

Lee_Downs_Feb__2011

This interview was conducted by Tom Edwards.

Tom: My name is Tom Edwards. Today's date is February 29th of 2012 and I'm interviewing for the first time...Lee Downs and Marietta Downs. The interview is taking place at 389 4th Avenue in Columbia Falls. The interview is sponsored by the North Fork Landowners Association and is part of the History Project. So then Lee the first question I have for you is where were you born and when were you born?

Lee: I was born in 1928 about 4 blocks from here.

Tom: Really?

Lee: Yeah.

Tom: So you're a Montana native.

Lee: I'm a real native.

Tom: Marietta how about you?

Marietta: I was born in 1936 at Mason City, Washington, now known as where the Columbia Dam is.

Tom: Okay. So the City is gone, right, under water?

Marietta: Yeah.

Tom: Okay. So if you were born in Columbia Falls you've but been up to the North Fork all your life.

Lee: That's right. My granddad and my mother homesteaded just North of Columbia Falls here, about 3 miles from here. And when I was a boy I used to herd my grandfather's cattle up along the North Fork Road for pasture. After the 29 fire he didn't have as much you know and I did that a lot. Actually the North Fork Road goes in about the same direction, but from Columbia Falls to Big Creek it's not in the same locations that it was. It just touches on where it was. And when the North Forkers they would start north Columbia Falls, they would use Cedar Creek. It's Crystal Creek now, but for reference they would have 1st cedar, 2nd cedar, 3rd cedar, it was bridges across the creek. When you got up there to about 3 miles north you could go over Parker Hill. It was the Jimmy Neal that was built and in the spring of the year some of the guys would go that. It was a little bit drier than down in the bottom where the road is now and they just went that way. They just used, for reference they would say well it's 2nd cedar and such and such.

- Tom: So was it a trail that just kind of grew into a road as people used it in the beginning that you remember?
- Lee: Yeah. It wasn't plowed until oh in the late 40s they started plowing it a little bit, but before that it wasn't plowed. Yeah, we lived out there by the aluminum plant. The road that would be drifted shut and it sometimes be a week before the county got it open. I can remember one time my dad and my granddad was in the wagon. It must have been about 32, we was going right...the first 1 Cedar Creek, we was in a wagon and the water was up to the box on the wagon. Cedar Creek was...there was nothing to hold it back and it had just been burned the whole country and there was just water all over.
- Tom: So the water would have been up to the horse's belly? You had horses at that point?
- Lee: It was right up to the wagon box. I wanted to get the edge of the wagon box and look out and they wouldn't let me. They made me sit in the middle of the wagon.
- Tom: Did you know how to swim?
- Lee: No. I was still wearing three-quarter pants.
- Marietta: He's never learned how to swim.
- Lee: And in the early days at 2nd Cedar during fire season the Forest Service had a camp, it wasn't a camp it was just a resident forest service guy, anybody that would come down the road had to stop going up to the North Fork and they had to have an axe on one bucket. They had to be in good condition or they couldn't go, they just wouldn't let them go. They just had to turn around and go get the stuff or whatever.
- Tom: So let me ask you this question, this is jumping ahead a little bit, but how old were you when you actually moved up the North Fork to the location that those of us today would know as your place?
- Lee: Well, when I got out of the service I bought a place up there in 1953. That was my mustering out pay out of the army, and that was Cyclone Park. You could go there in the fall of the year in November and there were deer all over. You could just sit there and pick out the one you want. But it's changed. They've just about eliminated the game on Coal Creek. There's no moose left to speak of. I've seen two moose all through the year, and I think it was the same moose.
- Tom: [Laughs] That could be. That could well be.

