

Wynona “Nonie” Doreen Mathison Oral History Interview

June 30, 2017

Lois: This is Lois Walker, and I’m here with Bonny Ogle. We’re interviewing for the first time Wynona “Nonie” Mathison at her home at 519 E. Evergreen Drive in Kalispell. This is part of the North Fork History Project, sponsored by the North Fork Landowners Association.

Bonny: We also have here Nonie’s son, John Mathison, and his son Kenyon Mathison. Kenyon, do you know my daughter Rachel? She’s friends with your sister Shannon.

Kenyon: What’s her last name?

Bonny: Rachel Jeffords, but was Rachel Ogle. She’s been around for a long time. She used to take Shannon to our place camping.

Kenyon: The name sounds familiar. Shannon is a little bit younger than I am.

Bonny: Were you one of those kids who spent time as a little kid with Ruth Sondreson?

Kenyon: Yes.

Bonny: I thought maybe you were one of those kids.

Kenyon: My cousin, Nathan, and I spent a lot of time with her. As a matter of fact, when she came up when my grandmother, Esther [Day], was getting close to passing, we were talking about playing pinochle up on the North Fork. She made a hand-made card case and sent it to me with pinochle cards in the case.

Lois: I’ve heard reference to “Pinochleville.” I don’t know where that was. I think it was down near Ladenburg’s place. Roy Cooper lived down there for a while, and they would get together and play. It just sort of picked up that name.

John: A lot of people played pinochle up there. They even played at the community hall. They had a pinochle night one time.

Lois: We still have a game night about once a month in the summer. People can bring whatever games they want to play.

John: I was partnered up with Cy. We thought we were going to show those guys. We ended up losing terribly.

Bonny: Who’s Cy?

John: Cy Bras, he’s my bother-in-law. He’s married to my sister. They have a gold mine up in Alaska. He was raised in Martin City. He and his parents were good friends with Sondresons.

Lois: You worked for the Sondresons, didn’t you?

John: Yes, Cy and I both worked for them.

Lois: And you dad did, too, right? Johnny Mathison worked for them? Was he strictly a horse logger?

Nonie: He wasn't a horse logger. Johnny was the one who was a horse logger.

John: I had a partner who knew the horses. I was more the mechanical end of it.

Bonny: Who was your partner?

John: Ed Ernst. When I was a teenager, Loyd was a major employer up there. When Dad worked for him he had a sawmill, but then in the early 1960s he made a deal with the Canadian government. They gave him the timber free, and he built a big sawmill just across the line in Canada. The only stipulation was that he had to hire all Canadians. He could only have two Americans working. Ed Hanson was one. He hauled the lumber down to Superior Builders. They would rough cut it up there and haul it down and sell it to Superior. He had about 60 men working for him.

Lois: I had no idea his operation was that big.

John: Yes. That's why he built the runway up there. He had a Cessna 180. That way if something broke down, if he needed to get a part immediately, he would jump in the plane and fly to Spokane or Great Falls or wherever he needed to get it. But when he got diagnosed with Lupus, they told him he had six months, but he lived 10 or 15 years past that time. But he had to sell the mill after that. But he was the biggest employer up there back then.

Lois: Well, thank goodness. If you didn't want to work for the Forest Service or the Park Service, it was hard to make a living and support a family up there.

Johnny: I was just a teenager back then. They didn't have kids, so in the summertime the people like us and the Brasses, they would invite their kids to come up and stay. We would work around their place.

Nonie: They always had a bunch of kids.

Johnny: A lot of their relative's kids would come up. They had a bunkhouse out there. We had fun. We put up hay.

Lois: In what we call Sondreson Meadow?

John: Yes. We hayed both meadows at our place, and up at the border, at the airfield there, all those places. They and Sweets had cattle there, that they just had in the summer. And I had a couple of milk cows, so we'd fill my barn with hay.

Lois: Nonie, tell us the basics, when and where you were born.

Nonie: I was born in Columbia Falls. The house isn't there anymore.

Lois: Your mom was married to Lynn Chapman at the time, right?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: How did she meet him?

Nonie: In school, when she came down for high school.

Bonny: What year were you born?

Nonie: I was born in 1928.

Lois: Kenyon has made reference to the cabin that is behind the Community Hall, on land that belongs to the Kummerfeldts. He said Lynn Chapman built that cabin?

Nonie: No.

Lois: Okay. I was wondering if the Chapman family had anything to do with the North Fork.

Nonie: They didn't have anything to do with the North Fork. They lived in Columbia Falls. My dad died when I was three months old.

Lois: So, Lena and Harry, Larry Wilson has a copy of their wedding photograph. They were married in 1905 or 1907 in Wisconsin?

Nonie: In 1905.

Lois: Then they moved out here, and they had the homesteading cabin on their property. Harry didn't build the frame house for Lena until the 1920s, I think.

Nonie: Right.

Lois: They had a son [Fred], who was killed as a teenager, and your mom, Esther. Do you know what year your mother was born?

Nonie: 1908.

Lois: Was she born on the North Fork?

Nonie: No. She was born in Columbia Falls. They would go up for just a little while, and then come down. They had to prove up on the place.

Bonny: Your mom told me that Harry spent a lot of time up there. He couldn't take you up there until he had some kind of a structure built, he didn't feel safe doing it. He spent a lot of time with someone else who had a homestead near, and they were helping each other. I can't remember the name. She told me that they living just off the viaduct, on the edge of Columbia Falls. There was an old barn there. There's still a barn there, and I was wondering if that might be the same one. I'm not sure.

Nonie: I don't know.

Bonny: That's where her brother went out during a blizzard. A board came down in the barn and hit him, and he died out there. I can't remember how old he was.

Johnny: I think he was 18 or 19.

Lois: He was in high school. I found a newspaper article about him. He was on one of the sports teams at the high school. He was a football or baseball player. There was a nice article in *The Columbian* when he was killed. It had a real impact on the other kids.

John: Grandma told me that all he had was a little dent on his forehead.

Lois: Was she older or younger than him?

Nonie: She was only two years younger.

Bonny: She said they were very close.

Johnny: They adopted Uncle Bud, then. He was more Mom's age. He was Grandpa's sister's son.

Lois: What was his given name.

Nonie: Leonard Mark Holcomb.

Lois: After your dad died, how many years was it before Esther married Ralph Day?

Nonie: Three, maybe. I think I was three, because I can remember when they got married. I went with them, and I was sitting in this place where they were getting married. I was sitting right behind the stove, and it was so hot. That's what I remember.

Lois: If you have a memory of it, then you were three at least.

