

The Community Library Association, Inc.
Regional History Department
Ketchum, Idaho
OH-004 & 005
an interview with
Alta Horton Ellis
by Miriam Breckenridge
Fall 1987

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Where was the first ranger station in Sawtooth Valley?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Bowery, that was on the east fork of the Salmon.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: You went up through Pole Creek, that way. They built the cabin and then it had to be furnished, so this is the picture of the stove we had on the pack horse to take over, the little square cook stove.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, my!

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And this is one of just what was a daily sight in the sheep days: herds and herds of sheep being brought in, trailed in. It was before the days of trucks, you see.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: They would bring them in in the spring, have their lambs, when the lambs were old enough to be shipped they would all have to trail back to Ketchum to be shipped out, and then bring the ewes back. They spent half their time on the trails. Of course, it was the trail from the head of Pole Creek, which [is] the area you don't know. From there to Galena was six miles and, incidentally, my folks would let me ride that once a week to the Galena Store to get a candy bar. (Laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, how long would it take you?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Gosh, I don't know. It was only six or seven miles from the head of Pole Creek and down over to drop into Galena Store and get my candy bars from Mrs. Barber, who had it then, and come back.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How early in the spring would the sheep usually come in?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It would depend on the weather a great deal, but never before May, if in May, usually June. Usually, the last of May or the first part of June because the snow lays in that trail. You see that goes from the head of Pole Creek over to Galena, and it was difficult. This is a picture of what the rangers did in the winter. In fact, Dad's writing. They would plant trees. And this was taken in May, 1914. That's Dad's writing. That was their camp.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They're planting trees.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mm, hum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: What kind of trees?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Pine trees.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Pine trees. Well, now, I count four or five tents there, four tents, I guess.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mm, hum. It was quite a crew.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How many personnel did he have, for example, in 1915?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, well, this was before he got the ranger station. This was just like a crew of men who did these things that had to be done. Many times it was a telephone line, or this time they were planting trees. I don't know how or who -- in the dead of winter they trapped for coyotes. That's an old picture as you can see.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Wow, look at the coyote pelts. Is one of those people your father?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, that's he. This is Ray Ivie.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, part of the Ivie family that is still in ...? There's an Ivie in Ketchum, I think, or Bellevue.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, I don't think so. There was a Ray and an Al Ivie. The Al Ivies moved to Mackay and the Ray Ivies -- now Neva, do you know the Albrethsens in Carey?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I don't.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, Neva Albrethsen was an Ivie. Her father was Ray.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, this again is 1915. That camp would have been somewhere in this valley, or is it below?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It's down -- those mountains look more like south

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I imagine. It wasn't up in this area, no, because there weren't that many coyotes up in this area.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They were still down below.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mm, hum. This is -- well, Dad has written "just above Toxaway Lake." Have you ever ridden in the back country?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: "Just above Toxaway Lake, on the [one] between the Payette and Toxaway Lake." That's Dad's writing and that was in August. In fact, there's that -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's the famous bank where the snow always stayed. (Laughter)

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, I guess so.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You really felt like you were at the top of the world when you got there.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This is what they did in the winter, was count sheep and I don't know what else, but -- or how I happen to have that [photograph].

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: "Feeding sheep in snow at Carey, Idaho."

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: There Dad is at his desk at the Pole Creek Ranger Station.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, that's a magnificent picture.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The only thing is I'm sorry about they have things on the flag. It shouldn't be.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Of course, today people wear flags as clothes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That is taken in the kitchen at Pole Creek.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's a great picture. And that's your dad?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mm, hum. Here he is. Isn't that a marvelous picture?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's a marvelous picture.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Barbi had that enlarged, one about this big and gave it to me for Christmas.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, that's wonderful.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That is the old buggy. You wouldn't remember, but they had white canvas tops and side curtains. You see, Dad would come up in the early spring and then by June the family [would come]. My two sisters were quite a bit older than I. Well, I don't really remember. All I remember is mother and I coming. That is the old buggy we used to come in. It had a white canvas top and curtains that you could put up or down. Oh, it was the fanciest thing, I thought, that ever was.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Would you come --?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mother and I would come. You see, Dad would have to leave early in the spring and do this trapping.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Then about soon as the road was open, the Galena road was open, Mother and I would drive from Carey to Pole Creek [in] three days. The first day to Hailey and then to Russian John's and then Dad would meet us at Galena when he could, to drive us over the hill. And many times -- my mother was a very fearless person. You know that a child picks that up, you know, feels it. I thought it was wonderful, never thought a thing about being afraid. It was dark one night. He couldn't meet us because there had been a lightning fire and he called Galena to tell us to come on. We had a wonderful team of horses, Frank and Scout. Mother went by where you turn to go to Pole Creek, at the foot of Galena there's a dirt road. Of course it was all dirt then. And we were about a mile beyond it before she realized it, and the dark, the pitch dark, and lightning and thundering. I never remember thinking of being afraid, you know. I mean it was Mother that was doing it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And you had a lot of confidence.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, I think those things can be transmitted to a child -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, I do, too.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: -- very easily without words.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And you were perfectly at home with the elements. The elements didn't concern you.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, we turned around and got back on the road.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: This would [have] been about what year? Can you recall?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, I would have to guess.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I don't mean exactly, but -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, but I couldn't have been more than ten or twelve. And, oh golly, that would be fifty -- fifty years ago anyway or more.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: When you came in like that, there were, of course, other families already here?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's what I didn't think so. None of the homesteading had been done.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, this had been. This had been homesteaded.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: This -- the spot we're on right now.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This was the first homestead in the valley.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Maybe the Williams were in then, I don't just remember, maybe the Dave Williams and the Tom Williams were in. There was another family. They left and I don't recall their names. But there weren't more than three or four families, if that many, between here and Stanley. Because there was a little school here, and I think there were seven children in the school and sometimes only five. Esther Foley -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: -- had the school.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This is a picture of the Pole Creek Ranger Station as it was. That is just a picture of what he had to do in the winter was trap coyotes and he has another sheep eater.