- Lee: Yeah, yeah. They had... Fool Hen Hill used to have dry bridges on it. There was three dry bridges and it was quite a deal and it was always sliding in. I can remember it must have been about 55 or 56 it was and I come there one morning and there was ten feet of dirt in the road and the ranger was on top of there and he says, "Well where are you going?" I said, "I was going up to do some erosion work." He thought a minute and he says, "I'll tell you what, you take my pick-up and go to work and I'll take your pick-up and go to town." He says, "I've got to go to town." So I traded him pick-up right there and I come there that night about 5:30 or 6 o'clock and there was the ranger standing on top and he says, "You're going to be here in the morning." I says, "I got to get a way to work." He says, "There's a pick-up on the other side," and he says, "Use it." That was Bud Paul.
- Tom: All right.
- Lee: He wound up to be supervisor over in Idaho.
- Tom: So a wood bridge was that to hold the road kind of on the hill?
- Lee: It was so steep that the dirt they put out went clean to the river.
- Tom: Interesting that you called it a wood bridge. I thought I understand what you were talking about.
- Lee: Two dried bridges and that was one of the road marks, the dried bridges you know. And just before you get there there was a logging camp. Tom Lee and Jim [Evans] had a logging...and they drove...they put logs up there all winter and they dumped them in the river there over by the chute there at the rapids there at Fool Hen and floated it to Summers and sold the logs to Summers.
- Tom: Oh, so that was the way of getting them down into...
- Lee: That was the farthest the North Fork was ever to go but from Korum down and through that area there they had quite a few log drives in that area.
- Tom: In 53 you bought your place you said?
- Lee: Yeah.
- Tom: Did you build up there then right away and move up there?
- Lee: Yeah, I think I built in 55, yeah. The Forest Service thought they owned that place. They had the cabin there and the guy that bought the place he asked the foresters whose cabin that was and they said, "That's ours," and he says, "Well I own the place, I was wondering." And then he says, "No, you don't own it," and they went and checked and they found out they didn't own it. And it stayed there until 48 and then they moved it out. They moved it up the creek

and they used it for a scaler shack for a couple of years and then they moved it to Ford, and then they said they was going to get rid of all the buildings and I asked if I could buy it. And then about ten years later they gave it to me, that building.

Tom: It took them that long to decide huh?

Lee: Yeah. It took a long time but I finally got it back.

Tom: Other than surviving what was your job for making pay, money, groceries?

Lee: I logged in the woods pretty much, salvaged logs and then I contracted to the Forest Service piling brush and whatever, things like that. And then I got a lot of erosion jobs, go out and fix erosion jobs in different places.

Tom: Let's clarify what an erosion job was. Were you working on the river or a creek or a road? Some of us don't know what an erosion job would have been back then.

Lee: I've been in every drainage of the South Fork, Middle Fork, North Fork working for the Forest Service. I had a CAT, a truck and I could stop and do a job and move, sometimes I'd move six or seven times a day and do different places and doing little jobs for them, things like that.

Marietta: And the erosion work involved what?

Lee: Well [00:10:23] have a ditch plug where somebody was getting wood or whatever and I would do that. And then sometimes just there would be washouts in the spring and you would go around and do all that repair work.

Tom: So were you a contract employee or a regular employee?

Lee: I was a contract employee.

Tom: Did you ever go regular for the Forest Service, a full-time or part-time Forest Service employee?

Lee: No, just part-time on fires and things like that. I remember one time I was going to work and we spotted a fire. We went down and me and Bud [Ferrick] had done a bunch of hand work and got it stopped and then a Forest Service guy come by but told them there was still fire there. And Pete Darling was working for the Forest Service, and anyway he come up and I showed him where the fire was. And guess what? A week later there it was, I got a check for fighting fire because of how long I had been there. They was really good them old forest employees.

Tom: Well that sounds pretty fair.

