

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #330 - Sides A/B/C/D/E

Subject: John & Florence Scharff

Place: Scharff Home - Hines, Oregon

Date: July 9, 1992

Interviewer: Harriet Kofalk

This interview done by Harriet Kofalk was made possible by the Oregon Council for the Humanities. (Sound quality with Mr. Scharff is not very good, difficult at times to understand.)

HARRIET KOFALK: This is an interview with John Scharff on July 9th, 1992, in Burns, Oregon. The question is to describe the refuge when he came to work for it.

JOHN SCHARFF: Well it was an old run-down dried up valley. And at that day and age of course there wasn't any cement, everything was like, the dams and so forth were wooden. In fact there wasn't, there wasn't a single dam on the Blitzen that was working at the time that I came here. And everything was, it had gone through, and was in this drought period in the '30's there. There was so many parts of it that was producing anything in the way of hay. And so it, trenches were poor, everything on the place was run down; they'd been rented out and abused. Of course they have the --- the first thing we did was to build that dam (telephone rings) the Page Dam there at the head of the valley, we built that there the winter of '34, '35. So, that was '34, '35. Let's see, I guess that's right, it would in '34, and '35, or '35 and '36 that it was done. I just ---

HARRIET: Bailey said that it was over-grazed. Did that change then, with the dam?

JOHN: There was no question about that it was over-grazed. The whole country was.

There was no way but --- but that wasn't anything new in this country. Peter Skene Ogden when he came through this country in '84, why he had a terrible time finding horse feed. And then he also, there wasn't any game, the Indians were starving. And then John Worth came back through about six years later, and the lakes were all filled with water, and the Indians were prosperous and there was game in the country.

So that's the way that --- and the Blitzen Valley, the ditches and all the head gates, or most of the head gates were made with lumber and hadn't been used for a few years, and the squirrels kind of aerated all of them. (Laughter) But it was a sorry looking place.

HARRIET: What changes came, what changes came?

JOHN: What changes come?

HARRIET: Yeah, when you came.

JOHN: Well we had three two hundred man CC Camps there. And we had, after we got shaped up and had a real good organization of personnel, and then we begin to get some machinery and we trained a lot of boys on the, on like drag line operators and Cat operators. And had fence crews, had three fence crews running all the time. And things began to change pretty fast. It was ---

HARRIET: Was conservation a priority?

JOHN: Well I don't know as it was at the time, we were more concerned in getting the water system built, and fencing, and that sort of thing. Although we had a botanist, or somebody at each one of the camps that was looking after the --- of course we had our, we got our office built there and then we had to move everything left at the central headquarters. We had a biologist, but what could he do, see, at that time? But we began to, after four or five years why then we begin to, things began to change. And we got an awful lot of work done in the way of canals and ditches.

HARRIET: In what ways did it change? Was the water for stock or wildlife?

JOHN: Well there wasn't much. Of course the river provided water there pretty much for the valley. And then they had pumps, pitcher pumps and shallow wells. Anyhow, of course at Five Mile there was that big spring, and then that big spring there just above the "P" Ranch buildings. And the spring there by the lake at the refuge headquarters. And they furnished quite a lot of water.

Most of the wintertime there they were pumping water for livestock, with shallow wells and pumps. And they had those gasoline pumps that they --- could water a lot of stock with all that.

Of course at that time we had a generation of people that didn't know much more than to work with their hands, and improvise some way to get along. I think more so than today.

HARRIET: Yes, yeah. Refuge since 1907, I believe, that you were its first manager.

JOHN: No, they always had a man there. George Benson, when I wasn't there, George was --- single employee that they had had for years. And of course about the only thing that he could do was to kind of keep a record of their observation of what the birds were doing. He had no, nothing to do with the livestock at all.

So there was --- water has increased over the years. We got, like the year, the winter we built that Page Dam there at ---

FLORENCE SCHARFF: That's the dam that is at the head of the valley.

JOHN: We were washed out twice in the process of building that dam. We had our forms washed out twice. And I bought a big lambing tent from a sheep outfit that was moving out, and we were able to cover the area in which we worked, and then we built some barrel stoves, and so ---

But we had a very fine crew. People that knew how to work, of course at that day and age, there was more people that knew how to work than there is today. (Laughter)

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: And there was no problem. We had some real fine builders there. The fellow that was in charge of building that dam, I think he could do anything in the way of --- something went wrong, why there was a way to fix it and take care of it. We had several of those kind.

And we had some, had three local fellows that had gone broke in the cow business, and they were really good help too, you know, and they were glad to have a job. And people had an attitude that was quite different then I'm quite sure then today, they like that. I just don't think that we can go through a sweat like that again.

HARRIET: How was their attitude different?

JOHN: Well their attitude was that the country didn't owe them a living. That they were certainly --- and willing to work for it, if they hadn't had a job.

As an example, I needed some, five hundred fence posts right quick, and I wanted juniper posts. And so there was a homesteader over in Catlow Valley there, and I went over to see him to see if he could cut some, five hundred posts. He said yes, he sure could. And so he did an excellent job, and he done it in a hurry. And then I give him another five hundred, and he told me afterwards, he said that, "You don't know," he said, "we were down to where we didn't have anything to eat, and I didn't have a job." He said, "By virtue of that job I went down to the store and got the credit to ---" And he said, "The kids got their belly full for a time." But, you know, well he said, "That was a life saver as far as I was concerned." And I never had a chance to, I just accidentally run on to him down in Ontario, and we were both visiting the same fellow that was sick at the time. And he told me, he said, "You know John, I've been waiting all these years to thank you for what you did for me during the depression." He said, "That we were on the verge of starvation." And he said, "I had no gasoline," he said, "to run my car." But --- and that

was typical of a lot of people.

And of course in that day and age why there was a five-cent bounty on rabbits, and there was a lot of people that made a living on trapping rabbits.

HARRIET: Yeah. Bailey says there were no fewer after the bounty. (Laughter)

FLORENCE: Well I never saw so many rabbits in my life.

JOHN: No, that's right. She remembers them eating up her lawn and flowerbeds.

HARRIET: You knew the land, is that why you came to the refuge?

JOHN: Well I was just --- worked for the Forest Service, and I had the experience for instance of transferring from John Day to Agness, the Agness Ranger District in 1923, by horseback. And I liked the Forest Service, and I always had a good job, but I was getting more and more inside.

And I was assistant supervisor on the Fremont Forest, and was acting forest supervisor there on that forest for quite some time. And, but I think one of the things that kind of entered into it was that the National Geographic, there was an article on Steens Mountain in 1934, and I read that and I had heard a lot about that, about the mountain and this country. And so I never give it any thought about leaving or anything.

But one day there was a total stranger walked in my office and asked me if I was Mr. Scharff, and he said, "I've been instructed to stop and see me and see if I would be interested to come over." And they had just bought --- but I was, that was in July, and they bought that place in May. And so he said that, "You think it over," and so he let go.

Well I talked it over with Florence, and of course she wasn't exactly --- but I too, I kind of blew hot and cold on it for a while, but finally I decided I would take it. At least I would be outside.

And so I came over there and we were assured that we were going to have a new house in which to live in, and in what, six months wasn't it?

FLORENCE: Twenty-two months later they had a new house for us to move into.

JOHN: It was two years later that they got that house built.

FLORENCE: And in that day and age ---

JOHN: I could see the possibilities, and I always had a ---

FLORENCE: It was a real challenge.

JOHN: --- good job in the Forest Service. Like over on the coast there during the CC days, I had five CC Camps on the coast there. And I was --- made his way back, the big fire there ---

FLORENCE: The Tillamook Burn.

JOHN: Huh?

FLORENCE: Tillamook Burn. The Tillamook fire you're thinking about, John.

JOHN: Yeah, Tillamook Burn. I moved two CC Camps up on that. But I was on the third line of defense, and I never did see any fire. But I don't know, there probably aren't too many people living now that was on that fire.

HARRIET: What did they buy in May, was it 1936, '34, somewhere in there?

FLORENCE: Well we came here in '35, and they had purchased that before we came here. That was the upper Blitzen Valley.

HARRIET: Okay. It was a refuge since 1907, what did they buy in May?

JOHN: Well they bought the sixty some thousand acres there in the Blitzen Valley.

HARRIET: Oh, they added to it.

JOHN: Yeah, that was ---

FLORENCE: They bought that from Swift and Company.

JOHN: From the --- 64,000 acres in that deal.

HARRIET: What do you remember about Bailey?

JOHN: Well, not very much.

HARRIET: I understand, yes.

JOHN: Now I want to ask you, did he live in Salem?

HARRIET: No. He worked for the U.S. Biological Survey, lived in D.C. And he wrote, he wrote ---

JOHN: About that mess, uh huh.

HARRIET: Yeah, The Fauna of Oregon.

JOHN: I remember him at Hart Mountain one time.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: I was at Hart Mountain when he was there, and I just have a hazy recollection of him. And the reason I asked you if he lived in Salem, I had a, I can't think of this fellow's name, he was also a wildlife man and he got around a lot. But he had a stroke, and was partially paralyzed, and his son and maybe a daughter involved too, well they had a, fixed up to where he had real fine quarters and everything, but he couldn't get out and wander around. And I used to get letters from him asking me if I couldn't come down and make arrangements with his family to treat him better than they were, the way he put it, you know. (Laughter) And I, but I can't think of his name, and I couldn't connect it with Bailey either. But I just, that's why I asked once if he was --- And I knew this fellow that I speak of, I can't call his name now, but I knew him quite well.

But I remember meeting Bailey at Hart Mountain. But I think, it seems to me like I met him one time some other place. It may have been on the Sheldon Refuge down in Nevada. Because shortly after they acquired that, why I was down there. There was a lot of people that --- It might be that ---

HARRIET: The refuge was to protect wildlife?

JOHN: Well yes, I think that's right. Of course at that time why waterfowl was having a tough place to find a little water to drink. And they were buying up quite a bit of land to get

the water.

HARRIET: Because of drought?

JOHN: Yes, yeah, because of drought, yeah. Well you take like the Blitzen in '34 they just barely went up the Upper Valley a little bit, you know, it was limited to what --- And they was, I think five or six years that this river here never reached Malheur Lake.

HARRIET: Huh.

JOHN: Yeah, there was a prolonged drought. Of course the tree range and everything has a history, it tells us that this had happened before.

HARRIET: Uh huh, cycles.

JOHN: So it happened again. And maybe the next time it is going to be worse from what they tell us. So it was --- But at the time they bought the --- That was true in many areas, they bought a property in order to get the water.

HARRIET: With stock having a hard time, how did they justify protecting wildlife?

JOHN: Well I think at that time there was a kind of an awakening on natural resources that hadn't existed too much before. And people that were interested in waterfowl, or fishing for waterfowl, and of course the same thing was true with big game, and I think it was just a kind of a general change of thinking, and we better make some provisions for the future.

HARRIET: Looking back now, what would you do differently?

JOHN: Well I'll tell you, I'd probably would just revert to herding sheep and stay there.
(Laughter)

FLORENCE: John.

HARRIET: Your priority was helping people. We could use CCC now, or could we?

JOHN: The youth of today wouldn't do that.

HARRIET: Hard work. But an environmental awakening now too, I see.

JOHN: I think that's right, yeah. There is an awakening among a lot of people that is kind of getting carried away in some areas, because money is so easy. But I can't go along with some of the things that's being done, but there isn't anything I'm going to do about it.