SHEEP PREDATORS

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And this, though, would have been on the other side of Galena Summit, rather than here?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I would guess so. There weren't too many coyotes up here. It was bears up here that would get into the sheep. That's just a picture of a hide. Oh, and this -- no, let's see -- is the one Yes, and I found in his diary in 1912, where he speaks of trapping this particular bear, because it was such a big one. There it is. There's the bear again. And there's where he tells -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Why don't you read it, would you mind?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No. "Pole Creek Ranger Station, Sunday, August 25. You see, they had to keep a record of what they did everyday. "Rode up to where I had my bear trap set. Caught the biggest bear of the season. Phoned to Ray Ivie to come up and take a picture of him. No work performed because this is Sunday." (Laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Nineteen-twelve, August 25.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: There it is in his diary. Isn't that amazing that I would go through them until I would find that?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, it really is. And you have these diaries, isn't that wonderful? Does the Forest Service have a copy?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: (whispers) No.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, we won't tell.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No. I cannot tell how I got them, but I didn't steal them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That doesn't matter.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I will tell you. (Tape off then on again)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, these are bears that would go into a band of sheep.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, and then come back the next night. And I suppose very often they watched for the bears. I don't remember how many my father trapped and got, but they were ruining the sheep business completely. I don't know if it were every place, but up at the head of Pole Creek, where the trail from Galena comes over and there used to be -- I think still the corrals are there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. They were there last time I was up there, which was a couple years -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That was always a stopover for the sheep men. And there were a great many bear up Pole Creek, and so Let's see who is there. They had to tell everything they did, every place they went. "Pole Creek Ranger Station, August 27. Rode down the trail to Williams Creek. Rode up Champion Creek looking for Mendiolas outfit. Could not find them. Had two bands of fifteen count. Twelve bands of sheep on trail going out to ship." Just think of the number.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, is it your recollection that Ketchum was one of the largest shipping points in the -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It was the largest?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was the largest. Yes.

MB; In the United States.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, I remember my father saying that many times because -- did I show you the one picture of all the sheep trailing?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, you did.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was just a steady stream, and they had to be careful, you see, that the bands didn't get mixed, whose bands were on the trail at a certain time. I know Dad tells the

story of a band of sheep. Most of the herders were Basques -- very fine men, but spoke very little English. And this must have been before they had the short-cut trail from Pole Creek that drops down into Galena. They had to go over the road. Anyway, they were where they shouldn't be, and my father tried to tell him where he was to go. "No sabe, no sabe." So, it was raining and a miserable day and Dad helped him get them back on the trail where they should be. And when they got all through, the Basque said, "Doesn't rain as much here as it does in Oregon." (Laughter) And the story used to go, "The last they saw that shepherd was taking off down the mountain." (Laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He could speak beautiful English. He just got your father to help him. (Laughter) Oh, that's a wonderful story. Most of the herders were Basque?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, practically all of them. There was just one sheep outfit, and I can't remember which one it was, that didn't have Basques.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And did they have Scotch herders?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No. Well, I don't remember, they might have -- you mean the-

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The herders.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This one-

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: This one outfit.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I don't remember. But the Basque people seem to take naturally to this kind of life, and they were very, very efficient and watched them, you know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Reliable.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Reliable is the word I'm trying to think of. And they thought a great deal of my father, although sometimes he used to have to get very cross with them. But they called him "Mr. Bill."

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's nice.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And they always kept us a lamb. We had plenty of lamb to eat.

SHEEP FAMILIES

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Did you see much of the families of these sheep men? It was a man's world and the families -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: You don't mean the Basques?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I mean the owners.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, the Brailsfords used to come up every summer. There were eight children in that family and we all knew them very well.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They would come up and stay here?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Their reserve was up at the head of Salmon River and they would come up for, not to stay all summer, no, for perhaps two weeks at a time. And Mr. Brailsford was up here