- Lee: They was. They was real fair years ago. Yeah, you do a good job and you didn't have to look for a job; they would just come and get you every year. I would sign a contract for 5 or 6 years in advance what I was going to get paid and that's the way it went. Then I done a lot of salvage log and then they logged in square blocks up the South Fork and they didn't think it looked good so they would go along and feather them out. You know you go on the edge and go back in. I done a lot of that type of logging and brush piling and stuff.
- Tom: Did you have to pay stumpage for that?
- Lee: Yeah, you had to pay stumpage. Sometimes it was a pretty good deal. Sometimes you got it for 2 or \$3 a thousand and you could afford to come in and if there was a couple of loads of logs you could come out on it. Yeah, they had it all figured out you know what it could cost you and what you should make. They was real fair.
- Tom: One of the things that my dad who is a graduate forester from Missoula always told me and I've since began to wonder if he was misinformed or lying to me, he said, "Well they practiced, sustained, yield so that they can continue to log forever." Being you were a logger did you see where they were trying to make the forest last forever?
- Lee: Yes, but the Forest Service had a lot of bad things. You had the spruce bark beetles and they would come in and they would just take the trees out and it didn't really work, so they would just go in take big blocks of trees out and then the bugs would still continue to the other timber you know. They would take like Red Meadow and Canyon Creek and Big Creek. You know it wound up with just huge clear cuts. Well it really wasn't their fault, they were just trying to manage the timber. It was the thing to do because if you would have left it go there was drainage where they would have to go and you couldn't even walk in them with the down timber and stuff. Spruce doesn't last very long you know. Six or seven years and it's all on the ground if you don't log it.
- Tom: Well and they can kind of gauge that against some of the Park Service land too. In places there it's piled up 10-feet high like pick-up sticks.
- Lee: Yeah. Then they've got it in the lodge pole they got a pine beetle in that and the park was over there and they didn't log and it just took the whole North Fork. It's just really hard to manage something like that.
- Tom: Across the river from you, Sullivan's Meadows I'm sure you're familiar with that place.
- Lee: Sullivan? Yeah.
- Tom: At one point they logged some private property in the park. Were you familiar with that? Because you can see it from outside.

- Lee: The Johnson Boys log that and they're good friends of mine. The park had really a lot of restriction. They couldn't haul lumber until after 5 o'clock at night and things like that. They made it as difficult as possible. In fact the Cummings place they wanted to log that. They had to take logs out of there they had to take some timber off the park so they could make the corners with the logging truck and the park wouldn't cooperate at all and so all that timber went to waste. I was offered the logging job if I could get it out of there, but there was no way you could do it with the park and the restrictions they had.
- Tom: Do you know or did you work with any horse loggers in your day?
- Lee: Yes. I had even done some. My dad and my granddad were horse loggers.
- Tom: How did you like that? What did you think of it?
- Lee: Well, it was a lot of hard work. It was a lot of really hard work and you had to have good horses, well-trained. Yeah.
- Tom: Was that kind of logging light on the land?
- Lee: Well, yeah. You would get out there and you come back in later years and log where they horse logged and if the trees were real big they left them because they were too difficult to skid with horses, and so they left them. They even had wooden and arches and stuff to lay logs, but that stuff was expensive and most of the guys couldn't afford it.
- Tom: Let's get back outside the park. So talk to me about the town of Polebridge or the community of Polebridge.
- Lee: Yeah, there wasn't much there in the early days. The store was there and that was about it and Polebridge where all the lots are was a big hay meadow.
- Tom: I know that. I hayed that for Ted Ross one summer.
- Lee: Did you? A big hay meadow. And the elk used to come there in the spring and the deer and of course that's gone now. But if you had a hay field and had any type of clover or alfalfa in it they would eat it down until you couldn't get a crop off it. They just ate it, just stayed there until it was gone.
- Tom: And that was constant, always that way?
- Lee: Pretty much. I understand the sage that's up there on Big Prairie and in there they were short of hay one winter and they brought in the hay from the East side from the prairie over there. They just cut prairie hay and brought it in and it had the sage in it and that's where the sage come from.
- Tom: Really, I never knew that. I wondered why it was there.