HARRIET: Yeah, or me. They don't have hands on skills, and no one to teach them. Where did you learn?

FLORENCE: It makes me think of a little story after we retired. Why we had a real bad week, and John just about had it taken care of when he retired, and we was going to be in the cabin up on the mountain. And he was going up there one day, or coming down from there, I've forgotten which, and they had a group of youth out working in the field. And so John had noticed there were a few of those weeds still left, and they hadn't done anything about them, so he waded the canal and went across and visited with these kids, and told them who he was, and so on and so forth. And so he pointed this weed out, and he said, "Now this is very, very detrimental," and he said, "I worked on it ever since I have lived here," and he said, "we have it down to this one small area," and he said, "you should dig that up and take it back to the refuge headquarters and put it in the burn barrel." And one of these smart kids said, "Well that isn't on my job description." So John said, "I decided I'd never stop and suggest anything to any young people anymore." (Laughter)

HARRIET: Uh huh, yeah.

JOHN: Well, I don't know how to answer that. In the case of when I was growing up, why everybody had a job, had his work.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And it's, and if you're interested you like to try something else, I don't know I ... I had no idea I was going to ever go into the Forest Service. But the high school professor that I went to had spent some time in the Forest Service, and he thought it was a great life, so he decided that I ought to take a job in the lookout for a summer and see how I

liked it. And that's how I got started in the Forest Service. Up until that time, up till several years after I was in, had worked for the Forest Service, why I was still going to be a rancher and have sheep. I still would like to, that basic kind of a business. But there again, can't get the labor. When we first come here, there was over a hundred thousand sheep that summered in the Steens Mountain, and it showed it too. They had as many cattle as they have now, and a big deer population, and it was pretty hard on the land. Unfortunately there was no administration then. And if we had started with some sort of administration the same time that the forest was created, or back, it could have been different.

And I --- but like today now, people came over from, well like you could just kind of tell where the people was from. Now you take like where Florence was raised why they were Scotch, there was a Scotch settlement. Down at Lakeview it's Irish. This other way it's Basque.

And this country here, was those Basque people would come over, those people they'd get a job herding sheep, in a few years they'd get an interest, and they had no investment in land, or there was a, a soft way to do it. But the minute the Taylor Grazing Act come into effect in 1934, of course that was the year of the Act, it was five years later that it become workable. Why then this sheep business just dried up because of the itinerant operators. They could get out with some money, and they just, they didn't have enough, or didn't want to buy commensurate property as base.

And there was a lot of the people that made, walked away from the sheep business for a good many thousand dollars, yet never did own a foot of land, you know, to operate on. It was a serious situation. We're paying for that to some extent today. And --
- I don't know.

HARRIET: Even with administration, so many stories about overgrazing, how did you

administer that?

JOHN: Well of course where we were in pastures, it was a pretty easy thing to do.

HARRIET: Count.

JOHN: And there were areas that --- well it was --- as far as the livestock use on the refuge, why they're a valuable tool if they're used right. And that's, unfortunately, that's something that the present day administrators don't see. But this public lands, where there --- that have been abused ---

Well you take like Steens Mountain, there was hundreds of acres, thousands of acres that didn't look like it would ever grow grass again. It's coming with beautiful grasslands today. And it's sagebrush, well the old time sheep men used to burn the sagebrush off in the fall, you know, you'd look up there and there would be a half a dozen fires burning. And it's surprising how that grass comes up in those burns.

Last year, last summer, I went with a committee that has to do with land use on the federal land, and we went to a rancher where he had a section of land, he burned it off. And then that got away from him and he burned a couple thousand acres of B.L.M. and they were kind of concerned about it. But that land, the ... grass was that high, and then the under story down through there, it was, you could imagine what it was.

And I know that, we have some land up there, and I took the sagebrush off one time, but we were in a position there with our property that we couldn't use it the way we wanted to because we were co-mingled with the government, still are. Finally straightened out some exchange, but they don't have enough people to get ... of all this stuff, you know. They ---

HARRIET: Wasn't it hard to tell ranchers to graze fewer head?

JOHN: A lot of ranchers that were, that had ranches, were concerned about the situation, but they had no way of protecting themselves. It was up until the Taylor Grazing Act

come into effect, that was the way --- it showed some increase, but it's still --- Well for instance a lot of this land that hadn't been protected for a good many years, they planted crested wheat. Well now that's no good, because that's bringing in something new that wasn't a native here, and so --- But you can go up here to the store and buy fruit and vegetables that's coming from foreign countries too.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And so it's all right to feed the people that, but don't feed the sheep grass, you see. But we've got, we've got thousands of acres of non-producing land that could be taken care of, but politics, and fear, and everything else that enters into it makes it a pretty tough situation. So people are around buying ---

For instance we've got several sections of land up there, and we had one piece of land, when we first bought it, why it was just open range and we rented it. But later on why we decided we wanted to do something to perpetuate the work that Russell Jackman had done over the years, and so we just put that piece of 400 acres there, turned it over to the college to sell. And it set there for ten or fifteen years, I guess, we just kept renting it. And when this big bus come, why the college put a price of five hundred dollars an acre on it and they just bought it like that. And so the college got a pretty nice piece of money out of it, to do something, and they're doing something with it. I'm involved with some of the other things that they are doing.

So it used to be, you know, lots of that land that sold for, well fifteen hundred dollars a section, or two thousand dollars was a big price. And of course now you couldn't touch it, because the government wants to get all of it. In fact --- There is part of it they'll be quite awhile getting I imagine.

FLORENCE: Of course if the government wants it bad enough they'll condemn it.

HARRIET: Right, and then they take it, yeah.

FLORENCE: That's right.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: We hope that never happens on the Steens, but it's a very grave possibility.

HARRIET: Yeah. What was life like on the fire lookout?

JOHN: Well I'll tell you that was back when things were pretty primitive.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: I was the first lookout on Field's Peak, that's down in the Mount Vernon country.

FLORENCE: That's on the Malheur Forest.

JOHN: So the ranger there took me up there with my outfit, I had summer supplies, grub, and my bedroll.

FLORENCE: That was before sleeping bags.

JOHN: And staff compass for a fire fighter. Had an iron telephone we hung on a tree. We had about ten miles of insulated wire, World War surplus. And ... said that down here about a mile and a half, two miles, a telephone line. And he says, "You can lay this insulated wire down, and when you come to a horse trail or something, why be sure and cover it up, or make it possible for them to step over it." Then he said, "If you drop over on this side there is a spring down here, and you can take a line down there and get a ground." And he said of course, he told me he said, "Whenever you find a fire well be sure and get a compass reading on it from this point." And so he said, "Well when you get hooked up why give me a call."

And so after about five or six days I gave him a call. And I had a tarp for a summer camp, they didn't have tents those days, at least I didn't get a tent. But that was a light season, and I wasn't up there too long, I think probably oh two and a half months or so. But there again, we didn't know any different.

HARRIET: Right.

JOHN: And it was no hardship. I remember my grandfather made a couple trips across the plains; he was on the survey prior to the civil war to Pikes Peak. And went back to Pennsylvania after being gone two years, and had all that money that he had accumulated while they were gone. So then there was too many people there, so he had a kind of a taste of, part quenched, so he got himself a bride and went to Kansas City and outfitted and came west. And it was --- I'll always remember ---

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JOHN: I recall him telling some of his experiences to a group of youngsters that had a teacher that had brought them down there to the house. And so the teacher said, "Well Dan," said, "that was really a lot of hardship, wasn't it?" And he said, "No, it wasn't no hardship connected with it at all, because that's the only way of life that we knew." It was just ---

And so we can look back now, you see, or a hundred years from now and see how primitive we are today.

HARRIET: I hope so. (Laughter)

FLORENCE: I don't know about that.

HARRIET: What wildlife were with you, and any people visit on the lookout?

JOHN: You mean there on the lookout?

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: Well there was ... squirrels, and there was sage grouse, and in that day and age there was very few deer in the country. I saw some deer; in fact I killed a buck when I was there on the lookout. I cut a quarter of it, and give the rest to the sheep outfit there. But there were very few deer there.

I know I herded sheep in Murderers Creek five months, and there was a place

where the deer later showed up by the thousands, and I only saw three or four deer that summer. That was the summer of 1920. And it changed in a hurry, there was explosions of deer, it happened all over.

I know when we lived in Lakeview why they were getting ready; they were building up real fast. They already had built up in this Murderers Creek country. And one thing they did was, those thousands of deer, and they ruined an awful lot of good country, as far as the browse plants were concerned. And you could tell just, when you go up on Steens Mountain, when you come to the first bitter brush why you know that wasn't there when, or was there, unless it was covered up with snow or something, the deer couldn't get to it was the reason it was there today. And that's true in the John Day country. Well there is a lot of country that's nothing, never come back again in the way of browse.

But I know they, that camp down there checked out, hunting there, over four thousand deer were killed. And they estimated that that many died that winter in that area. And of course the Lake County had the same situation as we had here. So it's ---

HARRIET: It's another form of overgrazing.

JOHN: But the deer numbers now are down quite a lot again.

HARRIET: You don't do well manipulating either --- can we leave them alone? That doesn't seem to work either.

FLORENCE: Nope.

JOHN: I don't know.

HARRIET: With a sense of ethics --- I want to see if I can get an attitude --- The attitude was different, the sense of ethics differed then.

JOHN: Well I don't know just how to answer that, but I think in some areas it certainly changed, and maybe it isn't for the better.

HARRIET: How does this country feel now, compared to when you first saw it?

JOHN: Well I think maybe I might answer that this way. We lived there thirty some years and never had a lock on anything. And today everything is locked. If it isn't, why it probably disappears. And you know you think --- I know as an example I had friends down in California, he's an artist, a painter, and he had a hobby of looking for arrowheads. And he used to, every year he'd come up into this country. And so he came by one day and he said, "I want to tell you of a very fine experience that I had down in Nevada, a place where I hunt arrowheads." He said, "I went in, there was a ranch there, and I wanted to kind of look some of their grounds over." So he said, "I went into this ranch and this lady was there alone, and told her what I wanted." Well she said, "You're just the fellow we're looking for." Said, "We've got to be gone for about a week, and we're looking for somebody to do the chores. She said, "You just move in and you can hunt arrowheads all you want to, but you've got to take care of the chickens and a few things like that, and a garden to irrigate and so forth." And he said, "Now where would you go, a total stranger, to do that, you know." Said, "They'd never seen me before and had no idea who I was. But the fact I was out there hunting arrowheads, why I had to be a good fellow."

HARRIET: Uh huh, uh huh. Yeah. How about the land and wildlife now?

JOHN: Well that's a difficult one to say. But looking back, we have a lot of changes in the animals, as well as the birds. You don't have the --- like on Steens Mountain, that used to be a fine birding area, and we'd have several species of hawks. And we had, I know immediately adjacent to the refuge we had, I think four eagle nests. They don't ... anymore. You very seldom see a hawk. You go and --- and we used to be able to, especially when they were putting up the hay, and they would have these big four-horse bucks, and the bunches, when they started moving those, why young hawks would fly around picking up the mice, you know. We don't have any rodents like we used to have.

And I don't know, it's a complete change. Why, I don't have the slightest idea. But I can't say that it's for the good.

HARRIET: Yeah. Poison was much used, yet rodents helped as well as hurt. Now we reap.

