

Part Two of transcription starts on page 10 by Meghan Weimer

White Grass Heritage Project  
“Sharing the Legacy”

INTERVIEWEE: Patsy Hobbs Tompkins and Liz Thayer Verney

INTERVIEWER: Roger Butterbaugh

LOCATION: White Grass Dude Ranch, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

DATE: 8 September 2014

Roger: My name is Roger Butterbaugh. I'm the caretaker of White Grass Ranch in Moose, Wyoming. In front of me are Liz Thayer Verney and Patsy Hobbs Tompkins. They are former workers at White Grass Ranch. This interview is being taken in one of the cabins on the White Grass Ranch, which has been rehabilitated. The date is September 8, 2014. The purpose of this interview is to document some of the experiences these women have had here at the ranch in the past and to get a better understanding of how the ranch operated over many, many years of operation. So welcome to both of you, thank you for being here. If we can start with Liz – please share with us a little of your background, where you grew up, information about some of your family, preparation in understanding how it is you got to White Grass.

Liz: Okay, I was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. My family on both sides is from Philadelphia all the way back. It doesn't really matter where I grew up – we moved so much. My father was with the airlines, so we ended up moving a lot. My mother's younger sister (my mother was one of four girls) was married in Philadelphia and got divorced – that was sort of scandalous. At some point, she and Rachel decided to come west. I don't know how they found White Grass, but my mother was sort of nervous letting her sister go without her, so she drove out with Rachel and Fricky (her sister).

R: When we say Rachel, we're talking about Rachel Trahern, who worked here for a number of years at the ranch.

L: Yes, and my mother's sister was Francis Mifflin and my mother was Lizzy Mifflin.

R: And there was a third person that you mentioned that drove out there?

L: No, just those three. My mother, her sister, and Rachel.

R: Okay. You mentioned the name Fricky.

L: Fricky is Francis. That's how she was known, that was her nickname.

R: Oh, okay. Great, great. So, they're out here coming and then apparently that had influence on the family to follow in their pursuits?

L: Fricky stayed, I'm not sure how long she worked, but she stayed for maybe most of the summer or something. The timing is before me, so I don't really know, but I believe my mother left here and went back to Philadelphia. Rachel stayed, Fricky stayed – Rachel

probably knows better how long they stayed. Somewhere in that period, Fricky met Chick Galey, who was Frank's cousin – I believe first cousin – and eventually married him. I don't know how long that took her or who else she was out here with or for how long. And then they married and moved to Sheridan, Wyoming and raised their kids up there.

(3:43)

R: And where do you fit in being here?

L: Well, I'm Fricky's niece and when Patsy and I were graduating from junior college, we did not want to move into Boston and become secretaries like most of our friends. We were pulling our hair out trying to think of something more fun to do. And I said, "You know, my mother and my mother's sister went out to Wyoming at one point and that might really be fun." And so I wrote Frank probably months before we graduated (in 1969) and I never heard back from him. And I thought, "Oh God, there goes that opportunity." And I think about two or three days before graduation, Frank called and said, "I got your letter! I'd love to have you come out. Can you be here in two days?" We're like, "Oh my God." Literally we grabbed a suitcase, grabbed blue jeans, jumped on a plane and came out.

R: So do I understand that the two of you were college roommates?

Patsy: College roommates, yeah.

R: Okay, so that was your introduction.

Patsy: My introduction is that Liz and I were college roommates. I grew up in Andover, Massachusetts. My family is primarily (from) Boston. I do have a Philadelphia connection – I didn't really know about it until I came out here and learned the Bar-B-C. Struthersbert was married to Katherine Newlin Burt. I was cleaning a cabin and there were books by her. And her middle name is N-E-W-L-I-N, which is my grandmother's maiden name (that grandmother was from Philadelphia), so I wrote her and asked, "Who's this Katherine Newlin?" (She) turned out to be a cousin. But that was totally unknown until I got out here. Strictly Boston. Liz and I were college roommates and in 1969 we threw our jeans in a bag, got on a plane, and came out here. One of our favorite experiences was when we flew Frontier Airlines from Denver. (We were in) prop planes – you kind of lifted your feet when you were flying over the Tetons. We landed at Jackson Airport, which was, at that time, a little tiny hut. Period. We were expecting to find some old Gabby Hayes type cowboy – toothless and a hat. We get off the plane and standing in front of the hut were three gorgeous, young (our age) cowboys. (laughs)

L: I said, "Oh my god, where's my lipstick and my comb?" This isn't the summer we were expecting.

P: And they were also just college graduates. One of them was Tom Barrett, who was here at the reunion, Jon Ferry – no; it was Randy Swensen and Tony Villa who –

L: – and Randy Hackman?

P: No, he wasn't here yet, he was here later.

R: Well, help me understand your expectations before you got here.

P: We just wanted to go do something adventurous.

L: Had no idea, had no idea what we'd be getting ourselves into.

R: In your past were you interested in horses, had you ridden horses?

(6:30)

L: Adventure.

P: I had ridden horses up until the age of 9. After that, (I) never had access to them. But we had no idea how this was going to turn out.

L: I knew how much fun it was for my mother's sister because I had grown up with cousins who had grown up out here, so I kind of knew that this was a really exciting place. And my mother always talked about it. Made her twinkle every time she talked about it.

P: I came out on a family trip when I was 12 in 1961. We were doing a national parks tour and we ended up going to Yellowstone and coming down to Grand Teton. I remember being blown away by Grand Teton. I loved Yellowstone, but when I got to Grand Teton, there was something about this at the age of 12 that I remember blew me away. It was my favorite park of all the parks I went to.

R: Can you clarify that?

P: It was the mountains. I think there was a chairlift – not a tram – and I think we rode that up (because I remember seeing that) and the mountains were beautiful and I just remember relating to it somehow. And when Liz said, “Let's go out there,” I thought, “Oh, I liked that when I was younger.”

L: And I know when we moved to California (we drove to California) when I was going into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and we came through the Tetons. We also went to visit cousins in Sheridan, so we came to White Grass. So I had an idea.

P: Oh, you had been here. I forgot that.

L: Mm-hmm. How was my Mum going to go through Wyoming without going here?

R: As youngsters growing up, were you interested in the west? Interested in cowboys, reading, watching films (about the west)?

P: Nope.

R: That just wasn't really a part of what brought you here?

L: No.

R: But certainly adventure, something new. Let's go explore.

P: Oh yeah, we were pretty adventurous.

R: So here you are getting off the airplane and there's three – what did you say?  
Gorgeous?

L: (laughs) Gorgeous cowboys.

R: (laughs) We want to make sure we get that word right!

(8:21)

L: Literally from Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. (These were not) clueless cowboys. And we really had no idea. And we were 20 – we were certainly interested in those guys that were staying there. We thought, “This is really going to completely color our summer a little differently than we had imagined.” We were just going to be cowgirls, you know?  
(laughter)

R: So they introduced themselves.

P: They did. (They) drove us up to the ranch – it was still early, they were opening the cabins. And we were shown the cabins which had – well, the way they protected the mattresses in the winter (they cleaned out all the cabins, they took most of the stuff away) – to protect them from the mice, you threw around mattress fluff. We called it mouse fluff, but they had old mattresses and they pulled out the mattress stuffing and they threw it around the cabins and the mice would use that for their nests and not destroy the mattresses. And it worked. Part of our job was to clean up the mouse debris and the mouse fluff and to sweep out the cabins.

L: And we'd clean out the bathhouse.

P: Oh, the bathhouse – the bathhouse, which is still here – the laundry room/bathhouse –

P: – which is basically a bat house.

P: During the summer there were bats in there – and I did find big bats. Sometimes a large gopher snake!

R: So this is 1969 –

P: 1969 was our first summer here, in June.

R: And there were other summers?

L: We did 1969 and 1970.

L: And I believe that first summer, Frank had a bear try to get into the walk-in in the wintertime.

R: And the walk-in...

L: (The walk-in) is a refrigerator, probably the size of a cabin with a big, heavy, thick door. And the bear would always figure out a way to get in.

P: Tore the door off.

P: And so he was really ticked off at that bear, so he went out and shot it. And we had bear stew, which is what we ate the first week we got here.

L: It was awful!

(10:27)

P: It was just the greasiest, most horrendous (stew). I don't think the cook had arrived yet, but it was... ugh. We lived in our long yellow raincoats. It was rainy and muddy.

L: June was very rainy back then.

P: But we didn't seem to mind. We realized we were going to have a good summer.

R: I should interject here and (say) Craig Struble is sitting next to me, across from Patsy and Liz. Craig is taking some notes about this and will also be participating with some questions that are going on. Craig is a former director of the Western Center for Historic Preservation, which has done their work out here. So, a question: How many cabins that you recall were up here that you were responsible for?

