

Cecily_McNeil_Fall_2011

Cecily was interviewed by Annemarie Harrod and Karen McDonough.

Annemarie: My name is Annemarie Harrod and today is Friday, September 16, 2011. Karen Sue Moss McDonough and I are interviewing Cecily Rideout McNeil for the first time as part of the North Fork History Project. This interview and Oral History Project are sponsored by the North Fork Landowners Association in Polebridge, Montana located in the North Fork of the Flathead in northwestern Montana. Our interview is taking place at Cecily and her husband Mac's home at 2969 [Roofaknock 00:00:43] Circle in Kalispell, Montana. To begin, would you tell us when and where you were born and also something about your early background before coming to the North Fork?

Cecily: I was born in San Francisco, California in December of 1923. My early background was to live in Merin County, California, a very beautiful place. I lived there until I was about 20 at which point I moved to the Midwest.

Annemarie: When did you come to the North Fork of the Flathead for the first time and how did you get there?

Cecily: Well, we were living in Chicago. I had two young children at an age of about 7 and 10, something like that, and I was very anxious to get them out of Chicago for the summer. I got a Volkswagen bus second-hand and planned to take it up and camp near my sister in northern Michigan. However, a man ran into me at an intersection. He had no insurance. He had no sense. He had no nothing. Fortunately I wasn't hurt and I couldn't use the bus for a while. And I went to work and during that time I felt quite anxious about getting away and I ran across an ad from Charlie Green who lived in [Korum] and he was a real estate agent and he said he had gorgeous places for sale and all this within the boundaries of National Park, Glacier Park. And I wrote to him and sent him 100-bucks earnest money on the place that he sent me a picture of. Had a big tall tree in front of it. It was a lovely log cabin and how great. I went out there and a long story short met him up in [Apgar] and he drove me 14 miles on this two-track dirt road up to the middle of nowhere which was Dutch Creek which was within the park. And we drove past a lovely cabin and it looked oh so nice, and he drove on down into this hollow into Joel [Palcus'] cabin which was the one for sale. And the tree that had been so beautiful was dead and I went into the cabin and ran my hand along the wall and this red dust came off in my hand and Charlie Green said, "Oh that's perfectly normal," and I said, "Well no it's not," and I said, "What about that cabin we passed that had a for sale sign on it?" He says, "Oh I don't know." "Yes, I want to look at that," and I bought it on the spot.

And I remember, long story short again, I thought I was being very sophisticated. I was then in my 30s and I said I have a lawyer here in town. I

had gotten one with a friend and I gave Charlie Green the lawyer's name and he said, "Oh yes, that's my cousin." Oh my. Anyway, I bought the place right then and there, and I was particularly anxious to get out of the city. My husband let me do this. He was very tolerant, but I was the one that really wanted to get out.

Annemarie: So getting out into a wild environment was that a deliberate choice or was there something in your background that brought you to that?

Cecily: Yes there was. I had not known my father except by the objects that he left behind. He died when I was 3½, and by his writings; he was a novelist, and his bookplate that was in a small engraving and that was part of him to me. And I would look at that whenever I opened a book and there it was, and it was a spruce tree under a cold winter sky with a legend from I think it's the 95th Psalm, and that's him to me. And I don't think I was consciously seeking for that, but the thought of a northern country and beautiful trees is something that I needed. And he was similar to me. I have a poem that he wrote when he was in New York City and it's very much what I would feel if I [00:04:45] those circumstances and they were similar and I didn't know it.

Annemarie: So he was born in Maine?

Cecily: Yes.

Annemarie: And then from Maine?

Cecily: A branch of his family had gone out to the central valley of California and were in a banking business there and my father went and stayed with them, and he was in California and met my mother there and that's how they met.

Annemarie: So when you came to the North Fork what was the social life like? How was it different from the other places, California where you were raised?

Cecily: Well, what was the North Fork like 60 years ago? There were no 20-room mansions built by people we never saw. People knew each other. There were hermits like Tom Reynolds and there were alienated people and I won't name names, but by and large we socialized, all of the whole community as you remember very well Saturday nights and then there was church on Sundays and that was a North Fork tradition.

Annemarie: Tell more about the church activity.

Cecily: I didn't go so I can't tell you. [Laughs] Not that I'm not religious but I just didn't go but it was there and they had the pulpit and the cross and all those things, so it was nice.

Annemarie: Did the minister come from the North Fork?

