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Interview with Leo And Marianne Spradlin, 3/16/07
Interviewer: Shelly Means

[Part 1.]

Shelly Means Today is March 16th, 2007. Marianne and Leo Spradlin of Buffalo Creek have graciously agreed to be interviewed for the North Fork Oral History Project. Shelly Means of Pine Grove is conducting the interview. First of all, thank you very much for doing this. I really appreciate it.

Marianne Spradlin You're welcome.

SM And, let's just start, maybe you can tell us how you happened to come to Buffalo Creek. Either one of you.

MS Okay. I was ten years old. And that particular day my father and mother and grandmother and aunt went for a drive. And they were driving in this particular part. Why, I don't know. But anyhow, they drove by this cabin that we're in now. And there was a for sale sign out in front. Grandma was looking for some place to nest, she called it. And saw the sign, and she said, I want to go in. So she did and talked to this gentleman who was sitting out on the porch rocking. And then, then and there she said, this is what I want. Right there. She said, I'll meet you tomorrow at the bank. So, the man met her at the bank and the deal was signed. And that was in 1940, I believe around August, somewhere around there. So, anyway, that's how my grandmother acquired the cabin. And there was a lot of cleaning up to do. It was a total mess, but she was in love, so this is where she'd stay. And from then on, our vacations and so forth were mostly at the cabin, because that was the starting of the war and gas rationing and everything. So, this is as far as we went on any vacation, which was fun.

SM So, were you in Denver and came up?

MS Yes. We were in Denver. We lived in Denver and drove up on weekends or weeks or whatever we could spare. And then Grandma would have my sister and I come up when we were, oh, I think eleven and twelve and so forth. And we slept out on the front

porch, which at that time was screened in. And we had an old feather bed, which we dearly loved. We slept on that. But Grandma worked us, which we were not used to, being city girls. You know, we thought that it was just terrible that she made us work. I mean, we had to rake, we had to clean. We even plucked chickens, which was totally new and that kind of thing. But she was a hardy soul. And lived up here all by herself.

SM And she lived up here full time?

MS Full time. Now, sometimes during the winter, if it was really cold, we insisted that she come to Denver, because there was no insulation in here at that time. It was just a summer cabin and no foundation at all. So, it was very cold. So, she did come down when it was really bitter cold up here. And then back she came. And gradually added the porch and glass windows. Added a kitchen and added the bathroom. Otherwise we did the outhouse for many years. And it was all dirt road. It took us, well, you can fill that in Leo...

Leo Spradlin I can't even remember what year it was.

SM But it was still dirt?

LS Oh, yeah. Yeah, the road coming down from Pine Junction _____(4:12).

SM So, that's the way you came down?

LS Yeah.

SM There was no Foxton road at that time?

LS Oh, yeah. _____(4:22).

MS Took Tiny Town.

LS Because that was such a terrible little old road. _____(4:33).

SM Now when you came into Pine, around that curve, was the road from Pine to Buffalo Creek as it is now? Or was there another road?



MS Pine Junction?

SM When you got into Pine.

MS Oh, Pine. No, same road.

SM A lot of the cabins have names. Does this one?

MS Yes. Grandma named it the Roby Otte. R-O-B-Y, O-T-T-E.

SM Okay.

MS She named it that, so that is the one that's hanging on both porches right now. And so through the years we had totally enjoyed it and made it our summer place and had a lot of fun up here. And in our younger days when my sister and I would come up, we'd spend hours down at Buffalo Creek, wading. At that time, under the bridge, everything was smooth cobblestone. So you could go there and walk for hours and play. And it was just a great time.

SM Okay. Now the bridge you're talking about, where was that?

MS Over the creek.

SM Oh, okay.

MS Over Buffalo Creek.

SM So, you could walk underneath it at that time.

MS And then we walked to the place called the falls. We had to cross people's property to get to it. We'd go under fences and go down and sit on this enormous boulder. And we could wade or even swim in that part of the creek at that time. The falls was a lot of fun. And also at that time, Mr. Searway lived across 126 and he delivered coal and ice to all the people around here. And at that time also, one of the Greens would deliver groceries, so Grandma didn't have to walk back and forth and so forth. So, that was fun.

SM Now, you mentioned this road out here _____(6:36). What do you know about that?

MS All I know was that there was one, two, three homes, houses, cabins on the east side. And one, two, three, four on the west side. And that was all the comprised the little Pine Grove road. And that was always the front part of the house. That's how we came in and out. Well, parking in the back. But then we always called Pine Grove the front of the house.

SM 126, now was there a road there?

MS Yes.

SM Okay. And is that Sand Draw? Is that what people refer to as Sand Draw?

MS Yes. That gully there Sand Draw. But we used to come up through Morrison, from Denver.

LS That's when you had to come through Tiny Town.

MS Tiny Town.

LS 285.

MS It took more than two hours, yeah.

LS Pardon me, 285 didn't exist.

MS Couple hours or better to get up here.

SM Yeah. In those days.

LS It was about a two and a half hour drive.

SM Oh my.

LS Little two lane road most of the way. If you got behind a semi, you were just stuck.

SM Oh my.

LS Because there was only about two places where you could pass. And, otherwise, you just had to follow a semi. Just a little old two

lane road. All of the way. Into Tiny Town and Morrison and all of that. It was just a poke and go.

SM So, when you'd come up, you might spend a week up here?

MS Yes.

SM Wow.

MS Bring our groceries from town as a rule. And there was no electricity at that time. So, we did everything by lantern. We still have some just in case.

SM Yes.

MS Yes. And that was fun. I remember the adults played cards way into the night. By the coal oil lamps and so forth. And we just really had a good time. And Grandma cooked on a wood stove. She could cook anything on that, and I mean anything. So, we just always had a great time up here. We still do.

SM You mentioned going down to Buffalo Creek, and _____ (9:20). Do you remember any other kinds of things you did?

MS Oh, yes. The community center, which we called the Bippy, was open to anyone. We went across the road to the Searways again, and Mr. Searway had a key. And all of the children were welcomed to go. We played table tennis. We played the player piano and that was our entertainment other than hiking around and so forth. And that's what we did as young kids up here.