P: There were numbered 14 (cabins) – I'm not sure it was numbered 1 to 14, but there was a cabin 14, which might be the Hammond Cabin. There were probably 3 of the big double cabins; there's one that's gone now that was over there and then there's another one further up. So there were small cabins. Cabins usually had a bedroom and a bathroom or they had two bedrooms and a bathroom –

L: – and a couple of singles.

P: And a couple of singles. We were also responsible for cleaning Frank and Nona's cabin, and then there were two or three cabins down past them that were privately owned. One was referred to as Freitag (which was Inga Galey's parents) and then the Messler Cabin, the Cleary Cabin – we also had to clean those.

Craig: So the cabins included the main cabin?

L: Yes.

C: And the Hammond Cabin?

P: The Hammond Cabin – was that the original main cabin? Before they built their own personal cabin down there. I think that's where the owners lived – in the Hammond. But that was a guest cabin.

C: So 14 total then?

L: I think. Well, I remember we knew there was a number 14, so you'd really have to go around and remember. But 14 here.

R: You referred to yourselves as –

P: – cabin girls. We were cabin girls and we were it. There was a woman named Karin Rae (who's now Karin Gottlieb) and she was the head of the girls. So there were the waitresses and there were the cabin girls. We had separate duties. And (Karin) was the manager of the girls. The other girls were kid wranglers (Becky Thomas was one of them and Jeannie Matthews was the other). We all shared the girls' cabin.

(12:57)

P: Karin and her husband, Steve, lived in an army green tent that was near Fran and Laurie's trailer.

P: And her husband did maintenance, he was doing maintenance.

R: This would be Karin –

P: Karin Rae, R-A-E, uh-huh. And her husband Steve Rae, he was doing – there are pictures of them in my book of that time – and he was doing the maintenance. So basically Karin told us what to do, but basically it was just the two of us for summer cleaning the cabins.

R: This may sound like an insignificant question, but I'm very curious: You're moving laundry and cleaning supplies – how are you moving (them)?

P: I have a great story. (laughs)

R: How are you getting around this ranch with all of these supplies?

P: There were a couple of vehicles and one of the vehicles was an old pickup truck, which had a gun rack and we put the brooms and mops in the gun rack. (laughter) But generally we worked from the laundry room and carried them around from place to place (by the armload). You'd get an armload of sheets and throw them up in the laundry room and then you'd come back around, but we did get to use, especially when we had to go

way down below, we got to use the truck. There was also an old Chevy station wagon – probably from the early '60s – that had no key. Only a few of us knew how to start it. You had to pump the gas ten times, hold the gas to the floor, and then you'd just turn the ignition thing – there was no key. I had to take it into town to the Chevy dealer one day and they followed me in another car because I could only go 10 miles an hour. I got to the Chevy place and they said, “Well, where's the key?” And I went, “Who knows? There is no key.” We did have some old ranch vehicles.

L: We had fabulous old vehicles. The other one that wasn't really the cabin girls' (but it was terrific) was a sawed-off Cadillac sedan turned into a pickup truck and had no windshield.

P: And it had an embedded St. Christopher in the dashboard.

R: (laughs) You remember.

L: Yeah, and we took the trash to the dump in that.

P: Right.

R: The dump being right here down the road.

P: It was an open dump. One of the things to do was go down at night and flash the lights of the car on the dump to watch the – there was a cinnamon color bear who was a regular. His name was Clarence for some reason. He often had –

L: – he had strawberry jam and tissue paper stuck to his face because he'd get into there and get the food. (laughter)

(15:15)

P: And he was a black bear. There were no grizzlies in this area.

R: Is that right?

P: Oh no, they were all up in Yellowstone on the open dumps up in Yellowstone. And it's when they closed those that the grizzlies moved out.

R: So as a cabin girl, were you changing sheets everyday?

L: Yes. And Pledge! I (can still smell the) lemon Pledge – doing all the wood furniture and everything with the Pledge –

L: We were filling – oh let's see, what did we do – we would make beds and there were these potbellied stoves in each cabin and a coffee can full of sawdust with kerosene and we called it “Pep.” We had to make sure the Pep was full in the coffee can because that's how you'd start the fire.

P: The maintenance guys supplied wood for each cabin and each stove had a little bit of wood next to it and the one can of flammable Pep next to it. We were responsible for making sure all that was in order. We cleaned their bathrooms and emptied their trash.

R: And then you were responsible for washing the linens, too?

P: Yes, we took them up to the machines that were in the laundry room. They were on the backside of the laundry building – there were machines.

R: Can you describe those machines?

P: The first year I'm not sure I remember them, but the second year I was the head girl and Nona had gotten new machines – they were brand new washing machines. The dudes could use them, too. She decided to make the new ones coin-operated –

L: – which they weren't before.

P: And all of a sudden everybody had to pay for it and I felt that wasn't fair, so I gave all the employees the knowledge of where the key was to the coins. So the employees did not have to pay for their laundry. I felt that was outrageous. But we did a lot of the laundry after hours. We'd go up and do it at night and we'd sit up there on the machines while we were doing the sheets and towels.

C: And where was that again?

P: The laundry room is right up there at the top of the road – it's the washroom. The front side of it was the showers that the men used and the backside had some showers that the women used and next to that were where the machines were. The far side had a door that was storage. It was a linen closet.

(17:14)

C: All that's still there.

L: (laughs) Oh, we'd love to see that.

P: So that was our room –

L: – that was our headquarters.

P: That was our headquarters.

R: It sounds like you were working a lot of hours during the day.

P: Not really. Breakfast was probably at 7. The waitresses took care of the dudes in the front part of the cabin. The crew kitchen was in the back. We got breakfast in the back and I would sit (when I was the head cabin girl) –



L: – when the wranglers came in – it was dependent on when they –

P: – on when they got the horses and came it – that was when breakfast was. And then we would sit there and I would make notes about which cabin was a turnover, which was a change of sheets, which was a whatever – and then we'd split up and do that kind of thing. And then we'd come back for lunch around noon. After noon we were pretty much done. We might have had to do one or two things after lunch, but we were free to do whatever we wanted after lunch. Ride horses, go swimming – whatever we wanted to do.

R: And then some responsibilities with the laundry in the evenings.

P: Yeah, probably just because I had left it until then. (laughs)

L: I don't really remember when we did laundry.

P: I remember sitting there because I remember sitting there and having the bats fly in.

L: Well, I remember we did the laundry, I just don't remember when. I think we threw it in during the day as we were changing cabins. We'd take it up, throw that cabin's sheets in, get them going. So it's sort of a constant (thing).

R: So in '69/'70, did cabins have showers?

P: No.

R: Bathrooms?

L: They had bathrooms. Each cabin had a bathroom – they must have had a bathtub... I think they had a bathtubs, I don't think showers.

(18:42)

L: I thought they had those really horrible, metal, awful showers, didn't they? Did you find them?

R:

(continuation of Tompkins and Verney interview)

INTERVIEWEE: Patsy Hobbs Tompkins and Liz Thayer Verney

INTERVIEWER: Roger Butterbaugh

LOCATION: White Grass Dude Ranch, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

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(18:46)

R: We found a number of them – Craig, you would know better than I.

L: Weren't they just those stall/shower things?

Craig: After 1945, all of the cabins had bathrooms.

L: They were all tacked on, as I recall. They were sort of an added room for each one.

P: But they were okay, they weren't really bad. We kept them clean.

L: Yeah, the dudes didn't use the shower room, that was really just for crew.

P: (They) got mad at us for not (keeping) the everything fresh and clean.

L: (laughs) We didn't do it right. We were not professional cleaners at all.

R: Well, the reason I ask is because you were talking about the laundry room having showers. Were they frequented often?

P: I think just by the crew.

L: The second summer we lived in tents. Patsy and I lived in one of two tents that had wooden platforms and half wooden walls, white canvas tops, right beyond the laundry.

P: So up a little road from the laundry, up to the creek, right by the side of the creek.

L: I think they put them in one or two years before (when they had) too many guests or overbooked a bunch of guests and thought, "Oh, we could do that."

R: And the first summer you stayed where?

L: In the girls' cabin right here.

R: Which would be next door.

L: There were lots of us in there.

P: (There were) bunk beds.

C: How many?

L: One, two, three, four, five, six...

P: I want to say six or eight.

L: It could have been eight. There was an add-on – I don't think it's there anymore – a plywood add-on and Bethy was in that. And then there was a room for the waitresses and bunk beds for the cabin girls. There were two or three waitresses and two or three cabin girls. I think there were three cabin girls the second summer. The second summer I was supposed to be the head job and I got here and Nona had squelched that, she had completely reneged on the job she had offered me (through) mail and I was not old enough or experienced enough to argue with her. I was supposed to be head of all the girls, waitresses and cabin girls. I got here and I was only head of the cabin girls and there were just three of us and somebody else was head of the waitresses. So it was one of those learning experiences for later in life – “How to defend yourself at a job.”  
(laughs)

R: I hear pieces of that as you're talking. (laughs)

(20:50)

L: No, it was a very good learning experience working for a difficult boss, a boss that was hard to satisfy – she was never happy with the work we did, whether or not it was fair – it was not fair. We would clean and she would say it wasn't clean enough.

