

**Elon and Alma Cary  
Narrators**

**Amy K. Rieger  
Interviewer**

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Park Rapids, Minnesota**

**Cary:** My name is Elon Cary. I was born in Akeley, Minnesota, on June the 26th, 1910, within the sound of the saws of the world's largest sawmill what was in Akeley. It had three double cutting band saws. The carriage cut both ways, and they hauled the trees in on railroad cars. The whole country was full of railroad tracks and stuff like that. That's how they hauled the logs in. When the logs were gone, and when the trees were all cut down, the company moved to Redwood, California, and they took most of the town of Akeley with them, including the preacher, the druggist, the doctor. They took everybody but me, I guess.

**Rieger:** That's good, you stayed here.

**Cary:** I went to school in Nevis, Duluth, Minnesota. I started, actually in Park Rapids in kindergarten and I graduated and post-graduated in Park Rapids high school. Then I went to work, I went to the Northwest Airways Flying School and learned to be a commercial pilot. I came home and depression set in. There was no job. You couldn't buy a job. So I went to work for the Minnesota State Forest Department. I had, in post-grad school, gone through typing and shorthand and bookkeeping, and I got a job as clerk. My job was mostly typewriting and shorthand and things like that for the Forest Ranger, Alan Stone. Alan's long since gone now. He was a wonderful man. Alan Stone kept me on as long as he could. Finally, the job kind of petered out in the wintertime, they didn't need it, so he put me in the CCC camp north of Nevis, 2708. I was in that camp all winter long and the next spring, they wanted me back in the Forestry Office again to be a clerk and to run the typewriter. I barely got started when the man who was the clerk in Itasca State Park passed on. He died. They needed a clerk up there, so they sent me up there to clerk. [laughs] I never left, I stayed. I wound up as Superintendent up there. I was in there for about twelve years. Grover Conzet was the Division Director of State Forestry, and while I was there, about the first year or two I was there, they transferred the State Park from the Forest Service over to the State Park System. They organized a new division in the state of Minnesota, so we became State Park employees instead of Foresters. We lost our uniforms.

Anyhow, at the time we went up there, the CCC camps and the TRA camps and the SP camps were in full swing at that time. The Park office was beleaguered with business from these camps. One of the things that I told about was the dynamite situation. We had to issue all the dynamite to all the

camps and I was put in charge of that. I don't know whether I should tell this story about the dynamite again or not. You can add that on your own.

**Rieger:** Go ahead. I love that story.

**Cary:** I had to issue it. The CC camp from camp 58, which was west of Itasca Park, came over to haul about ten cases of dynamite over there. They were building a fire prevention road and they had to go through some rocks and things and they wanted dynamite. So they took about, I think it was ten cases they wanted of dynamite. With the dynamite, you have to have those little fuses, or those little copper cylinders that takes the fuse. I went down and I measured out about fifteen-twenty feet of fuse, wrapped it up and handed it to them. I wouldn't let the CC boys come down into the cellar where we had the dynamite, and so we had to carry the stuff to the doorway and then they handed it to them and they climbed the stairs and went up and put it in the truck. Meanwhile, one of the foreman, I won't give you his name [George Wilson], came down into where we had the dynamite and walked in there. I said, "Stay out of here. This is high danger area." He didn't care, I guess, and he walked in there. He was an old lumberjack. I went into the fuse room. We had a special little room where we kept those little cylinders and those little cylinders, if they're dropped or disturbed unnecessarily, they will explode. If one explodes, they all explode, and when they all explode you've got yourself something going. Well, anyhow, I was going to give him about six boxes of those little fuses. I think there was twenty or twenty-five in a box, I can't remember. I handed him, and he stacked them up in his left arm so that he could carry them all at once. He dropped one of the boxes onto the cement floor. The lid flew open and all those little brass cylinders rolled all over the floor. My heart is in good condition yet! Why they didn't explode, I'll never know. It should have. It may have been because it was very damp down in there, and it may be that the dampness controlled it or something. That was a close call.

**Rieger:** Scary call.

**Cary:** Anyhow, we got the truck away from the place where the stuff was stored underground, and that was one of the incidents. Another thing was, during the first year or so, I was single at that time, and that big storm came through the southwest corner of the Park and took a whole bunch of heavy, big, round, yellow pine trees. They were all saw timber stuff. You'll find around Preacher Grove yet, there's some of them still standing. But these were in the southwest corner of the Park, and the storm went through. I guess it was a tornado. It smashed them and it tore them down and uprooted them and everything like that. The CCC camp, which was right near the Headquarters, they called that camp SP-1. It was under the army and the National Park Service. They logged the stuff off as best as they could, and then they piled all the logs right in front of Headquarters. It was very unsightly, so the state got in a sawmill, and they had a steam engine running the sawmill. The Park employees had to saw those logs up into board and turn them into marketable timber, which we did. The trouble was, there was nobody there that could measure the timber or estimate how many boards or what they were sawing, and they had to have that count, and I was elected to do it. It took me about six or eight hours to figure out how I was going to count those boards and estimate the board feet as they came off the saw. Well, we sawed them. We sawed up an enormous amount

of timber there, and the trucks were hauling it away continuously all the time, so the Park got a little extra revenue, which we sorely needed, because our budget was always short. In the wintertime, right in January and February, we had to work two months for nothing, without salary, because the budget petered out. That helped out a little bit to sell the timber. We had hay lands and swamp lands that we sold hay and stuff off of these swamps and the farmers would come in and they'd pay so much an acre for hay land, and that helped out with the Park budget, too.

We were responsible for the entire Park. There was quite a Park crew at that time. The Forest Service had put in a fire telephone switchboard into the Headquarters, and they had to have two girls there on twenty-four hour service. Eventually, after I got married, my wife had to stand in. They kept that thing going because the people around the whole area there didn't have any telephone service. There was no paved roads and the main highway, this is 71, went right through the Park in those days, so we had to keep the road cleaned off. It kept us busy all winter long. On top of that, they finally began to hook up all the buildings around the Park there and they had to have electricity. The state had a big, old fashioned light plant and hired an electrician to run it. It would start up at about three in the afternoon and it would run until midnight and then they'd shut it down. That went [off] from time to time, the engines petered out and everything, so they finally got a diesel, a great, big diesel engine. I think the engine came from Battle Lake, Minnesota. Anyhow, the fly wheel must have weighed something like twenty tons. It even had to have it run down in the ground a ways, it was so big. That thing had to have somebody run it all the time and to watch it all the time, so that took part of our crew away. Then there was always the picnic tables that had to be painted and repaired and everything. Just north of Headquarters, there was Wegmann's store, and Wegmann, Theodore Wegmann his name was, was an old, old timer. I think one of his buildings is still up there. He wanted us to hook up to the electricity, so we had to electrify him. He had refrigerators and things in the store there, so it just kept us busy making current all the time, and it kept the old engine busy.

Then we had seventy-six elk in the back in the elk pasture that we had to feed and take care of, and some of them would get sick and get caught in the fence, and sometimes the fence would get down. They were wild. They weren't tame elk. They were wild. They would run. Sometimes they would run into the fence. Anyhow, we had to keep the fence up. Then we had two bears, which was my job again. On top of my other duties, I had to take care of the bears. Pretty near lost my life there. That came awful close.

**Rieger:** What happened?

**Cary:** The CCC camp, one of the camps, built a bear den inside of the hill. They built it so that the door was toward the northwest and that's prevailing wind in this [area], and the wind blew in the doorway, and the bears would get in there and pretty near freeze to death. The Superintendent, whose name was Louis Engstrom, he's dead now, they're all dead. Anyhow, he said, "You'd better go and put hay in front of the, can you cut that thing off? [tape stopped] I was ordered to haul some hay and put down in front of the door, the bear den, in the fall, because the bears were going in hibernation. So I went down there. They were in a cage, and the door on the cage was right near the den, so it was handy. All I had to do was pitch the hay in the doorway. The door swung into the den, so if they pushed on the door it would lock itself. I got in there, but the hay held the door

open when I threw it in there and I couldn't get the hay in front of the den unless I got inside the den and pitched the hay over against the door against the den. I got in there and I started to pitch the hay across the entrance to the den and the she-bear came out. Her eyes were just as red as fire and she was mad. She had her mouth wide open, she was mad. She saw me and she made for me. The door was stuck, the hay was holding the door open, and she got between me and the door, so that I couldn't get to the door. I had to run down into the cage deeper. I run down that thing and she reared up on her hind legs. Their claws are about six inches long, they were adult bears. I had a brand new jacket I had bought. It was a wool jacket. I had just bought it. Fortunately, it had buttons. When she came down, her claws grabbed the back of my jacket and tore my jacket. The buttons flew off and I let her have the jacket and I ran on. She thought she had me. She jumped on the jacket and she just tore it all to pieces, and while she was tearing it to pieces, I run up and got out the door of the cage, fortunately. It was that close. I had to run past her to get up to the door of the cage. That was kind of a tricky situation. The bears were a very good tourist attraction.

**Rieger:** Were they up towards Headquarters?

**Cary:** Right at Headquarters. Just north of the building. Maybe the den's there yet, but I think the cage is gone. They don't keep them anymore.

**Mrs. Cary:** Did you tell about the buffalo?

**Cary:** We had five buffalo, [one was] an enormous, enormous bull. We had a couple of calves and I think there was two or three cows. The bull was mean. He didn't like to be penned up. He wanted to roam around, and he'd charge the fence. It scared us to death in the Park because the little kids would go and hang on that wire and that old bull would stand back there, probably two hundred feet back, and all of a sudden, here he come, full blast, and he'd hit that fence just as hard as he could. Well, the posts were twelve inches across and the wire was eight feet high, so he couldn't get out. Never-the-less, he kept at that so long, and stretched that wire so bad, it just kept us busy repairing that fence. It got to the point where we couldn't feed him anymore, because when we got to throwing hay over the fence, he'd charge it. So we moved a trough in there so we could stand on the other side of the trough and keep him away from us. They'd stand and eat by the hour, and the buildup behind the trough got higher and higher. We couldn't get in there to clean it up. He'd charge us all the time. One day the old bull slid in there and he got down on his knees and he slid underneath the trough and he couldn't get up. We had to shoot him. It took two of us with a log chain and a pull between us to lift the head alone. We just cut his head off and it took two of us to lift the head alone. The head's in the State Capital now, mounted. I think either it's in the governor's office or the secretary of state's office. It's mounted in there.

