

HARNEY COUNTRY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #271 - Sides A & B

Subject: Frank Morgan

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: September 1979

Interviewer: Richard Cowan

FRANK MORGAN: ... by god there is only one, no two other fellows a living that I know of that was boss for old Bill.

RICHARD COWAN: Who was that?

FRANK: Sumner Houston and Fred Houston.

RICHARD: Oh, I didn't know Sumner ---

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: But he's over in Prineville.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: Well I'll go over and see him, I know Sumner. Sure.

FRANK: He'd probably give you quite a bit more data than I could, because he's older than I am. His dad was buckaroo boss for old Brown, oh; I think two, three years.

RICHARD: Well now when did you work for Brown?

FRANK: Oh, I was just trying to think. It'd had to been '26, I think.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: I think 1926, but I worked for him for, oh god, I guess eight or ten different years.

RICHARD: Huh.

FRANK: And then on the remnants of them horses, me and my brother gathered them.

RICHARD: This was in the '30's?

FRANK: Yeah. We gathered the remnants of the horses in the '30's.

RICHARD: Well how did Bill get started?

FRANK: Well, I guess he got started, the way the story says, that the Cox and Clark outfit from Bid Valley, I guess it was before the turn of the century. They loaded an awful lot of horses up out of that country down there that wasn't worth nothing. And they loaded them up there at Abert Lake. The way I get it, or remembered, old Bill bought what horses they got up there, and then they run there for several years, and nobody branded up the colts, and he bought what horses --- there around the turn of the century for a dollar a head. Now that's what I think the story was. Because that's where he started in the horse business. But who the --- owned the Cox and Clark outfit, I don't know.

RICHARD: Well you don't hear stories of Bill being a horseman though.

FRANK: Well, he wasn't.

RICHARD: Well how could he handle all those horses?

FRANK: Well it was just through his buckaroos.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: He seen there was money --- old Bill had an awful mind, he was, you know ---

RICHARD: Pretty sharp with a pencil and dollar I guess.

FRANK: Well I don't think he was sharp with a pencil, but he just knew, and I guess that's the way he got in the sheep business. He just kept accumulating, accumulating. See he owned fifty thousand head of sheep at one time.

RICHARD: That's what I heard. Did you say you had fourteen thousand horses branded, I mean paying taxes on?

FRANK: Paying taxes on fourteen --- and I'm not, I won't quote this to be the truth, but my uncle worked for him for years, and I'm pretty sure Uncle Laton said one time they branded ten thousand colts. That is colts and oreanas.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: What they branded that year; one year was ten thousand head. That's a lot of horses.

RICHARD: That's a lot of horses, yeah.

FRANK: And I don't know, just, there is lots of --- But I know he bought the Gilchrist horses. He got them awful cheap. Now I don't remember what war that was, but I think it was the Spanish American War, that the spring after he bought them horses from the Gilchrist, that's the head of the Crooked River, that's the old Gilchrist.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's where the GI brand comes from.

FRANK: GI brand come from the --- head of Crooked River there. And I forget what they say he paid for them horses, but he sold more than enough mules out of them horses the first year to pay for the horses, and money left. He got a hundred dollars a throw for the mules, and he paid, I don't think over three dollars a head for them. And then he had all the geldings left, and he sold them. But they was, for years there that he sold that western horse and mule market, a thousand head of geldings in the spring, and a thousand head in the fall. And I don't know what he, sold them for a hundred dollars a throw, every gelding that wasn't blemished, that was from six to eight years old. And he got a hundred dollars a head for them. And he sold a hundred in the --- or a thousand in the spring, and a thousand in the fall. And he just kept accumulating horses. And he had that store, Pat Cecil

RICHARD: Oh sure, I knew Pat well.

FRANK: Goddamn, you could have got a lot of data from him.

RICHARD: Yeah, I know it.

FRANK: Pat tells the story one time about when they used to go over and buy his groceries through the store. And old Bill would keep in that little old pad he had --- but this

one year he wanted a wagon, and he went over there to, sent the man to get the groceries with the team, and he was going to bring this new wagon back. Load the wagon with groceries and bring it home. Well that fall when he went over to settle up with Bill, old Bill gets out his book and had it all, what he'd got, how much his bill was, and Pat says, "Now that's all of it?" "Yes, doggone it, I can't remember nothing else." He paid him, and he said, "Thanks Bill for that new wagon." (Laughter) He put the groceries down, but he never put the wagon down. (Laughter) And after he got it all settled, then Pat paid him for the wagon. But he'd forgot that.

RICHARD: Well, you know, this is what I have trouble grasping Frank, he built up this big empire, you know, horses and sheep, and yet he, seemed like he was so sloppy.

FRANK: Well, he was in ways. Another story old Bill always told, he liked to buy out these homesteaders that homesteaded around him. "Gad dang it," he said, "doggone it," he said, "I get all this accumulated, and what they stole from me, and get it back." (Laughter) But he had an awful empire. You know he controlled all the water on that desert. Big Juniper, Last Chance, wherever there was water, he owned forty acres, or eighty acres, whatever it took to keep that water. He controlled that whole desert, all of it.

