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HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #495

Subject: Don Toelle

Place: Toelle Ranch 72702 Cow Creek Road, Burns OR

Date: January 28, 2019

Interviewer(s): John and Laurie O'Connor

LAURIE O'CONNOR: Good afternoon, this Laurie O'Connor, from the Harney County Library, and I am out at the Toelle Ranch, and I am visiting with Mr. Don Toelle. Don, could you please state your name, where you were born, and when?

DON TOELLE: My name is Donald George Toelle. I was born in Linnton, Oregon in 1929. March 20, 1929.

LAURIE: And you were over on the West side until what age?

DON: Fifteen. Until I was fifteen, when I left over there.

LAURIE: And how did you end up in Harney County?

DON: By Trailways Bus.

LAURIE: You were on a bus, and you ended up in Burns, Oregon?

DON: Well, we had tickets for the bus, for Burns. My cousin and I left home together, we were knot heads, wanted to be cowboys. We were raised on farms. Hell, we knew all about working horses, and riding. You know, we weren't buckaroos or cowboys, but yeah, we knew how to work.

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LAURIE: So you were still using horses, on the farm?

DON: Oh yeah. My dad still used horses when he quit, ten years after I left.

LAURIE: And who was your cousin who came with you, Don?

DON: Richard McClure.

LAURIE: And, did he stay in this country?

DON: No, we were working there for Mike Acton, in Drewsey, we were feeding cows there in the winter, pitchin' hay off of these haystacks, and I don't know what happened. He slid off a haystack and ran a tine up his hand. So, that ruined him, he couldn't pitch hay with one arm very good. So, he just went back, he just went home and he never did come back.

LAURIE: Was he about the same age as you were, Don, when you came to this country?

DON: Yeah, he was about eighteen months younger than I was. Or eight months.

LAURIE: Your grandson said that when you got to town, you guys stayed in town one night, and then you found there was work in Drewsey.

DON: Yeah, we stayed at the Commercial. The bus station was there at the Commercial Hotel, across from the Ford garage. And they stopped there, and we got out, and unloaded our junk, and we went in the hotel there that night. I think the Basquo lady fed us the next morning, looked at a couple of hungry kids.

JOHN O'CONNOR: You bet, I'll bet they ate a lot, too.

LAURIE: She took pity on you.

DON: I think so. So we was walking up the street and we was looking for a job, and we stopped at the barber shop, and asked. Dave Gibson was running the barber shop then, and he knew everybody in the country, so he said, "Well, let me see." About that time, Lloyd Hill came along and he wanted one of us. He said, "Can you drive a team of mules?" And, I don't know, I said, "I

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didn't, we never did work mules. But I said, "I guessed I could drive 'em. I could drive horses." So, anyway, he said, "I need someone to drive a team to help feed." And, I said, "Well, I can do that." So, technically I had a job, and my cousin didn't yet. So Dave said, "Well, I'll call around." So he got on the old crank phone, and he called Drewsey, and he got ahold of Mike Acton and asked if he needed any help. I think Mike was pretty good to work kids, you know, he liked younger [workers]. He didn't like too many of those old winos. But he worked a lot of 'em, but, I mean, he liked a lots of kids, too.

LAURIE: It seemed like a lot of folks helped out young kids, and got them started in this country.

DON: Yeah, he treated you pretty good. You know, he worked the hell out of you, and didn't pay any overly good wages, but he paid all you were worth, I guess. [*chuckling*] Three dollars a day, and board and room.

LAURIE: So there you are, you're in Burns, you came into Burns on a bus. How did you get out to Drewsey?

DON: Well, I had a job, and I got on the phone, I said do you need any help out there? And he said, "Yeah, I can use somebody." So technically we both had a job. So then, I chickened out, and said, "Ask him [Mike Acton], if he can use two of us?" So, Babe said, "Well, I got two of these boys here. Can you use 'em?" And he says, "Yeah. Send 'em out." So, George Riley had the ranch right across the river from Actons, and they were in town. They had a pickup, and his wife, his son and his wife, were all in this one old pickup there. So, they loaded Richard and I in the back of the pickup. The 28th of February.

LAURIE: You were riding in the back of the truck, in February?

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DON: Well, they couldn't all get in the cab. Four people in one seat, that was a pretty good load in that pickup! Pretty crowded.

LAURIE: What was the weather like, do you remember?

DON: Oh, it was good, about like this. Really it was. It was breaking up, and we rode out there, it wasn't really horrible, you know. We stopped on the bridge there where—well, it was below— Oh, I can't say anything. It was across Pine Creek. And they just stopped on the bridge, for the dickens of it, and the creek was breaking up, and these ice bergs were coming down, you know. It was warming up. And we went on down. We didn't even have a bed, we didn't have nothin', we were just, dumb, dumb, dumb--

LAURIE: Teenagers.

DON: Yeah, we had plenty of clothes, I mean in that respect. But we didn't have nothin' to sleep in, and they didn't furnish us with any bed either, so we just slept in horse blankets, and whatever on the bunkhouse floor. The bunkhouse was pretty full when we got there. I think there was— It wasn't a big bunkhouse, it wasn't even any bigger than these two rooms here, it wasn't that big even. About the size of this room there [pointing at his living room] paneled off. There was one bed, two beds in the back, and one in the front, and the stove was in the front, and that was it, you know. So we slept on the floor, I was trying to think how many people was working there at that time. There was, I don't know, there must have been four of us there, at least.

LAURIE: In the bunkhouse?

DON: Yeah, there working, just feeding cows.

LAURIE: They had sheep and cattle, Actons?

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DON: Yeah. No, he didn't have any sheep, no, no, no. Just cows. Oh, I remember now, Howard McMullen was there, but he stayed in the old bunkhouse, so he wasn't in there with us either, but he was working there.

LAURIE: So, you'd be feeding, all winter you'd feed--

DON: Yeah, in February, it was about, you know, starting to warm up. So, the first day, he put Richard with, uh, with the crew there at the home ranch, pitchin' hay. And, he powered McMullen and I, he saddled us up, and we rode from there back to Pine Creek. And they had, horses in the corral there, they had water and a big feed rack there, so we harnessed them up, and we had to pitch four jags of hay. We had a sled. So, I guess they discovered that I could pitch hay, and drive a team, so the next day that was my job! [*chuckling*]

LAURIE: All by yourself?

DON: All by myself.

LAURIE: So you had to hand load, and pitch it all off, of course.

DON: Yeah, the buggers ahead of me they'd pitched all the top off the stacks, so everything you had to pitch was uphill.

LAURIE: New man on the job.

DON: So, I'll guarantee, them old cows didn't get overfed when I was feeding 'em! Four, four jags of hay, and one jag I had to take from clear from up by the buildings, clear down past, well, across the road from where the schoolhouse used to be up the road there a little ways. Where they put the new Pine Creek school, on the corner there.

LAURIE: Wow, way up there.

DON: Yeah, but the old school, well, you went right down through the middle of the fields, and there was two bunches of cows, one bunch was there up at the house, and the other bunch was

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down in what they called the Rye Grass field. A bunch of dry cows. So, I had to haul one jag of hay down there.

LAURIE: What would you get paid, as a teenager, for a month's work?

DON: Well, ninety dollars a month, three dollars a day. That was just about what everybody got, you know.

LAURIE: And room and board.

DON: And room and board, you know you could eat. That's one thing, it was all you could eat.

LAURIE: Yeah. Ninety dollars a month.

DON: That was pretty much the going wage, you know, working on a ranch. I don't know.

LAURIE: 1945. Yep.

DON: I think even in haying time they get up to five and six dollars a day, you know for a good hay crew. But kids, I don't know, they never got overly expensive on us. They didn't throw much money around. But anyway, old Mike, he was pretty good. We learned a lot of things, working for him.

LAURIE: So, the winters you were feeding, and then in the summers, you were out in the pastures, out fencing and monitoring--

DON: Yeah, well, I left there then, in June or July, and went back home for a while, so I didn't get to go with the buckaroos the first year. Then, the next year when I went back, well, I was there all winter, and then in the spring, they started turning cows out, we moved them here and there, and then in June we had to ride the lot, and gather them all out of one area, and push them back into what they called the Oard Flat. And, uh—

JOHN: Branding.

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DON: Yeah, we had to brand the calves, the late calves, there. They had them big brandings there at the ranch, before we ever left, or turned them out. But these late calves, yeah--

LAURIE: So, is this when you really learned to ride and rope. You weren't ranching like back, back in Linnton? You didn't use horses that way.

DON: No, no. We just—I had a saddle horse, but we worked horses, that was all we did. We had work horses. We were—Linnton was a little town, there along the river, the Willamette, where I was born. I think most of my brothers and sisters were born there. I can't swear to that, but I am sure that some of us were, anyway. Clear on the other side of the ridge, clear out in the valley side, I went to school at Skyline, and went to high school in Beaverton.

LAURIE: Oh, right in town, Beaverton.

DON: Beaverton, and Skyline and Forest Grove, Hillsboro, North Plains. That was all part of our area. You know, when you're a kid, you think, "My God! You're going out to Forest Grove?" Well, hell, it was only about fifteen miles, you know. *[laughing]*

LAURIE: But it seemed like a long distance to everyone there.

DON: Yeah, you looked at this country, fifteen miles would take you outta' sight, you know. *[laughing]*

LAURIE: So, that sounds like it is a lot of logging country, back west.

DON: Oh, yeah, it was all mostly ranch, farming, and loggin'. A lot of loggin'. I even worked in the woods there, when I, I was up here again, working for Mike, and I was going to be eighteen, and I thought, "Well, hell they're gonna draft me. I'll just go join the Navy." And he said, "Well, I can get you a deferral, and keep you out of the damned Army." And I said, "Ah, nah, I'll go do this." So I quit and went to Portland, tried to join the Navy, but they didn't want anybody. It was in between the wars. And so, I said to myself, "To hell with it, I'll just make the Army draft me

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then.” So then I was laying around home there, and the neighbors, they all worked in the woods. And he says, “Do you want a job?” And I says, “Well, I better do something and get a few dollars so I can get the hell outta’ here.” And so he got me a job out there in the woods. It was a good job. It was a big outfit.