JOHN: Well we had, of course poison was pretty well outlawed quite a while ago. And it's just like trapping coyotes. And we had a trapper and he took --- I know of one year over five hundred coyotes off the refuge. And today if you see one in several months, why it's a rarity. But when you stop and think of the food chain is where he couldn't catch the ... And I don't know what the answer is, because it's so different. You rarely see a mouse, and there used to be, I remember when we had that die off of the meadow mouse, they died by the thousands. They ate up a lot that year there at the refuge headquarters. But you'd look out there on the sidewalk, and they'd be one that was in the process of dying, and maybe three or four eating on him. Had regular cannibals. And we haven't had it since. I don't remember what year that was.

FLORENCE: I don't remember either, John.

JOHN: But it's --- if you see an eagle, why it's a great thing to see nowadays, to see an eagle. And hawks are --- our most common hawks used to be --- you rarely see one. The swainson was the most common hawk I had, and probably we could have found a dozen nests ... immediately adjacent to the refuge. But, let's see that nest we had there at the, that was at our house.

FLORENCE: It's ... the hawks built it.

JOHN: Was that a red tail?

FLORENCE: No, it wasn't a red tail.

JOHN: No, that was an owl, a great horned owl.

FLORENCE: We had an owl there at the refuge for years.

JOHN: And just to show you how thinking goes, one of the managers, the first manager followed me, why he took that nest down, he said it wasn't natural. (Laughter)

HARRIET: Oh. Did many naturalists visit in the early days?

JOHN: Well yes, we had quite a lot of people visit there. Of course I told Florence there, I said she is keeping a short order house here. But people would come from great distances with the idea of staying with us. And we didn't know for sure when --- well as an example, when the new bird ---

FLORENCE: The chuckers.

JOHN: Yeah, when the chuckers, when they first had the first season of the chuckers, well one of the neighbor boys brought us two chuckers, wasn't it? And he said, "Now you cook those the night you don't have company." Because he said --- Well Florence selected the night, and by the time she got dinner ready, why there was six of us there, so we ate chuckers. (Laughter) And we enjoyed that. Another time we'd been gone several days and we came home and there was a note in the kitchen, said, "Well we waited around here quite awhile, we got tired waiting, so we went to bed." Had no idea who it was until the next morning. (Laughter)

HARRIET: Did they expect you to tour them?

FLORENCE: Oh yes.

HARRIET: I'm sure.

JOHN: Well there was lots of visitors, we had lots of visitors. And there was ---

HARRIET: The naturalists, to tour the nests, etc.?

JOHN: Yeah, they --- Well of course most of the people that I toured were employees from Washington, D. C. Although we had groups at that time, we had about three groups every year out of Oregon State University. And we always had a biologist, and he was a biologist just himself --- we had somebody to go with them, and they looked forward to

that, you know, and expected it, and that's one of the things we were there for.

HARRIET: Did CCC include education?

JOHN: Yes.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: Yeah, they had classes, and it was a learning situation. You take --- we had so many kids that was off of the farms from the Midwest when they had that drought, you know. And a large percentage of those boys were sending thirty dollars of their thirty-five dollars home, out of their check, you know. They were actually, their family was eating on their, they were making a living out of the CC program. That was one of the finest programs that ever ---

FLORENCE: That the government has ever had.

JOHN: At the time.

HARRIET: Yeah, better than college.

FLORENCE: Yes.

HARRIET: Because it was practical.

JOHN: I --- no, I can't say that, we had quite a few, one and two year, three year ... kids.

FLORENCE: In the CCC, the families couldn't send them home, they continued to send them to school.

JOHN: A great number of our supervising personnel, why we picked a lot of those right out of the ranks then.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: As an example, one day after the war, why --- well quite a few years after the CC program, why there was a fellow came in, and came in the office, and he said, "Well I didn't expect to see you here." And it was several years after, and he said, "Come out here, I want to show you something." And he led me out there to a service building there;

there was a corner stone about that big, and so wide. And he said, "You see that rock?" And I said, "Yeah I can see it." Well he said, "I cut that rock." No he said, "I got that rock out of the pit, I shaped that rock, I laid that rock." And he said --- and these buildings here. He said, "I become, the rock, that's the way I made my living for years, was rock." And he said, "I turned the business over to my ---" He said, "During the war I met a girl in San Francisco, and later on after the war was over why we were married, and I established a rock business." And I said, "I learned it right here on these buildings, right here, learned a good trade."

Well that was true of a lot of things. We tried, just like drag line operators, we worked three shifts, we'd have three crews. In the summertime we'd usually, a lot of the time we'd have three crews of trainees, you know, that was working on the draglines. And the same way with the fences and everything else, we had learning crews, you know.

HARRIET: Yeah. Draglines were for sagebrush?

FLORENCE: Oh no, digging canals and ditches.

HARRIET: Okay.

FLORENCE: That type of thing.

HARRIET: Dig ditches. The draglines were to dig ditches? What were draglines?

JOHN: Yeah, we used the draglines; we put the river --- the channel there for about thirty-six miles. And then we built those ditches and ... We had a lot of canals with, well ten, twelve, fourteen feet to the bottom, you know, and then we used the drag lines for ... Yeah, there was, and it was surprising the number of people that were looking for employees. They came to us for, said we need a --- well a rancher called me up one day, he said, "We need a drag line, or a Cat operator, and have you got one?" I said, "Yeah, I'll send you a good one."

And this boy was, he hadn't been there too long, but he was just a natural. And so

he went over at that place and wore out two Cats, during the work for that outfit before he went home. But we had just quite a lot of them. At one time I think there were seven CC boys in business here in Burns. And one of them is Hale Baird and still lives here, see him quite often. He was, well an unusual youngster, and he wanted to learn shorthand, and so the clerk taught him enough shorthand, and then finally I would give him my dictation.

HARRIET: Uh huh. What role can the refuges play now to help heal the earth? That's a big one.

JOHN: I just don't know what --- how you would answer that. It's a different world. You know on the people working, and --- But, you know, it's human nature I guess, you go onto a new job, why the first thing you want to do is change it around. And that's what's happened at the refuge, they've changed the whole operation around on the --- it's certainly --- a new man now --- When I first came there I spent thirty days a horseback, just riding out on all the old fence lines, and the property, just to get acquainted and see what --- and meeting the neighbors. I'd ride out of my way once in awhile to meet a new neighbor and have a visit with him, and get acquainted with them. And it all paid dividends.

HARRIET: Sure.

JOHN: But I had no more idea than the Chinaman, you know, what made a refuge. And of course we learned a lot there ... two years.

HARRIET: Were any women active?

JOHN: Well we had, of course we had clerks. And they weren't active in the CC program at all.

HARRIET: That was all men, all men?

JOHN: We had a number of clerks. See what we did, we had all three camps, we

centralized it with our office, and we did the buying and all that. So we had the clerk from each camp. And of course it worked out real good.

HARRIET: Was the Field Station later? Was that part of the CCC, maybe you know.

FLORENCE: It wasn't part of the CCC, it came later. I've forgotten who was the president of the United States when that came into effect. I should remember too, but it just doesn't come to me. Anyway it was ---

JOHN: Well yeah, that Field Station there, it happened just about a year before I left here.

FLORENCE: Yeah.

JOHN: It's ---

FLORENCE: Well we had Lucile Housley there then.

JOHN: You see what happened ---

FLORENCE: Instead of coming here, why it would have been much better ---

JOHN: They had a, I can't even think of the name of those camps. That first camp ---

FLORENCE: Well I can't remember the title either, John. It's changed, it's changed from what it was when it first started, and I can't remember what it was back then.

JOHN: And it was a program ---

FLORENCE: Well it was supposed to be for educational ---

JOHN: Can't think what it was called.

HARRIET: Well one of those economic things.

FLORENCE: One of those CC Camps.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JOHN: And it was a complete flop as far as I was concerned. For instance they brought an awful lot of those colored kids up here. And they formed little units, you know, they'd be three or four of them together. They'd say some White boy come in and say you pay

us, we protect you.

HARRIET: Uh huh, uh huh.

JOHN: And so that was a complete failure. And then the Field Station, they're the ones that fell heir to those buildings. They built that camp there. But it was a terrible disappointment to me, because I thought about the old CC days, you know.

HARRIET: Sure.

JOHN: And it ---

FLORENCE: Well they had no discipline; they couldn't do anything to discipline them at all.

HARRIET: The Field Station is private, taking over the education function it seems like.

FLORENCE: Yes, uh huh. No, they have a good program now.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: It's very educational. And certainly it has improved a lot since Lucile Housley has been there.

HARRIET: She is a real go-getter.

FLORENCE: Yes, she certainly is. Yeah, she is just great.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: Well that program, I don't remember what they called it, but it was kind of universal, and I think most all agencies of the government supported those.

HARRIET: Uh huh. Bailey spent two years out in '87, and sent money home to the family farm. A pattern then?

JOHN: I think it was pretty much a pattern with those CC programs. It was surprising the amount of those kids that sent ... money home.

HARRIET: Yeah, that's a different attitude.

FLORENCE: It's certainly different than they have now.

HARRIET: Yeah. And a different ethic. I don't want to over tire him, so you keep me ---

JOHN: Yeah, that's right, it's a different situation today.

HARRIET: Yeah, it's a different attitude and a different ethic.

JOHN: Now it is usually the ---

HARRIET: The reverse.

JOHN: The other way around. You just wonder, you come down here and see these school kids come into the store down there, they have a lunch counter, buy a three-dollar lunch, you know.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And don't think anything about it.

HARRIET: Maybe living outdoors was a difference.

FLORENCE: Well, it could have been.

JOHN: Well it was, and out of town.

HARRIET: Yeah, but there was a connection to the land.

JOHN: That makes a real difference.

HARRIET: Connection with the land.

JOHN: Had its effects all right, there is no question about it. You know it's difficult to say, or know how much the CC program

--- But it hasn't been too many years since that fellow from Illinois flew out here.

FLORENCE: Yeah, uh huh.

JOHN: And he was only here a couple days because he had to go back, he left his dogs with the neighbors. But he was a fellow that had never married, and he said, "You know Mr. Scharff I came out here," he said, "the happiest part of my life was being in the CC Camps." And ---

HARRIET: Uh huh, uh huh. Well even before the CCC, as you treasured having a job

outdoors, and Bailey did too.

FLORENCE: Oh yes, I should say so.

JOHN: Yeah, that's right. Personally, why I didn't want anything else.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Even in the Forest Service, not outside enough.

JOHN: Well you take in the days when I was in the Forest Service; of course you had a different situation. You take on the Malheur Forest when I came back here as a ranger at the Prairie City District, and there was five of we rangers, and three in the supervisors office, and that was the year long personnel. Eight of us on a forest. And then in the summertime why we would hire lookouts, and short term employees, and have a little road crew or trail crew.

But that's --- the first ranger district that I had down on the Rogue River, of course it was, well thirty miles to the nearest wagon road where our station was. And I don't know, there was just a different attitude about the Forest Service. The jobs we had, worked for, and seemed secure, and seemed to ... But ---

HARRIET: Can you expand on that?

JOHN: Well it, a lot of it is individual, what you like.

HARRIET: Not many would work thirty miles from a road.

FLORENCE: Not even way back when.

HARRIET: Were you different from other Forest Service then?

JOHN: Oh, you just took it in stride. But you take, like on the Prairie City District, I'd take one day every month to wind up the office work, and the rest of the time we were outside. Had a nice string of saddle horses, and it was a great life.

HARRIET: Uh huh, uh huh. Do you know Bailey's book? This is his fauna, his life of the mammals in Oregon.