SM Did you have any favorite hikes?

MS I didn't because I don't like to hike and I was always the last one to climb up or down. Down, I would fall. So, I have scars to prove that little adventure, but my sister was more athletic than I. And mostly up Christmas hill was a good place to go. And at that time the Harts[?] were there and their swimming pool was available if we wanted to swim. So that was quite interesting. But, we didn't go too far but did a lot of walking around Christmas Hill and down the Buffalo Creek road. That was a big place to hike.



- SM And picnics as well?
- MS Yes, a lot of picnics. That was a favorite thing to do.
- SM Was it, the picnics? Did you have a favorite spot for that?
- MS Yes. Up Buffalo Creek road, tell about that. That big cave.
- LS Big cave?
- MS Oh, it was half a cave.
- LS Are you sure you got the right guy?
- MS Yes. Where we went on the snipe hunt.
- LS Oh.
- MS You didn't forget that. You've got that on tape.
- LS Oh, yeah. There used to be a place back there that was quite an area. And I took them all back up there one day on a snipe hunt. My brother and his kids and we had quite a few people. We had quite a snipe hunt.
- SM Catch a lot of them?
- LS Oh, yes. Caught a whole bunch. And the kids were all excited and they were running around screaming. And of course, I had them holding bags and they were, they were hollering, here snipy, here snipy. And my brother, he went up on the other side so they couldn't see him, and he'd throw a rock so it would make some noise. And I'd tell them, did you hear that? That's a snipe up there. I said, call them. And all of them are holding the bags. And they'd holler, here snipy. Here snipy. Of course, they never did catch any. Of course we were all drinking a little bit at that time or another, and giggling and laughing.
- MS I'm surprised we didn't drown in the creek. It was right on the creek. Oh dear.

- LS That was quite an outing.
- MS And all up and down Buffalo Creek road, the picnic areas were just perfect.
- LS The creek came right down through there. You could wade if you wanted to.
- MS Yeah.
- LS And later on they even had some outdoor potties out there, so you didn't have to worry about that. But you could still do campfires and _____ (13:19).
- MS The flood, yeah.
- LS The fire and the flood. The whole thing is gone. And it was a short way to go up to the lake.
- SM To Wellington?
- LS Yeah. You could go up to Wellington Lake up that road. Turn to the left up there, come back down to Deckers that way. Go into Bailey.
- SM So, do you remember going over to Wellington very often?
- LS Not too much, but we'd go up there every now and then and look around. Of course back then there wasn't hardly anything up there. But, the campers did go way around on the backside of the camp. It was a beautiful drive.
- SM How about over to Cheesman dam?
- LS I didn't go over there.
- MS A couple times is all.
- SM Nothing real exciting over there.
- MS No. I think you could fish. But I don't think there was too much activity going on there at the dam that we could tell. Was there? I didn't.



- LS Not too much. _____(14:47).
- MS But in the '70's when Leo and I lived here with our son Danny, he went to Evergreen high school on the bus, which was a two hour trip. Which he hated, _____(15:06) anyway. We darn near froze to death.
- SM Yeah.
- MS In the 80's it was horrible. It was below zero consistently those winters in the '80's. Leo had to drive into town every day to go to work.
- LS A lot of mornings it was 35 below zero. Couldn't believe it. Had to put a heater thing in the car to get it started. It's hard to believe. Here, a couple of weeks ago, I looked out and gosh ten till seven and the thermometer said three above and by three o'clock in the afternoon, it was 68 degrees. And I tell some of these people in town, why, they look at me like you're walking on air. Night temperatures and day temperatures have changed _____(16:10).
- MS In the early '70's or '80's, excuse me, we had two woodstoves that was our heat. So we would spend all summer, every weekend, with our little wood cutting permit, and go up into the mountains and spend that time cutting wood. And that was our summer whatever. To get ready for the winter. You had to. 'Cause that was it. So, we did that for a good many years. Now we have propane, and that's a blessing. It really is. But Grandma used that for heat. In the early fall, when it got a little chilly, she closed off the front part of the house. Lived in the bedroom and the kitchen, which was a smart idea. And she had a little wood stove in there. But she had her wood delivered. There were some nice men around that brought her wood, and still brought her ice and coal, and so forth. So, she kept pretty warm. But it wasn't that well insulated. None of them are.
- SM Yeah. Do you remember any of the people who lived here when you were a lot younger?

- MS Oh, yes. There was a family that lived up Buffalo Creek road, who were members of our church in Denver. And they had a cabin up there. Their names were Teague[?]. In fact, they're buried up there at the little chapel. And we would go up there and play with their daughter. She had a wonderful little playhouse.
_____(18:09)Adams lives there now. And we spent a lot of time doing that. And then, our neighbors the Skinners[?]. I remember them because I went to Junior High with their grandson. And then on the other side, we've gone through several families in that house where Dorothy...
- LS Lombard.
- MS The Lombard place down in Buffalo.
- SM Now, the Skinners, were they full time?
- MS No. They were just summer people.
- SM No. Just summer.
- MS Same with the Lombard place, that was just summer. And then on the other side, there was a lady friend of Grandma's that she played Canasta with all the time, I remember. And then the place that burned to the ground, that one next door, we used to love that family. They had oodles of kids and chickens and goats. So, they had a little bit of everything, and it was just a fun place. To listen to and to talk about and so forth.
- SM And this is the place that burned down in the snow, and you didn't know that for a while.
- MS No. Didn't until we came up until we came up to check the cabin and there it was, gone. _____(19:35).
- SM And do you remember the name of the people who lived there?
- MS Oh, gosh. Not right off hand but they were interesting people. He wore bib overalls, I remember that. My sister and I were quite impressed with that. And they looked like, you know, just big farm people.