LAURIE: Who was that for?

DON: Ellison Logging Company, I think. Allison, I think.

LAURIE: And what did you do in the woods?

DON: Well, I started out green, you know you were a choker setter. But, first, they had a big camp out there out on top of the mountain, off from the coast there. You could just stay there forever, you know. They had a store there. They had everything you could have needed to buy. You could buy a set of corks, or any clothes. And they had a bunkhouse, and a bed maker, and a sweeper, and had these showers, three or four big showers, where you walk in there. A lot of the guys come in outta’ the brush, they’d just get in the shower, clothes and all, and washed the mud off. And they all wore what they call “tin pants”, “tin coats”, and they were pretty water proof. Especially if you put a can of grease on ‘em, well then they would waterproof. So, anyway, yeah, I went to work—First, they put me out there settin’ chokers on what they call the slackline outfit. That was dragging the logs on the ground, pretty much, you know. They’d just drag the logs on the ground, pretty much, they’d just go back and forth. They’d send the chokers back, and you’d set ‘em, and they’d—They had a riggin’ slinger, they’d call him, he was the boss, and he’d send in a whistle. They had a punk, a whistle punk they called him, and he’d set out there and he’d “punk” the signal to the donkeys, operator. And the rigging slinger, he’d give the whistle punk the signal: “Yo. Yo. Yo yo yo”. Or, “Yoooo” You know, and then he’d punk that in, and the riggin’ would either go ahead, or go back, or whatever, you know. They’d send that to the

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donkey, and he'd start it and—Anyway, I worked there for about three days, and then they sent me down the hill, and I worked on a high lead.

LAURIE: What is a high lead?

DON: Well, that is, well, everything is in the air. That was kind of a wild affair, there.

JOHN: Did you set chokers there, too?

DON: Yeah, oh yeah.

LAURIE: Swinging logs!

DON: They did. They'd swing 'em, and uh-- Yeah, it was dangerous, because there was no place to get out of the bite of the line. There was haul back, and lines going here, and overhead, and – All you could do was back up away from the main line, you know, where them logs was gonna' go.

LAURIE: Traffic both directions.

DON: Yeah. Hoped you didn't have to run, 'cause you couldn't out run it. So, anyway, we worked there for quite a while. They were supposed to change that rigging, I think, or slip the line, on that tail tree, every five days I think. And they didn't do it. Anyway, they had two big peelers, I mean they were huge, and they put two chokers on each one of them, and this rigging slinger, I don't know what the hell got into him. He was in a hurry to get rid of them, I guess, because that was the end of the road, we were done. And we got em, and we walked back away, and he give the signal, and they got 'em about halfway in the air, and that rigging, that main line broke.

LAURIE: Back they came.

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DON: Logs and rigging went off in the canyon, went right over us, you know. We were lucky, if we'd have been down the hill, a hundred yards, or fifty yards, we might not been here listenin' to this. But, anyway, yeah, that was educational.

LAURIE: So, you went into the woods, because you were going to make more money?

DON: Well, yeah, I just wanted to make some money, it was a job. I wanted to come back to Burns, but I, I was half broke. And so, I said I'd work for a while. But, I kinda' liked working in the woods. That was good money. And that camp, that was good treatment. You know, they had three meals, for every—They start one way early in the morning, in the middle of the dark, you had to go the farthest away from the camp to go to work. Then the next one in the middle, he was a little closer. Then, the closest one, was right, you know, maybe a half a mile from the camp, where he'd go to work. So, then they fed three breakfasts, and they made three lunches, sent you a good lunch, and then they'd have three suppers, when you come back.

LAURIE: Huh. That's a big operation.

DON: Oh yeah, that was a big operation. And all of their logs, that they logged a lot, I forget how many carloads of logs. They ran three sides, I mean, you know, big, hauling logs all day. Yeah, I won't even say how many—I thought they said fourteen cars a day, but I, that might be wrong. But it was a lot.

LAURIE: Everything went out on rail?

DON: Well, they put 'em on trucks. They had to get off that mountain. And then they took 'em, and everything they logged, dumped in the river.

LAURIE: Oh, they river floated their logs.

DON: Yeah, they called them log rafts, you know, or log booms. And the boom men, that handled all those logs, they went on a strike. Well, you couldn't dump any logs, so that outfit just

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shut down, I mean, immediately, because everything they logged, they didn't send anything directly to a mill. It all went to a, into the river, and then to a mill.

LAURIE: Down to a port. So if they went on strike, nobody, there's no reason to be cutting logs, it was all backing up.

DON: No, no. So I laid around there half the summer, I thought, well, they'll go back to work and I'll finish out here. They never went back to work, finally I said, "I know where I can work." Of course, I was dumb, you know. You could have walked down the road and went to work for half a dozen different logging outfits. [*chuckling*] In fact, uh, in the spring, them loggers that have [], a lot of them was quittin' and going to Alaska. And they said, "Why don't you go with us, kid?" But, I said, "Ah, no." Kicked myself afterwards, that I didn't go see more country. Because them were good jobs, I mean you were in camp there, but I guess you could go to town and spend some money. But, most of them would go up there and make a grub steak, and they would work, and stay in camp, and save their money, and in a couple of months, they's come out of there, and they would have some money. Some good money. For them days, you know. I forget what it paid now, but it was way better than ranch wages. [*chuckling*] But, you earned every penny of it, too.

LAURIE: Or, even, I am surprised, when you came back here, you didn't even look into going to work for Hines.

DON: No, no, that didn't interest me at all. Working on the coast there was alright, because it was good money, and it was a means to an end, more or less, for me. So, I got the heck out of there then, and come back over in this country, and I never left. I forget who I went to work for first when I got here. I don't know. I did a lot of foolin' around, I guess. I might have went back to work for Mike [Acton]. I kinda' think I did.

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LAURIE: You were working for him when you went to your first rodeo, as I read. For Mike Acton? So, now you are back here, and this is about-- What year is this now, 1948? '49?

DON: Yeah, 1948, when I worked in the woods, yeah.

LAURIE: Ok, then you came back here by summer or fall, and then maybe went back to work for Mike Acton?

DON: Yeah, for a while anyway, and then I left and I went to Nevada, and that was in the fall of the year, and that was a mistake. That is the coldest ...**.... place on earth!

LAURIE: What part of Nevada?

DON: Midas. It's out of Winnemucca there. It's a big ranch. It was a big ranch.

LAURIE: Big, wind-swept country there.

DON: Oh yeah, it's all flat, and there was snow, and it was before Thanksgiving, and there was already that much snow on the ground then already, down there.

LAURIE: And you went to work on a ranch there?

DON: Yeah, I went to work. I thought, well, I'll be a buckaroo here, because they hired lots of buckaroos, and they run a wagon, and that's where the buckaroos went, with the wagon. But, anyway, they put us—The wagon was still out, they hadn't come into the ranch yet, so, I got to stay in the bunkhouse. And they had a lot of separate rooms in there, for the, "resin jaws" they called them, the ranch hands.

LAURIE: And what was your work there?

DON: Well, I got to buckaroo there, some. A lot, with this old Mexican, "Lola Manuola", or something like that. Lola? Yeah, he'd been there. He was old. But he had an old grey horse that he rode every day, and he, to get on him—They had wagons, in them days, and sleds, and the wagon tongue would be on a slope, and he would lead that old grey horse up alongside of that

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wagon tongue, where he could step in the stirrup and get on him. I thought, "By golly! That old boy has got some good ideas there." [*laughing*] That's what I need now, is a wagon tongue, and an old wagon.

LAURIE: And a horse gentle enough to let you step on him that way.

DON: Mine is, I could get him about up there to anything. He'd have got me on. But, but I've thought about that a lot of times.

LAURIE: So, by this time, do you have your own gear? You have your own saddle, and your---

DON: Yeah, by then, I had my own bed, and I had everything I needed.

LAURIE: Oh. You even had a bed now? How nice. [*laughing*]

DON: Oh yeah, a big bedroll, yeah a good buckaroo bed. You could even roll it out on a foot of snow and be comfortable. Anyway, yeah, we had to ride. We'd make a big loop away from the ranch, and then ride way down the country there, to what they call the Upper Clover Ranch, and the Lower Clover. And we'd make the cow tracks, and we'd hunt them cows, if they was in that fresh snow. Then, if they'd belong to this outfit, we'd try to push them over, and then when we come back, we picked 'em up and stick 'em in a field on the way back to the main ranch. So, that was kind of our job. Yeah, after about a month, the buckaroos come in, and up until then, I got to eat in the cookhouse, with the ranch hands, you know. But then, I was supposed to eat with the cowboys, so, they pulled up their wagon, and they parked it right at the end of the bunkhouse, and set their cook tent out there, and the cowboys ate there. The cowboys had one big room in the bunkhouse, and they all stayed in this one room. You know, there'd be beds around. You just had to go around the corner and eat at the cook wagon, at the buckaroo wagon. Yeah.

LAURIE: So, how many guys would there be?

DON: Oh, I don't know. There were six or seven, when they were all there. Yeah.

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LAURIE: What was that paying? Do you remember what you were getting paid by then?

DON: I can't remember, but I think it was a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. I think.

LAURIE: And, you'd be out gathering, all of the cattle, trying to get 'em all in?

DON: Yeah, well, there wasn't lots of 'em, but you'd head off a few, pick up a few, and the buckaroos would come with the main bunches and they'd shove them in. I think they probably wintered a lot of cattle out on the plains, on the desert, there, too. I don't know.

LAURIE: They didn't have to bring them all in and feed them, in that country?

DON: No.

LAURIE: So, how long did you stay there?

DON: About three months, I guess.

LAURIE: So you came back to here in the winter, again.

DON: Yeah, and then the old, the boss, he said, "Well, if you stay here until spring, I'll put you on as a buckaroo. In the meantime, if you stay, I'd like for you to feed some cows." And I said, "Well, feed cows? What's that?" And he says, "Five hundred head, to a man." Each man! They figured you're gonna' feed five hundred cows! I said, "Well, I don't know...."

JOHN: That's a lot of cows.

