

Interview with Margaret Matthews Reid

29 July 2008



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Interview with Margaret Reid, Tuesday, 29 July 2008, at her home in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, 80545

(Margaret's son Ross Reid sat in on the interview and added comments from time to time; his additions are in italics)

Interview and transcription by Linda Bell

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Childhood Memories from family cabin at 549 Hiawatha Highway

The first time I came to Red Feather Lakes I was 6 weeks old. That was in 1926. My mother liked to live up here so as soon as she thought it was safe to travel, she brought me up. That was from whenever the roads opened in the spring, which was April or May usually, and then we stayed until after deer season, October, November. Or until it looked like we might get snowed in again.

My mother was a housewife, a homemaker, and my dad and my grandfather had a business in Denver. My dad drove up on the weekends. They closed Saturday afternoon and he drove up after that. In those days businesses didn't close for the weekend.

We stayed in the pole cabin on Hiawatha Highway. My parents didn't build it. Mr. Gooding built it in – they bought land here in 1923 when the park opened and they built the cabin in 1924. Mr. Gooding, George A. Gooding, lived in Wellington and did construction up here. He built our cabin and theirs and, I'm sure, others. He and Mr. Swatman built the gate at Parvin (Lake).

One of them, and my brother who did remember everything, didn't remember which one fell off the ladder when they were building that gate and broke his arm. That was lots of excitement for up here. They didn't rush him anywhere – in those days you didn't rush anywhere, but I assume they put him together and took him to Fort Collins.

I was the youngest in the family. I had one sibling and I don't have him anymore. I'm the last of my family. Our family name was Matthews. My father was a sportsman, which is sort of a lost art these days. Since they did business in Denver I assume they knew Mr. Akin because I think he was a banker. And I wouldn't be surprised if they knew about Red Feather through him, but I couldn't say that that is so. But I assume that's how they found out about it.

We spent our summers up here until we had to be in town to go to school. I grew up in East Denver.

Every spring when we came up my mother would prop up the tombstone on the Ezubah Batterson grave. It always fell over in the winter. It didn't get propped up permanently until it became part of Glacier View. Once when she did that there was a rattlesnake lying under the tombstone and she never did that again.

We used to go down to Battersons to pick choke cherries. There are some here – there are some around Hiawatha (Lake), at least there used to be, but we went down there, to Battersons. Nothing went to waste in our family. My mother even made current pies. You can imagine how many currents it took to make a pie! They used the choke cherries and they used the currents and whatever else was available. They liked fish – I always hated trout, but... In our family, if you killed it you ate it. So we did eat fish. My dad would bring groceries up on the weekends.

There was a store at Log Cabin. When they (my parents) first came up here, that was the closest telephone and the closest store. So they would go down there and get groceries. And I do remember when I was really little, we stopped at.... My mother had, I think, a 1927 Essex that she drove to come up here. And I remember we stopped at that store and it hadn't been a good store for a long time after the Wallaces built up here, and we stopped going down there. The man was so frightening, that my mother said that she would never go back down there. I don't remember what it was that scarred her, but he did ... he gave me a funny feeling too.

Route 287 was unpaved from 46th and Federal in Denver all the way up here. The dirt road went through all the little towns, Erie and Berthoud and Lafayette and Loveland, Longmont, Fort Collins. Down by Petersons there was one gate you had to open and close. The road doesn't go that way anymore.

The Wallaces built Hilltop. That was George C. Wallace. They had children but I don't know anything about them after they left here. He was a tall dark man, at least

I thought he was tall when I was five. She was a little round white-haired lady. She kept the store open for several years after he died.

Jesse – whatever her name was – that bought after the Wallaces, made the knitting books. The Wallaces had just the store and they lived there too. They built the log house across the road, up the hill, where they also lived.

Mostly we played here during the summer. In my lifetime, I don't think there is a rock within walking distance that I haven't been on top of, except for that big one across the Red Feather Lakes Road. I don't think you can get up to the top without equipment. We called the high rock across from the cabin on Hiawatha Highway "daredevil" rock. We used to have to go through a little-bitty crack to get up to the top of it. I can't get through the crack anymore.

