

Mattie Hansen, 1990, Transcript of Edited Video  
Transcribed by Susan Kim, 2/6/24

This is the Sawtooth Mountain Mama Centennial project. We are at Cliff and Bonnie Hansen's house interviewing Mattie Hansen on the 11th of November 1990. Mattie, we'd like to know why and how did you get to the Stanley Basin.

*When I first came up here was in 1930 and started working at the Rocky Mountain, Idaho Rocky Mountain Ranch in the summer. I was teaching school down in Kimberly at that time.*

About how old were you when you came there?

*About 23.*

And you worked that one summer at the Rocky Mountain or did you work more than one?

*I worked four summers, really.*

And when did you start teaching school in Stanley?

*Well, teaching steady, I didn't start really teaching steady until Cliff was in the fifth grade, but I did substituting for quite a long time before then.*

When you first came up here to work at the Rocky Mountain, how did you get here?

*Bill Hamilton came down to Twin Falls in a truck and I rode back up here with him. I was supposed to start working earlier, but Laura and Vella were going to work at the Rocky Mountain Ranch, the California Girls. I'd already been hired, but then they kind of put me off.*

And who are Vella and Laura?

*Williams. But you see, Vella was down in California with her mother and her sister the winter before and so they were the California girls. On the 4th of July, Laura was kind of a wild little character and Pete Snedaker was the manager of the Rocky Mountain Ranch and she got quite chummy with him. So, on the morning of the 4th of July she didn't think she had to get up and go to work. Winston Paul, the owner, really the owner, financially owner, of the Idaho Rocky Mountain Ranch fired her and Vella said if you're going to fire my sister, I'm quitting. But he fired her anyway. So, they just hired the one person, me, cuz they didn't need that much help.*

What kind of a wage did you make?

*I believe it was \$100 a month.*

And your board and room?

*Uh-huh.*

And so, you stayed in the lodge then?

*We stayed upstairs in those rooms where they had for the girls, for help.*

Now, was that the first year it opened?

*Uh-huh.*

1930. So, you started to teach school when Cliff was about in the fifth grade?

*Uh-huh.*

Before we get on to that, can you think of any more stories about the Rocky Mountain Ranch? Did they have a tennis court, we've heard that they had a tennis court there.

*They didn't have a tennis court when I worked there. But they had ping pong.*

And they had the pond out front that you could swim or fish in.

*Oh yes. And we always thought, well Pete Snedaker was quite a golf player and he had sampled champion things he'd won, and we thought, oh boy are we going to learn how, to get some pointers from him on golf. So, first thing we did, now this was this first summer, and the first*

*thing we did is ask him. Yes, he said, I'll show you anything I can, but he said, you have to be able to hit that ball and knock it clear across that pond. And shoot, they landed right in the water every time. So that he didn't have any more trouble with us. You know, we didn't want to just throw our golf balls away. On Sunday evenings we used to all get together up in the lodge and they'd sing songs and visit, you know, with the guests. Most of the guests there were from the East at that time, and they'd come and stay, you know, all summer or like six weeks or something.*

And they ate in the Lodge?

*Oh, they ate there, and then they could go out on day trips and things you know.*

Clear from the East Coast?

*Mm-hmm.*

Did you go in town...?

*We always said the ones that live in... when anyone came from Idaho, and they tip us at the table, you know, for their dinners. Why, we always said you can tell they're from Idaho because they didn't tip very high.*

They didn't have the money, evidently.

*Evidently. They had to work for what they made.*

Yeah, did you go in to Stanley on Saturday night to dances?

*Oh, yes, we had more fun. We'd go in there some, and all of us together, and we'd say Bar-de-Are. You know, we're from Bar-de-Are, Dude Ranch Rocky Mountain. Oh, we just had a lot of fun. Tried all the different kind of dances, old-time dances. And this one time in Stanley at the dance, it was Riva Gillespie's father was there. When I was dancing with him, he was telling me how they did those old-time dances, you know. And he always came and ask you for you to dance on some of those old-time dances with him. And it was fun, you always enjoyed visiting with him.*

Was the Ace of Diamonds... did you dance at the Ace of Diamonds?