LAURIE: Hand pitching hay?

JOHN: I wouldn't feed 'em very much. [*laughing*]

DON: Yeah. I don't know, they might have had—I didn't stay around long enough to find out. They might have had some derricks. Yeah. Mike Acton, they were building a derrick, when we got out there. When we first went to work for him, they had all the runners, and the mast, and the boom and everything set to—In fact, they put it together the next day.

LAURIE: To load the wagons? That's the biggest part of the work.

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DON: Yeah.

JOHN: Well did they stack the hay with the derricks, too?

DON: No, they called it a Mormon derrick, but, ah—The Mormons, did, the originals, they'd use a net, and stack hay with them. Yeah, but we worked it the other way, with a Jackson fork, and you'd wind your mast one way or the other, whichever way you wanted it to turn, and you'd pull it up there, you'd set your fork, you'd holler go, and the horse would pull it up and they'd swing around and you'd have your wagon parked there. You'd swing over and you dumped it, pull her back empty, and they'd back the horse up, or however they worked him, you know. Some of them old horses would pretty near work by themselves after you got them going good.

JOHN: You see, in Beaverhead County [Montana] where we were before we come here, they called them "Beaver slides". And that hay, you had a fork, and they would push it up, and then dump it into a rack with a net. But, they never, I never saw a Jackson fork in that country. They pitched it all off the stack, onto the hay wagons.

DON: Yeah, they made pretty stacks that way. They'd be pretty square. But, some of these hay stacks here, would be one hundred thirty, forty, ton of hay on a stack. On a big ranch. Well, nothing in this country was that big, 'cause most of their lands weren't that big. But you go to Island, or Roaring Springs, and some of them where they had those big hay fields, yeah, they put up some hellation big stacks of hay. Yeah, but you know, the way it was stacked, you know, they put it on a net, and they had four horses-- We used four horses, or Mike used four horses on the pull-up, and the big long cable would go clear over the stack, the way it was rigged up you'd hook one chain, and then you would hook four on this hook. And when you tripped it, up from the wagon, and that slack and them four chains, the net chains, would come unhooked. And then

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the only thing that was left hooked was the over-throw, so the pull-back guy would pull that back and put the net hole, they had a, and lay it in there, and then the next they'd buck the hay onto the net, and the net-setter would hook the chains and holler loud enough so the stacker, settin' up on the hay, he'd send the pull-up going, and you'd have to watch him if you were driving the pull-up, 'cause he would trip you, or tell you when to trip, you know.

LAURIE: Quite a production.

DON: See the long pull up cable was hooked to the back of this wagon, on a toggle switch. And you'd drive these four horses, and you'd have a trip rope, and would be lookin' back, and the old hay stacker would trip you, you'd pull that, and that would trip that chain, or the cable, and it would go slack, and that would turn the chains loose on the net. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. It was a good way, but it took quite a crew to do that. You had seven or eight men there. If you could get the right go, you could stack a hundred ton pretty good. Most of them stacks weren't that big, you know. Seventy-five was a pretty big stack, I think. I've got the figures in there, how they'd measure that hay.

[Don goes to retrieve the note.]

DON: Are you the mathematician?

JOHN: Hmmm. Width minus over?

DON: The over.

JOHN: Divide by two times the width times the length, gives you the cubic feet. Boy, this is quite the.... Look at this Laurie.

LAURIE: So, this is estimating how much hay was in a stack?

DON: It was pretty accurate. Yeah, loose hay.

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LAURIE: Width minus over, divide by two, times width, times the length, cubic feet. That gives you a cubic, because you have the three-way. Five hundred and twelve cubic feet to a ton. It took five hundred and twelve cubic feet to equal a ton?

DON: I guess.

LAURIE: Three hundred forty-eight cubic feet equals a ton year-old, because it would settle and then weigh less?

DON: Yeah.

LAURIE: Well, I am going to have to figure out, how much hay it took—A hundred, a hundred ton of hay is a big stack!

DON: It is. A big stack. And the over was a lot of the secret, you know, if you had a good over. Look at a hay stack, and the taper, you know, and they'd get back and they'd judge, where it broke, and that's where they'd throw the over. They wouldn't go in the low end, and they wouldn't go clear in the high end. They'd just figure, if that was level, that is where it would be. So that, you'd throw your tape measure over, and sometimes you'd need an honest guy on the receiving end, 'cause he might reel in a couple of feet extra, or he might hold it up on the side three or four feet!

LAURIE: To make it seem like it was more.

DON: Yeah, you had to deal with pretty honest people. But we measured—I didn't figure it all out. I helped measure a lot of hay there at the Sod House, when my brother-in-law gypoed stackin' that hay there.

LAURIE: Oh, for contract?

DON: Yeah. When Walt McKuen had those refuge fields, from the government, he would hay them, and he hired my brother-in-law, two different years to stack the hay.

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LAURIE: And, who was your brother-in-law? Which Hill?

DON: Harold.

LAURIE: Harold Hill?

DON: Yeah.

LAURIE: So, you're putting up hay with horses still, when you got here.

DON: Well, and the width of the stack, too, they had to get the end of the stack, to see how much of a taper, and guess how straight that was. It was pretty tricky. I know we stacked the that hay twice there at the Sod House, but we never slacked it like they did with a slide. We stacked with a Farmhand, with a big basket, and we'd set it up that way.

JOHN: Did you ever have to salt the hay, if it was wet?

DON: Yeah, we salted every buck load of ours here, one year. Yeah, we had it all cut and bunched, and it started raining in August, and we were hayin' down there in what they call Miller Swamp, south of the Bell A. And, when we came back, it was dry, but it went through all of those buck loads of hay. I picked up some them with the Farmhand, turned 'em over, and I thought [*whistling*], "That ain't gonna work." All black, and terrible lookin', you know. So we just left them, and we started stackin', and the neighbor's daughter, was, she, I guess, might have been a junior or senior in high school, and she stood there with a coffee can, all day long, and she'd dump a coffee can full of salt on every buck load of hay. And stacked it, and it didn't burn, and the cows ate that stuff. like it was good. I don't think there was too many vitamins left in it, but they thought it was alright. [*laughing*]

LAURIE: I have never heard of salting hay.

JOHN: Oh yeah, they did it in North Dakota. I remember my Grandpa did it.

DON: I'll bet.

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LAURIE: To keep it from rotting?

JOHN: Yeah, alfalfa, if it wasn't curing out, well they'd salt it, and it would keep.

DON: Yeah, they just used rock salt.

LAURIE: So your figure here, for showing what a stack weighs--

DON: Yeah, I never knew that was here, and I got to rootin' around in some papers the other day, and I couldn't remember what the formula was for measuring hay, and there it was.

LAURIE: So, that's for, if you were contracting haying, and they were charging by the ton, that was how you would be paid?

DON: Yeah, they'd pay you so much a ton.

LAURIE: Do you remember what it cost back then

DON: Boy, I sure don't.

JOHN: [*looking at the note*] I think a woman wrote this.

DON: Yeah, that's my wife's hand writing.

JOHN: I was thinking, "You've got pretty good hand-writing, for a guy!"

DON: She probably worked for my brother-in-law. Or for her dad. Yeah, her dad, they did a lot of contracting hay in the hard times, in the Thirties. They sheared sheep. They had the ranch.

And they'd even buy these old broken mouth ewes, and pull the teeth out by the side of the mouth, so they could go eat. They had them down at the lake there, at the ranch, besides their cows was all out in the hills, or wherever they were running them. And then they had a shearing plant, the one, Harold, Lyle Hill, Lloyd Hill, the guy I went to work for and quit before I ever worked. He had the plant, him and his brother, but Lloyd kind of run it, he was the head honcho, you know, they couldn't both be "honchos", so they got along real good. And, Lyle sheared, and Lloyd sheared, but Lloyd run the outfit and kept track of the books, and the hired help.

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LAURIE: So these are all sons of Harold?

DON: Their dad and uncle.

LAURIE: Ok.

DON: Lloyd was Harold's uncle, and Lyle was his dad.

LAURIE: And Lyle was the father to your wife?

DON: Yeah, right. Lyle.

LAURIE: When did you meet your wife? When did you get married?

DON: Ohhhhh—When did we get married? God danged, I can't--

LAURIE: Fifty-six.

DON: Yeah, that's right. I had to stop and think.

LAURIE: So, you knew her for a while?

DON: Oh yeah.

LAURIE: You'd been working with the Hills by then?

DON: No, I hadn't worked for the Hills.

LAURIE: You're just in the area, working.

DON: Yeah, I'd been around. I was rodeoin' then, pretty much. Well, I'd met her before that. I'd met her at a dance in Diamond. I knew who she was, and then I finally got to meet her, and, yeah, it just went from there.

JOHN: There was an old Irish man by the name of Dees McGee, that lived over by Plush, and he—

DON: [*laughing*] Cogg McGee! “Ah, Christ, you'd think [we's at a rodeo]!”

JOHN: But, he would ride, all the way from where he'd ranched there, by Hart Mountain, to Diamond, to the dances. And it was like a hundred and fifteen miles.

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DON: Yeah, that was a long way.

JOHN: But, he would ride, just for the dances. They had a lot of dances then.

DON: Well, was it Dees? Was it Cogg? Was Dees his brother?

JOHN: Dees, McGee, is the one I am talking about.

DON: Oh yeah, and Cogg McGee. Cogg had a place there by Diamond, and Dees, I think Dees must have been a brother. But they were from over there, over on the other side by Hart Mountain. But Cogg, he made a lot of moonshine. I don't know whether Dees ever made moonshine or not, but old Cogg made a lot of it. Yeah, but anyway, he was a character. But, yeah, them guys, they never thought anything about going that far for a dance. Take 'em two, three days.

JOHN: But then they'd stay overnight, and maybe leave the next day.

DON: If they sobered up enough to catch their horse, they did.

JOHN: It's a long ride home. [laughing all]

DON: Yeah, they might heal up for a day or two before they'd try to go home.

LAURIE: So, there were a lot of dances in Diamond?