R: So this was Nona the second wife?

L: Yeah, and she was trying to keep the ranch together and I know there were always economic difficulties here at the ranch.

P: I think to her credit, she was under a lot of pressure.

L: She was trying to make things work.

R: So something like putting coin operated machines in the laundry was a part of that?

L: Exactly.

R: How did you know there was economic difficulties on the ranch? How was that made clear to you?

L: I think it was evident in the way that they were trying to save money on supplies and the fact that she took all of the valuable rugs and baskets that were in all of the cabins. Every cabin had old Navajo rugs and Navajo baskets and these beautiful, old cowboy curtains and she took them all away. I think she was trying to preserve the rugs and baskets. I think she was afraid not that they would get stolen, but maybe that they would get damaged or somebody might tread dirt on them. She took them all down to her cabin.

P: She went down to Montgomery Ward and bought polyester curtains.

L: They were easy to throw in the wash and they lasted longer. She took away sort of the cowboy flavor, but what she was doing was economic.

P: (There was) a personality to each cabin. Each cabin had a theme.

R: Please, would you talk about that?

L: Yeah, it was really pretty. Each cabin had log beds and bureaus or whatever. And if it had red curtains with little flowers on it, (then) the quilts on the bed had red and sort of the Navajo rug – then the next one would be a different color theme and real character, I mean each one was different. And when Nona really decided to take everything out, she took all the curtains and rugs out and then she got these polyester – I thought they were sort of plaid – avocado, tomato, and gold curtains and bedspreads, you know, bulletproof. And then she bought cheap horse blankets to use as the rugs on the floor.

P: The cabins also had horse skins on the furniture. The cabins that had living rooms had the same log furniture as Liz was talking about and the couches were covered with horse skins and people knew who the horses were. So they would (say), “There's Dice,” or “There's Domino.” (laughs)

L: It was really weird, that one.

(23:10)

C: I was going to interject when you were talking about the girls' cabin there when we took out those other shelves, there was some writing there about Nona – X-rated – (laughs) I won't say what it was, but...

R: Does anybody want to be a little bit more specific?

P: We should be diplomatic.

L: This is for history, but she was very difficult, she didn't want to be here – this was not her choice.

P: She did not want to be here.

L: She wanted to be in the Caribbean with Frank where they had a place. And I think she was pushed into this because this was his passion.

C: So he was in the Caribbean?

L: Well, he owned Golden Rock, and so that was where Nona and Frank met (in the Caribbean) when she was a paying guest.

P: They wintered there.

C: But didn't they come back together?

L: Yes, I think they got married and came back

C: It sounded like you said she was here by herself.

P: No no, unhappily she came here. When she met Frank in the Caribbean she thought that's what she was getting – the Caribbean lifestyle. Frank said, “Oh no, I want White Grass.” He kind of split with Inga and gave Inga Golden Rock and he kept this. Nona was hoping to have Golden Rock – sun, beach, fun.

L: I think they still had a boat down there.

P: And they had a boat called Gold Rock. The place was called Golden Rock and the boat was Gold Rock. That's what she thought they were going to have, but then Frank said that his heart and love was here. So she did not want this – and it was evident.

L: Well, she drove a Jaguar – she was not a ranchy type. Everyone was teasing all the time that she was wearing dude clothes.

(24:48)

C: Was the split-up between them a part of when you guys were here?

P: She was pretty new, Nona was pretty new when we were here.

L: Oh no, I wasn't here when Inga was here, but we knew Inga later.

P: I worked with Inga later.

L: No, Nona was already married to Frank when we came.

P: But newly married. I don't think she had been here that long.

L: A couple of years, maybe.

P: I think she was fairly new.

R: So as cabin girls, how would you know clearly that Nona didn't want to be here? Was that just knowledge or...?

L: She was difficult, she was unhappy.

P: She was frustrated.

L: We had speakers in all of the main –

P: – in the kitchen.

L: Well, in the kitchen and in the barn and she had a microphone down at her house. Now and then you'd hear her come across the microphone and just be kind of angry, like, “Who the hell is in the kitchen?!” She was just always frustrated, she didn't want to have to worry about why people were going in or what they were doing. You could just tell in her tone of voice that she was frustrated.

P: She would have these fits every now and then and run away. She'd get in her car and leave, go away.

R: For an hour, a day?

P: Idaho Falls. (laughs)

L: She got stuck on the pass once going to Idaho Falls... overnight maybe? She always came back. In hindsight we were not old enough to know what we were dealing with. When you look back on somebody who was so evidently miserable... And it was hard for us because we –

P: She wasn't miserable in her marriage, she was miserable in running the ranch.

L: In the job, yeah.

P: And a bunch of crazy 20-year-olds that she had to try to make... And I think she was also more responsible for the book end, the money end of the ranch. Frank was really the hero.

L: Frank was such a big-hearted man. He would hire people that were totally unqualified because he liked them or because they asked. They'd come up the driveway in a car and say, "I need a job." And if he didn't have a job, he'd give them a job. Nona, I think, spent a lot of time thinking, "Oh my god, how am I going to pay this person?" We didn't get paid a lot, we were paid almost nothing and it was largely room and board and fun. But he would never really say no. I mean, the second summer I came out I wasn't really here to stay, I came out to help open up the ranch and I was going to go to summer school in Denver. He could clearly tell that after ten days of being here I was clearly not looking forward to leaving. He took me aside and said, "You want to stay?" And that's why we had three cabin girls – because he'd offer me the job. And I said, "Of course I want to stay." But that I think made it hard for Nona, too – I'm guessing, I would imagine.

(27:33)

R: Your comment was very interesting, you said Nona did not want to be here, but it was not the relationship that was bad, that they were okay?

L: Oh yeah, I think that they were a volatile couple.

R: Meaning...?

L: Well, there were fights. You could sometimes hear them. (laughs) They were a passionate, volatile couple.

R: Comments that we've heard is that there was a lot of drinking in that house – did that account for some of Nona's behavior, do you think?

L: That would be an educated guess, yes.

R: And Frank, too?

L: Sure. But my experience with that whole generation was that they were the post-World War II, that a lot of the way they sought their post-traumatic stress or whatever they had gone through –

R: With alcohol?

L: Yeah, so I think we were all used to it, half of the guests were along there drinking with him. It didn't seem really outrageous.

P: There was a lot of drinking and bridge. My mother came up to visit the second summer and she went down and played bridge with Frank and I don't know if Nona played but Suki Matthews – you've probably heard of her –

R: I've heard that name, many times.

P: She was here and my mom was taking them because my mom was a good bridge player. She had a lot of fun down there. Cocktails and bridge, that kind of thing. It was a lot of fun.

R: So what did wranglers, waitstaff, cabin girls do with your free time?

L: The cabin girls had more free time than anybody, we were very lucky. Mostly we would ride –

P: We would have lunch and we would get on any horse and go for a ride, almost every day. Or we'd go sit by the pond and sunbathe and swim. Or we'd go to town, but we didn't all have cars.

L: The second year we had a car, the first year we didn't. So the second year we went to town more.

P: Not as much, though. It took a lot of time to go.

L: The waitresses had time off later, in between meals and stuff, so they could ride a bit in the afternoons –

P: But it was sporadic for them because they had three meals and they had to be prepping.

R: Yeah, they'd have to come back.

L: We also helped them with dishes and things. I do remember helping them do dishes so they could get done soon. But in the evenings –

P: But that wasn't our job, that was just helping out.

L: But in the evenings, you'd want to talk about – have you ever heard Dave and Shorty's stories?

R: Oh, I don't know these people.

L: Dave Benson and Shorty, they were here the summer of 1970. They were two itinerant cowboys living in their pickup with a saddle in the back. And they were real cowboys, they looked older than they were.

R: And their ages were...?

L: Probably in their 30s. Maybe older? They seemed old, but we were in our teens.

P: They were both short, high cowboy boots.

L: Black hats turned way down low.

P: And a real twang.

L: A flask of Jim Beam at breakfast. At night, because they had a pickup truck, they would (not all the time) now and then throw us in the back of the pickup truck and drive us to Jackson. We'd go drinking and dancing at the cowboy bar. And then be driven all the way back in the back of the truck, still drinking Jim Beam. I mean, I don't know how we survived. (laughs)

P: He was drunk and driving fast and we were all thrown into the back of the pickup, which I gather is not legal anymore. We would have horse blankets over us because it was cold.

