

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #311 Sides A & B

Subject: Walt McEwen - With Video

Date: December 13, 1991

Place: Harney County Library, Burns, Oregon

Interviewers: Barbara Lofgren & Dorothea Purdy

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy, along with Barbara Lofgren and today we're at the Burns Library talking with Walt McEwen. The date is December 13, 1991. Following our interview we will be doing a short video with Walt, and it will be stored at the library along with the transcript and cassette tape, the number is 311. Okay Walt, we'll start out by asking you your name, can you tell us your full name?

WALT McEWEN: My name is Walter McEwen.

DOROTHEA: And when and where were you born?

WALT: I was born in Nyssa on the 2nd of April, 1914.

DOROTHEA: And what were your parent's names?

WALT: Well it was James McEwen and Jemima McEwen.

DOROTHEA: And where were they born?

WALT: James McEwen, my dad, was born in Tennessee, and my mother was born in Scotland.

DOROTHEA: And how did they come about coming to the country?

WALT: Well my dad come here in 1898, he come here when he was eighteen years old. And he had a, I think it was an uncle, possibly an uncle by the name of Shown lived at Lawen. And he come over to Lawen for a short time, then he moved over to the Drewsey area and worked there for several years. And my mother she come into this country when she was a baby, I can't remember now, she was three or four months old.

BARBARA LOFGREN: What was her maiden name?

WALT: Scott.

BARBARA: Scott.

WALT: Mary Scott was her mother. And she was a niece of Tom Turnbull who was one of the old original pioneers in, well in the Barren Valley country, and she was his niece. And her dad died when she was real young. So her mother was the housekeeper for Tom Turnbull for quite a number of years, and he --- my mother had two sisters, Mrs. William McEwen, Eleanor McEwen, and Margaret Dowell. And they were all, both older than my mother, and she, Uncle Tom pretty much raised them, well he did raise them.

And my mother went to school, and she had another uncle living in Portland, so she went down to Portland and went to school in Portland for a number of years. And then she was, had some school-ing there on one of the ranches when she was real young. And her time, she went through grade school, but she didn't get to go to high school. She always kind of regretted it, but in those days why ---

And my father, I don't think he, I don't know whether he went through the fifth or sixth grade. And when he was, when he was growing up back in Tennessee why he was even, helped teach some of the younger kids occasionally. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Well in the rural schools they kind of did that.

WALT: Oh yes in those days, of course, you know, they didn't --- and no one hardly ever went to high school, you know.

BARBARA: Everyone helped each other.

WALT: If they got out of grade school, why that was it.

BARBARA: They knew a little bit of reading and writing and then they had to go to work to help make a living.

WALT: And boy there was nothing wrong with their mental --- their mentality I'll tell you.

BARBARA: Yeah, that's for sure.

WALT: This old country was populated with those people, and I'll tell you they were plenty bright.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

WALT: Every way in the world. My dad he was a whiz at adding, you know.

BARBARA: Well I think a lot of them kind of self taught themselves as the years went along.

WALT: Yeah.

BARBARA: If they needed to know something, they just went ahead and found out about it and taught themselves.

WALT: Yeah, they were real educated in one sense of the word.

DOROTHEA: How did your mom and dad meet?

WALT: Well my mother was, I don't remember how old she was, in her early twenties. Anyway she was there at my uncle's, and my father when he first come over to this country he, or first come into this country, was at Drewsey for a short --- or was at Lawen for a short time. And then he moved to Drewsey, and went over to Drewsey and he worked for some of those real old time people over there. He worked for one of those old --- Milt Davis, maybe you remember, might know that name.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: He worked for Milt Davis for awhile, and then he went up and he worked for, quite a long time, several years for August Miller. And Mrs. Miller, they would be, well let's see they're Joel Swords and well --- anyway it would have been --- the Scheckels girls are related.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: Well their mother was a Miller --- Muller.

DOROTHEA: Muller, right.

WALT: And --- August Muller. And he worked there for a number of --- for a few years. And then he come over and went to work with my Uncle Tom, and that's where my mother and dad met. He was working for my uncle when they met and were married.

DOROTHEA: And were they married in Harney County?

WALT: Married in Vale in this old hotel that they're having such a battle over.

DOROTHEA: Oh.

BARBARA: The one that they're trying to restore for a historic

WALT: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: Uh huh, yeah.

WALT: It's kind of amazing. I'm not, well I don't know either, I guess the hotel was pretty new. I don't know when, gosh I don't know, 1903, I don't know when they were married for sure, I mean offhand. I can remember they said they --- you know you've never, probably don't know how that hotel was built. They had a stairway up both sides, coming out of the lobby, and then there was a landing, sort of a landing, and then the stairs went on upstairs. I guess they had the wedding on this landing, you know.

BARBARA: Oh, that was very romantic.

WALT: Anyway, let's see, probably 1903 because I think on their honeymoon they went to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, and that would have been in 1903.

BARBARA: That would be an interesting trip for them then.

WALT: Yes.

BARBARA: So was your dad working with cattle or sheep at that time?

WALT: Sheep. He was a sheepman most of his life. So then after they were married they homesteaded right close to where my uncle was, Tom Turnbull's. They called it, well early years I guess they called it the Burnt Ranch, but it was always called, for years called the Turnbull Ranch. And then later on Tom Dowell owned it, and now it belongs to the Norman Ranches. But ---

DOROTHEA: And this is out in the Diamond area?

WALT: No, it is in the Barren Valley area.

DOROTHEA: Barren Valley area.

WALT: Uh huh. And so then they were there for a number of years, and I think in 1918 they bought the home ranch that we still own. And ---

BARBARA: And where is that located?

WALT: That is located down below Crane, between Crane and Riverside. Several miles north, south of Riverside. So they moved there. I don't know, they bought the ranch in 1918. I think it was maybe a year, maybe a little bit after that, a year or two after that they moved over there. So they still owned their homestead over there in Barren Valley. It's completely surrounded by the Norman Ranches now.

DOROTHEA: Do you still own that place now, then, or has Norman Ranches bought it?

WALT: No, we still own it.

DOROTHEA: You still own it?

WALT: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

WALT: I have two sisters.

DOROTHEA: No brothers?

WALT: No brothers, no.

DOROTHEA: Okay. I think my husband had some McUne relatives, but I think they spelled their name different. I think they were M c U N E.

WALT: Yeah. There was a family, you know, out in the Sagehen area.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: That was the U N E.

DOROTHEA: That's the U N E. Yeah.

WALT: Were some of them your husband's relatives?

DOROTHEA: Well his mother's sister was married to a McUne, but it was the U N E.

WALT: Uh huh. There was a McUne, apparently, worked for, and his name is Jim McUne, worked for Bill, old Bill Wagontire Brown, old Bill Brown. I know here just not too long back there was a woman, she was related to this McUne. Anyway the man, the man he lives in Eugene and he's writing a biography, or whatever you might say, of this old Wagontire Brown, Bill Brown.

DOROTHEA: Bill Brown.

WALT: I know he called me, he kind of thought maybe my dad was this, but it wasn't.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. So, well can you tell us something about the country that your parents homesteaded? Did they ever say anything about whether it was full of foxtail, sagebrush, dry land, wet land, what kind of country was it?

WALT: Well I think, I don't know so much about the brush, and the sagebrush, I'm sure there was sagebrush here as I understand. And I don't know as the grass in our area was much better than it is nowadays. But they did say that, they called, there is a lake in Barren Valley and they call it Paiute Lake. And I guess that lake used to get quite a lot of water, and it would fill pretty much in certain

years, and that's where my old Uncle Tom put up lots of wild hay out there. It was what we now call macaroni grass, that kind of, you know, hollow stemmed sage or whatever it may be. But I guess he put up quite a lot of that hay at certain times.

Then the climate completely changed though later on. I know that he still owned the place, and he had to move out of there. Didn't have sheep until later years, but he had cattle and he had to buy hay for his cattle.

They run sheep and they run out on the Owyhee Desert in those days. He had quite a sheep operation apparently the same time as the Jenkins of Diamond. There was old John and Tom Jenkins were sheep operators in the Diamond area at the same time.