*That's where we danced, uh-huh. And in That old Ace of Diamonds, you'd sit on the side bench to watch them dance and the floor was so, you know, the old foundation underneath, and you just swing along, and I wondered if the thing would break when I was sitting there. And I looked out the window, they had a row of windows right there, and I looked out the window and I thought, well I wouldn't fall too far if it did break.*

Now when did you move on to this ranch?

*Well Fred and I, we bought the ranch together and I lived on it there from the time we were married.*

When did you marry Fred?

*In 1934... three.*

In 1933, you married Fred Fleming?

*Mm-hmm.*

Okay, and you moved on to this ranch. Who did you buy this ranch from?

*It had been homesteaded by the Nieces and then they sold it to... Barney Lanier had it. We had to make our payments to Barney Lanier.*

How many acres are here?

*320.*

320 acres you bought for taxes, back taxes.

*Uh-huh. But we bought them from Barney Lanier.*

And you and Fred had two daughters?

*Mm-hmm.*

Claire and Mary?

*Yes, and uh he passed away before Claire was born.*

Oh?

*Uh-huh.*

And what did he die from?

*I never did really find out for sure because we had to take him to Salmon. Claude Gillespie took us over there, to their house. That's when the girls were going to school there and uh, his girls I mean. And Mary was just a little baby and Claire, you see, wasn't born yet. And, anyway, well that's when it happened. The doctor there, when we had the doctor come at Claude and Mary's house, and he said that he wasn't, it was late you know, at night or dark anyway when we got in there and the doctor said in Salmon said that he wasn't um, he kind of thought maybe it might have been a bleeding ulcer. But he didn't get a chance, he never, he said in the morning we'll get him into the hospital and find out just what caused it. But I always kind of felt he must have injured himself internally from his riding bucking horses. And I really think that [inaudible].*

I'll be darned. And then, how long did you live here? You and the girls lived here for a while.

*Yes, that first winter when Claire was born, we lived with my brother in Hansen. I lived with them. And then I was back up here in the summer. I always was back up here in the summer. And then in the wintertime I'd be different places. I know about the next year I spent in Hailey, rented a little house, and lived in Hailey.*

And you taught school then in Hailey?

*No, well no, Mary and Claire were just little tots, you know, and anyway, and I needed to take care of them. And then the next couple, three years, I went back to...see my certificate was a, the teaching was a 5-year certificate and I had to get it renewed, go back to school some more. So, in the summertime, I'd save up my money from working here on the ranch to where I can spend enough time. Then I went the first year, I could have taught that next year, except the fact that I couldn't get around to make too many inquiries about jobs, didn't have the money. And anyway, they weren't hiring married teachers then, now married teacher with two children, you know, they wouldn't hire them. Different than it is nowadays, they know they're the steadiest.*

So, you went back after that and finished then.

*The second semester, the second winter I went back there again and then the next years when I taught school in Stanley.*

And what building were they using then?

*It was the old building, the first year I taught, it was the old building that belongs to Harrahs now, that they've moved there on the main street.*

It was the old teacherage then, later.

*Uh-huh. Phyllis taught the year before.*

So, when did you move up here then and start teaching steady in Stanley? And you lived here on the ranch and taught in Stanley?

*Um-Hmm. Well then you see, after Chuck and I were married, and then after we had Cliff, we were... and we had Cliff in, I had Cliff in Twin Falls then too. And uh...*

When were you and Chuck married?

*That's right, we were married in 40. 1940.*

Okay. Now, how did you meet Chuck?

*Up here on the ranch. He was working for the sheep outfit and when he'd go by, why we kind of got acquainted. And when they had the Gooding Smith [inaudible], when they had their sheep on the ranch, see I'd rent my pasture to 'em when they were here. And he was always coming down seeing, you know visiting with me a little bit. Come bring me some sourdough cinnamon rolls. And was that good.*

You thought you better get to know that fellow a little better, huh?