Bonny: That sounds about right. Esther told me she met Ralph because she was having her hair done in Columbia Falls. I'm not sure of the building, but I think it's the main big one there that had a hotel upstairs. Ralph was renting a room upstairs. You started screaming and crying and carrying on. He came running down to see what was happening to some little kid down there. Your mom was sitting there getting her hair permed. He held you and walked around, and you guys hit it off so well. She said that's how she met Ralph. Is that what she's told you?

Nonie: Yes, that's right.

Bonny: So, he raised you like his own, from what she said.

Nonie: Yes.

Bonny: I kind of remember Ralph. He was a little bit older than she was, though, wasn't he?

Nonie: Yes, he was born in 1901.

Lois: Did they live in Columbia Falls from the time they got married?

Nonie: No, they were married in Great Falls. They lived different places, wherever he found work. But they were over in that area always.

Lois: But they had a cabin on the North Fork, right?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: Is that where they would come occasionally, or did they live on the North Fork full-time at some point?

Nonie: They lived on the North Fork most of the time.

John: They delivered the mail for years and years.

Lois: Do we know what year he took that contract to deliver the mail?

Nonie: I don't.

John: I don't either.

Lois: I think I have a list of the mail carriers. I can look it up.

Bonny: Do you know how many days a week he delivered the mail?

John: In the summer it was twice a week, but the winter there were times when they delivered it with a dozer with a sled behind it.

Lois: We wondered if it was like the gal who has the contract today. She comes up the North Fork two days a week, but she delivers Blankenship and that area every day. I don't know what his contract was at the time.

Nonie: No, it wasn't like that. It would have taken him a week to get it delivered in the winter time.

Lois: So, did Harry and Lena give your parents a piece of land up there, or was their cabin just on the Holcomb property?

Nonie: No, he bought his own.

John: Yes, it was separate.

Lois: And you're saying that's where the schoolhouse was built [Ford Schoolhouse]?

Nonie: The way I remember it, he owned from Esther Creek to Tepee Creek. He owned that property in there.

John: Seventy-some acres.

Kenyon: Seventy-six acres [handing Lois a copy of the homestead paperwork].

Lois: Excellent!

Nonie: He donated the piece of land for the schoolhouse. That's the way I understand it.

Lois: Well, I got to thinking, who would he have donated it to? Or did he just give permission for them to build the school there, and it was still his land? Especially after the school closed. Did he still have that land, or had he sold it to the school district?

Kenyon: Well, somebody sold it to the Funks [Bob and Mickey].

Lois: And before the Funks, George and Ruby Rockwell had the place.

Nonie: Yes, I think they did. The Rockwells had it first.

Lois: With the description we can go to the county plat room and trace whether it belonged to the school district at one time, or whether it was just his.

Nonie: I just don't know.

Lois: You were an only child?

Nonie: Yes.

Bonny: Is my memory correct that you had eight children?

Nonie: I had six children, but one died.

John: My older brother only lived a couple hours.

Lois: Oh dear, that's a heart breaker.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: But Harry and Lena lived up there pretty much full-time once he got things built until it was time for Fred to go to high school, and that's when they bought the place in town?

Nonie: Yes, but they rented in town. They always lived in the North Fork until the 1960s.

John: That's when they bought the place over on Riverside Drive. When I was in high school I would come up and drive them, because his eyesight wasn't so good. They had a garden in both places. I would take them up the North Fork, and after we'd pull in there would be car after car coming in to visit with them, because they'd see us coming up. Everyone knew them.

Bonny: Do you guys still own the property down on Riverside Drive?

John: No, after Esther passed away we sold that and got this piece close to us, so that Mom could be close.

Lois: At some point, we'd love for you to come up and show us where the buildings are in relation to each other and tell us what the buildings were for. We're trying to document all of the homestead-era structures that are still standing. Who built them, when they were built, what they were used for, and so on. I know there's still a number of structures up there, back behind the house.

Kenyon: I don't know how much longer that original homestead cabin is going to stand. It's coming down slowly.

Lois: Well, we should get pictures of it. Larry Wilson has some pictures of it.

Bonny: And I have some, if I can find them. Esther and Ruth [Sondreson?] and I went around and did some of this. I need to find them. In case I can't, then that's what we'd like to do. I

remember that Esther told me when Harry built the first cabin, the first year that he felt she was old enough to go up there, when they got there the cabin had “sprouted.” It looked like a wooly bear, because in the fall they had chinked it with sod, and put it on the roof, too. When they got there in the spring, everything was covered with grass. It just looked like a wooly green bear. I was trying to remember which one that was, whether it was the building that we could see out there that was kind of by itself, out by the road.

John: It’s the one furthest to the north.

Lois: So, we’re thinking that your mom and Ralph got married about 1931. How did Ralph earn his living? What did he do, before he took up the mail contract?

Nonie: Well, anything he could.

John: He rode in the rodeos, didn’t he?

Nonie: He was a rodeo rider before they got married, but then after they got married he worked for the Forest Service. Then when they were doing all that oil exploring up across the line, he worked up there. He and Grandpa both worked up there.

Lois: Did Harry and Lena approve of the marriage? Did they like Ralph okay?

Nonie: Well, there was a little friction [Chuckles].

John: And the irrigating of the water and stuff.

Bonny: Oh, dear.

John: Grandpa Holcomb had the water rights. They had little battles over that. Grandpa like to flood for irrigating, so he would block off Esther Creek to flood the land. Then Ralph and Esther wouldn’t have power, because they had a wheel over there to generate power. So, they had little arguments over that stuff.

Lois: I always got the impression that Ralph was pretty laid back, though. Was that true?

John: I can’t remember him except being in the wheel chair. After he had the stroke, he lived for years in the wheel chair.

Nonie: He had a bad back, so his health wasn’t really great. Because he had ridden bucking horses.

Lois: That would do it to you.

Bonny: Was it mostly in Montana that he rodeoed?

Nonie: It was in Iowa, I think. I’ve got all that information in there.

Lois: When he and your mom had their place up there, did they have animals? What was daily life like for your mom, in terms of the things she had to do? Did she have a garden? Did she can?

Nonie: Yes. The first place that he built up there they called the Tarpaper Shack. It was just a little shack. It was on the other side of where Benson's original place was. It was just before you got to Wurtz's. Over there on the side, there was a slough down below. That's where he built that tarpaper shack. I don't know why.

Kenyon: Who was it that built that?

Nonie: Ralph. Then when he got the property down there where Hart's is, he moved that tarpaper shack down there.

John: Did he build the old cabin that's gone now?

Nonie: Yes, he built that one.

Lois: Isn't one of those cabins that's still on Ray Hart's property their cabin? Ray Hart bought it and moved it over onto his place?

Kenyon: I thought he took it down. But that foundation where the fence and the garden is now, isn't that it?

Lois: I thought it was. He altered the top of it, he put the roof way up?