- SM But they were only here in the summer.
- MS Yes. We never came up during the winter time, when we were young. Until the 80s I guess. Until you could insulate.
- SM Do you remember being in the Hudson hotel at all?
- MS Yes. It was a wonderful hotel. The Ray family, who lived in the cabin where the Searways did, after their parents at the hotel. And it was just marvelous. They served meals there also. It was just a wonderful place to go visit sometimes. They had old furniture in there. All those old beds. Remember? Those Murphy beds.
- LS Murphy beds, the ones that roll up against the walls.
- SM Yeah.
- LS Oh, boy. When they sold that place down there, you could not find a parking space.
- SM Yeah.
- LS Cars were parked everywhere. And they had _____ (21:17). And I think the whole thing, the hotel, three cabins, I think it was sold for \$28,000. \$28,000. And I had all my brothers and sisters up here, and we're all standing there looking at each other, like, where are we at. And none of us, between all of my brothers and two sisters, we could've bought that place. And we could've turned it into a bed and breakfast or whatever. Three cabins and the hotel. And I think the last time it was sold it was \$158,000.
- MS And it needed a lot of fixing.
- LS Well, it needed some.
- MS But not at that time. That time it was in good shape.
- SM And was it always known as the Hudson?
- MS Yes.

- SM Okay.
- MS That was the original name. However when the Rays had it, everyone knew it as the Ray hotel. But the original name was the Hudson Hotel.
- SM I see. And was that hotel older than the Blue Jay Inn? Do you know?
- MS No, I don't know.
- SM Okay.
- MS Now that might be in the book, *The Buffalo Beginnings*. That's probably where you might find that information.
- LS That's something else that her grandmother used to do was go make Maggie and Marianne go across the road and work at the Blue Jay.
- MS Oh, the Blue Jay. Oh, my gosh.
- SM Well, we'll get to that in a second. Was there an ice cream parlor in the Hudson?
- MS Yes, there was.
- SM Can you describe it?
- MS It was marble. It was just gorgeous. It had a big mirror in the back, like the old fashioned soda fountains did in the drug stores years and years ago. And that also was auctioned. It was just a lovely place. It was just perfect for a hotel.
- SM And the ice cream parlor was separate from the restaurant, right?
- MS Yes.
- SM So, it was a formal dining area.
- MS And they even had their own gas pump down there.

SM Oh, wow.

LS Yeah.

MS Because we used to play down there also. And pretend a great deal because of the gas pump and the attendants. Yes, that was a fun place to go.

SM Well, what about the Blue Jay?

MS Oh, golly yes. Grandma became fast friends with Catherine. And, so, when Catherine served her meals at the Blue Jay, I don't know how often she did this, but I remember it was like _____ (24:19). Grandma volunteered my sister and I to go down and be waitresses. I mean, now this is 12 years old. And not knowing a thing about this but we did, scared to death because she was very intimidating.

SM Your Grandmother was?

MS Catherine was, yeah. And everything had to be just so. And we knew if we dropped something _____ (24:49), do something very silly. But that was our duty. And we were very happy to do it, according to Grandma. And I think after that Catherine had all the help she could get by kids that were up here, not knowing any better. She got them to work for her.

SM Now, was that when she served the chicken dinner was on Sunday?

MS Yes.

SM Can you kind of describe how that was?

MS That was quite a project because everything was served beautifully. The white linen table clothes and of course all of her antiques and her gorgeous place settings. That was a must.

SM Did you help set up? Or you just helped serve?

MS Just helped serve as far as I can recall. And it was probably a good five course meal that she prepared. And she had at that time a

pantry that was a walk-in, where she prepared all of the salads in one place. And then the drinks were in a separate place. And then all of the chicken, mashed potatoes gravy, and of course a fresh vegetable. Iced tea, usually, lemonade, coffee. And a dessert. So, it was very elegant.

SM And did you have to have a reservation?

MS This I can't remember Shelly, whether you did or not. Well, she had a lot of friends from the, what do you call it, the Episcopal women. They had a name for them. It escapes me now of course. And then she had some of her quilting friends that would always come out. And then she did have some people that would spend the night, the weekend. Now, beyond her dinner on Sunday, I don't remember serving through the week or if she had overnight guests. That I don't remember. But I do remember the chicken. She did all that.

SM Wow. And were they all in the dining room. There's a lovely porch on the south side.

MS Yes, there is. But they were all in the dining room. Now the porch I think she used maybe for luncheons and things like that. And teas, I would assume. _____(27:30).

SM And so when you first started coming up here, was the Blue Jay already running as a hotel?

MS Oh, yes. It sure was.

SM Yeah.

MS And the fisherman would come out and stay in the little off cabins, you know, around there. I remember that. She had cabins for the fisherman. So it was really a pretty bustling little community at that time.

SM And do you also remember going down into Green's?

MS Oh, yes.

SM Okay. Will you talk about that?

- MS Every day, we would walk down to Green's and get a bottle of Grapette.
- SM That was your favorite.
- MS That was our favorite. Pick up the mail and so forth. And we were not fond of Mr. Green at that time. This was Don Green's father.
- SM Okay.
- MS He did not like children. He really didn't. He didn't like to wait on us. He'd make us stand there forever with our dime or our nickel or whatever it was. And he was very rough. Now, as he grew older he got a little nicer but we were a little afraid of him. But the rest of the family was great. But I do remember him. He was very rough with the children. I don't know whether he was fearful that we would do something or steal something or whatever. But...but that was our trips, everyday was to get a Grapette and the mail. So, that was part of our experience in Buffalo Creek. When we were growing, you know, eleven years old, that was the first time we were here, when I was eleven. And then we would bring friends with us who had children our age. So, it was as great deal of just good fun.
- SM Do you remember much at all of Pine?
- MS No.
- SM Did you go through it? Or did you come...
- MS We went through Pine.
- SM And when you started coming up here the train had already been gone, is that right?
- MS Yes.
- SM Not much _____(30:02).
- MS No. Just stores. Very nice stores.
- SM Can you recall any of them?

MS Not really, except for a few of us that would _____(30:15). I think it was Dave Rainey. And Don Smith. Don, I believe made the last train ride up here. And he said, when he was a little boy and so forth he worked for Catherine.

SM Everybody did, right?