- Lee: That's what they tell me.
- Tom: Well that makes sense. I mean it isn't anywhere else around the North Fork is it?
- Lee: Matt Burns told me the story about Johnny Walsh and I can't remember the other guy, but anyway they were short of groceries in the spring and it was a big job to cut that Inside Road out to go get groceries. Anyway, each of them was waiting for the other one to go to cut the road out and Johnny Walsh started out first. So he went down the road and he cut them trees out and go through with his wagon then he would unhook the wagon and horses and drag the log back in the road. He done that all the way to Belton. It used to be Belton instead of West Station.
- Tom: Oh yeah, I know. I traveled that road when I was 8 years old because my dad was a seasonal ranger so we would come back from our lieu days in town and drive up there and he always planned it so that he would hit Dutch Creek I think was the edge of the boundary for the logging station. So at 8 o'clock in the morning we would be just past Dutch Creek and he could be on the job and call the patrol to get home. Because my grandmother lived in Kalispell, so we would go to town and spend two days in town with her and then come home early in the morning, probably Friday morning. I think our [lieu] days were Wednesday and Thursday. And we always had to cut trees on that road. Or we would go to the MacFarlands for a square dance and a wind would come up and you would end up with six trees in the road between Polebridge and logging at seven miles you would have to cut before you could get home.
- Lee: Yep. That was the only way in to the North Fork for a long time and in fact the county used to plow that road so the mail could be brought up.
- Tom: How far up did they plow it?
- Lee: Just to Polebridge. See there was a lot of county roads in the park and I didn't know if they [reverted] to the park or not. But years ago there were a lot of roads even up to cross Big Prairie there was a county road.
- Tom: Yeah, that's when they forwarded the rivers. They didn't always use a bridge to get across and the post office...
- Lee: There were several crossings. There was one there at Quartz Creek where they come across in the Home Ranch Bottoms and then there was one up there just above Polebridge there on the Henson place back in there where they crossed in there. They crossed in them old Model Ts and would go across the river.
- Tom: That had to be pretty late in the year though, only in the fall that they would get away with that?

- Lee: Well after a high water then they could cross.
- Tom: Really?
- Lee: Yep. In fact just there at [Hay] Creek before that fire there was a poplar tree that had names and dates on it 1915 and stuff but it burned up in the fire. It was a pretty historic tree really.
- Tom: Have you ever stopped and looked at the cottonwoods and the aspen trees on the sides of the North Fork Road? It's almost like a billboard. If you're walking or hiking and you go down the road, in a car you don't see it, but people have put a date or their initial or something and it makes you wonder why is that there. But it's interesting because they're all along the road if you take the time to get out and look, particularly up far north where the road hasn't been pushed out.
- Lee: Yeah. And the North Fork Road there on the Home Ranch Bottoms there was a poplar tree there that had Johnny Hothic's name on there. He was the young fellow that Ralph Thayer pretty much raised and he wound up to be a supervisor too in the Forest Service. He got pretty high up. And that tree I've got it in the basement of my house up there. I cut it off and put it in there but since the bark has fell off and stuff and lost the name, but it was quite a big deal.
- Tom: Did you use it?
- Lee: When you went over [00:22:17] right there's that big hole on the left that's called the Devil's Pot. It used to have that name on the maps even and the road went just on the North side and then side hill all the way to the bottom of Big Creek, [00:22:38] Creek there used to be a big patch of cedar trees and that was... In the early days Ralph...Mike Burns, he located the road from Junkets Corner to Coal Creek and that was in 1915 I think it was.
- Tom: I don't know Junkets Corner. Where is that?
- Lee: That's Blankenships now.
- Tom: Okay.
- Lee: That there was Oscar Junkets homestead and they called that Junkets Corner. He was a early homesteader up that way.
- Tom: So you bring up an interesting point. Have a lot of the names changes in the North Fork and were the names a lot of times because of the people? Like Sullivans Meadow is named for whoever homesteaded them. Have you seen a lot of change in that respect?

- Lee: Yes. I know like the Devil's Pot and Fool Hen and stuff like that, that was named by Walsh, Mr. Walsh. He named Fool Hen and [00:24:00] Creek, Rabbit Hill. There's a lot of them names have disappeared over the years. Rabbit Hill is right just across Coal Creek and then Beaver Pond is on the right right there, that's Rabbit Hill.
- Tom: Will those Beaver Ponds ever present a problem to the road or have they in the past?
- Lee: Yeah, and the river running right there for a while and would wash the road out and then in 47 they built a road up over the hill and around it and then they finally got enough money to rebuild it down below and put it down below again. For about ten years the road went around that particular spot.
- Tom: What do you think they will do with Wurtz Hill? Do you think they will ever do anything with it?
- Lee: That was named after Wurtz. He homesteaded there in the early days. I think they've got the history on that pretty much.
- Tom: His grandson put together a book on the Wurtz place. But I was worried, it's a similar deal with the road. At some point they may have to move that road because that hill keeps...
- Lee: Yeah, it keeps something...
- Tom: Yeah.
- Lee: There's been a lot of changes in the North Fork. Actually you know from Columbia Falls to Coal Creek the road just crosses the spots where it has been. It's not the same. Well from Fool Hen Hill to Deep Creek in there it was on the side hill and then come down in the bottom and then the road was out sloped and it was dangerous to drive in the winter time, especially with a two-wheel drive outfit, always wanted to crowd you off the road.
- Tom: How long was it before you got a four-wheel drive outfit?
- Lee: 1959.
- Tom: You got one then huh?
- Lee: Yeah.
- Tom: Were you glad to have it? I bet you were.
- Lee: Yeah. I had seen one and I just figured that was a lot better than putting chains on all the time. It really was handy.

