

Carl and Linda Pittman_Summer_2012

This interview was conducted by Linda Nelson and Gary Haverlandt.

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

Gary: And my name is Gary Haverlandt. I am with Linda today and it is August 15, 2012. This is the first interview for Carl and Linda Pittman and this interview is taking place at their home 9340 North Fork Road, Polebridge Montana, and it is sponsored by the North Fork Landowners Association and is part of the North Fork History Project.

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

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

Carl P: Okay. I was born June 7 '31 in Caldwell, Oklahoma, throughout Oklahoma City, had a scholarship to UCLA, Oxford, earned a bachelors and masters and half of a PhD. That's about it.

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

Linda P: Right, yeah. I went through most of the school. They had no kindergartens at that time and I was 1 through 12 at two different school districts is all, and then started taking college classes after I was grown and married and finished the nursing degree in about 1975 or 6 and then went to work in the nursing field for 25 years there in Southern California, two or three different hospitals that I worked in.

Linda: Interesting.

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

Linda P: We came for the first time in the late summer of 1964 and it was because we were looking for some land where we could spend the summers since we were

free in the summer. Carl was a schoolteacher so we were here looking for affordable land that we could get and it was the year after the big flood, the 1964 flood. That was our main reason for being here, to find a place to recreate and build something. We were thinking of a campground but we only did that for a few years here.

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

Gary: Is that right?

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

Gary: So you worked with the tourists?

Carl P: Tourists and people up here, you know. The interesting thing about the '64 flood was Mill Roder got the Hungry Horse News Pulitzer Prize for the flood that killed many Indians and several whites down there around Kalispell. That area down – what's it called, that end of Kalispell, that was all under water. That was a bad flood. The interesting thing about it the people up here at Carrolton saw government cars going through like mad. They said, "What's going on?" So some of them jumped in their trucks and drove up the river where those trains came out the tunnel, the tunnel was shooting water clear across the river. It was that much higher than the tunnel, so it was acting like a hose with a lot of pressure on it, so they said we've got to get out of here kick. We've got to warn everybody. So they went down to Carrolton to tell everybody get on high ground quick or you're going to be dead you know, 2 or 300 feet above that tunnel see. It was really a bad flood. And the North Fork Road there from the bridge down to Polebridge had all been washed out, just solid rock. That's about all I want to say about it.

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

Linda P: Oh. Well we found it through looking in the Stout Realty Catalogue. They had some cabins and a home advertised along the North Fork River and those cabins aren't there now. They burned in the '88 fire, but they were across the road from the Ben Rover cabin and they were for sale, so we came to look at them, but by the time we got here they had sold.

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

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

- Linda P: Well, it was a lot of camping at first while we were building. Our son was 6 months old when we bought the land and we came back the next summer to start building something, so he was about 18 months. My mother and father came with us. He had built homes all his life, a lot of it and the weather was pretty good, typical rainy June and then July and August were nice. We had a normal amount of mosquitoes and we did have a little raft with us. My father and Carl rafted the river every once in a while for recreation, but we had a lot of fun just building something where nothing had been before and didn't have to do much clearing. There was a clearing down in front that some logger had a big slash heap down there so we ended up using that wood out of the slash heap for our bonfires. We had a bonfire going pretty much all day long and all evening and through the night and in the day sometimes. And this is where we are today. We are sitting on that property.
- Carl P: We was pretty smart in those days. We asked the seller to get the people to give us...go to a lawyer, draw up rights to the spring, all the way up to there to the stream and they did, so they signed it and we got copies of it. So twice I had to give our neighbors over here who bought 40 acres after we bought our 20 acres a copy of that. I would be going up to work on the water system. "What are you doing on my land?" Well so I would give him a copy of it and said, "Read this," so he never said a word after that each time. See the stream came through the lower section down here but I wanted to go all the way up there to get plenty of pressure for my electric system [00:08:39], and water for the showers and everything else.
- But go fishing in the park at 5 PM in the evening and by 6 PM we would have enough fish to feed the family. We would set the table and eat at 6 o'clock. Fish was in there in those days.
- Linda P: Lots of fish whenever you needed fish.
- Gary: What was the North Fork like as you remember it in the early days, the roads, the people, etc?
- Linda P: Nice friendly people. Within a few days after we started camping in here Frank Evans had come down and he told us a lot about their get-togethers usually every Saturday either at the hall or...
- Carl P: It wasn't a hall.
- Linda P: There was a hall and sometimes over at the MacFarland guest ranch which was still operating on the park side. And the road was really quite good once the loggers who were logging fairly heavy up here at that time they would oil the road usually sometime in June and once that was done the road was a very good road and very little dust. You did have to sort of be ready to pull off to the side when a big logging truck was coming down and we were told if you