MS Everybody worked for Catherine in one way or another. But he said yes, that the people on Christmas Hill, now he specified Christmas Hill, that was really the elite. You know, the society people of Buffalo Creek. When they came up on the train, they came up with their entourage, and all of their trunks, and maybe even a nanny for the kids. Who knows. But this is how they came and spent the summer. But that is the story that I remember. And I thought, gee that was fascinating.

[End of Part 1.]

[Part 2.]

Shelly Means Tape one of Leo and Marianne Spradlin. Okay. We were talking about Christmas Hill and some of the people who'd come up in the summer.

Marianne Spradlin Yeah. The Morgans, the Weeds. And then the Harts. Those are the two families that I remember the name. And that they were very influential because the Harts owned a lot of property. And then eventually owned the water, _____(00:43) and formed a corporation. But at that time we knew no one on Christmas Hill, at least my sister and I didn't.

SM So that was sort of like a separate community?

MS It was. Grandma used to take us on walks up there, like I say, when the Harts had their swimming pool. I don't know that she knew a lot of them either. But it was a good hike to go on.

SM And the people who lived on Christmas Hill, also were summer people?

MS Yes.

- SM Okay. And, were the Hamilton's over there?
- MS Now I don't know if Larry's father was there. I would imagine. I don't know.
- SM Okay.
- MS So, that's as far as Christmas Hill. But that's a story I believe that Don Smith told about the people that came on the train. With their servants or with their maids. Yeah, this was really quite a deal.
- SM Well, as I understand it, Buffalo Creek was more the community for tourists or people who leisurely travel to the mountains and spend time in one of the hotels or if they had a summer cabin here.
- MS And of course Ed Small and his family. And Josie Moran, her family came up from Kansas every summer.
- SM And did you know them when you were growing up?
- MS No.
- SM You didn't see them at all?
- MS No. I don't recollect. Now, I probably met Ethel Myer [?]. But all I had heard about is just stories about her and about what a powerful woman she was and had a lot of influence in Buffalo Creek.
- SM Now, she didn't live on Christmas Hill though.
- MS No. She lived on a ranch up 126. And, she pretty well ran the place. She was very, very outspoken and a wonderful, wonderful woman from what I understand.
- SM Did you know her? Meet her at all?
- MS No. My grandmother did.
- SM Your grandmother did.
- MS Yes.

- SM Okay. And she lived there full time, Mrs. Myer.
- MS Yes. And our grandma was a goer. She liked people because she had owned a hotel at one time. And she loved people. She was very neighborly and would go visiting. And of course, at eleven years old, I was not at all interested in visiting. Especially with older people. But visit we did, because it was Grandma. So we did. Do what Grandma says. And we dressed when we came to the table. There was no blue jeans unless we were out playing or out doing something. You are ladies and don't forget it. So, this was very strict, Grandma. But she was fun too. She did enjoy everything that went on up here.
- SM When she moved up here, she wasn't working. She was retired.
- MS She was retired.
- SM Well, do you remember of those other folks you went visiting with?
- MS Well, like I say Mrs. Teague and the neighbors next door, and whoever was living in Dorothy's house at the time. There were two ladies from California, I do remember them vividly. Mrs. Gross that had a flower shop in town and she was quite a character as I recall. She wandered around in her kimono. That really impressed me. To see her walking up and down the road wearing this kimono. Here she is with her white hair all over. And I'm sure the ladies all had their cocktails too. Besides tea. And that's what I remember. We did visit the lady across the road many times and played Canasta. And then of course Catherine at the Blue Jay and the Hudson Hotel. And we tried not to stay longer than a week if we could help it. We might be asked to do something. Oh, but I think we learned a lot.
- SM Did you know Dave Rainey when he was here?
- MS No. Unless, you know, that part escapes me.
- SM Let's see. There was also the Crystal Lake resort. Do you have any recollection of that? He doesn't.
- MS Yes you do, honey.

LS What?

MS Crystal Lake.

LS Crystal Lake.

MS When we went up there and rode that little paddle boat around and had dinner up there with Aunt Penny and Roy. Crystal Lake is on the way up to Open Space now.

LS _____(7:02).

MS Yes, you should remember that.

SM There was a restaurant up there?

MS Very nice one too.

SM Can you describe it?

MS Real nice restaurant, it burned.

SM Okay.

MS But gee, the lake was fun and they had paddle wheel boats, you could go on. A lot of the kids did that. Our kids. And we had dinner up there several times. It was very, very nice.

SM Was it also a hotel? Or was it just a restaurant?

MS I think they had cabins. I'm pretty sure they did. I know that they advertised, so I'm sure it was a little _____(7:51) kind of a resort thing.

SM Yeah. And then beyond that, now the Open Space was originally the Bear[?] Ranch?

MS Yes.

SM Do you think you know anything associated with that?

- MS Not that early on. But when we moved here in '80, our son was going to Evergreen High School and he got a job up there at first as dishwasher. He and his buddy got a job up there, which was really nice. That was a gorgeous lodge. Just beautiful. The handwork and the beautiful logs. Huge. Big fireplaces. And served wonderful meals. And it had cabins all around and a swimming pool, a tennis court, and a corral for horses. It was just really quite a _____(8:56).
- SM Do you have any recollections, I know you said you don't remember much about Pine, you just came through, but the Bryn Mawr, do you know anything about that?
- MS Yes.
- LS It was a bar.
- MS The Bryn Mawr.
- LS The Bryn Mawr.
- MS That burned, honey the Bryn Mawr, the bar that we...
- SM Yeah.
- MS Yeah.
- LS ...beer or two. We used to come up there and right there where the old caboose and stuff is they used to rent horses. And you could rent horses there and go ride back up in the mountains. That was in the '40's during the war. And every now and then, there was an old cabin back up there, I don't know whether it's still there or not. It was back up there, just above the Bryn Mawr, back...
- SM So, you're talking north of the Bryn Mawr?
- LS Yeah. Back towards the mountain part.
- SM Okay.
- LS And you could rent cabins up there. And we'd come up there a few times with my mother. That was before Marianne. So I was

probably only about thirteen, something like that.
_____(10:29)thirteen years old, fourteen at the most. We used
to go climb back up on those rocks.

SM You had a good time?