a great deal of the time and his son, Jimmy, and I had quite a romance going on at one time.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Jimmy didn't stay with the sheep, did he? He's the one that went away.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, no. He went away. He isn't living now, nor is Fred.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. Jimmy has died, and Fred has died, and it's Bill and Bob that are alive?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Bob is still --?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, and Bill is still alive.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Bill has owned some land across the river.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right, and his son, Bill, is also in the business.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I see. I didn't know that.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But I have tried to discover whether- (Tape off then on again)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: We were talking about families, and I have never been able to quite determine whether or not the families of the sheep men ever came to sheep camps very often. It was the camps whole--the summer program was quite remote, and if the families ever came up it would just be for a brief period of time. Is that right?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The only families who came regularly, and didn't stay the whole summer, were the Brailsfords.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Now, there could have been others. I don't remember any of the Bacons coming. The Urangas, did you know the Uranga family?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I have been in correspondence with part of that family.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Nita and I still have kept our friendship all these years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Have you? How great.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: They have, I've forgotten how many children. But it was an eye opener to me to go -- the first time I was up there, when the family had come up for the summer, their range was up Smiley Creek. Here were eight sheep wagons. They had an enormous family and she always brought one or two people to help her with the children. And here were all of this string of sheep wagons for the families to stay in. Nita, what is Nita's name now?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Jones.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Jones. It was odd how we got together again. About ten or twelve years ago, Barbi, our daughter in Boise, in a bookstore said she wanted to know if they had a book pertaining to this area. The lady said, "Yes." She said, "Are you interested in that area?" She said, "Yes, my folks live up there." Come to find out it was Nita and that is how we got back together.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: She is still in that bookstore.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Is she?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, Nita Jones....

FOREST SERVICE TRAILS

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Would you talk a little bit more about these first pictures you showed of these trips, and what were you doing actually, when you went into the mountains like that?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Cleaning trails. We would go up to clean trails, usually, because this was in the back, high country, up here. And it's too rough for sheep, you see. But the trails had to be kept up in case of fire.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: (Laughs) And I remember this time, Dad wouldn't always let me go with him, but on this time he said I could go. And I went for a ride. Jim Brailsford and I were going to go some place and then I remembered about this. (Laughs) And Dad had gotten disgusted and started out. And I just grabbed a few clothes and, of course, I knew he hadn't started up in the mountains yet and I knew the way anyway. So I caught up with him and he was a bit cross with me, I tell you. (Laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, there would be then a regular trail crew, young men, whom he would hire?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Usually three men. There were usually three, not the same ones each year. They were usually, I guess, college men, I don't know. I wasn't interested in that. But three or four, who did nothing but clean trail. Did you know Gene Van Guilder?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The name, that's all.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, Gene was up here many years and a friend of his. And some of the trails that Dad had just marked out -- you see, he put a little slash in the trees as to where the trail was to go. And many of them were just being made.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's what I wondered.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This went up to -- Emogene was my favorite one. Have you ever been to Emogene Lake?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. When John and I were married, which is fall, 1939, of course, we began right away my coming to the lake, to the cabins. But I would go over there with the children. And by the time I had loaded them up, driven from Twin [Falls], taken the supplies, I just stayed at Pettit Lake. Because, you see, our children were two and a half years apart, and maybe I was lazy or something. There was no way to take little babies up a trail. In fact one time, I started hiking, and this was when our youngest was -- oh, I don't know -- four or five maybe. I had gone around to the other side of the lake and left the car and we started up the trail towards Alice, which I had ridden before John and I were married. But I got up as far as, I'd had to wait until they finished their nap in the afternoon, and I got up as far as the falls. I can't remember whether I stumbled or something like that, and it suddenly struck me, "Miriam, you are a fool to be up here in these woods with four little children."

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: If you had broken a leg or -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And the older girls didn't want to come back. They were having a marvelous time scrambling over the rocks and we weren't on a trail. We were cutting through to try to see the falls. I just said, "We have to go back." And they were all mad at me. But we went back. So anyhow, I have done a little of it in recent years, but I didn't get to all those lakes, for just that reason. And John was always too busy with the sheep. We never thought we could take the time. So, back to your story.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, no, I didn't mean to interrupt. This particular picture was taken -- and Emogene and Alice Lakes were named for ... I can't point them out. This was Emogene, the girl, and I don't know which one is Mr. Loche, but he was a man from Washington, D.C. And they named those two lakes on this trip -- decided that Emogene and Alice would be the names of those two lakes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And they are named for the family of Mr. Loche?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: L-O-C-H-E. I don't remember what he did, I mean, what his title was. But he came up once a year and he was from one of the eastern states where they leave out their "r's." Which one is that?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, it could be the south -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It wasn't in the south. Anyway

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He was part of the Forest Service?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, he was an official who came out to inspect. And we took this trip. Tom Williams went along. 'Twas his horses, because Dad didn't have enough horses for all of them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: So, the area of responsibility was the -- now, of course, this man was -- this Forest Service official from the east was the top responsible person for this area. But your father was the first official of the Forest Service to function in this valley, isn't that right?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, and that picture of him on the horse, did I show you that?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I'm not sure

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The first year he was in the Forest Service, you see he was in Geological Survey, the first year, I mean, one year. The the next year the Forest Service began, and he changed over in that year. And I am not sure, but I would guess it was about 1910 or '11, though I might be off a year or two.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And he was married then?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He came as a married -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: My father?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He started all this -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, yes, I can remember.