- Cecily: Yes, I think they recruited someone. I did go once or twice. There was a Episcopal minister came up there once from St. Mathews here in Kalispell. Anyway, yes, there was some contact there and it was a nice service. People went to trouble. And I gave you something that I wrote up about a church service that was held on a Sunday evening by the Fellowship of a Hungry Horse and that is just the way it was. I think you might want to use that.
- Annemarie: For the people who would be listening who don't know the North Fork can you talk just a little bit about that?
- Cecily: Our mailman was a man named Fred [Boss 00:07:04], a very nice and very good mailman and quite religious and he belonged to a group called I guess the Fellowship of a Hungry Horse. I think the building is still there and Hungry Horse, and they wanted to do a nice thing for us and they were going to have a church service on a Sunday night. My kids were then 19 sort of then, and came all these very pleasant women in their polyester suits with all kinds of cakes and oh goodness me and they hung up quilts that they had brought over the western window and the sun showing through it. It was like a stain-glassed window. It was really very nice. Well the candle had a mouse net in it and nobody could do anything with it. The generator went bad and they couldn't show the movie which was called The Valley of the Shadow of Death, a real loser and stuff, and they tried to convert various people who were not having any of being converted, but it was a well meant gesture. That was a one-time thing though.
- Annemarie: And you mentioned the mailman. What is your experience of the mail being delivered, I think it still is twice a week.
- Cecily: That's correct. And you had to get it out...into your box by the road by your driveway, you had to get it out there in the morning and I think the mail person would pick up your mail in the morning and then pick up...bring you mail in the morning and then pick up the outgoing so you could answer things in a hurry and pick up the outgoing on the way back down the line. After Fred Boss left there was another mailman whose name escapes me now who was very particular about the exact distances and orientations of mailboxes. He irritated some of the most common tranquil people in the North Fork with the things that he required [00:09:02] to me. And there was a group that came in recently, substitute mail people and they gave the most marvelous listing and the problems that they've had with mailboxes trying to find them and some were located in bushes and they went on and on about it, and I wish someone had recorded that because that was very funny. But by and large by experience I really admired the mail people.
- Annemarie: Apart from just the mail that they delivered did they deliver other things for you all?

- Cecily: Packages I think.
- Annemarie: Did they run errands like prescriptions?
- Cecily: For other people they did. They didn't have to do it for us but they did for some people. I think for Tom Reynolds it really quite important. I don't know a great deal about that but I believe that he and Becky Green who was then the mail person that she really helped him and she was with him I think at the end. That's what I've been told. That's a remarkable thing.
- Annemarie: He died in her arms.
- Cecily: Yes.
- Annemarie: He waited for her.
- Cecily: Oh my God.
- Annemarie: And he died, yeah.
- Cecily: Special.
- Annemarie: What about old-timers and homesteaders you knew? Can you talk about some of these people who are no longer with us?
- Cecily: I have notes. You hear me rattling paper. I'm sort of sounding like I'm reading, I'm reading. Residents who made an impression. Well they were the summer people and the year around people. By and large with certain exceptions the year around residents impressed me most. They were by and large friendly, receptive, and interesting, self-sufficient, versatile, and generous. The Holcolms though I didn't know them very well. The Wurtz's, Ms. Matheson who was our immediate neighbor, Ruth and Lloyd were homesteaders but they were very helpful and generous people and they never soured. Even when there was hostility one time against them they didn't sour against people, they didn't gossip. I thought they were wonderfully wise. The other neighbors of ours were Frank and Ethel Newton whom I didn't really know very well but I admired very much and Frank Newton helped me once when we rented a horse. He came in and looked at it and said, "You have that horse taken care of." Some man rented it with a cut in it [00:11:23] and he was a wonderful guy, but he was closer to Rachael Sweet and to the Sweets than he was to us, but they were great neighbors.
- Annemarie: Did you know Ralph Thayer also?
- Cecily: Slightly. I didn't know him well but I had some contacts with him. We needed to find out about a road that was in the North on the edge of our land and we went to visit him when he was already in the nursing home. We saw him at

gatherings. He was always very pleasant, very nice to people, but again I didn't really know him well.

Annemarie: But he was one of the original homesteaders.

Cecily: Oh yeah.

Annemarie: What about the Foremans? You knew Helen Foreman although she was not a homesteader.

Cecily: Hmm. One summer my husband was going to be teaching in the east and he brought us out to the cabin and got us all established and the understanding was and I've written ahead to the Hammers and I said I just don't want to spend another summer alone, can I rent a cabin from you? Although I had a cabin of my own I just couldn't take it.

Annemarie: This was?

Cecily: I don't know what year it was.

Annemarie: Who were you talking to?

Cecily: Walt and Hazel Hammer, and they were friends with the Foremans and Helen Foreman used to bring the Sunday New York Times down to them every week after she read it and that was how I met her. And then knowing her I met Orville and the rest of the family and became very good friends and that has a lot to do with the beginning of the Compact as a matter of fact.

Annemarie: Would you like to tell us about the Compact?

Cecily: When we get to question 7, somewhere in there, soon.

Annemarie: What about Grandma Matheson?