had any problem they would stop and pull you out if you got stuck by pulling over, but we never had that happen. Yeah, very friendly people and get-togethers on Saturday were a really welcome chance to get to talk with other people. We must have had a radio to listen to once in a while because I remember we would tune in to the news so it must have been affordable. I can't remember what it was like, in our camp or in a tent.

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

Linda P: I remember the hot shower we had.

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

Gary: Okay.

Linda: As you think back to that period what other North Fork residents or did some North Fork residents make an impression on you? Was there that character that stood out while you've been here on the North Fork?

Linda P: Yeah. Like I said Frank Evans was very welcoming and told us a lot of things that were helpful to us. We got to know the Newtons, Frank Newton and Ethel. They had homesteaded up on – it's North of Moose Creek somewhere. Another interesting guy was Wally Noland who he was related to Ted Ross who owned the store in some way wasn't he? I think he married one of Ted's daughters. He would come visit and he was a really hardworking guy and moved a lot of cabins and moved that MacFarland main room of their guest ranch over and which became the hostel. Who else?

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

Carl P: Across the river.

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

Carl P: He came up here and got a few extra logs for extra supplies if it got messed up or something. Doug and [00:13:31] William...

Linda P: They owned the store for a while.

Carl P: [00:13:32] Olson.

- Linda P: And the Wurtz family we would visit with them once in a while and they would come by here and I know Carl bought a pair of their moose skin moccasins that he made and I could say shared work on that. They quilted all kinds of hide pieces together and made a big 2½-foot sized pillow that we bought from them. It was really comfortable.
- Carl P: They were the kind of [interposing voices].
- Linda P: We had deer, moose and elk hide. It was beautiful. We had that for many many years.
- Carl P: We would sit on our porch here and we would visit and the kids were just enthralled with the [00:14:20] that told about how [00:14:20] got killed by the grizzly up there on Moose Lake [00:14:26]. It's quite a story.
- Gary: Were there any of the homesteaders you knew north of Trail Creek?
- Linda P: A few times we visited and Carl once bought a little motorized bike from Tom Reynolds. He was a homesteader I think, a retired ranger. We knew the Holcolms but they're not north of Trail Creek and the Wurtz's...
- Carl P: Ann Henson and Ben Henson, their big place there.
- Linda P: The Henson family.
- Carl P: But they were here way back. He didn't get to town for 10 or 12 years after he had gone up there as a kid.
- Gary: I remember them.
- Carl P: They [set cruise] to Alaska going hunting from there on horseback and stuff.
- Linda: How about any other homesteaders here near you, near your place here?
- Linda P: I'm not sure. Did the Ladinbergs homestead their land down here?
- Carl P: I don't think so.
- Linda P: I don't know who was the original owner on some of these pieces. We bought from the Greens.
- Carl P: He was the head of the post office.
- Linda P: He was postmaster at Columbia Falls... Green. They owned all this land here and we bought 20 acres of it.
- Linda: Okay, so what was daily life like and how was it different from life in most parts of the country? You sound like you've given us a little bit of a picture. Is

there anything else you want to add to what your daily life was like when you got up in the morning, cooking, shopping, groceries? What was that like?

Linda P: We had to go to town, Columbia Falls or Kalispell for supplies. We did some laundry by hand and by the time we were here 3 or 4 years we had an old wringer washer that we could use to wash. We had plenty of firewood always for if we wanted to cook over a fire, but we did have a little camp trailer with a little stove that we used to...

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

Linda P: A bonfire every evening, yeah.