L: This was the freedom we were talking about. There was absolutely no supervision. But, you know, we were young adults, we weren't baby kids. But if I had visited or had been a guest or a dude at Moosehead, they were very tight about what the crew can do and cannot do and what the hours are and what would make them be fired and that was just not here. We had a lot of fun.

(31:27)

R: Having said that, you seem to be describing that nobody got too far out of line or over the edge.

P: No, we all took care of each other.

R: Please tell me about that.

P: There were fun parties at the boys' quarters.

L: BQ – Bachelors' Quarters. There was one... in the Hammond Cabin, which we called 14, it had a lot of people in it – there were some dudes I do not remember their names, but they were repeat old time dudes and they often had a party for the crew. And what I remember about that party was my first experience with tequila – and my last, probably. But I remember swinging on the crossbeams – the guys got us up there somehow and we were hanging in that big crossbeam. And then the next morning we were all comparing



where we each passed out in the crew kitchen. We were all absolutely hungover and we were all under different trees next to each other. I think that's why we didn't make a big deal out of Frank and Nona's drinking. (all laugh) They were drinking, but so were we! I mean, we were allowed to.

P: We also got up the next morning and got ourselves to work.

(32:38)

L: We weren't doing that all the time. We're making it sound like it was run by the inmates of an insane asylum, but it wasn't. We were just college kids, basically. Having fun, just like any other college party.

P: But as you said, we had the freedom to do that. Nobody was criticizing, nobody was correcting.

L: And I have to tell you, I think Frank took great pleasure in hiring crew and that he enjoyed standing back and watching them all start dating each other. I mean, he did. And I was told yesterday by somebody that one summer the cook went to Frank and said, "What the hell have you done? The cabin girls are all ugly." (everyone laughs) And Frank said, "I didn't hire them, Nona did! Go ahead and fire them." And so the cook went in and fired the cabin girls and went into town and hired cute girls.

R: Really?

L: Uh-huh.

R: And their job was to make it a better place?

P: As somebody also said yesterday – and I love this – there were a lot of firsts at White Grass. And I know Frank really delighted in putting together – and not everybody was a model, you know what I mean? But he delighted in putting together fun, attractive, young college people and he didn't push anyone together, but I think it originally started as being children of friends, children of guests. It was really like a family here. I think that's maybe what's different about this ranch than the others that don't hold together like that. You immediately felt like you were a part of a family when you came here. And then he would hire you because you were family or he would hire your sister or your brother or somebody you suggested. It was all done with a big heart and lots of love.

L: And I think that's why the dudes were mostly repeat dudes. And we were still here, back in the late '60s/early '70s – I think up until that point the dudes were all repeat families who came here for generations. And they were all very comfortable with the crew. There wasn't a whole lot of separation between us and the crew and the guests. I mean, they really did like to hang out with us and we were allowed to hang out with them if they wanted. And the Sunday barbecues – I don't know if you've heard about those – but every Sunday, two of the crew (sometimes wranglers or sometimes cabin girls) were responsible – that was your day off unless you were one of the two and the two had to go down and you had to turn and baste either two piglets or two lambs.

P: Down by the pond.

L: Down by the pond. And they were truly delicious, but they took all day to cook. I remember one time we did stick cherries and apples in their mouths, but that was not usual. And then the crew and everyone went down for Sunday dinner and it was so delicious. And there was generally somebody from the crew (a wrangler) who'd play guitar and ours was Joe Baker. He could play anything. And Dave Benson (we mentioned him before) – a real cowboy – in his youth, he had been a real cowboy singer on the radio, so he knew all the words, but you did have to give him a little more Jim Beam and he did have to pull his hat down a little lower, but he would sing all the words to all the classic cowboy songs. And Joe would accompany because they were just basic chords – it was really fun and the dudes loved it. Sometimes we'd invite other ranches to join us – R Lazy S in particular, Fish Creek came up sometimes –

(36:01)

P: – Oh, and friends of Frank's.

L: Friends of Frank's.

P: Or if your family was around, they were invited.

L: It was really fun, those Sunday barbecues.

P: It was really inclusive.

L: And I think that's why a lot of people kept coming back – because it was a very comfortable, casual, pretty well-run ranch to be on. The horses were good, the dudes were well taken care of on their rides, their kids would go off with the kid wranglers. At some of the other ranches the families have to ride together, but here your kids all went off in a pile with the kid wranglers and they went off and played games and had fun while their parents went off and went on their more serious rides. I think that was one of the real pluses to this ranch – that people felt really comfortable here.

L: Let's tell about Mrs. Cunningham. Mrs. Cunningham was this older lady from Philadelphia. She took the train out every summer. And it would arrive in – was in Rock Springs?

P: Or Victor. One or the other.

L: Somebody would drive down and get her. She would show up – and the reason this is interesting is she wouldn't get... well anyway, I'll get to that. She would show up in jodhpurs and jodhpur boots, never cowboy clothes. She had a horse on the East Coast called Captain East and Frank provided a horse in this area called Captain West. She'd get her little step stool out, she'd trim the manes of these horses – you know, they'd just be these matted, long manes – and she'd get on her step stool with little nail scissors and trim his mane so he'd look like a nice English horse. And that's what she'd ride every

time. As a cabin girl, she was in a one-room cabin and she would invite us in and we would all go in, sit down – we had to talk to her for the amount of time that we would have been cleaning that cabin (because she would clean it so we didn't have to) and she wanted to talk to us. So for 20 minutes we'd be sitting in there chatting away and all she had every now and then was a gin bottle in the trash. She would burn her trash in the stove, clean the whole place herself. But that was sort of typical. And then later –

R: – Typical of the lack of division between staff and guests?

P: Yeah, exactly. I think the summer after we started to see a change. Frank would start taking people who would call from somewhere nearby and looking for a place and nobody knew them and they were often not typical of what the guests of White Grass had been.

(38:28)

L: More the Jackson Hole tourist types. (They) would just come up the road and he'd take them in whereas normally ranches did not do that.

P: No, you're almost sort of referred.

R: So much of what we're learning about the ranch was an evolution of – or a change, I should say – and part of that may have been really the transportation options and just the changing vacationing pattern of people, (such as) not staying in one place for a month or whatever. There may be some economics in that, too, in terms of the clientele not being such Philadelphia connected referrals and a lot of those people as we're talking were quite wealthy.

L: Oh yeah, it was always the almighty buck. I mean, if we needed to fill the cabins we were going to fill them. There was one family that came to that last cabin up there –

P: – the last one on this side –

L: – who we had no idea who they were and I don't think Frank did, either. And they were quite large and they brought satin pillow cases for their pillows. And they filled their cabin with food – I mean, it was quite unbelievable – and they cooked food on their wood stove. Hot dogs and things. And it was actually kind of bizarre. And when they left, we had a wheelbarrow full of smoked oysters, caviar –

P: – pickles, ice cream...

C: That's the family that donated the \$200,000 to restore that –

L: – No!

C: – the triplex, yeah.

P: You're kidding, wow!

L: Who are they? (laughs)

C: I'll think of their name in minute, I'm blanking.

P: We had one of the best meals –

L: We got back to the girls' cabin and we had never seen such food – the food was always great in the kitchen, but we were never allowed to go in and snack. That's when we'd get the “Who the hell's in the kitchen?!” on the microphone. But we were just sitting on the floor in there eating – “What's a smoked oyster?”

P: And all the crew came up and all the wranglers came up and we sat on the floor – I'll never forget that.

L: We have a picture of that, I think.

P: The other thing they did – because they had all of this food in their cabin they also had mice – so they got mousetraps and they would throw them out the door in the morning, so when we got up there we had to deal with dying, morbid mousetraps. (laughs) But yeah, that's how they dealt with the mouse problem.

L: That is so cool to hear about them. I'm dying to know more about that.

P: That's really neat. Because they were nice people, I don't think they were bad, just huge eaters of food. And (they had) these hot dogs on a stick. (laughs)

L: Remember those little cocktail hot dogs that came in little jars like baby food? I remember them cooking them in the stoves for hors d'oeuvres for cocktail time.

C: They donated the money. They were very interested in (having) the money go to that cabin.

P: That's really cool.

R: Surprise, surprise.

L: Where are they from?

C: Back east some place.

P: Yeah, yeah. Anyway, I'm trying to think if there were any other standout guests. You said the Butter –

L: – the Butterfields were here, they ended up staying and buying a ranch somewhere – I think they ended up in Montana – but they got close with Fran Fox and they were going to help him by buying back his own dude ranch. Oh, there was a polo player who came, a famous polo player –

P: – so handsome.

L: – and he had lost both of his legs from the knee down. And he had a gorgeous girlfriend with him.