BARBARA: Who were some of the other people that ran sheep during the time that your father did?

WALT: I don't know. There were a lot of sheepmen, I don't remember the names of them. There was a lot of sheep in the country. I don't remember ---

BARBARA: Did they go up on the Steens at all?

WALT: Yeah, my dad went up on the Steens at one time. And he used to buy hay up --- at that time, after he and my uncle dissolved their partnership he went in, kind of went into the sheep business with my Uncle Tom Turnbull, that's how he got his start. And he used to buy, used to go in the Steens Mountains in the winter --- summer, then he would buy hay sometimes up there at the Alvord Ranch.

And --- but as to other sheepmen, I just offhand --- of course there were the Browns, they run sheep at one time.

BARBARA: Some of the Basque in there at that time?

WALT: They weren't all that much at that time.

BARBARA: They were pretty well gone by then?

WALT: They were before they come in too much. Weren't too many Basques and there weren't too many Irish. There was quite a few people from Burns run sheep out in there. I think some of the Baker family, I think some of the Bakers had sheep. Gosh, I just don't remember the names.

BARBARA: So your father did run sheep the whole time that he ranched?

WALT: Pretty much. He run sheep for over forty years, and then finally ---

BARBARA: I see.

WALT: Oh in later years why he quit the sheep business and we run cattle. But quite a number of years ---

BARBARA: About when did you get into the cattle business?

WALT: Well he had been in the cattle business in a limited number, amount. Well I think my mother had some cattle when they were married.

BARBARA: I see. How would she happened to have gotten some cattle as a young woman?

WALT: Well I think all of this --- well this old uncle of mine, he was a magnificent old man. I'll tell you he was something. And he was, I think all of his nieces had a few cattle. And I just ---

BARBARA: Just kind of help them out a little bit?

WALT: Yeah, right.

BARBARA: Have a little nest egg back there just in case?

WALT: Well I guess that was it. (Laughter) But he sold his sheep right at the start of the second world war. Just about the time it started.

BARBARA: And as a young person, what did you have to do with the sheep? What was your job in the summertime and ---

WALT: Well I used to go to --- the summer mostly, of course the sheep were pretty much gone. I used to buckaroo some. And then on the summer we always hayed and worked around the ranch. Then later on after, why my dad put me to tending camp for a band of sheep in the summer. Go out with pack mules, and move the camp and that sort of thing.

BARBARA: So did he have specific people come in to shear his sheep and ---

WALT: Oh yes, they had ---

BARBARA: Were they kind of rotating around the different sheep men?

WALT: Well yes these, there was at least --- one name comes to mind was Jake Wattenburg. He run a, at that time there was quite a lot of sheep in the country. They would shear, they would start shearing down around Nyssa. They would shear at Juntura, they had a big shearing plant at Juntura. They had one at Riverside. They could shear several thousand head of sheep at Riverside. And then my dad in later years had his own shearing corral. And they would shear there and then they'd move over --- there was a shearing corral at the Crowley. And there was a shearing corral at, well at what we called the Sky Light. That would have been the Norman Ranches, the one they had now. But that would have been over in Barren Valley. And then they would come up and they would shear for Jenkins' on --- well I guess probably on, up on the Riddle Creek, or somewhere in that area. And then they would move around. But there was this Jake Wattenburg, and then there was also another one Charlie Prowl. He was an old time, had shearing plants. And then there was some ---

BARBARA: Were these shearers local people, or did they come from maybe out of state or something and just work the area and then go on up to Montana or whatever?

WALT: Quite a few of them were local people. And they would, in fact the Hill boys, Lloyd and Lyle had a shearing crew for several years, and they would go down, I think they would start down

in the southwest, maybe around New Mexico, and they'd shear clear into Montana. They would spend several months of the year shearing. These shearing --- quite a few of the local people were sheep shearers, I mean local men, were sheep shearers. It was a pretty good paying job.

DOROTHEA: Did you know the Heinz, were they part of the shearing crews?

WALT: Oh yes, they were part of the shearing crew.

BARBARA: I guess they can't shear when they are wet, is that right?

WALT: Oh yes, when they had wet weather, why they'd ---

BARBARA: Everything would be on hold then, huh?

WALT: Everything would be on hold, and then everything would get off schedule, you know.

BARBARA: Uh huh. I suppose they had to pretty much keep to schedule, because people would bring their sheep in.

WALT: Why yes.

BARBARA: And they would just have to hold them there until the weather changed.

WALT: Well yes, they would have to hold them, or have to plan on it, you know. Yeah, wet weather really raised hob with their shearing schedule.

BARBARA: And where did you take your wool to ship, and where did you ship to, do you recall?

WALT: Well my dad used to haul his wool into Riverside, and then they would ship it. And there was one, they called it the --- I can't remember the name, but anyway they had a wool grower's marketing cooperative in Portland that would sell quite a lot of the wool. These sheepmen would send their wool down there, and then it would be sold in this co-op. Lots of time they shipped it to Boston. Boston seemed to be a big market for wool in those days.

BARBARA: That's a long way to ship wool.

WALT: But generally these wool buyers would come around. Pretty much the same people every year, and buy wool.

BARBARA: Did the buyers then come into the ranches here and check to see if they wanted your wool? Or did you just pretty much contract out to them?

WALT: Well I don't think they contracted too much. I think they generally always sold the wool after shearing. I can't remember them contracting. And I think they pretty much knowed the various producers, you know. I don't know as I --- I can't ever remember them. I guess probably they would take samples out of the wool sacks, I'm not sure of that. Well, I'm sure they did. But he would haul his wool into Riverside, and they would ship by rail from Riverside.

BARBARA: What kind of money would they get for their wool, do you have any idea?

WALT: No, I've forgotten now.

BARBARA: I just wonder what kind of money you could make off of sheep during a sample ---

WALT: Well the old story was you could go broke every three years in the sheep business, and beat the cow business all to heck. (Laughter) And that was kind of true. They did, the sheep business you could --- they did very well or else they didn't survive very long, you know.

But the cow business for many years there it was just a kind of slow starvation, just drag, drag, drag along. Well I think it is kind of noted for being that way. You have your ups, and then you have your downs, and they just keep going a little lower and a little lower.

DOROTHEA: Where did you go to school at?

WALT: I went to school in Ohio.

DOROTHEA: And how did you go about going to school in Ohio?

WALT: Well when I, when I graduated from high school it was during the depression years and ---

BARBARA: Was that at Crane?

WALT: No, I went to Ontario.

BARBARA: Ontario.

WALT: Yeah. And the same Tom Turnbull had a nephew, and his name was Jim Turnbull, James Turnbull, and he was superintendent of schools at Ontario. Later on, after he left that he was assistant superintendent of school --- public instruction for the State of Oregon at one time. Kind of an interesting thing about him, to kind of divert --- he was a mining engineer, he took mining engineering. But then he was a school teacher and never did follow that. But when he got this job with the state, this assistant public instruction, superintendent of public instruction, why he had to have a doctor's degree or something. Anyway, more degrees than he had, so the legislature bestowed a degree upon him.

BARBARA: An honorary degree, huh?

WALT: So he would qualify. And he held that --- he was in that job for quite a number of years until he retired. But anyway he was superintendent of schools, and he and my mother were real, well they grew up together. So he was the one that kind of started me on this school back there. But anyway it was, after I graduated from high school why I stayed home for two years and herded sheep and worked on the ranch. And then I went back to this school, and it was what --- it still is what we call a work study school. You go to school half time, and study half time. You don't make enough money, I mean by your working, to go to school. But still you get a lot of practical experience, and you, and for me it was real good because you got back there in the bigger cities, Chicago, and all of those, and it was a completely different life than out here, you know.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

WALT: And so I went five years back there and graduated, a B.S. degree in engineering, mechanical engineering.

DOROTHEA: And did you ever pursue that career then?

WALT: No.

DOROTHEA: Well where did you go then? Did you come back to Harney County?

WALT: Yeah, I come back here.

DOROTHEA: Just came back here?

BARBARA: You can apply some of the things you learned around the ranch.

WALT: Oh it was not waste time at all.