**Mrs. Cary:** It's in a state building.

**Cary:** Yes. But we were the people that shot him and had to dress him out and everything. Well, so much for the animals. Of course, there's deer, always deer. One of the chief problems were the deer got too tame. They got so tame, we'd paint their horns red in hunting season and hang tags on

them, red tags. They were just like cats and dogs. They'd come up and stand around. I was married. I got married when we were up there, and I moved out of bachelor's quarters into a building that had been abandoned by the TRA. The TRA is "Transient Relief Administration," and they were [men] that would come in there and eat and sleep and stay until they got rested up, and then they'd move on. It was a great place [for them], and we had [men] all over the place.

[Deleted reference to their lack of enthusiasm for working and potential for theft at the Headquarters]

They had to move them over to Squaw Lake, a place called Squaw Lake, which is about four miles, three or four miles west of the Headquarters. So, TRA camp over in Squaw Lake was established and they had that over there. They finally had a Superintendent to watch over the buildings and things like that.

**Rieger:** They were at Headquarters at first, in that area?

**Cary:** They were right at Headquarters. She [Mrs. Cary] and I, being freshly married up there, there was no place to stay up there. First we stayed in Heinzelman's cabins north of the Park. Those were summer cabins and pretty soon it got wintertime. We had year round jobs so we had to stay on in the wintertime, so we fixed up one of the TRA buildings up there, bedbugs and all, and had to hang newspapers on the wall and everything like that. We lived in there all winter. It was pretty hard going.

**Rieger:** Was that 1935 that you were married?

**Cary:** About '35.

**Mrs. Cary:** About? It was '35.

**Cary:** It was '35, 1935. She was teaching school in Arago [Argo?]. She was the school teacher in Arago. Anyhow, Harold W. Lathrop became the Division of State Parks Director. He was a good man. He saw our predicament and so he ordered the state to come up and fix these buildings so that they were liveable. They fixed us up a nice house. [House was located south and east of the Headquarters, up on the hill.]

**Mrs. Cary:** Modernized.

**Cary:** Modernized it with water and sewer and everything like that, and of course, we were making our own electricity, so everything worked fine. I was working in the office whenever I didn't have to work outside. Then they established Bear Paw campground. Bear Paw campground is still there, it's still there, as you know, down on Bear Paw Point. It was put there by the National Park Service. They believed in having everything wild, and there was brush and mosquitoes and

grass and mud and poor roads, and they built some nice buildings. They built a Headquarters, the picture of it is right there, that they built, and they had a store, and they had a place for the caretaker to live. Also, they had a well. Incidentally, the pump that's there is 169 feet deep. They had to go down that deep to get good water. Then they built a bath house, or toilets.

**Mrs. Cary:** Showers.

**Cary:** Showers, and hot and cold running water. Finally they came along and built another one, so we had two. We had public toilets and we had showers, and then they came along and built three log cabins. All these buildings were built out of logs. Then they built the ice house, which has got so much notoriety, which was about the last building they built. We used to have to furnish the ice. They kept us busy, don't you ever think they didn't. We were working our\_\_\_right down to the\_\_\_. Teddy Wegmann died about then, and he's buried in that cemetery right near the University down there. When he died, everything blew up and the store was managed by one of the clerks for a while, and he finally got married and that got tiresome and he moved away, and the thing went to pot and they finally shut it down. Teddy had eighteen boats he was renting on Lake Itasca. The state bought all the boats. Out of the eighteen boats, I got fourteen of them down there on Bear Paw Point to take care of. The boats, they found out, were old and rotten, and so they had to destroy them all, and they replaced them with new boats. That was nice, except those boats had to be kept up, and I had fourteen boats to take care of [laughs].

**Rieger:** How did you get everything done in a day?

**Cary:** Well, wait a minute! In the store, we sold minnows and bait. The Fuller's Tackle Agency here in Park Rapids sold us, they didn't give it to us or lease it to us, they sold us all the bait and the plugs and the line and stuff like that. We had to resell it. So we did that. All of a sudden, there was a demand for minnows. Wally Johnson, I guess Wally's still alive, isn't he Ala?

**Mrs. Cary:** I don't know if he is or not. His brother is vice president of a bank or something.

**Cary:** Yes. Wally Johnson [our minnow man] used to be out all night long seining minnows in those streams up around Lake Alice country, and he'd come about six o'clock in the morning with about four hundred dozen minnows. We had a tank about as long as from here to the wall. I always think it was ten feet long and probably three feet wide. Dumped all those minnows in and we had to keep fresh water on them all the time, so the pump had to run. We had a five thousand gallon tower tank on top of the pump, and that pump had to run continuously, and it had a three horsepower electric [motor] on it, and we were pumping our water up. I had eighteen toilets to maintain, four in the women's and three in the mens, that seven showers to go. You had to keep hot water for the showers by firing a coal burner, we had a coal burner, so we had to have hot water down there all the time, and then we had laundry. We kept it going.

Then we had to sell that lousy ice twice a day, at nine o'clock in the morning. I got an old school bell from off a school house that had went defunct up in Lake Alice. I went and got the bell off of the school house because it was closed up. [sentence deleted.] I mounted it on top of the fish

house. I think the old bell is still up there yet, if I'm not mistaken. I used to ring the bell. We wouldn't sell ice, we didn't have time to monkey with it, the thing was out there quite a ways. I would ring the bell about nine o'clock in the morning and here the tourists would come out of the brush with their buckets and stuff, and we'd shovel the sawdust off the ice and chip up the ice and sell it to them. [It cost about 25 cents a chunk.]

**Mrs. Cary:** Shut that off.

**Rieger:** O.K. [Tape off-Story about a woman and the ice]

**Cary:** I'd ring the bell, the tourists would come and then we'd chip the ice. After that was all over, I had a wheelbarrow and I had to load enough ice in the wheelbarrow, in a wash tub, to go up to ice the equipment in the store. I'd haul that up to the store and ice the equipment. We had fourteen boats and people had a nasty habit of dumping their worm bucket on the bottom of the boat. They'd pull it up on shore and come back. The only control we had over the boats was, we had the oars. We had to issue the oars and I made an oar rack with numbers on it. That's how we could keep track of the time that they had the boat out. So much for that. Finally, it got so burdensome that I had to fix up a machine to wash the boats. I had to turn the boats up on the side and wash it with water, which we did. Somebody stole my patent. They were going to market the thing. They were down there taking pictures and diagrams, they had an artist up there. Anyhow, that's part of the job. So, after that, it was routine.

[Note; they were also responsible for splitting wood and providing it free to the campers who would often load up on the way home. It cost 50 cents a night or \$3.00 a week to camp. Mr Cary hung cardboard tags on the campsite posts to determine who had paid or not.]

We had all this Bear Paw campground to mow, it had to be mowed. It was rough because the CC camp had left it just like it was in the forest, and there was holes and everything. The mower had wide wheels on it with handle bars. You'd go along, one of those wheels would catch in the hole, around it would go, punch you right in the side. I thought it would kill me, honestly. I finally got that brush mowed down with that mowing machine, and it's the way it is now. It's stayed that way.

The trees were falling over the telephone line and we had to keep contact on account of fire and things like that, with the Headquarters and the switchboard, so we had to keep up our own telephone line. We were just freshly married, on her birthday, I put a telephone pole on my back, I was younger than I am now, and I hauled it down the line. She was following me down trying to scramble through the brush. I had the telephone pole on my back. I had to dig a hole and then climb up the pole and put the wire on it. She thought it was terrible. She wasn't used to that kind of living [laughs].

We had sewage disposal. On one Fourth of July, I had three hundred campers out there and the sewer situation was frightful. The CCC camp had put down tiles in twelve inch tiles, and instead of hub tiles, they'd put in butt tiles, so that they just butted them up against. When they got wet, they would move. So we had continuous sewage problems. I had to keep that open. The

sewer pipe was, I would say, eight hundred feet long, and that thing was continually plugging all the time. One third of July, the rods inside of this well that went down to 169 feet, parted down there on the sixty-fifth level. The rods tore apart and we didn't have any water. I had twenty-eight toilets going and three hundred people on there. There was a man by the name of Morgan who was a diesel engineer for the Rock Island Railroad, was our camper. Bless his heart. I think of that man so many times. He came up and he started to help me. We worked all day on the day of the third. We had to fish down there sixty-five feet to get the other end of the rod to pull that head of water, 169 feet of water, up out of that three inch pipe, with some sort of a tool. How do you grab a wood rod that's sticking up like that? But that man was a wizard. He told me, "You take a piece of pipe and you put prongs in it pointing inside, and you drop the pipe so it will drop over that thing and grab the wood, and then pull the winch out. I still got the winch out in the barn here. That was on the afternoon of the Fourth. Fourth of July, people all over the place, all the boats were rented out, everything was going, she [Alma] was trying to take care of the store alone, and I was up there working on the well. We pulled it out. We put new rods in, and by the end of the Fourth, we had water again. That's just one of the things.

On top of that, we had a gravel road coming in, and we had to keep the roads graded. I had an old Fordson tractor with a drag on it, and that was how we kept the roads up. That was part of the job. Then she [Alma] was taking care of the three cabins and then while we were there the CC camps built three more cabins. So, we were harnessed up with six cabins. She was making beds, renting out the cabins, cleaning the cabins, and washing. Fortunately, the girls on the telephone switchboard, up in the Headquarters, washed the sheets. So that's how we got by on that.

I'm just telling you part of the story because we were partially responsible for Douglas Lodge. We had to furnish all the ice for Douglas Lodge, and the campground, and the Headquarters, and the Forestry Station. You say, "What did you do all winter?" We just worked our\_\_\_\_. We just worked ourselves to death. I still have an ice saw out here that has a handle in one end, and the saw's about six feet high with teeth about two and a half to three inches long. We'd saw that by hand. Everything was sawed by hand. When I came up there, they had made ice the year before. Two men would get on each side of a slide and they'd grab tongs and drag those cakes of ice, which were about thirty inches high and I would say probably two feet square, up the slide and on to the truck. That took two men. We didn't have [two men]. We only had the electrician, he was supposed to take care of the light plant, he couldn't work on the ice, and then we had...

**[End side one, tape 1]**

**[Begin side two, tape 1]**

**Cary:**...somebody had to haul the garbage. There was that everlasting garbage that had to be taken care of. Every minute that they're off, we had to go down to see that the buildings were being maintained. There's people walking off with stuff from Ozawindib cabin. Can you spell that? Ozawindib?