P: And he was so elegant, if I remember correctly.

L: He was very handsome. But he rode – he had prosthetic legs and they got him on a horse every day and he rode every day. I remember as cabin girls we got to see bloody bandages in the wastebasket every day, so he was obviously still having trouble with them. They were a very wonderful couple.

P: Very elegant.

L: She had gorgeous dresses and rings that we tried on.

R: Any understanding how he lost his legs?

(42:21)

L: I don't remember.

P: I don't think we knew.

L: But obviously recently. Something recent because of the bloody bandages.

R: Wow, that's a good story in terms of getting up on a horse at that stage in the process. So one of the things you've talked about – or several things – that the staff and the guests – that the interaction was pretty un-demarcated, if we can say it that way. And that part of the pleasure for the two of you was the relationship not only the staff, but guests and enjoying that last story of sitting with Mrs. Cunningham. Did you mind the combinations with that tight quarters?

L: No, it was actually kind of fun. It was like a dorm.

P: But the next year, the second year we were here, there was an overstaffing and they didn't have room. We immediately volunteered for the tent up there –

L: – which was very funny because it turned out that we had – you would think in a tent you would have cots – we had mattresses and box spring beds, just like this with the log beds. I think they put electricity to those tents when guests were going to be there. So we had somehow found two electric blankets and we were in our lovely tent on the stream with electricity –

P: – electricity, light – we had a lamp, we had everything.

L: Yep, we had electric blankets. Which, you know, it gets cold around here at night.

P: But we had let everybody know we were suffering.

L: And it was very funny because Nona kept saying, “Are you girls sure you're alright up there?” “We're fine, Nona, we're gonna be just fine.”

C: So you started in the girls' cabin?

P: First year in the girls' cabin. '69 in the girls' cabin, '70 in the tents.

L: I think maybe, because I stayed the second summer (because of Frank's kindness), they had to figure out where to put us and there weren't guests going up there, so she being head of the cabin girls (my best friend), they probably said, “Would you mind being up there?” And we were like, “No, no, it's okay.”

R: I'm curious – and you may know this, given the fact that you were doing the cabin – '68 or '69 and '70, how many guests do you recall? I mean, the number that would typically be here at any one time? How many dudes – or wranglers, I mean – how many waitstaff?

(44:48)

L: Okay, the cabin girls were two or three, the waitresses were two or three, the first year there were two cooks. There was a cook and her assistant, Marge and Karen. And the second year there was a couple cooking – a husband and wife cooking. The wranglers were probably... Well, Fran was the head wrangler and he was here with his family. And then the men were maybe 8 to 10..

R: Wranglers?

P: Wranglers, yeah. And then there was a maintenance staff, one or two guys were –

L: It was Billy Conderman that summer.

P: Billy Conderman was the first summer. Dave... he was a boyfriend briefly – I can't remember his last name. He was a nuclear physics major in college.

L: What about Wade?

P: Wade was taken on as sort of a family favor. He was the kid of some old family people. Wade was the one who restored the old Cadillac, but he was also slightly –

L: – maybe autistic.

P: Learning disabled.

L: Unidentified, yeah.

P: So they had some guys cutting the wood for the cabins and rough maintenance and fences and that kind of thing.

L: We used to joke that the place was mended with bandaids and bailing wire.

R: (laughs) That was before duct tape.

L: (laughs) Exactly. Actually, the guys did do a lot.

P: So the crew dining room for breakfast were two long tables with benches, so there were maybe four of us on each side and maybe some on the ends and then the waitresses were usually busy running back and forth. And the buildings – I don't know if their maximum got up to 30... with 14 cabins, if there were 14... I sort of feel the numbers didn't go one to fourteen, I feel that there were some missing numbers. It might have started 4-14. So let's say that there were 10 cabins. Maybe as many as 40, but I don't think so. And that didn't count those people staying down in the private cabins, which they sometimes used for dude spillover (the Freitag, Cleary and Messler Cabins down there).

R: And would those people eat in the dining room there, too?

L & P: Oh yeah, yeah.

R: So they're cooking for everybody, all of the staff.

L: Oh yeah. Really the only separation of stuff was the two dining rooms. But sometimes I remember eating in the dude dining room. We ate there occasionally, maybe it was before we opened. That's where the bear stew was.

P: Yeah, I think that's before we opened.

L: I have very clear memories.

P: Because we had to clean the back dining room, probably. (laughs)

R: '69/'70... average stay for guests? Take a guess?

P: A week?

L: Yeah, I don't know if they had the minimums that are required now. Dude ranches have a 3-day minimum now, but –

P: – ten days.

L: It was easily a week to ten days. Generally hardly anybody shorter than that.

P: Yeah, I don't think they were really allowed to (stay shorter than that).

L: Possibly in 1970 when Frank was taking people who had driven up the road – those might have been two or three night stays. But generally the repeat people were at least a week, if not two.

(47:48)

R: I was just going to ask, the repeat customers in that 30-40 people, would have been what percentage?

L: The first year they were probably 75% (the repeats) and then I think the second year was a definite – well, I think we were here at a big transitional period.

P: Maybe a third or a half (of them).

L: In the second year it was probably less than half or maybe half.

P: I sort of think Frank and Nona were... I don't know if they were falling apart, the ranch was falling apart. It went from being a really fabulous ranch to... I think things weren't quite the same and those guests were thinking, "Meh." I don't know.

L: But I think you were also saying that tourism was changing.

R: It was.

L: Flights to Europe were a lot cheaper, so people no longer had to pretty much stay home. I think they lost a lot of business to the flights to Europe.

C: Well, did you know the ranch was actually sold in the 1950s to the National Park Service? So that might have been the other thing that was happening, is like, "Why should we... we're going to be exiting here soon."

P: Exactly. That's sort of the bandaids and baling wire thing.

L: We heard the stories when we were here and we're not sure what we had heard was true, but we had heard that, from obviously from the ranch point of view – it was anti-park point of view because the park had threatened to cut off his water rights and grazing rights, which he depended on because the horses went off into the park at night and that they had threatened to cut it off and forced him to sign the 99-year lease. But we were probably hearing one side of the story. We also know Frank had a temper and he had been here since he was a child and probably didn't like being told what to do. And maybe if he had been more diplomatic the way the Moosehead Ranch had been very diplomatic – they're still functioning in the park – but they're still cooperative with the park, whereas I don't think Frank was. And I don't blame him. He was here before they were here.

P: Yeah, it was like, "I had ridden my horses up there forever."

L: How can you tell me I can't do that? So I think that if he had been a little bit more diplomatic and had worked with the park a little bit more, he might have been able to leave it to his kids at least because there was Cindy and his nephew Fran was totally expecting to stay here forever.

R: Yeah, we heard that.

L: And I think that there's two sides to that story. And it's a shame. Honestly, when we were out riding in the afternoons, we were riding through ghost ranches that had already



been plowed under and we did not like the Rockefeller Ranch because we felt that he was doing that to him. And it was great that he ended up giving his ranch to the park. I know his kids didn't like that, but bless his heart for putting his money where his mouth is.

P: Because that was noble of him, I think.

L: And it was important, but also the ranches are a history as much as the trees and the animals are history. (I'm glad) this one's being saved.

R: Craig sitting here made me aware of buildings are buildings, but they're buildings and only buildings until you have the story with them.

(50:41)

L: You're so right.

P: Exactly.

R: I paraphrased that poorly.

L: No, no. You have to beat White Grass people away from this place. (all laugh) I don't know how it's going to go from now on, but everybody feels an emotional ownership – not a physical ownership –

P: The emotional connection, absolutely.

L: And the fact that it's not going to fall down is just fabulous.

C: I was just going to say on your point... restored, what I feel like are hundreds of structures over the years, but nothing like this where you have that direct connection to the people who lived in and stayed in the place, so that's really unusual.

R: So what is the attraction? Can you define it?

L: The attraction? Oh, it's very sentimental. Well, first of all, every time I fly into Jackson a smile comes across my face, the minute I see the Tetons. But I remember even working here, we just felt them behind us, they're almost like mystical and magical. So the Tetons alone would do it. But then there was that family feeling... I mean, I grew up moving a lot and there were very few places in my life that would always feel like home. And this will always feel like home.

R: Asking you to maybe be a little introspective, more than what you shared, did you have a sense of "I'm okay" up here?

L: I'm happy here. Patsy and I were never happier than when we were here. We giggle from the morning we get up to the time we go to bed. Yesterday we were posting pictures on Facebook and my daughter called this morning and said, "Clearly you are having a giggle attack when you were taking those pictures." (all laugh) Because it is just total joy.

P: Yeah, I go back east and they say I'm different. And they're also worried I'm not coming back. (laughs)

R: Different?

