

Charles Gill Interview About Warm Lake

Audio taped by Richard Wilkie July 1978 and transcribed by LeRoy Meyer

Gill: Bill Darling was a fellow who might be classified as a hermit in a way; he lived down on the South Fork of the Salmon River. He had a little acreage down there I would say probably five miles below Poverty Flats. He had a little lean-to shack that he lived in and a shed along side where he kept some horses I guess. He made his living primarily taking hunters out in the fall. This was in the 20's and I knew him in the early 30's. He had been here quite some time prior to that. He was well acquainted with Molly and Bill Kesler. They had all been in this country many years. He knew Bob Barr and he was well acquainted with the well-known Dead Shot Reed but Dead Shot at that time was no longer living on his land down of the South Fork. Dead Shot Reed's is still down there and signs still indicate it but it must belong to his descendents, his boys. It was interesting; I ran across those people and got acquainted with them, visited and talked with them. Wilkie: I think Bill Darling was a caretaker at my fathers place one winter (North Shore Lodge) and helped my father get in wood or someone with a similar sounding name. G: That could well be.

G: Old Burt Bostwick was another one of those fellows they all knew and he knew all of those people. They would all get together up at Molly and Bill Kesler's lodge (now Warm Lake Lodge) there for a session. W: When did they build that lodge at Warm Lake? G: Oh, I don't know, that was built sometime before we came up here. It could hardly be called a lodge. It was a frame building called Warm Lake Hotel, a two story building. I don't know how many rooms it had; I imagine it had four or five rooms in it and they, Molly and Bill, lived on the ground floor. Then off to the side they had a little building they called a store, not more than 20 x 20' as far as size was concerned. Just a frame building. W: Was it where the new lodge is? No, it was further down towards where the workshop and shed is. That's further down. W: Did that burn down? G: I don't think it burned down, I think they tore it down after Molly and Bill sold out and left here. They left Warm Lake because it was getting too crowded and went up some place near Yellow Pine but not in Yellow Pine. They wanted to get away but away from Yellow Pine. I don't know where their home was up there; anyway they sold out to some body that bought out the place (Dr. Leo E. Jewell). They tore the buildings down and built the cabins and lodge that are now there. Molly and Bill lived up there a few years. They were getting along in years and came down to civilization. I don't know where they went to first. But Bill seemed to me Bill Kesler died in Emmett, I'm not certain of that. After that Molly went to Portland where she had a sister and spent some time with her sister. Then she died and she was buried at Weiser, which was a surprise. When we lived there and noted she was buried there I didn't know why, but found out later she had relatives that had been living in Weiser. It might have been her mother or father (daughter). W: When did she die? G: I can't recall but it seemed like the 50's when she died (Nov. 19, 1951). I don't know how much longer before Bill died (Aug. 3, 1955). Never the less that's where she was buried.

W: What happened to Darling? He died and I can't remember what year he died (Aug. 6, 1963). His property was empty for many years and whether he had any family who inherited it, I don't know or whether it went back to the Forest Service.

W: How old was he when he died, would you guess? G: He must have been in his late 60's that was my judgment. Because in the 30's he was a well matured man in his 50's, late 50's, or early 60's. He may have been 70 or better. I was a little bit young to be able to judge people's age at that time, as I was only in my 20's and early 30's at the time (he died at age of 11 days, 1 month, 86 years at Cascade).

W: How did you happen to come up here? G: Well we just came up here on a fishing weekend. Mr. Kinney and Mr. Glenn and I, we enjoyed the fishing and scenery and the lake. So that evening after we had fished we were setting around our campfire near the outlet of the lake on the Warm Lake Lodge side. We were setting around and Mr. Kinney said he wondered if anyone could build a cabin on this lake. Not knowing of course, we decided in that case, we stopped in Cascade on the way out and find out, in 1932. The Forest Service, I can't recall the man's name at the time, he didn't know and he would have to write Ogden office, the regional office at the time, and he said come back in a couple of weeks and we'll have an answer. Two weeks later, we went up and he had an answer. Yeah, we can give permission but we will have to survey the place for lots and a site to build on. But he gave us permission to go up and pick our spot before he even started surveying because we were the first ones to think about it. For that reason we were entitled to the breaks. They didn't get the surveying of the lots done until 1933. But we started with one cabin in 1932 and built our first cabin. That's the little cabin. The point was named after Mr. Kinney because it was his idea in the first place and so that's how we happened to be here and we have been here ever since. W: What did you do, go all around the lake looking for the best spot? Pretty near all the way but on the one side ever there you can't get around it because it's swamp and it's wet all the way. We walked the shore line pretty completely and got around here and saw it's beautiful view and then right off this point at that time was where most of the fishing was being done for kokanee or silver sides or red fish because during the fall spawning season the sides turn red. The fish when not in the fall they are silver. W: Were they still fishing than as well? G: Yeah, they came here still fishing. W: Did they rent the boats across the lake? G: Molly and Bill Kesler had a couple of boats over there. Most people brought their own boats. There was very little fishing being done, very little. But after that when the place opened up for lots, the lots were grabbed up real quick. It was but a matter of years before all the lots were taken and cabins were built. After the first round of lots were taken the Forest Service decided to expand it and they moved to a second level of lots on top of the hills and opened up some lots in Paradise Valley where old Bob Barr had his place and so there were about eight cabins over there I think (10). W: This was all in the 30's? G: Yeah.

