

Interview with Vern Gairns at the Waterton School Reunion.
3 June, 1995. Interviewer: Leslie Robertson.

Time: Side A - 45 mins. Side B - 40 mins.	<u>Topic of Interview</u> Childhood memories of the Park; Employment; fishing; War years and Depression Years; Park personalities; eye witness account of boat accident causing death 1954.
--	--

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Footage</u>	<u>Subject</u>
	001	Introduction - 1925 Gairns arrived in WLNP.
	005	Family History -Mother (Florence Auger) and Uncle (Arthur Auger) left Saskatchewan because of drought. -Arthur craftsman / carpenter - employed in construction of Great Northern Hotel. - after POW finished general contractor in Park. - original cottages built very quickly - most required upgrading. - Auger's clients included: Dr. Fowler; Dr. Bigall; Judge Sheperd - all Lethbridge.
	032	Stone work - all stone acquired within 20 mile radius of Park. - fieldstones from the grasslands; Flagstones / flatstones from mountains. - Auger did most of the wainscotting in Park i.e. schoolhouse / fireplaces.
	043	Anecdote: Picking fieldstones from the prairies - placed in piles to be picked up later - Auger had a mental idea of where each stone would be placed.
	058	Question: Archaeological sites? - awareness that Native peoples travelled through the Park.
	071	Childhood - idyllic - due to environmental factors and mother's disposition. - activities now considered dangerous - never aware of Depression - Father (Pete Gairns) frugal and hard - working.
	101	Peter Gairns - Scottish - moved to the United States then to Canada - Vern's step-father. - wounded in World War One on Vimy Ridge - returned to homestead in Spread Eagle district - not a productive piece of property. - employed with Government in Park - seasonal - trails and roads / Red Rock - Akamina Warden. - carried the mail from Twin Butte to Waterton 3 times / week 1929?
	131	- Mail - horses in Winter / Model T Ford when roads passable.

- usually change horses at Jenkins Ranch on the way to Twin Butte.
- Jenkins' Ranch was a Jersey Farm- delivered milk to the Park 1930 - 1940's.

142 Roads

- not maintained.
- took the sod and laid down gravel - no burrowpits (ditches).

153 Florence Auger / Gairns cooked at Oil Well site at Oil City for one season.

- drilling - ran out of money then another company started (Florence worked for them).

170 Question: important places?

Fishing:

- Alderson, Carthew, Bertha (fishing tricky here - large Trout).
- Crypt Lake - fish formed schools and swam round the Lake - always successful.
 - cook them in butter - coffee boiled three times.

198 Bull Trout: Cameron Creek, Pass Creek, Trail Creek.

Chokecherries - Trail Creek.

Huckleberries - "Blue Lake" - Crandell lake.- suckers

Wall Lake could catch fish on a bent pin.

216 Environmental factors

- Park not spoilt - tourists very respectful - began to change after World War Two.
- Vern took furlough in Park.

241 War

- several of the original residents World War One Vets.
- World War Two - Jack Christensen, Ted Christensen, Pittaway boys, Fred Udell all served from the Park.
- Vern 1943 - 1946.

255 1939 Gairns' left Waterton Park to live on the Hatfield Ranch.

270 War

- scarcity of men - omen dancing together - Twin Butte Hall.
- Doug Oland and Sophie Allison directed plays at Twin Butte and Pincher Creek - Windy Hollow Players Company

313 Depression Years

Father worked for Government - Mother industrious.

Waterton - all Civil Servants - pay and benefits.

- caught minnows and grasshoppers to sell for bait.
- worked for Gordon Morris (boat concession).
- sold newspapers Albertan - required a surety bond \$5 fee.

- No envy of outside things - no extravagance.
- 361 Swimming in Lake Linnet before the pool.
- 367 Community
 - very close but groups of people i.e. bridge players especially in Winter - isolation
 - roads often impassable and poor cars.
- 283 Waterton Personalities
 - Ski Prosser - ran rodeos East of where the stables are located late 1920's early 1930's. - good competition.
- 403 Levi Ashman - trapper - older when Vern knew him.
 Jack Hazzard - entrepreneur - Peter Gairns told stories of him.