Carl P: The grizzly would walk...this is a major path from the park to up the [00:17:11] here for the grizzlies. They'd come across the [00:17:16] here. There's three islands there and they would come right up to our fire and look at us and look at the fire, what are you doing here? You know this is is right in my way. We would go in the cabin or go in the...we had a little cabin. Grandpa put a little cabin for him and his wife and we would get in our trailer and it would go on. When our dog's hair would raise up we started going in after that every time.

Gary: Yeah, that would be pretty scary.

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

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

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

Linda P: The O'Hare's or the Gaffneys.

Carl P: Yeah, the Gaffneys were wonderful people.

Linda P: Yeah.

Carl P: No dust. Dust these days, not this year, but go up 300 feet and it fills a [00:18:38] that deep on the rocks, you couldn't even see the rocks and it was crystal clear before that you know.

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

- Gary: Tell me about the North Fork social life, the hall or parties.
- Linda P: Oh. Practically every Saturday there was something going on. People would get together and they would always have snacks unless it was a potluck or something and they would use a record player and the generator and they would square dance until late hours.
- Carl P: Back in the olden days they would square dance until daylight then they'd have breakfast and get in the wagon and go home.
- Linda P: Yeah.
- Linda: My gosh.
- Carl P: Our nephew was here and he said he looked up on the internet, the coolest place in the nation, nighttime average temperature for the summers is Polebridge, Montana, 42 degrees.
- Gary: Is that right? I believe it.
- Linda: With all this action going on here in the North Fork were you a member of any organizations in the North Fork?
- Linda P: The North Fork Improvement Association, that was the group that maintained the hall and a lot of the people built the hall there I guess. That was there when we moved here.
- Carl P: It became the North Fork Landowners Association. They tried to keep everybody see. You saw how that worked.
- Linda P: I think that's the only organization we belonged to.
- Gary: I think we've already discussed it, but what was the North Fork Road like? We've already gone over that, right?
- Carl P: Hmm, very good.
- Linda: One of the things that I'm curious about too is how did you communicate with North Forkers? I know Linda said you had these wonderful dances every Saturday night. Was that automatic every Saturday night a dance or did somebody come and tell you or did they leave a note in the mailbox? How did you communicate with your friends up on Trail Creek?
- Linda P: We did drive the road a lot more than we do today because the conditions really were better then than now, once it was oiled each year by the loggers. And we sent a lot of notes back and forth through the mail lady.

Carl P: Or mailman.

Linda P: I think the only phone available was at the store.

Carl P: Yes.

Linda P: And that was it.

Gary: What did you do for other fun?

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

Carl P: Hazen and Ruth were really nice people.

Gary: Yes they were.

Carl P: When we put in our campground people would stop in and I would say, "Hey," well when I was putting it in we had outhouses around, so I had this kid working for me and the other kid too, but the one kid would get down inside the...what's that cement thing that had holes in it, about 5 feet deep and he would get down underneath there. We'd hand him boards and he would fill in so no animals would get in there or anything like that. Then he would 'ha ha ha' he would open up the lid of the toilet and he would 'hello' and we would laugh like mad. I said you know what? Let's get these people that stop in to visit with us like Dr. Hart, Dr. Funk. They would all stop out here to visit with us. So we would sit around the campfire time then I'd tell them, "Hey you guys have got to go with me. I want to show you the campground. The county made me dig clear to China. I want to show you the campground." So we would take off and show them the campground. I would show them our tables and our fire pits and everything. And we would walk by to the outhouses. Well we would get down to this last one here and we never let anybody use it see. Well when we would leave the kids would sit there and keep stirring the fire. So when they would see us clear out of sight they would run out there and lift up the lid on the toilet and the guy would crawl down in there and they would close the lid and back he would come to the fire and when we would go by and see us back here he would come back behind us and I would know everything was all set up see.

So we would come up here and I would say, "Hey, you've got to see how deep we had to dig this hole to China," you know. "I mean this county is really

bad.” “Okay.” The worst one was Ruth Lawson. I opened up the door and held it for her and I held it for her and she went in there. I said, “Here’s a flashlight,” so she lifted it. I said, “Look down in there.” So she lifted the lid and looked down in there and what was his name?

Linda P: David.

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

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

Linda: Oh really?

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

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

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

Linda P: That’s very recent.