W: When did they put in the swimming pool? G: The CCC's did that; they had their camp where the Conservative Baptist camp is now. That was the CCC camp and the boys of the CCC's put the roads around the lake and roads into the cabin sites and build the corrals, fences at Stolle Meadows and put the swimming pool in and laid the pipe line for our water system around from Chipmunk Creek. They were a real productive

organization, the CCC's at that time in this area in particular. Most of the boys were from New Jersey and New York and far east states. W: They must have been awed by this? G: Yes, it was fun to talk to some of them. The fantastic stories and beliefs some of them had. They heard that gold was in Idaho and they thought all you had to do was pick gold up off the mountain and stick it in your pocket. One of them made quite a lot of fun ribbing him about fine gold that we found and they found those in areas where the yellow pines grew the big pinecones. Some of the people that knew a little better used to kid him and got him to believe those were immature pineapples. I guess he wised-up before too long. W: Where were they housed? G: Oh they had houses built for them. W: Where? G: Right where the Baptist Camp is. And there camp down below Poverty Flats quite a few miles down even beyond Dead Shot Reeds ranch on the South Fork of the Salmon River about 20 miles downstream from here.

W: Did you do any salmon fishing in those days? G: They didn't bother fishing you did salmon spearing. W: You walked on their backs across the river? G: No, spearing them was legal and everybody up here had a salmon spear. Generally a handle 12 to 15 feet long and we'd walked the riverbank and spot them. Sometimes you would get them under a log, sometimes would get them under a cut bank. Sometimes we would catch them on the riffles. There was a lot of salmon spearing done by people here. The women would go along with a man and they would often wade out in the riffles and stand there while the men chased the salmon up and down until they got them cornered some place where we could spear them. The women would stand and splash the water in order to keep the salmon from going between their legs and swimming on upstream and getting away from us. It was a lot of fun in those days with a lot of salmon. There were thousands of them in the river. Since the dams have filled the Columbia River up there is not as many salmon as there used to be. W: I think when we bought the resort we didn't know there were salmon up here. My father went over fishing with a little spinner over on the river and before the next thing he knew he had a salmon on and thought it was the biggest trout he had ever seen. G: I caught them on a pole and line with a spinner. They don't strike it too well yet at some of them, at certain times when they are freshest up here they will fight it especially if they had some red salmon eggs tied to it or red rags or something tied to it. I don't know what there was about the red that made the salmon mad I guess. They thought it was eggs and they would come to drive anything away from the eggs and would come and hit the spinners. W: They thought they were stealing the eggs or something? G: Well I think they thought the spinner was probably another salmon or fish or something that was coming to eat them and they were hitting the spinner to try and drive it off. They didn't really come up and try to swallow it because they say salmon don't eat anything after they leave the ocean. All I ever caught or killed had empty stomachs so I'm sure they weren't eating. They strike the lure because they are mad. That days gone forever, because there will never ever be more spearing done. I guess the Indians are still allowed to. There are not near as many salmon as there once was so there is not as much salmon fishing done really except in the main Salmon. The South Fork and Middle Fork, there is not much there.

W: Have you ever heard whether there were Indian groups around the lake in prior times? G: I have never heard that but I assume there must have been. Whether they lived here or