LS Yeah. Young, dumb. Boy, get up there and climb up those rocks.

SM So, what was your favorite thing to do in coming to this area?

LS Me?

SM Yeah. Climb more rocks. Or was that...

LS Yeah. Climbed the rocks, because I never was a big fisherman.

SM Oh, you weren't.

LS Yeah. We'd go back up in those hills and hike. I'm surprised we
never got lost. There wasn't too much up here then.

SM So, when you came out, did you rent a cabin for a weekend or a
week or something?

LS Yeah. For like a weekend, or something like that. And then we'd
ride those horses a little bit. I think they only charged something like
fifty cents an hour.

SM So, the cabins you stayed in were the ones in Pine? Or did you
come over there to Buffalo Creek?

LS No. Pine.

SM In Pine.

LS I took some pictures of them, oh boy, back a few years ago. And
they were, I think you could probably rent them for about five
dollars a weekend. Quite an adventure for young kids. A family.
You know. I can't even remember whether the Bucksnot was in
operation then.

- SM I don't know. Do you remember being in the other buildings in Pine? The Mercantile?
- LS No.
- SM There was an ice cream parlor, but maybe that was in the '50's.
- LS _____ (12:52). There's one thing about this area, it gets you off the main drag. Especially when you start thinking about Deckers. From Deckers to Woodland Park and down, you know, from Deckers up to 285. That's back in the hills a little bit. You start thinking about that. Back then, when there was nothing but a dirt road.
- SM Yeah I'm amazed there were as many businesses as there were.
- MS Yes.
- SM Someone does talk about that ice cream parlor. Maybe there's a general store too. And then the Mercantile that's now the Pine Emporium.
- MS Yes.
- SM I think that's...I don't know that there were many others there and then the two hotels here in Buffalo Creek.
- LS Not a whole lot.
- MS No there wasn't. And then of course earlier on were the train and the lumber and the mining. And at that time, they said that Buffalo Creek and Pine had a thousand people because of some of the early timers are buried up there at the chapel. Yeah. A lot of people don't even know that that graveyard's there.
- SM Well, and then there is also one in Pine.
- MS Yes, there is.
- LS Yeah.



- SM Most of those, I mean, you can tell that people are buried there, but a lot of the headstones, if there were any, are missing.
- MS We had found that too up there, a cemetery. We know that there have got to be graves some place. But, you just don't know.
- LS Yeah. I brought that up a few times, that we ought to get up there and put up some more stones because it's a just a little wood cross. If it gets knocked down or something. Next thing you know, you don't remember there was a grave there. Because her grandmother's there.
- SM The lady who...
- LS Yeah. Grandma Ruby and her mother.
- MS My mother and father.
- LS Mother and father.
- MS And now my aunt, she's up there.
- LS When her mother passed away, I dug the grave. And her aunt's ashes were up there. In this one area. In fact, I've got a plot up there.
- MS Yeah, my father was a fantastic fisherman. He loved it. It was just like a getaway. Totally getaway. He'd stand down there in the river with his big waders on and catch enough trout for us to have for breakfast. Grandma would cook us trout and he also taught my sister and I how to clean it. If we were going to eat it, we had to learn how to clean it. We did. We learned.
- SM Yeah.
- LS But her grandmother, boy...her brother-in-law and I took her up to the Bucksnot one time. Of course, him and I were pretty young. But, well, we were old enough to drink. But boy, we'd sit there and order a shot and beer and she'd sit right there and down them with us. So that being a school teacher up there on that Indian reservation she would, she would...

MS She was a strong woman, and she ran a hotel.

LS She was no sissy.

MS No. No sissy. Not at all.

LS It wouldn't have been a big surprise to see her packing a 45 on her. Because boy, she was no sissy, man.

MS No, she was not.

LS And after teaching school down there on that Indian reservation.

SM Now, which reservation? Was she in South Dakota?

MS She was in South Dakota.

LS Yeah.

SM Okay.

MS Sioux reservation.

LS We went down there one time. It was a bad reservation.

LS And, oh man, I'm telling you.

MS Pretty primitive. My mother was born just around there, until she went to school. My Grandma sent her to the city of Brushville, Nebraska to finish her school. Then was divorced and moved to Denver. And from that time on, independent.

LS Evidently she could speak the language.

SM Really? Oh, my.

LS Yeah. And, so, boy she was a pioneer.

MS Yeah. But she was dearly loved it up here.

LS Oh, yeah.



MS Really _____(17:48).

LS Well, this place is probably a castle compared to what she had down there. But the stove that she had in the other room, if you wanted hot water you had to build a fire in it because the pipes, you know, went to the stove and everything. That old gal, she was tough.

SM My neighbor _____(18:14), probably weighed eighty pounds dripping wet. And she was a school teacher in _____(18:25) South Dakota as well, on an Indian reservation.

MS Wow. Oh, my.

SM And I mean, she was pretty darn independent as well.

LS Yeah. Yeah.

SM Just a wonderful lady. For her 85th birthday, someone took her on a motorcycle ride. Now, it wasn't going fast you know.

MS Yeah.

SM But, here's Evelyn.

MS Oh, wow. Isn't that remarkable. That's wonderful.

SM Yeah, it is.

MS Well, I think a lot of these women up here were of that sturdy, very sturdy stock.

LS You know you had to get out and chop wood.

MS Yes. Do it all.

LS And, you know, do the whole thing. _____(19:07).

SM Oh, yeah.

MS Yes.



LS Boy.

SM Don't you admire her.

MS Oh yes. We so did. To do and go as much as she did up until the very end.

LS Oh boy.

SM Bob Drawe, he visited her the day before she passed away. The night before. And she was in an exercise class.

MS Yes.

SM Good for her.

MS Absolutely. Absolutely good for her.

SM Yeah.

MS She was such a dear lady and very educated and just loved life. She really did. She enjoyed everything.

LS Well, I imagine when you live up in these areas back then, in those days, you had to.

SM I mean, you talk about your grandmother living here full time. She wasn't just a summer visiting.