JOHN: No, I really couldn't tell you much about Bailey.

HARRIET: Yeah. Did you meet C. Hart Marion, his boss?

JOHN: He was one of the old timers, the biological survey.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: Steens Mountain, 9354 feet.

HARRIET: The like zones by altitude, and he has Steens Mountain as the representative of the high altitude that he studied here.

FLORENCE: I'd like to find a book on that.

HARRIET: Yeah, I'd like, this is a loan copy from a man in Eugene.

JOHN: I can't say that I did. I could have, but it would be just a casual ---

HARRIET: Yeah. This is the grizzly; the only specimen of the grizzly was at Malheur, 1930.

FLORENCE: We came here in '35.

HARRIET: Oh, so you probably didn't see, or know about that, yeah, the Malheur grizzly.

FLORENCE: I've never heard any of the old timers even speak of it.

HARRIET: Uh huh, it was one specimen. I made a Xerox of that page; I thought he might like to have it. He could read it at leisure. I just thought he might know something about that. This is page 329 in The Oregon Fauna.

FLORENCE: I had never heard anyone say anything about grizzlies.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: Yes, I knew about that.

HARRIET: Uh huh. And then here on the Steens, the next page talks about the grizzlies on the Steens.

JOHN: Well I never heard of a grizzly or a bear up there.

HARRIET: Uh huh, on Steens.

JOHN: There was a bear seen at Malheur Lake one time while we were there. But there

is an occasional cougar that has been recorded up there.

HARRIET: Uh huh. What's your most unusual recollection on the refuge?

TAPE 2 - SIDE C

HARRIET: Tape two with John Scharff. Okay, okay.

JOHN: I just don't know how I'd answer that.

HARRIET: Do you have a favorite recollection or story?

FLORENCE: A total blank here.

JOHN: I ---

HARRIET: That's a hard question. If you were to go back in time to the first time you set foot on the refuge, did you know you'd be there so long?

JOHN: I had no idea. Well I had no idea of how long I would be here. Had several opportunities to leave. One day pulled rank, and a fellow from Washington, he said, "We're processing your papers to move to Washington." So I said, "Well just who the hell wants to go to Washington?"

HARRIET: Good for you.

JOHN: He stopped a minute, he said, "You mean your turning it down?" And I said, "That's right." And he said, "Well now this may be your last chance." And I said, "Well just make that a promise." And so it went.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: He had plenty of opportunities to go to other refuges.

HARRIET: So it felt like home, huh?

FLORENCE: Well it was a real challenge to him. It really was a challenge.

HARRIET: Yeah, so it felt like home, or the best challenge?

JOHN: Yeah, it was ... like home. It was home to us, and friends and neighbors, and

relatives, and a lot of fine people. And I was just thinking the other day about the people I've ... And it was, I wouldn't know where to go and see some of it, and know that ... And so --- but I worked with a fine group of people ...

HARRIET: Back to ethics and the passenger pigeons. Over hunting, did the men; do you recall the changes and attitude toward hunting?

Bailey wrote some poignant recollections of the passenger pigeon, over hunting being such a problem. Because when they hunted ethically, things stayed in balance, and when they started taking them wholesale they disappeared in ten years. Buffalo the same way. But I'm trying to get a grasp on that change in the sense of ethics that took place during your lifetimes and mine too. But my hope is that people today can learn from this pattern of experience maybe, by hearing stories like your husband's.

FLORENCE: Well you'd think so.

HARRIET: You'd hope so maybe.

FLORENCE: But I don't know.

HARRIET: Anymore than we're ---

JOHN: It's been a change in the attitude towards hunting.

HARRIET: Has there?

JOHN: You wouldn't realize it if you were here during deer season when they first started out.

HARRIET: How?

JOHN: The number of hunters. The roads alive with hunters.

FLORENCE: You just can't believe the hunters that come in here.

HARRIET: I'm trying to understand the changes.

JOHN: Of course we've had, if we went back far enough, why I suppose maybe the skeletons and the things that they've picked up,

that there has been a big change over the hundreds of years and what was here. And I suppose that the first man was here, he would do it like a lot of the rest of the fellows now days, he went hunting and of course he depended on that.

HARRIET: Yes.

FLORENCE: Livelihood.

HARRIET: Or he only took what he could eat too.

JOHN: The early settlement of the country, why the people depended somewhat on fishing. I know my grandfather; he hadn't completed the gardening season without putting down a stone crock filled with fish. I can remember when the people along these little creeks always had a salmon trap in use. And that was part of their substance. Now, you can't find a salmon.

HARRIET: Huh uh. Well I'm trying to understand the changes in ethics. They only took what they could use.

JOHN: Well that's right to a large extent all right. I'm not so sure but what it's just a case of getting too many people.

HARRIET: That too.

FLORENCE: Well and then people are living much longer now.

HARRIET: But we're not taking just what we can use, even so.

FLORENCE: That's right, that's right.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: For some reason or other Harney County hasn't increased very much in population, but more and more it will.

HARRIET: Can't support --- Yeah.

JOHN: It's surprising the number of people, like in the John Day country where we grew up, we knew who lived on all those places. And of course we don't know anybody when

we go over there. But what is surprising, a large percentage of those people are out of California, come into Oregon.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: But people had a little money, come up and buy a little place, a house, and ---

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: So I can visualize that probably it's going to get worse instead of better.

HARRIET: Well they only took what they could use. When and how has that changed? Have you seen that change?

JOHN: Well I don't know what has changed. But I don't --- it's just like we used to leave everything, never think of locking up anything.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And --- but there was a dentist here in town, he had three children, and he went up on the Little Blitzen and camped for a week with the family, and ate all the fish they could eat, and when he come home why everybody had their fish. They doubled the --- what am I trying to say, they doubled the allowance that you could have ...

HARRIET: Oh, because they had eaten them as well as --- uh huh.

JOHN: Well a week, you can catch so many. And they bragged about it, you know, all these fish that they ate, and then they come home with a double number. And instead of ten apiece, why they had twenty apiece, and see there was five hundred fish.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And the stream shows it today, you see. Nothing like when we first come here. I remember I used to hike that country quite a bit, and then I had a friend that came every year for several years and we went up there and we'd catch maybe two fish for dinner in the evening. We had some barbless hooks and we'd go down through there and catch them and just release them.

HARRIET: Release them.

JOHN: Cut the line and they --- And we could catch sixteen, eighteen-inch trout in that stream. Now it's ---

FLORENCE: ...

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: Well it's just; those little streams can't stand that kind of abuse.

FLORENCE: Just can't ...

HARRIET: Connection with the land implies deeper values, spiritual if you will. This too has changed. Did you feel that? There is like a very subtle connection when you live on the land, and off the land.

JOHN: There is no question.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah.

JOHN: I can't visualize it getting any better.

HARRIET: Huh.

JOHN: Do you think it will?

HARRIET: I hope so.

JOHN: Well, we all hope so.

FLORENCE: We all hope that.

HARRIET: Do I visualize it? Yes, I visualize it, because I think that's how we can help it happen. In a sense it's like the vision you had of Malheur when you first came to it, you know.

JOHN: You're right in that respect, I grant you.

HARRIET: In a sense it's like your vision for Malheur, that created what it became.

JOHN: I think that's right. I spent many a days out in the valley there a horseback or afoot looking at what we might do to improve things. I had a crew that was just as

interested as I was.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: Well it's like now; they've got everybody on a forty-hour week payroll. Well ---

FLORENCE: You just can't ---

JOHN: --- this ---

HARRIET: The land is there twenty-four hours, yeah.

JOHN: There is no laboring man, like on a ranch or like on the refuge, the thing that's going to get the thing done in an eight hour day ---

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: ... And it is when that water is running why there is twice a day that those structures have to be checked and regulated to keep an even flow of water out over the nesting area. And it's, you don't do that on a forty-hour.

HARRIET: Yeah. Attitude again. What would you tell someone seeing the refuge for the first time, of its value?

JOHN: Well that's a difficult question. Certainly someone seeing it for the first time, why they could get different feelings about the different things there. A lot of people come there to the refuge, and it's kind of a comparative thing, you know. They compare it with something that they've seen someplace else. But

HARRIET: In other words, how would you share your vision? Keep you on your toes.

(Laughter)

JOHN: I just don't know. It depends on a kind of a person you're involved with. I don't think you could come up with an answer there that would hold ---

HARRIET: No, no --- pick one.

JOHN: Young people particularly.

HARRIET: All right. Pick one young one. Do you have children, grandchildren?

FLORENCE: No, we have no children.

HARRIET: Somebody --- no children. Pick one young one and talk to that one. An interested twenty-year-old maybe. If they were easy questions, I could have stayed home and written him a letter. (Laughter)

JOHN: Well I think you'd have to kind of form some kind of a rather quick opinion of the kind of a fellow you were visiting with ---

HARRIET: Sure.

JOHN: --- and talking with. And some persons right off, why you don't feel like that you can help them. Then there is other people that you could tell you're wasting your time.

HARRIET: Right, yeah, true again. You enjoy going to Steens with Elder Hostile. Any favorite stories you share with them? I've heard he spends all day telling them stories.

FLORENCE: I haven't gone on any of those trips with him, but he is a good storyteller. Like I was, where was I, Corvallis or someplace, oh I'm a P.E.O., and I was in Corvallis and my niece---

JOHN: Well I was asked to go with a group here, I guess it was last year, and so they were down at the station there, at the camp. And when I got in there, there was one man that was real overbearing, kind of belligerent type of fellow that, it was quite obvious very critical of --- And so I decided that it would be kind of interesting to maybe change him around to ...

And, but that evening when I, they stayed all night at Fish Lake and I came on home, they had a camp there. Very nice group of people, mostly those groups are made up of people with some age on them, you don't get too many young ones. And he was a man --- but he told me, he said, "I'm very grateful to you for taking to me like you did this morning, and a few things." Because he said, "After seeing this, and being with you for a

time," why he said, "I can see things in a different light than I did before." And it kind of makes you feel kind of good to think maybe once in awhile you win one.

HARRIET: Sure.

JOHN: But he was a very puffed up, belligerent type of fellow. I didn't think anything would change him; he was that type of fellow. And I think, they have a camp down there, and this lady that operates it, I think is just doing a swell job of reaching a lot of people that --- And of course she has groups in there that she doesn't think too much of too. But I think that she is doing a really good job. But I hope that she is able to continue. The last group that ---

FLORENCE: ...

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah.

JOHN: --- to continue that.

HARRIET: Do you tell them of the history, or animals, or ---

JOHN: Well it depends on the group a lot.

HARRIET: What they're interested in.

JOHN: Most of them are groups that are coming, and they're looking for something.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: And of course I try to give them a little history once in awhile, and that's kind of ...

HARRIET: Right, such as?

JOHN: Well it depends where we are. But --- and another thing too, you know, sometimes you have to justify something that you're telling people. And justify at least in your own mind, because there are so many different people. They sometimes open up a subject for you.

HARRIET: Yeah. ...

JOHN: Well, I'd say yes.

HARRIET: I understand. Do you know of any stories he's told, or thoughts he's shared that I can trigger asking so we'll have it on tape?

FLORENCE: The spur of the moment, I just can't come up with anything.

HARRIET: Yeah. Well maybe we should take a break for a minute; we'll turn this off.

(Pause)

The Forest Service is building a museum in Montana, is there any other --- here is some information that I brought, I will leave here for you. Is there any other historical recollection on that subject that you would like to share about your time in the Forest Service?