Ross Reid: *Now there's a geo-cache over there somewhere, on "daredevil."*

We used to sit on the rock right in front of the cabin before Mr. Arent filled it with cement for his TV antenna. There was a nice step seat up there you could sit on and watch the light at the Cheyenne airport. The light went around, like a lighthouse, green and white. The nighthawks would dive, it was great.

I never helped my mother in the kitchen. She didn't want anybody in the kitchen and I certainly wasn't eager to get there. One set of grandparents lived next to us (in Denver) and the other set lived with us, and I think my mother was delighted to get the kitchen to herself when it finally happened.

Most of the time when we were in the cabin, it was just my mother, my brother and I. And then some of my cousins who were 20 years older than we were would come, or my grandmother's daygirl would come so she wasn't entirely alone. But they always said that my father would come up on weekends with 13 people in his car. I don't remember that. I don't remember them being sociable at all, but they must have been, because there were two and possibly three beds in every room of that house. There were three bedrooms; there was a bed in the kitchen and one or two in the living room. Sometimes my grandparents came or other people, but I don't remember.

My parents said there were community picnics, but I don't remember anything about those. But they said they had weenie roasts and things like that for the whole community sometimes. The community was very small. The hotel was still operating, they had dances over there. I remember my mother taking me to a dance.

And of course, in those days, children were told to sit down and be quiet, which I did, on a bench along the wall. I remember people stepping on my feet, but that's about all I remember about it.

Of course Camp Wayne was still operating at the time. I read that it was a Boy Scout camp, but I don't remember it as a Boy Scout camp, I just remember it as a "boys' camp" over at Erie.

In the 1930s the CCC camp was up here in Indian Meadows – I guess they call it Indian Meadows now. It is behind the next street over past the Catholic Church. There were several buildings over there. I think one of the buildings is still there and they remodeled it into a house, but I'm not ever sure of that. There was a canteen and several bunkhouses, and things like that. The CCC did most of their work (lumbering) right around here. You notice when you go down the Bellaire Road it's been cleared, and they did all that. They blazed some of the trails and things like that around.

During the war, prisoners of war were at the lumbering camp on Deadman. I couldn't go out by myself anymore because my parents were sure an escaped prisoner would catch me. I don't know what they thought he would "do", but you know, the prisoners, when they did escape, thought they could walk clear to the ocean. I guess you can walk clear across Germany. They kept getting lost. There were only two or three who did it (escaped). There were Japanese up there too. Some of them came back, and some of their relatives still come back to get mushrooms on Deadman. Who knows where they come from. The prisoners were there until after the war was over. It really messed up my summers because I used to just go out after breakfast and come home at dinnertime.

Most of the time I just explored, and climbed rocks. Usually I went by myself, but once in a while my brother came along. It was great because nobody worried. You could go out then by yourself and be safe. Sometimes they said; "wish you'd tell me where you're going, so we could find you if you were lost." Most of the time I didn't know where I was going.... I went wherever the mood took me.

I ran into a bear one time. And on top of one of the high rocks at Erie I saw a ladybug convention. It was really interesting because the whole top of that rock was covered with ladybugs. You couldn't put your finger down without hitting a ladybug. I spoke to someone who was supposed to know about it later, and he said they're seldom that far north. That happens every once in a while, but you seldom see a whole lot of them in one place that far north. I almost stepped on grouse ... have you

ever done that? There are an explosion under your feet. On that same trip where the ladybugs were I tripped on the way down the rock. You know how when you start to fall, you run to catch up with your head. I came around the side of a great big boulder and there was a big buck deer standing there. We weren't more than ten feet apart. And he was as amazed as I was! So we stood there and looked at each other for a while, then he decided maybe he should leave. Things like that kept happening.

I never saw a mountain lion, and I'm hurt. Everybody up here has seen a mountain lion, but me. We used to see tracks when we walked down to the Poudre. There was a trail for a long time from part way up Deadman to the Poudre. We used to walk down there several times a year. This was to the "little" Poudre. It runs through Beaver Meadows and Crystal Lakes. For a while there was a sign at the top of the trail; "two miles down and twelve miles back" because that's what it felt like. It was a steep hill – easy to go down, but really hard to come back up, especially after a long day. It (the trail) burned in the 1972 fire, when the plane crashed. I don't think I'd find my way back down there again. All the landmarks and blazes are gone. We'd go down and catch "brookies". My brother and I usually took that trip.