DON: Oh, every town. Drewsey, they had a dance. Drewsey they one at the Grange Hall, below the Pine Creek School. They used to have one there. They always had a band. And then they had an Irishman's ball in Juntura, 17th of Ireland, they'd get together. Crane would have a dance. They'd have, Diamond would have a dance. I even remember they'd even have one in Lawen, upstairs in that old store. Ted Carson owned the store then, and boy, they'd get to dancing, and that old floor would get to bouncing! I ain't kidding. You'd get seasick. The old stairway went up on the outside of the store. The old building is still there.

LAURIE: And the floor would actually bounce?

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DON: Oh, it would get to wiggling pretty good. It's a wonder they didn't tear that thing down.

[*laughing*] And Burns—They never had much in Burns. It was all these country dances, you know. Oh, they'd have some dances. They'd go to these dances, you know. The Pine Room was a pretty good place, and, um, what the hell was the name of the guy that built that place in Hines? Oh crap.

LAURIE: That one that burned?

DON: Well, no, but yeah, well, that was one place. Yeah. Yeah. That was a good party there. But that was different than these country dances. Yeah.

LAURIE: So, you started rodeoing—you were working for Mike Akton at the time, and you just wanted to go to a rodeo, and you asked him permission to leave for a few days?

DON: Well, yeah, I'd worked for some other people between there, too. I worked for Milers. When I came back from Nevada, I worked for Ned Howard. Well, Howard McMullen and I both did. And we broke some colts there, and worked the winter and spring there. Then Ned Howard's father-in-law, Charlie Miler, had the ranch there on Miler Flat, and he had some big old work horses, three or four of 'em, that he wanted started, and so, I said, "Well, I could do that." So I went to work for them for it was only a month and a half, or something. It wasn't much of a job, it didn't take you forever to get them old, once you got them old workhorses broke to lead and worked every day for thirty days on the old [Jim] wagon. Well, you know, that was all they was gonna' get, unless you was gonna' work them steady—you'd have to wait for haying time to really get 'em broke. And, then, there might still be a runaway every five minutes, you never knew. [*laughing*] Anyway, so, then, uh, after that I went to work for Wright Wilber, for a while. I was just kinda was a rounder, there for a little bit, you know. I worked for Wright—I liked Wright and the family. It was a pretty good place to work, but, then I had, you

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know, I thought I would go back to work for Mike Acton, and then I did. I quit Wright, and I went back to work for Mike's, and I worked there for five or six months, 'cause I worked there long enough to be in the cow camps and all through, we were ready to go hayin'. We were gatherin' the hay horses, and gettin' them in. They were having a rodeo at Prairie City, and I said I wanted to take a couple of days off and go to the rodeo. And he said, "Well, we ain't got enough time to go rodeoin'." "Well," I said, "I've got time to go." I don't know why, but I quit on those terms! I always got along with Mike after that, you know. So, I quit, and I went to Prairie City, and then I just went goofy from there on, you know.

LAURIE: Rodeo became your thing.

DON: Yeah, it did, after about fifty-one. That trophy, what's left of it there, ****_** winos was working on the house there that we was living in, I had two trophies, and they fell off on the floor, and those goofy sons of bitches picked the pieces up, put 'em in a box, and hauled 'em off to the dump. The refuge had a big dump ground down there. And I found out, it was about a day or two later, and I went down and went through that dump, and that much was about all that I found, what's up there.

LAURIE: Which one was that from, Don?

DON: Dayton, Oregon, nineteen fifty.

LAURIE: First place, All Around. So what events were you entering by then?

DON: Well, I was entering three events then. That one, I got in the bare back riding, and the saddle bronc riding, and the bull riding. And, I think I won the bull riding, and I think I won third in the bareback riding, and didn't even place in the bronc riding. That was supposed to be my main event.

LAURIE: Yeah, that seemed that's what you excelled in, over the years—saddle bronc.

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DON: That was stupid—a man should have worked every event he was alive enough to get into!

JOHN: Yeah, well, that's a full plate, three events, so, you know, busy.

DON: Yeah, three or four events, and that keeps you outta' trouble, and you pretty near win some money every time. But one of them—They wouldn't hardly ever skunk you completely.

But, you had to be dedicated, and you know, you thought you were a professional or the greatest bronc rider, or whatever, so that was all you did. A lot of us, that's all we did, just one event.

But, like Casey Tibbs said, "Watch that guy over there." He said, "He works every damned event. You watch his checks. He gets a check or two, every rodeo he will win some money."

Yep. [chuckling]

LAURIE: So, you were pretty much rodeoing full time, that pretty much paid the bills for you, when you were a single man?

DON: Oh, pretty much. Yeah. If you could win a hundred dollars a week, you could live pretty good them days.

LAURIE: You weren't hauling a roping horse around, you were just getting you and your gear--

DON: Yeah, just traveling from one to another.

LAURIE: You were traveling in a group?

DON: Oh, one or two or you, or three. Depending, when I was an amateur, it would probably be two or three of us. That was for the first two years, and then I got to join the professional rodeo, and then George Menkenmaier and I traveled together a lot. And that one spring, we went, I forgot which year that was, we went to Edmonton, Canada, and I got bucked off and this horse stepped on my elbow and threw it out of joint, and it went clear in the bone, up beyond the joint. So, they hauled me off in the gut wagon, to the hospital, and they had knocked me out. They couldn't get that to go back, until they got me put out, relaxed. And then they finally got me put

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back together. And it had broke a bone on the bottom that locks your elbow, well, it had broke that off. And then, when it healed, wee it healed crooked. That's as far as I can straighten it.

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LAURIE: So, now you are out of commission for a while?

DON: Yeah, well, when I came back I went to work for my father-in-law. I was married by then.

LAURIE: When did you go professional?

DON: Fifty-three.

LAURIE: Fifty-three. That's quite a commitment, then. You're going for it all. A lot of traveling.

DON: Yeah, yeah. And I was married by the time that horse stepped on me. Shirley was living in town, there. And so, anyway, I tried to ah, work for my father-in-law. Because I could run a Cat or some damn thing, they were farming. So they got me on this old D-4, I farmed this one field, and then when they, there cattle were already out in August, so my father-in-law and I went up and gathered the cattle, and by then, my arm was out of the cast but it was still--

LAURIE: Worthless?

DON: Well, it was pretty well healed up and we were-- we were coming home with the cows, we had them strung out, well we had them going in what they call the [Eiser Field] on the East end of the Refuge, out from Johnnie Crow's place there. And they'd stop 'em in there, water them up, let them rest up for the night, and then take them on to the Refuge. My father-in-law's ranch was up over the hill from the headquarters, where the realtor—Blackburn, put up there. Got ahold of it, somehow or other, him and some doctors. Well, McKuens got it after—Well, that's getting ahead of the story, here. So, well, anyway, we got to the Eiser Field, and my wife come up in the car, and we'd just take the bridles off of our horses and turn 'em loose and they'd go home. They'd just head out of there and head home, you know, and they'd pretty much beat us

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home. So, we were just sittin' in the car, and she turned the radio on, and it said, "George Menkenmaier killed in a car wreck in Prineville." And I thought, "What in the hell?" Because, they had come, him and Larry Carlin, came to the ranch the day before, a couple of days, three days before, and they'd said, "Come on. You're ready to go. We're going to Prineville." I said, "I can't go this week. We're right in the middle of the road with these cows. I can't quit this guy until we get these damned cows home, and tended to, and next week I'll go." And, that kind of let the air out of me then. I never tried to rodeo very hard after that. I thought, "What the hell are you doing?" You know.

LAURIE: You've got a family now.

DON: Yeah, you're starving to death, and, at my age, I was just determined, I thought it was crazy. I was thirty years old. "I ain't going to be the champion of the world, at my age. There's too many of these kids coming. So, just bundle it up." So, I punked myself up, I went to Klamath Falls, the Fourth of July Rodeo, and, I said, "Well, this is the end of it. I am going to quit, when this is over with." Harley May—I don't know--you may not be familiar with the name?

JOHN: I heard of him.

DON: Well, anyway he was a world champion bull dogger, and hell of a cowboy. He could work three events, a great big, tall—They called him "Ladder Ass". [laughing] But anyway, Harley was in the bronc riding, and we split the bronc riding, so I said, "God damned it Harley, I quit." "You quit?" I says, "Hell yeah," I said. "If I can't beat you in the ***---*** bronc riding, I quit!" [laughing] "Oh, go to hell!"

JOHN: That's good. [laughing]

DON: But I'd already had my mind made up. I was just teasing him.

JOHN: Well, it was a good way to go out.

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DON: Well, it was worse than being a drunk, I'll tell you. It took me a long time to get out of the habit, you know. I'd go to Burns and be by myself. I'd have to stop in every joint to see what I thought I was missing. Because, that was just the way you lived for ten years, you know.

LAURIE: When you were out on the rodeo, it was drinking hard, and traveling?

DON: Well, yeah, you drank too much, but you didn't drink night and day, like people think you did. Some of 'em did. Some of those guys could drink a lot every day. No, we'd uh, party, you know what I mean. You'd go to the joints. There's nothing else to do, so, hell, we even played golf, for something to kill the time!

LAURIE: In between events and rodeos—I do have to ask though: you rode in Madison Square Garden. What was that like? I mean, that was THE big show, at that time. And what were you thinking in New York City? And who else was there with you? [Don clowning, eyes wide] Oh, wide-eyed! What an experience!

DON: [laughing] Oh, no, no. No, no. Yeah, it was kind of funny. We'd stopped in Omaha, on the way, and they had a rodeo. And then, I was with Ross Dollarhide, he had the car, and he had two horses he was pulling, and we got on the Pennsylvania Turnpike—it takes you right into the—almost into New York City. If you make the right turn, it does. But, we made the wrong turn, and we couldn't get into the Holland Tunnel, you know. And we'd drive up the river, turn around and go back, and we'd turn around, and go back. Finally, we pulled into a onion field there, in the dark, and we just stayed there and slept in the car the rest of the night, and then in the daylight, when we could see where in the hell we were at, we were in New Jersey! And we couldn't get from New Jersey, under the river, to New York.