BILLINGSLEY AND HORTON FAMILIES

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, of course. And he and your mother were both western people? How did they get here?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mother, the Billingsleys were one of the two families to settle Carey Valley. Billingsley Creek in Hagerman is named for my grandparents. My mother was the first white child born along the Snake River.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's the story I wanted. Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Had you heard it before?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, but not from right out of you. (Laughter) I, of course, know where Billingsley Creek is.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And he had the cattle there. In the summer they would go -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, this is your grandfather.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, the Billingsleys. They would go up somewhere between Shoshone and Carey.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: There's your cookies. (Tape off then on again)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You said your father had cattle?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, my grandfather.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Your grandfather had -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: My grandfather Billingsley. In the spring he would take them up because there was more feed somewhere up between Shoshone and Tikura and Carey, in that area. And he went back in the fall, and it was before the days of homesteading. And someone had squatted, taken his land.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In Hagerman?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Um hum. If you weren't there, anyone could -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: -- come and set and squat?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. That was called "squatter's rights."

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For goodness sakes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: So that's when they moved to Carey Valley.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The Careys were the one family and the Billingsleys, I think, were next.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. I see. And then, where did your father come from?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: My father was born, you'll never believe this, in New York.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, I could believe that.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And his family were English. When he was fourteen years old, his father was a mining engineer and he came out to Bellevue to the Minnie Moore mine to look at that.

My father came with him. His mother had already died and that is why he came with his father, I guess. I don't know. But for company, too. And while he was here, his father got word, that his wife, the step-mother you see, was very, very ill. He went back home and left my father here with the Billingsleys. And while he was there, he [his father] died. And that's how my father was left here, a boy of fourteen.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For goodness sake, and living in Carey with the Billingsleys.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, they were in Muldoon. What is that oldest ranch up there? It was Billingsley Ranch at one time.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The one eventually owned by the Laidlaws?.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And your grandfather owned that ranch?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Um hum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How interesting. Go on.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: So then he stayed -- my father lived with the Billingsleys until he was old enough to do for himself. And they were very good to him, and he and my mother were married. Their first child was a boy who only lived a few hours. So there were three girls. My older sister passed on about four years ago. I have one sister left in California.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Then your father was doing geological surveying, you said?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: He was with the Geological Survey, and when the Forest Service opened -- it must have been 1910 or '11. Now, I am not sure, but it was somewhere along in there, because I have diaries of 1912. And I have one some place of 1911, I think, but I am not sure. I'd have to look.

MB . You mean when he first went in -- (Tape off then on again) When he first worked for the Forest Service -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: What did he do?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: He just did trail work and that sort of thing, I am sure. Now where he was located -- and it was only then a summer job.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's what I wondered.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was just during the summer months. And he was home for several months in the winter. In fact -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And home was where?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Carey. I was born in Carey. Then, of course, as you know, Carey is a Mormon town.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And my father especially was -- we were the only ones who were not LDS. (Laughs) I can remember, I always wanted to go to Sunday School because everybody else went to Sunday

AE : School. My mother would say, "Now, you don't take any of that bread and water." It looked so good. She'd say, "Because you don't belong to the church. You're not a Mormon." (tape off, tape on) But anyway, I was -- Dad took us down, drove us down and we stayed in Russian John's the first night in the horse and buggy days. Slept on the ground. They thought I was asleep, and I heard Mother say, "Now, if anything happens to me I get buried [place]." (Crying) "I don't want Alta to go to Aunt Em."

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. She wanted you to stay with your father?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: She did want me to go to Aunt Em. I misspoke myself. "I want Em to have Alta," is what she said. I worried about that for years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Of course. Of course. And I'm sure you never told them.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, I never told them. (Crying)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, did your mother live?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, she lived to be-- Yes, it was the altitude and the climate. [ed. Mrs. Horton had had a heart attack in the Sawtooth Valley.] She just flourished there and was fine.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In California?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, but we came up in the summers, you see. And at that time, the rangers for about three months were laid off. There was no work for them then in the winter. So he always came to California for the three months in the winter. And then we would come up just as soon as school was out. And another reason my father didn't want me to go to school in Carey; he was afraid of another Mormon in the family.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I mean, I can say this to you, but I wouldn't think of saying it ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, no, I totally understand.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: So that's how we got to California. We would go back and forth, up here in the summer. But those first days in California ... (sighs).

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Whereabouts in California?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: San Bernadino. Just out of San Bernadino. Hot, and I never seen girls wearing short socks before. (Laughter) And I was completely lost, and at night I can remember waking Mother and saying, "Can't we go home? Aren't you feeling better? Can't we go home?" And she would say, "No, no." And then finally she said, "Now don't you dare ever wake me up again." (Laughter) But as soon as school started, I got acquainted and I liked it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And you were a teenager by now? Or you were-

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, I was only in the fourth grade then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, really?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Only in the fourth grade.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Really. So your mother's reaction to the high altitude came early in her life.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Apparently she was going through the change, I think now. And as I say, the rangers at that time were laid off for three or four months. Dad came down in the winter for that time and then we'd come back up here in the summer.