Carl P: They will know that too.

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

Carl P: 10 or 11 inches I think it was, knocked trees all the way down. So what was his name up here?

Linda P: Ralph.

Carl P: Ralph Thayer had a chainsaw.

Linda P: Ralph Hemp.

- Carl P: Ralph Hemp, so he would cut the logs and we would throw them off the road see and we got to town that way.
- Linda P: We haven't experienced any flood here. Once in a while if we get a lot of heavy rain our hillside will sort of seep water out of it. We're very close to a hill there. It will get wet in the woodshed and things when you're walking around in water.
- Carl P: When the big floods came it would pick up the North Fork Road about 100 yards of the pavement and take it out in the field. Just take it out there 100 yards or so and drop it. There it is perfect. You could make your road like that if you wanted to you know.
- Linda: Did you see that happening?
- Carl P: No, we got there after it happened. We had been to town, turned back up and then stopped, don't go in because it's flooding you know. And so we went around it and came up to down there, what's the name of this big turn down there?
- Linda P: Rabbit Hill.
- Carl P: Rabbit Hill and we could see it was a mess. Water was coming the left, not from the right where the [00:28:12], so we stopped and there was a guy up there, a single guy up near [00:28:20 Val's] that come up with a big truck and he said, "What's going on?" I said, "Well it's flooding." I said, "Water coming from the left, that's the main river coming in here." He said, "Yeah, I've got to get up and feed my dogs," so he went on through. I said boy I hope he makes it you know. He did. Then he sold out later or he died I think. He said he had cancer. You remember his name?
- Linda: So your road flooded right here in front?
- Carl P: No, it never got up here.
- Linda P: Down towards the Ladenbergs.
- Carl P: It went across the road two or three places there.
- Linda P: Fairly recent. The first 25 years or so I don't remember any big fires, except in '67 we could see the huckleberry fire, but that sort of went into the park and didn't come up this way. So until '88 and early 90s we seldom had any concern about forest fire, seldom ever saw crews going out to put something down or anything.
- Carl P: #18 I'll tell you about a fire.

- Linda P: Not many other problems.
- Gary: Were there any other important events to you here?
- Linda: Generally pretty happy days at the campground and lots of friends and visiting, and lots of hiking.
- Linda P: [00:30:05] about that.
- Linda: Okay. Next let's see, leaders and characters. Sometimes small communities do have their characters and sometimes...
- Carl P: Well the hippies came in. They all built up there on what was I selling that land for up there?
- Linda P: That was Moose Creek.
- Carl P: Moose Creek, yeah.
- Linda P: Trail Creek.
- Carl P: They bought a bunch of that land and they brought in rice and flour and stayed for the winter, put up these slap-to log cabins. You could throw a cat between the logs. So the lady stayed until November and the kids left in about December. The guys left and haven't seen them since.
- Linda: Did they own land up there?
- Carl P: Yes. They just panned on it you know, made a down-payment on it and that was it.
- Linda P: Some of the young people that came did get land and eventually built and stayed.
- Linda: Any strange characters that you remember?
- Carl P: Well if you go by the guy we bought this place from, I mean he was crippled up from logging, would take about 6-inch steps.
- Linda P: The realtor.
- Carl P: The realtor, yeah. He had in his books the stilt man. Way back when the store was in the park they had a boat tied up there and you would come up on the North Fork side, you would fire a rifle, a one-shot rifle setting up against the tree there and they would get in the boat and come over and get you. You would go back over and get your supplies and come back and go up to your homestead. Well the Wurtz and all them, Mr. Wurtz he would walk to town 50

miles and carry a sack of 50...it was 30 or 40 miles, carry a 50-pound sack of hay – not hay, flour, different food sources, all the way back. He didn't have a horse back in those days. Pretty soon he finally got a horse though and that made life a lot easier for him you know. I forget where I was leading up to here.

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

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

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

Linda P: Charlie Green.

Carl P: I had more of his books. There were really good stories about the North Fork. I loaned them out and nobody ever returned them.

Linda: Charlie Green.

Carl P: Charlie Green. Get a copy of those.