- Tom: You mentioned that it's cheaper to live up the North Fork than in town.
- Marietta: Yes. Not only cheaper but you only depend on what you have put away for survival. And I had lived up there for six months at a time on what I kept in my house from canning, down here.
- Lee: I had a hard time with ma, she would go downtown and she would buy three loaves of bread and I would explain to her you don't have to buy three loaves at a time; I says I want fresh bread. If we buy one loaf at a time I said this is only ten minutes to the store here, but we finally got it all figured out.
- Tom: So you brought up an interesting point though and I don't want to let this get away. To live up the North Fork it takes the two of you.
- Marietta: Yes.
- Tom: But you don't have to pay a light bill let's say but you do because you have to have lights.
- Marietta: Yeah, the generator.
- Tom: You don't have to pay a water bill but you have to pump it out of the ground or off the spring.
- Lee: We would get up at daylight and in the bedroom it was dark.
- Marietta: That was North Fork hours. Now pretty near the North Fork was running that way except for the real young people who liked to hoot and holler all night. But down here it's too fast. You push buttons and you depend on everything here and you don't have that feeling of safety and survival that we have at the North Fork. You knew you could take care of you. I could take care of a couple of my neighbors real easy because I canned all the time. Down here I'm lost.
- Tom: Did you have a big root cellar in your place?
- Marietta: We had a root cellar. We didn't use it much. We had a basement. We used stuff mostly in the basement. When the generator was running that day you washed your clothes, you vacuumed the floor. Everything you did, you baked that day, everything was done that day and then we were done until the next time we needed it, which would be about once a week. And you get kind of almost frugal in what you have up there because you didn't want to burn it all up because you didn't know when the fuel would come up or the propane. But down here if the electricity goes off we have nothing. We had the wood stove and we still have him splitting wood.
- Lee: Yeah, but we depend on electricity for it. It's got a fan.

- Marietta: It's a different way of living. It's nicer because that was about the only thing at the North Fork I didn't like was North Fork Road. Although at one point I loved it. I could have kissed every mile of it getting to our house. Because we went to Washington, DC in 84 to see our son. When we saw that North Fork Road I could have kissed it all the home. I don't like traffic.
- Lee: You knew you were home. It felt good, yeah.
- Marietta: I could on up there. That one winter I didn't get out until April.
- Tom: Let me ask you this question, because you lived on the North Fork Road and you guys didn't have pavement in front of your house, but I always remember and to this day appreciate the smell of the dust. I mean it's a pain, it's a nuisance but it's like you say, it's like being home when you recognize that.
- Marietta: It was pretty continual up there. You could open the front window and in an hour's time you could write your name across the table and on all the furniture it was so much road dust. And then mostly there was tourist people coming to look. It was a great place.
- Lee: Well that place we had up there was homesteaded by Joel [00:30:57] when he homesteaded. But he left there in 1922 because it was too damn many people.
- Tom: Really? Where did he go?
- Lee: Alaska, never heard of him again.
- Tom: So who homesteaded to me it was called the Ladenburg place, did you ever know those people?
- Lee: Mike homesteaded and then he hired other guys to homestead then he'd buy their homestead for 100 or \$200 and he had like 900 acres there.
- Tom: So that was homesteaded by the Ladenberg's?
- Marietta: Burns.
- Lee: Mike Burns. He was there, there was quite a activity for coal and up Coal Creek about a mile there's a shaft back in the hill, Quinn it was, and anyway Walsh, Patrick Walsh Sr, Dick's dad and Pat's granddad was one of the guys in there. They made [rafts] and pulled it down to Coal Creek. They had a big raft there and it was pulled to Columbia Falls for the Talbot Building and he wanted to burn coal so that's where they got the coal.
- Marietta: Floated it all the way down the river too?
- Lee: Hmm.