JOHN: I can't think of anything else that ---

HARRIET: After the lookout, where and how did you work?

JOHN: Well after the lookout, that was just a summer season.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: Of course I was under age yet, and then I spent two more summers. Winters in the sheep camp, and a few summers working for the Forest Service. One as a fireman, and the other I was patrolling an area where there was some thieving going on in cattle. I was supposed to catch a cattle thief, but I didn't get him.

And so then I took the examination, the fall of '21, and passed with a grade, I got 70.3, 70 was a passing grade. (Laughter) But it was one of those times that they had lots of surveying, and I'd never done anything like that before. But I, and that's all, was the fall that, the fall of '23 then there that I headed for the Siskiyou, got an appointment on the Siskiyou and went down there. I was just there two seasons, and then they transferred me to Prairie City. And I went from Prairie City to Lakeview, and then I spent a year --- let's see we were about a year down there on the CC program.

FLORENCE: Yes, it was.

JOHN: And they sent me down there to help organize it for just thirty days, and it took me a year to organize it.

FLORENCE: They wouldn't let you come home.

JOHN: So then we came back to the Fremont, and in the summertime why I got around to some of the places where they were having bad fires and stuff like that. And I got a, had a real good time in the Forest Service, I learned a lot, and never worked with a nicer group of people as there was at that time. And then when it kind of looked like maybe I made a mistake when I left there, why I ... and we got, really had an enjoyable ---

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: But I got in, almost, well I guess I got in a little over sixty years of government --- I sure wouldn't go back out there with it this time.

HARRIET: Bailey had forty-six years.

JOHN: If you don't know any better, why --- forty-six ---

HARRIET: Yeah, all with the Biological Survey.

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: Uh huh. Water rights were a big issue in the '30's.

JOHN: I guess I got in a little over fifty years.

FLORENCE: Yeah, I was thinking you kind of stretched it there. Just over fifty years that you were in the federal government.

HARRIET: There was the dam, what was the name of that dam, Page Dam?

FLORENCE: Page Dam, uh huh, that's the one at the head of the Blitzen Valley.

HARRIET: Page Dam, a way to deal with that.

JOHN: Well Page Dam had nothing to do with it, because the refuge had all the rights down to the edge of the lake. There was a few places there that they got some water out of the Blitzen. But we never had any problems on water. But it hadn't, when I come here

it hadn't been adjudicated. And so there was a big lawsuit pending, because so many of those homesteads that, around the edges that had been acquired, you know, that had varying water rights, and at least varying applications. And it was a real mess.

And then Diamond Valley, they were settling up ahead of the refuge, which would have taken quite a lot of the water. So there was an old attorney here that was, believed in settling more things out of court than he did in court. And so he called me in one day and told me, he said, "John this is going to be a stinking thing to handle." But he said that, "What do you think about, just all take the same year as ---" So I said, "Well that sounds real good to me." But he says, I said, "I have to clear it with Washington." So I got a hold of the powers that be in Washington, and they said, "Well we'll send a man out."

So nobody ever showed up, and they had the big meeting up there, and so when the tail end of the meeting, why they called on me, and see what my feeling would be. And I said, "I'm in kind of a poor position to make a statement because I have had no word from any of the government people. But personally I think it could be a good thing to do just what we're doing, just make one blanket --- because the fellow at the head of the ditch is going to get the water anyway, and the ones in the upper stream is going to get the best of it, and we've just got so much water and can run so far, and when it gets that far why that's it."

And so we, that day there we finally --- they said, "Well we've got to have a verification here at this meeting." And so I said, "Well it may cost me my job, but okay, why I'll go along with it." But when Washington understood the situation on the ... why they --- incidentally that fellow that didn't show up was burned to death the morning he was supposed to have been here, in a little old hotel fire.

HARRIET: Bailey said this country was best used for wildlife, too fragile for stock. But

still on grazing ---

JOHN: Well there is a lot of died in the wool wildlife people that contend that. And then you get the other side of the question, so it depends on just where you sit.

HARRIET: Well put.

JOHN: My contention is that there is room for both.

HARRIET: Balance, balance.

JOHN: Balance.

HARRIET: Conservation as public policy --- Teddy Roosevelt, the '30's, and now. Has policy changed a lot, or just how we use it?

JOHN: Oh, I think there has been tremendous changes in our policy of thinking today, and no one ever thought back in the good old days that they were going to find a little spot, about as big as this house, covered with a certain insect that they had to protect. And I think that they're bending over backwards in a lot of their contention of trying to save everything. Something is going to give. To the exclusion of, I noticed there they was telling about a certain plant that was down on a range of mountains down south of us here, and what my understanding was, one thing and another, they got to eliminate all grazing to save it. But its been grazed for a hundred years, and it's still there. What, they admitted, it was in satisfactory conditions. So I don't know.

HARRIET: Somehow it's connected to using, or taking only what we need, and how we define that.

JOHN: I don't know.

HARRIET: Like your dentist, like your dentist story.

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: Yeah. Can we as individuals help places like the refuge, who helped you this way?

JOHN: I doubt it. For the reason that, now they've had what, four managers --- one, two, three, or just three.

FLORENCE: Just three John since you left.

JOHN: And until this fellow come aboard, with all the experience that I had had there and everything, why you would have thought they might have asked a question or two. And why this was happening, why that was happening, and I was available to any of them at any time. And I --- this present fellow he asked me to go out with a couple of his biologists one day, and they, it was quite obvious they didn't like to hear what I had to say.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah. We don't value experience.

JOHN: That's right.

HARRIET: Interesting, because ethics is experience.

TAPE 2 - SIDE D

HARRIET: We don't value experience, yet ethics is experience, and maybe conservation is too.

FLORENCE: I agree with you.

HARRIET: Yeah. Like John valued his high school teacher's experience which advised him to then go onto the lookout. And how do we share that kind of value, or can we, I don't know?

FLORENCE: I just don't think we can share it.

HARRIET: We live it.

FLORENCE: That's right.

JOHN: I really don't know.

HARRIET: We say, maybe you can't, you just live it. It's a different way of living.

JOHN: That might be what ---

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah.

JOHN: You know it's --- seeing so many of these young chaps come out of school, and get into the government and into these --- you take here two ranger districts, and each one has got about thirty or forty people. And I think the other, what am I trying to talk about ---

FLORENCE: Bureau of Land Management.

JOHN: Yeah, the Bureau of Land Management, they have fifty maybe.

FLORENCE: Oh, they've got more than that John.

JOHN: And then there are some other minor organizations, or government, like the water people and ---

HARRIET: Soil.

FLORENCE: Yeah, the Soil Conservation.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: But here is all these people coming aboard. Well as an example I was down to Oregon State University and had a friend who was in charge of the grazing part of the --- what do I want to say.

FLORENCE: Department of Agriculture.

JOHN: Animal Husbandry Department.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: So I went up to the fellow, just drop in and pay him a little visit, which I did. And he said, "You're just in time," he says, "in five minutes and I'll have a class, and I don't know what to tell them." And he said, "You're going to talk to them." So I talked to them, and we got into a question and answer thing. And so I made the remark there that I would never hire a man in wildlife management until such time he had a year with a burro and a band of sheep. And those kids they just panicked right there. (Laughter)

But one of these boys, said, "Now Mr. Scharff, you lived in the day that you got some experience, you grew up in it." And said, "I'm a city boy and I've never had this opportunity, and I wouldn't know how to start." But he said, "Where would I go and get the experience that I need?" And he said, "There is a whole bunch of us here, we're going to, another year or two we're going to all be looking for jobs, and there probably isn't a lot of us that --- there is no question, but there isn't a one of us that had the experience that you had when you grew up on the refuge, you know."

But it was just like all these kids, where could they have gotten any experience to start with. And they don't have, and they're all on this hourly rate, you know. Now there will get to be a plot of pickups go out here at eight o'clock. I was talking to three girls that were on one of those pickups, and so I said, "What are you girls going to do?" That was about eight-thirty, they were gassing up and getting their lunch down at the station. "Well we're going to count trees." I said, "Well what kind of trees?" "Well little trees, up by the plant." And I said, "How far out is it?" Well they said, "It will take us, it will be ten o'clock before we get there." So I said, "Well ten o'clock that's coffee time isn't it?" "Yeah, we have a cup of coffee. And then we work until twelve, and then we take an hour off, and work from one until three. It takes us almost two hours to come back, and we've got to get our pickup serviced when we get back and all that, five o'clock see." Well they, you know, I can't see that kind of work, work they do.

FLORENCE: But it is their policy, then you can't do anything but that.

HARRIET: Three-hour day.

FLORENCE: Yes.

JOHN: Just like last fall, that boy that come in here to buy a Steens book, you remember, said he didn't have ... went down there on the big fires in New Mexico or someplace.

FLORENCE: Yeah.

JOHN: And he was telling us then that he had gotten in something over two thousand hours, or two thousand dollars of overtime down there. So when you spread that around with all the people you see ---

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: No wonder we're broke.

FLORENCE: No wonder we're in the red.

JOHN: I just, I just can't see it.

FLORENCE: Well there isn't anything you're going to do about it either.

HARRIET: Watch it is all, yeah.

FLORENCE: It's really sad.

HARRIET: Yeah. What about the Siskiyou's? Big push this summer for public support to preserve wilderness. I know that's a long time ago, but ---

JOHN: Well I'll tell you that's quite a country. Of course when I was there it was quite primitive, there wasn't a road on the district, and there was just trails in there and out. And nothing, no timber sales, no nothing in that respect. But I had --- shortly after the CC program, about maybe ten years, I had occasion to fly over some of that country that was virgin timber when I was down there. It was just a brush heap, you know, they had logged it and never been any pretense of replanting it, at the time it should have been. And then we got all this brush to contend with in that country. The only way they could do is burn it off again and start over, really. It was just ---

I have been reading about their problems down there. And I don't know, up until now I guess the owl has the best of it.

HARRIET: Maybe.

JOHN: Maybe, yeah. And how many things like that that has happened that we have never discovered, you know.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: But it's getting to the point now where maybe it's going to be the owl, or the people will go hungry. So ---

HARRIET: Yeah. But clear-cut does ---

JOHN: I don't know ---

FLORENCE: They are doing lots of clear cutting.

JOHN: I've thought about that a lot. But ---

HARRIET: Clear cutting doesn't feel balanced. The owl isn't versus jobs, there won't be any trees soon, and that isn't mentioned.

FLORENCE: I know it.

HARRIET: It's a smoke screen to say that it is owl versus job, I feel. And I think that we get into this push pull over the wrong issue.

FLORENCE: We had some of the best biologists when we were on the refuge, just superior ones. And two of them, well one of them now is teaching down in the college in Arizona, and the other one is retired and lives in Salem. And I asked both of those boys, "Wouldn't the owl nest in something besides old growth?" They said, "Sure they would, of course they would. There isn't any doubt about it." And so, I don't tell a lot of people that, because I don't want to argue.

HARRIET: Right, right.

FLORENCE: But that's what both of these boys have said, and they were just super biologists.

JOHN: You know personally I've never been exactly a proponent of wilderness, and I can't say I'm against it, and I'm not. But I think we can administer our lands in a way without saying now that this such a year is untouchable. And we don't know what the future is going to unfold for us, or in store, but it's --- it's just like up at Steens, pushing for

some wilderness up there. But at least four or five times a day there is an airplane goes right over the top of it. And it's anything but wilderness.

HARRIET: As you knew it.