RICHARD: Well did he keep other people out?

FRANK: No. But he still had control of the water on the desert, everybody that homesteaded out there, you know. But they couldn't homestead his water, they could homestead around him. Yeah, he--- There at one time old Bill had five hundred head of broke saddle horses. That's more horses than a lot of people owned.

RICHARD: Yeah. How many people did he have, when you were buckarooing, how many ---

FRANK: There was only six of us.

RICHARD: And you handled ten thousand horses?

FRANK: Well, then there would be neighbors helping. There would be other fellows with the outfit. But he only had six paid horseshoe buckaroos. And, but old Bill was quite a surveyor. He could survey with his eye, better than a lot of people could with an instrument. Were you ever around the Twelvemile country?

RICHARD: Oh sure, yeah.

FRANK: Now old Bill put in all those reservoirs with his eye.

RICHARD: Oh, did he?

FRANK: He knew ---

RICHARD: Pretty good.

FRANK: And he could look at a, contour of the land and he'd put a ditch in, and that son-of-a-gun would work.

RICHARD: Huh.

FRANK: He didn't need very many instruments.

RICHARD: I'll be darned, yeah.

FRANK: Cause you know all those reservoirs around there, now he put them in with horses. And, well the same way out there at the Gap Ranch.

RICHARD: Yeah, of course I know that country real well.

FRANK: And old Bill put in all those reservoirs. And they all worked.

RICHARD: Well he built some ditches through solid rock up there too.

FRANK: Yeah, yeah, that's what I say. He had an awful eye, that old fellow. And he could look at the contour of the land and just pretty near tell you where that water was going to go. But he never was married.

RICHARD: Did he have any girlfriends? Did he ---

FRANK: Oh, yeah. He had several girlfriends that he wanted to marry. But he always said he wanted to marry a nice girl. Strong nice girl. He said he'd raised ten or twelve

children, doggone it he said, I wouldn't care if it was eighteen. (Laughter) But you see he built that big nursery there in that home there at Buck Creek. I remember when there was everything a kid wanted to play with, a baby wanted to play with in that nursery. But then it was one of the best-equipped places in the world. But he never, and I think that was when he was going with the Shields girl, when he built that.

RICHARD: Well she was a good deal younger than he, wasn't she?

FRANK: Oh god, she was, I don't think over seventeen, eighteen years old. And old Bill was past fifty then.

RICHARD: Did he chase any other girls around the area?

FRANK: Oh, no old Bill would never chase any. But I can't remember --- oh, I'll tell you another one that he was wanting to marry awful bad was a big hunting sister, what was her name? Nickie ---

RICHARD: Oh, Nickie Sutherland, yeah.

FRANK: Nickie Sutherland, he was going to marry her at one time. And then Frank Foster --- Yeah, he was pretty crazy about her. But I don't, them was the only two that I can recollect that he---

RICHARD: What was that poem you were reciting the other day about old Bill?

FRANK: I wish I could remember all of that. Let's see, old Bill Brown lives over there at Fife, I can't recall ---

RICHARD: What's that?

FRANK: Let's see, old Bill Brown lived over there at Fife, in a county called Lake, and there he decided he was going to make his stake. So he got him a bunch of bummers and a band of old ewes, and headed for the desert with his number eleven shoes. And along come old Newman, looking for a job, he didn't mind to rustle, but he didn't want to rob. That's when Brown put him in the head of his horseshoe buckaroos. But I wish I had

that --- I'm going to get that and I'll send it to you.

RICHARD: Okay.

FRANK: By gosh I know it's there at the house someplace. And if I haven't got it, I'll tell you who I think has it, and that's Buck Carlon.

RICHARD: Oh, yeah.

FRANK: You know Buck?

RICHARD: Yeah, sure. I haven't seen him in a long time.

FRANK: Well I think Buck has got it. Because I'm sure that Buck give me, wrote it off in a poem that he has got. I'm sure there is where I got it. And I'm sure that Buck Carlon has got the poem. But it tells just about everything that old Bill done out there. That poem was, speaks more ---

RICHARD: Well you were talking more than this the other day, when you recited a part of it yesterday; you were talking something about the Shields girl.

FRANK: Well yeah, that's when he give her the diamond necklace. And I forget, I think there was twenty-two diamonds in that horseshoe in the bar. And he buckled it around her neck, and he said she was his then, because he had his brand on her. And it made her mad and she jerked it off her neck and stomped it in the floor, and Bill was mighty certain she didn't love him anymore. (Laughter)

And then when he goes on, I can't remember, the old feller that done the freighting for Brown, but he tells about him and his freight wagons. And he was going to marry Sarah, that was Bill's sister. And he tells about that in there too, in this poem. But I can't -- I haven't thought of it for so long.

RICHARD: Well you know, the people I talk to, the most of what you hear about Brown is someone made a fool of him. Or someone put something over on him.