We didn't bring any animals of our own up to Red Feather. When I was little in Denver we had a dog and it got hit by a car. It dragged itself home to die, and it apparently hurt my father's so, that he said we'll never have another dog. We did have a cat or two that wandered in and we kept them. But up here, dogs either got lost or abandoned. Several summers we had a dog until we went back to town, and then the dog disappeared. I don't know what my folks did with it – I don't want to think about it.

I was 16 or so during the war. My brother was 19 and taken as a prisoner of war. That was the worst time of my life. When the war started, of course, we knew all about it. It was a whole other kind of war than the one we've had lately, because everyone was involved. If you didn't have somebody, then your next door neighbor did. We had blackouts and rationing.

My mother had been through World War I so she knew about rationing, and she figured it would probably happen again. She decided to lay in some supplies. So she bought like 100 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of sugar, and my father wisely broke his collarbone so ... and my brother was gone, so that left me to get those things into the house. It was no particular problem, and she bought 100 pounds of potatoes. The day we brought those home, we drove up in the alley and the iceman happened to drive up behind us. And I thought, "oh, wow, the iceman, no doubt I'll get some help here!" So I drug the potatoes out of the car, and made it look as hard as possible, and

they're a little harder than flour because they're so lumpy and uncooperative. I made it look difficult; and he sat there. I made it look even more difficult; and he sat there. So I thought, "oh well, the heck with it," and I picked them up and put them on my shoulder and took them down to the basement. When I turned around he was behind me. And he said, "You know, with the war, help's hard to get – would you like a job on my truck?" That was not the kind of proposition other girls got from the iceman!

But anyway ... then my dad went to work for Remington Arms down at the Federal Center, so we were involved in the war, as was everyone else. We weren't able to come to Red Feather very often because gas was rationed and the speed limit was 35 mph. Not that that would have stopped us, and it didn't, we came when we could get together enough gas to do it. We didn't spend ... well, we were down then to weekends anyway. During the Depression, you know, there wasn't money for pleasures, so we ... some summers during the Depression we only got up here one weekend. Times were so hard, and my grandmother was dying by inches, and nothing was going right, and we'd think, "Oh, if we can just get to the cabin, everything will be better." And it always was. But sometimes, it was just one weekend the whole year, for quite a few years.

My dad was one of the best fly-fishermen I ever knew. He fished and he hunted, but he never got a deer. He would get cottontails, rock rabbits, or whatever, birds, grouse. My mother was an excellent game cook, so when we were up here we hunted the little rabbit, and when we were in town, we hunted jack rabbits at Lowry Field. That was a long way out in the country then. We really didn't come up here to kill things... When we did, we did eat them. We came for the place and the feeling of it.

The community was small. There were the Wallaces, and the hotel. Wallaces had the post office. There was a little building sitting somewhere near where the (Hilltop) gazebo is that the post office was in. The fish hatchery was where the new park is. Akin's cabin was there at Ramona. There was another store in town, but I don't remember it. A lady named Mrs. Phipps had a bakery type place about where the hardware store is now. It was a kind of little run-down cabin. She had an accent of some kind; I think it was French, but I'm not sure. The church was where the thrift shop is.

One of the entrances to the "park" was at that gray house across the street from the thrift shop and the other one was at Westlake, which then was "Twin Lakes" – there were two there, they blew one of the islands apart. There were stone pillars there at that entrance and the club house was there, the big orange club house. The park was Red Feather, they called it a park. The whole place was called a park. People just

referred to it as a park. They had big plans for this place. Swansons meadow was going to be a polo field, and they were going to develop clear down to the Pine on the north. They had big ideas about it and of course then the Depression came along and things kind of went to pot.