FOREST SERVICE ACTIVITIES

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Under your father's administration, did it reach a point where he began hiring people?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In other words, what I'm questioning is when did the big buildup of personnel start?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: You mean in this area?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In this area.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Of course, that's all I would know. It was when I was a teenager. Because he would have the young men, the college men, building trails. He would map out the trail, you see. And every summer he would have two or three groups of men around. For instance, the one [trail up to Emogene -- there wasn't even one to Hell Roaring and all the lakes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And they were beginning to make those trails? Which were primarily for forest fire control?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Fires. Yes, that was the primary reason for it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And then his other responsibilities, for example, in relation to the sheep.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The first [responsibility] was the sheep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The first was the sheep?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, because there was just thousands of them in here then. They were always having trouble getting on one another's allotments or some problems to be solved. The Basques, as I said, called my father "Mr. Bill." And they were always so nice.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How had it been established what outfits went where? Was it squatter's rights with that, too?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, they had certain allotments. And if one sheep got over into the other one, they were right at the doorstep to tell my father about it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: To tell "Mr. Bill."

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And then he would go out and straighten it out. Did he have any assistance in doing this or did he do this all himself?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No. For a long time he was alone. For many years he was alone. And then he had one assistant.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And this assistant would be like the assistant ranger?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, yes. They didn't have a title. He was just a helper. And it was, at that time, they were getting more people in the area and watching out for fires -- a Mr. Foley, do you know?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I've met the Foleys, yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Mrs. Foley still lives in Hailey.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: She does? I didn't know that. I'll have to go see her.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. She is failing though, very fast. You know, she is past ninety, a good deal past ninety.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, she must be, because John's mother is ninety-five, and, of course, they were contemporaries.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. But she lives there alone on Main Street. I think it has three little apartments in it. And it's across from, almost across from the Forest Service buildings.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, I know those buildings. I'll find her this summer. I'll find her soon. I didn't realize she was still around.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: She's changing. She's, well, just getting old, you know. But she is so independent. My, she is an independent person. And she must be in her nineties, because she was older than Carol, her husband.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well now, he came up here --. The first thing I know about him was that he built houses, that's all I know about [him]. But what did Mr. Foley come for, up here? Was he the teacher?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, he came here -- he met Preston Shaw during World War I. And he didn't have good health, as I remember. And so he came up and stayed at the Shaws' and worked there. He was a very frail man when he came. And Esther -- they had known one another in the east. And so finally she came out and they were married and built their little home up there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. So, when you say that your father became more busy because more people were coming in, you mean they were beginning to homestead the ranches in the valley? Is that what you mean by more people?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, I think most of the places had already been homesteaded. Now, I'm not sure.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. But were there people coming in to climb the mountains?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: A few, but nothing like now. In fact, I'd sit at the old Pole Creek Ranger Station, watching for a car, the dust of a car to go by. (Laughs) Of course that was a long, long time ago.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, even in the 1950s, the early forties (1940's) -- of course, the war -- the Second World War was on -- but up at Pettit Lake, if you heard a car, you know, you just rushed out. It was an event.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Well, that's the way it was there. Or we'd see the dust coming of the car, we'd wonder who it can be. And Mr. Benedict was the supervisor. Mr. Woods was the supervisor when Dad first went to work for the Forest Service. And then Mr. Benedict came in.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And the supervisor's office was Hailey.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. And it was -- I was trying to think -- it was upstairs. And I was trying to think the other evening. I must look at that building and see if the new one has been put in there. Do you remember where -- well, you wouldn't remember where Dr. Wright's office was, a little brick building on the corner, and I don't know the name of the streets.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In Hailey? Yes, I know.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Well, the Forest Service offices were upstairs over that for many years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. Before they built their own place?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Oh, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Isn't Dr. Wright's name on that building?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It might still be.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I thought I noticed it yesterday, or when we came up the other day. John was driving, and so I was looking, trying to read the names. We talked about when the sheep came in, and it would be when there was feed and all available. And now they would go out just as they [came in].

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: ... have to trail them all the way out with the lambs to ship and then bring the ewes back in again.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right. And then the ewes would stay ...

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Until they had to be out by the 30th of October.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: October. I was sure there was a deadline. And I-

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, the 31st or something. But sometimes they would have to go out earlier because, you know, after the snow came, it was -- there wasn't such a thing as trucks taking them out. No one even thought of that. I showed you that picture of the sheep trailing, didn't I?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, you did. It's one of the early ones here.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. I don't think I have any (tape off then on again) One of them [ed. ranger stations] -- who was the president -- was named after the president.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: President of the United States?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Garfield. Well, this was the first year Dad was in the Service. That was taken up at Muldoon. That exists no more.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: A ranger station at Muldoon. I never even knew there was one.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: In that area, the Garfield Ranger Station. And I still have those chaps.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I was just going to ask about those chaps. That's -- are those sheep?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I'll never forget how we went through the catalogs, Dad picking out what he was going to send and get, the chaps he was going to send and get. (Laughs) And we still had the saddle and, you know, it was odd, after Dad passed away we left a number of things in the winter with some people whose name I won't mention. Among them was Dad's saddle. And when we came back, they said the saddle had been stolen.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, dear.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: We were just sick, because we wanted to keep that saddle. Do you know, about the third year we had a little place open over there -- this was when the sheep used to trail in, and the Basques would stop at the store, you know, come across. And there was a horse tied there, and there was my dad's saddle on that horse. And I went in and asked where he got it. And he said he'd got it at a saddle shop in Hailey. And these people had sold that saddle to that shop. And I explained it to him and he said -- he was such a nice Basque, couldn't talk much English -- but he understood. And he'd gladly sell it and get another one. Which he did.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's wonderful. So you got your dad's -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: So, we still have it out there in the shop.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, that's wonderful.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: What are those pictures?