FRANK: Well, they might have thought they put it over on him in a way, but they wouldn't

have fooled old Bill a damn bit. Because old Bill knew pretty close to what they was. They stole a lot of horses from him, I'll admit that. And when ... what was his name now, Moss, old Bill Moss and him law suited for years.

RICHARD: Yeah, I heard that.

FRANK: Over this, you see, Bill was branding, he started his with a horseshoe, just a plain horseshoe on both jaws. And Moss had the horseshoe bar. He had the horseshoe bar before Bill ever had the horseshoe. And all he'd do is just catch them horses of old Bill's and he put the bar under it. But they finally, Bill had him arrested for stealing horses. But he never could, they never could prove it. I don't know how many dollars he said he had, but there at one time old Bill said, "Confound you Moss I'll lawyer till the last sheep I got." And old Moss said, "I'll lawyer you as long as you put that horseshoe on them horse's jaws." He said, "I'll lawyer you till you quit using the horseshoe." So he had---

RICHARD: Well did you live at Buck Creek?

FRANK: Did I live ---

RICHARD: Yeah, that was the headquarters of the whole operation?

FRANK: Well that was the headquarters of the whole operation, but we camped everyplace. We would start in at Buck Creek, no Twelve-mile in the spring. Then we'd start from Buck Creek to, we come from Twelvemile to Buck Creek, then from Buck Creek to Bulger where you live.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: Then the Gap Ranch, and then we moved to Wagontire, then we'd go from Wagontire to over there at Hampton. And then go from Hampton to Brothers, then come back to the barbwire, then end up at the head of the river, there at the GI. Then in the fall we'd pull into Twelvemile, and un-shoe the horses, and turn them saddle horses out from Twelvemile. It was about a, well we'd start in, in May and end up about November.



RICHARD: I'll be darned. Well Bill turned all the horse work over to you fellows. He didn't work on the horses at all, did he?

FRANK: No, he didn't work on the horses at all. He just turned the horses over to his vaqueros, whoever was the boss. He just turned his horses over to them.

RICHARD: He watched the sheep operation pretty close himself?

FRANK: Yeah, he herded most of the sheep himself. He was with the sheep all the time. Yeah, they told a story there once that old Bill canned every sheepherder he had. And they'd move them into Glass Buttes there at the Best house. And he had over thirty thousand head of sheep; he was herding them by himself.

RICHARD: Now wait; he moved them into the Best house.

FRANK: Well up there what they called the Best house, you know, up there in the canyon?

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: The old, where the high windmill is up there in the canyon.

RICHARD: Yeah, Brown's well they call it.

FRANK: Brown's well, yes now, they used to call it the Best house. And they got loused up one time, some sheepherder come in there ... and they called it the Best house. That was his headquarters when he was at the Buttes in the desert in the summer, or in the winter. His main camp was there at that windmill. Then he had some at Benjamin, Princeton, and all that, his sheep went all over that country down there. And then when he come back, he'd start lambing there in the spring there at the windmill. Then work from there to Buck Creek where --- and shear there at Buck Creek and then he'd go to the mountains from Buck Creek with the sheep from there.

RICHARD: Did he run a pretty tight sheep outfit, or was it pretty loose?

FRANK: Just the same as he'd done with the ---

RICHARD: With horses.

FRANK: --- pretty loose. He had, I guess people did take a lot advantage of him, and stuff like that. Rob his sheep camps; I know they used to live off the sheep camps all the time. But there --- but I think you could get a whole lot more information from Lena and Paul. And Sumner Houston could tell you a lot too. Sumner was boss there before I was. And Sumner was boss I think for oh, four or five, five or six years he run that outfit. And I don't know, as far as I can remember right now, I don't think there is over --- let's see, there'd be my brother Les, and Sumner, and Fred Houston, and Raymond Houston, and myself, I believe is the only living buckaroos that worked for old Bill.

RICHARD: That worked for him.

FRANK: Right now. I can't remember of anymore. Course there could be some more that I don't know. But I'm pretty sure that's just about all.

RICHARD: Where did he deliver the horses when he shipped them?

FRANK: Well, they pretty near all went out of, they'd come right there to the ranch and receive them. You see the buckaroos would gather them, when they'd get so many head gathered, then the buyers would come and take them. And the western horse and mule market used to make two drives in the spring. They'd come up and get the first five hundred head, and wherever they was going to break at, break them out at, and they'd take them there. Then the buckaroos would come right back and they'd have another five hundred head. And then in the fall they'd come back and take them wherever they would come from. Most of them come out of the --- well the first bunch come out of Twelvemile and Buck Creek in the spring. Then in the fall they'd come out of Wagontire, down in that country. But there is where most of them was delivered from. RICHARD: Buck Creek always seemed to me to be kind of an odd place for headquarters, because there isn't too much country around there.

FRANK: Well, it was just where he had that store. There wasn't nothing there to hold nothing. In fact when they'd get so many horses gathered, they'd always go up there to that McIntyre ---RICHARD: Yeah, McIntosh.