*And he was so thoughtful with the girls, so good with the girls. I just felt like he's a good man for me.*

I'm just wondering how you got around um vehicle-wise from the ranch to Stanley and then through the winters? How did you...?

*Oh, whenever, in the wintertime, after Chuck and I were married, we had, he'd made the nicest little kind of a box sled and with the team of horses, you know. And we just ran all, you know, you put rocks down in there and get them hot, and put them in there, have hay in there for the horses. And we'd take the sled, you know that box sled, and well we'd run all around. You'd go up and visit with your neighbors and you'd be gone all day and come home. I know in this one year, when we went up to Sullivans, when Bill and Marie were up there on their place, and they had an old shed of some kind outside. And they had an old, one of those old Edison victor... phonographs, you know, with a big thick record. Must have belonged to some of their relatives they, their own relatives you know. And the kids had more fun playing out there and dancing, right on the dirt, you know. Just playing those old-time music. That would be all of their kids and our kids. And this one time... and we played cards in the house. And that time uh, we didn't always play pinochle, we played canasta. In those days they were playing canasta and so we played canasta. And then, when we got time to leave, when Marie did it, I don't know, but just before we left, she gave me a great big sack full of sourdough donuts. They were warm, she just had cooked them, to eat on the way home. And, you know, they were so good, and you could smell them. Why we had to eat them before we even got clear out to the highway.*

Now if you wanted to go into Stanley, did you take the sleigh into Stanley?

*Oh, that's the only way we could get in. See the road wasn't open here, then.*

Oh, they didn't plow it or anything.

*Oh no, that was before they plowed it.*

Now when you were teaching school how did you get in?

*Oh, well when I was teaching school, they kept the road open. I don't remember what it was winters, I think it was the first one to have kept the road open.*

And did you have a vehicle then, or did you still have to go by sleigh?

*Oh yeah, we had a... as soon as the road was kept open, we could drive back and forth. The one time when we were, you know we had programs you know, just like they do now, and I had a Christmas program this one year, Phyllis was teaching here that year. And so, we had to get down to the road. I don't remember whether we walked down, we probably walked down or else you know in our sled in the car down to the road. And then we got in the car, but our lights wouldn't work in the car, so we had the gasoline lantern hooked over the front of the radiator you know and that's the way we came bouncing into Stanley to the Christmas program. And of course, the kids were, it was a school program, and all three of the kids were in it, so they were*

*kind of waiting and Phyllis saw this one light coming up and she said well here comes the Hansens. And sure enough, it was us. So, we came in and then they started with the program.*

What grades did you teach?

*Oh, I always taught the first four grades. And this one year, well it was when Phyllis and I, and then she taught so many other places in between time and I taught with other teachers in Stanley when I got started permanently. And then she got started, then she started in again, and this one year she wanted to go to school, at Pocatello, to take a few subjects that she needed in order to get her degree. So, they wondered, Mr. Kimpton, was, Mr. Clarence Kimpton was a fine superintendent. They thought, Phyllis really the instigator of it I think, that we could teach together until like Christmas time and then she'd go the second semester. And then I'd have to take all eight grades. Well, that very first year I taught there, and I had all eight grades and I felt like one teacher cannot do it right, no matter how hard you work. When they needed a different teacher, a lower grade teacher in Caldwell, I mean in Clayton, I said that was in 1960 I thought..., or the spring was 1960, it'd be 59 and 60, I said well why don't I just teach in Clayton so I could have the grades I like. And Kimpton said that would be fine. And so, they hired another teacher that taught all year instead of, that took all grades the second semester, but I didn't.*

How long did you teach school all together then? How many years did you teach before you...?

*Then I taught the uh, Cliff's senior year. That's the last year I taught.*

So, you taught several generations of kids then, didn't you? You taught fathers and sons and possibly grandsons.

*Yes. That very first summer, first year I taught, I had Morgan Williams and then the next time I taught Morgan Junior, you know. And that's the way, it was quite a few of them.*

When did they move into the Quonset hut schoolhouse? Were you teaching when they did that?