Cecily: Yeah. The first time I ever saw Grandma Matheson we were hammering away on the cabin or doing something, whatever crazy thing we were doing, usually water systems occupied a lot of your time as you well know. Somebody in a pretty divity sort of a calico dress or whatever coming through the woods and said she knew exactly where she was going and in fact her family had built that trail. And it was Grandma Matheson and we became very good friends, a very hospitable woman, religious, tolerant of me and my ignorance of the country. Her daughter was still alive and her daughter had some children so our kids played together and I sort of associate the Mathesons with something that happened having to do with a bear, but maybe you would rather wait until question 17 for that one.

Annemarie: You don't have to.

Cecily: Okay. My husband had just left. This was another summer and he was going to be teaching at Harvard and he got us all set up in the cabin, the Moose Creek Cabin. And that very night the kids came to me when I was sitting in the biffy and they said, "Mom, there's a bear!" And here in the carefully arranged bottles that my husband had sunk in the stream as refrigerators there was a bear getting in things, pulled it up and opened it up. You know how clever they are. So I had a gun that somebody lent me. [Moe Duvall] had lent me a gun. It was a 30-ought 6, a very good gun. I didn't know how to use it. I thought okay I'm going to get that bear. I wasn't afraid of anything. I was too dumb to be afraid and I stacked up a garbage can and some stuff on top that would make a lot of noise in the middle night. And in the middle of the night I heard clankity clank clank and I couldn't see much. I turned on my flashlight. I got out the gun and I shot at the bear. Well it was discovered later that I had shot the garbage can. Many years later they found the garbage can; the bear carried it off and made 5 holes in the screen. And people would dine out on that story or at least they used to, the silly woman from Chicago and what she tried to do.

Well the bear itself turned up at the Mathesons the next day. We were over having lunch with the kids and Grandma Matheson and Allen can tell you that story. Are you going to interview Allen?

Annemarie: I would like to hear it from you.

Cecily: He tells it better than I do because he lived through it really. Grandma and I and Grandma's daughter were in the cabin, the Matheson cabin and they were cooking. And the kids, Allen and Bruce and their Matheson friends were all out playing in the mini barn and outside areas that they have there and they saw the bear and they came rushing back to the house, "There's a bear" and we looked out, we didn't see anything and we thought they were kidding. And they were kidding that first time and they were kidding the second time they did that and the third time they were not kidding. It was a case of cry wolf. By that time we had locked the door so there was a great deal of foo-foo on, carry on. Well all...finally eventually they came in and we went into the kitchen and looked out and yes there bear getting into their spring and their food and their spring and so forth. I don't remember what we did. I think we got a fish & game person to come and shooed the bear off somehow, it took a little while, but that was the great bear story that people for many years they told that story on me, that first part.

Annemarie: Do you know Mary Peterson?

Cecily: Only to say hello and I've read her book and she was a great friend of the Hammers, so I knew her and the Hammers were also great friends with Tom Reynolds. That was the way you made friends. You knew someone like the Edwards and then the Edwards introduced us to the Mosses and then the Mosses introduced us to Frank Evans you know and then you met other people

and you went to the dances and you knew a lot of people. It was very nice. Apgar was not like that, believe me. They weren't... It's entirely different. I don't know very much about it, but huh-huh.

Annemarie: Now Apgar is?

Cecily: That's at the foot of the lake.

Annemarie: You were how far from Apgar?

Cecily: 14 miles.

Annemarie: When you were living in the park?

Cecily: Hmm.

Annemarie: Did you participate in Apgar life?

Cecily: No. We would shop there and there was no handle on it. They had their own world and it's a different kind of world.

Annemarie: Is it a different kind of social class?

Cecily: I wonder. I think so. I think some of the people were famous. I think some of them had a lot of money. Lakeside homes established. It was very different than the North Fork.

Annemarie: How would you describe the social class of the people in North Fork at that time?

Cecily: Well it was interesting because we had the summer people many of whom had vacations. They had time to get away. They were teachers. They may not have had much money but they had enough for those days and enough to afford a cabin or the rental on the cabin or whatever. Some of them worked. The first people we met were the Edwards' and Burt was a ranger at logging, and then we met her family.

Annemarie: Logging was where?

Cecily: Logging ranger station on Logging Creek in the park in the inner truck trail road.

Annemarie: Which is the west side of the park?

Cecily: Yes. It's right along and it's the east side of the river. It's the other North Fork Road in the park. It goes on up to Kentla Lake. But social class that's what I don't like to see now. I don't like to see the isolation of some of the people

who have bought land there. They're entitled... For example I have neighbors that are really I think quite nice people. He's the grandson of JP Morgan and I met his mother and she was very pleasant, but it was... I recognized it because I've seen it in other places. It was graciousness and lady-likeness and you never see them again. I heard about from Don Sullivan I think a place with I don't know how much square footage where they keep the generator on all the time now just to keep the water from freezing in the toilets or something, and the man only uses it for I don't know, a month a year if that. That's sad but of course they're perfectly entitled to do that, but there are always some who came just for the weekend and you might meet them and you might not and they were very often people from Columbia Falls and the valley and it wasn't the same as the summer people. They were pleasant. They were helpful.