P: Different. I come back with a big smile on my face. I go back smiling. And that's why I keep coming out every summer. I have found a similar ranch to this one over in Dubois because they have that same comfortable, family, cabin casual feeling to a ranch – you feel safe, you do feel secure, you feel protected, but you also feel adventuresome. You feel like you're in certain danger. I mean, there are bears, we are riding horses on cliffs. There is something to being alive out here.

(53:11)

L: And the other thing I remember – and I even feel at ranches or on packed trips – that there's something about being pulled together in a group and having those conversations... I mean, we don't see each other as much as this and we get out here and we... but even the experience of being on that ranch? We had campfires and sat around and talked about the deepest, most emotional things in your life. You know, we all went through things with our families, whatever – but it's like being in a boat together, you know. I mean, this ranch felt like that. Cruising alone in a boat in a big sea together. And when we see each other we've shared that experience, you know?

P: It was also a key point in our life. We were 20, 21-years-old and that's a big, huge moment in your life where you're choosing which road to go on and that kind of thing. So I think that's why it's important. It represents our youth, or a great part of our youth, and it was a great part for us.

R: Great adventure and first of a lot of things.

P: A lot of firsts and it also helped us to determine what we wanted to do in life and I was going to live out here. I was all set to live out here. I had my cowboys, which is what they used to refer to license plates as, and I worked for Jack Dennis the fisherman and I worked over at the Sojourner Inn and I worked for George Clover, which is a name I'm sure you've heard – I worked for him. But you did whatever you had to do to stay here. I had a great job with Jack Dennis and I was going to live here and I fell in love with somebody back east. And I'm still married to him, 43 years later. He took me to New York City, which is not a place I would ever want to live. This is where I want to live, not New York, but I have thrived there. As long as I have this balance. Once I discovered coming back out here in 2000 for the first reunion we went to, I realized I needed this in my life, this part of the world.

L: I think I fell in love for the first time here, too. And thought maybe I'd end up here. But then it wasn't really a relationship that was sustainable. But that first love – my God, everything looks amazing.

R: (laughs) I think that's true. Well, in common psychological terms that you hear and used frequently, you seem to be describing that coming back here many, many years later

– and maybe even when you were here – is like recontacting or recentering as individuals, kind of tuning inwardly, peaceful, joy, maybe reawakening from the stresses...

L: Also remembering who you are as an individual. I mean, I'm a mother and a wife now. And she's a wife and a working New Yorker, but when we're out here we're just Liz and Patsy.

R: Freer, freer.

P: And the reunion brings us together with the people we worked with here and that's what we love – seeing the people that we shared that experience with.

L: And the depth of those friendships is deeper than –

P: I mean, they live all over the place – in Boise, Bozeman, Vancouver – but we come here and we're right back together again, having fun and telling tall tales.

R: Some people describe relationships as they kind of come and go, but there's another kind of relationship that you may not see somebody for five, ten years, but you pick up exactly where you left off.

L: This is exactly what these are, it's totally true.

R: Is that the reunion?

L: Absolutely. Absolutely true. And I love hearing the stories of the earlier days here –

P: – Oh my god, I love them.

L: The reunion was very key for that, for hearing back when the ranch was a little more primitive and when it was kind of crazier – when they rode down to the rodeo and we did have some of our cowboys sneak out. Our wranglers were not allowed to ride in the rodeo. They feared they'd break a bone and they were necessary workers.

P: And they weren't pros.

L: And they weren't pros. But at the end of one summer they all snuck down to the Jackson rodeo and we went down there with them. And they rode in the last rodeo of the summer –

P: – I think Frank agreed that they could. It was, like, “You're going to go home broken, I don't care.” (laughs)

(57:12)

L: Exactly. They had a wild rodeo experience.

P: And they all did get trashed. (all laugh) They did run through fences and get bucked off, it was fun.

L: But also for me, I think it connects me with my mother and her sister and another time. I really loved seeing those '40s and '50s photographs that were shown. I mean, my mother died 20 years ago, so I kind of visit her by being here.

R: You may have spoken to this – (in the) '70s (there were) a lot of things happening in our culture. How would you describe the gender issues here? Male and female –

L: I never felt more feminine in my entire life than in blue jeans and cowboy boots. Seriously. We were equals, but we were so protected by those guys. We never felt less than, but we also felt so safe. And they looked out for us all the time. They were like big brothers, some of them were boyfriends. But we knew we were safe. Even if we were in town, they would make sure that we would all go home or go, “Are you okay?” I mean, it was wonderful, really wonderful.

R: Another example of family.

L: Exactly, exactly.

R: In many of the other interviews, that word keeps coming up: family.

L: Oh, I would say we feel like a family.

R: Amazing. Quite, quite interesting. Well, you weren't involved in the kiddie wrangler program at all?

L: No.

R: Okay, so your need for adventure brought you out here in '69 I guess.

L: It worked.

R: I think I hear those adventures paid off. Other connections to your experience on the ranch that have influenced your life? Vocational choice? Relationships?

L: As a mother, I've always encouraged my kids to go do everything. I've always loved traveling anyway, but my kids know when I'm out here I'm really happy. They know how special it is. I think I've given them a sense of adventure and fun. (I haven't) said, “You better stay on the east coast and do what everybody else did.” They actually are doing that, but they know that they don't have to.

R: Freedom for them. Oh, that word keeps coming back!

L: Oh yeah, that's true. And adventure. One son's a sailor and he's done races and (he's) gone, gone, gone and I'm always back there saying, “Go for it.” My other daughter is a horse woman, so...

(1:00:08)

P: I probably think the best work experience I got here was learning how to deal with a difficult employer. I was very young and I had worked since I was a teenager in summers, but I had never encountered anybody who was so unbelievably unfair where you would do what you thought was the job being done and then you'd be criticized for something else. But I took that away from me and the other experience I had working for Jack Dennis taught me how to do everything for a small business. And I took that experience to New York City and I've been running an art gallery since 1972 based on my Jack Dennis experience, but I also ran into a difficult employer – the wife of my boss – and it reminded me of the wife of this boss and I knew how to deal with her. I said, “Oh, I've been here before.” (laughs) Only this time you're not going to run me over. And it was a very good experience, it was a very growing experience. We grew up here. I had had a very protected life through college and when I got out here you are on your own, you know, you have to stand up for yourself and I learned how to do that.

L: That's actually in contrast with the fact that I felt by moving every two years growing up, this grounded me.

P: (laughs) We had opposite childhoods.

L: We did, we did. As you said, (it's) like family. I came to a place where I knew my family had cherished me and it wasn't going anywhere and it was all loving.

R: Some people would say, “I've never been in an environment where I felt as much freedom, protected, and able to explore who I am.”

L: That's exactly right.

P: Absolutely right, bingo. Right on, absolutely.

L: But again, back to being on a boat together – the kind of conversations you could have – we were all together all of the time and had those deep conversations, you know? And I don't really remember us fighting much. I mean, with guys or girls. Every now and then there was a little something. “She didn't do something right in the cabin,” or whatever, but mostly we were really a family.

P: Pulling together. As I said, we'd help out in the kitchen if they needed it.

R: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Other things you want to talk about? To your credit or understanding on the tape, both Liz and Patsy have brought in notes.

P: While we weren't wranglers, we still had a lot to do with the horses because we were so in love with them. If we chose to get up at 4:30, we were allowed to go out and help wrangle with the horses and that was a fun experience.

R: So you did it?

P: We did wrangle, we did wrangle. It was awfully hard to get up at 4:30 in the morning.

L: But we also got to know the horses as if they were our friends. I mean, there were probably 40 or 50 horses here, we knew them by name, they all had different personalities and they were hysterical. I mean, riding each one was like riding a different friend. I do remember one incident when we were sitting in the living room – Frank was always in there with the dudes – and somehow we had come in there after cocktails or something, and he would turn around and say, “Take a look outside.” And there were these two horses that looked like the most illogical friends. One was Best and he looked like he was wearing a tuxedo. He was black with white on his chest and he was very, very handsome. And then there was Blue, the horse I loved to ride, and he looked like he was wearing a dirty sweatshirt.

P: He was named for blue cheese. He looked like blue cheese.

L: (laughs) And these two horses could not be kept in anywhere. They would go along the fence line of the driveway and you'd see them if they were kept out, they'd go along and measure with their chest to see just where the place was where they were going to jump into the other field and inevitably, almost every evening, they would find the place and they would just cock back and hurl themselves over the fence. They never turned around, ran, and jumped.

C: What were their names again?

L: Blue and Best.

P: They didn't put the horses in the front pasture. And it was irrigated, it was green grass. The horses always went out into the park except for Best and Blue who wanted that grass in the front field and they got it. (all laugh)

L: The horses would go off in groups and be wrangled together, but there was always a story at breakfast. A leader of each group would have a bell around their neck and those horses would get so clever that they would hold the bell when the wranglers came out and get behind a tree and they wouldn't end up coming in for the day – they couldn't find them. Now and then there was a group of girls that would go up over the mountains –

P: – the black horses. The black horses all went to Idaho.