LAURIE: So, the next day you get in--

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DON: Finally, we made it, and you had to park your horses and the trailer in the building some place, until the rodeo was over. And the horses, you would take them to the basement. And that was where all the livestock was, in the basement of the Garden. Everything was tended to and fed. But you had to look out for your own horses, make sure they were being fed and exercised every day, and took care of. Yeah, it was pretty interesting. And then the town itself was—you know, big, you know, lots of crazy people, just—Yeah.

JOHN: So what's the Madison Square Garden look like? How big was it?

DON: Oh, the old garden, it was pretty big. I forget how many people could stay in there. Quite a bunch.

LAURIE: And, a full-sized arena?

DON: Yeah, well, it wasn't a huge arena, but it was probably as big as some of these buildings they've got today, you know. They'd have wild horse races in there, of course that's just running down from the chutes to the lower end. And the bull doggin'. Calf ropin' was pretty much what you call "Lap & Tap", you know, just a short barrier, because you didn't have a lot of room to run 'em. But it went just about like they do today. You watch the Finals [National Final Rodeo, Las Vegas], and it's a pretty tight place, too, where they have it. If they changed buildings--they could probably change buildings—they could probably find a building that's bigger than that one, today, but--

LAURIE: The sound, inside of there? Was it pretty loud?

DON: Oh yeah, it was pretty normal.

LAURIE: And you rode—You rode saddle bronc there?

DON: Yeah. And bulldogged. Once. I bulldogged once, the last time I went.

LAURIE: Did it feel like a lot of pressure though, being in Madison Square Garden?

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DON: Well, everybody was there, pretty near. I mean, not everybody, but there was a pile of cowboys there, from all over, you know. Of course, the judges had the pencil, and they had their little heroes, also.

LAURIE: They had their favorites?

DON: Sort of. [chuckling] Yeah, yeah.

LAURIE: Yeah, it's been a long time that way, I think.

DON: Yeah, yeah, I think it might still be some places pretty much. You'd go from here down South in the summertime, go down to New Mexico or Texas, you'd better look out, 'cause--

LAURIE: They had their own boys to take care of.

DON: They had the "click" right there, spoken for, pretty much.

JOHN: Yeah, gotta' take care of our own first.

DON: Yeah, if you was up the line in the rodeo business, and had a little pull someplace, then they'd treat you a little better, 'cause they might scare--you wouldn't get a judging job, if you got too tough. This Terry Carlon, he judges a lot of these big rodeos today. And he was so honest, he was rough on the champions and all of 'em. They were all treated the same with Terry's pencil. He didn't give a damn whose name it was, or who you was. If you had a goose egg comin', that's what you got. And, boy, they couldn't hardly bare that, 'cause there was a lot of them champions used to sneaking by, you know, and getting away with it.

JOHN: Missing 'em out?

DON: Yeah, and Terry, he'd just educate 'em. And boy oh boy—they couldn't take that, 'cause, it'd just kill them. This year, you watched the goose eggs that they give them bronc riders, and 90% of 'em was Terry.

LAURIE: We didn't get to watch it [National Finals Rodeo] this year.

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DON: Yeah, yeah, a lot of them champions went by the wayside 'cause they couldn't spur their horses out.

LAURIE: And he called it.

DON: Oh yeah, and he didn't give a damn which one of them it was, either. So, they tried to get rid of him, and—they set him down pretty hard there for a little bit. But, then, Friday realized that maybe he was just what they needed, I think, because I think he judges some pretty good rodeos. I think he judges Pendleton.

JOHN: Did you know Duane Howard?

DON: Oh yeah. Was he one of your countrymen?

JOHN: Yeah, from back there. I went back there about five years ago. He had gotten two new knees, and there was a little rodeo, an amateur rodeo, in Sheyenne [North Dakota], and Duane was sittin' there, they gave him a – I told him where I was, and the first thing he said, "Do you know of a guy named Boots Menkenmaier? And I said, I know of his name, I was neighbors to his daughter, Georgia. And he said, "Yeah, he was a bronc rider, that he knew of. And Duane, and the Teschers, and Joe Chase, and—

DON: Yeah, they were good, a hell of a bunch of good bronc riders, yeah. Alvin Nelson, Duane Howard, I remember when they first started out. They were hard to beat, when they were just kids, coming right out.

LAURIE: What surprised me was how tall Duane was, riding like he---

DON: Well, Duane died, didn't he? Did he get Alzheimer's?

JOHN: I don't know. But he died just a couple three years ago.

DON: Or was it Alvin Nelson? Alvin Nelson died, too. Jim Tescher. Tom Tescher.

JOHN: Tom died from a four-wheeler accident. Wrecked a four-wheeler.

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DON: Tom did? The hell. Yeah, Tom and I was good friends. Yeah.

JOHN: The Teschers were—

DON: Jim, he was ahh--well, he was just different than Tom, you know, personality differences, you know. But he was alright. I was friends with him too, but not like with Tom. And Duane Howard and Alvin Nelson, they just were what they were. They didn't mess around, they went to rodeo, they never drank, and they didn't smoke. They tended to business and you had to beat them.

JOHN: Duane was pretty straight up. I worked with him—there was a sale barn there, and he was there, he'd work during sale day, every week, and I worked with him. He was just a good guy to be around, honest, hard-working, and real sincere about everything.

LAURIE: Solid.

DON: Yeah, I always wondered how they all made it, after they quit, you know, because they were World Champions, all of them, except Tom, was the only one that wasn't a World Champion. But, Jim and those other two boys, all three were World Champions, and what did they get outta' that?

JOHN: Well, I think Duane went on to judge more, for the PRCA, he had a job there. And, he had a ranch, but it got flooded. Devils' Lake, was the name of the lake, and the Howards all, Wilson, and Duane, and Larry Howard, they had places around there, and that doggone lake come up, and it just never did come down, and they just lost their places.

DON: Is that right? Devil's Lake. It was well named!

JOHN: Yeah, yeah. And Duane moved into a little town, and that was where he stayed, until he passed away.

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DON: But he had enough money to do all that? Just from rodeoin', or from his judgin', or he got old enough to get a pension?

JOHN: Yeah, I think he had something going there.

DON: Well, knowing them two, they probably saved every penny they made. Because somebody-- I probably shouldn't say anything, I guess, but someplace, they were eating in a restaurant, they were settin' there, and this guy said, "You guys want a piece of pie?" And, they says, one of them said, "No. But we'll take the fifteen cents." That was being honest! They would have taken the fifteen cents before they'd have ate the pie. That shows you there, how tight they were. That's nothin' against 'em. They were what they were. They didn't ask you for nothin'.

JOHN: Yeah, one of the Teschers, I don't know if it was Jim or Tom, but he had a pickup that he drove around and he had his bed in the back, and I mean it wasn't a pickup with a top on it, but just the bed of the pickup. And that was what he slept in when he traveled. One of the Teschers, Tom or Jim.

DON: When they were starting out, probably. Yeah. Yeah, that would have been pretty tough living after they got going down the road hard.

JOHN: Did you eat glass with the rest of the hooligans?

DON: [laughing] Eat glass? No, I never did eat glass.

JOHN: Did you ever hear of any of 'em that ate glass?

DON: Casey. And that—

JOHN: Yeah. Linderman. Bud.

LAURIE: Why were they eating glass?

DON: To get drunk.

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JOHN: They'd just crunch 'em up and swallow 'em.

DON: Eat them fine wine glasses, swallow 'em. Billy Meyers. Did you know Billy?

JOHN: No, no.

DON: You talk about a cuckoo! Now, he was—He was a pretty good bronc rider, too, when he stayed sober, but then he got pretty bad, drinking, you know. In New York, I stayed with him for a while, and then he finally decided he would quit drinking. So he stayed in the room and he'd read this Robert Service, the poetry, and then I'd come home, and he'd recite me a poem from that day. I missed out on the deal, but they said he got drunk and he run and jumped out the window, and make the loop around, and come in the other window. And he was up there about five stories up. But, I think he was a paratrooper, wasn't he?

JOHN: I don't know.

DON: I think he was.

JOHN: Didn't have any fear of heights.

DON: He didn't any fear, or no brains either.

LAURIE: At five stories, he didn't have a parachute either, so this isn't really jiving.

DON: Yeah, poor Billy. He had a hell of a struggle there. But he could really ride broncs damn good when he was half together. But, the whiskey got the upper hand.

LAURIE: A lot of the guys, would you say, the drinking was hard? The lifestyle was hard on a lot of them?

DON: Well, some of 'em, you know. You didn't drink too much, most of us. A lot more than we needed, for sure. We wouldn't have got away with it today—it just wouldn't work, 'Cause you gotta go too hard, these guys. So they make one hundred thousand dollars. What the hell is a hundred thousand dollars today? That don't take you out of sight. Not the way they have to live.

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LAURIE: Their expenses on the road, their entry fees.

DON: Yeah, if you stay in a motel, hundred dollars a night, for just a pretty common room, probably. Your meals.

LAURIE: If you have to have a horse for roping or bull dogging.

DON: Yeah, well, if they don't have sponsors, every one of 'em is a walking bill board, you know.

JOHN: That book in the library, The Last Cowboys, about the Wright brothers, in southern Utah, those saddle bronc riders. They wrote a book about 'em, and it's a good story, about how they, the whole family, is right around them.

DON: Oh yeah, they made a business out it. A big business.

LAURIE: But it's still not easy. And they still have a ranch that they are trying to keep lucrative. And they all have wives that work, with jobs with insurance and benefits. But it is still hard, even being in the top tier in professional rodeo.

DON: Well, yeah. If you gotta go, being on the road—I have no imagination what they go through. What we went through, was fairly simple. You know—you could work it. They finally got to “trading out”, and I said that's the ruination of rodeo, right there.

LAURIE: Trading out? What does that mean?

JOHN: If you draw a dink horse that you aren't going to make any money on.

LAURIE: Oh, so you could just let him go through, no ride?

DON: Yeah, they'd set you out on another rodeo, you see, and trade you out with somebody, so you could work here, and drive over there and get on another one. Well, so, the only ones that could afford to do that was the champions, so they was starving the next tier damn near to death, and they had to show up at every rodeo. And then, they got to the point, where now, they can

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trade out or draw out, if they don't like what they got, and pay a fine, and they don't even show up. So, you are paying a big ticket to set there and see this champion, and the son-of-a-bitch is down the road someplace. Excuse the language. But, I don't blame him either. He helped make the rules, and it benefited him.