But the people that I remember as the two social groups and it's hard to call them classes were the homesteaders, the people who lived there all year whom I admired by large and the summer people many of whom were teachers.

Annemarie: Is that similar to now the year arounders versus the summer people here?

Cecily: I think it's different now. Year arounders are probably facing some of the same challenges. They're coping with more. They're having more technology I think to help them to cope with things. I feel it's different in that way. I don't know any of them very well. I feel it has changed but I feel a basic spirit of an openness and pretty much a friendliness is still there and I think your generation Beverly and yours too are trying to promote that by doing more at the hall and having more gatherings and things like that. It's an effort to bring back something of what we once had I think. It seems like it. I'm not out there so much so I can't speak of that too well.

Annemarie: That's a real possibility because this year for the first time people were complaining that there's too much social life and that we needed to cut back because we were working too hard with all the projects we have going.

Cecily: Ask them what they really think is important I guess but I think to have something every Saturday night is important. It made me very sad when I see the hall and there was nothing going on on that Saturday night and I think all we needed was the records and a few people and it was fun, brought some mixed cake or whatever. Do you remember the cake that Helen Hunt Ramone brought to a 4th of July party?

Cecily: Cecily is addressing Karen here.

Karen: I don't recall it but maybe if you would jog my memory.

Cecily: It was decorated with the colors of our nation and maybe some others besides and it had pinecones all picked out on it and it was really something. I mean it

was fun. People were fun. They were different and individual and we had the hat dance, so many things that were... Different people specialized in managing those things. Ann Hanson was the wife of a son of a homesteader I think. She ran the hat dance. She planned for it and bought the prizes and she lived in California and it was wonderful. It was wonderful for the children. That was...I don't know if I got around to saying it. You were asking me about social life on the North Fork. The chance to meet, to know several generations of one family was absolutely vital to my family. We lived in the heart of Chicago where Barack Obama now lives. Nothing against him, don't get me wrong, but you can't exactly say it was friendly. It was a University of Chicago neighborhood. The people were not interested in getting to know you. They would say does your husband work for the University? Oh yes, the University of Illinois. Oh, yeah. It was really difficult for me. There again I crossed trails with my father who said he didn't like living in Marin County which was sort of a bedroom community of wealthy people and he went back to Maine and he said, "It's wonderful for my children to see a community where people know each other." This is what I got here and it's more important to me than the scenery by far.

Annemarie: We missed when you move from Dutch Creek to the...

Cecily: Yeah, that was interesting. Burt Edwards was directly involved with that. We loved Dutch Creek but we were a little bit lonely. You know we went out through Apgar and Apgar was not at all interesting as I say. And we got to know the Edwards because I went up to camp logging with the children or something and they were so kind and so hospitable. And I remember one night when the kids and I and Thelma and Burt were all in the cab of his truck and we went up to look at the Cummings Ranch which was up just east of Logging and up towards Quartz, a terrible road of course. And we were coming down and Burt said to me, "Cecily you must get land on the North Fork before it goes sky high. Amen. And I got busy on it that very year, and I got our old Nash and I went off with it with the two children and then in those days you had back down to Apgar and up and all the way around Columbia Falls and stuff to get on the North Fork Road, and we wrote down each place we thought looked interesting. And we came down towards where the Newton's driveway is now, the [Schnaus] place and everything. It was just a beautiful view that opened up for us the first time and I wrote it all down in accordance. I had a geological map with me. And later I was talking to Thelma and she said, "Oh Stone Street has a place to sell there." Stone Street had cabins near Polebridge, near where Ben Rover's cabin. They were the men who made buses into houses.

Annemarie: Ron Wilhelm.

Cecily: Yeah, I know the name and that was where... Stone Street was across from that. Anyway we bought from them and they drove us... Stoney drove us in a

snowy day. It was just beginning to snow. It was September and we pulled off on that road and he said, "This ain't no [bully hard]". He had an old Studebaker and up we went and we parked by the old cabin. I didn't even look at it. It just looked like derelict to me. We walked over. I think we'd been on the land 5 minutes if that. We walked over to the stream and here was this spring. I said 'sold' and everybody thought I was insane to pay \$4,000 for 100 acres of land. Duh!! [Laughs]

Annemarie: What year was that?

Cecily: We signed the deed in 1959 and then we were going to dances at MacFarland's already and we knew quite a few people and we started going to the hall, the landowners' and so on.

Annemarie: Were there any rangers that you knew that you can tell us about?