BARBARA: Well education is never a waste.

WALT: No, and it was --- I don't know what I'd do --- I really enjoyed it. I have, and still have a strong inclination that way. I mean that was right up my alley, and still is. I really --- and I ---

BARBARA: What was the college name?

WALT: Antioch College.

BARBARA: Antioch.

WALT: And they've had problems here the last few years. They were noted as being one of the real, well they're, I don't know how you would class --- classed as being one of the top colleges in Ohio at that time, private colleges. I'm not saying that academically, I don't know how they ever picked me, but that's beyond the point. (Laughter) Because I was never ---

BARBARA: You had to have some smarts.

WALT: Well I wasn't it. (Laughter) Because I, of course I did well in college, but in high school why I was just an average student. I mean but, I've long since found that there is almost no correlation between high school and college.

BARBARA: No, it's a different world when you get into college, yeah.

WALT: It's a different world, and a different attitude.

BARBARA: They don't care if you come or do your work, or not. I mean you're just on your own. If you want to learn, you learn, if not, they could care less.

WALT: Yeah. If they don't, they kick you out in college.

BARBARA: If you don't keep your grades up, you're gone.

WALT: No. It's completely different. But anyway ---

BARBARA: Who did you live with when you went to school in Ontario?

WALT: Well my mother, in those days, quite often the mother would, it was quite common they would move down, they would split up the family and she would move to town in the winter, you know. BARBARA: And your sisters went to school there also?

WALT: And my sisters went to school there. And then after my, well after my older sister graduated from college, or from high school, why then we went down and we stayed with a family, Curfmans. And of course I ended up, I married one of the daughters down the road many years later. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Oh, that's interesting.

WALT: But we lived with, my younger sister and I lived with the Curfmans then, finished high school. And then they moved to Baker and my younger sister moved on to Baker and went to high school up there in Baker with them.

BARBARA: Curfman, how do you spell Curfman?

WALT: C U R F M A N.

BARBARA: And you say you married one of them. How did, you met during that time that you were at school there?

WALT: Kind of grew up together.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And then how did you get together later on?

WALT: Oh, I don't know. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Just decided that was the thing to do?

WALT: Well, we was, yes, and even --- my wife has been dead for quite a number of years. But ours, our family and the Curfman family were very close families. And I just absolutely adored my mother-in-law, and I still do. Used to say well I had to marry the daughter to get in the family. (Laughter) Because she was a fine person.

DOROTHEA: Is she still alive?

WALT: No, she died several years ago.

BARBARA: When did you get married?

WALT: Well I got married late. It was in 19 --- gosh, I don't know, '52 I guess.

BARBARA: And where did you and your wife live, and what was her name?

WALT: Virginia.

BARBARA: Virginia. And where did you live?

WALT: We lived here in Burns. Her health wasn't too good, so we always lived here.

BARBARA: And you continued to ranch, but lived in town?

WALT: Yes, uh huh, yeah.

BARBARA: Did you have any children?

WALT: No. No, I still live in town, I've lived in town for thirty years probably, or longer.

BARBARA: I see, I see. So you just go out to your ranches and do your work.

WALT: Commute, yeah.

BARBARA: And so do you have a number of people working for you to help take care of your ranches?

WALT: Oh yes, we have about six people working for us.

BARBARA: And so how many little ranches do you have then?

WALT: Well now we have, our folks' old home ranch, and then we had another small ranch we called Swamp Creek, we own that. And then later years I bought the Lyle Hill Ranch out on, near the refuge. And of course it was all flooded out. So then after it was flooded out, I bought a place at Crane. So we still --- and then not too many years ago I bought another ranch. So we have, one, two, three, four, four ranches. None of them are very big, smaller places.

DOROTHEA: Do you run any sheep now, or do you run mostly cattle?

WALT: No. All cattle.

DOROTHEA: All cattle. Who runs the places? I mean you have these people, you must have families live on these ranches.

WALT: Yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And they run the place, or they're just working for you?

WALT: Well they work for me. But they're pretty much --- I have a man, well you might say he is a buckaroo boss, a cow boss. And he has, one of the Opie girls is our, Sue Opie is his assistant, his buckaroo. He and Sue do the buckarooing. Then I have --- they stay at Crane. So we have irrigated alfalfa there, and I have a man generally irrigates the alfalfa, sprinkler irrigated. Then down at the home place why we have, generally have, we have a man and wife down there. Well my mother lived down there until not too many years ago. And so then the other little Swamp Creek Ranch why it's small, and we haven't always had a person stay there the year 'round. Then this other place I bought not too long back, why during these drought years why it hasn't been all that productive.

DOROTHEA: So you don't have anyone live there either?

WALT: I have someone.

DOROTHEA: Oh, you do have somebody?

WALT: I have a person living there, yes, a man and wife.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. But they don't have much to do?

WALT: Well there is plenty to do, but not --- (Laughter) Not all that much hay raised there.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

BARBARA: So do you have to run on some federal land too?

WALT: Oh yes, we run on a lot of federal land. Then we run on the Malheur Refuge, have for years and years on the bird refuge. BARBARA: And so what do you see has happened to the cattle business when you, when your dad or you first started in, were things pretty good or not? And how are things now?

WALT: Well, it's just been ups and downs. Cattle business wasn't all that bad. It was never real good. But there was periods when it would be extremely good, and then there was periods when it was just not very good. In the '80's as I remember, of course that's when we were flooded out, lost our land there on the Hill Ranch there at the Sod House, I can remember that. Of course we not only lost all of our hay land, a lot of our hay land, we also, the cow market was extremely poor during the '80's. Then here recently it has been very good.

So, but now I think it has reached its peak, and the cattle numbers are building back again, and the market is not as good as it was. But it is still not all that bad. But it is going down. Numbers are being built back again.

DOROTHEA: Well talking about the flood, can you tell us something about the flood, and what do you think brought this on, or how did it come about flooding this area, can you tell us something about that?

WALT: Well it just had abnormal snowfall, precipitation. I can remember that winter we had Jewel Starkel, you may know Jewel. I don't know whether you do or not?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: Jewel was taking care of my mother and I can remember it was Christmas, and my sister come over and we had those heavy snows and we were literally snowbound there for a week, we couldn't get out, you know. Of course you always had plenty of groceries on the --- so that wasn't the problem. But we was just, we were snowbound. And then we had all that excess moisture. And we still, I still, and the people living there, even in the Lawen area, and out in the Sod House area, we just couldn't believe what was happening, you know. That water kept coming up, and coming up, and coming up, and we just didn't believe it. That just literally, there was no way you can explain why you would have did what you did. We lost machinery, we lost everything we should have gotten out. But we just didn't ---

BARBARA: You just didn't think it would come any higher?

WALT: We just didn't believe it was going to do it, but it did.

BARBARA: That's why I wondered, a lot of people just left their machinery there. And you know you just couldn't understand why people didn't move it off.

WALT: Well it just wasn't going to happen. I mean you just --- it was unbelievable. It had never happened before, and you couldn't believe, well it is going to stop.

BARBARA: Yeah. It had never happened before.

WALT: I know we, the Hill place, why we even hauled gravel in, you know, and built the road up so we could get into the house, and it all went under water. Water come in the house, and then the house finally froze in the ice, and then when the ice broke up, those are the buildings you saw along

the road there, they all floated over to the road including the tree in the block of ice still standing up, you know. It was unbelievable.

BARBARA: A lot of people lost an awful lot.

WALT: Oh yes.

BARBARA: Really did.

WALT: We did. We never anticipated it. Still can't believe it.

BARBARA: Yeah. It just couldn't be.

WALT: Yeah, it couldn't. It never happened as far as anyone ever knew, and it just wasn't going to happen now, but it did happen.

DOROTHEA: Do you think that that land will ever produce again, or do you think it will produce better after its --- its all gone down now hasn't it?

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And do you have to replant it?

WALT: Well yes, it has to be replanted. They've had a government program where they are helping to rebuild the dikes and fences and reseed the ground. I no longer own that land that I had. I traded it in on another piece of property, so I'm out of it.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

BARBARA: You don't have to worry about that part now.