LAURIE: Because he is in the top tier, and he is just making sure it works?

DON: Hell yeah.

JOHN: Did you know Hi Whitlock? From Billings? Hi Whitlock.

DON: I should know him—

JOHN: Yeah, he was a saddle bronc rider. He kept riding—Ol' Duane Howard was telling me the story. He said, 'Old Hi kept riding past his time. And he was like fifty-some, and Hi was telling me, "You know, these horses now-a-days buck harder than the ones when I was younger!"' He didn't realize he was getting old, it wasn't that the horses were bucking harder.

DON: I don't think they were bucking a darn bit harder. They were raising 'em. But they used to have those ol' slaughter houses, you know, my God, they had access to thousands of horses, them old big work horses. Every place. This country was crawlin' with 'em, there for a while. 'Cause when they got good machinery, after the second world war, why they'd get tractors and get that stuff in the hay fields, instead of these damn horses. So, they just turned them out, 'cause there was no fences. You could go from here to southern California without ever opening a gate, if you knew how to go through, you know. You can't get out of Harney County any more.

[*chuckling*]

LAURIE: You gotta' take a wire cutter. I just interviewed Jerry Miller, a good story, great stories, of course Taft and George, you know. Some of their bucking horses, they would use them to gather wild horses, right out of their bucking string. That's just crazy to me.

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DON: Oh, yeah, there were a lot of those [bucking] horses that was broke to ride, if you were half-assed cowboy, you know. You could talk ‘em out of it, and they wouldn’t buck until you flanked ‘em. I mean, they might buck, but they wouldn’t turn the crank like they would—Oh, there was a lot of those—Andy Riggie, he got a lot of those horses out of riding academies in southern California, he was in []. He had a good string of horses, and put on a lot of those California rodeos for years. And a lot of his horses were pretty near thoroughbreds.

JOHN: Oh yeah, they get mad, you know.

DON: Yeah, they’d get spoiled around them damn riding academies, people buy one of them, just like they do here. They buy that good horse and then they take them home, and they can’t get along with ‘em, ‘cause they aren’t cowboy enough or cowgirl enough. Then they can’t do nothin’ with them, and there they stand. And then they get to bucking somebody, and like ol’ Mike Acton told me, riding them colts, and I liked for them to buck, you know. He said, “Boy, you’d better start stoppin’ him. He’s gonna’ learn faster than you do!” [laughter]

LAURIE: You think it’s cute now---

DON: He was right. “They learn faster than you do.” They do, too.

LAURIE: When, so you were sort of done with rodeo after Klamath Falls, and then you came back and worked for your father-in-law for a few years?

DON: Well, yeah, for two or three years, there until my brother-in-law ended up with the ranch.

LAURIE: And, who was that?

DON: Harold. Harold Hill. I worked for him, and he got real sick, you know, he drank a lot.

LAURIE: Oh, no, I didn’t know.

DON: Oh, yeah, he was a total alky, I mean, he was. You’d never know it, but it was eating his liver alive, you know, and he wouldn’t quit. They told him, if he’d quit, his liver would heal up

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and he would live. He couldn't do her. Couldn't do her. What a crime, and what a hell of a good guy he was.

LAURIE: So he got ill.

DON: Well, his wife ended up with the place, 'cause he bought it from his dad and mother, and then Harold's wife ended up with it in the estate. And I was supposed to get it, but that's another story, and I won't go into that. But Walt McKuen, I don't know why that son-of-a-bitch wanted that ranch, 'cause he had so much land all over the damn place already. Anyway, he wanted it, and he offered her—I had an offer, a good offer on it. I had the backing. I wasn't begging. I had the money lined up to buy it, on her terms, to start with, or anyway the administrator. And then Walt took a run at 'er, and he said, "Well, if Don can't do this," he says, "I can do that." I wasn't getting' along with her worth a damn anyways, but then, that didn't help anything.

LAURIE: What a pity. So then, where did you go? Is that when you came up here?"

DON: Well, I don't know. No, I went to work for Walt. Yeah, I had fifty cows of my own, already, so anyway in the shuffle, I bought two hundred of the estate cows. And Walt did let me run 'em on the Hill ranch, just like we always did, for three years. And then I had to do something after three years. And I had two hundred and fifty cows and no home. And a wife and three kids and a borrowed dog, so I had to make some kind of a move. He didn't offer me any kind of a proposition, which he cussed himself out afterwards. Which he said, "Well, I should have done this with Don—" He never told me that, but of course he told other people. Yeah, 'cause I could run that thing in my sleep, you know. But that is neither here nor there anyway, and then it went under water, so—I guess it was a god send maybe in the long run. Who knows. Who knows?

LAURIE: It literally went under water during the floods, in the eighties.

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DON: Oh yeah, yeah. Plum. The buildings filled up with water, and then when the ice went out, it just destroyed 'em. There was nothing left but a few sticks.

JOHN: You know that ice—The Refuge puts up the fences after the water goes down, good fence with good rock crib corners, and then one winter with the water and the ice, it just takes it down.

DON: Yeah. Them old wood post fences that they had out there withstood everything for years. You know, fire—The old wire would get pretty rotten, and we'd go around about two miles of that junk out there, and hang it up. And it would be good for another year. It's like, if you put steel posts, they either sink, or fall over.

JOHN: Right, absolutely.

DON: This fence builder, he made a ton of money, straighten it up. He'd just straighten up the old fence. He figured out how to get a half-a-mile, or a quarter-a-mile at a whack, and lay it back up, stick it back up in the mud, tie a stick on the bottom so it can't sink anymore. Yeah, no, when John Scharff left there, that thing went to hell. John wasn't one of my favorite people, and he sure wasn't the family's favorite, because they [Malheur Refuge] condemned that place, of grandpa's, twice, in his day. He went to court, and beat 'em. And then they took him to court again in a few years, and he beat 'em again. But, they broke him twice, fighting over it. Adverse possession on his property in the lake [Malheur].

JOHN: Eminent domain?

DON: I don't know what their deal was. Anything below the meander line, above the meander line—I don't know all of the details.

LAURIE: So, they weren't offering to trade land, on that deal?

DON: No, they were just going to take it over.

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LAURIE: Like, when Larry Dunn got bought out, and they just traded him land because his just kept flooding all of the time, so they traded him out.

DON: Yeah, they did. Well, yeah, that was a little different proposition. But, no, they wanted that of Lyle's [Hill], right there in the middle of the refuge, where they could see it, you know. And that was pretty good too, because we had that one field that went clear down in front of the headquarters.

LAURIE: Right under their noses.

DON: Oh, ***---***, those old deer would get out in there, and old [] went rippin' out through there with his pickup after those big bucks. He run off into an old well out there. Damn near destroyed his car. But, anyway, the deer got away, but—Yeah, that was one thing that bothered old Scharff. But then, what scared Harold when he got the place, he was just sure that they would do it again. And so, he tried to trade with them. He said, "I'll trade you this, for some of the Sodhouse, just acre for acre." And they wouldn't even talk. So, he knew damn well, they were after him again. And as soon as he died, then it went on for about three, four—maybe four or five years, I guess.

LAURIE: When Walt McKuen had it?

DON: Yeah, yeah. When he had it all dried out, and he could hay it again. Of course, there weren't any buildings. Yeah, well then they condemned it again. Old Walt, he rolled over for 'em. He sold half of it, but laid down in the channel, where the channel went around, between there and Lawen.

LAURIE: Is that up by the "Duck Club", is that where this is?

JOHN: Close to it.

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DON: Yeah, across the river, across the channel, I mean. The channel ain't that deep. We used to gallop right across that channel in the fall and go to Lawen, because the cows could go—You couldn't build enough fence out there. You could stop 'em from going East or West, but you couldn't stop 'em from going North. Except for the bare channel, when the ground would be bare, and there wouldn't be too many that would take a run at it. But there some always some ol' idiot that would go, you know.

LAURIE: Did you have upland ground, in the summer, then? Did you have allotments?

DON: Stinking Water, yeah. Yeah, they had good range up there, in the summer. It didn't last but three months, four months.

LAURIE: It dries out pretty fast.

DON: Then they had good refuge permits, I'll give the Refuge that. But that's what Scharff tended to that, and hell, he'd hay acres of it. Well, you know that. You've been here for twenty years, you damn sure know it. And he would pretty near insist, you know them old flag patches, those flags would be about yay high, and we would just dodge 'em.

LAURIE: You had to cut them.

DON: We'd have to go back there and clean 'em up. He wanted it like a lawn. We stacked a lot of hay on the Refuge. McKuen stacked a lot of hay. Everybody stacked a lot of hay. Especially down on that end, from the Diamond Lane, north. There was a lot of hay stacked on the Refuge.

LAURIE: Did you do any of the grain farming, when the Refuge did that?

DON: No. But they used to farm Vickers Lake, and that was right North of ours. In fact, our cows would run on Vickers Lake in the fall of the year, because there was no fence to stop 'em, if it dried up. That was a bird's nest on the ground! That ol' foxtail would get about that high, and then the beards would blow. Hell, them old cows would just roost there until they got all of

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that. Pretty green feed going, you know. But, we rake bunched hundreds of acres. What we didn't stack. We'd stack enough to get us—You didn't want a lot of hay stacked over, because if you had too much left over, Scharff would say, “Yeah, well, maybe we'll take this field and give it to this guy.” So you had to, you know—He had his heroes.

JOHN: Yeah, they quit stacking hay, I think in eighty, eighty-five, maybe. I mean, you couldn't feed it, you had to get it out.

DON: You had to haul them weeds off the refuge. Walt McKuen scattered 'em. Walt McKuen scattered that ***----*** white-top from there to Vale. Took it all off the [Vickers] there and stacked it— ***---***!

LAURIE: Some went that way, and some went this way.

DON: It's sickening what they did, and the way they treat that Refuge. And tore down all the good fences, took them out. What an idiot thing—

JOHN: Corrals, good corrals, they took out.