FRANK: McIntosh.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And hold their horses up in that country until they got them counted, enough to make the shipment. Then they'd come, and when they worked them, or they'd turn the rejected ones back, why there is where --- when Winslow and Couch, when he sent them to the pen.

RICHARD: Well what was up there?

FRANK: Yeah, they was rejected geldings would go one way, and the ones he sold, they was selling the rejected geldings right there with him. And then after he sent Couch up, Charlie Couch to the pen, then he hired him back for his buckaroo boss. Couch run for him a long time. Doggone, he thought he could watch him if he had him for a buckaroo boss. (Laughter)

RICHARD: Well you know, I heard he scattered a lot of strychnine around.

FRANK: Oh, everyplace.

RICHARD: Well didn't he worry about his horses getting it?

FRANK: Well, the horses wouldn't get it. But he killed lots of dogs.

RICHARD: Oh, he ---

FRANK: But he took, old Bill himself would take so much strychnine every morning. Then build up so far, then he'd go back. He'd pack his strychnine right along with his raisins. He was awful to eat raisins. He'd go out for two or three days just a pocket full of raisins. That's all he'd eat. And heck he started off from Twelvemile there, or Buck Creek afoot, you'd never see him for three days. He'd end up at the Gap Ranch, come walking

through there, or come to the Best house, anyplace. You never knew where the old fellow was. But he could outwalk any saddle horse that ever lived.

RICHARD: Yeah, Claude said he'd leave Buck Creek and walk to Burns in about a day.

FRANK: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's what I say, then all he lived on was raisins. He'd just fill his pockets full of raisins, strychnine and all. (Laughter)

RICHARD: Well what did he do with his money, those good years that he had?

FRANK: Well, I guess he banked it. Because you've heard the story about the check he wrote on the shingle.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: Then he wrote another one on that tomato ---

RICHARD: Yeah, tomato can label.

FRANK: Tomato can label, and they both went through the bank. So I guess he must have had it in the bank. Because it was, them checks was good. I can't remember the amount of that one that he wrote on the shingle. But it was to a church institution, wasn't it?

RICHARD: Yeah, I think so.

FRANK: And I think the one he put on the tomato can ---

RICHARD: Can, it was too?

FRANK: It was too. It was either to a church or school. Then he built that old folk's home in ---

RICHARD: Down in Salem.

FRANK: Salem or Albany.

RICHARD: I heard Salem, but it might have been ---

FRANK: Might have been Salem. He built that home for the old folks there; he paid cash when they built that. And he had his name over one door. One room, W. W. Brown, was

his, that was supposed to be his room when he got so old that he was going to go over there. But now didn't he have a brother that was a doctor?

RICHARD: This is what Claude said.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: And apparently the brother came over here with him early and then left.

FRANK: Yeah, yeah. And then I know there was Sarah, sister Sarah. RICHARD: Was she out in this country too?

FRANK: Yeah, she was going to come there and keep house for old Bill. And then he must have had another sister, the one that married Winslow, because Winslow was his nephew.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: So that would be the only four children that I know of.

RICHARD: Well did he come here with money do you think, or the family have money?

FRANK: Now that I couldn't say. But he must have had some kind of capital --- well you didn't need much capital then to start in on.

RICHARD: That's true.

FRANK: You could get some, because the country was all even, all open. And all you had to do, if you could accumulate a little band of sheep, and just start out with that.

RICHARD: Did he file on all this land himself, or get his buckaroos and stuff to do it?

FRANK: I think he got a lot --- he could, well there was desert acts and ---

RICHARD: Uh huh, yeah desert entry.

FRANK: Desert entry.

RICHARD: Grazing homesteads.

FRANK: And then there was pre-emptions. And I forget how many different acts, but then I think he got them people to homestead some of them water holes, and then he'd

buy --- or get them from the state, whichever way he could. But I never did know him to ever having anybody to homestead him. I knew a lot of homesteads he bought out, like the Bradfords there, the Bradford place there at Long Hollow.

RICHARD: Yeah, pretty well.

FRANK: And I can't, and then I think old Ellis McIntosh, he bought that from Ellis McIntosh. That was Ellis McIntosh's place there. Then that place right up above Twelvemile in the canyon, there used to be a house there, but I can't remember the name of it. And Bill Jake, he got Twelvemile from Bill Jake and, huh --- what in the world was Mrs. Cecil's maiden name?

RICHARD: Bybee --- not Bybee. Yeah, it was Bybee, wasn't it?

FRANK: No, nope. Burdell.

RICHARD: Burdell. Uh huh.

FRANK: Yeah. She was a Burdell. And he got the Twelvemile there from Jake and, Bill Jake and Burdell was brother-in-laws.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: And that's who he got the Twelvemile Ranch from. But he just a kept a buying land wherever --- land was cheap then. Every time he would find one someplace suitable, that had water and pasture on it, he bought it. He controlled all the water. One time I seen a map, and it would just surprise you how much land that old fellow owned.