FLORENCE: Yes, uh huh.

JOHN: Yeah. And so if I was a logger, and say fifty, sixty years old, fifty years old, and had made my living and raised a family with, by being a logger, why it would be pretty hard to just convince me that we should have a wilderness.

HARRIET: Need a balance though.

FLORENCE: I think, hate to get into this, but this is my feeling. I think that, thinking back they haven't done anything from the wilderness standpoint that I feel has been productive.

HARRIET: How do you define productive, I think.

FLORENCE: Well that's the point.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: Their idea is different than mine.

HARRIET: Right.

FLORENCE: So there you have a problem.

JOHN: Yeah, I think we need a balance alright to --- At the moment we're going, oh the spotted owl, and maybe we should kind of look the timber situation over a little closer. But you've got two different kinds of people; they look at two different things in a different light. And it's a tough situation to ---

HARRIET: Yeah, but we had that in the '30's too. How did you see it then? Wildlife and sheep, and I guess sheep were the major weren't they? Cattle weren't, there is not enough feed out here for a lot of cattle I think.

FLORENCE: Well cattle and horses. Horses are real bad on the range. Horses eat ---

JOHN: Well I've always felt that we've got room for both.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And I --- if properly --- our ranges have been terribly abused. At a time, particularly when we had no administration.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: And it's something that can be done if the people just kind of see the light and work for it.

HARRIET: Yeah, cooperation is a key, working together. That's something that's missing now too.

FLORENCE: It certainly is.

JOHN: That's right.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: That's right.

HARRIET: Did you do more of this then?

JOHN: Well we --- we was always in a position where you had to work with other people and share their thoughts as well as my own. And I think by in large it has not been only a good experience, but it was good for the country. But these folks who come in and make radical changes without knowing any of the history, or anything, they aren't helping us any.

HARRIET: You were brought in because you knew the land. That policy has changed.

FLORENCE: Yes it has, drastically.

JOHN: I haven't mentioned it, but the way I was brought in was that when the government bought that property in May, they were casting about for a manager. Of course at that time why the Bureau of Wildlife Management wasn't a very big organization, it was pretty thin. So I was told that I'd been recommended, but it was

seven or eight years before I found out who had recommended me. And he later became the chief of the organization.

But he said when he saw what they had done out here, he said, "Now I'll tell you what you do." He said, "You hire a man that's a local fellow that kind of knows what he is doing, you may have to go to some other organization to get him," but he said, "I can tell you the man to pick." And so that's how I got the job, really. It come the other way instead of working up ---

The fact that, you know, that I had been with, so closely related with livestock, why it stood me in good stead ... And I kind of knew the language, but it helped.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: I remember one feller kind of claimed out in the lake there, that eventually I knew we would have to have. And so he was dead set against the government, you know, and he smoked cigars. He was a big chested fellow. So I knew that he liked cigars, and I'd usually, if I was going over there, why I'd fortify myself with a couple of cigars, and go over there. I remember the first cigar I ever gave him, he hesitated about taking it, but he took it. A few days after that I saw him in town, and he brought me a cigar. "I don't want to be beholding to you," he said.

But one day I went with a neighbor of his, I went by there one day, there were two brothers and they were branding calves, and they were big calves too. And it was really about a four-man job, three man kind of tough. So when I stopped there and saw them tying the calves, why I went over and helped them on the ground there, helped them ... on the ground. Finally the boy on horseback he said, "Here, you take this horse and catch these calves." He says, "I'll walk on the ground." About that time this neighbor come, and this fellow that I'd give the cigar. And so I was real careful when I --- how I caught a calf. And so I roped four or five calves without a miss, and dragged them out to the fire.

And so one of these boys --- I saw him in a few days, and he said, "Well we got a little something to tell you." And I said, "What's that?" Well he said, "After you left there," why he said, "our neighbor that was helping us, he kind of shook his head." And he said, "Well," he said, "I sure don't like him," but he says, "he can't be all bad," he says. "A fellow that can catch a calf like that." (Laughter) Can't be all bad.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: We got to be pretty good friends. He finally committed suicide. He had lost his wife, and he had problems. Took the short way out.

HARRIET: Yeah. Knowing the land makes a difference.

FLORENCE: Well yes, and then another thing that I think clearly made a difference, John could get along with any person, any person.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: And that's more than I can say for a lot of government employees.

HARRIET: Right, that's not a priority, or a value for them. And knowing the land makes a difference to yourself and relations with others. You can't buy that in college. That's where I think programs like CCC have an advantage, because they help you connect to the land.

FLORENCE: That's right.

HARRIET: Gardening does the same thing.

FLORENCE: Yes.

HARRIET: When I teach a workshop, "plurkshop", which is play plus work, "plurkshop" called Food for Thought, and it is connecting people with live plants.

FLORENCE: Oh.

JOHN: Yeah, I think that's right.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah. Your garden still does that.

FLORENCE: That's for sure.

HARRIET: It's our modern day refuge.

... (pause)

FLORENCE: Ellis Mason, a boy who is retired from Oregon Fish and Wildlife Service, in fact he was just here when you came, went out the back door. And so we said well now we have to have a buck, because we'd like to raise some young. And so I don't remember now where they picked that one up, but someplace they got it. And so that's how we happened to get into the antelope business.

HARRIET: So did you then raise young from having a pair?

FLORENCE: Oh yes, oh yes, uh huh, oh yes.

HARRIET: But this was the original buck that's now on the cover of the Steens book.

FLORENCE: Yes. And so when we were publishing this book, why Russell Jackman said, "You know the thing that is eye catching to the public and sells more books than the contents of the book, is the cover."

HARRIET: The cover, uh huh.

FLORENCE: And so Charlie Conkling who had a, at that time had a business in Portland, and he was one of the first to come out with color in the Portland area ... and they had a tremendous business there. But he has since passed away, and his wife has passed away. And one of the boy's wives has passed away since, and they're no longer in business. And so we've just had a lot of interesting people around us all the time.

HARRIET: Uh huh, uh huh. How many, what other kinds of animals did you raise out there?

FLORENCE: Well we raised geese, we raised ducks, and ---

HARRIET: Were these orphans from hunting?

FLORENCE: Not necessarily.

HARRIET: Or just orphans for some reason?

FLORENCE: And so it's been so long ago I can't remember all the details. I should have written it down I guess.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: Because I kind of have a one track mind sometimes. But we raised quite a few fawn deer, because people were always picking up fawn deer.

HARRIET: Were you then able to release them in the wild, or did they not do that?

FLORENCE: Well we did release some of them, and we had one that we took up to the "P" Ranch, which is about forty or fifty miles above headquarters. And, oh, we took, that's right, we took that one up in one of the fields and turned him loose. Well then he was back to the house by the time we got there. And so we said, "That isn't going to work." And so then they took him up to the "P" Ranch and Brenton Cabin which, unfortunately the refuge started a fire for some reason, I haven't found out why, and it got away from them and it burned the old cabin, the old Brenton Cabin, and the old corrals and everything which was a tragic thing. I still weep about it when I think about it.

So we took this, and the company --- of course John had lots of cattle grazing on the refuge, and then the next manager that come along, he stopped all the grazing, it wasn't compatible with wildlife. So now this manager, they're having some grazing, which is a fine thing, and we're real happy about it.

HARRIET: Well I'll ask him in the morning how they determined, since it had been so over-grazed, how did they determine how much was okay.

FLORENCE: Oh, I can't tell you just what the policy is in that respect. But John can look at something and can tell, because he knew the land.

HARRIET: Yeah, because he knew the land, yeah.

FLORENCE: And the people now aren't people of the land, and they couldn't do that.

But we are happy that Cameron is having some grazing again.

HARRIET: Yeah, we'll continue this morning where we left off yesterday.

JOHN: I didn't realize that was --- but I remember now that light turns off.

HARRIET: Switch. Did you have a chance to look at Vernon's book, I know Florence did.

JOHN: No I didn't.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: I haven't had time.

HARRIET: I wrote some more questions, since I know that's easier for you. This one I wrote yesterday, so since it was over-grazed, how did you determine how many cattle were okay?

And then I understand Stanley Jewett's grandchildren are coming, and what can you tell me about him and your taking over the refuge. I understood he was the manager?

JOHN: Well he was pinch-hitting for probably a few years. But about the only thing Stanley could do was to keep something in a turmoil as far the administration was concerned. I'd believe anything in the world that he told me, anything that he would do, you know, with nature.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: But if it come to anything else, I would be doubtful.

HARRIET: Oh. So that's why you came?

JOHN: Well no, Stanley was just kind of a temporary situation, because he was no administrator whatsoever. And so then he could just come and go. He'd disappear, and then he'd say, "Well what's Jimmy Green doing?" He was one of the foreman. "Well why is he doing that?" And I said, "Well let's go ask him." "Oh no, oh, it might make him mad," he'd say.

HARRIET: Oh.

JOHN: That kind of an administrator.

HARRIET: Was he out in the field, was he out in the field, you said he disappeared.

JOHN: You mean Stanley?

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: Well he just kind of went.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: He wasn't here too steady.

HARRIET: Oh, yeah.

JOHN: He was headquartered in Portland.

HARRIET: I see.

JOHN: He had the title for a while; I guess that's what they did. I never did know.

HARRIET: Uh huh. You were the first to live there. Yeah.

JOHN: Oh yeah. Stanley, he was a likeable cuss too, you couldn't help but --- he was something else. I think he was, in his line, he was a biologist, and I think he was a good one. But he was a little jealous of anybody that ... some of his remarks. I know I was with a fellow over on Hart Mountain one time, I don't recall his name now, but he was a real keen observer, and considered to be one of the top men in the organization. Stanley, he couldn't say

a good word to him.

HARRIET: Huh.

JOHN: Now getting on to the cattle.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: Grazing, you have to have a few key plants to watch for, and it's just like you take a bunch of cattle that goes out onto a range where there is a creek with willows, and when

they start browsing those willows it's time to take them out. Because anything else that they would use, as far as the grass is concerned, why they would just take them ... And it's --- of course in grazing a meadow, some meadows why it's difficult to, like there in the valley where you mow hay, and have the ... pasture, why you can tell pretty well when to take the cattle out. But at that time of year you can't hurt anything anyway, you know. It's in your early growing season is the kind of the key to --- and in that time of year why we didn't have any cattle in there.

HARRIET: Yeah, timing.

JOHN: I had one field where we developed a goose nesting area, and would maybe band a thousand young geese in a season down on that area. Why I had one field there that I kept cattle in to keep it grazed down so that the geese would have some short grass. About every two weeks we'd flood a little water out there. We'd work there shortly after sun up, you know, and that thing would be full of geese. Because the geese, they don't like that big stuff. It's nice to nest in, but it's no good for feed.

HARRIET: So did you depend on the shepherders and the cattle, those who were running the cattle, to know when to take them off?

JOHN: Oh, I issued permits. I issued five-year permits, and I had stipulations there what they could ----

HARRIET: So the timing, when they could run them.

JOHN: Oh, they were seasonal.

HARRIET: Uh huh. Is that still true, is that still true that they run them seasonally, or is that one of the problems?

JOHN: At the present time there is a move afoot to just ignore livestock, get it out of the country. And so a good many of the managers I think we've inherited, you know, they kind of stringed along with them.