DON: Oh yeah, there was good set of corrals, two of them there, that I know of.

JOHN: We lived at the Double O for twenty-five years, working for the Refuge. And I had a willow corral, an old one that I just fixed up. And the gates, still had Hanley's brand on 'em. And then the blacksmith's shop, they put a roof on that. Preserved everything. And when I left, they took and dozed the whole corral and the gates down. Pushed 'em in a pile and burned 'em. What the hell did they do that for? They didn't like me anyway, but I guess that was one way--

LAURIE: They didn't want it to look like a ranch, anymore. So they took out everything that looked like that.

DON: Yeah, it's supposed to be a bird refuge, and they didn't have any no ***----*** birds left!

If you was a bird, would you land in that jungle that they have, with those tule patches higher

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than this ceiling? Millions of acres of ‘em. Now, they are burnin’ ‘em, the dumb pot lickers, finally. But, they don’t burn enough of ‘em. It don’t make any sense. My father-in-law used to burn down his fields, there. They owned clear to the channel, on the North end there, after they finally got that foreclosure deal all settled. They wound up with a few more acres than what he was fighting for to start with. Anyway, he’d take a tire and twenty foot of chain, get in the old jeep and he’d drive down there, and he had a bunch of oil and gas, he’d pour that tire full, and get her to going good, and he’d just drive home. Hell, in thirty minutes, he’d have it clear for another year. And he’d have that old sugar grass hay, six feet tall—You couldn’t beat that.

JOHN: Yeah, when them horses would come in, on the Double O, the whole front of the chest of ‘em were coated. I couldn’t figure out what they were getting into to. They are sticky all over the front of ‘em. It was that sugar grass.

JOHN: [-----]

LAURIE: Let me get a little more historical now, at this point, Don. So, you got married, you worked for your father-in-law, and then you worked for your brother-in-law, then Walt McKuen had it, and you worked there for him—You stayed there for three more years.

DON: Oh, what would I have had if I would have kept going for him?

LAURIE: No. How did you end up on this place here? Who had this place? You had to find your own place.

DON: Oh yeah, well, [Pinky Catterson] had this ranch right over this hill here, and he was a good friend. He told me, he said, “If you’ve gotta’ go someplace, I think Frank Smith is going to go do something with that place. You ought a’ go talk to him.” So, I looked around. I went around quite a few places looking for some place to go, that might work, you know. So then, I went and talked to Frank, “Oh yeah. It’s all for sale.” I was kinda dumb, you know, and Frank,

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he didn't have everything down, clear, black and white, acreages and so forth. And him and Jack were into a pissing match.

LAURIE: Jack is his son?

DON: Stepson. But when his mother died, then he thought the whole thing should have been his. And Frank should have been in their care. And Frank, by god, he said, "No, I'll take care of myself."

LAURIE: So then you came up and looked at this property, and worked something out with Frank--

DON: Yeah, well, I had to go to my bankers and get financed. Went to the Northwest Production Credit, and I had good friends that run that then, before it went belly-up.

LAURIE: PCA?

DON: Yeah. Northwest Production Credit.

JOHN: We're familiar with PCA.

LAURIE: Yeah. We know PCA! We started out friends, but didn't stay that way by the end.

[*laughing*] But that was after the fishing fleets all went under, you know.

DON: That was what broke it up, you know, was that fishing.

LAURIE: Yeah, suddenly they wanted every penny back of everything you had borrowed, even if you had a ten-year loan.

DON: Aquaculture, instead of agriculture. I never figured out how the government had a right to tell the PCA—Because, the PCA was a total different thing all by itself. And they forced them to take this ***---*** fishing deal under. There was thousands of fishing boats just sitting there, and they had bought 'em, paid tons of money for nothing, and then they didn't have tons of money.

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LAURIE: Well, no, then the fishing resource went out, the fishing was gone, and then they regulated the fishing, and all of those boats were worthless. So, we were in the middle of that one. So, anyway, you managed to get a loan, and you got some acreage up here. Did it come with permits?

DON: Some, it didn't have a very big permit. That was the hell of it. About one hundred, a hundred and fifty head.

LAURIE: So just part of your herd?

DON: Well, I had a permit in the Bell-A.

LAURIE: Oh, with the grazing association?

DON: Yeah, I should have hung onto that, but I wasn't that smart. The valley out here was empty, you know. Vogler sold it, and it was just settin' there, thousands of acres of grass. And a lot of the fences was tore out, because on meadowland, they took down all of the private fences and rolled 'em up and hauled 'em off. But all of the Indian fences were still there.

LAURIE: There are eleven thousand acres of tribal lands in the flats down here.

DON: Yeah, I had most of it leased, at one time. I still have a bunch of it, but I don't have that much.

LAURIE: So you just put it together, pieces here, pieces there.

DON: Well, I just said—I found some water, and went to the Indians—Vogler had that leased, and he had all of the State ground leased. Yet, even with all that meadowland, he still had the Indian leases. So, I talked him into—I had to pay him, too. It wasn't no gift, dealing with Henry the Third. He was alright. I got along. He wanted money, and I paid him what he wanted, and we got along good. And so I got the Indian leases that way, and I got the State leases that way, from him. And so then, I had a pretty good toe-hold, and then I bought some water, and so I had places

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to tend to, and I found a lot of them wells that Vogler had drilled out there. A lot of them, they didn't even take the poles down from 'em. You just hooked 'em up again. I didn't get that many of 'em. I had a couple of 'em. But, anyway--

LAURIE: Did you sprinkle irrigate early down there? Did you have sprinkle irrigation down on the Indian land?

DON: Ah no, no. They don't farm anything down there. They don't do anything with it.

LAURIE: They are looking into it now.

DON: "Yeah, welllll, we got to think about that now. Ten years from now, we'll still be thinking about that, for a while." How in the hell are they going to do anything with that?

LAURIE: So many owners.

DON: Yeah, how are you gonna take a piece here and piece here, just like this tablecloth: this is Indian, and this is Indian, and what's in between is all deeded and farmed or worthless. 1:33:38

LAURIE:

DON: Oh, there were buildings here, but the old house was a total disaster. They never put no foundation under it. I wanted to fix it up, and then I got to looking at it, and I thought, geez, this is impossible. Because they had added on—Frank's brother did that for them, I guess. They took down a homestead house up the canyon, and brought it down here as best they could, and set it down along the other house. It was a lot of room, but it was just a wood rat trap, was all it was.

LAURIE: So you had to bring in a house?

DON: Well, we would have had to bring in a house, or build one, so we just did. That other one just sat over there, until this one was built, and then we moved in here, and then we finally, after that one just sat there, we tore it down.

LAURIE: And you had three kids?

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DON: Three kids. Yeah.

LAURIE: Who are your children?

DON: Where are they?

LAURIE: Who are they? I know your son, John.

DON: JR, or Joe, or--

LAURIE: Those are your grandsons. [chuckling]

DON: John, Dave, and Lee Ann. Dave is the oldest, and then John and Lee Ann is the youngest.

LAURIE: And where are Dave and Lee Ann?

DON: LeeAnn is in Eugene.

LAURIE: Does she have a married name?

DON: No.

LAURIE: She is Toelle?

DON: Yeah.

LAURIE: And Dave?

DON: He's is Colorado.

LAURIE: And John is still here?

DON: John is the big wheel here.

LAURIE: He is the big wheel, now that you are not so big?

DON: Yeah, I can set there and look out the window now, and go crazy you know.

LAURIE: [laughing] Watch him—What is he doing? So, you had three kids here, and they went to school, all of the way into Burns?

DON: Yeah, yeah. The bus came up to the mailbox.

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LAURIE: And, Shirley, your wife—Was she a ranch wife all of that time, she didn't work in town?

DON: No, we tried. She thought about it, but it would have been hard. Trying to raise three kids, out here. It could have worked, 'cause her mother was in there, she could have stayed there a lot. She could have figured out some way—I don't know; it would have been a mess.

LAURIE: Yeah, it's a dilemma for women who live out.

DON: It would have helped a lot.

LAURIE: Financially?

DON: Yeah, financially. You could have made another couple of thousand dollars a month.

Damn right. It would have made it a lot brighter, but--

LAURIE: But, you made it.

DON: We made it. [chuckling] Still barely making it now. This is tough now, I'll tell ya'.

JOHN: Yeah, it costs a lot of money.

DON: Yeah, well—We made a couple of mistakes. When she passed away, then I sold a lot of my cows. A whole bunch of the better ones. Instead of selling the worst end, I sold the good end, because they were worth a lot of money, and because of the way the estate was and everything, it was all tax free. So, "Oh, well, that's pretty good", you know. And, uh, then I was going to lease pasture, sell hay, and gonna' kill a coon doing nothing, you know. [chuckling] Well, that didn't work out too good, 'cause the government starts raisin' hell with you when you want to sublease anything.

LAURIE: Oh, yeah, with your permits.

DON: Yeah, you can do it, but it's--

LAURIE: It's tricky.

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DON: You gotta' be careful, and then selling hay. You work just as hard doin' that as if you had your own cows. So, that went on for a while, and then we finally decided, that ain't working too good. We still sell a little pasture, on the quiet. But, the Indian land, I used to lease some of that out—sublease it, on a good year, you know. There'd be tons of extra hay there, on some of them allotments. Then, they got wise, and wanted everything different, and then they put it up on bid, you know.

LAURIE: Oh, for competitive bid? Every year?

DON: Every five years.

LAURIE: Every five years, like the state?

DON: Yep. This year will be the end of it, and then next year I gotta' bid again. Well, two or three of these guys gonna' try to put me out of business. They might get 'er done this time. They came awful close the last time. Well, they've got it so ***---*** high priced, and now the Indians, they think it's really—You can't make a reason with some of them people. Some of them are very intelligent, and listen to you. I've got a good range con [conservation officer], that is one thing, she understands what I am talking about. But then, she's limited. All she can technically do is say, "Hey, you've got your cows in trespass," or, sort of like a BLM range con.

LAURIE: You mean a range con with the BLM? Or the tribe?

DON: No, she's with the Indian.