Cecily: Not very well but we knew Adolf Olpaca. When we were in the park we were in his district and oh he was fun. His brother had a cabin further on down and another brother of his had a cabin next to that between the two, Leopold Olpaca and there was Joel Olpaca who had the cabin I thought of buying at one time. And Adolf would come in in his green car that they had you know and he said, "Well now if you're having trouble with bears, and we have trouble with bears in Dutch Creek because that's where they dump the [bum bears] from Agpar and you would see this bear with its rump with a red splotch on it and you knew it was bad news. At the time, well anyway I'm digressing, but Adolf said, "You keep a 22 here and you just swang the thing in butt and [00:27:02] a bear" and we did. [Laughs]

At the time we had a dog that I think thought the bears were really quite cute and was interested in them and we put the dog... We didn't know that, we put a French Poodle, a standard, and we put it outside to chase the bear and it would go over and water the poppies instead which he wasn't supposed to do with the patch of poppies there and was very friendly with the bear. Oh no, it didn't help at all, but I remember shooting at a bear and I guess I hit it because it went and sat in the cold water for a minute to cool its rump off and off it went. But I like bears so I don't like to shoot at them, but we didn't kill anything and I don't think we caused anything to die a lingering death, but it was nerve-wrecking. You never knew when they were going to be around.

Annemarie: If you had bear spray at that time would you have used it instead?

Cecily: I would have carried it. I certainly would have carried. I mean every time you went out to go to the bathroom biffy you had to think, and we've marooned by various animals in the biffy but never a bear.

Annemarie: How far did you have to walk from your cabin to the biffy?

- Cecily: Oh not terribly far. 300 feet, not bad. By the way, our generator at that cabin had been Charlie Russell's generator. You know he had a cabin by the lake and [00:28:15 Duvall] had acquired, so we still have Charlie Russell's generator.
- Annemarie: Tell us about who Charlie Russell is.
- Cecily: Oh I don't know very much about him. He's a western painter. He painted cowboys and Indians, an interesting man. I don't know if you know it but he did an artwork down at what used to be Cutney Lodge which was down on the Swan River, a beautiful place and I don't know what's become of it now, and he did barefoot prints and drawings and things in the cement there of a patio. Thelma Edwards knew him. They had an artwork by him in their house she told me. She didn't know what had become of it. It was kind of a diorama or something. Interesting isn't it?
- Annemarie: Yes it is. What organizations did you belong to and if you would like to talk about any or all of them.
- Cecily: For my sins I was once actually president of the NFIA as it was then and then in those days all we did was to talk about whether we were going to have chicken sandwiches or tuna sandwiches. There were occasionally very bitter meetings usually involving paving the road or not.
- Annemarie: And this was about what year?
- Cecily: Oh this would be late... I was president of that thing in 1977 and Frank Evans was very concerned about the future of the North Fork as we all were. We knew what could happen with one man and a bulldozer and money backing him.
- Annemarie: Who would that be?
- Cecily: Well Frank Evans was concerned and he got up in front of one of the meetings at the NFIA I think when either I or my husband was president of it and said we have to do something about zoning this area or we're going to lose it. And he was right of course. The word 'zoning' was as if you had injected somebody with fiery I don't know what and people just went bananas over that subject. They didn't want anybody telling them what to do. It's just a current and American psyche that still exists as you can see it today. I never encountered it and it never occurred to me to worry about such a thing. You made plans and you tried to do something and oh my goodness. Well, the fall meeting that year, I'll never forget it, I was late to it. I had the wrong idea and I got there late and this was the end of my term for that summer and I had proposed that we send out a zoning petition. I went into the hall and Linda Pittman was the secretary then and the entire south wall of the hall was lined with great big beefy men whom I had never seen before in my life who had been brought

there by Ross Wilson who was very much opposed to zoning of any sort. And it was a ghastly meeting and they didn't want any part to do with that.

So not too long after that, it was about the time that I was bringing the cookbook out and it sold well and it made – I don't know that I brought it out as a charity thing; it sold well enough that I had enough money to do a zoning petition and that was how it was done. I wasn't president of the thing anymore and the Compact did it. I will talk about the Compact in a minute. We send out a zoning petition and you have to have 60% of your landowners voting positive to have... We didn't get that. Most of the out of state people voting for zoning but the Montana residents and so forth either didn't vote or voted twice against it or whatever, you name it, so it didn't go through. And gradually though over the years as zoning became called something more friendly somehow land use planning was more acceptable. You had beginning to work on it and of course we now have a neighborhood plan out there, but that was sort of the background for that.

The Compact which I mentioned started about 1973. I hate to tell you, but I think it was my idea because I was so worried about changes, and Mac agreed with me and then we talked to the Foremans and people from Illinois who knew urban areas and were worried. So it was they that pretty much signed it and I have for you here a list of the original signers of it which I thought you would like to have.

Annemarie: Yes.