The people of Red Feather Lakes

When people talk about Red Feather they don't talk about the people, and the people are what I remember. The Moores had one of the first cabins on the rocks on the west side of Hiawatha, so we always called it "Moore Mountain." One of the Moore girls was a teacher and she married Carl McCarthy and they lived in the green house catty corner from Akins. Mr. Ovens had another cabin on Hiawatha. He was one of the other old-timers. He had a garage on Colfax and Colorado Blvd, which was way out of Denver then too. Mrs. Swatman, whose husband helped Mr. Gooding, I remember as being "dead" old. She was probably about my age! But my mother used to visit people when we were up here and Mrs. Swatman was one of them. She kept her husband's ashes in an urn on the mantle which at the time I thought was pretty peculiar. And Mr. Toy built Frydendall's house, and Lukins house, Melba Anderson lives in that now. He (Mr. Toy) built another log house over there in that direction. He was a little short man and kind of square, husky, and he treated me as if I were a lady, and I've never forgotten it, because it is really unusual. And the Sievers lived up the road from Blatts – Blatts lived at the end of Papoose, and there's a road that goes on over the hill and on the other side of the hill, the Sievers lived. I think they were both teachers. They lived up here but I don't think they taught up here. He did odd jobs. I remember him pulling moss out of the lakes and things like that. She died in the last few years and she was very close to 100 – I'm not which side of 100 she was on.

I don't remember any foresters. The CCC did all the forestry work up here that I remember. I can't remember when it came to be Roosevelt National Forest of any of that. Somebody must have been supervising the prisoners when they were cutting forest. The fish hatchery in town was just for the Red Feather Lakes, so that would have been a storage and irrigation type thing, but there wasn't any storage and irrigation company then.

We didn't, I didn't, socialize, and I don't remember that my folks did when I was old enough to know what was happening. We stopped at McNeys on the way up first thing in the spring just to say hello. All I remember about that was a lady with white hair. I sometimes wish I'd been older, because I missed a lot. I've been working now for a long time to make up for those six weeks I lost!

Honeymoon adventures, bringing my family up to Red Feather Lakes

When I was a young adult, married and having children, we didn't spend any more time away from Red Feather than we had to. The children were born in Denver, but as soon as we could, we got up here. I don't know how old Paul was – that is Ross's older brother – but Ross was 11 months before we got him up here. He was born in September, so we had to wait until the following year. We have three children – a boy and a boy and a girl. I met my husband – Les Reid – at work. We both worked for the Bureau of Reclamation. He came up to Red Feather right away.

We spent our honeymoon here. We were married on a Sunday afternoon in August, 1949, and we had bought – a *car*. After the war it was hard to get cars. They didn't build them, you know, during the war and used cars were *used*. But we found a 1937 Chevrolet coupe that we thought was the finest car in the whole world because it was our first car. We started up here in our first car, and we got to Fort Collins and went into the filling station to get gas. The man said, "Should I check the oil?" and Les said, "Oh, no we filled it with oil before we came, you don't have to worry, but maybe you better." So, he opened hood, and there was oil all over the outside of the engine and nothing in the engine. By this time it was evening and nothing in Fort Collins was open except one little mechanic. He looked at it and said, "There's a hole in the oil line, so that's where you oil disappeared to."

Les said, "Are you sure that isn't a gravity vent?" And the mechanic said, "No, there's a hole in there and the oil's going to come out." So he soldered up the hole and we had dinner. By that time it was really dark and we got to that long stretch between Ted's Place and Owl Canyon. This was still dirt road. I think they had paved it to Fort Collins, but the road from The Forks on up for sure was dirt. But anyway, we got to that point and the lights went out. Les pulled over to the side of the road and stopped and I went to step out and it was so dark and the car was still moving, but I couldn't tell that, and I got back in the car. In that time, cars had fuses, so we put another fuse in the place the fuses go and the lights came on, and we went about ten feet and the lights went off again. That was the last fuse we had. We sat there thinking: "Now what shall we do?"

After a bit a car stopped behind us and about a half dozen teenaged boys got out and we thought, "Oh boy, what are we getting into now?" And a man came up and said, "You having problems?" We said, "Yes we are – the lights won't stay on." Well, some of the boys smoked so they took the lead foil out of the cigarette packages,

because they were lined with lead foil then, and wrapped it around the fuse and put it in, and the lights came on. The man said, "We'll wait and see how it goes." We went another five feet and they went out... He said, "Well, you better follow us to the ranch – I've got a ranch just down the road and I can put you up for the night. Well, we thought, "We don't have much choice." We followed him down the road and got to his ranch and sure enough he put us up for the night. That was the first night of our honeymoon. He didn't know that, and we didn't mention it. He might have been a little suspicious because we were all dressed up coming from the church. But anyway, he explained that the boys, except for one of them, he had met farther down the road and their car had broken down and he was bringing them up to the ranch so that they could work long enough to make enough money to fix their car so they could go on to California, where they were going. That turned out to be Evan Roberts.