Kenyon: So, he reused it? I thought it was gone.

Nonie: I think it was the barn that my step-dad built that he altered.

Lois: But it came from Ralph's property? He had a cabin and a barn?

Nonie: Yes, he built the cabin and then the barn.

Lois: If it was tar papered, did he eventually put siding on it?

Nonie: No, they just tore it down when they built the other cabin.

Bonny: Interesting.

Lois: Well, I can see Harry having something to say about that, with his daughter. You know how dads can be. [Laughter] Who was your mother good friends with up there?

Nonie: Gosh, I don't know. We were all just sort of friends. I think her best friends was the wife of the Canadian customs officer, Frances Sinclair.

John: When I was driving Grandpa back and forth as a teenager, we always had to stop and see the Tachenys. He was good friends with Vic and Helen.

Lois: You're right. I've seen some pictures of the two couples together.

John: She was something else. She was one bossy lady. You couldn't forget her. She'd yell at old Vic, and he'd just turn his hearing aid down.

Lois: What was his brother's name? There were two Tacheny brothers up there.

Nonie: I don't know.

Lois: George, perhaps. Didn't Vic and Harry work together for a while?

Nonie: They could have. I don't know.

John: Yes, Vic and Helen were more Grandma and Grandpa's age.

Bonny: Was their place at the top of Red Meadow hill?

John: Yes, just past the Red Meadow bridge. It's still there. It's been passed to the family.

Lois: When we were trying to figure out when the Ford Schoolhouse might have been built, if Esther and Ralph didn't get married until 1931, when would he have gotten that land? What's the date on this title? [Looking] 1936, it says!

John: That's when the patent came through. I know it takes several years.

Lois: But Nonie, if you started to school in 1934, when you were five or six, that tells us the school was built sometime between 1931 and 1934. But there's mention of a school in *The Columbian* newspaper—where there was always two columns, Upper North Fork and Lower North Fork—it talks about there being a school in the 1920s for the kids up on Trail Creek. There were a bunch of kids, but we don't know where that school would have been.

Nonie: There was a school right across from Wurtz's house.

Lois: Kind of going down toward the airfield?

Nonie: Yes, I think it was right across the road.

Lois: Because Ella Wurtz's dad had a cabin down there. What was his name—Hanes? He was killed dynamiting stumps, or something.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: After the Wurtz's two babies died, they went to Washington State for a while. When they came back in 1929 they found that their house was being used as the schoolhouse. Frank said, "You don't have permission to use my house as a school." They begged and pleaded to use it for the rest of the school year, so the Wurtzes moved into the Hanes cabin until the end of the year. But there was a school even before that. There had to have been another school in the 1920s.

Bonny: I know your mom gave me a good accounting of that stuff.

Lois: There was a tent school out on Big Prairie. There was a gal who wrote a book a couple of years ago, with a lot of pictures, titled *Moose Country School*. She said she had been a school teaching on Trail Creek. Larry Wilson says he doesn't have any knowledge of there having been a school up there. But there almost had to have been. People started homesteading up there very early, by 1909 at least.

Bonny: The problem is that they called that whole upper end of the North Fork "Trail Creek," so that may be where it starts to get a little confusing.

Lois: Yes, they did, from the Wurtz's up.

Bonny: I wondered if there was even a school up near the border.

Nonie: I don't think so. I think that one across from Wurtz's was the main one. Felicia Holter Burleigh taught there, and she lived with the Braytons.

Lois: Mary Maude Brayton's family. So, the years that you went to the Ford Schoolhouse, from first grade until you were going into eighth grade—that's when there was only you and the Wurtz boy and the school closed—did you get to do any of the eighth grade at all?

Nonie: We did part of the eighth grade up there, then they closed it and moved us out.

Lois: Did you go to school at all after that?

Nonie: Yes, I finished the eighth grade in Columbia Falls.

John: That's why you had a hard time, right? Because you were in a classroom with so many different grades. She didn't know very much. That's why, when we were raising our family, we decided we were going to live down here. We wanted the social life for our kids.

Nonie: It's really hard.

Lois: But the seven years you were there, were there ever more than six or eight kids?

Nonie: At one time I think there were about ten, Gilders moved up there where Sweets were, that old cabin. I don't know how they lived there, but they had a lot of kids. He was really sick.

Lois: How did the teacher handle the different grades? Were you divided up by age? Did you take turns with subjects?

Nonie: Yes, we were divided by age.

Lois: Did the older kids help teach the younger kids?

Nonie: Probably, but I don't remember that all.

Lois: Do you remember there being an organ at the school?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: Did the teacher play the organ?

Nonie: I don't know who played the organ originally, but I played the organ. I always got an A in music.

Lois: They used it when you had the little plays and pageants and things like that?

Nonie: Yes, they would use it.

Lois: Because the teachers used to write reports for the newspaper, saying, “We’re having some sort of celebration, and everybody is welcome to come.” Do you remember any dances at the schoolhouse when you were there?

Nonie: No, we never had dances at the school. But they had them at other places.

John: They had them at Grandma and Grandpa Holcomb’s house.

Lois: Yes, I’ve heard stories about them pushing the furniture back to make room.

Bonny: Your mom told me about going to dances at the Kintla Ranch, and that Harry would be driving a buckboard and would pick up neighbors along the way. And they would dance all night and come home in the morning. I guess the kids slept on benches and under benches. But everybody went, and I guess it was a good time. Did they also go to McFarland’s?

Nonie: Yes.

Bonny: That was quite a trip down that far.

Nonie: I can remember going to McFarlands for a dance, even after we were married. You were just a baby.

John: Wow.

Lois: What were your desks like at the school? Did you have desks? Were they the old kind that had a top that opened? Or were they just like a little table?

Nonie: Yes, they had a top that opened up.

Lois: How did you meet your husband, and when did you get married?

Nonie: His folks had the Mathison place up there. When he got out of the service, he came up there with them and I was there.

Lois: Did he serve during World War II?

Nonie: Yes. He was a medic in the Army. He only had one eye, so he couldn’t qualify for anything else.

Lois: Did he lose it during the war, or before?

Nonie: Before. Some kid shot him in the eye with a BB gun.

Lois: On the North Fork?

Nonie: No, in Great Falls.

John: He was pretty young

Lois: What year did you get married?

Nonie: 1946.

Lois: What years were your children born?

Nonie: I had one in 1947, one in 1948, then 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1954.

Bonny: So, you have John. Then there's Connie?

Nonie: Ronnie was the first one, who died.

John: Then Johnny is my given name. They all rhyme. Ronnie, Johnny, Connie, Bonnie, Lonnie, and Donnie.