RICHARD: I bet.

FRANK: ... a hundred and sixty someplace else.

RICHARD: Did he go to town very often?

FRANK: Very seldom.

RICHARD: Very seldom.

FRANK: Very seldom.

RICHARD: What did he do, just send his, send someone to town for his business and supplies and things?

FRANK: Well I, that by gosh I couldn't tell you. But he never did stick ---

SIDE B

RICHARD: We've heard this. (Laughter)

FRANK: But he was supposed to never did have intercourse with any woman at all. And he said that when he was going to school, he said a lot of times a right clean fat boy would send him off. (Laughter)

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

FRANK: But he was, so he claimed, he claimed he never did taste whiskey. Never had a drink of whiskey in his life.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

FRANK: But one time, well that fellow he lived there, old Wood Best ---

RICHARD: Oh, yeah, well that's the ranch I have now.

FRANK: Yeah, the ranch you have there now. And I can't remember where in the world this took place at. But Wood was telling me about it. And Bill was with them, they was in town, all of them in town together. They passed this whorehouse, and they figured out that if somebody go in, they'd get Bill in between them, they'd shove old Bill in the whorehouse. (Laughter) And they got in there and them women got a hold of him, and old Bill says, "Doggone it," he said, "I think I could have made one of them," he said, "if he worked it right." (Laughter) He couldn't figure out just what they wanted, and then he found out what it was, and boy he was sure mad then. He was ---

RICHARD: Yeah, he really wanted a family, didn't he?

FRANK: Oh, he did, worst in the world. He was --- and he liked kids. He liked kids. By

gosh he would sit down and visit with them. But he wanted everybody, it didn't matter who it was, if you get married, he wanted them to raise a big family. He wanted, couldn't see why people didn't raise big families. That's what he was interested in more than anything else.

RICHARD: Well did he seem to miss not having friends and a family?

FRANK: Well old Bill, there was only one Bill Brown. And I don't think there was anybody very close to Bill Brown. That is, I know you didn't get much out of him about his family. This here one guy, well that fellow that run that freight outfit, ... Bill was going to marry sister Sarah. And I guess you better not print that either.

RICHARD: Well ---

FRANK: Old Bill found them in bed together one time. Him and sister Sarah, and doggone it, she's nothing but a common whore, and that's when he run her off.

RICHARD: His own sister, huh?

FRANK: Yeah. But he didn't believe in anybody messing around with the women, by god, if you wasn't married.

RICHARD: And he never did himself, I mean he never chased any of the homesteaders girlfriends ---

FRANK: Oh, no, no, that's one thing he never, as far as I know he never. I know there towards the last, when we were together in the horses, he --- the mortgage company had taken them over then.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: And that's when me and my brother gathered the tale end of them. My wife was a cooking, and when she'd go to Fife to get the mail or something, she always brought old Bill's mail back with her. And he was getting fan letters then. People had heard of him, women had heard of him. Boy, all the way from eighteen to sixty-seven years old, they



was a writing to him. And he wouldn't open them himself, he'd get my wife to open them and read them to him. (Laughter) And he thought it was --- he didn't like to read them, but he always wanted her to read, set there all afternoon and she'd open up them letters and read them to old Bill, what them women had proposed to him and things.

RICHARD: There used to be a school out at Buck Creek, I guess?

FRANK: There on the flat there at Fife.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh. Did he work with that school at all?

FRANK: Well now that's something I couldn't tell you. I wouldn't know. But you see down there on that flat, Fife used to be right out in the middle, well out in the middle of Buck Creek flat there. It isn't where it is now; it was between Buck Creek and the head of the Crooked River.

RICHARD: Oh, it was, back this way.

FRANK: Back this way.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: And there is where the original Fife was. And then when they homesteaded that, then ... and they moved it over to the other side of the head of Crooked River.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRANK: But Fife itself, the town of Fife was just about half way between Buck Creek and the head of Crooked River.

RICHARD: I've never heard that before.

FRANK: Yeah, there's where the town of Fife was.

RICHARD: Well when you were there, were there still quite a few homesteaders out in that area?

FRANK: No. No they was about all left. In fact there wasn't nobody there but Wes Street, and he was on Street's Ranch.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: But down in the flat there, there was nobody lived there then. Them was all vacant. And Spencer's lived over ---

RICHARD: Yeah, over ---

FRANK: ...

RICHARD: Laughlin ---

FRANK: And Laughlin lived up on Swamp Creek. You've got that too, haven't you?

RICHARD: Yeah, Swamp Creek was where the house is, and we have the Spencer place too.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: We actually lived on Swamp Creek.

FRANK: Oh, you lived on Swamp Creek.

RICHARD: Yeah, Laughlin's old house.

FRANK: Yeah, yeah.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: Well them was the only three families --- no, I take it all back. Old Ollie Nordell --  
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RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: --- lived out there.

RICHARD: Yeah, on Swamp Creek, down ---

FRANK: Yeah. Lower end of Swamp Creek.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's right.