Cecily: I forgot to give that to you. I've got it right here; I typed it up and something of the history of the Compact. And it is a land covenant. It went into effect in 1973. It covered at that time about 1,500 acres and so I imagine some of it's gone back to the forest service, I see they have it. The Sondresons for example they signed it and their land is now Forest Services you know. It meets every year the second Monday of August and its stipulations the main ones are no commercial development on your land. If you sign you don't want any commercial development, and no acreage sold. Now it's less than 20 acres. We started out with 5 acres and I want to explain that, because Robert Funk was very active in the beginnings of the Compact and he had 5 acres and it was politeness to him. But then about 1991 Baird was chairman of it and sent out a petition to the voters from the Compact to change to 20 acres because that brings it in line with the county. That's all I have to say about the Compact, but I felt I should say something because I do know about it.

Annemarie: Ralph Thayer also signed it right?

Cecily: Yes, he certainly did. He's on that list. Yes indeed.

- Annemarie: I wonder how it was that once he was dead the people that bought the land from him before he died could subdivide some of his property into less than even 3.
- Cecily: Yes. I didn't fight that. It may have been something that was grandfathered in some way. I don't understand it myself.
- Annemarie: Do you know when Ralph died, what year?
- Cecily: I think it was in the 80s.
- Annemarie: So he died long after this went into effect?
- Cecily: Yes.
- Annemarie: Where is the North Fork Compact...
- Cecily: The actual document?
- Annemarie: The actual document that shows up on peoples records, where is it recorded?
- Cecily: It's recorded at the County Court House. It should be on each person's deed and they have it in their electronic system there.
- Annemarie: Because it doesn't always show up on peoples...
- Cecily: This is another worry. It used to be recorded in something called the Flowered Binder. I mean this was some very informal county...my understanding is that it's now in the electronic system, but it's there. It's a great worry to me because the history of land covenants generally don't last more than about 30 years. The original impetus and enthusiasm is dissipated very often either among the heirs of a family or necessity, or people buy a piece of land that they don't give a damn.
- Annemarie: What other organizations did you participate in?
- Cecily: Oh the Preservation I belonged to, or at least I'm very enthusiastic about it. I don't always remember to pay my dues and so I said everything I think I belong to.
- Annemarie: Do you want to know about the North Fork...the Polebridge Mercantile and it's history and the people who owned it?
- Cecily: Who were the first owners that I knew? Was it Ross? Yes, I do remember. I remember them and I remember that they had the post office in there which was a great convenience. It was charming you know, old time thing, the window with one of those grills. I remember. Then I think the Olsons bought it

from them. Is that right? I think so. This is my recollection anyway, and that was a man and wife and they were very industrious and they put in an adjunct which is now no longer there which they had pool tables and they were good about helping to change tires and pump gas and were very industrious people, but they were new to the area. They were there like 7 or 8 years. And then Karen Feather she was and some other people bought it and Karen Feather pretty much ran it I believe after that. She had started the saloon. I'm very fuzzy on dates about that. That was the coming in of sort of the hippie generation and I considered her and I considered John Frederick to be a hippie and I looked at John Frederick with a great askance and I thought on my goodness. And of course I've come to admire him very much, his persistence, and the fact that he has never been vitriolic about people. I think it is so difficult not to. There have been all kinds of feuds and difficulties that have developed up there and he's never been really that I know of a part of it. He's had his difficulties with various things, but I've never known him to be mean. I admire that.

Annemarie: Speaking of feuds, do you have recollection of any feuds that you haven't talked about?

Cecily: Only slightly, because we lived down at the Hammers and we knew them so well and we were directly affected by their attitudes. Apparently as I understand it, and I'm not really an old-timer so I may have this wrong, they wanted to have the post office down on their land down by the river and people would have had to drive all the way in. And opposing them were other persons including probably the Holcolms and Ruth and Lloyd, and the bitterness on the part of the Hammers was just unbelievable. It was still there in 1977 at least which was shortly before they left the area and moved away. I went in to see them on some kind of business and they had been very close to us. They had been very friendly with Allen and they had said 'he's like our son' and all this. He worked for them. They didn't want anything to do with us because we had something to do with the North Fork Improvement Association and they associated that with Ruth and Lloyd and with the mail probably, delivery of the mail, all of that.

I didn't understand it at all. And I saw them years later. They remained friends with certain people and they made friends with the Chrismans for example who asked them up to stay. I was so glad to see them and went over to the Hammers and went over and said, "It's so sad we lost touch." It didn't do any good. It was a deep deep bitterness. It was very very sad, and you could tell when people had spent a whole winter up there with the exception of the Holcolms because their ideas were kind of skewed. And I think that Walt and Hazel Hammer re-enforced each other and he would say 'yes dear I think so' and she would say something and he would say 'yes dear I think so'. I think it was like mirrors reflecting each other and it just [00:38:55] a huge ball of wax.

They were better if they had been out for the winter. Anyway, I liked them very much and that's always made me very sad.

Annemarie: Going back to the land use issue, when and why did you feel that we needed to have land use planning? Is there a certain point in...?