Kenyon: That's only the half of it. They rhymed the middle names, too. Ronnie Jay, Johnny Day, Connie Mae, Bonnie Kay, Lonnie Gay, and Donnie Ray.

Lois: Was that your idea, or his?

Nonie: We just agreed.

Bonny: I have the family picture with that all marked, someplace. I'm going to keep looking.

Lois: And they were all born in Columbia Falls or Kalispell?

Nonie: No. The boys were born in Kalispell, and the girls were born in Whitefish.

Lois: Do you remember how many years you had Ruth Coan as a teacher at the school?

Nonie: I was trying to figure that out. It must have been several years.

John: She was the last one you had, right? She taught in Columbia Falls after they closed it down?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: She kind of taught all around. I found newspaper coverage of her teaching up in Eureka and in one of the other communities up that way. I think wherever she could get a job, she'd take it. And her husband Bert was a good bit older than she was. Do you remember her bringing her granddaughter, Naomi Gaffaney Hoiland, to class?

Nonie: I don't remember her bringing her to class, but I know Naomi.

Lois: Naomi said she was living with them at the time, and Ruth would take her to school with her. I don't know if she was even old enough for school yet, but she took her to class with her. But just for one year. Naomi has only real foggy memories of being in the school with her, but she remembers the organ. Kids remember music, I guess.

Nonie: [Laughs]

Lois: Do you remember if they had some sort of a ceremony when kids graduated eighth grade?

Nonie: I don't remember.

Lois: I know. You couldn't ask me about my elementary school days. I couldn't remember them either. So, after you couldn't go to school there, then your parents moved to Columbia Falls so you could go to school?

Nonie: Yes, they took me out to Columbia Falls. We had a room up over the bank building in Columbia Falls that winter. And Ruth Coan took Leonard Wurtz. He lived with her and finished the school year.

Lois: And Ruth Coan had a son, too, by her first marriage. I can't remember his name right now, but he lived with them. [Willie Nordgren] But when I look at the old minutes, from when they first formed the NFIA [North Fork Improvement Association] in 1947, his name is on there, and Bert and Ruth are on there as original founding members of the organization. So, he must have come to meetings up there.

Do you remember anything have to do with construction of the Community Hall or going to NFIA meetings? The Hall was built in 1952-1953.

Nonie: I don't know.

Lois: Do you remember if you and Johnny belonged to the NFIA at any time?

John: We were up there when they were building it. I can kind of remember the piles of lumber and playing on them.

Lois: It was another community project, like the school. They had work weekends. The ladies would all cook lunch for the workers, and I found some of the receipts for food. It was quite a project.

Well, I'm glad you told me about the Sondresons, because I'd like to know more about them, and neither of them are around anymore.

John: Yes, they were the big employer up there.

Kenyon: They were both pilots, too, right?

Lois: Yes, they were. Until they bought their property, they lived in what was called the Top Hat House?

John: Yes.

Lois: And that's still standing, isn't it? I'm not sure who owns it now.

John: Yes.

Lois: Do you know who built that house, or how old it is?

Nonie: Charlie Miller built it, I think. I don't know when, though. I was just a kid.

Lois: And why did they call it the Top Hat?

John: It's because of the construction, it has a big roof that spreads out.

Lois: With overhanging eaves?

John: Yes, quite a ways out. You used to be able to see it real plain from the road, but now the trees are all grown up.

Lois: And the place where they built their A-frame house, down in Sondreson Meadow, was that where the old Sansavere place was?

Nonie: Yes [pronounced Saun-se-veer].

Lois: They had three or four girls.

Nonie: I didn't know them at all.

Lois: They went to the school further south. Some people called it the Prairie View School, sort of back the lane where Milton Huck had his homestead, and his daughter Helen Huck Ramon. An account I read said that in the morning, Mr. [Charlie] Schoenberger, over on Big Prairie, had a rowboat, and he would row his daughter across the river, and they would meet up with the Sansavere girls and some other kids. They would all walk to school together, until one morning there was a moose that bothered the children and frightened them. After that, one of the parents accompanied them every morning walking to school.

I need to find out about what year Loyd and Ruth bought their place down there and moved. Did they ever have a sawmill out there in the meadow?

John: Down by the river? No. They had it on the upper part, back on the Mathison place. Dad worked for them when they were on Center Mountain.

Lois: Yes, I've heard some exciting stories about Ruth driving the truck, and the truck got away from her and she jumped out, or something like that. But there were some hair-curling stories about logging up there.

John: Yes.

Bonny: The first time I met Loyd and Ruth, they had the big CAT parked by the Hall. It was broken down, and Ruth was covered in grease clear up to her shoulders. Loyd was telling her how to fix it, and she did. She was just getting it put back together when we got there. He said, "Boy, you just missed a lot of blue smoke." I guess she was really angry at that CAT, and she was muscling the whole thing around. I was very impressed, I have to say. He was not well, and he couldn't do it.

Lois: How old were the Sondresons when you were working with them?

John: I didn't know their age. They were more Mom and Dad's age. Loyd and Ruth, they were your age, weren't they?

Nonie: Yes. [Nonie takes a break to go to the bathroom]

Lois: Johnny, once you kids were born, you lived down valley full-time after that?

John: We had a place in Columbia Heights. It was right on the corner, just past the Columbia Mountain trail, where the road made a sharp turn to the right and went out away from the mountain. They owned I don't know how many acres. Mom would know. They had milk cows and some animals and stuff.

Lois: Was there a house there, or did your dad build a house there?

John: There was a house there, and a barn. I can remember milking cows in the barn. And then they sold a piece to Uncle Harry, up on the other end. Then Hansens bought it. They had a daughter, Candy, and she's married to my cousin, Jim. They come and visit here once a year. They live over in Bonner's Ferry.

Lois: Did you live in that house the whole time you were going to school?

John: No, just through third grade. See, dad had rheumatism. He was working at the sawmill at Superior. He got rheumatism in his wrist, and they suggested we go to a warmer climate. I think it was when I was in fourth grade that we went down to Arizona. Mom passed out from the heat. She had never been out of Montana. That was in September. As soon as it started getting warm again in March, we came back. But they had sold the place here.

Lois: Did you live in Kalispell after that?

John: We went up the North Fork, then they decided to settle half way. That's when we moved to Salt Lake City. So, I went to school from fifth grade through high school in Salt Lake. We would just come up in the summer time and stay with Grandma and Grandpa Holcomb. Especially in my teenage years, when I could drive, because his eyesight wasn't so good, I drove for him. But when they came down here, I had a Honda 90 motorcycle. I would put it in the back, and as soon as we got down here I would unload it and ride back up there. I would stay with the Sondresons, and they would send a message with the mailman when they wanted me come down. Then I'd ride down and drive them back up. They would stay up there for a few days. They were back and forth, working. They had a garden in both places.