WALT: No, I have no desire --- it would be worse than homesteading because you have to clean up all the debris from the past before you can even start to homestead.

DOROTHEA: Well do you know about the ground, is it more fertile than it was before, or have you got to really start completely over, like you say, like homesteading?

WALT: Well I think its, I don't believe it hurt the ground, it might have helped it even. But of course it killed all the vegetation. The foxtail is coming back some, and an awful lot of weeds. It should be reseeded no doubt about it. It should be done real soon, or else I think the weeds are going to take over, well I know they are. They have that problem on the refuge, there is an awful lot of weeds coming now.

DOROTHEA: Are the animals coming back as thick as they were, or are they --- did the water run the animals out completely, like deer and antelope?

WALT: Oh I don't know. There was never many antelope in there, but there was lots of deer, and there is still deer.

DOROTHEA: There is still deer?

WALT: Yeah. They come right back in.

DOROTHEA: They come back in?

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did the grass --- it was not all that great out there at certain times. Do you think some of the seeds will reseed without being planted?

WALT: Oh, I'm sure they will.

DOROTHEA: But the weeds and the foxtail will probably grow in first.

WALT: Yes, they will come in first for sure.

BARBARA: There is so many restrictions on what people can spray to get rid of weeds and everything now ---

WALT: Yeah.

BARBARA: --- that it has become a real problem for government people, and state people, and federal ----

WALT: Yes, they can't hardly do anything on the refuge anymore.

BARBARA: The environmentalists get on them right away.

WALT: It's real bad.

BARBARA: Yeah.

WALT: They have a real weed problem on the refuge, and it just, they aren't able to combat it. It's just too bad.

BARBARA: The private people try to keep things under control, but then the seeds float from the refuge or whatever and just infest everything else again, so it is kind of a never ending battle I suppose.

WALT: Yeah. Uh huh. One thing we had was, we had a jillion gophers. We got rid of the gophers. Oh gosh they were thick. We combated them every way we could think of. Rex Taylor was our neighbor and I know we had a man come in from Payette two or three years, he and his wife, and they poisoned them. And then we got one of these, they call them a gopher getter. It's a, mix an artificial burrow and drops poison every so often. I had one of those, but nothing seemed to phase those little old fellows. They just --- (Laughter) But we got rid of them.

BARBARA: They were smart. What about jackrabbits, did you have a lot of jackrabbits on your places?

WALT: Sometimes, sometimes.

BARBARA: They kind of cycle in and out?

WALT: They cycled in, and it's been several years. We had, used to have them down home. I can remember lots of rabbits.

BARBARA: Go rabbit hunting as a young person, did you?

WALT: Well we never did much of it, but I can remember they used to have these --- what did they call it, where they would all get together with the tin cans, you know, and run them into a pen. They had a name for that. I can remember when they were awfully thick there to the Sod House too at one time, and the refuge. Gosh they were thick. They didn't get in on the refuge too much, right in itself, but there was an awful lot of them right outside. I don't think they could cross the river or something, what the problem was, but gosh they were thick.

DOROTHEA: Did you ever shoot them and sell their ears?

WALT: I never have, but I know ---

DOROTHEA: You never did. A lot of people did.

WALT: I never was much of a hand to shoot. Yeah, lots of people did.

DOROTHEA: Trap them and ----

WALT: Five cent bounty.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah, they had that. You used to go on a lot of historical tours. We've read your name in several of the historical tours that they took. Could you tell us some of the places that you visited, and how they came about having those tours?

WALT: Well I don't know, it has been several years. We had one, they went down and they toured the Warm Springs Dam. Well in fact they met at the ranch. They had a picnic down there at the ranch that time. I don't know. Then there was another tour we went out to Lawen. I can remember Ilda May Hayes and Roy Heinz arguing, or arguing, just arguing up a storm over where Lawen was. They never did agree, they was both raised there, but they didn't know where Lawen was, they couldn't agree to where Lawen was. (Laughter) And then we went out and we looked at that ex-town of Harriman. I think Tom Jenkins was along that time. And I think at one time, I don't know whether they had ---

BARBARA: What about Albritton too?

WALT: Yes, Albritton, we went to all of those old town sites.

BARBARA: Venator?

WALT: Well Venator, yeah of course I've been by Venator lots of times.

DOROTHEA: Well I read in one of the, about a Dupree Hotel, can you tell us something about that, and where it was located?

WALT: Oh yes. Well let's see, I don't know. I mean I know but I don't. Was it ---

DOROTHEA: Was it in the Lawen area, or where was it? Can you remember?

WALT: They had two hotels in Crane, and there was a hotel in Riverside. And I was wondering, would it have been in Riverside?

DOROTHEA: I don't know. I just read about it, and I don't know where you were at.

WALT: There was a man by the name of Slim Dupree was his name, and he built the hotel. But let's see, there is the Clay Hotel, and it might have been the Dupree Hotel, might have been in Crane. There was two hotels in Crane. One burned up, and then the other one burnt up in later years. The Clay Hotel burned up many years later when a lady by the name of Mae Gillispie run it. And she had two old men staying there that winter, and the pipes froze, and I guess they went down to thaw the pipes out and burned the hotel down. (Laughter)

BARBARA: I think that happened to a lot of places with pipes freezing and people would try to thaw them out and they would have house fires.

WALT: Yeah. She, there was a man in Crane by the name of Charlie Lutton, and he was a piano tuner, and he used to give violin lessons I can remember. And he was staying there, I'm pretty sure he was the one that was supposed to set it on fire. (Laughter) He used to tune the pianos around the country.

BARBARA: Did you and your wife go to dances and things like that when you were first married?

WALT: Oh yes, we went to dances. I used to, before I was married I used to go to quite a few of the dances in Crane and around.

BARBARA: I think that's probably where most everyone did their socializing, wasn't it, at their Saturday night dances, and stay overnight, or midnight suppers, or whatever?

WALT: Oh yes. Yes, they would have their dances, and they would --- of course when I went why we would always go home. But the roads weren't all that good, but you could get home some way or other. They used to, of course the dances used to never break up until way, way, wee hours of the morning, you know, and then you'd have to go home and feed the cattle.

BARBARA: It was a little hard the next day.

WALT: Yeah, it was pretty hard the next day.

BARBARA: But when it was time for the next one, you were ready to go again?

WALT: Yeah, you would be ready to go to the next one.

BARBARA: Well it's not like everyone sitting home and watching TV now, you had to get out and do something in order to visit with anyone.

WALT: Well it was, that Sod House community was an extremely nice community. I've always felt bad that it went under water and disappeared, because that was a wonderful community. The people were good neighbors, and they got along awfully well, and they helped each other. Many years there, we wouldn't come to town very --- you know you wouldn't come to town too often. I mean it was often enough probably, once a week, or maybe not that often. Maybe oftener once in awhile, depending upon the weather. But people were a lot more sociable. They used to, they would have pinochle parties and that sort of thing, you know.

BARBARA: Who were some of your neighbors at that time?

WALT: Well there was Marcus and Edna Haines, and of course John and Florence Scharff, and Lyle and Stella Hill. And then there was the Dunns, there was William Dunn and then of course Myrtle Caldwell, that was Marcus' mother. And that was pretty much the community.

BARBARA: Did everyone there have cattle, is that what they had?

WALT: No, quite a few of the people worked on the refuge. Oh, I admit there was Marselle Leake, there was a number of people working on the refuge at that time that stayed there, lived there for quite a number of years, you know.

BARBARA: So they worked at the refuge and had a few cows, and kind of did ---

WALT: Well no, they didn't have cows. One time they used to have, I think the refuge policy was they could have had maybe one or two cows.

BARBARA: I see.

WALT: Then in later years why they really frowned on that, so they got rid of all the cattle.

BARBARA: Did you ever work for the refuge?

WALT: No, I never did.

DOROTHEA: You mentioned Marselle Leake, he worked for the refuge?

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did he finally have a place of his own then later, or where did he end up going?

WALT: No Marselle never did own a place.

DOROTHEA: He never?

WALT: No. Well I mean they moved to town of course.