- Marietta: Wow.
- Tom: That must have been quite an adventure.
- Lee: Yeah. Well those timber oaks I drug the paddle wheel out, me and Bob [00:32:59] with the Forest Service he was sitting down at the bridge down there and they've got a sign there. Anyway I got elevated to a ranger on that sign. [Laughs]
- Tom: That wasn't why I asked if you if ever worked for the Forest Service but it ties right in doesn't it?
- Marietta: Yeah. There's always a little bit of blood there.
- Lee: Yeah. I had a contract with them but it was an open contract. When they had some work they would get me.
- Marietta: They knew that if they got Lee he would go right then. He wouldn't say tomorrow or the next day.
- Tom: So did you have a pretty big garden at your place?
- Marietta: We had a nice garden.
- Tom: Did you garden every year or did you do carrots one year and potatoes the next year? How did that work?
- Marietta: We planted potatoes, carrots, turnips, cabbage, peas. What else?
- Lee: Well beans and stuff like that was iffy because a lot of years you would get a frost every month you know and the carrots and cabbage they are pretty frost-resistant, you could raise them. But a lot of the guys up there had greenhouses, small greenhouses and they would grow gardens.
- Tom: So what's the earliest greenhouse that you remember somebody having?
- Lee: I didn't even know the people but I was doing work up there [00:34:35] on different homesteads for the Forest Service and stuff and there would be greenhouses there.
- Marietta: Tell him about the time we grew the 51 cauliflower. Remember the kikimini cattle?
- Lee: Oh.
- Marietta: We went to town to buy stuff and the cauliflower were all ready to harvest, so we went to town to get some vinegar and stuff; we were going to pickle a

bunch of them. We come home and we didn't get enough to fill a gallon jar. The cattle came in and ate them all. Tom comes down and we really were mad and upset and we were telling him. He said well it wasn't his cattle. He knew for positive it wasn't his cattle. Well how do you know? He said, "I smelled each one's breath and they didn't have any cauliflower on their breath." [Laughs] So a few weeks later Charlie Ritter who was a neighbor of ours and up from Ladenberg's, he came down with a ribcage. He had bought a half a beef and had taken everything off of it and he brought it down so we could use it for bait for coyotes and stuff. Lee hung it on the fence and everybody thought we had a cult going on there because he'd hang that out there and Tom would hang the coyotes on the fence and the first time...

- Lee: Well the girls made a sign remember; it says Cows Beware and hang it there with the ribcage. Tom got quite a kick out of that you know. Everybody thought we was having a big feud but we wasn't.
- Tom: Well back with open range and when the cows were there in the summer many many people had their yards trashed by the cows and they weren't happy with it.
- Lee: No. It was open range. If you don't want them you've got to fence them out.
- Marietta: I think a few of the locals up there ate a few you know, because they would get so doggone mad at losing their gardens.
- Tom: I know that to be a fact, I do.
- Marietta: Yeah. We do too but we try to be nice about it.
- Tom: But having said that, the incident that I know about it wasn't eaten by the people; it was eaten by a grizzly bear.
- Marietta: Uh-oh.
- Tom: But the bear had a little help getting the cow.
- Lee: Well years ago when Finley Arnett was up there he had a cow that was lame and he couldn't stand the drive to Columbia Falls so he was going to haul it, and he left a couple of other cows there with it. Anyway when we went up to get a grizzly bear had come in and killed one cow and he turned it in to fish & game. Lorna Deas and Ross Wilson went up and he killed another cow and they finally killed the bear. That's the only really grizzly bear getting cattle up there that I know of.
- Tom: The one other story that I heard of and you probably heard of it too was when Ted Ross was at the store he had horses that he rented to dudes and he also rented them to the border patrol for their annual ride down the border. But one

winter the story that I recollect was that a grizzly bear got into the barn area and chewed up a corral and chewed up a horse, and I remember seeing one horse that had a big stitch on her hip. And the story I was told that it was part of that bear attack, but that was only hearsay.