Lois: During your high school years, would you work up there in the summer?

John: Yes, I worked for the Sondresons.

Lois: Then after you graduated, what did you do?

John: I went on a mission for the church, from 1967-1969. That was up in British Columbia and Alaska. Then I was home two weeks and I got drafted. It was during Vietnam.

Lois: So, we've all got to be the same age. I graduated in 1967.

Bonny: I did, too.

John: I graduated in 1966.

Bonny: What years were you in Vietnam?

John: I actually didn't go to Vietnam. I went to Ft. Lewis, and because of the experience I had as a dozer operator, I was assigned as a dozer operator.

Lois: Ah, a dirt boy.

John: Well, after basic training, you just get put on a plane. I got off the plane, and I was at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia. They looked at my paperwork and said, “You should have been sent to Ft. Leonard Wood. We’ll just change your MOS [military operational specialty] to Mechanic.

Lois: Yes, the Army Corps of Engineers is headquartered at Ft. Belvoir.

John: Yes, so I went through mechanic school, that everyone else had enlisted an extra year for. I was the only two-year guy. All the others were there for three years. But being a dozer operator in Vietnam was not a good thing. They used bulldozers to clear the jungle for airfields. And the Viet Cong used dozer operators for target practice. There was like an 80 percent chance of getting killed.

Lois: But you ended not having to go?

John: There were 65 in the class. It was a six-week course. We had a formation at graduation, and they said, “Twelve of you are going to Germany, and the rest are going to Vietnam. We’ll read the names for Germany,” and I was the first name they read.

Lois: So, where were you in Germany?

John: I was in Dexheim in a little engineering battalion. When I first got there, I looked up—the Army had a religious retreat once a year for each religion. You had to pay your way down there, but once you got there everything was supplied. It was at Berchtesgaden, near the Austrian border, where Hitler had an underground headquarters. I went down there. They had tours in the morning you could go on. I got on the bus with a friend of mine, and the bus started filling up, with more and more people coming in. There was a young boy, maybe 4 or 5, sitting beside me, and his parents were in front. I asked if I couldn’t put him on my lap so someone else could sit down. And my wife Marlene sat down. We got to talking. That’s how we met.

Lois: How did she come to be in Germany?

John: Her father was a lieutenant colonel, a battalion commander. Her parents didn’t come, but she had come down to the retreat with some friends. She was a junior in high school, going to the high school at Wiesbaden. So, every time I didn’t have duty, we’d go on dates, touring the castles and the ruins in Germany.

Lois: Nonie, I bet you were glad he didn’t go to Vietnam. That was a scary time for lots of parents.

Nonie: I’ll say.

John: It was about four years later that we started dating seriously, when she was in college.

Lois: Where was she from originally?

John: She was born in Salina, Utah. They traveled all around, of course. But her family settled the town of Aurora, Utah.

Lois: What a strange world, eh?

Bonny: So, you didn't start dating until you were back in the States?

John: We dated while we were in Germany, but only for about six months before I came back. Then she was going to BYU Provo [Brigham Young University], but I kept in contact with her. She had an older sister who was married. I was back here, but my mom and dad were down in Salt Lake. When I would go down, we would get in contact, then we started dating again.

Lois: You just did your two years in the Army?

John: Yes.

Kenyon: Didn't you get out early?

John: Yes, Loyd got me out a little early. I got to checking the regulations, and they had what they called a Seasonal Employment Early Release. Loyd sent a letter. They had the spruce beetle—this was before the mountain pine beetle—that attached up there, and he had logging to do. I used to run the CAT. So, he sent a letter, then somebody from the Forest Service that he knew sent a letter, verifying that he had a job for me in the summer. So, I got out in June instead of September.

Lois: Of which year?

John: 1971.

Lois: You're right. That infestation was in 1970-1971; around that time that all got started.

Bonny: Lois, you guys were in Germany weren't you?

Lois: Yes, that was much later.

Bonny: And Elmer Benson was also in Germany.

Lois: Yes, Elmer was in Berlin. He was in intelligence. He knows that city—you name a street in Berlin, and he can tell you exactly where it is. He must have had like a photographic memory.

John: Oh, the sights we saw. One of the places that impressed me was Oppenheim. It was just a little town on the Rhein River. I was in Dexheim, and Oppenheim was pretty close. Marlene lived in Giessen.

Lois: Yes, I know Giessen, up north a little ways.

John: Yes, it was a ways up there. But this town of Oppenheim—in most of those towns over there, they have the church building right in the middle of town, then the houses all around it, then the fields are out there.

Lois: Yes, the farmhouses aren't in the country. The people live in town and drive their tractors out to the fields.

John: Someone was telling us, "You've got to see this town." So, we went. There was a church right behind the church, and there was a big metal gate there. You couldn't go in, but you could

look through it. There were human bones stacked, just as far as you could see. It was like a big puzzle put together.

Lois: Yes, they call it an ossuary. There's one at Verdun in France, from World War I.

John: This was all from the bubonic plague. There had to have been hundreds of thousands of bones from people, stacked up there as tight as can be and clean to the ceiling. That was one of the places that impressed me the most.

Lois: Did any of your other brothers go in service?

John: No. But my younger brother is like seven years younger than me. So it was over by the time he was of age.

Lois: What are your memories of the Polebridge Mercantile and who was running it at the time? How often did you get down there?

Nonie: We didn't get there very often. I can't remember much, except when I was a teenager we used to go over there and visit.

Lois: Did you know Ben Hensen?

Nonie: Yes, but he wasn't in the mercantile. I remember the Adairs.

Lois: Did you ever visit the store that the Hensens ran, in competition with the mercantile, out where the loop road met the road to the Park?

Nonie: No, I never went in there.

Lois: I think it closed in 1936. I think the Depression kind of did them in.

Bonny: But you remember the Adairs?

Nonie: Yes, I remember the Adairs, Bill Adair.

Lois: And the Rovers, Ben and Annette, who bought the store from the Adairs.

Nonie: Yes. I worked there for a little while.

Lois: Did you really?

Nonie: Yes, when I was in a teenager.

Lois: They bought it in 1943, so you would have been 15 at that time. Did you run the register? Did they have a cash register, or just a till box of some sort.

Nonie: It was just a till box, I think. I don't remember running a register.

Lois: Did they have the post office in there by then?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: Did they sell cheese? People talk about them having big rounds of cheese.

Nonie: Yes, they had a big round of cheese.

Lois: People used to buy a lot more at the Merc then. Now it's mostly tourists.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: Bill Adair would have supplies hauled up for people. You could order stuff, and he'd get it freighted up there for you.

Nonie: The mailman used to bring a lot of things. We used to order things.