DOROTHEA: Oh did they?

WALT: He and May they moved to town and lived in town. I think that was probably after he retired, or shortly.

DOROTHEA: Well I know I knew the kids, so I knew that ---

WALT: Yeah, you knew Tom and Betty and Margaret.

DOROTHEA: Margaret, uh huh. So I just figured that they must have a place out there.

WALT: Well no, they don't. Of course Betty married, well Margaret married Red Dunbar.

DOROTHEA: Dunbar.

WALT: And they live out there. And then of course Betty married ---

DOROTHEA: Jack ----

WALT: I was trying to think of his name, I know him, just right off hand --- But anyway they have been with the Otleys for years, Charlie and Mary Ann Otley.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

WALT: Well in fact their daughter married the ---

DOROTHEA: The son, yeah.

WALT: The son, yes.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, I think their name is Jack and Betty Davis.

WALT: Yeah, yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: He worked for Bertha Solomon for awhile before he went to work out there, yeah.

WALT: Yeah, he had a family that lived here in town, I mean his brothers.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. Several brothers and sisters, yeah.

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: I knew, I think I went to school with several of the girls.

WALT: I knew one or two of the brothers.

BARBARA: Moving back a little bit, who did your sisters marry, and where did they go?

WALT: Well one sister, they both went, one of my, my oldest sister she went to the University of Oregon, and she was a teacher. And so she was teaching in Juntura, and she married a Mike Hanley, he was one of Bill Hanley's nephews. And so they, she still lives, she lives in Jordan Valley now.

DOROTHEA: What's her name?

WALT: Hazel Hanley.

DOROTHEA: Hazel.

WALT: And then my other, my younger sister she went to Corvallis, Oregon State. And she majored in hospital dietetics, so she was a dietician for a time. And she married a boy from Corvallis.

BARBARA: And her name is?

WALT: Gates, Charlotte Gates. Kind of strange in a way, her daughter then, one of her daughters, she had four daughters, one of her daughters come out and married a rancher from Jordan Valley.
(Laughter)

BARBARA: For goodness sakes.

WALT: She moved to Corvallis, and the daughter moved back to Eastern Oregon.

BARBARA: I grew up in Corvallis too.

WALT: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Let's pause for a moment while we turn this tape over. And then I think we'd like to get into more of the Hanley family if you wouldn't mind. Just a moment.

SIDE B

DOROTHEA: We'd like to kind of talk about Mike Hanley. He's kind of popular, he's written some books. Can you tell us anything about him, and what he is doing?

WALT: Well he is still active on the ranch, and still writing. I think he is thinking of writing another book. He has been accumulating material anyway.

DOROTHEA: Now the ranch is over in ---

WALT: Over in Jordan Valley, yes.

DOROTHEA: In Jordan Valley. Where his mother ---

WALT: Yes, he and his mother are together on the ranch.

DOROTHEA: And what does the daughter of your other sister do? Did she marry a rancher or is she ---

WALT: She married a rancher, his name is Jerry Raburn, and they live there at Jordan Valley, down near Arock. Well really not that far now, but down below Jordan Valley.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. How long was your mom active as far as the ranch was concerned? Did --- your father must have passed away earlier.

WALT: He, my father died when he was 92. He died about 1972, I guess. (March 29, 1973) Well I guess we could go from 1882, that's probably about what it was, he was 92, that would have been about '70 --- and then my mother she lived to be a 102, and she just died last year.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, I knew your mother.

BARBARA: You come from very good stock.

WALT: Well we've always talked about --- my father's family, they were all long-lived people. But lots of those old people from back in the woods in Tennessee, they lived, they were, I don't know how they lived, but they lived to be old, old people. It was very common, you know. He had, I can remember he had an aunt they used to talk about, she was --- I forgot what they called her,

Aunt --- anyway she had, he had two grandfathers killed in the civil war. And this old Aunt Lou, they called her Aunt Lou, she was the one that, she was supposed to have lived to be over a hundred, you know. And she was, they said she shot the chicken thief when he jumped over the fence. (Laughter) She was supposed to have been quite a character I guess. But ---

BARBARA: So did your dad stay on the ranch then?

WALT: All the time.

BARBARA: All the time.

WALT: And my mother did too until just the last very few years, and then she finally had to come to the nursing home. But she lived a very good life. She had an extremely fine attitude. She was a positive, you know, she had a very positive attitude. Well my dad did too. But my mother was very, very positive. She never, all through the years she never was, never had any problems.

BARBARA: And what did they do to keep themselves busy, other than just their daily chores?

WALT: Well that kept them busy, that kept them busy. (Laughter) BARBARA: Was there certain things that they liked to do in any free time that they had? Were they readers, or ---

WALT: Oh they were, they were great readers. Of course our whole family was great readers. That was a lot of your recreation and still is my recreation is reading. My recreation is western history. History, I'm a collector of history books. But that was the main thing, was mostly reading in the evenings. Of course we always went to bed early, and got up early.

BARBARA: Did your mother or father read to you as a child?

WALT: I don't remember whether they did or not. I sure don't remember.

DOROTHEA: Did they teach you at home a little bit during your early years, or where did you go to school in the younger years?

WALT: Went to school in Riverside.

DOROTHEA: In Riverside.

WALT: And in those days, at that time, when we were, my sister and I, she is two years older than me, and so to kind of get me out of the way why I went, sent me off to school when I was five years old. Well I didn't make it. I had to repeat the first grade. (Laughter) Anyway we ---

BARBARA: The concentration wasn't quite there yet.

WALT: Yeah. Anyway we, the train in those days we had a very, good transportation. And the train of course in, up until 1926, '27, something about then, just come to Crane. And we'd go to school, we'd go about a month or maybe two months in the fall, and maybe at least one month in the spring we'd go to school on the train. We'd walk over about two miles to the railroad and then we'd --- I can remember very plainly then we'd get on the railroad track and you'd wave your hands, you know, until the train would whistle twice, the engineer, and then you knew they was going to stop. Of course they would have stopped anyway. And then they'd stop, and they'd pick us up and we'd go to Riverside. And in the evening the train come back just about right, and we'd come back home on the train in the evening, and then we'd walk home, you know.

BARBARA: So they had that regular a schedule that you could depend on them?

WALT: Oh, they had a very regular schedule.

BARBARA: To depend on it to get back and forth to school, that's interesting.

WALT: And then of course in later years then, after they built the railroad on into Burns then they had what they called the Galloping Goose. That was that little electric, diesel electric train, just a car. And that was a big loss to all of Eastern Oregon when that, that was a casualty of the war. But you could set your watch by that. They would come to Burns, that was all they did, they carried the mail and the express.

BARBARA: From Crane?

WALT: No, from Ontario.

BARBARA: Oh, from Ontario to Burns.

WALT: They would pick it up and they would come through. Down home, you could remember that would go through at seven fifteen in the morning. Then they would come back through about three-thirty, forty in the evening. And they always met, they met at that time, was the Portland Rose, was Union Pacific's train to Chicago. And they would meet the Portland Rose, and they would pick up the mail, and then they would come back. And you know, we used to get our paper, folks always took the Oregon Journal, you would get your daily paper the same day. And you sent an order to Montgomery Ward one day, and get it the next. Sears and Roebuck was in Seattle, three days and you would get your ---

BARBARA: That's marvelous.

WALT: It is, it is. We never, after that went off we've never had that kind of service.

BARBARA: The service certainly has gone down since then.

WALT: Now they only have two days away, I think two days a week in Riverside, mail service. It comes out of Juntura. But it was remarkable.

BARBARA: So I suppose people could hop the train in Crane and come into Burns and then do your shopping and come back?

WALT: Oh yes. Well you would have to stay overnight if you come to Burns.

BARBARA: I see.

WALT: Went to Ontario, you would have about an hour and a half, and do your business if you were real swift, and catch the train and come home.

BARBARA: Well that's great.

DOROTHEA: Did you do that much?

WALT: Oh yes.

DOROTHEA: Did you?