Cecily: It would have been in the late 1960s. So we had sort of adjusted. We were building a place at Moose Creek. We could see what was happening. There were more people coming in. The only kind of planning that we ever heard anything of was when we were talking to a neighbor and he said, "Oh if they tried to do that I would just shoot them." Well, they didn't seem adequate to us and we came from a urban area and came from Wren County originally and things were pretty well planned. I just thought it was the civilized thing to do. Actually the Compact was the first with its restrictions on those who signed. It was the first zoning effort in this county. I've been told that by a planner here. Yeah, that's really something.

Annemarie: So you saw an influx of...

Cecily: People and there was nothing to keep it from just being divided into a million whatever.

Annemarie: Did you have a realtor on the premises in the North Fork or was the property being marketed in the valley?

Cecily: I can't answer that for sure. Certainly it was being marketed in the valley. Charlie Green was very active there. He wanted to sell me what became Rachael Sweets' place. It was \$11,000 at the time for 300 acres or something like that I imagine. But I never wanted [riparian] property. I couldn't afford it anyway then, but I never wanted [riparian] property because we lived on the Russian River or near it in California and we knew what can happen, people coming through your land all the time. Can we pause that for a bit?

Karen: Yes. After a short break I'm Karen McDonough and I'm going to do a couple of questions for you. We would kind of like to know what kind of transportation you used back when you first started as opposed to now on the roads.

Cecily: You mean personally we as a family?

Karen: Yes.

Cecily: For us it was Volkswagen bus all the way, and when we first came out here I had a bus that I bought second-hand in Chicago from a would-be sculptor and it was the one that was run into by the old man who didn't have insurance. It didn't very well. It went across the continent I don't know how many times and we even used it in the winter at home, and it was an old-type bus. It had a

divided windshield and you had to ratchet out the windshield. If you were driving up in Canada which we did one time we just opened up and we could see everything and the dust was behind us because there were no cars, a car. And we camped in it. Oh my, it was super.

Karen: What were the roads like back then?

Cecily: Not good, particularly after winter and after a lot of logging and so forth and if they put down oil it was worse. The edges of the potholes were deeper. There was no paving by [Home Ranch Bottoms] at all. That went in very suddenly. A county commissioner who was friendly with the landowner down there put it in in a hurry.

Karen: Tom Ladenburg?

Cecily: Hmm.

Karen: Do you remember what year that was by any chance?

Cecily: No I don't. I'm very bad on that. I think the 70s.

Karen: Can you remember anything that you had to carry in your cars then as opposed to what we do now?

Cecily: Yes. When the fire danger was high we had to take an ax, bucket, and shovel and there were signs that reminded you to do this. We usually carried water. We went on a lot of picnics in the bus. One of the things we loved most to do was to go onto the forest service roads and explore back in White Fish Hills and we called it taking a jitney. We packed a picnic lunch and either all 4 of us would go or just one of the boys when they grew up and I let them drive back in there, well it was one of the great joys. We discovered things that to other people was commonplace. We didn't know about Whale Falls for example and there it was and the bubble ups, that was all discovery for us you know in the cave. So many wonderful things.

Karen: I believe that you also discovered the Indian trails at that time too didn't you?

Cecily: Well in a way. I realized that it was there. Somebody told me perhaps and I saw it where it goes on that [ski] slope where you can see it above [00:43:39]. That was the first of it that I saw and then I got very interested in it later when the children were grown and my husband would drive me up there and he would sit and read and I would go down and hike around in the bushes and find a trail and measure it by pacing it you know and all that. Still there are things to be found. Duke [Hailand 00:44:00] says that there's another cave that's lower down and he intended to explore for that. He was talking about it last summer.

Karen: Can you think of anything else with driving that you guys really enjoyed?

Cecily: I didn't particularly enjoy driving at night. I'm not answering your question, but I can remember driving from the MacFarland's dances down to the Dutch Creek Cabin which was a long way at night, usually at midnight and the weird things that you would see. There were some birds that took dust baths or something in the middle of the night. I don't know what they were but they were down in the road and kind of bathing themselves. There was the inevitable bunny hopping along lumpity lump. We didn't see deer or anything like that and I don't think we saw anything big. Anyway, that car was... The car I think I sold it to Mo Duvall and somebody used it years later and we got a more modern version of it, and so I have that now.

Karen: Can you remember how you got a hold of each other?

Cecily: Communication? Yes. There were no phones. There were no cell phones certainly. There aren't now really. When we first came up there were no radio phones except for the government. You communicated with people because you saw them on the road or you drove to their place and whatever it was you had to talk about and I remember many instances of that, or you saw them at the store or the dance or the meeting you know, and then you got your business done or you wrote them if you really had to and then that's how you issue invitations and you'd keep in touch, that kind of thing. There was one phone line. You may remember it. It ran I think from Ford Station up to the Hammers and then I don't know where it went from there and it had been abandoned by the Forest Service and taken over sort of by the local residents and it was a party line and it was plenty weird. It was the crank-type thing and Allen said lightening would hit down by Ford Station and would travel all the way to Hammers and go zap on their back porch. [Laughs] It just sounds horrible for me, really horrible. [Laughs]

Annemarie: I think the CCC, the Conservation Corp of America workers installed the telephone line.