*No, Rodney Romney was teaching then. And Mrs. Pearson, Pierce, whatever her name was, something like that.*

And they used to serve hot lunches?

*Mary and Claire were in about the seventh grade when they started teaching there.*

And did they serve hot lunches then out of the teacherage building?

*Well, that was when we were in the Quonset and in the old building, we had the hot, uh...*

Somebody came in and cooked lunch?

*Well, Wanda Niece did for a while and then they got started having... then I did, you know run in there and fix something you know. And then they started in, Phyllis decided when she was still teaching them after I quit, and it'd be easier, cheaper and everything for the children to just bring their lunch. And so that's the way they've done.*

Right, they just bring a sack lunch.

I'd be curious about some of the interesting hardships that you endured living in a place like this that's so remote and so, uh the elements are so...

*I didn't mention any of those. We had really, we really had hard times.*

I think people would be interested to know what was that really like for a young woman to be living in this kind of, what were the temperatures like...

*Not used to it.*

Yeah.

*Well now one thing you know, we didn't have electricity. And I know when I was first married, and I was going to make a cake and I just had a little, in the little old shack we had to live in, a*



*little old log house that was built with the Nieces when they were first here. It was one of the first buildings. This one out, that's the horse barn now. They just had a little camp stove in there. But did have an oven. And you could only put just two or three little sticks of wood in there to get it to have a fire, cook something and I got my oven hot, and my recipe said 30 minutes. Bake it 30 minutes. Well, I put it in the oven and in 30 minutes I took it out and about the side where the fire was, it was done. The rest was not done. Oh, terrible.*

Did you have indoor plumbing?

*Oh no.*

Until when did you have outdoor plumbing?

*We had outdoor toilets until we got the house here built. And, by the way, there weren't very many houses in Stanley that had inside plumbing.*

Now, this house was built in the '40s?

*Yes.*

Cuz Cliff was born in '42 and he was what, like five or six years old when you lived in here, Mom?

*He was starting in the first grade.*

And where did you get your water, did you drill...?

*At that time?*

Uh-huh. At that time so you could have a bathroom.

*Well, there was, up behind the barn on the side of the hill there, there was, it's kind of springy so we had, they kind of dug around there, and had just a box you know and then piped it down to the house here.*

So, and you had a bathtub and a regular bathroom.

*Old-fashioned bathtub, uh-huh.*

When did you get electricity?

*And we had a kerosene lamp in there, you know, kerosene heaters. Just a little round one to warm it up when you want to take a bath.*

How often did you want to take a bath?

*Well, we did once a week.*

Once a week.

*And you had to stay in there with it or else the little thing'd smoke till it'd be so smoky, you couldn't... You'd light it up and shut the door, so it'd get warm, why it'd get so smoky in there.*

Now when did you get electricity in this house?

*Well, they were working on it when Mary and Claire were in high school because they went with a couple of the boys whose fathers were working on it, clear up here when we got electricity in. That would have been in the '50s.*

It was when power came to the valley and I believe that was '53.

Now the heat, your major source of heat was this fireplace when you first built this house wasn't it?

*Definitely.*

And did you have a wood cook stove then?

*Oh, of course we had a wood stove.*

In the kitchen to cook on.

*In the kitchen.*

And this was your primary source of heat then for your house.

*Yes, and you can ask the kids about that. They slept upstairs there in the bedroom, in their bedrooms. And they'd have to get around the rocks in the fireplace up there to get warm while they're getting dressed in the morning in the wintertime. And this one time when Cliff was just a little fellow and he got the chicken pox... Oh, and on New Year's Eve you know we'd have parties. And this one time it was our turn to have a New Year's Eve party up here, that's when we were in the house here. And so, Chuck went down and with this big sled, not the little box sled, the bigger sled and hauled everybody up from the highway up here, see. The road was open then and anyway but there were, now I know Mr. Gregory felt like those poor horses pulling all those people, so he walked. And they came up here and Bill Wall was with them and all, the whole, well about everybody in... you know at that time there weren't so many people like there are now. And so, we had our party, we played cards and had our party, and then we were eating about that time when it was midnight. Of course, you know, everybody could have radios with batteries you know. And anyway, when it was 12:00, I reached over and gave Bill Wall a kiss and if you ever saw anybody surprised in their life, he was. He just... embarrassed, surprised. Everybody laughed.*

Now did everybody bring food, that was kind of like a potluck and everybody brought?

