back. Do you think that's Vic?

Lois: It sure looks like him.

Ruth: I'm not sure the date when they came up here.

Lois: It looks like it's just right down along the river doesn't it?

Ruth: Yes. I'm sure that's where it was.

[Scanning photos; conversation in the background]

Ruth: That's down in the Park. That's on the North Fork.

Lois: Yes, it says this is Vic fishing. Oh good, a picture of Vic. I really wanted to put one in that slide show I did.



Vic Tacheny fishing in the North Fork of the Flathead River, 1918.

Ruth: Here's George's cabin when he came back to visit in the 1950s or 1960s. I don't know about the 1980s.

Lois: Do you think maybe this is Vic's cabin, or is this George's that he started?

Ruth: Here is George. I think this might be in the mid-1950s when he came back.

Lois: Okay, George sitting on top of the log structure.

Ruth: Yes, and George Jr. That's George and his wife Margaret, and that's George Jr. I think that's probably in the early 1950s when they came back here. He hadn't been back since then, as far as anybody knows.

Lois: Do you think his son, who was your husband, would have been interested just because?

Ruth: As they say, George Sr. wasn't forthcoming about a lot of things.

Lois: The one that says "among the ferns" is actually a postcard.

Ruth: Yes, a lot of those are postcards.

Lois: For purposes of the tape, there is a Texaco station. When I blow it up I may be able to see what year the license plate is.

Ruth: That may be down at Belton.

Lois: This looks like Hidden Lake. This is another scene on the North Fork 1919. I wonder if they sold these at the store. Is that where they came from, I wonder? Could be.

Ruth: I don't have a clue.

Lois: This is another scene on the North Fork. How did Peter do in his open house? Did he sell anything?

Ruth: Yes, I think the open house was good. I think he had some success.

Lois: I didn't ask him about the booya parties. We will have to do that.

Ruth: These, I think, are from the 1905s. I think my husband took those pictures.

Lois: This looks like it's over on the east side.

Ruth: This is Uncle Vic's gravel pit. That's what it says on the back of it.

Lois: Where is it, do you think?

Ruth: I have no idea. Someplace around here.

Lois: It doesn't look like Vance Hill. Oh, I see, you're saying in Whitefish.

Ruth: Yes, that's what it says on the back, Whitefish.

Lois: That makes more sense.

Ruth: Yes, and I think that was from that same trip when they were out here.

Lois: It says somebody's cabin. Charles Toepel. Okay, I see his name. When they would go down and testify for each other as they proved up, you'll see that Toepel is on almost all of them, so he must have been right around here. They would witness for each other. I had not really known his name until I started seeing it on theirs.

Ruth: Is he somebody that homesteaded up here?

Lois: Yes, he also homesteaded. I thought maybe he was on the other side of the river, but this says "May 1918, Charles Toepel's cabin." He must have been up in this area, not on the other side of the river. Thank you, that's beautiful.

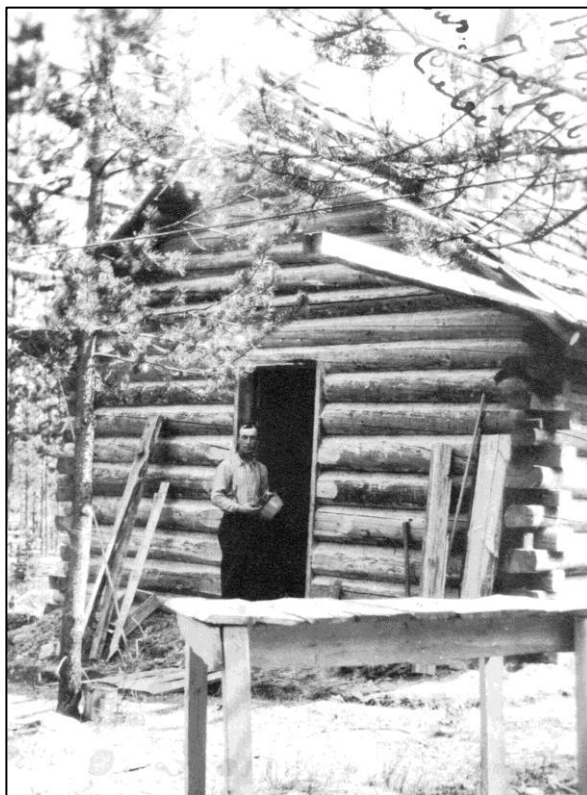
Ruth: I have some other ones that are in a big album. I can scan them and let you know what it says on them, and then you can decide. Does that make sense?

Lois: It's like working a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. You have these little pieces, and you don't know where they fit until you interview six people, and then oh, that's what that is.

Ruth: I will look up what his service dates were, when he got married. You know, that kind of helps put the puzzle together about when they came out here.

Lois: Context, yes.

Ruth: I have that stuff at home, but I don't have it memorized.



Charles Toepel and his cabin, 1918.

Lois: Well, George must have been the ringleader.

Ruth: He's the oldest.

Lois: To get his brothers to come. Not that they weren't up for an adventure; I'm sure they were.

Ruth: As I say, they were quite poor, as were so many people.

Lois: Yes, in those days especially, that's right.

Ruth: Whether they had read about it and planned this and then they would do this and go into the service, I don't know.

Lois: Once they got to the valley the newspaper, in the weekly newspaper, *The Columbian*, there was a lot of boosterism in those days. "Oh, the valley is growing, and we're going to have coal, we're going to have oil and the richest agriculture."