Karen: In that same vein we would like to know some of the things you did for fun.

Cecily: Now that's the question I brought up that nobody who were summer people like us would think of that. I mean every day we did a lot of the things, but it wasn't as if our life were divided into fun and not fun is what I'm trying to say. There was work and that was sort of fun, like my husband being stark naked and doing all this stuff. [Laughs] Hammering away up there. Anyway, we did do some things that were special. We had treasure hunts just in the family. I'm trying to think. The hiking was fun, the hikes we took. The group things that we did were fun and the dances were fun and you could classify that as fun, but I still find that to me it's a strange question. I could understand it if we spent

the winters. I can understand it in Chicago where you want to get away. It's just amusing to me.

Karen: For an explanation I think so many people don't realize we had like you said fun the whole time.

Cecily: Yes.

Karen: Everything we did.

Cecily: Not that we didn't work. Not that we didn't have problems and break our ankles and get bee stings and what have you, but it was...yeah.

Annemarie: Karen you came to the North Fork at what age?

Karen: I was about 5.

Annemarie: You have a long history.

Karen: Yeah. Could you kind of tell us the times you took trips and hikes with just the women?

Cecily: Well, I think there were generally some men along the trips that I remember the ones that I have pictures of, the ones at Huckleberry were the [ASIS and the AASE] was a lovely young couple that were manning that lookout. And I believe Evans, the Evans' were on that, your mother and kids I think, Edwards boys I believe were on that. Thelma was certainly on it because I remember your mother and Thelma hiking down the trail ahead of me and I just couldn't catch up with them. They were just yak yak yak. They had known each other for years. They were very friendly with me but there was this old habit. We hiked Cyclone and I remember Edna Evans on that hike. We climbed up the height of the building there, the lookout, and I think you were on that. I remember you being on that.

Karen: You remember it with good thoughts, right?

Cecily: Yes, I do, I really do. I don't have any bad thoughts there. I don't there was anyone I really disliked. There might have been some people I was kind of scared of. But I must tell you talking about a lookout... Before I do excuse me, I'm going to go back a little bit. You asked about the hiking. We went up to logging and that was kind of interesting. We stayed under the overhang of the old Snowshoe Cabin at the Logging Lake and that was your mother and Thelma. I don't think you were on that. I was on that and then there was a couple of people from like from New York who were just hikers and they went along with us. I don't think Allen was on that. There were some other people but I can't remember who. Maybe Ed Evans was on that, I don't know.

Anyway, at that point I fancied myself a great fisher woman. I had some fancy gear and I went out on the South side of Logging Lake and I was going to catch me a fish. And later I got back to the cabin and your mother and Thelma were just in stitches or something. They said, "Did you know that there was a bear watching everything that you did?" And that's in the cartoon book and I didn't know anything about it. ...about 20 feet away from me and I was happy. What a dummy I was. Anyway, I remember that. Now, I want to tell you the story, I don't want to forget this. This is the darndest thing that happened to me. I was very kind of a straight-laced person. I had been brought up to be very proper you know, girls school and dancing school and everything, so getting out here was the wonderful for me. I had more freedom than I ever had. And so we would go down, when we lived in Dutch Creek we would go down where [Canvas] and Dutch Creek joined together which is now sort of overlooked by the road, but at that time it was really isolated. There was no Canvas cut off and the waters ran warm over wide beds of pebbles and so they were warmed up from the sun and we would go down and we were swim. And not only that we didn't wear any clothes. Why should we? There was nobody anywhere around. Well duh, there was somebody up there with binoculars looking down at everything. Not only that, he told people about it so that I think it was 2 years later Grandma Matheson and I were up on Center Mountain huckleberrying and here comes this forest service person. He said, "Oh you shouldn't be up here by the way, the road is closed," because they were blasting or something. I said well... Anyway, he said, "What's your name?" I said it and he, "Oh, you like to swim don't you?" And something in my stupid brain clicked on and Grandma Matheson was real smart. She said she had asked someone they said they could see every hair on your chinny chin chin. I was so upset by that. [Laughs] And I wondered how many people thought I was an absolute idiot, but then we had fun.

Karen: I think that's probably a good part to stop don't you? We'll all take a rest and we'll try to have another date to set up and take some more question.

Cecily: Yes.

Karen: Thank you so much.

Cecily: You're very welcome. Thank you for doing this. This is a big undertaking. Can I give you some hot soup or something?

00:52:12

[End of recording]