VIENNA MINE AND SUN VALLEY

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, I didn't know Oh, this would be interesting. Do you remember the old, old road over Galena?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I remember the -- not the first, but the second.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That's the S turn. That's the boarding house up at Vienna mine. And that's Vienna mine, you see ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, you know, does anybody have a picture like that? They don't do they?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I don't know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Because the first time that I hiked up to Vienna mine, again I went with our children, took little ones.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, that was a hike.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It was then. A good portion of that boarding house was still there. Again later, I hiked up with Jeanne Lane. And that was after they'd rebuilt the road, and of course, it wasn't as much of a hike. But of course now, there isn't anything left, you know.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, it's all fallen down.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's a marvelous picture. I want to be sure John sees that.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, I used to love to go up there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, what do you recall of that? Of Vienna mine?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: You mean my recollections?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Wonderfully happy. They would let me go a little way into the mine, you know, on the car. And that was a thrill just going up there. And I loved to eat there, and then she was a good cook. I can't remember her name now.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How many people could board in that boarding house, about?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Gee, I don't know. At that time, I wasn't -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You weren't interested.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was the least of my

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But it looked -- it was quite sizable.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, it was. It's too bad that it's I've been up there once since it's fallen down. I don't want to go again.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. There were -- it was quite an active mine, wasn't it?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, it was. I'll tell you. You see at that time, there was one telephone line. And I think there were twelve phones on that telephone line between Hailey and Stanley and everyone, you know, you just rang. And there were every ring imaginable. Our ring at Pole Creek was a long and a short. And then we had to call when they wanted Vienna mines, we had to call them from there. And theirs was six rings. I'll never forget how many times I had to crank the phone. Pleasant memories.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And what they took out of the Vienna mine was silver?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Um hum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's a wonderful picture.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: There are -- this, I think, is one that not many people have. The first six instructors at Sun Valley. In the first year that Sun Valley opened, I worked in the ski shop there. It was a wonderful experience. And that's the first six instructors.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For goodness sake. January 1, 1937. John and I were in college and I remember the big banner across the New York-Grand Central Station in New York -- big banner about Sun Valley, Idaho. And I knew this boy in school from Idaho, and he showed me all the pictures and told me all about this place.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Well, it was -- it was so different from what it is now. This is the ice skating rink. I worked at the only shop, the only ladies shop that year was Saks', Saks' Fifth Avenue. And Roberta Brass, the people who owned the land, and I worked there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, did you?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, that first year. And it was a marvelous experience, because people -- it was the first year, you know -- they didn't know quite what to wear and ski pants were new, so they would wait until they got there to buy what was the right thing to wear. It was an experience I will never forget.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, I am going to go back again. For instance, when you would come in here, did you ever come in here in the snow time? Did you ever snowshoe in with your dad or anything? Women didn't do that very much, did they?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, I guess my dad did it. I am sure he must have.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The reason I think he did is because I spent some time reading the old copies of the Wood River Journal and there I read quotes of what your father said about the snow depths up so far. He had snowshoed in from Galena Store, in so far, this kind of thing. So, I am sure this is when he was trying to figure when he could actually come in. Or it may have been when he was trapping? I never could figure that out from the paper.