hunted in this area I don't know but there must have been some. Female: The Sheepstealer Indians have a monument up here on the summit. G: The Sheepstealer Indians killed a white man on that first grade as you come out of Cascade. There is a monument commemorating that man. W: I remember that monument. You can't get to it now. G: You have to take the old road to get around to it. He was, actually the Indians that killed him were horse thieves that had stolen his horses around Indian Valley and he had tracked them. They way-laid him. They knew he was after them and that's where they killed him. I don't recall what his name was but it's on the tombstone down there. I've seen it and I've read it in a few history books about highlights of Idaho history but those were suppose to be Sheepstealer Indians as they were called, that did the killing. I don't know whether they were ever apprehended or ever anything done about it or not. W: The cavalry came through here once chasing them and went into the Middle Fork, Artillery Dome was named after the military because they drug a cannon all the way in there. No roads. G: That wouldn't be part of the route Chief Joseph took? No. His retreat was farther north toward Lewiston. Different territory entirely. W: There weren't too many Indians around this area. G: There were Indians in this area; this isn't too far from Council Idaho you know. Council was the meeting ground. That's how it got its name. The Indian chief's had their pow-wow's there when they gathered to make plans and meet at the area where the city of Council now stands. There were plenty of Indians all right in this part of the country. How much they, whether they lived in any length of time any given spot or not is highly questionable. I suppose they were on the move most of the time. They probably hunted up here and maybe got salmon up here and picked berries up here in this country. W: In the summer time? G: Yeah, they wouldn't stick around here in the winter. It's too tough a winters, they would go down the Salmon River. They might have followed the elk herds and deer down the river for the winter. If a person had all the facts it would be a real interesting history.

I would like to know more about the town of Knox (Knox was one mile NW of Warm Lake). Who founded it for example and who built the buildings that are there and what they all were. I know they had one main street that had a blacksmith shop and a tavern or a bar. W: There was a town there?

G: Store yeah. It could be called a town, a town of Knox. You are using the term town rather loosely when you call it a town because it was just a way station on your way to Thunder Mountain. The pack strings and stuff stayed overnight there. They had a place to sleep and feed their horses. A place to shoe there horses or do things like that they had to have done but when we came up here that day was long since gone. I don't remember who was over there. The only building that was there that was being occupied was the big house that still stands there. I can't remember the name of the people that lived there. It was pretty nice. We bought milk there and eggs there and bread. The lady that ran the place for some reason or another she had been nicknamed gold tooth. She had a gold tooth in front of her mouth. She was a beautiful woman and was one of those women who was absolutely spotlessly clean (background, a Mexican) and anytime of the day when she came to the door you would think she had just stepped out of the beauty parlor. Her hair was made up. Her apron was spotlessly clean, her dress was spotlessly clean she looked like she stepped out of a bandbox as often say. A very pleasant person. I guess her husband; oh he ran a few cows in that pasture they had over there and then he packed

in the hunters during the fall. He had a pack string and would take hunters in to these high lakes for deer hunting and elk hunting trips. But I don't know what their names were and what became of them. W: Then the Renieke's bought it? G: I think it was the Renieke's that bought it, got it after that. I don't remember what her or her husbands name was, I don't think there name was Reineke. Reineke came along later I'm sure. W: Where would one dig that information up? Probably at the county court house, you would have to dig it from the records there. I imagine any transaction of the property would go on record. I imagine it might be at the Forest Service office. It was not Forest Service land; it was private land so I don't know why the Forest Service would have it on their records. Any transaction would have been recorded at the courthouse. W: When were the forests established here? Do you have any idea on that? G: No I haven't. I haven't the slightest idea on that. I don't know when they started calling that the Boise National Forest. I suppose it was just one of the national forests that was established. Way back in the early statehood days back in the 1800's whether the boundaries were the same as they are today is questionable because I doubt if there had been any major surveys conducted in the state before the 1900's. The boundary lines were ambiguous I presume. Probably based on a mountain ridge or a river or a stream would be the determining line until the surveys were completed.

W: Where did you get that bear? G: Old Burt Bostwick shot that bear. Shot it at the upper end of the lake and he gave the skin to Mr. Kinney. Mr. Kinney had it made into a rug. It laid on the floor of this cabin for several years until it began to get kind of beat-up from walking on it so we put it up there to preserve it. W: It looks good up there. G: Yeah. W: What year was that? G: It must have been around 1938. W: Any grizzly up in this area when you first came? G: No, I don't know if there has ever been grizzly in this country, none around when we were here.

W: Do you know when North Shore Lodge was built, Carters Camp, North Bay Camp? G: I don't know what year it was started but it must have been in the 1930's (built in 1935). I would judge it was probably, if I were to make a guess I would say 1936 to 1838 somewhere in there. I don't know how many years he kept it either. W: We brought it from him in 1945. G: He probably, it was probably 36 or 38. W: Did they put in lawns and flower gardens? It was actually beautiful. None of those things would last. We kept them up quite nicely. It sure went down fast when we sold it to Chapin's. G: Well you know there are people who get these things like a lodge to make a quick buck and then get out from under it so they don't care how it looks as long as they get the money. Yeah, and they will sell and this happens quite often when you get an unscrupulous owner. All he is interested in is making money and because it is the popular thing for a while and then he sells out. And that's happened up here a time or two on both lodges. W: Yeah, I guess they stopped a dentist from Phoenix or someplace from coming up here and doing this and wanted to use it for a tax right off. G: Well I don't remember that case but I can remember one owner that came from California and bought Warm Lake Lodge and he was advertising through his friends in California and the wealthy people in that area. He guaranteed they would catch all the fish they wanted. He was taking in pack strings of fishermen to Long Lake. This was at the time Long Lake was the best fishing lake in the country and was loaded with beautiful rainbows and cutthroat. He took parties