L: Yeah, they did. They just took off one day.

(1:04:56)

P: They were spotted by airplane.

L: Star and Twinkle and god knows what else.

P: Star and Twinkle were the leaders. Darky and... I can't remember the names of the other horses – and yeah, they had to go back and get them in Idaho.

C: Did they trail them around?

P: They wrangled them back, they were able to wrangle them back. They were on some ledge over Death Canyon.

L: But the horses became friends. We really knew them. They would say, “These three horses haven't gone out to dinner,” and we'd say, “Oh my god, okay, we'll take them.” But we knew who they were. We each had favorites. She had Peaches and I had Blue.

P: The dudes couldn't ride Peaches because she'd run away with you. And she was also very fat, she was very round. She was great to ride bareback. And she ran away with me all of the time.

L: Our rides were magical. I mean, we'd just be singing, going through fields of wildflowers – just unbelievable.

R: Going back to the joy, the freedom – (being able to) be yourself.

L: Exactly, exactly.

R: Wonderful. Other things you want to add there.

P: I think we covered a lot of it.

L: I think that's it pretty much it.

R: It's a wonderful description, just wonderful. And I say that because – just a quick comment – so many people are at a loss to describe this place.

L: Really?

R: Yeah. Well, they say, “It's magical.” What do you mean by magical? “Well, I don't know what to say, it's just magical.” So I think you have been much more clearer –

P: We're blabber mouths. (all laugh)

L: It makes us giggle. The magic's coming in while we're right here.

R: I do want to ask you – in terms of activities (again, in your life after the ranch), were either one of you involved in conservation or ecology or any of those types of movements that might bring you back to things that impressed you about nature when you were here at the ranch?

L: I think I have an incredible respect for nature and on Nantucket we're very ecologically minded and recycling is probably the highest level of recycling in the country. I'm kind of a recycling nut.

P: I have a small house in New Hampshire, which I think of as a mini-Wyoming. We have very much the same things, except for on a way smaller scale. But I was so delighted when I had moose in my yard and I've had bear in my yard –

L: – We're in the same community.

P: – And I've had coyote in my yard and it's kind of like, “Oh yeah, it's almost like Wyoming.”

L: I raised my kids with ponies and, you know, fields – they were on a farm.

R: And that's related to here?

(1:07:41)

L: Well, I don't think it was really by choice because my husband was there, but I knew the value of it. I knew what I was giving them. I had been in New York for 12 years before I moved up there and I was really stimulated by my career in New York, (but) I knew the value of what that could bring. Just time – I think kids are so over-programed. The ability to just go out into a field and put something into a stream and watch it go down and have fun – I wanted them to have that.

R: It crosses my mind also that you were talking about the animals and the personalities, knowing the names, etc.

L: Oh gosh, we're very animal-oriented.

R: The connection to animals as a part of growing up –

L: – that's probably one of my big things, yeah.

P: But I also have on my property one – it's a poplar back there, but it reminds me (it's in the aspen family) – and it has the same aspen leaves. And their clone trees – you probably all know that – and they go down and come back up again. And I've got the one and when the wind blows slightly it makes a slight noise and you think it's raining. It reminds me of here because of the one tree that's very similar to the aspen out here.

R: Which is sensory – and then your experience with Pledge is another sensory (experience). (laughs)

P: You know, I walked into this cabin and I thought I was going to smell Pledge. It was like a sense flashback. It was, like, “Where is that smell? That lemon Pledge smell.”

L: If you guys ever decide that you need help – I'm an interior designer, too – well, sort of (I play one on TV).

P: No, you really are one.

L: If you ever decide to renovate and find the right furniture and stuff for the right fabrics – to recreate what was here – I would love to help. And I don't know where I could find it or what I could do, but –



P: You do remember what it was like.

L: I do remember what it was like. And a lot of the photos would tell us what it was like.

R: Well, we are interested. Probably in an area where we have a very low number of photos would be the interior cabins. It's very interesting, it's very small.

P: Exactly, it's funny – we don't have those either.

L: The only ones I took were the interior of Frank and Nona's because it had all those Navajos and baskets and –

P: I remember the beds like it was yesterday.

L: I do, too.

R: I would be very interested in that because even still we don't have a lot of photos. In fact, Karin Gottlieb sent us some from her collection that we had never seen before.

P: Oh good.

L: Good. Did she have inside of cabins?

R: She did. Not... Frank's cabin was really what –

P: I have a picture of Karin. I don't know if you've ever met Karin. That's the interior of the cabin.

R: I know, I've got it here.

(1:10:22)

P: But there's a picture of Karin in here.

R: Yeah, I should note as pages are being turned, Patsy has a book that we will be scanning –

P: 1969.

R: Yeah, of many photos that she took around the ranch. We'll put some documentation with that as we're going along.

L: That's the inside of the girls' cabin, I can see a metal bed in there.

P: Oh yeah! That was the feast! That's the feast we were talking about.

R: Okay, oh yeah! Up the road... caviar and –

P: That's a picture of Karin.

R: Okay, I've never met her. She has been very loyal to –

P: She's now Gottlieb, right. She and Steve –

L: I think the next one is a picture of her then husband there – that's Nona's Jaguar.

R: Okay. See, when you write up this description about these pictures, that is an important detail.

P: Indeed. It was an important vehicle out here. (laughs) Liz has some of the same pictures as I have because we shared them, but she also has some from the second year in 1970.

L: These are largely from the second year. And this is how wet June usually was. This is us sitting inside –

R: – oh, slickers!

L: We lived in those in June when we were out here opening up the ranch.

R: Oh wonderful.

P: But you guys can have scans of these.

R: Yeah, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.

L: This is the second summer – handsome cowboys picking up unsuspecting girls at the airport. (laughs)

R: (laughs) I mean, that last comment sounds like the wranglers can't wait to get to the airport. (all laugh)

P: To check out the chicks, yep.

(1:12:03)

R: Well, now we know one of the criteria for –

P: – well, it seemed to be.

L: It was a romantic place.

P: It was very romantic.

R: Yeah, yeah. Other things to add?

L: My memories of Frank – we don't have a lot of Frank stories because I think at that point he was kind of quiet and removed from us. We didn't interact with Frank that much. And we were sort of sorry for it. I mean, he was sort of family and my memory of him was that he was twinkly and smiling and gentle and always happy to see you and usually

wandering around taking care of something. I mean, he really was helping to keep the place from totally falling apart.

R: He wasn't sitting down and –

L: No. And he had a beautiful, very red yellow lab named Amber and they were sort of a pair, the two of them were a pair. And it was really wonderful to see him and when we would go – there was one time when we went to the rodeo and they did have the dude ranch owners come in and they were all dressed up in their finest regalia and he was on his beautiful stallion Dexter and he had really high cowboy boots. And his saddle was all gorgeous Mexican silver and the bridle was all that and he just looked so incredibly handsome.

P: He was a real Marlboro man.

L: He was, he totally, totally was.

P: Very handsome. But also a big, big heart.

L: Yeah, and I have very fond memories of him. He was a really wonderful person to work for.

R: Part of that affirmation that you're okay.

L: Exactly, exactly. He was really just a great man. And I think he is largely the reason why all the White Grass people can never get this out of our souls and our hearts. It's Frank that's the real cornerstone of all that.

R: How would you respond to this statement? As one person, who has a long history at this ranch and lives in Jackson, she said, "Every time I come up here, I feel Frank's presence."

P: Yes, absolutely. We stopped at the cemetery –

L: We stopped at the cemetery to eat our banana and yogurt and to just eat breakfast with him.

P: With Frank.

R: Really? How interesting.

C: I have a question. We tried really hard when we were doing the restoration work, to try to capture the vegetation outside. What do you remember... what's the difference between what we have now and what you remember about the cabins?

P: It was grass.

L: That's the one thing that doesn't seem right – it's not your fault for not restoring, but it's all rough, wild grass now where it was really lawn/grass around – especially out back behind the kitchen. After lunch we would lie out back on the lawn – a maintained lawn – and I think amongst the cabins it was maintained lawn. I don't remember mowing it –

P: – I don't, either.

L: But I don't remember it being this dry, grassy stuff.

P: I don't remember it being that tall.

L: But definitely there was maintained lawn.

R: Were there more trees?

P: Oh yeah, more trees for sure.

L: But it wasn't, like, really tree-y.

P: Because there was a tree by the girls' cabin because that's the one I ended up under.

L: But I don't remember feeling like it was in a line of trees. It was still open enough, there was still sunshine. It wasn't really like being in the woods.