Lee: Well Hulie Stein used to have a place up there, that big meadow just across the Hay Creek and his corral was made with three logs. There were two logs laying on the ground and one rolled in the middle and that was his corral.

Tom: Was it very tall?

Lee: Yeah. That kept the horses in. they were big logs.

Tom: They could have been 4 feet high or 5 feet tall.

Lee: Yeah.

Tom: Big logs.

Lee: There's a story that Ralph Thayer told me about Hulie Stein and used to make a little horse [00:39:05] and he'd sell it. Anyway, the 4th of July everybody got oiled up and [Hulie] passed out and Ralph Thayer and Newton, Frank Newton, anyway they took and tied his pant cuffs with a bale twine and then stuffed his pants plum full of horse manure when he was passed away. He woke up and he wore a pair of army pants that was about two sizes too big and they had them just plum full of horse manure and had it packed in there. [Laughs] I imagine that would be quite a surprise waking up like that.

Tom: Yeah, exactly. I'm surprised he didn't retaliate and get back them. He probably did at some point. I imagine payback for hell. I never heard about the payback for it.

Marietta: Did you tell him the story you told me about the cook in the [CC Camp] here in the North Fork that his bread dough fell on the floor?

Lee: Oh, oh, that was the Forest Service cook at Big Creek. But he was from down south and Ralph Thayer and them old guys, they knew he was scared of bears and so they had the garbage can just sitting outside the cook shack and anyway they took some ketchup and spread it around out there and fired a couple of shots and told him the bear was there. Anyway, the joke wound up on them and the guy says, "To hell with it," and he packed up and left. He wouldn't come back. They tried to tell him they was [00:40:46] and he says, "I don't give a damn; there's too many bears," and he left.

Marietta: I was referring to the story you told me about the CC Camp that had the figs and the cook and the cook spilled the bread dough on the floor.

- Lee: Yeah, that was down in the [Sewanee] where that happened. It wasn't up at the North Fork. But anyway, he was packing the dough to mix it and it fell on the floor and dropped it. And so they took it out and fed it to the pigs and it killed the pigs. They swelled up and anyway they took them out to the dump and the bear come along and ate the pigs and ate that dough and it killed the bear too.
- Tom: Quite an epidemic. One action led to a whole bunch of others. [Laughs]
- Marietta: So don't even trust the bread dough. My grandpa said that really happened up there in Canada where it came up. The Mrs was mixing up bread up there in a little [sodi] and had two kids and they were watching and they were hungry and they asked for bread dough. She gave them each a chunk of bread dough and then she had to go outside to get some water or something. When she come back in they had got into more bread dough and they got horribly sick, screaming and she didn't know what was wrong. Hooked the teams together and it's a long ways to a doctor and they were headed for the nearest neighbor. By the time they got there the kids were dead and it was from bread dough.
- Tom: I'll be darn. See I never heard that and we baked bread and stuff, I just never thought of eating raw dough, or rising dough I guess is a better description. I'll be darned.
- Marietta: I've heard a lot of different things from a lot of different people. Should have been put in books years ago.
- Lee: Yeah, them old cars that they had years ago they had real narrow tires and high, they would go through a tremendous amount of snow. They would go through more snow than a lot of these four-wheel drives will go through today.
- Tom: Well because they were taller.
- Lee: Yeah. They were so high and made such a narrow track, yeah. Ralph Thayer told about in January driving up to Trail Creek. He told about in the early days Ralph Thayer told me he said in the middle of the night he heard a lot of hooping and a hollering and the Indians would go by with 60 or 70 horses that they stole on the east side. And he said a month later they'd be hooping and a hollering and the Indians were driving them back. They would steal them from each other just back and forth all the time.
- Tom: What year would you suspect that that occurred in?
- Lee: That was early 1900s.
- Tom: Early 1900s?
- Lee: Yeah.