LAURIE: So, you have to negotiate with them all of the time?

DON: Well, not really. Yeah. You write out a plan, how you want to use this. And I said, "Well, this is how I would like to use this." And on a good year, "Well, this is how we'll go through these fields." But, I said, "There's years when I gotta go this way, or this way, and this way, to

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make it come out.” I ain’t gonna be the same every year, like it’s on the paper. Except, the bottom line’s gonna’ be the same.

LAURIE: Just how you move them and how you use it varies.

DON: Yeah, right. So, I don’t know, I get along with her on that, you know. She doesn’t fight me. So far, she hasn’t gotten mad at me. She has tangled with a couple of ‘em. That Don White. She ain’t got any use for the White boys. I can’t imagine why.

JOHN: I don’t know them real well, the White boys. I bought some bulls from Mary Lee.

DON: Yeah, well, that’s a different breed of cat, yeah—

JOHN: It’s kind of nice not to know a whole lot of people in this county.

DON: [*laughing*] Well, most of ‘em are pretty good. Most of them are. There’s always—It don’t matter where you go.

LAURIE: What’s so interesting to us, having come from the outside and then living here and taking thirty years to figure out some of the connections. I am amazed at all of the connections. Not in a bad way, but it certainly is a tightly woven community, partly because of the geographic isolation, I think.

DON: Well, it used to be worse. It’s a lot of these places are thinning out. Like Drewsey area—a house full of the same, you know. Diamond Valley. Burns.

LAURIE: So, JR, your grandson, told me your wife was a Hughet. Her mother was a Hughet?

DON: Right.

LAURIE: And so, she grew up by the Narrows, or in the Double O area?

DON: No, my wife grew up right there where the Hill ranch was. Her mother—Yeah.

LAURIE: So, that originated with the Hughet family?

DON: The ranch? No, no. They had nothing to do with that.

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LAURIE: But her mother was a Hughet?

DON: Yeah, her mother was a Hughet.

JOHN: That would have been Louis Hughet was her uncle?

LAURIE: Doris was her--

DON: Doris was a, niece, I think.

LAURIE: Doris might have been a cousin, I think?

DON: Yeah, a cousin, probably.

LAURIE: Shirley's mother and Doris's father were brother and sister, I think?

DON: Probably, yeah.

LAURIE: But just things like that—all of these connections.

DON: Yeah, well, the Hughets were a pretty big tribe, quite a few boys, you know, and three or four girls. Yeah.

LAURIE: Who are your neighbors right around you, out here, Don? We don't know this area very well.

DON: Andy Root.

LAURIE: Ok. [*laughing*] How's your water holding out?

DON: Just out that fence, and that fence, and this strip in between. Me and Jack Smith are the sole survivors!

LAURIE: How are your wells holding out?

DON: Well, I don't know. We just drilled three new wells, so, I'll tell you more about here it in a few days.

LAURIE: How deep are you having to go?

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DON: I don't know. That last one, I think John said was like two hundred and fifty feet or something.

LAURIE: That's still reasonable.

DON: Oh yeah, you gotta quit—You go—We drilled one up to four hundred feet a few years ago. It was a total wreck. When you got past two hundred feet, you were running out of water there, the rest of the way. It's weird, where it is here. Jack Smith has got that one well that he drilled years and years ago. The best well in this whole part of the country, really. Well, I guess Andy has got a couple of them over here, over on that Withers place, that are that good. But going this way, he goes and drills just so far, and he pulls up the drill and goes a drills just so far. And when he bought that place, that old guy that he bought it from, he had filed, I don't know how many ***----*** well permits. He had all approved and paid for. So now, Andy all he had to do was drill the wells, and claim the water. And if he had to apply for that many wells himself, after he had bought it, he never would have got 'em, 'cause they was all shut down by then.

LAURIE: Yeah, well, I wonder if he didn't transfer well rights into this area?

DON: Yeah, well, he can, you know. He's sure drilling 'em. You drive down the highway, and you can count five wells there in a mile. Just see the well casings, sticking out there, and yeah—He just drills one, and he'll plumb 'em all together, until he gets what he wants. And if it ain't there, he'll just say, "Well, I am entitled to this much water, and he'll drill another well, and he won't even have to get a permit.

LAURIE: Yeah, that's probably what shouldn't be legal.

DON: Yeah, well, they've got the ***---*** laws—He's got it figured out.

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LAURIE: Yeah, there are some laws that they haven't enforced. He's just getting away with it for now, but, you know, this all going to come to an end. They are over allocating, all over the basin.

DON: Well, it's nuts. They [OWRD] put a stop on this. Why don't they stop it? Why don't they stop this transfer bullshit?

LAURIE: Yeah, that's a big part of this. And when you transfer, you are required by law to meter and report, and they aren't enforcing that at all. They are not enforcing it. That's what I get really mad about.

DON: Well, they like that money here in the court house, I think, is what it amounts to.

LAURIE: Well, you've got a commissioner, who is also a big water guy.

DON: Harney County loves to overspend. And they always whine, they ain't got enough money. Well, ***---***, how much money do they take in with these wells? How much money do they take in with this power? What do they do with it?

LAURIE: Yeah, well, only with the appraised value of the land does the county make money. So, as the appraisal of the land goes up--

DON: Yeah, it really went up!

JOHN: Yeah, like that land around Riley—When we moved here, forty bucks an acre would have bought most of it around there. And now, they have punched a bunch of wells around there, and it is a thousand bucks an acre, is what that stuff is going for, at the lowest.

DON: At a minimum, yeah. If you can find someone who even wants to sell it.

JOHN: So, the county will tax that accordingly, as opposed to

LAURIE: Same thing that happened to the timber. Get it out as fast as you can, and then don't worry about the future, I think. It's too bad.

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DON: Yeah, well, when they let that mill get totally away from Burns, that was the first wreck. And then they didn't even have brains enough with that railroad, where they could have owned it, and then sell it. Millions and millions of dollars' worth of ties and steel. And they had the chance.

LAURIE: To own it, and let it run?

DON: Or, to tear it up, or do what the hell they wanted to do with it.

JOHN; Yeah, the county has made a lot of mistakes.

DON: Well, there's two or three people that don't make too many.

JOHN: [laughing] Yeah, like the realtors.

DON: Well, Dale White was one of them, too. And Robert F. Smith was another one of 'em. The electrical engineer.

JOHN: You knew Earl Tiller, didn't you?

DON: Oh yeah, I knew Earl real well.

JOHN: He worked for Bob. He had some good stories.

DON: I'll bet he did. Yeah, Bob had it figured out. Earl just did the dirty work. Well, it was a good job, so why argue with it, you know. Somebody else would have done it if he didn't. Kind of like working for Andy. You can set there and see the wreck, but, you take the money and do the job, and shut up.

LAURIE: Everyone that's making money at the demise of the future, just can't quit doing it, because the money is here today.

DON: You can't hardly get one of them guys to say anything about, that work for Andy. "Well, I dunno." They're just dumb. Which they had better be. [chuckling] Yeah, I don't blame him; he's

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using the company, he's using the law. And, he's getting away with—murder. Look at what he did out there at Dog Mountain, out that country. He dried all of that country up.

LAURIE: Yes, he did. And then he transferred out a lot of those wells, those permits. That's the beauty of this land, this Indian land, someday, if they can ever get it together. We have historic water rights in the state of Oregon. Theirs go all of the way back to the "beginning of time". If they ever get to contesting water rights, they have eleven thousand acres to develop.

DON: Well, right down here. But they'd have a hell of a time. But they could do it. It's gonna be a hard deal, because I talked to them the other day about it. I said, "I heard that you guys were—Everybody was wanting to take it away from Warm Springs and put it up here?" And they said, "Well, yeah, they might want to, but they can't do it—they ain't got the bodies, they ain't got the machinery, they ain't got all of the hookups that it takes to tend to this, like they do in Warm Springs. And that's big money to Warm Springs, to handle this deal. And they don't want to lose it. I don't understand. I'm dumber than a post, but I know they've got something up their sleeve. They might put me out of business next year, themselves. They already did on one piece of ground down there. I bid on it and they just bid over it and they didn't even look at my bid. They just know, "We want it."

LAURIE: The tribe itself?

DON: Yeah, there's one piece that they just took away from somebody out there, you know.

LAURIE: Well, maybe they are going to get organized.

DON: Ahhh, they're trying. But how in the hell—You can't go to those meetings. They are so disorganized. Look what they set 'em up in right here—They had the casino, they had the onion factory, they had this and that. They've got that perfect piece of alfalfa ground right there in

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front, water and everything, and they can't even get a pot-licker to go and irrigate it, steady. [----]

An Indian's mentality is different than ours. Not all of them, but most of 'em.

LAURIE: I think it varies from tribe to tribe, too. And it might vary on their history, how broken down they were. And I think these were about as broken as they come.

DON: Oh yeah. They busted these like a punkin'. Sent 'em all to Nespelem and then let some of 'em come back, give 'em 160 acres apiece out here, with nothing.

LAURIE: Yeah, didn't let them consolidate as a tribe until 19---

DON: They should have put that all together when they give that back to them, should have given them a res [reservation] right out there in the middle.

LAURIE: That they couldn't sell off.

DON: Well, they can't sell this this now. Because I tried to buy a piece from two women that owned it, and I thought, well, even if I can buy half of it, that's half of it, I can put some water on that.

LAURIE: Yeah, I don't know what will come of it. It will be curious to see in the next five to ten years.

DON: 'Cause, I've got a good well that I can transfer. If it's that easy--

LAURIE: It's getting tougher every month.

DON: Excuse the coughing. I had pneumonia here a week ago.

LAURIE: Well, I am sorry to hear that. You're looking pretty hale. I don't want to arm wrestle you. Which is your bad arm? *[laughing]* Well, I think we will shut off the recorder, and close this conversation for now. But I feel like somehow you tricked me out of a lot of the factual history, Don. *[chuckling]* Did I? Well, I can start over. Where did we leave off? We left off with Walt McKuen? Or Grandpa burning it up? Or John Scharff?

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LAURIE: What time is it?

JOHN: Three fifteen.