FRANK: And there was another family lived there too. What in the world was their names?

RICHARD: Well there were some people named Winters lived over there. But they were

related to the Spencer's.

FRANK: Yeah, that was old sidewinders, was Buck Spencer's brother-in-law.

RICHARD: Oh, uh huh, okay.

FRANK: Mrs. Spencer was a widow.

RICHARD: I see.

FRANK: But there was one more family there. But that's the only people there was there on that whole flat, Ollie Nordell and Spencer's, and Laughlin's.

RICHARD: Ollie Nordell went to prison for something, didn't he?

FRANK: Now that I couldn't tell you.

RICHARD: I think Barney was telling me that he went, he went to prison for a few years.

FRANK: I couldn't understand why he would, because he was a pretty --- I don't know what he was a doing to went to prison, because he was, I don't think he was that type of man.

RICHARD: Oh. Did he have a still out there?

FRANK: Now that's something I never ---

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: I didn't know anything about it. Now he sent a boy to prison.

RICHARD: Maybe that's what it was.

FRANK: Charlie Hart, Cecil Hart.

RICHARD: Oh, okay, yeah, that's probably what it was then.

FRANK: Yeah, he sent Cecil Hart to prison. But no, I don't think Ollie Nordell ever went to prison. Because he was --- I knew Ollie pretty well, and I believe his word was law.

RICHARD: Well is that right?

FRANK: Just as honest as a man ever got to be. I don't think there was one --- I don't think there was one crooked ...

RICHARD: Well good.

FRANK: Nordell.

RICHARD: Well when you were in there, someone told me once that Buck Spencer was freighting, was running a freight line. Is that

---

FRANK: Could have been. Now that was before I, before my time. As far as ... Bulgers.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Ranch and cattle there ---

FRANK: Yeah, cattle and horses, yeah. He had quite a few horses, a couple three, four hundred head. And several head of cows, I don't know how many.

RICHARD: Yeah, the old corrals were pretty good horse corrals.

FRANK: Big horse corrals.

RICHARD: Big high corrals.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: Gate set right where it ought to be.

FRANK: And old Spencer was quite a horseman.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: Good handler of horses. He knew ---

RICHARD: Well Spencer's and Ollie were there all the time Bill was there then, huh?

FRANK: Oh, yeah.

RICHARD: Did they work for him, or work with him or ---

FRANK: Now I don't, as far as I know they never.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: Old Ollie might have worked on the ranch or something, as far as, but I don't think so.

RICHARD: Did Bill put up any hay there at Buck Creek, or was it all ---

FRANK: Oh, yes. Yeah, he did.

RICHARD: He --- at the Gap Ranch.

FRANK: The Gap Ranch, and Twelvemile ...

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: And I've seen five or six hundred ton of hay stacked there at the Gap Ranch.

RICHARD: That's what Claude said. He wondered where it all came from.

FRANK: Boy I've seen alfalfa there at the Gap Ranch as high as your waist.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: And he also sowed rye with it, alfalfa and rye. But I seen probably six hundred ton of hay piled up there at the Gap Ranch.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

FRANK: Yeah. On good years. Then he would put up a lot of hay at Twelvemile. He put up a lot of hay at ---

RICHARD: Yeah, I knew that, uh huh.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: Why did he happen to pick Buck Creek for his headquarters?

FRANK: Now that's something I don't know. I guess it was kind of in the center of everything. And it was a pretty nice place to build a house.

RICHARD: Yes. Pretty spot.

FRANK: Pretty spot there. And then he had the store there too.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh. Well now someone was telling me that the main road from Burns into Prineville ran right through Buck Creek there.

FRANK: Right through Buck Creek.

RICHARD: And people used to stay there a lot.

FRANK: Yeah, that was quite a stopping place, overnight. See they would stay at

Cecil's, was a stopping place. There is where the stage stopped was at Cecil's. And then they would come over the mountain to Buck Creek.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And then from Buck Creek down any place from Cold Springs, Hackleman's on down that way. That's the way the road went. There used to be a stage line went through there.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: Then they stopped all night at Bill's, huh?

FRANK: Yes.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Did he charge them for that?

FRANK: Oh yeah, yeah he had a cookhouse, cook and everything was there.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRANK: Yeah he had a regular, sold rooms.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: What was there, fourteen bedrooms in that home, wasn't they?

RICHARD: Claude says seventeen.

FRANK: Well, either seventeen or fourteen.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

FRANK: Could have been seventeen. But I was thinking it was fourteen. But I know it was a big, nice big place. No, he had a regular stopping place there. And then he sold lots of groceries through that store. And he had --- there was --- he didn't charge much. I guess you could buy groceries cheaper from him than any-place in the whole country, so they claimed.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: There wasn't many people like him.

RICHARD: No, there sure weren't. He amazes me when I hear about him. Well, I just --- Is there anything else you can think of Frank? You know I just want all the stories I can get. I wish you could think of that poem.