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

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

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

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

- Linda P: Oh the most recent time we were here for Christmas just you and I?
- Carl P: Yeah.
- Linda P: The Lawrence's place. We came back in about '74 or '75 and spent Christmas.
- Carl P: At the Hemps that was quite a story, climbing up that hill there in our little forerunner.
- Linda P: It was fun to cut our own Christmas tree and the children made their own ornaments. That was fun and we were very comfortable in our cabin and went up mainly to the store area and socialized up there. I remember once Roy Cooper who was our neighbor for a while, he had a sleigh and he got horses and he took the kids and Carl went too for a sleigh ride up to the store. That was fun.
- Carl P: Yeah, then the ex-superintendent had a snowmobile and we went snowmobiling.
- Linda P: That's right. Yes.
- Linda: How about the 4th of July, what was that like in those days?
- Linda P: That was fun.
- Carl P: These nuts shooting 10,000 rounds.
- Linda: Was there always a parade here?
- Linda P: No. This was before the parade and they had a fish fry every year and so the guys would go out in the morning and fish and I think all the fish they used for the fish fry were fresh from the river that morning.
- Carl P: We 100 people, 50 people every time we was there.
- Linda P: 70 people there, and for a while then we also Carl conducted a skeet shoot for the guys to go up on the old Matheson homestead next door to the hall and they would be up there and I would get games together for the children, and we played games while they were getting to fry the fish and it was a big full day. We started working on it from 8 or 9 in the morning until 1 or 2 the next morning. The kids were asleep on the benches at the hall with the square dancing going on. Yeah, it was a fun full day.
- Linda: I can almost taste the fish.
- Carl P: I forgot that July 4th when the ladies got stuck up here at the north end of our place.

- Linda P: That was close to July 4th. It was July 3rd one year.
- Carl P: Well they came walking by down here and Dick and I were standing out there, Dick Smith that was my partner, had that big house down there, he's dead now, but we said, "What's up ladies?" They said, "Well we're stuck." I said, "Stuck? What are you driving?" They said, "A Volkswagen van." I said, "Oh you're not stuck. Let's go and I'll get it out for you." So we went up there and I just rocked it a couple of times and got them going you know. And so we got down here, we got out here and they took off, but it spun a little bit and they thought they was stuck you know.
- Linda: Did you say 10 inches of snow?
- Carl P: Yes.
- Linda: On the 4th?
- Carl P: Yes.
- Linda: My goodness. Okay, well now animals, do you remember any close encounters with animals?
- Carl P: Every night [Laughs]
- Linda P: Well we had very few encounters, but in recent years about '95 or '96 after a flood there was a grizzly in the field out there near Hay Creek and it was eating ground squirrels that had drowned in their holes in that field and he was out there about a month, a big grizzly. I mean a week. And so we hadn't seen it for over a week or so, so I decided it was safe enough I could go jogging again, and Carl used to ride the bicycle along. So we started out...
- Carl P: And two dogs, two nice dogs.
- Linda P: And my two dogs with me jogging too.
- Carl P: And these dogs were great. If they see a squirrel go across a mile down there they would take off after it you know. Go ahead.
- Linda P: But he was on the bicycle and got ahead of me as he passed [Miran] Creek and then a little ways up there...
- Carl P: Downhill, so I let it go freefall.
- Linda P: I heard him start to yell a few things and this big grizzly was coming down the hill on the left side. It must have been 3 or 400 yards that it came chomping its jaws and growling at me.