In the morning, we got in the car and came back up here and took it over to a man named Remington who had a place over on Nokomis, who was a mechanic. He said, "Some damned fool soldered the gravity vent closed on your oil line!" So he unsoldered that and fixed the generator so the lights stayed on. And that's how our married life started! It got better as it went along....

Ross Reid: *One of the more interesting parts of that story was when the library had a program at the Roberts Ranch to show everyone the buffalo jump on their property. Of course Mrs. Roberts was there, but Mr. Roberts had had so many strokes that he wasn't present. Mom said, "You know, I met Mr. Roberts before... When we got married we spent our honeymoon here at the ranch." "Oh, that was 1949 or thereabouts because I was in Hawaii." She knew exactly where she was in 1949!*

His boy, Mr. Robert's boy, was then David – now he's named Derek. And he was a teenager then too.

We had some good adventures. Once when Les and I were up here we decided to go over to Chimney Rock and then on to Laramie, in the '37 coupe. We got – oh I don't know how to tell you where we were, but out where there was nobody else and we were going down a hill and we heard a "pop." We thought, oh, a flat tire and pretty soon we'd hear a "hssss," and we didn't hear a "hssss." We got out and all the tires were round. Well, OK. We got in and turned the car back on and it shook all over – the whole thing vibrated and made the awfulest noise. There we were – absolutely in the middle of nowhere and we thought, well, I don't know what we're going to do now.... We had a lot of stuff with us that we just didn't want to leave the car. We sat there a while and then we turned the engine back on and everything was fine. I

ran just as smooth as could be. So we started on over to Chimney Rock and Laramie and when we went to go down a hill it would jump out of second gear. We went to a mechanic in Laramie, and he drove it around the block and he came back and said, "There's nothing wrong with that car..." which made us so mad that we got back into the car and drove back to Red Feather holding it in second gear all the way back. When we got home, Les took the transmission apart and put in a new gear of some kind, and just as he was getting it together, the mechanic from next door came and said, "Where's the cotter pin that holds second gear in place?" Les said, "There wasn't a cotter pin in there...." He looked down in the transmission case and there was this ground up cotter pin. It had gone through all the gears which was what made all the vibration. Once it was gone, it was fine, except it wouldn't stay in second gear.

Contemporary places, mining in the area

Ross Reid: *One of my favorite memories – this isn't anywhere near that long ago, but we were hiking up behind Peterson's Meadow and we got on top of a rock formation and it was obvious that an Indian had sat there and made arrowheads. The flakes were all over the place. It was just too cool to think that the last person who sat here and did something was an Indian – watching this whole valley. That was in the last twenty years. Peterson's Meadow was right across from Mount Margaret and that whole valley was their ranch.*

The foundation for their house is still visible there. You know the foundation for the house that the Battersons had – well it's the same kind of foundation. Just rocks laid along the hill. You can see it from the road. I don't know when the Petersons left, but I know the house was there for a long, long time.

Ross Reid: *I assume it is a mine shaft right beyond the little gate across the road from the Mount Margaret trailhead – people looking for gold. It might not have been gold necessarily. Could have been amethyst – you know a lot of people dug for the crystals.*

Garnets....

Ross Reid: *There are a lot of places. I don't know – do you know when any of that stuff was dug? I don't know if it was done before the ranch was there, or while the ranch was there, or what they were looking for. If it was the people coming up at the time of Manhattan, then they were looking for gold.*

Do you know they are prospecting for diamonds at Lost Lake? We keep looking around for gray places in the ground – there might be a Kimberlite pipe in our basement or something!

I didn't know of any active mining during my childhood. It was mostly agriculture. Except the amethyst mine was in my childhood, the one on Deadman. Penoyer had it, that was his name. Mrs. Wallace always called him Penori, but his name was Penoyer. That was there for a long time. I think he opened it. There was a claim across the road from that for a long time too, but I don't see the signs up there any more. If you stake out a claim and take out a certain amount of whatever, then you can eventually acquire the land. That is only mine I would know about, but Mrs. Mulford's relatives, the Peters, had a mine just across the cattle guard on the Deadman Road, but I think that was just a hobby thing.