MS No. She was determined. She did not like staying with us in the winter. She made it known. However, mother said she would worry herself sick, you know, with her up here. Finally, mother had a phone put in for her because she would worry. And the nearest phone was down at Green's so, you know, it was a little hard. Otherwise, she would've lived too, without any creature comforts.

SM Other folks you can remember in the area or times that you were up here?

MS Well, there was a little old man, he was a German fellow. And he lived up behind the Hudson Hotel. He was sort of like a caretaker.

- SM Of the Hudson?
- MS Of the Hudson Hotel. And then he would do little odd jobs for people around here. And I remember he had no teeth and he had a big German shepherd dog that was wonderful. _____(21:39).
- SM Mm-hm.
- MS _____(21:43). And he did odd jobs. And he must have been old as God then when we were here.
- SM You mean when you were a little girl?
- MS Yeah. He was quite a character. Yes, I do remember him. And there were several men that did carpentry work then at that time. And those were the people, that most of the ones up here that had anything done, had to call on them to do the work. The Pine was put in and I know of _____(22:22). And a time or two, _____(22:60). And when she enlarged the kitchen and that was all done by the people up here. And I do remember that she ordered a lot out of the Sears catalogue. And they would deliver. So, there had to be lumber and a lot of things that you could get through the catalogue.
- SM Some of the early catalogues had houses you could buy.
- MS Yes. Oh, amazing wasn't it? Oh, wonderful. Wouldn't that have been something?
- LS Yeah. Because part of that kitchen in there, evidently at one time, must have been an outdoor porch. Because it, just like out here. You know? And she had it all put in, so.
- MS The bathroom at one time was her pantry. Very small little pantry.
- LS Because the flood got the outhouse.
- MS Oh, yeah.
- LS In fact that shed out there was my neighbor's.



SM Oh.

LS And it came across and smashed into my shed. And the Skinners[?], they came up one time and we'd kind of moved it back a little bit. And he came over and he said, Leo, he said, you can have that shed. But he said, if you don't mind, I'd like my tools. And believe it or not, the tools were still hanging on the wall.

MS The tools were still hanging on the walls after all of that. It was just...

LS And it floated that thing over here and into my shed. And of course, our outhouse and our shed and everything, they went bye-bye.

MS Oh, yeah.

LS And all my wagon wheels I had in there. And the kids from all over, they gathered up my wagon wheels and brought a whole bunch of them back. Just like the ones out here on the fence. But the water, when it came down, the cabin next door, the water in there was five foot deep.

SM Are you serious?

MS Yes.

LS Yep.

SM Oh, my god.

LS And the lady and two young boys were up just a week before. If they'd have been in that cabin, they'd have drowned because the water went from room to room. And I...

MS That house saved our bacon, because it went around.

LS Yeah. When the water hit that house it went up and around. And when the water started coming down, we started out this door over here that goes out on 126 and it was a huge wave like that.

SM Oh, wow.



LS And we turned around and started, and went and started going out this way, the water was probably about four or five foot deep out here.

MS There was no way. We just had to stand and watch.

LS Yeah.

MS We could've gone up to the attic.

LS Yeah.

MS But otherwise, there was nothing we could do. We could just stand and look. I said, oh honey, there goes your fence.

LS Yeah. There goes my shed.

MS And there's the sheds. All the sheds and everything. We had two beautiful big pines out there, they went bye-bye.

LS Oh yeah. They were just off the road there and it took them out. And we could stand there and of course the lightning was striking about every three or four seconds. And every time the lightning would hit, you could see the propane tanks.

MS Otherwise it was pitch dark.

SM Oh my.

MS Just total darkness. It was so scary.

LS Yeah.

MS We had no idea the road was gone until the next day.

LS No. And finally...a vehicle was setting out there against my shed. It hit my VW. I had a VW parked next to the garage. And the lights were on, and I thought, now, how did that guy get up that road? In the meantime the water had went down. So, Marianne and I had our rain gear and everything on. And I told her, I said, now you stay in the house. And I said, I'm going to go out, because whoever was in that vehicle, of course I didn't know it was a pickup truck at the

time. I said, whoever was in that vehicle, if they went the wrong way, they got back in the water _____(27:29). And I went out there and I'm hollering and hollering and hollering. And finally, I went around and the guy, _____(27:38), had his safety belt and everything on. And the truck was upside down. And he had a camper shell on the back of it, because he was the head of the gun club, up by the lake. And he was laying on the horn. He was dead. And I reached in and got a hold of him, shook him and, well, he went to heaven. And I come back in the house and believe it or not the phone was still working.

MS Amazing.

LS After all that. And that highway must have been washed out at least six or seven feet down.

SM Oh, my goodness.

LS And it was clear up by Dorothy's house all the way down here. It was gone. And we got on the phone and called 911, and told them that there was a truck up against my shed. And I said, there's a body in it. And they said, well, we'll get somebody up there as soon as we can.

MS But the sheriff knew, because the sheriff came by finally.

LS Well, he said, I seen a truck way back up the road up here and, that he was not the first one to find him.

MS Oh, no.

LS Because there's no way that he could've...

MS Gotten up.

LS Yeah.

MS Because there was no road to get up.

LS But anyway, I didn't argue with him. But, then later on I don't know how true it is, but they said Tinker[?], they had a, real way back up by where the fire station is now, I guess. They said he went around

a roadblock. And coming down evidently that water must have caught up with him because when he went by Steve Humphrey's house, Steve said he was going around like this. And then, evidently, as beat up as that truck was, must have got him rolling like that. And he wound up against my shed, upside down. Cost him his life. And some lady that lives up there, just up there by Pine Junction, she was taking up collections for his wife and, how old was that young girl?

MS Thirteen I think.

LS Something like that. Twelve or thirteen.

MS Twelve. Yeah.

LS She had cans and bottles from Bailey to wherever. Taking up collections, you know, to help her get by. And we met her, and she was going back, I think they were going to move back to Seattle, weren't they?

MS Yes, she was.

LS Her and her daughter.

MS But in the meantime, they had put his ashes in the Pine Cemetery.

LS Yeah. And...

MS And she finally came and got them.