Bonny: Your mom talked about when they would have supplies coming in, like windows or special lumber, sometimes they would have to go all the way to Polson to pick them up. Of course, that was with a horse and wagon. When did the road get good enough to actually have anything delivered to the North Fork, or was that much later?

Nonie: I don't know.

Lois: What do you remember about coming up the road when you were a teenager?

Nonie: It was much different than it is now.

John: I remember the dust. It used to be like that deep.

Lois: When was your first car ride up the North Fork Road?

Nonie: I can remember riding in a car. I think Grandpa had a Model A. I was about eight or something like that. When we would come down to town, I would get so sick. I had motion sickness so bad. I would be just about passed out by the time we got down here.

Lois: Did you come down the outside road the whole way, or did you go down the inside road to Belton?

Nonie: It depended.

Lois: You could go either way?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: What was Fool Hen Hill like back then? Did they still have the Twin Sisters, the dry bridges?

John: I remember that.

Lois: Describe it to me.

John: I just remember that it was so far down to the river. It was like a chute, just straight down. These bridges went across there.

Nonie: There were three of them, weren't there?

Lois: Yes, there were three eventually. But in the spring there was runoff that went under them? They just called them the dry bridges.

John: I don't know. I just remember that it was a long way down, and it was scary.

Lois: Did you ever hear of anyone having an accident there?

John: I don't remember hearing, but Ralph Thayer went off at Canyon Creek, that corner there. It was icy and he slipped right off. He said he had rocks in the trunk of his car that kind of kept it balanced, so that it landed on the wheels. But he had to have metal put in his leg or his hip, that bothered him in his latter years.

Lois: And he had a bear encounter that damaged that one leg.

Nonie: Yes.

John: Yes, he was working for the Forest Service then, doing surveying. But he slid off that corner.

Lois: Do you have memories of the other old homesteaders that were up there, besides your grandparents? The Gaffaneys, Naomi's parents? Tom and Marie Price Peterson, on Trail Creek?

Nonie: Ethel Newton.

John: Oh, we played pinochle with the Newtons. After we were married, Marlene and I used to go down there and play pinochle. Bob and Betty Olson, we played pinochle with them.

Lois: Walt and Hazel Hammer?

John: I didn't know Hazel, but I knew Walt.

Lois: Madge and Ollie Terrian?

John: I worked for him for a little bit. He paid us to go gather the black moss for chinking on the cabins that he built.

Lois: Terrian did?

John: No, Walt Hammer.

Lois: Which cabins?

John: He was always building cabins there on his place. Oh, and the Chrismans. He built the Chrisman's cabin, and we gathered the moss for him.

Lois: That was in the early 1960s?

John: Yes, I would have been up there then, in my teenage years.

Lois: Tom and Verna Marx?

John: Yes, I knew both of them. They had a son Tom. He was a little bit older than I was. He went in the military. One summer, when he was back from the military, my cousin Mark, who's a year older than I am, they came down to visit Grandma and Grandpa Holcomb. We were playing in the barn out there. He took us both on. He said he could take us both. We got him, the two of us, but it took us a little bit. We got him down. I wasn't very old then.

Lois: I think the Marxes ended up essentially raising their grandchildren.

John: Yes, they did.

Lois: Debbie married Ray Brown eventually, but that didn't last.

John: There were three of them, weren't there?

Lois: Yes, two girls and a boy.

John: Yes, because after he passed away and she was coming up with those kids, she would stop in, and I would go up and help them get their water set up and that.

Bonny: Paul Marotz. That was the grandson.

John: Right. Yes, Paul wasn't happy with the Ray and Debbie marriage.

Lois: What year did your dad die?

John: 1993.

Lois: That long ago. Wow.

Kenyon: He's the one who built the chimney in the cabin behind the Hall. I was talking to Ray Brown, and I told him that my grandfather had built the chimney in the cabin that he's moving for the Kummerfelts.

Nonie: Yes, he built the fireplace.

John: He built the whole fireplace, in exchange for being able to stay there, right?

Nonie: Yes.

John: They didn't charge you rent or anything?

Nonie: No.

Kenyon: Maybe that's how things got confused, when I said that my grandfather built it, Ray thought I meant Lynn Chapman. But it was my grandpa, Jack Mathison, who built the chimney and the fireplace, not the cabin itself.

John: There as one winter that lived there all though the winter. I remember going with Dad. We'd slide down to get the mail.

Nonie: Yes, that was fun. That was the year that Lonnie was a baby.

Lois: So, you were up there during the school year.

Nonie: Yes, that was just before Johnny had to start school.

Kenyon: Was that the year the bear came to the cabin?

John: That was the summer time, when you shot the bear through the window, right?

Nonie: Yes, it was in the summer when I shot the bear.

Lois: In that house?

Nonie: Yes.

John: She shot right through the window.

Lois: Through the glass?

Nonie: Yes.

John: I can remember that bear going through the creek, with the water boiling. That bear took off.

Lois: How many kids were you wrangling at that point?

Nonie: Three. I was changing Bonny's diaper, and John said, "Mom, look at the cow." The bear was looking in the window.

Lois: Your husband had a shotgun or something?

Nonie: He had a rifle. He had left it there, so it was all ready.

Bonny: You kind of mirrored your grandfather, Harry, didn't you?

John: He had to shoot a bear in the living room [as it came into their bedroom].

Nonie: After I shot it, it went across the spring and laid down. I didn't have glasses then, and I couldn't see very well. I was trying to see if it was dead or not. The rifle had a scope, and I tried to hold it up and look through the scope, but I was shaking so bad I couldn't hold it.

Lois: And the Community Hall was built by then, wasn't it?

Nonie: It probably was. I can't remember.

Kenyon: If you were a little kid, it was right around that time that it was built. [1952-1953]

John: Yes.

Lois: Where was your husband working then during the day?

Nonie: At Loyd's sawmill, up by Center Mountain.

John: They worked through the winter up there.

Lois: I need to get my map out and let you show me where these places were.

Kenyon: Here's a copy of Harry Mathison's homestead patent. That's up by Center Mountain. Dated 1926.

Lois: Between Red Meadow and Moose Creek?

Kenyon: Between Moose and Whale, right?

John: Yes. Straight west of the Community Hall. There used to be a road that went up there.

Kenyon: And this is a copy of the Harry Holcomb patent.

Lois: You got these at the plat room at the county?

Kenyon: Actually, it was Dad's cousin Jim who got them. He has the patents. He sent me these. The Holcomb one is 1919. This is after they got it perfected.

Lois: Yes, because they came earlier than that.

Kenyon: Yes, 1913 or so. It took them that long to get the patent.

Lois: May we have these?

Kenyon: Yes, I printed those out for you.