Ruth: Yes. Everything was come up here and farm, all those wonderful farms.

Lois: Right. Then they would come up here and realize what it meant to clear 20 acres, and they would try and spend a winter when you had to have all your supplies for the winter on hand, because you weren't getting out.

Ruth: Yes.

Lois: Especially if they had a wife with them, she would be like, “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Ruth: Yes, chopping wood and trying to keep yourself warm.



Clearing land on a homestead in the North Fork.

Lois: You may or may not have had chickens. You may or may not have had eggs or milk or things like that. They did rely on each other. They tried to help each other, but still.

Ruth: You didn’t have food like you have nowadays, because you can bring food up.

Lois: And you have a freezer.

Ruth: Yes. You can survive just because of the way food is packaged and processed, but back then, if you wanted fresh milk you had to have a cow..

Lois: Yes, and some of the gals who came early on, like Mata Brill who came up with her husband. He homesteaded in 1912. I don’t know how early she came, but my gosh. And I think they didn’t sell until 1947, and they still kept some of the property.

Ruth: A tough life.

Lois: What a woman!

Ruth: Especially when you start having kids.

[Peter comes back in]

Lois: Peter, tell me about your booya parties. How and when did they get started? Spell booya for me.

Peter: B-o-o-y-a.

Lois: Oh, that’s too easy. Is that a foreign word or a made-up word?

Peter: I think it's made-up.

Ruth: No nationality seems to have claimed it.

Peter: I don't have any more history of that than I do of my grandfather. It was his party to begin with, that I know of. He was having them at his cabin in Wisconsin, probably back into the 1950s for his friends and family, 1960s maybe. It's a cauldron of food; it's not a stew, and it's not a soup. It's kind of in between, and it has a whole bunch of different stuff in it. It was a traditional fundraiser in the Twin Cities for the Boy Scouts and the fire department, churches. They do them in the fall. It's an autumn thing. They make a whole bunch of this stuff, and people come and eat it and pay for it.

Lois: Where did you get your cauldron?

Peter: From back there, from a school. Actually, my Uncle George got it from a church.

Ruth: The church was getting rid of them, so George took three of them.

Lois: What did you use as your base? What did you put in it?

Peter: I put game. I put venison or elk or whatever, grouse. The recipe I had was a half recipe that my grandmother had from wherever she got it, and Ruth has got that recipe. It called for the equivalent of ten chickens. Half a pack of onions.

Ruth: Ten pounds of oxtail.

Peter: There would be beef. Here, like I say, venison and grouse and oxtail, of course. Peas, carrots, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, celery, and lots of tomato sauce, Worcestershire, just a whole bunch of stuff.

Lois: What kind of spices?

Peter: There wasn't a whole lot of spices. I put some Tabasco in it and what do you call that red stuff?

Ruth: Ketchup?

Peter: Well yes, actually there was ketchup in there.

Ruth: There was ketchup in there, a secret ingredient.

Peter: Paprika.

Ruth: Paprika, that's right.

Lois: Then the locals brought things to add to it?

Peter: Well yes, I would have people come in with a grouse and throw it in there.

Lois: I can see Dr. Dave bringing a rabbit. He always had rabbit.

Peter: I never put any rabbit in it. But I would have a party.

Lois: It was usually in October?

Peter: It was the end of September or early October.

Lois: Your birthday is the middle of October, or am I thinking Ray Brown?

Ruth: You must be thinking of Ray Brown.

Peter: Friday all the meat would go in a big pot and cook on the fire, and you would cook that all day. Then I would have a party in the afternoon or evening. Cheryl and Michel would come, and some other people up here. We would pick through all the chicken, pick all the bones out. I would take that and put it in with the stock. I would put that in my truck overnight, so you could scoop the fat off the top the next day. Then it would go in a pot and people would come and party.

Lois: So how much stock, or how much water, would you put in?

Peter: Well, whatever was there. I don't know. I ended up having probably, I don't know what those kettles hold.

Ruth: 20 or 30 gallons?

Peter: I don't think they're that big.

Ruth: I think they're 20, at least.

Peter: I think they are 20, so I would have around 12 or 14 gallons. It would be more than half of that.

Lois: You served bread or something with it?

Peter: Yes, you served bread. People would bring a bunch of stuff.

Ruth: Yes, they would bring bread and cookies or whatever.

Lois: People would take some home with them in jars?

Peter: Yes. If they were smart enough to bring a jar there would be a lot. There would always be too much.

Lois: Yes, you would be eating it all winter.

Peter: But Grandpa did them when I was a kid. I remember them when I was a kid, and then before I came out here in the 1970s I started doing them in Wisconsin, like he did at the cabin. I did a few of them there before I came out here, and then once I got established here and came up with a pot and brought it out, then I started doing them

here. That was probably mid-1980s. I did them into the early 1990s. Then I found that the people who were coming weren't people I even wanted to be here, you know. The people that were coming to the parties to begin with kind of fell off the stage.

Lois: But if you don't invite everybody, then . . .

Peter: It was word of mouth mostly. I would tell people about it. But like I say, people were coming that I didn't even want them to be here, so why have a party for them? So, I quit doing it.

Ruth: Yes. Times change. People change.

Lois: They do. You know, I guess there's an end to everything. I found that the 1980s were really an incredible time. The job I had, and the neighborhood we lived in, which was an old neighborhood that dated from the turn of the century, with a lot of old homes. People were really into preservation and doing stuff. It was just a neat decade. There was a lot going on.

All right, well, thank you guys. I really appreciate your time.