- Tom: I didn't realize that...
- Lee: Well you've got to get a hold of Howard Green because he tells about going up Trail Creek with Ralph Thayer and I can't remember who the other guy was, but anyway, when they got up there he showed them Indian graves up there and it's in the Timothy Meadows area up there.
- Tom: Sure.
- Lee: But Howard went back years later and he said it changed so much since the road was put in and they logged it he couldn't even identify the spot where they were, it had changed that much over the years.
- Tom: Things do change and they change in about ten year chunks. I'm sure you can remember things that you remember one way and 10 or 15 years later it was different and you never imagined that that would be the case.
- Lee: Yeah, it changes tremendously.
- Tom: Yeah.
- Marietta: It's hard to imagine just looking at these construction places how a home will go up or a hospital or something. It's just almost overnight.
- Lee: A grizzly bear got Ralph Thayer in 1928 I think it was up Canyon Creek and crippled him up pretty good. Ralph told me the story of what happened. He sat down on a log and he had his pack and his axe and he's located trails. Anyway, a bear grabbed him when he was eating lunch and he said, "I had sense enough to grab my axe" and he chopped over his shoulder and he says I got a pretty good lick in and she turned him loose. And he walked from there to the North Fork Road with a broken leg. He made a crutch and made it out. And he says there weren't as many cars that day in them years and just as luck would have it a car come by just as he got to the road.
- Tom: Amazing.
- Lee: He said there was an old doctor by the name of Burns; he was the old-time doctor here. But anyway he asked Ralph he says well I get the chloroform or Old Crow and he says, "Give me the Old Crow." [Laughs]
- Tom: Did you have any personal encounters with a bear?
- Lee: Oh yeah.
- Tom: How did that happen?

- Lee: Well, somebody killed an elk right close to my cabin there and I got up the next morning and there was snow, about a foot of new snow. And a guy walked right by there and I thought they are going after the elk. It quit snowing about 10 o'clock and I said I'm going to see where they're going. I went out there and then they come to the elk and I could see that they hooked on to it and was dragging it. And of course it was snowing then and you couldn't see much and I said, "Well jiminy Christmas the damn fools are dragging it the wrong way." And so I got on their trail and I was going to catch them and I got out there and there was a grizzly bear and it was [00:46:52 watchful] like that and he drug it around and there was a little point and he was on the other side. And I looked and as soon as I made eye contact with that bear he come. And he tried to come through that lodge pole and it was so thick he couldn't get through and he had to get on the trail where he drug the elk. But anyway, when he come around the corner he was probably 30 or 40 feet from me and I says well I better go shoot him, so I shot and after that he forgot all about me. He stood on his hind legs and started grabbing at lodge poles and they were inch and a half to two inches and he would bite one off and pull another over and bite it off and roaring all the time, and then he fell over on his back dead.
- Tom: So the guys got run off by the bear or just the bear was dragging the elk?
- Lee: The bear was on the elk, but it wasn't that, it was a bear that walked right by.
- Tom: I see.
- Lee: But it had enough snow on it I couldn't really tell you know. Yeah, there was a lot of bears. Ted Ross killed a elk by my cabin and he went to get it. As he went up there where it was, he left it overnight and the next morning the bears had it. It was gone.
- Tom: And that's still some concern today. One of the kids that lives up at Moose Creek, Greg Oulett, you may know him or not, and a couple of years ago at Thanksgiving dinner at the hall he had shot a deer in season, everything was fine, but he left the gut pile. But on his way home he had to pass a couple of cabins of people that lived up there and he stopped to tell them because they were joggers. And he said, "I just wanted to let you know that there's a gut pile not too far away, so if you're out jogging," because that's what brings the bears and the crows in, so he was being neighborly and telling them just pay attention to what you're doing. Same story, different time.
- Lee: Yeah. If you see the raven sitting in the tree stay the hell away from there because there's something big on that gut pile.
- Tom: Yep, exactly. The birds get run off by... Well at the inner local, maybe last summer or the winter before the fish & game said the biggest predator in the North Fork for killing things was the mountain lion. But the mountain lions

were starving to death because the wolves or the bear were running them off so they couldn't benefit from their kill and I never thought about that.

Lee: Yeah. Well just this last fall I don't know who killed the moose, but there was a dead moose up Coal Creek and a grizzly bear and five wolves were fighting over it. The grizzly bear won. He got the... I went there afterwards. I waited about a week afterwards, I went there and looked and you could see where he covered stuff up but there wasn't any hair, there wasn't any bones or nothing there, everything was gone.

Tom: Yep.

00:50:07

[End of recording]