ELLIS HOME ON SALMON RIVER

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, he didn't do any trapping -- maybe he did and I don't remember. But I don't remember his ever trapping in here.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. His trapping was all on the other side of Galena?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, in the winter.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Before they worked the year round. But that was -- he was with the Forest Service when he was doing that trapping, I'm sure. But -- Sandy Brooks had the dog team that first year at Sun Valley, as you know. This is the old Ketchum Post Office. Getting off the subject.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, that's interesting, too.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Came across it. And here's one that, to me, is interesting and very sad. We came up, my father, we brought my father up -- maybe I told you -- that last year just before he passed away. And this place had been deserted for years. It was the first homestead in the valley. And they lived here, I think, one or two years during World War I. They had one son. He had to go to war and he was killed. And they lost all interest in the place and just left. So that summer we brought him up he said, "There's one place I sure would like to have had." So that helped us, encouraged us to buy it, after he had passed away.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Really?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This is where we had planned to build. And this is the way it looks -- well, it looks worse than this now. That slide came -- in fact I have written here that I sent my picture to my mother, "View of the Ellis property, previously known as the Aiken Ranch. Hope to build our cabin somewhere near places marked 'X'. From here one gets a beautiful view of the Sawtooth Range." (Laughs) We came back and this had happened.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Good heavens, you wouldn't have had any cabin.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, we were gone three weeks.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: My gracious. And that was the direct result of snow and water? Is that what did it, or does anybody know?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, it had somewhat to do with the irrigating on top. There was so much water, they would just open up the ditches and let it run. And this is very sandy soil and washes easily.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It had always been -- there was a great deal of -- there was a little spring down there in the bottom, and you know, one year, the oil man was here bringing us gasoline. It was when we had the station and had a pump over there. And I looked out and we had several horses, three or four mares. And I could see this one buckskin mare standing there alone and I couldn't see a colt. I guess that went on for a half an hour and I keep looking and I didn't see a colt, so I went and told Boyd. And, as I say, the gasoline man was here, there were three men anyway. So they went out, and down in here is quicksand. And all they could see -- the little colt had gone in -- all they could see was its head.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, for goodness sakes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And they managed to get him out. I've often thought, we would never have known what happened to that colt.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I didn't know there were areas around here that were quicksand.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Um hum. Well, there is over there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And I never knew that you call this the Running Springs Ranch.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: For that reason, because water just streamed down. We called it that at one time.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For goodness sake. Well, that was lucky.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Wasn't it though? But the little fellow, it was a buckskin, and he was the oddest color, muddy, you know, brown sort of thing, and they had to carry him over because he had been in there quite a while. My husband took off his pants and they finally got him on his feet and got him to walking. And then Boyd ran him around the corral just, oh, for quite some time, you know, to get his blood thoroughly circulating. And we saved him.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's wonderful. Did you run a sort of resort here?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. We had the same people, they were government people. The husbands were at this -- what is the state, oh, experimental station?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Ash ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I know perfectly well. Ashton.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Ashton. Is that it?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, that isn't quite right. No, it isn't.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No. But anyway, the men worked there. They were from Washington, you see, and they worked there in the summer. And the two families stayed here. And the men came the weekends to fish. Garlands, they were wonderful people. They had stayed at the Shaws' ranch for a while. The Shaws' place just sort of folded. We -- I did the cooking, fed them, had the two little children. I had a girl help with the children. We'd have sometimes as many as ten. You know, just family style food.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right. You primarily have spent your summers here, like when your children were growing up you were in California.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. One year in my life that I haven't been up here -- during the war even we managed to get up, get gas enough to get up. That one year I went to England to visit my father's only sister.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: How interesting.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: But I've been up here for some -- oft times only two weeks, three weeks, when we were in Santa Barbara for nineteen years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You and Boyd?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. And we came up and sort of -- the children always loved it up here. I am glad they did because they still like it -- learned to like it, otherwise they wouldn't have. But as soon as they were through school, we come back. These are just pictures. Do you remember the old Wendell Inn?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That's a postcard Dad sent. It was amongst his things.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Those early inns were marvelous -- really. Considering how remote they were from places, they were very well built.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Dad and I, that was taken three or four years before he died.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, that's a wonderful picture. He was tall, wasn't he?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, he was over six feet. Tall and straight. Of course that was after he retired. He was beginning to fail then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, he virtually worked his lifetime then in here.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, yes. Now, I don't know how old he was when he went to work for the Forest Service. He was left here as a boy of fourteen, as I said, his father planning to come back.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And then he just stayed.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: He just stayed with the Billingsleys and worked for Ben and then went into the Geological Survey. The first year, I don't know whether it was the first year, but one year, he went into the Forest Service the first year it was created here.

FOREST SERVICE LAND USE

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. And from that very beginning time, I gather, they tried to count, they tried to keep track of the number of sheep that were coming in.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, yes, it was very important. I should say so. Because it seemed to be so easy for the bands to get mixed. And then there was really -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Trouble.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: There wasn't necessarily a problem with cattle, because there were not -

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: There were no cattle. I mean, not herds. No, no cattle. Because, you see, the winters were so hard on them, they couldn't go over the sheep trail. There were no trucks. It was such a long way in, to trail them in. There were a few, perhaps, well, I don't know who owned them. But I vaguely remember seeing some cattle go by and it was quite a novelty.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, it was sheep country.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Well, it's rough country, most of it. Of course it's wonderful summer pasture for cattle. Now the Rocky Mountain Ranch, you see -- what's her name, the daughter?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Alice.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I'm sorry, no. It wasn't Alice.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Wrong family. I'm thinking of the Bogarts, and you mean ...

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Bogarts, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Mary Alice, wasn't it? Well, it doesn't matter. But anyhow

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, anyway, it's hers now, you see. And we noticed that there was a lot of activity around the beautiful lodge up there, so I hope she is restoring it. But the pipes were all frozen and [broken] Nothing has been done with it for years and years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Do you remember when those people came in -- I suppose you do -- and [they] first built that lodge? It was very exciting.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, it was Count somebody or other. But he didn't stay long. And it was a beautiful place to go to. Well, the Bogarts didn't run it as a resort very long. Mrs. Bogart died soon after that. He had no interest whatsoever in it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. Did your dad, from your recollections, did he ever have any anticipation that this area would be considered to be overgrazed?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Oh, indeed. It was his chief worry. It was his chief worry that they didn't bring in--they only allotted to bring in so many sheep for so much land. Oh, he was very tough about that. (Laughs)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Because he realized it was, as we use the word now, fragile area?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. And, you see, if the sheep had been allowed to trail in much longer, what would have happened to those mountains. You've noticed how they've terraced them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That has helped a great deal. Otherwise they just would have eroded.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Because [of] all those little feet?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, they are so sharp. Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: So that was really a concern from the beginning?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: It was from the beginning. They didn't try to put too many sheep on their allotment, because they definitely had their boundaries and the number of sheep that were to be in there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, as you lived in Carey -- well, now, I'm wrong, you weren't there because of your mother's health, but you must have some recollections of this: where did all these sheep go in the wintertime?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The sheep that were up here?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In the summer. They all went down. They wintered in Carey and Shoshone and Hagerman.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I don't remember of a single, maybe there was one outfit from Carey, but they were all farther down.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, that's what I thought.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Shoshone and other towns.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hagerman.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Hagerman. Yes. There are four robins out there. (tape off then on again) ...something experimenting and trying, and this had never been done before.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And this is the creosote plant?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: At Pole Creek, the first one in the valley.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For goodness sake. Now, what exactly is this?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, those were the poles all piled up. My father was a very neat, tidy man. Everything had to be just in its place. And those were the poles. I presume that were to be done or that had already had been done.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And this is where the creosote is?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. And that's where the creosote is.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And the point of this was to preserve -- (tape off, tape on) -- so that the log would withstand weather.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, so they wouldn't rot out so fast. That was his shop, as he called it. You can't see the stable, it isn't in here. That was the station -- beautiful Pole Creek stream.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And where did -- you lived in the station?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right. Now, did we get everything? Oh, we didn't see -- now, what's this car? What's that?