 George Baker - sons Rey and Alfred - business man - knew what was going on at all times.
 - In his spare time he drove around the Park to see what was happening. Knew who was upgrading their home - knew when doctors were in town
 - "he was the communicative centre" - Baker handled emergency phone calls - hospitals call for doctors - no phones in cottages. Also in touch with Glacier N. P. U.S.A.
- 436 Don Morris - "Bud" - lost a leg.
 Jack Christensen - Best friend. Anecdote: climbing Bear's Hump - loosened rocks - confrontation on steep ledge.
- 479 Anecdote: sister Jane followed Vern and friends up Bertha Mountain - told her to go home - she didn't know the way - slept there - searched and found her where they had left her.
- 531 Trail and road workers - picks and shovels - horse-drawn graders (Fresnos)
 - Waterton lakes N.P. had sufficient budgetary allotment to keep crew working all year.
 - Head Quarters - bunkhouse and cookhouse.
- 563 Akamina and Chief Mt. roads - no pavement and rocky
- 574 Employees not called Parks Canada then - most permanent residents.
 Bo Holroyd, Bert Barnes, Williams - seasonal from Mountain View - did not enforce fishing limits - often gave tourists extra.; Knight, LeCappland, Frank Camp, Art Colbeck - Fish Hatchery.

685 END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE B

- 001 Account of the decapitation of Gerald Udell May 1954.
- Udell - "Slen" - from Saskatchewan looking for work. - freighted for George Baker; carpenter with Auger. - Married June Parrott from Mountain View.
- moved to Victoria - worked as a carpenter - returned and bought a fleet of boats.
- Udell built a hydroplane(25 Horsepower) - wanted to show how it performed - Vern and warden at Marina - cowling and trappings on top of boat were taken off to decrease the weight - flywheel and rewind exposed.
- Past the Narrows - U turn South - wide open to sand bar where trees were - heard motor cut out - saw blue smoke intermittently rising from trees.
- Couple who had rented a boat returned and told them there had been an accident.
- Prop shaft broken off - flywheel loose - decapitated Udell.
- 107 Vern 35 years old - philosophical cross-roads - shock - like shell shock in the War
- three years to recover from the incident. - notified RCMP and spoke with Coroner.
- 139 Childhood
- mountains - Bear's Hump, Bertha, Sofa without climbing gear.
- skating on the Lake - dangerous air holes - clear ice.
- 158 Changes in wildlife
- Deer - very few domesticated then.
- sheep and goat - used to be none in townsite area - last 25 years only.
- Bears - black and cinnamon - coloured common sights - garbage bears - no injuries.
- 174 Anecdote: as a child struck at by a deer wanting food at the door to his house.
183 Much more wildlife now than then in Townsite.
- 186 Vegetation:
- appalled at Bertha Mountain - Pine Beetle Kill.
- below Akamina road used to be Lodgepole Pine - now dead.
- Trees in Townsite Campground planted by Parks look great - original plans for the campground were ineffective - more attractive now.
- 207 Flood
- Cameron Creek often flooded around the fish ponds (mobile home area) - engineered now - cribbed.
- course of Cameron Falls changed before the flood.
- Lake at Emerald Bay rose to cover the road- picnic area flooded often.
- 237 Fire
- Father participated in fighting - logged area after - logs in booms in Lake.
- Winter - dragged logs down the ice - kiln - dried trees from burn area milled near the ice house. Logging on the beaches - posts, corral poles, telephone poles (mostly Jack Pine)

- 270 Anecdote: standing while driving a team of horses (Robertson's from Twin Butte) into Waterton on the gravel road - passing HQ , the Morris' house and the Hitching Posts - lost balance - fell between traces behind the horses' feet - front wheel ran over stomach, back wheel ran over shoulder nearly cutting off ear - ran to Morris house - Mother cut off shirt - mychurochrome - Doctor in Cardston.
- 350 Mother - advice and discipline.
- 358 Relationship to Wilderness
- no respect now - vegetation trampled.
anecdote: getting car stuck in gravel bars on Lakeshore 1949 Lincoln Continental
at Cameron Bay.
- Parks Canada - media campaign - throwaway society now.
- 413 What do National Parks mean to you?
-Preserves set aside for people to enjoy, recreationally, emotionally, socially.
- Parks Canada employees very conscious why we have Parks.
- Banff used to be beautiful too in the 1950's.
- 489 Hutterites - industrious, concerns linked to survival, farming. Supplied vegetables and eggs.
dairy. - Mr. Lens - from Mountain View - supplied Park with veggies and eggs and
- 529 Native peoples - used facilities in the Park - Blackfoot Confederacy - not frequent visitors - question of financial accessibility of Park - fees / food.
- 1930's - 1940's - 50 cents / day - Soldiers exempt.
- 563 - Not much money until after the War (1950's) - soldiers payed \$1.30 / day plus trades pay, Officer Pay, NCO etc.
- Native peoples - uncomfortable? discrimination?
- Treaty Money - spending in Pincher Creek - Parks not great for them - limited ability to hunt and travel.
- 622 Thankful for life in Waterton.

647 END OF INTERVIEW