Lois: Great! I'm excited. And I understand, when your mom [Esther] died, that there are still family photo albums and such that we might look at some time and copy some of the pictures?

Nonie: Yes, I'll have to have somebody find them. I know there is one album that Mom had. It's downstairs in Lonny and Cy's room in a shelf in the closet.

Kenyon: Would you like for me to find it? [Goes to find album]

Nonie: Yes, if you want. I've got gobs of pictures.

Lois: In the early days, who had the camera? Who was taking the pictures up there?

Nonie: Gosh, I don't know.

Lois: Did your Grandpa Harry have a camera?

Nonie: Well, Mom did.

John: I don't remember Grandpa ever taking pictures.

Nonie: I don't either.

Lois: Yes, it's the women who want to document the kids and the grandkids.

John: Yes, Marlene takes all the pictures in our family.

Nonie: I have a suitcase full of photos that Grandma and Grandpa had. Old pictures, but they didn't write on them to identify them.

Lois: Do you know who some of them are?

Nonie: Not very many.

Lois: Well, we could ask Lee Downes or Larry Wilson or some of the old-timers, and they might be able to identify who they are.

Nonie: Yes. My granddaughter has one of those scanners, and she comes and goes through these.

Lois: Good. You know, I would think after your grandpa built that house for Lena, he would have been proud enough to go out and take pictures of it. It was something different on the North Fork, a non-log structure. But they still had an outhouse, right?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: When did they put in indoor plumbing?

Nonie: They didn't. It still doesn't have indoor plumbing. Johnny's house does.

Lois: Well, sometime after Bonny finds all her stuff, we'd like to have you come up and help us do a layout of the property. Where the buildings were. That would be nice to document. But I'm amazed that the old homestead cabin is still there.

Nonie: Yes. My granddaughters would really like to fix that up, but nobody's got the money.

Lois: Yes, it takes some expertise, and it takes money to do that.

John: And a lot of time. When they just come up for a two-week vacation.

Lois: Do you remember going on picnics, either in the Whitefish Range or over in the Park. Were any members of your family hikers or horseback riders.

Nonie: I can remember going on picnics in the spring, when the whitefish started running. We'd go down where Holycrosses are. Just before their place was a road that went down, on part of the Miller place. We'd go down there in the spring with the horses and the sled, before the snow was all gone. We'd catch whitefish and cook them. We'd build a fire. I was just a kid.

Lois: Did your mama can fish?

Nonie: Yes, they used to can fish.

Lois: We were talking with Marietta Downes, and she said, "I used to can everything." She even canned applesauce cakes. She said her mom had had polio, so she learned to run the canner by the time she was six years old. They canned everything—sausages, wieners, ham, you name it, she'd can it.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: You know, I think about those folks living up there. Having to lay in all of their supplies before winter, because you weren't getting out until spring.

Nonie: Yes, we always went and got our grub stake in the fall.

Lois: What kinds of things would you buy? How many pounds of what?

Nonie: I have no idea. I was just a kid, but I remember going down with them. They'd put their grub stake in.

Bonny: Probably flour and sugar, salt and pepper. Bacon, all kinds of canned stuff.

[Kenyon returns with a box of goodies. Newspaper clippings, photos, slides.]

Nonie: There should have been a gray photo album.

Kenyon: I'll go look for it.

[Discussing materials—Bonny may have already copied some]

Bonny: Your mom was very proud of her job as a switchboard operator, and there were quite a few pictures of that. She talked quite a bit and great, funny stories about being a switchboard operator here in the valley. I guess it must have been the 1960s, but I was thinking even as early as sometime in the 1950s. But I must be wrong, because Johnny was saying that they purchased that property in the 1960s. I know it was when she was living down here.

Lois: Was this before or after Ralph died? I think they moved a year or two before Ralph died.

Nonie: Yes, they were down here before he died. That's when she was working as an operator.

Lois: [Looking at ad in scrapbook] This is an advertisement for Pacific Power and Light. "Electricity is a marvelous bargain. All the service we use costs us 45 cents a day."

Nonie: Yes, that was Pacific Power and Light that Mom worked for.

Lois: So, this may be someone she knew who posed for this picture. What kind of car did your parents drive?

Nonie: The main thing I can remember was the truck. They usually had a truck, a big truck. They got cattle every years and took them up the North Fork in the summer.

Lois: Here's something addressed to Cy Tonner. He was a state representative from Kalispell and a State Democratic Committeeman. There's an article about his death. He died at his home in Martin City. He was 62, but this clipping isn't dated. He was a native of Iowa, but in 1921 moved to Spokane. There's also a letter from Mike Mansfield, written to him from the Senate in 1958, congratulating him on his election.

Nonie: That must be Lonnie's stuff. Cy Tonner was Cy Bras's grandfather.

Lois: We're trying to document the Forest Service ranger stations in the North Fork, at Ford, Moran, and Big Creek. There's nothing at Moran anymore.

Nonie: No, they tore it all down.

Lois: At Ford, there's just the cabin that Ralph Thayer built that's now a rental cabin. Do you remember going to Ford Station and playing around down there?

Nonie: Not very much.

Lois: But you'd go fishing in the river?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: Nowadays, everyone wants to float the river in a raft or a canoe or a kayak.

Nonie: When Jack and I were first married, we went up there and stayed in the schoolhouse. Nobody was there. We didn't live there very long, but we lived there for a while, right after we were first married.

Lois: Did Ralph still own the property then?

Nonie: No, I don't know who owned it. But it was just there, and it was open. But somebody had lived in there before, because there was a cookstove. We'd get up the morning, and Jack would grab the fishing pole. He'd go down to the river and catch some fish, and I'd have the fire going when he got back. We'd have fish and pancakes for breakfast.

Lois: It sounds wonderful. Those were the days, huh?

Nonie: Yes, they were. We had fun living in that schoolhouse. When I went to school there, the teacher had a bell, with a handle on it. When recess was over, she'd ring the bell so we'd come back. That bell was up in the attic when Jack and I were living there, and there was a packrat up there. During the night he'd roll that bell across the floor.

Lois: Were there any other remnants there? Were there still blackboards on the wall? Anything else that the teacher would have used? She had some sort of shelving there. Felicia Holton wrote an article.

Nonie: But I don't think Felicia ever taught in that school. She taught in that one across from Wurtz's.

Bonny: Lois, you had among your questions: Can you describe a typical school day; classes, recess, lunch, recitations, spelling, math, reading? Were there any problems with wildlife around the school? Where did you get your water? Was there a well? Where was the outhouse in relation to the school, and how far away was the river?

Nonie: The outhouse was further back. I think they have moved that up.

Lois: There is an outhouse still there. The schoolhouse is kind of facing south. The outhouse is behind it, up against the hill almost. One of the teachers said that the outhouse was across the road from the school.