TRANSPORTATION

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: This -- my father would never learn to drive a car. And finally in 1927, I had just finished college, so he said, "Buy a car." So, we bought a Dodge. Mother and I were in California, you see, still. I had just finished, as I say, school. So, we drove up in the Dodge. We thought it would save him. He was then getting, you know, tiring easily. We thought he could, you know, would drive it, and save so many hours of riding horseback. (Laughs) Do you happen to know the cutoff, where you can turn off the highway and cross Salmon River and get over to Pole Creek, that dirt road?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I've done it, yes.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. So, it turned out, I could drive him so many places. He was beginning to fail then, and I could drive him so many places. So one day coming home I said, "Dad, now you've got to learn to drive, you've never driven." And so we decided that road was the good one to try it on. (Laughter) And he got behind the wheel and I moved over and I got to laughing 'til I was almost hysterical, at seeing him behind the wheel. (Laughs) You know, he'd never driven and he got to laughing and he went out into the sagebrush and killed the engine and there we were. (Laughs)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The horse-less wagon was in the sagebrush. Is that your dad? And one of your children?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Grandchildren. Yes, a little boy and he died at nine years old. My older sister's son, it was, and they were up visiting.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But even in this picture, your father's not behind the wheel. It's his grandchild. Did he ever learn to drive?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: No, no, he would never try. (Laughs)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Rode that horse.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: He says, "Take the damn thing."

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, what's this?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, this is at Sun Valley, the first year they did quite a bit of that, maybe you remember?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I was in Twin Falls. And that, they're ski-joring behind a horse?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes. Some others here. And this is the dog team -- you know, Vienna mine, for a while, worked in the winter, was open in the winters.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I didn't realize that.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: And this is a dog team hauling supplies from Obsidian to Vienna. Now, you didn't know the Fishers either, did you know ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, I met the Fishers.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The Fishers sr.s and the Clarks. Nellie still lives in Bellevue. Well, this in the Frank Fisher. This is the dog team hauling supplies for Obsidian, from Obsidian to Vienna mines. I don't know whether I sent you one of them taken two years ago. Here's the dog team going to Vienna mine. Here it is again. Here's another Sandy Brooks had his dogs doing it for awhile.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: When did Vienna mine finally close down?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I know it got revived again a few years ago, you know. All but -- but the first

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: The heater didn't come on, did it?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I don't think it did.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Pilot's out.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Does it take a minute for it to switch on?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, yes, but it should have been on long -- there it comes on.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: There it's on. Vienna mine, from its first big functioning stopped in what, the thirties (1930's), didn't it? It must have, because it wasn't functioning when John and I were married. Maybe the twenties (1920's), I bet it was prior to the Crash.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, it could have been. I just don't remember exactly that.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Did we miss -- did we see all the rest of those pictures?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: I think so. That's among the trips I went with Dad.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's the old road.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Um hum. That's the stove to go to Bowery Ranger Station. Remember, that's the small picture of the creosoting.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Are the roads over Galena -- of course, you knew all three of them, didn't you?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Yes, yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That first road was

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: That's the one mother and I used to drive from Carey to Pole Creek.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: To Pole Creek. And, of course, the route -- you came down off the summit on this side and then you went right up over that hill and right down to Pole Creek, didn't you? Is that the way it worked?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, we had to cross Camp Creek, the little stream there. And then we went along, and it ... oh, it was perhaps a half a mile or so where we turned off to the right. It's a very steep hill.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right, and I've been over -- that's the hill I was identifying. I've been over it. In fact, I think I just about wrecked one car we had. When the children got a little older I would -- we would -- get in the car, you know,

I'd take them with me. We had a car, not a truck. And that road comes right down into Pole Creek [Ranger] Station. Is that road still usable?

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Well, it looks as if it is. I haven't been over it. But you know -

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I think it's ten years since I've been over it. I don't know what's left of it.

ALTA HORTON ELLIS: Everytime we tried to go up that hill in Mr. Benedict's car, we'd get stalled. So we got so we carried rocks in the car and would jump out and put them under the tires.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Put the rocks -- yes. (Tape off)

END OF INTERVIEW