LS Yeah. In fact, we had a cross on the side of my shed out there with his name and the day he was born and whatever. It was out there, and the wind finally blew it down, but I still have it. But, pretty sad. But had it not been for the fire, we would not have had the flood.

LS Yeah. Because I talked to one of the guys and they were doing some test up there. And he said that fire...

[End of Part 2.]

[Part 3.]



- SM This is tape two, side A of the interview with Marianne and Leo Spradlin. And we're talking about the Buffalo Creek fire and flood.
- LS But he said they were running some test up there. And he said that ground was as hard as concrete. Because he said, you could pour water on it and it would just run right off. But that's how bad that fire was. And we figure we've had three fires and two floods.
- SM Amazing isn't it?
- LS Yeah.
- MS Yes. It is. It's just a miracle.
- SM Yeah.
- MS Because I don't remember the severe, hot summers, when we were younger. It was warm, but, the flowers were more prevalent then too. Much, much more wildflowers than we have had. And it did rain usually in the afternoon.
- SM Right about three o'clock, huh?
- MS Which was so nice. This little breeze would come over. And cool, the evenings were very cool. And so I remember that. And the mornings were cool. But it was totally different weather than it is now.
- LS But it's just a good thing there wasn't anybody next door. Or, they would've drowned. When you start talking about pitch black. And about five foot of water going through, room to room. They had to have that whole inside over there redone. They had to get down and scrape the mud and stuff out of the cracks in the floors and everything. But it's just a good thing that lady and her two kids were up the week before, instead of...
- MS They were very fortunate.
- SM Were you two here when the fire occurred?
- MS We were in Denver.

LS Oh, yeah.

MS And my aunt knew where we were eating with a friend, and she called and she said, they're evacuating Buffalo Creek, there's a fire. Well, boy, we started up that hill and we could see the smoke for miles. We thought, oh, what are we to expect? So, they stopped us down there at Green's store. That's where everybody was kind of congregating. And just noticing you know, total, total smoke. That one we didn't have to be evacuated.

SM Really? The one in '96? That was pretty close.

MS We went down that one night to your brother's house, to Roy's house. But then we came back up the next day.

LS Yeah. They had a guy up at Pine Junction, and he checked your ID. That one time, of course, the last fire.

MS The last fire we had was really bad.

LS Everybody was at the fire house and I took the kids next door here, because their father couldn't get in. And they asked me if I would take them up to the Safeway, because their dad, if they could get a ride up there. So I took them up to River road and they finally stopped me up there. And I told them who these kids were, and I said, if I take them up to the Safeway, they're going to meet their grandparents and their dad. And I said, would you let me back in? And they said no. They said, leave them here with us, and we'll give them a ride, so I did. And I turned around and come back, and I was down on the Foxton road, and here come two police cruisers, and they stopped me. And one of them pulled right up in front of me and the other one pulled up alongside of me. And they asked me where I was going. And I told them where I lived, and I showed them my driver's license and everything. And I said, I'm going up to the firehouse. And I explained to them that I had just taken these two young kids, neighbors up there and so they let me come on up. And I went up to the firehouse. And we sat around up there until what? Two o'clock or something.

MS But then the next time we were totally evacuated and had to go into town.



LS Yeah. So...

MS So, three fires and two floods.

SM Now, when was the second flood?

MS That came the next year. And Sandy Draw was full.

SM So, it was from the same fire that created the...?

MS Yes.

SM Okay.

MS It was still just, nothing could absorb in the ground, so. But that wasn't near as bad because the ditch or draw can handle the water.

LS But that one fire we were coming out of Bailey.

MS Yes.

LS We went up to the, up there in Bailey.

MS The Pine Meadow fire.

LS And we were coming out of Bailey and it was a beautiful, real quiet day. I look off to one side, to the right side of the highway and here's this great big black thing going straight up. No wind. I thought, well, such a quiet calm day, that somebody's having a controlled burn. You know, they're burning. So, we went all the way down to Conifer, and we're in the Safeway and I got to talking to some guy there, who was a deputy sheriff or somebody. And we got talking about it, and I told him, I said, you know, I said, we were coming out Bailey, and we could see that over there. And said, I just thought somebody was having a controlled burn. He said, any time you see something like that, he said, report it. He said, you might be the hundredth caller but he said make the call. And that was another one that burnt the whole thing.

MS Well, yeah. At one time there was no fire department of any kind up here. Nothing. The first time that we were aware of anything was

when my brother-in-law was here with the kids and there was a fire in here in the fireplace that went through the wall.

SM Oh.

LS It sure did.

MS So, at that time I believe Chuck Schissler.

LS Yeah, the fire department was right across the road over there in the little shack.

MS In Dorothy's shack.

LS That's where the fire truck was.

MS I think there was two fellows.

LS Yeah. Two or three.

MS And they came over and I think they had to hook up the hose.

LS Yeah.

MS That was it.

SM That was in the '40's, right?

LS No.

MS '50's.

SM '50's.

MS Yeah. By golly. Well, it was after that, because we were living down there on Ames, honey.

LS Yeah.

MS The kids were born, so it was in the '60's.

LS Oh, yeah.

- MS Had to be in the '60's. And here was Chuck Schissler.
- LS Yeah. And from the back side of that fireplace, I'll bet you it was that thick. And it looked like somebody had taken a pencil and just made a little black mark.
- MS Crack. Smoke. Through this little bitty crack.
- LS Yeah. In the kitchen side.
- MS And set the wood on fire.
- LS There was wood. And it set that on fire. And one of the kids had got up to go to the bathroom, and I guess the kitchen was full of smoke and he started hollering. And they all got up and turned the lights on and I guess they started throwing water on it out of the sink. And they got it out.
- MS Because we came up then of course.
- LS Yeah. They called us. And we came up and there it was. So, I tore the rest of it out.
- MS Yeah. That was definitely in the '60's.
- LS And I had this little guy that was living over across the road over here, where Randy and his son lived. And he was the one that did all the fancy brick work on the kitchen side of that fireplace. But, I wouldn't build a fire in there now, since it's been so many years since, you know, the thing's been checked. And boy, I've told a lot of people, get them fireplaces checked. Because that soot and stuff will get in those niches and cracks and everything, and...just like that little tavern that used to be right over there. There's one down there behind the fire station there, setting on the creek. They had a fire in the fireplace.
- MS Never know.
- LS And he's going to have to rebuild. He's going to have to tear that thing completely down. We stood there on the porch and watched

that. Man, it looked like the flames were going up there about a hundred feet high.