FRANK: I do too; I wish I could think of that poem. I liked it. I used to know about every word of that. But I haven't thought of it for so long. It just plumb slipped my mind. But if you could get a hold of Lena and Paul I know you could get a lot more information. Because they would be the only people yet that knew Bill, and worked for him. They are the last two I'd say a living that worked, that's old enough ---

RICHARD: Old enough to really know him.

FRANK: Really know him, and knew him ever since he started the store and everything else.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: Because Paul buckarood for him, with the buckaroo outfit. And Lena, they knew him ever since she was a girl. She was born and raised right there at Buck Creek. And if you could, and then if you can see Sumner Houston, Sumner could tell you a whole lot.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah. Did Red Walters work for him?

FRANK: I don't think Red ever worked for Bill.

RICHARD: Just knew him.

FRANK: He knew him. But his uncle worked for him for years.

RICHARD: Who was his uncle?

FRANK: Bill Burgett.

RICHARD: I didn't know him.

FRANK: No, no, he's been dead years ago. But old Burgett worked for him for a long time. In fact Burgett and my uncle would be about the only two that worked the year

around. And they was what they called the outside men. In the wintertime they'd just go plumb down to Christmas Valley and all over. Just ride around see that nobody was disturbing the horses.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Huh. Well Bill didn't have any cattle?

FRANK: Well he had two milk cows at one time. I know ---

RICHARD: A big cowman.

FRANK: The only two cattle I ever knew he owned. Yeah, had two roan milk cows, and that's the only two cattle I ever knew him to own.

RICHARD: Huh. He didn't like cattle, or just ---

FRANK: I guess he was just a sheep man and a horseman.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRANK: Horses was his main stay.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And he would give up his sheep before he would his horses. RICHARD: I'll be darned.

FRANK: Yet he didn't ride, very little?

FRANK: Very little.

RICHARD: I'll be darned. Well you know he was a man of contradictions, seemed to me, you know. He built up an empire and yet he let the homesteaders take advantage of him.

FRANK: Oh yeah, he was --- in fact he just had too much --- you know Bill didn't trust anybody. He didn't trust very many people, by gosh. He was, I don't know, like you say there was only one Bill Brown.

RICHARD: Uh huh, uh huh. You say he didn't prosecute, and yet he let these people come in and ---

FRANK: Oh yes ---



RICHARD: --- and write their own groceries down.

FRANK: Write their own groceries, and things down like that. But he was always, you know, just a little bit on the, I don't know what kind of side you would call it. Thinking that -- confound them, and doggone them. And he hated booze worse than anything in the world. It didn't matter ---

RICHARD: Well of course you fellows weren't in town enough to get a lot of booze around the ranch.

FRANK: Oh, no, no. Well you went out there, if you went out in May, if you got back the Fourth of July someplace you was pretty lucky. That was, and then from then on till, well they generally made this fair here in Prineville. And that was about the three times you got off the ranch when you was ---

RICHARD: Uh huh. Well I just, he just sounds to me like a real fine man.

FRANK: He was, he was a good man for the community. He done lots of --- about people.

RICHARD: You know, I've heard talk about these, oh Bill Hanley and John Devine, and Miller and Lux, but they always stepped on people.

FRANK: Oh, yeah.

RICHARD: And Brown never did step on any people.

FRANK: No, Brown never did step on anybody. He was always --- Like you said, them homesteaders come in there and take the groceries out, and half the time old Bill didn't know what they took.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: If he would --- then what he kept down on his books was --- he had it wrote down in one of them little old pocket books, and that's what it was. But I can't remember who it was now, rode one of Bill's own saddle horses in there at the Gap

Ranch, and it was a nice looking horse. And he asked him if he would sell it. "Yeah," he said, "he'd sell him." And he asked what he wanted for him, and he told him. And old Bill gave him a check for his own saddle horse. (Laughter) But I can't remember who the fellow was now. But it was somebody that had been a working for him.

RICHARD: Well now I once heard Frank, that a guy could go up to Bill and say I've been working for you a month, and I'm quitting, and I want my time. And Bill might not remember him, but he'd ask him how much he owed him and pay him.

FRANK: They say there was people done it, but I don't know who. I don't know of anybody that done it. But I've heard people say that he done it. They said one time there was a hobo come there at the Gap Ranch and just stayed all night. He done something that Bill didn't like, "And doggone it, I'll just fire you." And he said, "Well that's alright with me." "How long have you been here?" And he told him, and Bill paid him that much. Oh, there was something the next morning that he had done that Bill didn't appreciate, or whatever it was. And he was just a hobo, and he collected so much wages from old Bill. But it was ---

RICHARD: Well you know, he was really a man of vision and he saw what could be done with this water.

FRANK: That's one thing I will say, he could, had one far look. And he knew that if he stored that water it was going to come in useful. Well you can, if you were around Twelvemile, you know where all those reservoirs is. And they was in the right place.

RICHARD: That's right, yeah.