**Rieger:** Yes.

**Cary:** You know what it is. O.K. There was curios and display up there. Well, somebody had to

watch it, or else the stuff would evaporate. So we had to have one man [Charlie Veit] walking around watching that. Also, there was another set of toilets up there that had to be maintained. Oh, brother! On top of that, the Minnesota Historical Association decided to have a Pageant, Indian Pageant, celebrating the Headwaters of the Mississippi. Of course, the Park was responsible for it. I was charged with buying all the food and seeing to it the food got down to the Indians, and taking care of the receipts and taking care of the traffic and the parking up there. That was my job, besides taking care of all this other stuff. I'd get up about four o'clock in the morning, get my work done as fast as I could, I was young then, I could run. I even had a bicycle to ride from one end of the campgrounds to the other. I couldn't walk it, I had to ride on the bicycle. I had a Model-T Ford Coupe, and I'd run that thing. Anyhow, the Pageant would start about, what was it, two o'clock in the afternoon, Alma?

**Mrs. Cary:** I think so.

**Cary:** The traffic would start in about ten in the morning. We'd have from five to six thousand people every Sunday [emphasizes thousand]. They all had to pay admission. What did we charge? Was it fifty cents, Alma, or was it worth a quarter? [fifty cents] I forgot. Anyhow, every ticket had to have a coin with it. We had tickets and they were numbered. I had to be responsible for them. I'd work until three o'clock on Monday morning to get that money and the tickets to match up and everything like that so I could turn it in. Then at four o'clock in the morning go back down to the campgrounds, start selling minnows again. I'll tell you something, we worked. We just worked our fingers to the bone. What else did I forget? Cut it off for a minute. [Tape off]

At that time, they called it the DNR, but it used to be the Game and Fish Department, discovered that the Park was overpopulated with deer. So they decided that they should feed them because they were starving to death. You'd go out there and you'd find deer leaning up against a tree, dead. They'd freeze to death standing up there along side of the tree. So they decided to feed the deer. Who got the hay? We did. They had an old, beat up Ford truck that had a semi on the back of it. It was some rig, I'll tell you. We went up to Erskine and we contracted for hay. We'd pile the bales up on top of that truck just as far as we could get them up, and then we had a short-wheel based truck and we'd go up and haul hay, probably once every two weeks. That was for the elk, which were also starving, and the buffalo which were starving, and the deer which were starving. We had to feed the whole bunch of them. We did it. I don't know how. We kept a going with it. Finally, I bought an airplane. I was already a commercial pilot when I took the job up there, I had a commercial pilot's license. I would put hay in the back seat of the airplane and I'd fly out to dump it off. But that was too slow. There was tons and tons of it. It took too much gas, and the Park wasn't going to furnish any gas, the budget was shot, it was always shot. They were always stingy with the vehicles and stuff, you had to be stingy on the gas tank because there was no money for anything. So I had to quit that. The Forestry Department furnished us with toboggans, you know what they are, flat toboggans, with these "Hudson Straps." We'd put them over our forehead and we'd pile about four-five-six bales of hay on there, and we'd haul the hay out on the one-way trail. That's still there. If they look good on one-way cabin out there, Nicolet Cabin, I guess the logs are still there. They were in good shape. You could sleep there all night if you had to. Anyhow, we'd haul this hay out. Once in a while we'd get a storm and those roads would plug,

so we had to plow the roads around. We had a ten ton caterpillar tractor with a snowplow on it. My job to plow the road. Besides doing all this other stuff, I'd go out there and ride that tractor around, it must have been pretty near ten miles around there, in the cold weather, and there's no cab on it. Anyhow, we'd go out there with the truck and haul the hay out there, and then we had to take it off the road back to the boxes. The Forestry had made boxes out there to feed them in, and so we'd haul this hay out there, and we had to break the bales out. The boxes were a failure, so we had to just scatter the hay around through the woods for the deer. We did that for many years until one day the DNR then, it changed to the DNR, decided they were going to shoot the deer, and they opened the Park for hunting. They killed [many, many] deer the first year.

**Rieger:** What did you think about that, about opening the Park to hunting at that point?

**Cary:** They had to do something. It was a solution to it. But it's been open ever since, and I'm against it. I think they should have opened it up first season and then shut it again, but they didn't. I was going to tell you the story about the rest of the animals, because that was our job. We had these seventy-six elk. In the rutting season, you ought to hear them. It sounds like whistles, you know. The woods would just vibrate with that, those bulls out there. Oh, they had enormous antlers on them and they'd whistle all night long. We got used to it. It was home, just like you hear a car go by once in a while. One day, the Department of Game and Fish gave up to the DNR and the DNR decided that the elk were not native to Itasca Park. They decided to take them out. But they made a mistake. The bulls were all in the velvet in their horns, and that's when they decided to put them in cow cages on trucks. The wild animals, when they put them in those, they just tore themselves. They would climb up with their feet on the slats and stuff. The horns would break off and they'd bleed. They lost about a third of them. What did they do? They hauled them up to the Indian Reservation on Red Lake and dumped them off. You know what happened to the elk. The bison, or the buffalo, they went the same way. I don't think there's any up there anymore. And the bears, they went the same way, so the time of the animals were gone.

Now I got to tell you the funny part of the story. Over the TRA camp, the Superintendent, we called him Superintendent, he was the caretaker over there, we called him the Superintendent, he had to have a title, bought a brand new Chevrolet car. [Erik Wallin was the superintendent, but the new Chevrolet belonged to Tucker] It just was shiny and nice and bright and everything, and he was so proud of it. He drove it out in front of his office and he parked it. We had a bull moose called Felix, and Felix had a rack on him just like you see on pictures, calendar pictures. It had a spread of probably three-four-five feet. It was enormous. I would say he'd stand six feet high. He was old but he was there yet, and he was getting ugly. He was hanging around the TRA camp because they were feeding him pancakes and stuff and that's where he ate and that's where he hung out. The Superintendent over there, he went and drove this bright, shiny new car up there and parked it in front of his office, and Felix was going to guard his territory. When he came up, he looked at this shiny car and he saw his image in it. So he backed off and he charged it with those great big antlers. He just bashed the whole back end of that brand new Chevrolet [laughs]. Well, that fixed it. Felix had to go, but they didn't want to kill him and they didn't want to haul him off because they had bad luck with the elk. They thought they'd fence him off around a swamp or something. They went south of Douglas Lodge into one of the swamps down there. If you drive

down the road going to the south entrance, you'll go right by where the pasture was. Maybe the fence is there yet. I haven't been there for quite a while. We put Felix in there. Felix got lonesome and he got just like the old bison. He got mad and mean and he'd charge the fence with those antlers. It was a continuous maintenance job. We didn't have time. We had other things to do. Had to keep the roofs fixed in Douglas Lodge, we had to furnish the ice for Douglas Lodge, we had to furnish the electricity for Douglas Lodge, we had to take care of the sewer for Douglas Lodge. I pretty near lost my life fixing the sewer down there.

We had to dig down, right at the corner of the hotel there, Douglas Lodge Hotel, right at the corner of the porch, the sewer comes out of the thing there and it has a triple thing there, distribution point, and that broke. We dug a hole. I would say the top of the hole was twenty-five feet across, and we had to go down I would say probably fifteen-sixteen feet deep to get it. I went down to put a collar on there to fasten it together, and when I went down there, the gas off the torch, [made me pass out]. Fortunately, one of the employees, Bill Hemmerich, who used to live off up on the north end of the street up here, he was an employee. Bill came by and he found me out, I was out. I had jammed the torch into the ground, into the sand, and the sand had rolled down over it. It didn't burn me, but I was out. When I woke up, I was staring at the sky and Bill was fanning me and pumping me and slapping my face and everything. That was close. I was all alone down there. I had the tanks on the truck with the hoses going down there. That was the fun part of it.

We had to keep up all the walks and things like that, repair the old boat. We had to repair the dock, had to repair the cabins, keep the roofs from leaking, fix the plumbing in the cabins, and then in the fall, after the Lodge is all shut down, I, being the clerk and the man in the office, had to go down and take the inventory for all that kitchenware, all those dishes and all that stuff, and all the bedding in the cabins. Oh, brother! When I think about it I get the woollies. They say, "What did you do all winter?" We could hardly get the time to lay in bed. Then they'd always lay off about half the crew in the wintertime to save the budget.

**Mrs. Cary:** Martin Dunn ran Douglas Lodge.

**Cary:** Martin Dunn moved out and he went back to Bemidji. He wasn't there in the wintertime. We had to take care of it. We had to get all the raccoons and stuff that were digging underneath the foundation. What a mess. Anyhow, that was how we kept Itasca Park. And then, there was always down timber falling over the highway. Every time there was a storm, we had to go down and take that old ten ton caterpillar and plow the road out so that they could get through the Park. We went from boundary to boundary. They were different then than they were now. They were gravel. The roads were gravel. They were hauling pulp through there, and I know one time there a pulp truck tipped over right in the middle of the road and dumped all the pulp all over the road. We went down there. Charlie Masoner, I happened to think of his name. Charlie Masoner [from Bagley] went down there, one of the game wardens, and he went and helped the logger load that load [of] pulp, and he had a heart attack pitching that cord wood back up on the thing. Had a heart attack. Poor old Charlie. He didn't die from it, but it knocked him out. He lost his job over it. He couldn't operate anymore. Anyhow, so it goes.

While we were there, there used to be a place called Peace Pipe Springs. It was down over Preachers Grove, and I think if you go down over Preachers Grove, you'll still find some of the old

steps that went down to Peace Pipe Springs. My wife and I used to ski down that hill in the wintertime, it was steep. Anyhow, Peace Pipe Springs was a tourist attraction and they had a tin cup, unsanitary, of course, but it was there. It was a pipe sticking out of the ground and we fixed flat cement blocks around it to make a place for the people so they could get near the springs, and that thing ran all year round. It was about a two and a half inch pipe. One summer, we had a heavy thunderstorm. Oh, the thunder clapped loud! The plumber, I don't remember his name, in Bemidji said, "You're going to have trouble with your Peace Pipe Spring, because in the back, underground, there is a place that's washed out, and it's a vast cavern in there. The water from that is what's coming through the spring." He said, "One of these days, either a small earthquake or a heavy truck or something, that will collapse and you'll lose your springs." Sure enough, that summer there was that thunderstorm and all those big trees around there vibrated with the thunder and everything and Peace Pipe Springs collapsed. It collapsed and it started to run muddy. It ran muddy for a while and first thing you know, it quit. I wanted to drive a pipe back in there because I knew that if I'd drive a pipe back in there I'd get back into open country again, but the state wouldn't allow it.

**Rieger:** Did they give you a reason?

**Cary:** No money. Always out of money. Like I say, they laid us off two months in the wintertime without pay, but we had to stay there or we'd lose our job. They had us. We never went to town or anything. We ordered our groceries out of Park Rapids that had a stage here, and we'd order on credit, and we'd run on grocery credit for two months [until] we could start getting a pay check again. Old Itasca Park was always broke. They only income we had was off the hay lands, off the timber we sold, and stuff like that. The timber couldn't be cut near the road. It had to be cut in the back. That was our source of revenue. There was no concessions. Douglas Lodge was supposed to pay a certain amount of concessions, but it was pretty thin. I don't know why. Then they built Forest Inn down to Douglas Lodge, up on the side hill. [chuckles] You've been in it?

**Rieger:** Yes, although it's changed now. [Forest Inn was built down by Douglas Lodge, up on the side hill.]

**Cary:** The CCCs had a CC boy wire it, and when they went to turn the wire [current] on, it blew the fuse. It wouldn't hold electricity. Our electrician, he wasn't feeling too well, and he was busy running the engines up there, he couldn't go down there, so what happened? The clerk had to go down there, this kid. They had driven spikes through the wall and right through the wires and I had to re-wire the thing, about two thirds of the building, around these spikes in order to get electricity. It's still that way. I hid it pretty well behind rafters, behind logs, and plates and fixtures. It's still that way. I was up there about two-three years ago and I looked around, and it's still there [laughs]. Forest Inn was part of the concessionaires revenue. We didn't get any of that. All we got was the maintenance. The fireplace would get full of ashes and half burned logs. Guess what? The Park crew would go down with a pickup and go up there and pick up the ashes and stuff like that out of there, pick up the rubbish and garbage. Around a place like Douglas Lodge, there was tons of it. They finally bought us a new truck, a new Chevrolet long-wheel base truck, and Bill Hemmerich, this fellow that found me down there, he was down there picking up the garbage in the fall and

that's how he found me. He was down there with the garbage truck. That was part of the job was to pick the garbage up and haul it out and burn it, destroy it, because we had a dump.

In the middle of the wintertime, the power lines that we had were put up by people who, I guess they must have stayed in Florida all winter, because the power poles instead of being up there at eighteen feet high like they should've been, they were only about ten-twelve feet high through the woods. The trees would fall on them. Olin Cone, the electrician, would go down there and he'd have to scoop the snow away from those high tension wires while the current was going through there. He'd scoop the snow away from those, and why that man never was killed, I will never know! I went down with him one time. It scared me to watch him. There was twenty-three hundred volts going through those wires, and he'd be there with a metal scoop scooping the snow away from those wires. Then there's be a tree or two away from him and he'd grab the tree and cut it off so he could lift the tree off the wires. Why that man never got electricity or got killed from it, I will never know. Poor old Olin, he finally, I hate to say it, cut it off a minute. [Tape off]

On Sundays, the traffic would come into Itasca Park. There was no gates. It was all free. They could come and they could go where they wished in the Park and do about what they wanted, except one thing. They couldn't shoot the animals and they couldn't speed. We had to patrol Highway 71. That took one or two men off of our crew to go around. You won't believe it, but we patrolled in our own cars, because the state couldn't furnish the gasoline. We furnished our own gasoline and patrolled, and they gave us this cheap, little old dime store star to wear. They did give us papers that we were deputy patrol officers, and we had the power of arrest. When you arrested people, then you had to take them about three miles north to a justice of the peace, on your own. That was how the law got enforced in Itasca Park.

We were also deputized by the Game and Fish Department to be deputy wardens. I still got part of my equipment in the dresser drawer in here of being deputy warden. You had to go out in your own car, furnish your own gas. The poaching would happen generally at night. They used lights. This one-way thing out there was potential for poachers. They'd go out there, lots of deer out there, lots of animals out there, and so we had to patrol that thing at night in our own cars. Sometimes two-three o'clock in the morning we'd be out there driving around through the woods. I think of it, it makes me sick [chuckles]! If you arrested someone, you had to take his gun away from him. You have to face up to a gun. He's got a deer rifle in his hand. It got to the point where it got to be a joke. Several poachers we had would call us up at about six o'clock in the night and said, "Well, you can look for me. I'm going to be over there tonight." Then we'd go out on patrol. They knew enough to get us to go someplace and they'd go someplace else. It was a trick to get us out of the way. The next morning we'd find a pile of deer guts and a hide laying in the road, or sometimes a note, "Ha, ha, ha. Where were you?" That was what we'd get. Here we'd been out there in our own cars on our own time. We were only paid from eight o'clock in the morning until five at night. That's all the time they allowed us on the books. She [Mrs. Cary] and I would get up at four o'clock in the morning and we'd work until eleven o'clock at night, on our own. That was how we run the Park. I went to work for them I think it was in 1932, got married in '35, and I left the Park in 1942, wasn't it, '43?

**Mrs. Cary:** No, two. You went in the Navy in '42.

**Cary:** Oh, that's right. I went in the Navy in '42. After a while, the Park...[Tape off-Politics, the union, and a "communist" Superintendent, etc.] His son now is in the bank, but old Wally Sr. would go out with his boys and they'd wade in these cold rivers all night and seine minnows. They'd bring them in in the morning about six o'clock, five o'clock in the morning, and dump about four hundred dozen of them into our tank. They'd been up all night with no food, no nothing. They were scantily clothed, you have to remember, Depression was all over the place, and they had an old truck with a stop-tank mounted on the back, it was a horrible old thing. They'd been up all night with nothing to eat. Alma would make breakfast for them and then they'd go out in our front lawn and get under the trees and go to sleep. They were just bushed, all in. Old Wally, he got to be good construction...

**Mrs. Cary:** Oh, no. That was Clide.

**Cary:** Clide. Yes.

**Mrs. Cary:** He was the kid.

**Cary:** That was the boy, yes. What was the old man's name? I can't remember his name.

**Mrs. Cary:** Their mother had died.

**Cary:** Yes. There was no mother. That was pathetic. But boy, those kids and that old man worked hard. I used to feel so sorry for them. Their clothes, they'd come with their overalls rolled up and their legs were blue from being cold all night in that cold water. How they survived it, I don't know.

[Note: The Cary's described the Johnson's as very hard working, nice, and successful people, whose hard work eventually got them (Clide?) into the contracting business and now, into the bank.)

**Rieger:** How much did they get for the minnows, do you remember?

**Cary:** We made a nice profit on them.

**Mrs. Cary:** Twenty-five cents a dozen.

**Cary:** We sold them [minnows] for twenty-five cents a dozen but we made a profit. I think we paid them fifteen cents a dozen or something like that. We did that for years. That wasn't just one summer. That was eight-ten summers. We had a spray nozzle in this other tank and the pump would stop. We'd burn out motors and stuff, normal things would happen, or the sewer would plug or something like that, I had to shut the water off. Then the minnows would die so I had to string a hose down to the lake and had a fire pump from the Forestry pumping on a fire nozzle into the minnow tank to keep the minnows alive. It was just something all the time. It was just a

continuous something. Telephone line had trees over it, and people trying to call long distance or somebody's sick or something is wrong.

**Mrs. Cary:** Don't you think things were that way all over in those times? I think they were.

**Rieger:** I imagine they were, but it just seems like you had an awful lot of work put on you.

**Mrs. Cary:** Well, all the people had to work real hard.

**Cary:** We worked hard.

**Rieger:** We take things for granted now days, people of my generation.

**Cary:** I got a hundred and five dollars a month, a hundred and five dollars a month!

**Mrs. Cary:** Then he got a raise to a hundred and thirty.

**Cary:** And then I got a hundred and thirty. Right toward the end. It didn't last very long.

**Rieger:** [To Mrs. Cary] Were you paid anything?

**Cary:** She was paid.

**Mrs. Cary:** Yes. I got eighty.

**Cary:** She got eighty. She went to work on the fifteenth of May, wasn't it?

**Mrs. Cary:** Something like that.

**Cary:** About the fifteenth of May and she worked up until the fifteenth of September. We did have one thing going for us. This is the bright one.

**Mrs. Cary:** This shouldn't be recorded though.

**Cary:** Why not?

**Mrs. Cary:** You'll get Lathrop in trouble.

**Cary:** No, Lathrop is dead. Lathrop was a prize boss. Boy, I loved the man. He bawled me out once, but he apologized for it afterwards. We were gone one night. Her nephew was graduating from high school and we just went down to the graduation, and he happened to come and we were supposed to have a cabin ready for him. The cabin was ready, but we had the key, of course, we had to lock everything up. There he sat out in the car waiting for us and he got perturbed. I don't

blame him much. He asked me what I was doing and all this stuff, and finally he apologized later. He said, "Yes, extenuating circumstances."

**Mrs. Cary:** He didn't tell us he was coming.

**Cary:** Anyhow, we were putting down twelve to sixteen hours a day labor, which we were entitled to, on our work sheet. Everyday had a work sheet. Lathrop came up one time, Harold, we called him, Lathrop. He looked at the work sheet, we had it on the clipboard. "Boy," he said. "Kid, you can't do this. The labor people are going to kill us. That's against the law! You can't work sixteen-eighteen hours a day. That's against the law." I said, "I am going to get credit for the work or I'm going to quit this job." He said, "You can't quit this job. Good night shirt, man! You've got to stay here." So I said, "Well, you got to let us put it down then." He said, "No, we can't." And we got into a little hassle over it.

[Discussion on how Lathrop recognized the Cary's for their extreme dedication and their extra hours throughout the year. Mr. Cary described him as a "prince of a guy."]

[After years of long hours, the Cary's finally were able to get a house trailer and travel from September 15 to October 15.]

**Cary:** We saw the whole United States. We saw Gettysburg, we saw Los Angeles, we saw Washington, Seattle, we saw Florida, we saw New York City, we saw Boston, we saw Winnipeg. We saw the whole world.

**Mrs. Cary:** Our world, the United States.

**Cary:** Our world, yes. We couldn't get out of the country.

**Mrs. Cary:** We've traveled ever since.

**Cary:** We had this trailer house and finally I got a little better rig, and we got travelitis pretty bad [laughs].

**Mrs. Cary:** We had a motor home, and then we got the bigger trailer now.

**Cary:** We bought a motor home.

**Rieger:** If I could, I'd like to go back to a couple of things that I wanted to ask but I didn't want to interrupt because you were going so good.

**Cary:** Fire it up, fire it up. What do you want to know?

**Rieger:** When you were in the CCC that first time, for Grover Conzet. What year was that?

**Cary:** Just hold on. I've got to think back...'30. I had that '30 Chevrolet. I had that '30 Coupe. It was 1930. I was only up there one winter, one month. I went up there when the Forestry shut down, which was when fire season was over with.

**Mrs. Cary:** They called you LEMs or something.

**Cary:** LEM, Local Experienced Man they called it. Well, I was experienced. We were putting out fires right and left.

**Mrs. Cary:** He got a little more money.

**Rieger:** Yes. My grandpa was an LEM.

**Cary:** He was? Although I slept out with the rest of the fellows. Barracks ten. Oh, and then I worked in the Forestry Office when I wasn't out in the field supervising the brush cutting.

**Mrs. Cary:** He played in a band at that time. He's a musician.

**Rieger:** Oh, really. What do you play?

**Mrs. Cary:** He plays saxophone mostly but he plays everything. Is that off?

**Rieger:** It's on, but that's O.K. That's interesting.

**Cary:** You won't believe this. I got two cellos, I got a tiple, I don't think you ever saw one, I got a bass file, I got a drum set.

**Mrs. Cary:** Accordion.

**Cary:** I got an accordion.

**Mrs. Cary:** A trumpet.

**Cary:** A trumpet, two saxophones, I got two saxophones, two or three violins, I lost count.

**Mrs. Cary:** I think there's three.

**Cary:** Three. Three violins, and I used to have to play most of them.

**Mrs. Cary:** And he sings. He has a lovely voice.

**Rieger:** You're a Renaissance Man!

**Cary:** We play the second Wednesday in the nursing home here, Inherite, and the last Friday in Menahga. Sometimes we play in Wadena nursing homes. So I keep in practice.

**Rieger:** [To Mrs. Cary] Do you play?

**Mrs. Cary:** No. I criticize him [I am the critic]. We have a friend who plays in the same little group, that is from Nashville.

**Cary:** He played over the national hook up. He's a guitar player above the average. That man is real good. But he's out here in a little shack out here...

**[End side two, tape 1]**

**[Begin side one, tape 2]**

**Cary:**...Frank Pugh was a Forester at that time. He's dead, too.

**Mrs. Cary:** At Itasca Park.

**Cary:** At Itasca Park. He was the Forester. Frank Pugh.

**Rieger:** I've heard only good things about Frank Pugh. What can you say about him?

**Cary:** Oh, he was a nice fellow. He smoked granger. In the morning, the mail came to the Headquarters and then he turned around and went back. He didn't go any farther north because Bagley took care of the mail from the north. He [Pugh] wanted a Park Rapids address, so he came down from the Forestry and picked up his mail every morning. Here comes that little red Forestry truck out here. He always had a new story. Always had a new story. I can see him packing that old, the bowl was pretty near as big as that cup, with that old granger that came in the paper bag. He'd pack that thing and light that thing up and it'd just get blue in there. But he always had a good story to tell.

**Mrs. Cary:** He had three or four daughters, didn't they, he and Mrs. Pugh?

**Cary:** Yes.

**Mrs. Cary:** He was always good to us.

**Cary:** Oh, they were wonderful.

**Mrs. Cary:** Yes, they were nice people.

**Cary:** He never complained when the lights would go out. The thing would stop, you know,

mechanical. He'd never say a word, never call up or anything.

**Mrs. Cary:** I wonder what happened to them? I never heard boo.

**Cary:** I remember one time he told us, "For Heaven's sake, don't let that plant go down. My wife's in washing. She'll chew me out!"

**Mrs. Cary:** They were nice people.

**Cary:** He was a fine man. I loved the man, I really did. Kind of feel bad that they're gone.

**Rieger:** I read a paper his grandson wrote about him, and I've talked to people, Bert Pfeifer and some of the other ones. The love that he had for the trees.

**Cary:** Oh, yes. When I got to be Superintendent in the Park, he knew I was having a bad time. He'd come down and help me. I had to put aside this other stuff that I was doing all the time, dump it on to somebody else. Sometimes they didn't really hardly know what they were doing, because I'd been doing it all the time. He'd come down and help me with my paperwork and stuff like that. Then, of course, I had that [financial deal, too, feeding those Indians. Every day we had to send our truck to Bemidji to Nash Finch and Company to get it loaded with groceries for those Indians. How many Indians were there? Is this on?

**Rieger:** Yes. Do you want...

**Cary:** Oh, that's alright. You can cut it off if you want to. But the Indians were in the Pageant and Chief Big Bear was there.

**Mrs. Cary:** Nice fellow.

**Cary:** He was a graduate of Carlyle College. He wasn't a "dumb Indian." His writing was shaded writing [calligraphy]. You know what that is, how shaded writing is?

**Mrs. Cary:** Oh, he had beautiful handwriting

**Rieger:** Yes.

**Cary:** He wrote with shaded writing and he had two wives and he lived in a birch bark wickiup, what they call a wickiup. It wasn't a tee pee. It was a round wickiup, hogan, or whatever you want to call it. He drove a whipper, which is Overland, with the fenders wired on. But he was a Carlyle graduate. You talk to him, just as slick as a whistle. He used big words and language and everything. He knew the whole works.

**Mrs. Cary:** Very polished.

**Cary:** He was the Chief. If it wasn't for him, we never could've controlled those Indians, because we had horses for the conestoga wagons, we had to have horses for that. Had horses for the horseback, and then we had settlers and stuff like that and he had to take care of all that. He did a good job. He had to have the storage facilities away from the Pageant grounds so the public couldn't see it. The Pageant grounds, there was a vast place down there near the Headwaters that had been flattened out. I don't know if it's there. I think it's full of trees now. It was flattened out for people to sit on. No chairs. They had to sit on the ground.

**Mrs. Cary:** Yes, everyone sat on the ground.

**Cary:** He [Chief Big Bear] was in charge of the Indians and he had to know the program. Harold Searles was the director from the University of Minnesota.

**Mrs. Cary:** And Ade, Adelaide.

**Cary:** Ade, Adelaide her name was. We called her Ade. [as his assistant]

**Mrs. Cary:** And Hal Bill. [their son]

**Cary:** [chuckles] And Hal Bill. We called him "Hell" Bill because he was into something all the time.

**Mrs. Cary:** It was Harold Bill, and we called him Hal Bill.

**Cary:** They called him "Hell" Bill [laughs]. They were fine people.

**Mrs. Cary:** Oh, they were great.

**Cary:** You won't believe me, but the Indians did not know how to do a dance.

**Rieger:** I've heard that.

**Cary:** It was up to Chief Big Bear and Searles, Harold, to teach them how to dance.

**Mrs. Cary:** We got so that we could do it better than they did.

**Cary:** We could do it better than they did. One of us would learn it and we'd go out and help them with it. And then they had oxen. They had several yoke of oxen, and they had to be taken care of and herded in and out. These people, many of them were farmers coming in out of the field or their farms, coming in putting on this Sunday program. It was an enormous thing and it was highly successful.

**Rieger:** Yes. [Presents xeroxed copy The Historical Pageants, a souvenir book] I was looking, it must be the first historical pageant, that's a xerox copy. Go ahead and look at it. I understand that you [Mrs. Cary] were actually in the Pageant.

**Mrs. Cary:** Oh, yes.

**Cary:** You rode up on a conestoga wagon, you'll probably see her sitting there.

**Mrs. Cary:** Here's Grover Conzet's name on here.

**Cary:** Grover Conzet, yes.

**Rieger:** You played a pioneer woman?

**Mrs. Cary:** Yes.

**Cary:** Yes. She was up on the conestoga wagon and running when the Indians were going to scalp them and stuff, screaming [laughs].

**Mrs. Cary:** All the ladies that wanted to. Some Sundays they were different than others. Living there, you may as well do it. He had to work.

[Earl Barker, from Bemidji, was the Chairman of the Minnesota Historical Association and helped with putting on the pageant.]

**Cary:** Is that...

**Mrs. Cary:** This is the Indians.

**Cary:** That's the wickiup he lived in. [referring to a picture taken during the pageant.]

**Mrs. Cary:** Careful.

**Cary:** This is the wickiup. That's what I was telling you about.

**Mrs. Cary:** Elon has eye problems.

**Cary:** I can't see too good.

**Mrs. Cary:** He had surgery in his eyes in October, and he's got four pair of glasses. He can see over there but he can't see here.

**Cary:** This looks like him sitting there. Chief Big Bear. He wasn't tall like that. He was a short man, he was a very short man. I used to know the names of these people, but I forgot them.

**Mrs. Cary:** Was that George Big Bear? Was that his son that we met?

**Cary:** That was the son that I buried. I thought one time after I got all done out of the Navy, twenty-three years later, that I wanted to be a mortician.

**Mrs. Cary:** He went to University of Minnesota.

**Cary:** The guy that was the mortician down here was about seventy-some years old. I thought, "Here's an opportunity." So I went and learned the mortuary business. I went to University of Minnesota to get some more credits. [Discussion of George Big Bear's murder.]

[Tape off-Prostitution]

**Cary:** That was at Fond du Lac when we went over there [to present the pageant]. Fortunately, we were just newlyweds. We went over to Fond du Lac, and they had this fort there. It had a tower where the guns were supposed to be, and up in these towers there were supposed to have beds in there, because nobody went up in there. Everybody was broke. We were broke. We went over there on shoe string. We had an old 1932 Chevrolet at that time and I hauled all the PA.

**Mrs. Cary:** Sounds old. It was only in '32 or three. That's a new car.

**Cary:** Yes. It was pretty new. It looked new. Anyhow, we went over there, she and I did. We went with Olin Cone, he was the electrician. He had to run the PA system. They said, "You can sleep up in the tower." I'd been up there and I saw all kinds of blankets and stuff up there and beds and stuff. Somebody had gone up there and taken all those cots except one. One single cot. And all the blankets. I had to take care of, again, the traffic and the finances, over at Fond du Lac and Whitewater. I had to take care of Whitewater, too. I was working way up into the wee small hours and finally we went to bed, and no bed! Just a single one. Either one of us had to sleep on the floor or we both had to sleep on this single bed. We was just newlyweds, so we decided to sleep double.

**Mrs. Cary:** We was so tired, it didn't matter!

**Cary:** We were so tired, we just passed out. It didn't make any difference.

**Rieger:** You traveled to every single one of the Pageants?

**Cary:** I had to take care of the tickets and the finances. [We went to Duluth and Whitewater State Park]

**Rieger:** I have copies of what was the Centennial paper, I guess, when they interviewed you about driving back with fifty thousand or some un-Godly amount of money in your car.

**Cary:** Yes. Underneath the front seat.

**Mrs. Cary:** When it was in Duluth, when the Pageant was in Duluth, he had a police escort.

**Cary:** We had police escort. Every time my car went out there was about two cops on motorcycles following me. They figured out I had money in there. [Discussion of taking the money to the bank and needing to watch and count carefully.] I was responsible for the numbers. Every ticket had a number on it and every one had to be accounted for. There was rolls and rolls and rolls of them. That's part of the game.

**Rieger:** How about the development of the Headwaters while you were at the Park?

**Cary:** What about it?

**Rieger:** Can you describe any of the developments of the Headwaters? It changed an awful lot.

**Cary:** I could tell you one story. When I was Superintendent, [in 1941] I can tell that. The Headwaters has got stones in there and people come up and they take those stones for souvenirs, and they'd take them home, "Headwaters of the Mississippi." Monday morning, I'd generally go down there. I had to check the water gage because we controlled Lake Itasca. We controlled the water level, and I had a gage in there. I had to watch the gauge all the time, wouldn't let it get down over an inch or two. I'd go down and look at the gauge and I'd go out and look at the Headwaters, and there wasn't any stones left. I'd have Bill Hemmerich, [an employee] this fellow she's talking about, get the truck out, go up to the gravel pit, load up. The people had screened out stones about that big around, in a screen, and they had them in a pile. I says, "Scoop up some stones and dump them in the Headwaters again." So he'd go down there and shovel them back in the Headwaters. By the next Monday they were gone again.

**Mrs. Cary:** I imagine Headwaters is quite wide there right now after all the rain.

**Rieger:** Yes. At one point this summer it was, I think they said, a foot under water, the rocks that you walk across.

**Cary:** Yes. We got a picture of it here someplace. Have you got that picture out here?

**Mrs. Cary:** Yes.

**Cary:** Let me see it. You know, Depression was on, but the weather went bad, too. That's when North Dakota pretty near blew away and the farmers were moving out and everything, and the lakes were going down. We were watching the water level in Lake Itasca just like a hawk, because we were scared to death. Let me see [looks at photograph]. This was the Headwaters.

**Rieger:** Was this before or after the CCC did work on it?

**Cary:** That was before it was worked on. It got down to just a trickle for awhile. A canoe outfit from someplace come up there and they didn't even have water enough to float the canoes.

**Mrs. Cary:** We lived on Highway 71, or near Highway 71, down in New Orleans during the War [World War II]. He was stationed there down at the Navy base. We lived at this end and we lived at that end.

**Cary:** There was a thing in the street about that big and that big around, "Official end of Highway 71."

**Mrs. Cary:** We should've taken some pictures of that. We didn't have a good camera when we were there. Everything was black and white.

**Cary:** We didn't have a good camera. Furthermore, you couldn't buy film. War time. Everything was restricted.

**Mrs. Cary:** But that was kind of interesting.

**Cary:** Gasoline was a big problem, too. You got those lousy A-stamps.

**Rieger:** And rubber, rubber tires.

[Discussion of problems while on the road in Arkansas, after the park days]

**Rieger:** One thing I was going to ask, again, as we were going along, the transfer of Parks from Forestry to the Park Division. Can you describe that, the repercussions of that maybe?

**Cary:** Well, it was all done in St. Paul. We hardly knew when we went from one to the other. All we did, we got a telegram to say that "You have been transferred from the Division of Forestry to the Division of State Parks. Harold W. Lathrop is your director. Number Ten state office building." It was a different address, a different director, and that's all we knew. We didn't know whether we were going to get paid, cut, raised, or anything else.

**Mrs. Cary:** Things went normal, the same as before.

**Cary:** We just went along on a normal day. Another thing was that times were tough. Oh, it was tough as it could be! You'd buy three gallons of gas to go to town, it was down to that, and hope you could get home on it. It was a bit ragged. I don't want to see that again.

**Rieger:** But basically, your duties didn't change?

**Cary:** Duties all the same, just went right on. We didn't see Harold Lathrop for about six weeks after that.

**Mrs. Cary:** What is it now? Is it the DAR, the DNR?

**Rieger:** DNR.

**Mrs. Cary:** When did they change from State Parks to DNR?

**Rieger:** There's a Parks Division in the DNR.

**Cary:** Oh, there is. We haven't kept track of it.

**Rieger:** That's as far as I know. I'm just here for the summer.

**Mrs. Cary:** As far as being short of money, they're always short of money. I don't know if other people think the same way that we do, but that Park belongs to the public. Along with a lot of other people, we don't think they ought to charge to go into "our" Park.

**Cary:** No. I don't think so either. I'm against that. We won't go in. I haven't been up to Itasca Park in three years.

**Mrs. Cary:** Well, since we went up with Freedens.

**Cary:** Oh, yes. We sang at Ozawindib one time. I played the saxophone for them.

**Mrs. Cary:** And Sunday. He went out and helped with Sunday services with a pastor friend of ours.

**Cary:** There's two things [that we dislike], the slaughter of the deer, when they let all the hunters go in there and kill all those deer that we had been feeding, and the charge to get into our Park [emphasizes "our"]. We own it just like you do.

**Mrs. Cary:** I don't think that's right. They have so many people working there now that they didn't have. It was kind of nice to go there for a Sunday picnic. Now you have to pay, how much is it?

**Cary:** Used to be some of those farmers had five-six kids and they'd come in on Sunday. It was nice. They'd have a picnic out there and everything like that. We'd go and visit with them and everything like that. Now, I suppose it's different, I don't know, because I never go up there anymore.

**Mrs. Cary:** We haven't been up there since we went up with Helen and \_\_\_\_.

**Cary:** Incidentally, Lathrop helped me to get a commission in the Navy. I got a [J.G. Lieutenant Commission] when I went into the Navy right off the bat, but then I had five hundred hours flying the airplane, was sitting down on the lake. I had been hauling hay to help the deer. I barnstormed on Sundays. Anyhow, after the War was over, Lathrop called me up. He said, "I want you to go down and take Douglas Lodge. I want you to go down there and be overall manager of the whole thing." I knew what Douglas Lodge was. There was the buildings out there, and there was Forest Inn, and then there was twelve cabins out there, and then they had a restaurant going, a golf course to manage, they had a boat out on the lake. It was more work, in other words, just day and night.

**Mrs. Cary:** No way [laughs].

**Cary:** I said to Harold, "What kind of salary are you going to offer for that, because I'm going to have my nose on the grindstone and I know it." "Well," he said, "I'll tell you. We'll pay you two hundred and seventy-five dollars a month."

**Mrs. Cary:** That was back in, what year?

**Cary:** It was '46, I think. I says, "Harold, two hundred and some? I'm making over twelve hundred dollars a month now." I was a pilot and I got flight pay and everything else. I says, "I'm making twelve hundred dollars a month now. Why should I take a two hundred and seventy-five dollar a month job and work my butt off?" I knew what it was. I knew what was going to happen. "Well," he says, "That's all we can pay." I said, "Harold, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to sign over in the Navy. I'm making good money here." And I did. I stayed for twenty-three [years] total. That's how it went. That separated me from the Park system.

**Rieger:** I'm just going to keep back-tracking. I'm sorry I'm not going in order. Your contact with the CCC, the WPA through the Transient Relief, you said that you had a lot of paperwork and things that went through Headquarters. Can you expand on that a bit?

**Cary:** Right. I had to type most of it. We didn't have any copy machines, we had to run carbons on everything.

**Mrs. Cary:** What was it about?

**Cary:** What was it about?

**Rieger:** Yes. What types of things did you get through there?

**Cary:** They couldn't cut anything down, any tree or anything else, unless we approved it. So it had to be approved by the Superintendent. Paperwork. Or if they wanted some of our lumber, we always had lumber, and they had to have lumber, so they'd back the truck up. I had to be out there and board by board pass it out, put it all down, and then report to St. Paul that we had given Camp SP-1 so many board feet of lumber, or probably be five boxes of dynamite. All that stuff. What

else? They were borrowing machinery. Every once in a while they'd have to have a pump or something. We had pumps and stuff left over from the Forestry, and they'd want to pump out something or this that and the other thing. Every unit had a book with it, and every hour, and every gallon of gas, and every quart of oil, and every piece of equipment went on, was down on the book. They had to check it out. When they had to check it out, it went into that office and it had to be reported to St. Paul. Well, that just kept these little old fingers going. With SP-1, and camp 58, camp 57, TRA camp, there was four camps...

**Mrs. Cary:** Douglas Lodge and the campgrounds.

**Cary:** Douglas Lodge and the campgrounds and all that stuff. I tell you, it was something.

**Mrs. Cary:** I used to go down and help him posting in the books in the office.

**Cary:** Eleven-twelve o'clock at night. That's how we got all this other stuff done. Hit the pile about midnight, get up again six o'clock in the morning, get right back out there. No fooling [laughs]!

**Rieger:** Do you think that they contributed a valuable service to the Park?

**Mrs. Cary:** Oh, yes.

**Cary:** I'll tell you, we had a thought within our hearts. This is a God-send. This Park is a God-send. It's the public's Park. Let's keep it going, let's keep it clean, let's save the timber, let's keep the fires down, let's preserve the thing to the best of our ability. It just worked the pants off us but it was a desire in our heart to keep that thing going.

**Mrs. Cary:** We made friends that we still have.

**Cary:** We still got the friends.

**Mrs. Cary:** They'd come back every summer while we were there. When we were transferred up to Gooseberry Falls State Park, which is a nice park right on Lake Superior, the people came up there.

**Cary:** Came up there.

**Mrs. Cary:** They didn't come here anymore, they come up there. We did a good job of PRing.

**Cary:** It was so bad, I was a flight instructor on squadron one in Olath, Kansas, full fledged Navy. I was working everyday, I was flying everyday, students that is. I got a telegram from the Superintendent of Itasca Park. "Will you come up here and supervise the draining of the campgrounds? We can't find the drains."

**Mrs. Cary:** Now, he didn't put them in.

**Cary:** I didn't put them in. I had to find them. And I found them. I traced the pipes and found them so that I could drain it in the wintertime. About a year later, I got leave from the Navy and I went up to Itasca Park. That would be about... '44, and I went down to Bear Paw Point, down there, in the fall. Every showerhead was froze up and busted. The faucets in the bathrooms were all exploded. I didn't get to go in the refectory because it was locked up. I didn't want to go into Headquarters. I was afraid they'd get me! "What do I do with this? What do I do with that?" Questions, questions. I wasn't going to answer any questions. I just drove in there. Here I found out the whole thing, the campgrounds, was all froze up and busted from frost. I was just on a ten day leave, and I went back, I felt pretty bad about that because we worked so hard. The state had issued the most modern controllers. They had three showers in the women, there was four toilets and three showers, and there was four showers and three toilets in the men, it was just the opposite. Each one of the showerheads was the most modern. You see them yet on public showers. And yet, there they were, all busted to pieces, pieces laying on the floor. The toilet stools hadn't been drained and the vitreous was all busted and everything. I had put a thousand gallon hot water heater in the boiler room, we had a boiler room. This I had done with my hands because nobody else would do it.

**Mrs. Cary:** The only way to get it done.

**Cary:** I had a boiler about that high and about that big around, and I had a coal bin that fired coal in there so I could get them hot water. That whole thing was froze up and busted. The tank was exploded. They hadn't even drained it yet. I had put a drain in it and put it outside where the faucet was. They hadn't had sense enough to go and just turn the valve and let the water out. It was busted! That beautiful boiler sit there, gone.

**Mrs. Cary:** They must have had to replace all of that.

**Cary:** All that stuff had to go be replaced.

**Mrs. Cary:** I understand up here at, on the way to Bemidji?

**Cary:** Val Chatel.

**Mrs. Cary:** Val Chatel, the same thing has happened there.

**Cary:** Same thing's happened. Nobody took care of it.

**Mrs. Cary:** When they quit using it and all. We have a nephew who was a gourmet cook up there for a while. They had everything there and everything is shot.

**Cary:** Fox [Reinard Erickson] and Bill [Hemmerich] and Eddie, Eddie Halberg was there...

**Mrs. Cary:** They've all died.

**Cary:** They've all died, but they were there yet, and they took care of the Ozawindib cabin and the toilets on the upper picnic grounds. That's all they did because they weren't ordered to go down and take care of it. Now there's a water tank down there, too, they had to pump. They knew enough to take care of that. They had to have orders to do things. They were just everyday employees. They'd come into the office and stand around. That's where I fell down. I'd sit in the desk, "Ed, you go out and you fix the buffalo pen. I see the bull has broke that post over here. You've got to put that post back. Cone, you go down there, there's a telephone wire hanging down." That didn't go over worth a cent. I could see resentment on their faces. I'd worked with them. That's no good. I asked Lathrop, I says, "You get me out of here. I can't stand this." And then politics. [Discussion of the effect of the labor union on employees. It used to be just like a big family. We were trying to keep the Park going, and it went smooth. Boy, I'm telling you, we was just like a family. The minute the labor union got in there it just went all to\_\_\_. That's too bad.

**Rieger:** How many people were on the Park crew at that time?

**Cary:** Well, it varied. Let's see, [Verbal listing of the following 15 people:

Louis Engstrom  
Eddie Halberg  
Clara Traun  
Emma Halberg  
Reinard (Fox) Erickson  
Clarence Norby  
Olin Cone  
Bill Hemmerick  
Elaine Reid (on the telephone)  
Martin Bakke  
Della Erickson  
Charley Veit  
Elon Cary  
Alma Cary  
Izetta Hemerick  
Felix Esping  
Bill Shanley

**Cary:** [Clarence Norby was] the mechanic. You had to tell him something or you were going to have to take care of the trucks and stuff. [laughs] He was a funny guy. Life was a joke to him.

**Mrs. Cary:** That helped.

**Cary:** That helped, because it was kind of dreary and too much work. So old Clarence would be in there and he'd be working on there and he'd wipe his hands off. Tools, he furnished his own. He'd walk out the door. We had a three car stall garage plus a carpenter shop, it was quite a layout, alongside the light plant. Old Clarence, I can see him yet, and that happened sixty years ago. He'd get up, wipe his hands like this. [imitates] He'd open the door and he'd stand outside and he'd put his hand in his pocket and he'd hitch up his pants. And he'd say, "Well, we didn't do so good today. We're going to give her hell tomorrow" [laughs]. He'd say that everyday. He'd walk out of the door, hitch up his pants, "Give her hell tomorrow" [laughs]. Everything he said, it was funny.

**Mrs. Cary:** You need a person like that.

**Cary:** He kind of kept things agreeable, you know. Eddie, he had two kids, and he doted on those two kids, Doris and I forgot the other one. The last thing I did, we were leaving, they lived right next door to us up there. They had fixed up a nice place for them to live in, finally. They were living hand to mouth like we were. He was driving back and forth up to his father's farm. Doris was, how old, three years?

**Mrs. Cary:** Something like that.

**Cary:** [imitates voice] "Doris!" He had a Norwegian brogue. "Doris," he says, "give Cary a big kiss!" And so Doris come up and give...

**[End side one, tape 2]**

**[Begin side two, tape 2]**

**Cary:**...and spending too much time out in the woods cutting wood. They were trying to cut down our workload if they could, bless their heart. This was Lathrop again. He was a good man. [Deleted information about Lathrop, his wife, and their daughter, Gloria staying at the park in the summers]

**Cary:** What was I going to tell you about...oh, yes. The oil burners. The state decided that we was spending too much time cutting wood out there and we had to split it all, and we were firing it and burning it like mad and everything, and it took quite a little time, the crew's time, to keep this thing going. So the state decided that we were going to burn oil.

**Mrs. Cary:** Eight cents a gallon.

**Cary:** Eight cents a gallon for oil. They went and furnished us with those old fashioned...

**Mrs. Cary:** Coleman.

**Cary:** Coleman oil burners. They were about that high and had a crackle finish on them, pot burners and everything like that. We liked that because it was going to lighten our work a little bit,

because we were working too hard and we knew it. Each house and down at Headquarters had one, two or three of them in the Headquarters because they had so much to heat down there, one in the office, they had them all over. They come in with a whole truckload of them. Eddie Halberg next door, he got one. He went over there and set them up, got some stove pipe from a old used stove, furnished the stove pipe himself, and they put them up there. I was sitting at the desk there and Eddie came and says, "I can't make that thing go. We're just freezing to death up there. I can't make that thing go! It just won't burn. Cary, you go up and see what's the matter with it." So Cary went up the hill, right up the hill to Eddie's place up there. I opened the stove door [laughs]. The middle of the pot is about that big, it had twelve inch pots but there was a burner ring in there. Here, he had chopped up wood about that long...

**Mrs. Cary:** Kindling.

**Cary:** Kindling, and he'd put it down inside there and he'd put some paper in it.

**Mrs. Cary:** The paper burned and not...

**Cary:** The paper would burn and the wood wouldn't burn because everything, you know, and it wouldn't burn and he couldn't make it go. He didn't know enough to turn the oil on.

**Mrs. Cary:** They'd never seen an oil burner. They lived out in the wilderness.

**Cary:** I had to pull the wood all out and I let the oil in there. Oh, boy, they were happy [laughs]! He'd never seen one before.

**Mrs. Cary:** But can you imagine, oil was eight cents a gallon. We have natural gas now. Wadena came up with the gas, and it is really nice. We have paid a dollar and a quarter for oil.

**Cary:** A dollar and a quarter and it burned ten-twelve gallons a day. That kind of cuts into the family budget.

**Mrs. Cary:** This gas is just really great. We're sure happy about it. Our neighbors didn't hook up. I don't know why they didn't. They should have, but they didn't.

**Rieger:** Let's talk a little bit about Theodore Wegmann and the store up there.

**Cary:** Old Teddy, we called him Teddy Wegmann, and he had a gas pump and he had a general store. You could buy overalls...

**Mrs. Cary:** Shoes or a hamburger.

**Cary:** Or a hamburger, a bottle of pop, or a can of beer. He sold lots of beer. And a little

hardware.

**Mrs. Cary:** Say, who worked in there?

**Cary:** Traun.

**Mrs. Cary:** Frances.

**Cary:** Frances Traun worked in there for years and years. He was a single man, a single fellow, but he finally got married, just about the time we left he got married and he left Teddy, and old Teddy died soon after that. There was another fellow, Alma, they lived over east of the Park, and he still lives there.

**Mrs. Cary:** Traun? No. I don't know.

**Cary:** He still lives there. He go across the Mississippi bridge there and you go over there and he's got a resort on the right-hand side.

**Rieger:** Bert Pfeifer.

**Cary:** Pfeifer! Bert. Bert worked for Teddy Wegmann for quite a while after Frances left.

**Mrs. Cary:** Was it Bert? There's other Pfeifers than Bert, isn't there?

**Rieger:** His brother is Joe Pfeifer, I believe.

**Cary:** No. This is Bert.

**Rieger:** This is Bert. I talked to him.

**Cary:** His wife worked for Teddy Wegmann for a while. Teddy sold gasoline in an old pump. He'd go out there and pump. It would go up in the glass, you know.

**Mrs. Cary:** Then they finally took the pump down.

**Cary:** They said it was a fire hazard. Everything around Itasca Park had to be fire-proof, because you was scared to death of fires. That pump, I guess they said it was a fire hazard. Old Teddy used to have a little old engine running back there making electricity. I guess the grass outside caught on fire from the exhaust, so he had to hook up to our power plant. I went down and wired his store for him. Where'd we get all the time?

**Mrs. Cary:** I don't know. You have the time now and nothing to do.

**Cary:** Yes. Nothing to do now. But I wired his store and I wired upstairs. He lived upstairs, and I wired the upstairs and the downstairs and everything like that.

**Mr. Cary:** Who is buried in that cemetery? Was that Teddy's wife?

**Cary:** Teddy and his wife, and then there was...

**Rieger:** Johnny, their son.

**Cary:** I think it's somebody else buried there. Browder. I think his name was Browter [Brower]. He was a Superintendent or something up there. You'll find it on a stone up there, I'm pretty sure there's a stone there with his name on it.

**Mrs. Cary:** Brower?

**Cary:** Brower, Brower.

**Mrs. Cary:** Is he buried there?

**Rieger:** He's not buried there. He's buried in another Park.

**Cary:** Is he? Brower, he was...

**Rieger:** He was the "Father of Itasca."

**Cary:** He was the "Father of Itasca Park."

**Mrs. Cary:** There's been a lot of writing about him in the past.

**Rieger:** When you first went up there you were a bachelor, and you lived right there at Headquarters. Can you describe the building again for me?

**Cary:** I stayed in the bachelors quarters. What?

**Rieger:** Can you describe the building again for me, Headquarters?

**Cary:** Well, it started on the north end. The north end was the office, which was divided in two and there's bachelors quarters up there, which is nothing but a bunch of beds. There's a bed here, a bed here, a bed here, and a bed here.

**Mrs. Cary:** They were bedrooms, weren't they? Separate bedrooms?

**Cary:** No. It was a general, almost like a dormitory. The Game Warden slept there. They always

had a game warden there to supervise the wild life and stuff like that. So, Charlie Masoner or...

**Mrs. Cary:** They were generally from Bagley.

**Cary:** Generally from Bagley. [Charlie?] Holt. Oh, there's another bad story. Old Holt. He was a fine man. He used to come and stay there by the week. One day he got orders to go down to Waseca, to be the game warden down in that county down there. They had poachers. The first guy he went to arrest up and shot him and killed him. Old Holt, just before he left up there, he came up to me and he put his arms around me. He says, "Cary, I hope I see you again." Tears was running out of his [eyes]. He never did. They killed him down there. It made me feel bad.

**Rieger:** That's horrible.

**Cary:** Old Holt.

**Mrs. Cary:** They did it in those days, too.

**Cary:** Yes. They killed him. The guy that was a poacher up and just shot him. What I was going to say, you asked me a question.

**Rieger:** About Headquarters.

**Cary:** Oh, yes. They built the building, this was built of all logs. There was basement underneath the whole thing. There was a building on the north side, and the building had been divided, so that this side was full of dormitory beds for game wardens and bachelors like me, and the other half was office. There was two desks in there. I had the safe and all that stuff in there, and I had to work in there, which made it a little heating problem because we had a stove in there, a wood stove, and had to keep that going. In between the buildings, they had built a porch, something like Douglas Lodge has got, but they got tired of that and glassed it all in. Therefore, we had to go through this porch and into the next building, there was another building. That building had a hall down one side of it and on the other side of the hall was bedrooms. Come to think of it, there was a bathroom over there, too. Anyhow, they had one-two-three bedrooms, I think it was, down there, and the hall led out into a...

**Mrs. Cary:** General open room.

**Cary:** It wasn't assembly, it was a sitting room or something and they had a great big old table and card tables and stuff like that. That's where they gathered at night. This was a log building, all log buildings, and next to that, to the south again, they had added on another log building which was as long as from here to the front room out there, it was longer than that. It was a little lower roof. But you had the kitchen. That was divided lengthwise and always had a regular restaurant stove in it, a great big flattop thing and all kinds of junk, and a table. The tables were a bit like picnic tables there, just a little bit better than picnic tables. Next to that, on the other side, they had the girls slept

in there. They had a bed or two in there, and they had a couple of picnic tables again in there. Why they were there, they thought maybe they would have overflow. Well, every once in a while, the Game and Fish Department would come up there, whole bunch of people from down in here, Cuzzy Smith and all those guys would come up with their deputies, and stuff like that, and they'd stay probably for a couple of days. The girls were over there so they had to have a curtain across, so they'd fill up here and then they'd get into this room, there was doors on both ends. Downstairs is the laundry, they had a laundry. It had one of these here washers with a thing like this with corrugation. You'd pull the handle back and forth. Finally, they got a machine washer that run on gas. Clara had an awful time with that thing. She kick that thing and kick it and kick it. Finally, she'd call up, "Cary, can you make that engine run, I can't get it going." Cary would go down there.

**Mrs. Cary:** This lady still lives.

**Cary:** She's still alive. She lives in Nevis.

**Rieger:** What's her last name?

**Mrs. Cary:** Her name is Clara Traun [Frances'sister], and she married a fellow by the name of [Andy] Berg, so she's Mrs. Berg and her husband has died.

**Cary:** Yes, her husband is dead. She's got a bad stroke now. She's all crippled up.

**Mrs. Cary:** We haven't seen here for a couple of years.

**Cary:** I'll tell you how to find her, it's easy. You go west of Nevis past the cemetery and the first turn-off to your left, after you pass the cemetery. You go down until you come to the water, but don't go across the viaduct. Turn to your right and there's a house and she lives there. Just on the right hand side of the road just in front of the water. It looks like it's been dug into the bank, sort of, but it's there and she lives there. She's lived there for thirty years. I don't go up there too much because I hate to see her. She used to be so, she'd work her head off, you know. Everybody in the Park worked hard. We didn't have any shirkers that I knew of. They were all hard working people. The girls only got sixty dollars a month. Alma used to get eighty, but she had to take care of the money in the store. She was charged with the finances in the refectory, so that give her a little extra money, so she'd get eighty dollars a month.

**Mrs. Cary:** It's all gone.

**Cary:** It's all over with.

**Rieger:** Where were the telephones located?

**Cary:** Telephones?

**Rieger:** The telephone switchboard?

**Cary:** The switchboard was in the hallway where it used to be a porch. It was glassed in and the telephone switchboard was on the south wall. The wires coming in there, we had seventeen lines coming in there, and they were these type that you'd sit there and say, "Number please!" And then you'd pull something and plug it in, and then you'd have to crank. We had, I think, two or three lines to Park Rapids central down there, that were continually under repair. Somebody had to keep them up. We were trying to get Northwest Telephone. Nope. They didn't want to maintain it. It was Forestry lines and fire prevention. So we had to do it or Frank Pugh. One of the Miller boys, and one of them's still alive, I think it's Vern, or is it Cliff?

**Mrs. Cary:** I think Vern died. One of them died.

**Cary:** I talked to somebody that knew one of them yet.

**Mrs. Cary:** He used to write in the Enterprise quite often.

**Cary:** Yes, he wrote in the Enterprise. He used to keep the line up pretty well. We were so dog gone busy we didn't have time! These boys working under Frank, they were his people, and they were supposed to be out on Forestry and survey and stuff like that, and they would fix the lines once in a while.

[Discussion of the isolation in the park and an incident where a family east of the Park called for a doctor from Park Rapids to help with delivery of a baby. The doctor was in his seventies and was unable to come on such a stormy night. He quit doctoring shortly thereafter.]

[Discussion of the challenges of driving school bus for 10 years, years later.]

**Rieger:** I don't want to take up too much of your time here. I didn't even notice that we've gone over two hours now. Can we go just a little bit longer?

**Cary:** Go ahead.

**Rieger:** Just a couple of quick things. I was wondering about the store, the refectory that you ran. What kind of things did you sell, did you handle?

**Mrs. Cary:** We sold your average groceries, bread and milk and coffee and tea and cereal. We had ice cream.

**Cary:** Pop in the cooler. Butter and milk. Milk. That was our big [seller].

**Mrs. Cary:** Just the basics.

**Cary:** We had a little Spam and stuff like that.

**Mrs. Cary:** Anything canned. Just general things was all we had.

**Rieger:** And you got those supplies from Park Rapids?

**Cary:** No. From Nash Finch in Bemidji.

**Mrs. Cary:** We had one-two-three-four-five-six booths, didn't we, where they could sit and drink pop or eat ice cream or something. But we didn't serve any meals. I served them to our relatives that came up every summer [laughs].

**Cary:** I've got a funny story to tell about those relatives.

**Mrs. Cary:** Well, not right now.

**Cary:** Ask the questions first.

**Rieger:** O.K. I was just wondering what types of things and how...

**Cary:** The boats were all numbered and we had an oar rack in the store and each rack held two oars for each boat with corresponding numbers, and then we issued tickets.

**Rieger:** With all that you did for Douglas Lodge, Martin Dunn...

**Cary:** Martin Dunn was the official carpenter.

**Mrs. Cary:** He was the manager.

**Cary:** Oh, that was Martin Dunn.

**Mrs. Cary:** That's what she said.

**Rieger:** What type of person was he?

**Cary:** Nice fellow, very nice, very personal. He had a lot of PR. He had a clerk, what was his name, do you remember?

**Mrs. Cary:** [Hodd] DeWald. No. He ran the boat

**Cary:** He ran the boat.

**Mrs. Cary:** I don't know his [name].

**Cary:** That guy, the clerk, he went and got himself a lawyers degree in the wintertime when the Lodge was quit. We were having trouble with him because he wanted to sell liquor and we were against it. He kept it under the counter, and he was doing it without a license. We were having trouble continually with that.

**Mrs. Cary:** Hodd DeWald worked down there and he had the big boat down at Douglas Lodge.

**Cary:** The boat's different than it is now. It was a long, narrow thing that they'd gotten off of Leach Lake. The thing must have been thirty-five, forty feet long. I can still hear that thing, "Ka-chucka, ka-chucka, ka-chucka, ka-chucka." And old Hodd would be standing up there, he'd be telling them about the trees and about Peace Pipe Springs.

**Mrs. Cary:** His wife was Eleanor Sauers [Sauer], wasn't she?

**Cary:** Eleanor Sauers. That was Eleanor.

**Mrs. Cary:** They moved to Bemidji when he quit and they lived on the lake and their little girl drowned.

**Cary:** Their child went down on the dock and drowned. They were fine people, both of them.

**Mrs. Cary:** Most of the people were nice people up there.

**Cary:** We sure loved them. They'd come up and we'd go down there.

**Rieger:** In your contact with the Forestry Station, or the University of Minnesota Biological and Forestry Station. Can you describe any of the contact you had with them besides helping with the ice?

**Cary:** Walter Nelson, we were this way back and forth.

**Mrs. Cary:** It was social, mostly personal, social.

**Cary:** Personal, social. We furnished the ice, and the electricity, but that's about all we did. And kept the roads open.

**Rieger:** O.K. But you didn't have much contact with the students?

**Cary:** We didn't have much contact with the actual operation. Those kids would come up, Forestry kids with those nets, and go around getting their butterflies and stuff. To us, it was kind of stupid because we were so blame worked to death, here they were...

**Mrs. Cary:** Having fun.

**Cary:** Having fun with the butterflies [laughs].

**Mrs. Cary:** They still do it, I guess, up there.

**Rieger:** We have gone an awful long time. I think you've described so much already, it's been wonderful.

**Mrs. Cary:** You ought to get a page or two out of it [laughs]!

**Rieger:** Yes! So, I'm going to turn the tape off and thank you.

**[End interview]**

Additional information:

Alma's maiden name was Bergstrom and she was born April 28, 1914. Her parents were good friends of Elon's and they knew each other from that.

Most of the Park Superintendents were real conservative, outdoor type people.

Elon and Alma write:

We enjoyed the years that we worked in both Itasca and Gooseberry Falls State Parks. Itasca was our favorite. Everyone was so cordial and friendly and helping one another. We always loved the outdoors and did a lot of skiing, ice skating, snowshoeing, and even sliding in the wintertime. Frank Pugh loaned us the snowshoes. We found ski trails during the summertime and knew where to go when the snow came. The gravel roads we had were impassable at times during the winter months and we surely appreciated when the main highway 71 was improved. We did our shopping in Bemidji or in Park Rapids, where we were from. We went to church in a Lutheran church just north of the Park whenever we could. Our vacation in the fall found us traveling throughout the U.S. in a camper. Some of the tourists and campers that we met became life-long friends.