up there 10-15 in a party on horseback and they would stay overnight and maybe stay two night and just catch those fish by the dozens and bring them out. Of course it didn't take but a couple three years before the lake was fished out. But his sole interest was the moneyed crowd he wanted to get them in here and get their money and when fishing ran down and things went haywire he got rid of it. W: Was it Clark? G: I'm not sure. It seems to be it was though. G: Did he die up here? W: He died someplace yeah he died. G: His wife and boys were partners and then they got to fighting and so the boys sold out. G: They didn't want anything to do with Warm Lake residents and Idahoans. I think that's probably the person that ...

W: Long Lake in the old days was a real fishing spot. G: Oh it was a terrific spot. It was about a four-mile hike when you drove up to Mormon Creek. If you were willing to make a four-mile uphill hike to get to the lake you got some fine fishing. But of course when you rode up on horseback it wasn't much of a trip. W: Yeah. G: But there were a lot of us who hiked up there 2 or 3 times every summer. Well, I don't know whether you remember the fellow by the name of Bill Allen who had a cabin over there by North Shore Lodge, owned by Rudolph now. Bill Allen was the one who had the cabin first. Bill was quite a fisherman, surprisingly a fine physical specimen for a man his age. He would hike to Long Lake 2 or 3 times every summer to go fishing up there and I'm sure he was in his 60's when he was doing that but he was a tough man. He and his wife stayed in here all winter 3 or 4 winters, they stayed in all winter. W: He was retired then. G: Yeah, I don't know what his: I think he had been a railroad man.

.... would have been the hunter and the roamer but he was a house cat. He wouldn't leave the place at all, but the beautiful Angora cat; he would leave the cabin and sometimes be gone a week or 2 or 3 weeks and come back fat and sassy. He would kill gophers and squirrels and tramp the woods like a wild animal. He was a beautiful cat but when wintertime came he stayed around home. Bill Allen and his wife were fine people and they stayed up here all winter and cut a hole in the ice and fished. Before the snow was too deep they kept it scraped off and they were a great pair to ice skate, over in front of their cabin. They were a fine pair and their home was Emmett. W: When did they sell, would you guess? G: I can't remember but it would have been sometime during the war years. Between 1945 and 1950 somewhere. Before Rudolph's bought? They were there when the drowning occurred (Aug. 31, 1945).

W: Did anyone else stay there in the winter? G: Burt Bostwick always stayed up all winter and Bob Barr and Bill Hall stayed a couple of winters and Molly and Bill Kesler. There was anywhere from 6 to 10 people for a period of 4 or 5 winters that stayed up here together. W: Who was Hall? He was Bakers brother-in-law. W: He stayed at Bakers cabin? G: No, he had a cabin around there on North Shore Drive on the other side of North Shore Lodge, next door to where Kniefel's cabin is. W: The first one or the second one? G: The one toward the lodge. I don't know who has it now. But that one Bill Hall built, I don't know if his name was Bill or not (his name is Earl Hall). But anyway he built that one himself. He stayed in all winter. He was kind of a hermit type fellow. I remember one fall he took me in there to his cabin. He took my upstairs in his attic to show me his huckleberries. He would go out and days on end he would pick

huckleberries. He had a framework built up in his attic. It was covered with canvas and he would spread his huckleberries all over that canvas. Under that roof on a hot summer day, hot sunshine in September, it would dry those things. They would shrivel up just like a raisin. When they got dry and shriveled up he would put them in sacks and clean bags. When ever he wanted to make a pie he just took a handful out and put them in water and they would pump up and just as nice as fresh huckleberries. He would do that ever fall, he would do that for muffins and hot cakes and pie all winter long. He would have several gallons of them all dried. When they pumped up they, a handful would make a bowl of them. W: There don't seem to be too many huckleberries around here any more. G: This year there sure isn't. Some years, I don't know the reason why, some years we get a real good crop and might go three or four years and hardly get any and then another year we get all kinds of them. Year before last was a real good year. Last year there was just a few it was spotted here and there. I can't find any this year yet. I haven't been able to run across any so I'm afraid they all must have got frozen. But I thought it would be a good year for them, we had so much moisture and I didn't think we had any cold weather this spring. We might have had a freeze at the wrong time.

Note:

Three western folk songs are played at the end of the tape.

This audiotape is a real treasure. Isn't it wonderful that Charles Gill and Richard Wilkie took time to record these stories in July of 1978.