FRANK: And every one of them went to Twelvemile where he could irrigate too. And the same way up there at the Gap Ranch. Them reservoirs was put in the right place, and they worked.

RICHARD: Sure they did.

FRANK: Like I said, he could look at a contour of land and tell you where a ditch, where the water would run, just about as good as a person could with an instrument. He had an awful eye for engineering. And I don't know how many reservoirs he's got there at Twelvemile there. Three I know of. Of course I haven't been there for forty years.

RICHARD: Where were you raised Frank, over in Paulina?

FRANK: At Paulina. Just above Paulina there.

RICHARD: Well, by golly, I sure appreciate your taking the time to talk to me, Frank.

FRANK: I wish I knew more about some of them people, their names. But I just can't think of the names now. But I do know you could get an awful lot of good information from Lena and Paul.

RICHARD: Yeah, well I'll go down there.

FRANK: And if you're ever around Prineville, you could get a lot from Sumner too.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Well what, you say Buck Carlon would have that poem?

FRANK: Yeah, I'm pretty sure Buck's got that poem.

RICHARD: Did Buck know him?

FRANK: I don't know whether Buck ever knew him or not. I don't think so. I don't think he ever knew him. But I can't remember how Buck happened to have the poem. But I know that's where I got it from. I got it from Buck, and I think he's got the original that it was wrote off of.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: I'll tell you somebody else you might find it from, if she's still living, is Gibb Perkins' wife.

RICHARD: I don't believe I know her. Do they live here in Burns?

FRANK: She used to live here in Burns.

RICHARD: Well I'll find out about her.

FRANK: By gosh --- because old Gibb helped write it. Gibb Perkins.

RICHARD: Never heard of him.

FRANK: But I'm pretty near sure now that she's still living.

RICHARD: Okay.

FRANK: Now she was ---

RICHARD: Maybe Red would know where she is.

FRANK: Yeah Red would know whether she is still living or not. Now she was a Chesner. Chesner's lived up above; well you know where Mike's place was there?

RICHARD: They lived out there, out by Woodie Best, didn't they?

FRANK: Well some of them, Chesner's place was going up right, well you know where Frank Gibb --- or Jess Gibson's wife had a place up above Mike up there.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And either that place was the Chesner place, or the place that that storekeeper's got.

RICHARD: Oh, uh huh. Well we have out there south and west of the Best place is, we have an old Kessinger place too, and there used to be a store out in there some ---

FRANK: Well the old Suntex store used to be right out there the other side of you.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah. Okay, that's --- well we call that the Kessinger field, because apparently Kessinger's had it, and there is some Kessinger's had a home down there.

FRANK: Well there might have been some Kessinger's out --- but I'm pretty sure that Gibb's wife's folks had that Kessinger place up there. It was either where Frank Gibbs --- or Jessie Gibson lives, or the one that store keeper ... Now one of them two was the Kessinger place. It was her --- now there could have been some more homesteads out

there, because there was lots of homesteaders out there.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah, lots of them.

FRANK: Out there in that place there was the Johnson's, and old Bobby Gibbon --- Gibbons.

RICHARD: Well yeah, I got his place.

FRANK: Oh, you got his place.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And then Wood Best had a homestead over there.

RICHARD: Yeah, I've got that.

FRANK: And Peck Amort, old Peck.

RICHARD: Old Peck, yeah. Well Mike got part of his place, didn't ---

FRANK: Well that's part of the place there. But he had a homestead out there too.

RICHARD: That's right. Right up the --- right up the ---

FRANK: Chickahominy.

RICHARD: Yeah right up Chickahominy from the Kessinger place that we had.

FRANK: Yeah.

RICHARD: And he called it --- sometimes called the Johnson place I guess too.

FRANK: Well Blackie Johnson got it from Peck.

RICHARD: Oh, okay, that's what it was.

FRANK: Yeah. Yeah, it was ---

RICHARD: Well Peck married a Johnson, didn't he, when he was married for two weeks or --- seems someone told me he married Bertie Johnson and it didn't work out.

FRANK: Well, he was married to her before Johnson married her.

RICHARD: Oh, that's the story. Oh, okay.

FRANK: Yeah, Blackie got her after ---

RICHARD: Oh, Blackie, after Peck had her, huh, I see.

FRANK: Peck got her. I don't know what Blackie's name was, but it was Blackie and George. George had the homestead way over next, where the Wood Best place ---

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah.

FRANK: And Gibbon's place over there. That was George Johnson--- stayed over there.

RICHARD: And then a fellow named Stoner had it in the '30's.

FRANK: I didn't know him. He come in after I did. But they was quite a few homesteads there on that --- Choate's had a homestead out there.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: And a fellow by the name of Wolfe had a homestead out there. And Fred Sturgess.

RICHARD: Yeah, and Hirsch.

FRANK: And Hirsch.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRANK: Yeah. An awful lot of homesteads along that flat.

RICHARD: Well ---

FRANK: Well, by gosh, it was nice a talking ---

(END OF TAPE)

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