SM Oh, my.

LS And I called, standing out here, looking at it _____(10:16) there's a fire here and a fire over here. And I thought, oh, boy.

MS And we called Pat and Vicky.

LS I called Pat and Vicky.

MS Pat went down to watch it from that side of the Christmas Hill.

LS Called _____(10:29). Boy.

MS _____(10:36) there was nothing like that, years ago.

SM There was enough moisture.

MS Evidently. Because the creek was always full. The river was always full. I remember that.

SM Mm-hm.

MS Because there was no fisherman that ventured out, even down by Green's store, without waders. It was a totally different _____(11:07). Everything was green and beautiful. A lot of flowers. Things have changed.

LS Quite an article here in the paper about how the ice is melting up there in arctic.

MS But I don't remember anybody else's name right off hand. You know, that we knew. And there weren't children up here. Except when they brought children for the, the ones across the road that had all the animals and they had a bunch of kids. But other than the ones that we brought with us, _____(11:56). I don't remember young children. A lot of elderly. What we thought were elderly.

LS Did they have those school buses running back then?

MS No. Because there wasn't anybody up here full time.

LS _____(12:17).

MS Yeah, it was all summer people. But I do remember Wilma Green was the teacher down there at the school, years and years ago.

SM One room school.

MS One room school. But other than that, it's been a wonderful place to spend time, to live. A wonderful community.

LS I wish they'd open up that road that goes back up to the top of the world.

SM Oh, I do too.

MS Yes. That was another place we used to go and have picnics.

LS Oh, yeah.

MS So, beautiful to see, all around the landscape.

SM I remember my son's boy scout troop used to come over there and camp.

MS Oh, sure.

SM You know, family camp outs and we would go up there too. And I'd like to see it open too, maybe one of these days.

MS Oh, yeah.

LS The gate was left open up there one day and we drove back in there.

MS That's when those gorgeous purple flowers were just exploding. And that, and then below the cave. All that valley in there was just purple. It was gorgeous purple. The first, second year after the fire, they were growing back up there. I wish they would. That would be a nice place to go again. Buffalo Creek road.

LS Well, you could see forever.

MS Yeah.

SM That's right.

LS Stand up there on that knob. And I know that they had that great big thing built up where they had, all the mountains were named and everything. Boy, you could stand up there, especially if you took a pair of binoculars.

MS Well, and we used to take that road down to the granite mine or whatever you call it.

LS I've got a big old piece.

MS Got several pieces of granite there.

LS The way it's setting out there, picked it up, put it into the truck. What's her name Barbara? Look at that wall that she built, on top of that.

MS Barbara Burke[?].

LS Barbara Burke.

SM Are you talking about the quartz mine?

LS Quartz.

MS Quartz. What am I saying? Granite?

SM Okay.

MS Quartz. I'm sorry.

SM Yeah.

LS That was quite the thing to go back up there and see where they mined that. And they had stuff laying all over. All you had to do was pick it up. It wasn't running anymore. But, boy. That must have been quite the thing to bring that stuff out of there with horse and wagon.

SM Yeah.

MS Yes. Quartz.

LS Hauling that ice and stuff up. Boy, that had to have been...

SM A lot of work.

LS _____(15:12), how they were cutting that on that lake.

SM It's very interesting _____(15:20).

LS Yeah. Well, I hope they have somebody _____(15:24).

SM Me too. I'm hoping they've have some for the rhubarb festival.

LS Yeah.

MS Oh, yes.

LS I'd sure like to get a hold of one of those.

MS Wouldn't that...

SM Me too.

LS Oh, boy.

MS Yes. Wouldn't that be special?

LS I don't think we really appreciated how we got it. We didn't, get in your car and go to the store. People riding their horses and wagons up and down these hills.

SM Yeah.

MS Well, the Swan Ranch was really going great guns then.

SM It was under a different name, wasn't it? Or was it the Swan Hereford?



MS Swan Hereford.

LS Yeah.

SM Okay.

MS And the family that lived there, their daughter delivered milk all around here. She was a young girl. But gee, you know, you could see the cattle.

SM Yeah.

MS Just roaming around down in that valley. Big time.

LS Back then, well, they had quite a lot of cattle. Well, you see some horses down there.

SM But that's about it.

LS But boy at one time, they had a lot of cattle. Water and everything came running through there. So they didn't have to worry about that. And they were green as a gourd.

MS That's right. Yes. It was really beautiful and still is.

SM It still is.

MS Still a gorgeous, gorgeous. Never tire of going around that bend and seeing that Swan Hereford place.

LS Wasn't it Eisenhower that went up there?

MS Yes. Eisenhower used to fish there.

LS People standing up there hollering at him.

SM Poor guy.

LS Yeah.

SM Can't get away.

MS Can't get away.

LS Yeah. Down there just trying to do a little fishing and...

MS Yes.

LS And people up there gawking. Oh, man.

MS Yeah. This has been a beautiful place to live. It really has.

LS Yeah.

MS It has. It's quiet.

LS You know, you might have to put this place up for sale one of these days and move into town.

MS Some day, some day. When we're too old to function.

LS Yeah. That's what I'm saying.

SM But that won't be for a long time.

MS Long time.

SM Right.

MS Long time, Shelly.

LS I'll turn 79 on the first day of the year.

MS He still gets out there and works with his hands, and does all the lumber stuff and builds things, so, as long as he can do that. We still manage to keep busy.

SM But not out of trouble, right Leo?

LS No.

SM Well, on that, maybe we should stop the tape.

MS Yes. I think so. It's been fun Shelly.



LS You mean you don't want to hear about that?

SM No.

MS No.

LS Well, I'll be glad to tell it.

MS I know you would, dear.

SM You mean make it up.

MS No.

[End of Part 3. End of Interview.]