P: There was definitely one tree in the front pasture. I conked my head on it – I got a concussion from that tree.

L: It was a deciduous tree, right?

P: No, it was pine, it was pine. It might have been a lumber pine or one of the smaller pine trees . And it had a low branch on it and one of the horses took a turn on it and I ducked and it hit me in the back of the head and I had a lovely concussion.

L: I think that once or twice we tried playing polo out there – did anyone tell you that?

R: Well, I know there was polo out there with regular mallets, I know there was polo out there with brooms.

L: And the saddles were... god, what were they?

P: Cavalry?

L: Cavalry Saddles.

R: Oh, is that what they were? Yeah, I've seen those pictures. Interesting.

P: We also had a gymkhana –

L: And sometimes we did it double (laughs) –

P: – we'd ride double.

L: A cowboy in the front and a girl in the back.

P: And the girl would pat with the paddle. (laughs) That was so much fun.

R: On a Cavalry? A paddle? (laughs) Ouch.

L: And you'd be galloping along and fly off the back. (laughs)

P: We bounced back then.

L: Did they tell you about the gymkhana we'd have with the other ranches?

R: Please tell me about that.

L: We'd have occasional gatherings with the other ranches. Mostly R Lazy S because they were so close at that point. And there were slow races for the kids and some of the horses understood the slow races and the little kids didn't understand it and they'd be kicking the horse trying to make it go fast and the horse was saying, "No." But there was a balloon race that we really got into where you'd blow up a balloon and tie it to the back of your belt, the back loop of your jeans. And then you had to go around and try to pop everybody else's balloon and not let them pop yours.

P: Which, you can imagine, made our horses crazy, made people crazy. Oh, the horses went nuts, we went nuts.

P: Well, just the sound of a popping balloon. There was barrel racing, which I did on Peaches. She was a really great barrel racer, she took them really tight. That was a lot of fun. And yeah, there were a lot of races, races and stuff for the horses.

R: Gunny sack races and that sort of thing?

P: Yep, that kind of thing, too. And it was all dudes and crew. A complete mix of everybody.

R: So this was at the end of the summer?

L: I remember a couple of times during the middle of the summer. There might have been a fence.

R: Guests were not participating –

(1:17:22)

L: The guests participated, absolutely. The dudes and crew – dudes and crew mixed together. Absolutely. Anybody who wanted to do it could do it.

C: Did Triangle X come?

L: No, Triangle X did not come. I know the ranch quite well, but I don't think they came. I think they were way bigger than we were. They weren't that close, either. The closest ranch was R Lazy S. And for some reason some of the Fish Creek guys came up because I remember one of them played the spoons really well.

C: So which other ranches would come?

L: R Lazy S primarily... J-Y Ranch, not friends with them at all. In fact they had a manager that was very hostile. Very hostile to us at that point. R Lazy S primarily, I don't know about Fish Creek – because, you see, they had to ride over and to be near enough to ride.

R: Anything else? I want to ask about the reunion for just a minute.

L: Okay, sure.

R: It should be noted on the tape that Liz and Patsy have been here... Friday, Saturday, and Sunday?

L: Part of Friday, we came late on Friday.

R: Which was the reunion and included many dudes and wranglers. Some special friends of White Grass. You've spoken some to that in terms of picking up relationship where they left off, it is a family experience, the joy of bringing you back to how you were years ago. Anything else you would like to add about the importance of the reunion in your lives, you have come a long way.

L: Today is my daughter's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and I am not there, my son's is tomorrow, my son just raced in a really important sailboat race – all of which I should have been there for but there would be no way that I would not have come.

P: And I'm supposed to be at work. This is really a bad time for me at work, really bad.

R: What do you do?

P: I run an art gallery.

R: Oh that is right.

L: But this is really important and I know a lot of people are talking – it is a really hard thing for them to organize and I appreciate them organizing it and we have impressed upon them that they have to keep doing it. And that will keep and that we will come out and help them do it.

P: Well every summer when I come out, some of the wranglers come down from Bozeman and Vancouver. They time their visit to Jackson at a time when I am here. They know I am coming from the east and we have mini reunions in town because we have kept in touch. And the reunions brought us back together. I am trying to get you to come more back here.

L: I don't come as often.

P: No, it is an important thing to touch base with everybody.

R: Well as you are touching base make the ranch one of your stops.

P: I've met you, I've come every summer.

R: As you have talked about your stories, they keep coming back to me. This is my fourth summer.

P: I may have missed you one summer, but I have come up every summer.

L: So White Grass people are still welcome to come? How does that work.

R: There is kiosk over here on the Death Canyon Trail. Do you want to speak to that Craig?

C: Sure, we encourage people to come. The ranch is in a national park and it is open to the public. It is that simple. Part of the money we have gotten to fix up the cabins is through these partnership funds that Park Service gives us and part one of those funds is that it has to be visitor related. And if we can't relate it to visitors, we don't get the money. We are planning to do some signage, set up an interpretative exhibit in one of the cabins. One of the rooms would be for artifacts and that kind of thing. So it is totally..

L: So we could bring a picnic and sit on the porch if we were to come with family.

C: Sure

P: And it would be helpful if you have cabins that are 'please don't come into this, you can look in this one. That would be fine, I have always just barged in.

R: And we know White Grassers do that sort of thing.

L: I was just asking but I would have done it anyway.

R: As caretaker when new people come in to stay here as guests, I say we have never had trouble with theft up here but there are a whole lot of people who if they find an unlocked door, they will walk in. So I say to the new guests to prepare yourselves and if you do not want folks coming in, lock the door. But to your question too, one of the evolutions of the ranch is the training center component and more and more people are coming up here and people are staying a longer period of time. So, if you anticipated sitting on a porch you may be joined by 20 other people

P: That understood, just to know we could bring a sandwich up here is important.

R: And I will add that many people do and it is truly amazing. And being caretaker, I certainly have lots of opportunity to watch people come up. We had people come up this

summer creating a family reunion bringing mom and siblings, mom is now in her 80's now. We had a person coming in who said that we are from Oregon and today is the anniversary of the death of my wife's mother. And he could not think of more appropriate than to bring my wife here because of their connection to the ranch. We have had other people come through – a lady came by my cabin and stepped out to say hello and turned and said hello, you weren't supposed to see me cry. I've been here before.

L: Let me tell you, this is that for me. I do have a faith in God, I'm not a real church going person, but I never felt closer to God than here. It is really true.

P: Yep!

R: On that note we will end our interview, it has been truly wonderful, so informative talking with you.

L: Fun to talk with you.

(1:23:56)

#### ADDENDUM #1

R: My name is Roger Butterbaugh and this is continuation #1 of the interview with Patsy Hobbs Tompkins and Liz Thayer Verney, cabin girls at the White Grass Ranch.

P: It occurred to me that the first summer we were here the floors were wood floors like these here. The second summer we were here, Nona had decided that she didn't like the floors and she decided to paint them a light sagey green, those were her words. "A light sagey green) (she would say in a high, sophisticated voice). And you have on the front of that cabin – that is like a record of the light sagey greens. And in the end, I think all the cabins had that color of paint.

L: And please don't do that to the cabins.

C: We might have to save a piece of that.

L: That (the light sagey green) was all part of Nona taking all the personality out of the cabins.

(1:26)

#### ADDENDUM #2

R: My name is Roger Butterbaugh and we are continuing our interview that just continues to unfold with Patsy Hobbs Tompkins and Liz Thayer Verney, former cabin girls at White Grass Ranch. And we are now talking about candle sticks.



L: I now live in New Hampshire basically and I ran into somebody, somewhere – I think through my husband’s business – who said I went to an auction at White Grass and I didn’t really know when. He told me he had something that he was going to give me from that auction and to this day I cannot remember who the person was. About six months later on my front door was a brown paper bag with two branding iron candlesticks with an F and a G on the bottom – for Frank Galey. And I don’t remember, it could have been that they were in the main cabin, on the side board, I don’t know. But it was really crazy and I have them and don’t know who to thank. It was just some crazy conversation I was in that all this came about. I do have them and I will send you a picture.

R: Please do.

L: And there is probably lots of stuff out there like that.

R: Well it is very interesting being here as caretaker and how those stories are starting to flow. I was talking with a lady the other day and I said “Chairs” and she said ‘are you interested in chairs? Well I have one sitting in my closet, you want it?’ And, I said, “Yes, sure.”

P: I do know that people felt this place falling apart and people wanted a part of it. I mean even people leaving it. When we were leaving, we were hoping we could talk a little piece of something. And there was some stealing that happened but I know it really wasn’t malicious, it was for the material object it was a piece of it (the ranch experience).

R: Take the ranch with me.

P: Yea.

R: Think of anymore stories

P: Nope

(1:26)

ADDENDUM #2 ENDS