WALT: Oh yes, that's the way we --- my dad would go down to Vale, or wherever we had to go. He almost always, he always come home at night. But he would, that's the way they would travel. And then of course the roads weren't always good in the wintertime, why you would always --- they called it traveling on the frost, you know. It would freeze up, why you --- you come to Burns, if you didn't get your work, things done pretty early why you stayed all night because you couldn't get back until the next morning when it would be frozen again.

DOROTHEA: That's called traveling on the frost?

WALT: Yeah. (Laughter) And it was literally.

DOROTHEA: I think we went to school a lot out in our country. I grew up in Ryegrass and we'd have to go out, and the roads were not graveled or paved like they are now.

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And you had to get out on that frost, or you didn't get out.

WALT: Hanley Lane was a fright. Oh man, that was terrible.

DOROTHEA: Oh. Yeah, that was even that way when we were riding the bus.

WALT: Yes.

BARBARA: Well that's interesting, I haven't really talked to many people that, you know, did much with the train.

WALT: Oh it was, of course people from --- we went to school in Ontario, and quite a number of the people from the Drewsey area and Juntura all went to school in Ontario. It was very common. Oh I think Rotha French, she was Lee Williams' or Drex Williams' sister, she went to school in Ontario. Of course I think, I don't know where Lee went to school, but Drex I think went to school

in Boise or somewhere. Rotha went to school, and then there was quite a number of those people from Drewsey went to school at Ontario.

DOROTHEA: Now did the train come to Juntura?

WALT: Oh yes.

DOROTHEA: It came through Juntura?

WALT: Come through Juntura.

DOROTHEA: And so it stopped there too so they could have picked up the train from Juntura?

WALT: Oh yes, uh huh. Stopped at Juntura and Harper and Vale, and then you could always flag it down on any of the sidings. Say we had a siding, it was called Dunnean, and then there was Venator Siding, and then there was another one they called Fort. And that's where we used to catch the train. I don't know where the name Fort come from, but that was pretty much across from the ranch there.

DOROTHEA: Well then you did most of your traveling by train then?

WALT: Yes. And we always went the other way, simply because it was handier. We never come to Burns really all that much for years. My dad did lots of business out of Burns, and he run sheep and run them up in the --- for years they had sheep in the Blue Mountains and around. But we never, if we went up that way, why we would go through Drewsey, up through Drewsey up where the sheep were. Very seldom ever come through Burns. Did almost all of our business at Ontario.

DOROTHEA: Now when you shipped your sheep, did they go out of the Silvies area, and so you caught the stockyards there?

WALT: Yes, they used to use the stockyards there at Silvies.

DOROTHEA: And caught the train again?

WALT: Yeah, they shipped those sheep down on the logging road, or the old, what was it the Oregon Northwestern wasn't it, yes.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: They said that was quite a trip down the canyon they say.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah. I don't know ---

WALT: The logs would fall off of the train and roll down, I've heard that. I don't know whether it was true or not. (Laughter) But sheepherders used to say that.

DOROTHEA: So where did you run your sheep in the Drewsey area? You started in the Riverside area, and then came through Drewsey and

WALT: Well my dad, in those days sheepmen didn't quite --- lots of sheepmen, at least my father when he come into this area they was some of these sheep and cattle wars were still going in the Drewsey area. They had some rather bad fights over in that area. There was quite a number of sheepherders, some sheepherders killed over in that country.

And so he always said he wanted to own enough land that no one was going to run him off of his own property. So he bought a lot of land, but it was range land. And they didn't normally raise their own hay.

Generally, policy was that an awful lot of these sheepmen would go down the Snake River Valley around Nyssa or Vale or Ontario, that country and they would buy hay, very common. So he would buy hay down there.

And then he and his brother were in partners for quite awhile, Bill McEwen. And then they would trail up in the spring of the year and then on to our own range out from Riverside back in that country. And then they had a, an allotment, one of the sheep allotments was, well of course they

call it Calamity Butte now, but it was Baldy Mountain in those days. You one of the Purdys from up in that country?

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah. I know where Calamity Butte is.

WALT: Well they used to know the Purdy family, you know. And he used to rent quite a little bit of that range down through there. There was the Gibsons, and the --- those little homesteads.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. I think there was some Shephards or something up in that area or something.

WALT: Yeah, and there was Gibson and I can't think of the name of the other one. There was several of those little homesteads through there. And so he would summer his sheep in there then. Quite often rent pasture down in the Drewsey country, and go down in that area in the fall, and then come back later on and back, and then go back down in the valley in the winter. But most of the sheep --- kind of a routine they followed.

DOROTHEA: So they more or less, when they caught the train it was more or less weaning the lambs off then, and ---

WALT: Well that was when they was shipping the lambs.

DOROTHEA: Shipping.

WALT: They shipped the lambs to, well they would, generally they consigned, they would call it consigning the lambs. There was what they called commission firms. And there was several different commission firms, one was Marion Wilkins. They had an office in most of the major stockyards. And back in the east you would consign your lambs to this firm, and they would sell them for you.

Sometimes they would sell them in Ogden, and sometimes they would send them to Denver. Sometimes they would send them on into Omaha. But then again they might, if the Nevada market wasn't too good, they would unload them in what they called Valley Falls, which was on this side of

Omaha in Nebraska, but on the Platte River and they would leave them for a little while, and the guy would put them on pasture. And very seldom, they would sell them in one of those three places, depending upon what the commission man kind of thought. Of course he was paid accordingly. A portion of what he got for the lambs, you know.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: And so they would, that's the way they almost, they almost all at one time sold their lambs that way. Then sometimes there would be lamb buyers come through the country too.

DOROTHEA: Kind of like cattle buyers now.

WALT: Yeah.

BARBARA: Did your father bank in Ontario, did he do his banking there?

WALT: Yes, he did his banking in Vale, a lot of it.

BARBARA: Oh, in Vale too.

WALT: Yeah.

BARBARA: And how was it to get loans and things like that during your father's early years? Did they have much trouble getting money to keep them going?

WALT: I can't remember ever him saying too much about the early years. I know when the depression come, in the '30's there, why it was extremely tough. I can remember the banks were closed, you know. And I can remember he was banking in Vale at that time, and they called it the First National Bank of Malheur.

And Jim Jones, he was at one time, well I guess he was Senator for Eastern Oregon. Well he was an Oregon state, not a U. S. Senator, but a state senator for Oregon. And he was president of the bank and I can remember my dad saying, had a shepherder quit, you know, and didn't have any money to pay him. I can remember my dad, of course he and Jim Jones also run sheep, they

were very good friends. So he said, "Now Jim," he says, "I'll let you have," I don't know how much it was, five hundred dollars or something, he said, "sure go easy on that." He just loaned it to him, you know, personally, so my dad could pay off his sheepherder and a few of those things.

But then they had real, pretty hard time getting financing then. But I can't remember him ever having too much of a problem, talking about much of a problem before. I think a lot of their financing was done through individuals.

There was an old, a man by the name of Jeff Billingsley, apparently he was pretty wealthy, and he was a stockman and rancher over in the Barren Valley area many years ago. In fact my old Uncle Tom Turnbull bought the ranch from him. And he retired and lived in Ontario. And he loaned, quite a few I think of these individuals loaned money. I don't know, I just don't really, I don't ever remember of my dad ever saying he had much trouble getting, problem getting money.

BARBARA: And did you bank over there when you first got started too?

WALT: I banked there, and then they finally went into the U. S. National, I'm still banking with them. (Laughter) Vale Branch of the U. S. National.

BARBARA: Well if you got a good deal, why should you change?

WALT: Well that's what I keep telling them here. I do all my banking here, so Glen says, "Well why don't you transfer here?" Well, you know, I don't, I've just always done business there, there is no reason why I shouldn't transfer, but I just stayed there. Because it doesn't make much difference now anyway, you go to this bank and everything is ---

BARBARA: It's all pretty much run by the big guy anyway.

WALT: It all goes to Portland anyway, so it don't make any difference.

DOROTHEA: Well what kind of changes can you see from the time that you were a kid to today, with maybe roads and weather and economy?