Now the boy that's out there now, the first year he was there why he was, no cattle. Well they had some, but I see he is increasing that now. He's --- I'll --- he asked me about it, I told him I said, "Why I think I'll see the day when you ... graze more cattle." And they let that stuff accumulate on the ground, year after year, after year. We had the worst fire hazard, you know, and they almost burned up the barn and the buildings and everything else there this summer, this spring. And they've burned up miles of fence and it's just --- the wire is laying there, and to me it's a mess.

Well I wouldn't --- now there are refuges I imagine that --- I was the first fellow, of a refuge of any size, was permitting grazing. And the reason I got involved there was that there was a certain area in the valley that they, the folks that had owned the place, they reserved the haying, haying and grazing off of it for five years, first five years. That area used to stack about five thousand tons of hay.

And so I had a chance to observe the cattle, and the nesting, geese, and the water distribution and one thing and another for five years. So then I continued that, only in a, scattered out more, among more people. And there was, one time when there wasn't too much area on the refuge that we didn't graze to some extent.

HARRIET: In good water years.

JOHN: Huh?

HARRIET: Good water years?

JOHN: Well yes. Well it may not even be a good water year, but ... Cattlemen, or a rancher, he has to plan ahead for his feed. And so some areas we would make a reduction in their use for the year, and some we might add some, it depended on ... And, but they have never produced water fowl like that since. New people and new ideas.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: But I can't for the life of me figure any good administrator going to an area like

that, and not at least ... it's working for a year or two like it was there. But that didn't happen.

The first man that was there --- in fact he worked on the refuge there for a time. But Joe was a very difficult fellow to get along with, or people to get along with. And why they ever selected him to come back there, I never did know. He was strictly a politician.

HARRIET: Uh huh. I was thinking of politics and ethics and how they get in the way of each other.

JOHN: Yeah.

FLORENCE: They do get in the way.

JOHN: They become involved anyway.

HARRIET: Yes, yes. Did you have any other thoughts about the refuge you'd like to share?

JOHN: Well really not. There is some ways that they are managing the area, why there is quite a lot I'd have to say about it. But I better just not say.

HARRIET: (Laughter) Yeah, we talked about many topics yesterday, and I thought maybe some further thoughts would come to you afterwards.

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: What about the big game like antelope?

JOHN: Well of course antelope isn't a meadow animal. And they have very little over on the Double O area; they'd sometimes have a little bunch of antelope. But they, unless they're hard up for water or something like that, they don't frequent those places very much. Now we've had deer, as many as maybe a thousand deer on the area at one time ... And that was the time when the deer were building up, and before the big die off. And now there isn't one in ten that ... So ---

HARRIET: Is that management too?

JOHN: Well ---

HARRIET: Or nature?

JOHN: Mother Nature takes care of that I think. The history of deer in this country was the, let's see, the fall of, I've forgotten the dates on that. But, there is two old timers that homesteaded in the John Day country told me the same thing in different times. But --- that was in the '90's, 1890's, or maybe a little earlier. Said that they went up the South Fork along in November and killed three deer, and said there was lots of deer there. They killed the three deer, and they jerked some of them, and some of them they put down in corn --- they had part of an old keg that they ... whiskey barrel, and they put some meat down in that. And they said then when they had a break up in January, or in February, those deer come out of that area there by the hundreds. And the river was breaking up, running ice, and he said, "They just piled off in there and tried to cross." And said, "Once in a great while one of them would get across, but most of them perished right there."

HARRIET: Huh.

JOHN: And then there was about at least thirty years that we didn't have any deer, just absolutely no deer. When I was six years old, five or six years old, my father bought or traded a yearling heifer for a fawn that a fellow had found up at the Long Creek country. And people would bring their children from miles around to see that fawn.

HARRIET: Huh.

JOHN: And he got to be quite an ornery pet. Because he had a stall in the, a grain box in the barn where he'd go in every day to have his grain. And there was one of the neighbors come by there and he tied his horse in there. And that deer went in there and he evidently hooked this horse, and the horse kicked him, and so he died in a few days. It was a blessing, because he was getting to be real ornery. Some people he liked and some he didn't.

But then it was years and years that the --- I know I herded sheep five months on the headwaters of Murderers Creek in 1920, and I think I probably saw a half a dozen deer. And I was out there at daylight in the morning, every morning.

And then when they did start --- then I don't remember the year that the state went in there and they invited everybody to come in and get a deer tag, and they killed over four thousand deer in that Murderers Creek country. And I found --- and there was, figured there was probably that many perished afterwards. And the country, they just, like at the Steens Mountain country, there is a belt that that deer killed all the bitter brush and the desirable grazing, you know, brush. But they just killed it off. And it had been grazed for years by sheep and cattle, but they were still wild and thirsty, and, but they killed it out. It just hasn't come back.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: The state has tried to introduce it, we introduced it a number of times by seeding and one thing and another, but it never did any good. First time that one of the plants shows up, why something hits it off, and ...

HARRIET: Did you introduce feed at the refuge when you were living there?

JOHN: Introduce feed?

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: No, it was right there, growing right there. Just a little protection and management.

HARRIET: Living there made a difference.

JOHN: What?

HARRIET: Living there made a difference.

JOHN: Oh yeah, I was --- I seen the first thing --- One of these boys asked me what I would do if I went back there, and I said, "The first thing I would move all you fellows back

here where the work is." And of course that would be ... now, you know. But I would want to live there, you know, and it's the finest place in the world to raise a family.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: But that isn't the way the ball bounces.

TAPE 3 - SIDE E

HARRIET: Okay, we're starting tape three, lots of good stories to share. Did you see many changes in the kinds of birds that came while you were there?

JOHN: Was I what?

HARRIET: See many changes in the kinds of birds?

JOHN: Oh yes, when we come here there was quite a few outside toilets yet, and scattered over the country, and a lot of old buildings. And Hines wasn't here then. Well yeah, it was here---

FLORENCE: It was, because Hines Lumber Company came in here in '29.

JOHN: Yeah, it was here, but it was just scattered buildings around here, and not too much planted here. Oh yeah, there has been a big change in the country, particularly the roads, you know, transportation. Stage running between here and Bend, you know, why it would take all day for it. And very few ranchers had cars. Well I wouldn't say that either, but there was a certain season of the year they just put them in a shed.

FLORENCE: Oh, the roads were awful.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: There was a number of times where several winters there that we wouldn't be able to get to town on the roads.

HARRIET: Your garden came in handy.

JOHN: Yeah. I always kind of liked to grow ... Florence; she was a great hand to grow

things. I was just thinking this morning, I've got a row of cucumbers that ... and there will be enough for four or five families. But at least it keeps me busy and some exercise.

HARRIET: Well you didn't need to keep busy then, but you still had a garden.

JOHN: Oh yeah. Yeah, there was very few mornings in a year that I didn't see the sun come up. I really, really enjoyed it; I think one of the finest jobs that was ever created in government. HARRIET: It was more than a job; it was a way of life.

JOHN: Oh, I suppose you could say that.

HARRIET: Well we talked about the forty-hour jobs, and it wasn't that kind.

JOHN: No.

HARRIET: What about the birds at the refuge, did they change a lot in numbers from year to year?

JOHN: Oh yes. There wasn't any place for them there in the valley ... Of course we did a lot of threshing, farm work, and distribution of water. We built; there was four dams on the river there to put the water out. Put the water in the canal there for twenty-six miles. But some big changes have took place.

HARRIET: What happened to the salmon?

JOHN: To the salmon? I don't think there was ever any salmon in there.

HARRIET: I thought you said yesterday there were salmon. Maybe I'm ---

JOHN: Up some of the creeks, yeah. See this is a closed basin here.

HARRIET: Okay.

JOHN: But you just go over the hill, like Stinkingwater, that's how it got its name down there. Salmon after they spawned and died, why even the cattle wouldn't drink out of the creek. And that's how it got its name. In any direction you could go, well you get into the John Day watershed, why they had salmon. The Malheur River, we had salmon. But this area here ---

HARRIET: It was closed.

JOHN: It was closed. Unfortunately the body of, the plant of bass, they --- When this town here was sited, why a lot of the people that worked for Hines some other place, and in the middle west, come in here, and they didn't like trout, they wanted something that, well they were used to a different fish. And they finally talked the state into the notion of making a plant of --- what were they?

FLORENCE: Bass.

JOHN: Bass, yeah, planted bass. And they ... out of the Columbia Slough down there, and undoubtedly got two carp. And Malheur Lake, which was the greatest goose nesting area, and grew more feed for waterfowl than any other place in the valley, or probably any other place in the state of Oregon. The carp just exploded and took it over, and made a desert out of it. And of course they have that to contend with in the Blitzen River. And they've gone up there quite a ways now. And so that was, that just took overnight, or a production of waterfowl, just plummeted down to about fifty percent of what ... Malheur Lake.

And around Malheur Lake another thing, those ranchers, there was lots of geese that nested on those ranches on the haystacks, and one thing and another, around there. But then they all come into the Malheur Lake ... hatched, why they come in there. There was quite a few of those birds that would come off of those ranches. And --- but they just annihilated the sago pondweed, which was one of the finest waterfowl foods that ... In 1955 I think we figured we killed about three hundred tons of carp. And hopefully we had them, but this spring we just had millions of little carp ... The eggs were there and --- The only thing that if we go through a drought period like we did in the '30's, or in Malheur Lake, in those low places that didn't get any water for four or five years, why they might clean the carp out, but that would be the only way that you could get a ...

And ... and treat them with rotenone and kill them out there in the Blitzen Valley, some extent, even though you think you had them, every one, why pretty soon you got a lot of little ones around.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: That was the saddest affair that ever happened to Malheur Refuge, was all the carp situation.

HARRIET: Not much hope for the birds unless they get those out of there.

JOHN: Well if they just clean it.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: The only place that ... they fly there and roost, you know, and ... feed. But we don't have near the birds that winter here and stay here that we had at that time.

HARRIET: The ranches have come to appreciate the birds more.

JOHN: Oh well, I think most ranchers did anyway. But its ---

HARRIET: Why do they not live at the refuge now? Why do they not, the managers not live there now? What changed?

JOHN: Oh, they like to be in town where they can party a little bit. Of course the road conditions have change now.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: Now it's just a matter of minutes instead of maybe a couple hours. I know one winter here we couldn't get through Hanley Lane here, that's that long lane towards Wright's Point there. That was closed for about six weeks.

FLORENCE: Six weeks, uh huh.

JOHN: Right there. They brought a rotary plow in to plow it out, and it went about a hundred yards down the road then and broke down, broke something, and it set there then for another couple weeks before they ever got back to it to fix it up and get that snow

out of there. But now well that's --- they have different machinery, and one thing and another, be no problem.

HARRIET: Yeah. But it seems as though to be there is so important.

JOHN: Well as far as I'm concerned it is.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: But you take, you know, that job there, most of the contacts that you have with people would be before eight o'clock, and after five.

HARRIET: Sure.

JOHN: And we always had clerks there, and people lived there, you know. They was always somebody around. And I think we made just a lot more friends for the refuge at that time, by living there, than we could possibly have done here. But I wouldn't like to ... Of course we had our milk cows, and our chickens, and maybe kind of a farm, you know. Then we raised horses for the service, had ten brood mares and ... stallion ... I was up at the "P" Ranch. But there at the refuge headquarters we had a nice setup with --- but you couldn't go down to the corner grocery and get a can ---

HARRIET: No.

JOHN: I've had my job, why do the chores in the morning, and then several of the other boys that milked, had families; they milked ... Worked out pretty good.

HARRIET: Did you train the horses too?