Ross Reid: *You know Lynn Peters? They have a cabin across from ours, a log cabin. They are relatives of the people, or some of the people, that are over on Red Feather Lake. Lynn Peters and Kay Mulford are cousins and their relatives have a place over there.*

That cabin was as old as ours. Mrs. Mulford came up here as a child.

Ross Reid: *That might be a possibility for an interview. I expect you could call Kay. I'm sure that Lynn would talk to you. They are only here in the summer.*

Their parents were the Johnsons, is that right. It's the Johnsons cabin and I think the Peters got it, inherited it.

Ross Reid: *Our old cabin is used by my sister's family, and my brother's family. Us when we need it. When we renovated the kitchen we stayed over there. That was for a whole summer a couple of years ago.*

That gave us a place to cook and sleep and whatever we wanted to do.

Relocation from Denver to 188 Creedmore Lakes Road, Red Feather Lakes

I've had this house 18 years. I moved here in 1990. I was widowed ... Les died in May. We had already looked at this house several times, together. We wanted a place of our own. And we wanted to live here. The cabin would have taken a lot to winterize. It wouldn't have held all our stuff anyway, although that we could have done without.... We looked at ... Mr. Lane would put the this place on the market

periodically. His wife was completely disabled with arthritis. Her hands were just fists – she couldn't hold a toothbrush, or anything. He took care of her, bless his heart. Periodically he'd pack her into their van and take her to Tennessee to visit. I really admired the man for that. Anyway, I think what happened is that she'd get really sick and he'd think, I'd better get rid of the house and move to town or something, then he'd put it on the market and we'd come over and make an offer, and then he'd change his mind. He did that two or three times. We looked at every house in Red Feather, but none of them had what we really needed. Les died in May and in June Mrs. Schmitt called and said the house was back on the market. Mrs. Lane had died, and Mr. Lane had died, and their son Jim had this place. He and his wife were up here cleaning up and his wife died of a heart of attack. So they were pretty anxious to get rid of the house.

You know they tell you, don't make any large decisions after somebody dies, and I thought, well, it would be a large decision not to buy this house because we had looked at it and wanted to buy it for so long. I made them an offer contingent on selling the house in town, thinking six weeks, six months, maybe never ... and it sold in a week. I had a month to get out of the house. That was August. I packed up and got out. We moved 8 tons of stuff up here! You know they weigh the truck before and after they load it, and it was 16,000 pounds, most of which I had packed into boxes. The south room wasn't finished so we stacked everything up there, until we built on some storage. That's all we build here – more storage!

The Lanes built this house, more or less. I think Mr. Barker ...

Ross Reid: *Mr. Arent said "old Earl"... built the original log, which is this room and the bedroom, and upstairs, there's a music room, and my bedroom downstairs.*

That was the original cabin. There are scrapbooks in the bookshelf behind all the paperbacks. It was just four rooms originally, and I think Mr. Barker built it. But I'm sure the Lanes did a lot of the work inside. I have no idea who "old Earl" was. That's just what Mr. Arent said, and that's as far as we ever got. The Lanes built on and on and on as the mood struck them, apparently. I remember when they built that end of the house, it was all open, like a porch.

Ross Reid: *One of the more interesting things about living here is that the Lane's daughter, oh, about every five to ten years, shows up and wants to see what all we've changed in the house. Last time she was here she brought pictures of what it looked like.*

It was built – I thought the house had been here 17 years when I moved here, so 17 and 18, you can figure it out.... When he built on to the house he didn't bother to take the windows out that were already there, so that when you walk down the hall out here, you can look into the bathroom. "How are things?"

I presume because she (Mrs. Lane) was crippled they had to have egress, so there were seven outside doors to the house and each one had a different key.

Ross Reid: *Over here on the corner of the property they had a house that they lived in while they built this one. It's across the street. We really didn't want it on the property because it was falling apart and the Atwoods said they wanted it, and they lived across the street here (Creedmore Lakes Road). It's next to the house.*

Orville Hawkins came in and drug it across the street and put it on two logs. It was a 16' by 20' foot structure so it wasn't tiny, and he put it on two logs and drug it across the street and through the gate. He couldn't have cleared that by more than 5 inches.