WALT: Well the roads of course are much improved. And the weather is --- well I remember the drought in the '30's quite well, and it was very dry. And then we've had this, we've had wet periods, real wet periods and then real dry periods. And we're in one of the dry periods now, and it's just about as dry as it was in '30's as I remember. And I don't remember as there is much change. I --- the economy of course is different. We live a completely different lifestyle, and there is no even mentioning how it used to be to the way it is now.

Because when we went to school in Riverside there was a two room schoolhouse. Why they built a two room schoolhouse, I have no idea. Because at one time there was probably, well I don't know what the maximum enrollment might have been. But even when we went there there was ten or twelve kids in school. And there was a lot of these small homesteads and people were still living on them, you know,. And they would, there was people living up in the Creston area. There was one, about four families up there. And there was people living over around the Crowley. There was several families in that area. Families over in Barren Valley. They've all moved out, of course. It's just completely --- one time I think they had enough boys they told me in Riverside for a baseball team. Well there isn't even any, don't even have any boys there at all anymore. In fact they don't even have a school.

And as far as people living, it's a completely different lifestyle. I can remember Mike Bentz bought, or they have the Venator right on the place that Don Opie, or Dan Opie had, and there was a man by the name of Jake Hughes lived over in the foothill. And I know Mike was asking me about Jake, well how did he get along. Well he didn't run many cattle, he only run, at one time he might have run a hundred. But as I remember he run near fifty or seventy-five head of cows. Well Jake got along very well. He, I know we used to go over there and ride, when we were riding we would stay with him. And he ate well, had everything you would say you would need, you know.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

WALT: And then there is other people lived up those little old canyons, and their life standards was so much different than now, that there is really no comparison. And you know it used to be, of course not so much my age, but even on about my age, there would be two or three families, you know, live on one of these small places and that no longer happens. Can't even support one family, you know. So is that progress, or you get into philosophical part, I don't know whether it is progress or whether we are going backwards.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

BARBARA: How many cows does it take to keep one family going now?

WALT: Oh gosh, I have no idea. The little old ranches we have, the wages we have to pay that are productive ranches, but it's just marginal, you know. They just don't produce enough hardly to hire a real, the type of man, person you need, you know. They just don't hardly produce that much.

BARBARA: So how many cows are you running at this time?

WALT: Well we run about seventeen hundred. Pretty fair size operator.

DOROTHEA: Do you run them all on one place, or have you got them spread between all of your four ranches?

WALT: Well they're spread about three different places.

DOROTHEA: Three different places. Approximately how many do you have on one place?

WALT: Well the, most of the cattle, the bigger share of the cattle would be on the old home place and down through there. We run around twelve hundred head, eleven, twelve hundred head of cows there, and some of the yearlings.

DOROTHEA: And then you ship these to the Malheur Bird Refuge during the summer, or ---

WALT: Well we drive them over there in the fall.

DOROTHEA: You drive them in the fall?

WALT: Yes.

DOROTHEA: So you don't winter feed?

WALT: Yes, we winter feed. We come out of there in February. But we don't bring all of our cattle over there. So we're starting to feed some now. And then during these drought years we have been renting quite a little bit of our neighbor's range also. We own a lot of land, but we don't own enough when it is this kind of condition. Why you just can't own enough land.

DOROTHEA: Where you don't get the hay crops that you usually get.

WALT: Yeah, you don't get the production.

BARBARA: You've got to move them around a lot more.

WALT: Yes. And then water was extremely short these years, you know.

BARBARA: Have you had to haul water to any of yours?

WALT: We haven't hauled water. We haven't gotten into that. We've been real short of water, and we just regulated our numbers so that we haven't had to haul water. Because this hauling water, that is a, boy that is a headache.

BARBARA: The more you give them, the more they drink don't they?

WALT: Yeah, and the big bill of expense. Oh yes. (Laughter)

BARBARA: And what about branding and things like that. What kind of an operation does that entail?

WALT: Well we brand of course pretty much as they always have branded. They rope the calves and brand them in that manner. We've never gone to chutes. I probably would, but the man I have taking care of the cattle he would definitely leave if I would go that route. And so ---

BARBARA: Leave well enough alone.

WALT: Leave it alone, yes. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Well my husband still does the roping end of it too, and all the neighbors they like that side of it.

WALT: That's the way ours is.

DOROTHEA: He has worked with some of, well my cousin has the tables and things like this, and he said it takes more work to put those cows on those tables.

WALT: It's harder work.

DOROTHEA: And it's harder than to go out and rope a calf and toss it.

WALT: So of course it depends on whether you are on the horse or on the ground. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Well I get the ground end of it.

WALT: I did too. I always got the ground end of it. And that can really run into work I'll tell you. Take a hot day ---

DOROTHEA: Especially a hot day.

WALT: Yeah.

BARBARA: Can you remember some of the, maybe funny things that happened on the ranches during your growing up time, some of the things that you remember?

WALT: No, not right off hand. I know there has been lots of funny things. Ranching has been fun. I mean it's obviously a good occupation. If it wasn't I wouldn't have stayed in it.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

WALT: It's been challenging.

BARBARA: If you had to do it over again, do you think you would do the same thing?

WALT: Oh, I would do the same thing. That was what I liked about engineering, I loved the study, but I couldn't stand city life. I worked in Detroit, and up in various places, but I just couldn't take it.

I just couldn't stand that idle time, you know. I mean I still have trouble, eight hour day means nothing to me, you know. I mean eight hours, that's not the way it is.

DOROTHEA: One thing about ranch life, it is not an eight hour day.

WALT: It definitely isn't an eight hour day. And it's a twelve, and it's a seven day week.

DOROTHEA: That's what I was going to say, it's not a five day a week, and it's not an eight hour day, that's for certain.

WALT: And that's the way it is, and that's what I like about it. Of course, oh I've done it pretty much, and I really like it.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. One thing about ranching we find too, is its not the same thing ever.

WALT: No.

DOROTHEA: Every day is different. You may go through some of the same routines, like get up in the morning, go feed your cows, but there is something that happens during the day that is always different.

WALT: Always is. You get stuck in the mud or something.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

WALT: (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Or you have a flat tire, or you fall through the ditch, through the ice.

WALT: We used to remember we'd go to the dances at Crane and we'd come home, and if anything was going to go wrong, that was the next day, it was the day it was going to go wrong. The pump wouldn't start, the water troughs would freeze up, tractor wouldn't start, or couldn't get the horses in, or some darn thing. And my dad and mother it always seemed like that was the day they would show up too. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

WALT: Things were not going very well, that's when they always, seemed to have a faculty for showing up. Well my dad was very sympathetic, he never would say anything. But I'm sure he thought plenty. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Those that play, pay, huh?

WALT: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Do you belong to any organizations, or are you a sports follower?

WALT: No, I'm not a sports follower. No not really, I belong to Cattleman's, and I belong to Historical Society, not that I'm an active member, but I'm interested, both Malheur and Harney. And that's about the extent of it. I'm a director of the Soil and Water Conservation District, and that's about the extent of it.

BARBARA: Do you like getting into the politicking of that sort of thing?

WALT: No, no, no, no. No, I'm not much interested in that. Politics is not for me.

BARBARA: And what about traveling, were you able to do some of that too?

WALT: No, I haven't done too much traveling, not for quite a long time. I don't even care whether I travel now or not, it really doesn't matter that much. I could if I wanted to, but I just don't have any big desire.

DOROTHEA: Well you're not really retired then either?

WALT: No, no, I'm not retired. I don't have any hopes to retire for awhile.

DOROTHEA: So you just hope to continue with your life as it is.

WALT: Pretty much, pretty much as far as I can. That's been my problem, of course, I have no heirs. But that's not the big problem. The problem is getting someone to take over the jobs on, the responsibility of running the ranches. And that has been the big, big, one of the big disappointments. I've gone through some pretty bitter disappointments there.

I have some awful good help now. I have an excellent cow man that takes care of the cattle. I just never could ever get anyone any better. And Sue is an excellent help too. They are very good.

DOROTHEA: Now is that her husband that ---

WALT: No, Sue is ---

DOROTHEA: She works ---

WALT: She works with him, but she is single.

DOROTHEA: Oh, she is single.