JOHN: Yeah, we broke most of the horse to some extent. They went to the, mostly to the big game refuges. The buffalo refuge up in Montana, and then down south too. They come up here and got their horses there for several years.

But there again why we kept people --- well phased that out before I left there, because some young youngster was always with a horse. Now we send him a horse, what they usually do why they feed them a lot of grain, and ride them once a week or so,

and pretty soon that horse he kind of gets playful and bucks him off, and then they come back. I had one little saddle horse that was a dandy, but come back to us two or three times. And he was ... But they just never had any experience with horses. Left that horse alone, you know, and they just thought it was great to get on one and gallop down the field, you know. And pretty soon the horse got to feeling better and better.

HARRIET: Well horses were part of your being out on the land.

JOHN: Well I'll tell you, you can see more in that valley a horseback in an hour, than you can all day afoot. And we had horses there at all the stations, why we had saddle horses.

I remember I had a biologist, and he had a daughter that was crazy about horses. But he himself, he just had nothing to do with them. So while he was taking his census, Dave Marshall, why you may know him, he's quite prominent in the circles ... He would drive his pickup up to a pond and count the broods, and then go to the next one. And so he come in one evening and told me how many broods he'd seen that day, the numbers and one thing and another. So I said, "Well do you want to increase that Dave?" And so I said, "Well just get on that old saddle horse there, and go up through there." And oh, he says, he's allergic to a horse. But he went up on his bicycle, and that evening he come in and he said, "Well," he said, "I learned something." He said, "I went up on my bicycle and didn't create any noise that way, and he said, "I got about thirty percent ..."

HARRIET: I know Vernon Bailey's wife used to watch birds from horseback.

JOHN: Yes.

HARRIET: Because it didn't disturb them.

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: They're used to seeing horses.

FLORENCE: Right.

JOHN: You could take a bunch of geese, you know, some people, of course it's illegal to do it, but I know years past that they'd get a sheet of plywood and make a rough silhouette of a horse and two fellows get a hold of it and walk right out into a bunch of geese ...

HARRIET: Does the refuge have a different role today?

JOHN: A different what?

HARRIET: Role? Reason for being? Role?

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: Today?

JOHN: Well I really don't know how you would answer that. Its, because you're having a different group of people altogether that's coming into these areas to see them, and more of course. I don't know just how you would answer that.

HARRIET: We set them up to protect the wildlife. Now we spend more protecting the people.

JOHN: Well of course I don't think I can buy that.

HARRIET: Just one that triggers them.

JOHN: But there is --- I don't know just how you would answer that.

FLORENCE: Well I think the policies have changed a lot. I --- when we were there, and since --- but we're not close enough to any of those people to ---

HARRIET: To know, yeah.

FLORENCE: --- to know, just exactly. And we can tell by riding up through, but perhaps our policy isn't true either.

HARRIET: Yeah. Was true at the time.

FLORENCE: Yes.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah. Because that was a time of drought when you came, did that

make a difference, were they trying to save it in some way by setting it up with a resident manager, or was it just time for that as the refuge grew?

JOHN: Well the refuge is, the small refuges, and well some of the big ones too, had at that time, why people pretty much lived with them. I think one of the things at that time too was that transportation was a factor. Now today with the speedboats and the automobiles, and one thing and another, why you can go thirty-five miles to a job. There is a lot of people that's going a bit further than that to a job.

HARRIET: Yes.

JOHN: And then they didn't do that.

HARRIET: Yeah.

JOHN: And so --- but now they --- the boy that they have there, at this time, that he was just a maintenance man there at the "P" Ranch at the head of the valley, and he was promoted to be in charge of the actual bird work on the refuge. And so then the first thing he moved to town. Well he has to commute out there. I think you have more --- of course to me just having people on an hourly basis, a pay basis out that way, that's just inviting them to put in eight hours.

HARRIET: Right.

FLORENCE: Well they can't put in any more than eight hours.

JOHN: A operation of Malheur Refuge is very much like the operation of a big ranch. When something happens, somebody should be there.

HARRIET: Yes, yes.

JOHN: But that doesn't work out that way.

HARRIET: Yeah. It's another way we've lost connection with the land.

FLORENCE: Of course every so many years, these lakes all go dry, and when we came here there wasn't a drop of water in Malheur Lake, in '35. We used to go out on

weekends, because none of the families living out here couldn't afford to come to town except to buy groceries, you know, and that sort of thing, or to go to see a doctor. And we'd go out on Malheur Lake and shoot coyotes, that was our recreation. There were lots of coyotes, and we'd go out and ride around on the bed of Malheur Lake and shoot coyotes. It was a lot of fun.

HARRIET: I was surprised this morning to find about --- I counted twenty-five jackrabbits dead on the road in about half a mile. I've never seen that concentrated a slaughter. I guess cars early in the morning or late at night ---

JOHN: Whereabouts was that?

HARRIET: Coming up from this side of Wright's Point.

JOHN: This side?

HARRIET: Yeah. And I don't know, are they increasing again?

FLORENCE: Well they're coming back, that's for sure. But nothing like --- I've seen the time when it looked like the whole earth was moving.

HARRIET: Wow.

FLORENCE: They were that thick.

HARRIET: Wow.

JOHN: Well yeah, they're definitely on the increase.

FLORENCE: They are on the increase now.

JOHN: Maybe that's a good sign, other things will increase too.

HARRIET: The hawks and owls, yeah.

JOHN: Yeah.

FLORENCE: You get more jackrabbits you're going to have more hawks and more owls.

HARRIET: Right.

JOHN: One thing about it, furnish more food for the coyotes and the bobcats.

FLORENCE: That's right, I should say so.

JOHN: They can raise a litter now instead of starving to death.

HARRIET: Uh huh. Well getting things back in balance is a constant process of course. But it's hard to bring the birds back with the carp and with the pesticides in other parts where they migrate to, like in Mexico.

FLORENCE: In Mexico especially.

HARRIET: You were there at a wonderful time.

JOHN: Yeah, we were. I don't know what I would do now if I was administrator. Of course I'd be just like the rest of them, because I wouldn't know any different. But if I knew different, I don't think I'd go to work for the government.

HARRIET: As it is now, you mean?

FLORENCE: Yes.

HARRIET: Yeah.

FLORENCE: Well it's certainly more political than it was when we were ---

HARRIET: Yeah, you had more control here of what, how you did things. Well as you said yesterday, you'd stay home and raise sheep, huh?

JOHN: Yeah. You can do more in range management with sheep than you can with cattle.

FLORENCE: Well you have a herder with them. And so you can understand why they are moved every day.

HARRIET: Yeah, uh huh.

FLORENCE: And cattle come into a meadow and they stay there for a long ---

JOHN: That's one of the bad things about our ranges, where they have little reservoirs and small creeks and places like that for water. A cow just --- take a bunch of cattle and turn them loose where there is good feed and a water hole, well they'll feed out from there

and come back and get a drink and lie down. Then the next day they do the same thing, and pretty soon they're going out a mile, and then two miles, and --- It's more difficult to control than with sheep. You take a sheep in a cool ... weather, like this morning for instance, they would be out if they were --- if I was herding them, by now they would be ... up. They would be ---

But I used to just like to sleep with them. The stars some time would be, the stars would be shining yet when they started feeding, and eight or nine o'clock why ... they were shading up for the day. And they would be drifting them right on to a new range all the time. But of course there is times when you have to come into a central location because of water, but there is an awful lot of range where it's green, there is no need to. I've been maybe two weeks and never go to water with a band of sheep. But we'd have a little shower along a time or two, and dew in the morning and --- But times are different.

HARRIET: How many sheep were in a band like that?

JOHN: Well ordinarily a thousand, or twelve hundred ewes and their lambs. And this would make around somewhere between two thousand and twenty-five hundred.

HARRIET: Did you use dogs to help? Did you use dogs?

JOHN: Oh yeah, you've got to have a dog, a good dog. I usually always had two dogs, you know, in case one of them got sore footed or something, well you had ---

HARRIET: Do they still herd that way?

JOHN: No, unfortunately they don't. No they kind of wait for sun-up before they start grazing anyway. That isn't very good.

HARRIET: Do they graze sheep on the refuge too, or just cattle?

JOHN: Well we grazed sheep in the fall to some extent, but very little. If there was any grass at all on the outside ranges, why you never saw sheep, you know. There was one outfit, I think, that for three falls I sold them a little pasture. But they --- Well there wasn't

too much sheep feed anyway, you know, on a lot of that area, and especially when it got dry.

HARRIET: There has been a lot of outcry about public lands, you know, the feeding, grazing on public lands, and that it isn't --- cost, that the public doesn't get its money's worth. Was that a feeling then, or is that something new?

JOHN: Well I think that's relatively new. And of course they don't, as an example there was an operator down in our country, and he had a field in which he summered some cattle. And then he had I think about three hundred head permit on the common country, the grazing country. And every year why he would, for some reason or other, lose a bull out in the, that didn't occur in the field. And that would be five or six hundred dollars right there. And then he would have the expense of going out and putting out his salt and traveling. In the fall of the year then he'd have to send his truck around sometimes clear over to Lake County with a cow that got involved, and got that way, instead of ...

And he, over the years he figured it cost him almost five dollars a month on the open range versus --- just as far as labor was concerned, hardly any in his pasture. And he told me time and again, he said, "If I could get enough range, you know, I'd never go to the desert again."

And it cost a lot more to operate the way they do that way than if they were all ranges ... Now like up in the Blue Mountain country where those fellows summer, you know, why they, labor wise and equipment wise, why they don't have much ... And there is always a few stragglers, that never do get them all back, you know. Once in awhile maybe somebody butchered one.

HARRIET: Yeah, yeah.

JOHN: So there is more expense to it than the feed that they pay for.

HARRIET: This really isn't cougar country either then. We talked yesterday about big

game, and there isn't much big game in this kind of country, is there?

JOHN: No, antelope and deer, and elk. And occasionally a cougar and a bobcat.

HARRIET: Coyotes, of course.

FLORENCE: Oh yes.

JOHN: Coyotes, yeah. We used to very seldom see a coyote. Well you know ...

HARRIET: Yeah. They've gotten wary.

JOHN: Coyotes, and jackrabbits, and cottontails. We used to have quite a few --- what was the call name we had on Wright's Point, and ...

FLORENCE: Marmot, marmot.

JOHN: Oh yeah, marmots.

HARRIET: I thought I saw one yesterday, but I didn't believe it, in the rock piles along the road.

JOHN: Yeah.

FLORENCE: You may have.

HARRIET: Oh, I didn't think of them as desert. I only have seen them in high mountains.

JOHN: They used to be quite common.

FLORENCE: They used to be real common.

HARRIET: Oh, I didn't realize that.

JOHN: Around where there was water.

HARRIET: Uh huh.

JOHN: I remember we had a marmot down in there, in our garden.

HARRIET: Uh oh.

JOHN: Yeah, that rascal. He liked potato vines, and every morning why he'd take about three feet more. I finally got him caught and moved him up to Buena Vista where there was a colony and turned him loose, introduced him into a new environment.

HARRIET: Uh huh. Vernon Bailey invented live traps, that was one of his specialties. Did you ever use the Ver-Bail Traps?

JOHN: I don't know the name of it, but there was quite a few live traps on the market, you know. We've used live traps.

HARRIET: That makes so much more sense to me to re-introduce them to their colony than to kill them all simply because they're where we don't want them.

JOHN: Yeah.

HARRIET: Well, thank you very much for your time and energy.

(END OF TAPE)

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