*Oh, no, no.*

No, you had to, you furnished all the food.

*Well, it wasn't a dinner, it was just a...dessert...*

Like snacking foods.

*Yeah.*

Oh, I see. And did all the kids come too?

*There weren't so many children that time, but if there were, they were all upstairs asleep, you know. And one time when Marjorie Shaw had the New Year's party, and we all went up there. But we drove up to her place and I know we had our, we had a little Chevy, I think it was, with just the two doors you know in the back part. And anyway, we had it fixed for a bed back there in the back seat. All the kids were there and so then when they were getting tired and sleepy, why we just, with our rocks, we got rocks for them, and the kids went out there and got their clothes off and put on their pajamas and got in bed. Slept till it was time to go home.*

Mom, tell about when you would be teaching in Stanley and Dad would bring you in milk and eggs.

*Yeah. When I was teaching in Stanley, I rented that little house of Ellen Niece's, this one year. And when Chuck had, on weekends he'd, that's when we were living in the little shack, you know. I had this pressure cooker, my old pressure cooker. So he'd fix it up, he'd get it started with a stew, and about our favorite dinner when we got home was when he'd have the cabbage and pork, you know, he cooked it together. Anyway, he'd come in the afternoon on this little bobsled [?] and I'd be kind of watching to see if it's getting time for him to get in. Why pretty soon I'd see Dewey, our dog we had then, come trotting in a little bit of head of Chuck and the sled, you know and the team. And so, we'd know, well here he comes cuz here comes Dewey. And you know he'd get in there and fight with every dog he could see along the way till he got in. I guess everybody's glad we came back down here on the weekends.*

So, he'd come and pick you up then on Friday afternoon and you'd come home for the weekend.

*Uh-huh.*

And then he'd, what, take you back on Sunday.

*Oh, yeah. And this one year when we did this and it was at Christmas, after Christmas vacation you know, and oh it had snowed, we'd had an awful lot of snow. But we had to get back, you know. And our horses were getting tired. And about the time we got about where the forest office is now, only on the road, and they couldn't even keep track of exactly where the road was then, the snow was so deep. And anyway, our horses were getting so tired, and you could just tell. Breaking all that snow. And all of a sudden, we heard ee aw, ee aw. Donkeys, you know, mules, coming along. And it was Harry Flemings' team, he was the mail carrier then. So, he passed us up, and then he broke the trail on into town and we made it.*

Interview with the Hansens at the old Hansen Ranch and Cliff's going to tell us about this building.

*This is the old ranch house. This is where we lived until I was probably, oh I think about 5 and ½, 6 years old when we moved into big house. This building sat right down there, about where Mom and those people are, and it faced the opposite direction. This was the east side.*

So that down where the truck was...

*About right down where the truck was, over a little further, little closer to the creek because this creek furnished the water for the house, winter and summer.*

This doorway you're standing in was facing...

No, it was facing east.

It turned completely around then.

*Yeah, the building's turned completely around and was moved out here in about '55 and changed around and used for a barn, calving barn, cuz in those days the folks calved up here in January and February. That's when they did most of their calving and they calved in this barn and the big barn that was right over there. Big old barn here with big hay mound in it, that they used to fill full of hay every winter, feed the cows with. The corrals were out back. And, right out back here, if you want to walk up through here, is where the spring was, fed this house when it was built. Like Mom said, it was one of the one of the first modern houses in the valley, had one of the first bathrooms in it.*

*Where you see that little indentation on the side hill, that was the spring. It was dug out and a wooden box in there. It has since become non-active, there isn't much water there, it was one of the reasons why we drilled a well. But the water was piped from here down to the house, gravity flow. And in the house, in the winter time the water was let run continuously, it went up over a spillway, up into the attic, and spilled over, and then ran out the backside and ran continuously to keep it from freezing because, as everybody well knows, in those days there wasn't any digging equipment, so it was all hand dug down through here and it wasn't deep enough to keep from freezing in a year when we didn't have any snow.*

Now it ran continuously in the winter, what did you do with it in the summer?