It was amazing. I had the best time watching that. He didn't even pause, he just took it through the gate and never touched it!

I couldn't find the photos of my childhood here – or I couldn't get them out, I mean. They're just snapshots, they're not scenes. They didn't seem to take scenery. We had pictures of our house.

Adrian (Davis) took pictures of the cabin that we didn't know about, and put it on his website. I didn't want it publicized. It just seemed to me that the cabin is over there by itself, empty, and if he was over there poking around where he had no business, I thought it would give people the idea it was public property. Or empty. Or, oh well, they won't miss this if I take it, and that's not what I want to happen.

Stories, characters, Ross's memories

With my kids, it was like it was with me. We just turned them out....

Ross Reid: *Oh yeah, we'd eat breakfast and we'd split. We were playing in the lakes, catching crawdads and tadpoles.*

They rode their bikes around and played a lot over there by the fox farm.

Ross Reid: *I remember the first time I was going bashing through the woods and came over a hill and there's all this grass, and I'm thinking; who would want to mow*

that lawn in Red Feather? It turned out to be the golf course. We didn't know anything about it. We came up here to play. I didn't know they had a golf course up here.

And the fox farm was working. I remember when (Ted) Dunning came, and what's the Irishman's name? Oh, Jim O'Rourke – I thought he was the cutest thing I ever saw, black curly hair. It was just after the war and he wasn't very old by then.

Ross Reid: *I'd never heard any story about how he got his land. I know he squatted on some of the Quaintance property that somehow turned into his. I'm not sure if Mary Quaintance gave it to him or, like I say, he just squatted on it and put up his cabin. I really don't know the whole story. You can't get a straight story out of Jim anymore. He's got that nice cabin over there across from where Syd lives, on the Prairie Divide Road, by the turn on the Nokomis Road, the orangish-red cabin, that's his. But I don't think that's always where he lived.*

No, he lived over by Nokomis where all the fence is in the trailer. I don't think he was here year `round, but I wasn't either, so I don't really know.

Young – that was Jesse's name. Jesse Young owned Wallace's after... I'm not sure whether they bought it from Wallaces or not. But she published a little magazine, with recipes and patterns. She had several kids, one of whom.... I have some of her books. Arianna wanted a pattern for crocheting hats and I thought Jesse probably had some, so I sent bunch of them to her. I hope she kept them. One of her (Jesse's) boys was a lawyer and I don't know what the rest of them did. He was a lawyer in Denver.

Then some people named King had Wallaces place for just a short time – they didn't last very long. Then the Provinces, then the Miskels.

Ross Reid: *The Provinces had it when we were little and going over for the penny candy. They had it behind the glass counter, so did the Trading Post. Mom talks about her mom being scared by the guy down there at Log Cabin, that's the way Jack was at the Trading Post. He always scared me as a kid. I don't know that he ever did anything besides be grumpy, but I remember not liking the store much because he was never nice. What was his last name? I can't remember. After he sold the Trading Post he lived in that prefab right at the top of the hill where the hotel used to be.*

He died there and he was dead for two weeks before anybody found him. He used to always go over to the High Country and visit and have a drink. They hadn't seen him for quite a while, so decided they better look and see if they could find him, and that's where he was. But there were lots of things like that that happened up here. The Moore's daughter that I said lived across from Aikens ... her brother came up and stayed with them for a little while and shot himself, under the clothesline. Some lady who lives in a doublewide trailer over by the Thrift Shop killed her abusive husband and buried him in the front yard. After several days she decided that wasn't such a good idea, so she dug him up and admitted that she killed him. But I think he had it coming.... So things happened besides battles at the Pot Belly (July 2008).

The paper said 150 people were involved and then the next day they said 15. They finally got it down to 10....

I was going to tell you when the McFarland's house burned down. It was about where Arent's house is, and as I remember, it was a two story house built of that hairy wallboard. You wouldn't remember. Worley's house was built the same way – Worley's house is where the well is.

Ross Reid: It was like a fiberboard of some kind. I don't know what it was made out of, but they used it up until the 1960s or 70s. They used it as an exterior barrier under the siding.