- Carl P: The trees were about this high and he was knocking them down as he was coming.
- Linda P: Yeah. And he was trying to stop the bicycle and get his pistol out in case he had to shoot.
- Carl P: I had a 44 magnum.
- Linda P: And he finally got it, but I heard him say, "Oh God he's still coming," and so he got that out, but then...
- Carl P: She was 100 yards me see.
- Linda P: When I got up there to him the bear stopped on the old North Fork Road which was in the trees a little bit. And it stood up and it was four of us there, us two and the two dogs but the two dogs didn't see the grizzly or sense it there luckily, and so.
- Carl P: Can I tell a little bit now?
- Linda P: Yeah, the bear went down on all four then and started walking down the old North Fork Road toward where our house is.
- Carl P: It scared me so bad charging right at me you know, coming down the hill. I jumped off... We faced traffic, I was going on the left hand side he's coming right at me see. So I jumped off the bike. One second later I had my 44 magnum in this hand and the bike in this hand and I'm saying to myself what do you do? Okay, one in the ground in front of him. If that doesn't stop him pour into him and do the last one in my mouth because if you wound a grizzly he will tear you to pieces. You don't want to live. He tore 300 stitches in this guy down here, what's his name?
- Linda P: At the merc?
- Carl P: He looked like a zombie in the paper. He's bandaged from his head to his toes. The thing had been shot once before and there was five of these guys hunting across the field in the trees there and the end guy, they didn't heard them, they heard some fumbling around over there and they came up on him and this grizzly just ripped him and tear him to pieces, so they shot the grizzly, killed it and took it to the taxidermy over in White Fish and he found an old bullet hole in it. So he was mad. He was going to get the next person and just tear him to pieces see. So anyway, when she came up he looked at her. He looked at those dogs and those dogs never saw the grizzly. They kept looking the other way. One of the them said to the other one, "Do you see anything?" "No, don't see a thing." Dern dogs. [Laughs]

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

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

Carl P: Every year the amount of people, the amount of camping doubles every year.

Gary: Hmm.

Carl P: Started off there was four up here, four people and they all had different views. They all fought – men and wife, men and wife. The next year there was eight, next year 16, 32, 64, 150,000 now see. Every [00:43:22] now there's 50 cars put in, 50 cars take out.

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

Carl P: Keep them out.

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

Carl P: The forest service changed their view. The first big fire we had up here a forester was riding in the back of a pick-up truck and a tree fell on him and killed him at nighttime. So they stopped all ever fighting a fire at night. That's the time you fight fires. It dies down and you go in and put it out see. You've got to take a few risks in life you know. But they had stopped that, so when this big fire was coming at us, coming over this hill right here by the store the helicopter comes down, he about turns over and he finally gets out there. The forest service they pulled up and they camped up here and so they saw the fire coming and so they pulled up the camp and went back to town. Every night I would go down there and look at the thing. It was 2 or 300 feet above the trees, that's how much fire was coming out. The gas went up about a mile and exploded over that area and over Logging Creek too. The people from White Fish and Kalispell called us 'what's going on up there?' said it looked like atomic bombs going off you know.

Well I'd go down there at 2 or 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning Linda and I and if it was closer we were getting ready to get out of here, but I had my fire stuff all set up then to fight it you know. I'm down there cussing at the forest service and the little girl walks up behind me. I'm standing there talking to a local firefighter. They saved every house, the local firemen from White Fish, Kalispell... I don't know about White Fish, but Kalispell, Columbia Falls,

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

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

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

Linda: Carl what about you?

Carl P: Nope, I think we got it all in there. Roy Cooper, he was a great guy. He lived next door to us. When the [00:47:37] grizzly came along here he spilled our moth balls. They left it alone and never touched it. Went over there and got his cabin, his tent, his trailer and over the restroom there's a little window up here, so he reached up there and tore the whole wall out see. Ran that way, ran into the kitchen, knocked the door out, threw all the cabinets out in the yard, got his grease out of that you know. Then came over to Mary's. Hit the wall there, hit the back door, knocked into two rooms there, went into the kitchen and she put out a few moth balls. But he pulled out a tray of silverware and it banged so he went out the same door he came in, so [00:48:21] North Fork and broke in 20 or 30 cabins. The only one on North Fork he went out the same door he came in. He went out the kitchen door.

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

Carl P: Well, I read this 40 or 50 years ago, a guy up in Canada, a logger said I got tired of going off in a bush there and putting my sleeping bag down and getting poked all night or my tent, so I decided I was going to sleep on the path that the grizzlies use all the time. But I threw some moth balls out all the way around me. I was ready to move if they came. He said they would come down ugh ugh, then they would go all the way around just breaking brush all the way

around you know. So I said that's it, so ever since then I've been putting a moth ball oh about 10 foot, 10 foot from the house all the way around, except when we leave I would dump them on the porch here and around the windows. We had one come in this door. He got to running so fast he knocked that door off and he didn't go in the house.

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

Linda P: You're welcome.

00:50:00

[End of recording]