Nonie: No.

Lois: Is wasn't? It was on the same side of the road?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: That makes sense, because there's a hill across the road from the school.

Nonie: It was just back behind the school.

Lois: Was it a one-seater or a two-seater?

Nonie: I think it was a two-seater.

Lois: Was there a well there? Do you know?

Nonie: I don't think there was a well.

Lois: Was there a creek around there that went down to the river? Did you get water from a creek?

Nonie: Just Tepee Creek.

Lois: That's right. It's close by.

Nonie: I don't remember where we got water. I thought they just got river water.

Lois: They might have, but the in the spring that's pretty muddy water.

Nonie: I don't know.

Lois: What did you do at recess time? Did you have recess?

Nonie: Yes, we had recess. There were games that we played. Hide and seek and others. And sometimes when we'd get ornery, we'd go far enough away that we wouldn't hear the school bell.

Lois: Who were your playmates? Who do you remember playing with as a kid?

Nonie: Dorothy and Leonard Wurtz. I went to school with them. Of course, Thelma was older, but she went to school there, too. I remember going out and getting wild onions. You know what wild onions are?

Lois: Yes.

Nonie: We would pick wild onions and eat them, and the teacher could hardly stand it.

Lois: What kind of supplies did you have? Did the teacher provide paper and pencils and such? Or did you work mostly on the blackboard?

Nonie: We bought our own school supplies like that.

Lois: Did you have text books your worked out of?

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: What did you do for lunch? Did you bring your own lunch?

Nonie: Yes, we packed lunches.

Lois: Did the teachers ever come to dinner at your house?

Nonie: They probably did. I don't remember. The teachers usually stayed with Grandma and Grandpa Holcomb.

Bonny: Did you already ask about the Ballard house?

Nonie: The Ballard house is where Doug Barnes is now.

Lois: That's very close to your grandparents' place.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: And one of your teachers, Ruth Coan, lived in that house.

Nonie: Yes, she was in there.

Bonny: One of your mom's teachers lived with Harry and Lena, and your mom and Fred for a while. Do you know which one that was?

Nonie: I used to know. I think she was one of the teachers that taught in the tent school.

Lois: I should know that, too. Was it Ella Weide?

Nonie: Ella Weide (pronounced Wī-dey).

Lois: She filed her own homestead up there.

Nonie: Yes.

Lois: She talked about snowshoeing great distances to go to dinner at someone's house, or to a party.

Nonie: It's amazing the things that they did.

Lois: There's a picture of her shooting a deer with a rifle. She must have been a tough gal.

Bonny: Here you go. It says Tommie Thompson and Bette Nicholson both lodged with the Holcombs.

Nonie: Yes, Bette Nicholson did.

Bonny: One of those girls was very pretty, and there was a fight at one of the dances. I think maybe it was Tom Reynolds and Ralph Thayer. I'm not sure. Do you know anything about that?

Nonie: No.

Bonny: One of them pulled the other guy's jacket over his head, so he couldn't swing at him anymore. [Laughter] It was your mother telling me stories. She was little at that time.

Lois: So, you just took notes as she was talking?

Bonny: Yes. We tried taping, but she talked kind of quietly. And then there was a little bit of background noise, and those old recorders just didn't do so well. I was always writing, too, because I knew the recorder wasn't doing good. But we got a lot of it down, while she was still around.

Lois: I'm glad you did.

Bonny: I'm remembering part of it, and this helps me to remember even more. It gives me the urgency to find that stuff. I was not well when we moved from McMannamy Draw. Lynn and our youngest son kind of packed everything, and it just got misplaced somewhere. But I'll find it.

Lois: Well, thank you for taking time to sit and talk with us.

Nonie: I hope I did you some good.

Lois: So, if you were born in 1928, you're coming up on your 90th birthday next year, right?

Nonie: Yes. I sure never thought I'd be a widow this many years. Jack and I lived together and worked together. We never thought we'd be apart that long.

Bonny: How long were you married?

Nonie: We were married for 47 years.

Bonny: Was this legal name John, but he went by Jack?

Nonie: Well, I called him Jack, but he was John Henry.

Lois: And where was he born?

Nonie: In Great Falls.

Lois: How did his family come to the North Fork, the Mathison side?

Nonie: I don't know exactly how they came. I really don't know. His dad was an engineer on the railroad, so he'd get three months off in the summer time, and they'd go up there.

Bonny: Lois, you have another question here on your sheet. What changes in the North Fork did you observe before you stopped coming up on a regular basis? Did you know and interact with the post-War crowd, like Frank Evans, Cecily McNeil, the Edwards family and the Maases, the Foremans and the Chrismans? You've answered part of that, but what changes did you see?

Nonie: I think Johnny and Marlene knew those people better than I did. Because Jack and I, after we moved to town, we didn't spend much time up there. He got arthritis real bad in his

wrist, so we moved to Arizona first, but he didn't like Arizona at all. He came back to work for Loyd one year, and on the way back we decided that Salt Lake looked like a good place. So, after he finished working that winter we went back to Salt Lake.

Lois: But Jack's parents were still up here?

Nonie: Yes. They never lived up there in the winter time, but they came up in the summer.

Lois: They were in Kalispell or Columbia Falls in the winter?

Nonie: No, they lived in Great Falls. They lived in Columbia Falls for a little while.

Bonny: It was a little tough, I have to guess, as people got older up there. It probably was very hard to withstand the road and hauling water. A lot of people didn't have wells. They would fill up in some of the creeks and boil their water—or not.

Nonie: No, we never even thought about it.

Lois: Do you remember taking your children up there to see their Mathison grandparents?

Nonie: Yes, we used to go up all the time. We lived in Columbia Heights for a while.

Lois: Well, the kids probably liked going up to see grandma and grandpa in the North Fork.

Nonie: Yes, after we moved to Salt Lake we came up every year. We never missed a year. When we had two weeks of vacation, it took us two days to come from Salt Lake.

Lois: What did Jack do for a living while you lived in Salt Lake?

Nonie: He worked as a custodian for the LDS [Latter Day Saints] church. We both did.

Bonny: How many grandchildren do you have?

Nonie: 28.

Bonny: How many great-grandchildren?

Nonie: I think I've got about 53.

Kenyon: [Returns with photo album] I found it.

Nonie: Yes, that's the one I was thinking of. Let her look at it. That's probably the one that Bonny remembers looking at.

Bonny: Yes. We didn't Xerox all of this, but we sure did some.

[Talking over photos and articles.]

Lois: You've got some nice Mike Mansfield signatures in your collection. This is great.

Bonny: Westberg. That's the name of the mill where Harry worked at Half Moon. And Ron Buentemeier has some information on those old mills.