WALT: And Al he is married, or he has a family, a grown family. And then down at the home place, why we had some real problems getting the kind of help that I need. Because I, frankly I'm not about to do it myself anymore. I'm not even going to try to do it, you know. I'm willing to do the best I can to pay someone and give them any kind of conditions they will, to get them to go out and do it. But then again, I've got pretty good help now. So just hope --- I had a man working for me in Crane, and then he moved to Ontario and bought a place down there. And then again this fall I hired him back. He was gone a year, he didn't like it down there, and I was able to get him back. He's a good competent man to take care of the ranches. And hope we'll get along a little better now.

BARBARA: Do you find it is harder and harder each year to get people to come in and work on ranches?

WALT: It is. We're getting a different quality of help. We used to, the men we used to get, a lot of them were alcoholics. And you knew what ---

BARBARA: Not always depend on them then?

WALT: But you know, most of them were --- and probably one reason they were alcoholics, you know, they were, I don't know they just had more energy than they know what to do with. You

know a lot of them alcoholics were that way. And they were extremely good men as long as they lasted. But they would be here today, and gone tomorrow. But when you got one, he generally knew what to do, and he had quite a lot of enthusiasm. And he knew, he knew what to do.

But the help we so often get now, they just aren't quite --- I know we used to think, what are we ever going to, what do we ever put up with these old guys for. But now we wished we had them back. Because they were, they were good help. They were maybe short time help, but they were good help.

Because we used to use the same men, they'd go to work for Dan Opie, or Lee Cables and they'd go up in the Beulah area and work for Joe Altnow, and they'd work around, and come down through --- worked for Joyces and ... and then they would make the circle and come back, you know, maybe two or three years. And you was generally always glad to get them. But they wouldn't stay all that long, but they were good help when they did come.

BARBARA: I remember Marcus mentioning in some of the tapes, and interviews that we have done, mentioning a person, he was a good person, but he sure did like the bottle. (Laughter)

WALT: Oh, that was true. I had, we had one, of course we lived neighbor to Marcus for many years. We had one man that worked for us almost all of his life. That was his big defect. He was about my age, and he just worked for us practically all of his life. He was just a member of the family, you know, but he sure ---

DOROTHEA: Well are you finding it harder as you get older to find people that are interested in ranch life? Or are you finding a lot that are wanting to ranch but don't know how?

WALT: Well seems like we are finding maybe more that would like to ranch, but don't know how. Because I think --- we used to when we were looking for help, there were quite a number of older retired buckaroos around. There used to be several of them around Burns here. And when we were

working cattle out at the Sod House we'd maybe spend two or three weeks in the winter, you know, we'd feed cattle in the morning and work cattle in the afternoon. Well there was, oh Don Baker, and M. Baker, and oh gosh there was any number of those old men. We would come in and we'd get them, we'd take them out and they would set around the bunkhouse and keep the fire going, you know, until you were ready to go. And they would go out and get the horses and get everything all ready. And then when you would get through feeding you come in and you could go out. And then if you got ready to move cattle you would get these old people, and they were good help, you know. Well that is what they had done all their lives. But they just, those old people, we don't get --- those people are not around anymore.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

WALT: They just, they ---

BARBARA: Well it is awfully hard for young people to get started ranching anymore.

WALT: Oh, it's impossible, it's impossible.

BARBARA: The cost of buying equipment and land, unless it comes down through a family or inherit something, it's way too much money.

WALT: Yeah, just too much money. You just, you can't get started.

BARBARA: Uh huh. So don't know what is going to happen to the ranching business if children of a family are not interested. They are interested in going and doing something else.

WALT: Yes.

BARBARA: Then where does it go?

WALT: Well I don't know, the way the environmental thing is going, maybe there is too many of us anyway, huh? (Laughter)

BARBARA: Well we were talking a little bit about your neighbor Marcus, do you have any good stories that you might tell on Marcus?

WALT: No, I don't think I have. (Laughter) Yeah, Marcus and I are the best of friends, have been for years. But I really enjoyed Marcus' mother, she was something else, that lady, Myrtle.

BARBARA: Uh huh. I understood she really worked hard to keep that place going.

WALT: Oh she worked hard. She was, and then of course her --- Marcus' sister, Dora Chapman, she was our neighbor too. Well I bought their old place here about three years ago. And then of course she was, she died a number of years ago. No, I haven't really any tales I want to tell on Marcus. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Well you mentioned John and Florence Scharff also. He run on the bird refuge for awhile didn't he, I mean he was the manager.

WALT: He was the manager for many years.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. Did you have any problems running on the refuge when he was the manager?

WALT: Not really.

DOROTHEA: Compared to now, do you have problems?

WALT: Oh, we have lots of problems now. No John was, John was, I always, I have a lot of respect for John. He was, well let's see, he was a man you might say had eyes in back of his head. He knew what was going on on that refuge. There is no question but what John knew what was going on in every corner of that refuge. And if you were a permittee there, why you better tow the mark. If you were there awhile, you knew exactly what was expected of you, and you better do it.

DOROTHEA: What is the difference between then and now? Can you run for as long, or have you been cut?

WALT: We have been cut in numbers and time both. We used to run, we'd go in in August, the 1st of September, and we would stay until the first of April or even later. And now, we can go in probably in, they want you out of there by the first of February, or they seem to. That is pretty much the cutoff date.

DOROTHEA: What is the reason for this? Do they think that the grass is not going to come back, or what is their reason?

WALT: Well of course part of the reasoning I guess is that they feel that --- well there is this big argument over whether grazing is beneficial for the bird production or not. That's what it amounts to.

DOROTHEA: That's what I was going to say, getting into that environmental deal again.

WALT: That's the big hassle, and that is the big problem. And I have been active in that for quite a long time, and so has Marcus. And we have fought a losing battle over that. Of course they have famous graphs that, one graph was that as the AUM's of livestock use went up, the bird production went down. They have that famous graph that --- but there is a lot of other factors involved in that other than cattle grazing.

DOROTHEA: Marcus and Barbara and I go out once in awhile and ride past there, and you very seldom see the bird population that used to be. Do you really see that many anymore, or is it that way all the time?

WALT: I don't think there is as many birds there. I know there aren't as there were. Of course I, when I come there, I can't remember the bird population being as thick. I come there in 1939, or 1940 was the first year I was there. 1940 I guess. The bird population wasn't as plentiful then as I've heard that it was before that. But it's definitely, seems to me like it is, I know it isn't as good

now as it was then. But it's a different world. I wouldn't want to work for the refuge. It wouldn't matter much what your thinking was, why you are guided by too many outside influences.

BARBARA: Well I think the government has their hands tied by all the environmental groups and all the different groups that make them do so many studies and things instead of getting their work done. They are always fighting with these other groups, and it ties their hands.

WALT: That's true, that is very true.

BARBARA: They can't do what they really know needs to be done because of the groups that ---

WALT: Well like their predator control. We all know that coyotes eat birds, there is just no question but what they rob nests. But you know, they are limited in the predator control. Now when John was there, they used to, of course coyote pelts were worth something at that time. For awhile there they used to have, well Roe Davis used to fly and he shot a lot, he used to kill coyotes, you know, they'd fly. Kill hundreds and hundreds of coyotes, he and others. And now you wouldn't dare shoot a coyote in that refuge, I'll tell you.

DOROTHEA: Oh no.

WALT: I mean there is certain areas, certain people can, but you can't. And then the matter of the beavers. Well civilization and beavers never did get together. The beaver, he is not a civilized animal. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: He is a destructive animal.

WALT: We can't even, they couldn't even trap a beaver out of those irrigation ditches, you know, without having to write an environmental impact statement. So I don't know, I don't think I would want to be around and work on that refuge at all. Or any of these organizations, I mean BLM, or Forest Service, or any of them. It's just --- because it's, they're just ---

BARBARA: Pretty well tied their hands.

WALT: They have had their hands really tied.

DOROTHEA: Well is there any other thing that you can think about that you would like to bring up or talk about? We are about to come to the end of our tape, so ---

WALT: Well I can't think of anything right now. You get off on the --- I don't know, sometimes I think about the, how it used to be. