

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Marlin Galbraith

Interviewer: Richa Wilson, Region 4 Architectural Historian

Transcriber: LeAnn Tracy

Date: April 19, 2010

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RW: Today is April 19, 2010. This is Richa Wilson and I'm here with Marlin Galbraith, retiree from the US Forest Service.

RW: Okay Mr. Galbraith, you've brought a book.

MG: Galbraith. (*Corrects pronunciation*)

RW: Okay. Well, I want to say it right.

MG: Well, I'm not the first_____.

RW: I'll say it right. You've brought a book today. Would you tell me a little bit about what that is?

MG: Yeah.

RW: It says "The Life and Times of Marlin C. Galbraith and Ethel Briggs Galbraith." And you wrote this?

MG: Yes. I wrote this, well about a year, following her death.

RW: When was that?

MG: That was in '98.

RW: '98, okay, okay.

MG: And I had it broken up into sections.

RW: Okay. Wow, there's a lot of text here.

MG: Now, for instance, see, my career with the United States Forest Service.

RW: And I see it says "My military service in World War II."

MG: Uh huh.

RW: So what branch were you in?

MG: Navy.

RW: Navy. And where did you serve?

MG: I served my entire time on Oahu.

RW: On Oahu! Okay...okay.

MG: (Laughing) How do you like that for workin' things out!

RW: (Laughing) Sounds pretty good. Well, let me ask you a couple of questions. First, when were you born?

MG: July 5 . . . almost a Yankee Doodle Boy. I missed it by one day. July 5, 1915.

RW: Okay. And you said you were about ready to turn 95.

MG: Uh huh. On July 5.

RW: Excellent. Where were you born?

MG: I was born in Idaho. Are you acquainted with Idaho?

RW: Yes

MG: Well, do you know where the town of Rexburg is?

RW: Yes

MG: Okay. I was born on a farm just south of Rexburg.

RW: Okay. All right. What were your parents' names?

MG: Archie and Selma. My mother was born in Sweden.

RW: Oh, okay. Great. So, you grew up in that area?

MG: I grew up in that area. All my grade school was right there in the little town of Lyman, which was about 6 miles from Rexburg. And then my 4 years of high school was in Rexburg.

RW: And then did you go to college?

MG: And then I went to the University of Idaho and got my degree in forest management and so on there. And don't misunderstand me, my senior year . . . near the end of my senior year, I got an offer from a small school back east, Harvard.

RW: A small school ? (Laughing)

MG: (Laughing) But I turned it down.

RW: Why?

MG: Because I was afraid I was gonna lose my gal.

RW: Ah.

MG: And I never felt like that I made the wrong choice.

RW: Yeah, a special woman, huh?

MG: Uh huh.

RW: And did you always know you wanted to be a forester?

MG: Yes, because on the farm, we were always busy and you couldn't hire people and my folks, I'm sure, didn't have money to hire people so we did a lot of farm work . . . now where was I going?

RW: About being a forester?

MG: Oh yea, uh huh, and we would almost, without . . . I don't think we missed going after huckleberries in August.

RW: Yeah?

MG: We made sure that we got the jobs done that we needed to get done in August on the farm and then it was huckleberries. And I used to go by the ranger station and think, oh, I'd get one week of vacation in this kind of thing. Wouldn't that be wonderful and so . . .

RW: What ranger station was that? Do you know?

MG: Well, it was on the Targhee.

RW: Okay.

MG: On the Targhee. And we usually went in a buggy . . . a horse and buggy. And we'd camp in, well, just spots really because there wasn't much built there. Oh, and all my cousins and so on would be there so our friends insisted that we pick huckleberries in the daytime but, during the evening and so on, we'd have a lot of fun.

RW: So the Forest Service appealed to you because you knew you . . .

MG: Oh yes, I was just sure that I wanted to be a forester. I'd drive by that ranger station you know and I'd think, "Oh, he has all this all the time. I get it for 1 week."

RW: (Laughing) So did you get a job with the Forest Service while you were going to school?

MG: Yes...yes. We were doing a lot of blister rust control at that time. And so, the first year, I was just on a crew.

RW: Where was that?

MG: In northern Idaho. That would have been . . . well, I'll think about it.

RW: It was in Region 1, though?

MG: Well, it would have been on the Targhee.

RW: Oh, okay.

MG: Yeah, that's right. Now, let see, where do we go from here?

RW: When you graduated, did you get on permanent with the Forest Service?

MG: Well, it was pretty rough. A lot of things that they just weren't able to . . . several things, early on, after my senior year, I did a lot of different things. I worked for the Immigration Service on the Canadian border.

RW: Really?

MG: I worked for the Weyerhaeuser Company in the State of Washington and so on. Because there never was anything certain and things that they promised me they weren't able to carry through so I was kind of in and out, but I still wanted that Forest Service.

RW: Well, that must have been about during the New Deal era when the CCC was working.

MG: Oh, well, one summer I had a crew of 25 CCC boys and way up at the end of the road at the end of everything else. All kids from New York.

RW: Was this on the Targhee?

MG: On the Targhee, uh huh.

RW: Maybe around Heise?

MG: And I probably spent more time on fire control than anything else. They thought I had a great crew and that I knew how to use them on fire. My wife, who was brand new, we were living in a tent. (Laughing)

RW: (Laughing) I'll bet she loved that.

MG: And so they would come up and rap – no telephone or anything there -- there was a telephone in the ranger's office but I was always being a ranger and they would come up at midnight, shake the tent and say, "Marlin, they want you to take your crew over to Montana." So I'd leave Ethel there and lightning was coming down . . . kiss her goodbye and that was it. I wasn't sure when I'd be back or anything.

RW: Yeah. What did she think about that?

MG: Well, she did very well and she covered up in that tent and it was very, very nice.

RW: Yeah? And would this –

MG: I spent about 2-1/2 years with the CCC.

RW: Really.

MG: I mean, with CCC crews.

RW: Was this around the Heise Ranger Station by chance?

MG: Oh, that's where I did all the huckleberry picking

RW: Oh, okay.

MG: That was very close to our home.

RW: I'm very familiar with it. Actually that ranger station, the Forest Service just sold 2 or 3 years ago.

MG: Oh.

RW: Yeah, they no longer needed it. So tell me more about some of your early jobs with the Forest Service. How did you make your way up to ranger?

MG: Well, let's just quickly . . .

RW: Look at the book? Okay.

MG: And as far as . . . it was that one.

RW: Oh yeah. Chapter 3, "The Saga of our Romance." I look forward to reading that.

MG: My senior year . . . as I started my senior year, the first week, by that time, she had two years in at the University of Idaho and then she stayed out a year because she had a job teaching. And the weekend of my, when I came up from the blister rust and so on and started back to school, about the first week, I got an 8-page Dear John letter from her.

RW: Really!

MG: And I've got it all here. So whenever . . . if you'd like to just keep this for a week or so and make copies of what you want and what you don't want, you'd probably get as much there.

RW: Okay.

MG: Probably more.

RW: Yeah. Well, are there any highlights of your career that just really stick in your mind?

MG: Well, when I finally did get in, why, I made fairly good progress. And I went higher than what I ever expected to. During the period of time when they changed to . . . they said that the . . . Oh boy, I tell you, the last two years my mind is just, oh, someone stole it!

RW: Hard to remember things, huh? Understandable. Well, you were Deputy Regional Forester here in Region 4. And also in Region 3?

MG: No, I was Chief of Timber Management in Region 3.

RW: Okay.

MG: Then I was in Washington, DC for about 5 or 6 years. That helped a whole lot.

RW: Yeah. And were you working in timber?

MG: Well, I started out working in timber but then I moved over to mostly where you do a lot of work with the legal things and so on. And the man heading that thing up was really a tough one.

RW: Hard to work for?

MG: Oh, yeah. I mean he'd send me in and so on and he'd read my rough draft – I could tell he was reading all of it – and said, “Well Marlin, I didn't think much of that.” So I felt about that big.

RW: Oh yeah..

MG: But when the big thing came along and the Congress decided that they needed another outfit, why he became it and so it was big. I mean he was just the same as the Chief of the Forest Service; however, it had nothing to do with the Forest Service.

RW: Was this with the BLM?

MG: No, not the BLM. It'll be in here [the book].

RW: Okay, I'll check it out.

MG: A new, oh, what are they called?

RW: An agency?

MG: Yeah, a new agency was created. And when they created the new agency, what did he do? He called the Chief of the Forest Service and said, "ya' know until we get going here and so on, we don't have much money and so on, can I borrow Marlin?"

RW: Oh really?

MG: (Laughing) Oh yeah. Two months I guess it was.

RW: Was this Richard Rutledge?

MG: No. I know the name "Rutledge" although I don't the – Oh, Ed Crafts. And he had that name for a reason because he was crafty. He was very crafty. But, on the other hand, he did some good things for me.

RW: Good. So you did go work with him.

MG: And so I went and worked with him, and then, the day after I finished the two months or maybe a little more than that, (it was approximately two months) why he called me in and he says, "Marlin, I've still got a couple of positions to fill." But I figured I'd gone far enough on that.

RW: (Laughing) Didn't want to push your luck?

MG: I'd better stay with the Forest Service, which I did. And so I felt like, well I could go and say, "What have you got in your plans for me?" And the Deputy Chief, who knew me well because when I went to Region 7, which doesn't exist now, why, he was Forest Supervisor . . . I mean of the Region.

RW: Regional Forester?

MG: Yeah, Regional Forester. And so I went to him and he says, “Marlin, I’d have been disappointed if you hadn’t come to talk to me about this.” He says, “The next good job out in the field some place, in one of the other Regions, you’re going.”

RW: Great.

MG: So, it worked out well.

RW: And, when you were in Region 3, was that when Bill Hurst was there?

MG: Well, part of the time.

RW: Okay.

MG: Bill Hurst came when the Regional Forester passed away. Well, maybe he hadn’t passed away but he couldn’t go on any longer, so Bill came down and so it was kind of funny when he, after I’d been there for about two years, he called me in one day and told me, he says, “How’d you like to go to Ogden?” He says, “They want you in Ogden.”

RW: That’s how you came here?

MG: That’s where I finished.

RW: Okay. Now I didn’t realize you also worked for State and Private Forestry.

MG: Uh, well that was when they were going to change everything and so on, and the big bang, and they created, instead of the . . .

RW: Was this under the Nixon administration where they wanted to do away with the Regional Offices?

MG: Yes. And all of that is in there.

RW: Great, okay.

MG: And if you’d like, I’ll just leave this here.

RW: That would be wonderful.

MG: And you can print out what you want and so on because, frankly, I’m the poorest person to talk with now because, up until two years ago, my mind was good, but boy, it just disappeared.

RW: Hard to remember those details, huh?

MG: Oh, and names and so on!

RW: Well, is there anything in particular that you would like to talk about while we have time today?

MG: Well, why don't you look at that [pointing to the book[]

RW: The section on your career?

MG: Uh huh. Well, you could look at the first and see what those sections are.

RW: I believe it's Chapter 8 and that's what I'm looking for. Well, I see you have lots of wonderful photographs in here, which is great. Well, that's Chapter 10, so I need to go back. Oh, this looks like this might be . . . nope, that's Chapter 7, your service in World War II, so we're almost there. Here we go, Chapter 8, and I'm just going to read a few things out loud. It looks like you just have some wonderful . . .

MG: As I say, you can keep the book and . . .

RW: I can get it back to Randy [Marlin's son] tonight. I'll just take it to the office and copy it and then get it back to Randy.

MG: Oh boy, that's fast!

RW: (Laughing) Efficient! So yeah, and you've got some photographs here from your career.

MG: That was the CCC camp.

RW: CCC camp near, is it Boville? Is that Idaho?

MG: Yes.

RW: Okay. And Trilby Lakes of the Red River District. That must have been Region 1.

MG: Yes, Region 1.

RW: And this looks like a lookout.

MG: Right. That's in Region 1.

RW: Sheep Hill lookout, it says. And some beautiful scenery. A mountain goat, or a bighorn sheep, isn't it?

MG: Yea, mountain sheep.

RW: Wow, this is wonderful. And it's so important to write these things down.

MG: Oh I'm so glad that I did it when I did. Because if I'd have stalled it any, I wouldn't have had it.

RW: Now, did you keep all of your old ranger diaries and things like that?

MG: No.

RW: Well, this is a great piece of work and I thank you for letting me copy it.

MG: That's the letter that she wrote to me . . . where your finger is there.

RW: Oh, okay, on Hotel Utah stationery. Oh, this looks very interesting. I'm looking forward to reading this. Very nice. And I see that you have some pictures here . . .

MG: That's in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. This is up at . . . Oh, I was working for the Immigration Service on the Canadian border.

RW: Okay. What did you do for them?

MG: Well, I stood at the gate and said, "You can go in and you can't go in."

RW: (Laughing) This was before Homeland Security, right?

MG: Right.

RW: Well, I'm interested in the photos of the places you've lived. Oh, here's some more . . . because I now live in your house [3082 Circle Way, Ogden]. And it looks like you owned the house from January 1967 until May 1976. So it's very special for me to see these photographs. This is just great. Well, if there's nothing else you'd like to talk about, I'll turn off the tape recorder.

MG: That's fine. Whatever . . . as I say, I'm a poor . . . because I just forget things and get halfway through a sentence . . . and what did I say in that first half?

RW: That must be frustrating.

MG: Oh, it is frustrating.

RW: But, you've got this very important piece of work so that's just wonderful.

MG: And I retired at a good age and we traveled a lot after that and so we've seen a lot of the world.

RW: Oh really? Any highlights? Anything that you really . . . any place you particularly enjoyed?

MG: Oh, I suppose Europe. We made more than one trip there and so on and so forth. And, you know, if you use good sense and take things when they're kind of a bargain, why you can do very well, so we were able to do a lot more than what I ever thought that I'd do. Ethel was good to me as far as . . . so when I quit, why, I had financing to do some of

those things that I'd always wanted to do and so I'm very pleased that I did it while Ethel was alive and so on and we did it together. I certainly haven't done much traveling since then . . . some, but not too much.

MG: Oh, incidentally, I have a cabin up near Yellowstone Park . . . 20 miles from the entry.

RW: So is this in Island Park?

MG: Yes, in Island Park.

RW: Do you get up there very often?

MG: Well, I did until starting last year. My four sons decided that I shouldn't drive anymore and I couldn't argue because I knew that my reaction time and so on was certainly not as good as it could be and so we, oh for a good many years, right after I retired, we bought a home in Arizona for the winter and then we'd go up to our cabin and spend five months up in the cabin so we knew every inch of the Park and so on.

RW: Sounds wonderful! Now, did you serve a mission?

MG: For the church?

RW: Yeah.

MG: No. My older brother, he was two years older than I was. I caught up with him in the fourth grade and then we stayed through, probably through, the eighth grade. And then through four years of high school. And so he was old enough to go then and there just wasn't money enough to send two missionaries and so I've had a lot of activity in the church and a lot of positions and so on, but never served a mission.

RW: It can be expensive, huh? Especially when you have two at the same time.

MG: That's right. And especially in those days.

RW: Now, you have four sons?

MG: Four sons.

RW: Any daughters?

MG: No daughters . . . well, we've got four.

RW: (Laughing) They came with the sons eventually, huh?

MG: That's right.

RW: Great. Well, I want to thank you for coming today and it's so nice to chat with you. I will probably have some questions for you after I read this.

MG: Oh, that will be fine, that will be fine.

RW: Okay. And I know how to get it touch with Randy and Jim [sons] so I'm going to turn off the tape recorder now, but again, thank you.