*In the summertime they capped it off and plugged it. So, then it'd fill the spring box a little fuller and had a little more pressure. It wasn't necessary, of course, to keep it running in the summertime.*

*This building right here, as you can see, it's built in sections, was one part of the old CC camp that was over by Redfish, between Upper and Lower Redfish. This building was torn down and moved over in sections and put up for a shop. This building that you can see right over here that you can see the roof of, which is a chicken house now, it used to sit where this one did and it was the shop at the time.*

And who built that?



*It was built probably the same time the house and the barn was built. It's as old as the house and the barn.*

I have wondered that.

*And it sat right here, and Dad moved it over there and put a concrete foundation under it. It's been used for a chicken house ever since. And of course this is the shop. I guess some of the things that I can remember most about building this house was Mom peeling the logs out here. I was real small at the time. And one of the other things I can remember about this house when they put it up, of course, it was all put up with hand labor and horses and as you can see there's no sliced [?] logs in it and there were no holes cut out for the doors and windows. The only hole was the door that's on the other side of the house when you get access to it. And it took a lot of labor and a lot of hard hours to build it. The logs came from out west of Stanley, out past the Narrows, and were all hauled in full-length on an old four-wheel wagon behind an old Chevrolet car. And there was an old fellow that used to come through the country years ago and helped put up hay and help some of the ranchers, by the name of Jasper Dean, and he's the one that cut the logs to the house. I can remember going out with Dad and some of the trips we had getting the logs hauled in here, just a few at a the time behind the old car and seemed like it took forever to do it but I was pretty small at the time, and so you know how time is. And I can remember one time when they were building it, that one of my uncles were up there and a guy by the name of Buck Allen, and they were sleeping down in the bottom, and I believe it was Phil Sullivan and I, or maybe Bob Danner, sneaked in and we were upstairs and they were down sleeping and it was after a Saturday night dance and they were a little hung over and resting good, so we started throwing chips on them, anything we could find upstairs we were throwing down on them. And of course, that upset them and they ran us out but I guess, really, you know you take time to tell all the stories that's been in this old house. It's sure been a nice place to live and we really enjoyed it.*

Has it been re-chinked or anything since then?

*No.*

I see the name Cliff written in the chinking next to that window. Is that your handiwork? Can you see it? Sure do.

*I'll have to say that that's a new one on me. As many times I've looked at this house I didn't know...*

It just jumped out at me.

*Right up on top of that mountain, Dad cut the trees and skidded them off that hill with a horse down at the bottom, rolled them on a wagon, and took them from here up to Rember's place, which was the Pierce's at the time, and they had a sawmill. And that's where the lumber was cut that's in the rafters and the sheeting that's in the roof.*

Charlene, when did you work at the Idaho Rocky Mountain Ranch?

*Charlene: Probably '86 and '87.*

So, you were about the same age when you worked there as Maddie was when she worked there?

*Charlene: Yeah, and whenever people would ask me questions that I couldn't answer, I'd always call Grandma and then I could answer their questions right away.*

*Mattie: Depends on how long ago it was.*

*Charlene: Grandma did real well on that.*

So, you're going to ask her about what it means to grow up in a place like this. I mean you go to school in Boise and you're fairly unusual and unique to have this kind of...

*Charlene: It's really an incredible place to have as home.*

*Mattie: You know what I always thought, too, was children that grow up out in the country and, like up here, they can go to a city and adapt themselves very well compared to the way a city girl can come to the country.*