I think it was a kind of cement thing. Anyway, the house burned down. And it burned so hot, the window glass burned into balls. I have some pieces of it at the cabin. When the fire started ... I think it's still that way, it just burned. It was lucky it didn't burn anything more than the house. I guess there were volunteer fire fighters then because people would come over and do something.

Ross Reid: And the wind didn't blow like it does now. That is literally true. The climate has changed immensely up here just in my lifetime. I don't know specifics but there are some things have changed. The acidity in the lakes, it's got to have changed because the frogs and the crawdads are gone. Gosh, when we were kids, we were catching frogs and tadpoles all the time. Those were the great big bullfrogs. They're gone – they don't exist up here any more. Like the rainstorms come through and the wind, you'd have a storm and the wind would blow, then the wind would quit. It wasn't like any day the sun shown the wind was blowing, like it is now. I don't know what's changed.

And the nighthawks are gone. We used to spend a lot of time on top of that rock listening to the nighthawks. You know the noise they make when they swoop, and there were lots of them, and we see very few of them now. And eagles, we didn't have eagles, and now we see bald eagles quite often.

Ross Reid: *A lot of things like that have changed. The elk weren't here when I was a kid. They've slowly taken over so you hardly ever see any deer anymore.*

The first elk we saw – I was holding Paul on my lap, and he's 53 now, so it's been that long, that two elk crossed the road in front of the Jeep. That was a real thrill. They were as big as the car.

Somebody told us a good story the other day. Evidently she was coming up in a fairly small car and there was a moose standing in the road. She thought she'd go around it and it started to go up the road with her. All she could see was moose underbelly.

We went over to Meeker, in whatever county that Meeker's in, that's supposed to have the most elk of any county in the world, and we didn't see a single one. We were over there two or three days and we came back and there were 17 elk down at the Girl Scout Ranch.

That's what I especially like about this place. You can walk to all the scenery. I don't enjoy just looking at it, I want to be there. And you can get there on foot if you have to.

Added written addendum by Margaret Reid, August 2008

We didn't get around to talking about how we lived when we were here and I don't know if anyone would be interested, but this is how it was:

The cabin had no running water, electricity or telephone. Water came by the bucketful from a spring at the far end of what we called the skeeter pond, now Papoose. Cooking and heating was done on a small wood stove called Myrtle. The name was cast into the body of the stove. We used coal oil lamps for light. When we came up we raised the flag in front of our house. It could be seen from Wallace's store and if an emergency arose in town (Denver), those people would call the store. Wallaces would look to see if the flag was up and would come over to tell us to call home. We bathed in a galvanized round tub, washed cloths on a wash board, and ironed with a flat iron. We cut our own wood using a bucksaw. Our mother was a small lady, not many inches over five feet, and very feminine, but she could take care of herself. One evening she was entertaining some ladies from the city. It was dark when suddenly the whole cabin began to shake and there was an awful noise. The ladies were pretty scared. Mom took a lantern and went out to see what was happening. It was a cow, scratching itself on the corner of the house.

We lived happily without the conveniences. When the Worleys drilled their well at their house on Hiawatha, they let everyone use it and that made things easier. The REA came to the area I think in the fifties and we added electric lights. After Les and I were married we bought a horse trough to use as a bathtub. When we could get our bottom and our feet in the water at the same time, we thought it was luxurious! At the same time the four hole stove was replaced with a six holer, which heated the house a little better. When we began to spend more time at the cabin, Les and I added 220 power and put in a small electric stove. We remodeled the kitchen a bit to make it more convenient, but we still heat with the wood stove. I did my first cooking with wood though, and continued it for many years. It was a good life. All things being equal, I would love to do it again.

Notes taken by Linda Bell following formal interview

Les's mom died when he was born, so he was raised by his aunts, uncles and grandparents.

Sure we swam in the lakes when I was a girl – we sometimes jumped off the promontory at the “three sisters, or ran in fast or jumped in. You couldn't go in

gradually – it was just too painful because of the cold. That was before Storage and Irrigation made rules about swimming. There was a waterfall along Columbine Creek where we used to bathe before Crystal Lakes changed that.

I always looked for arrowheads. I am still envious that Ross found the first one.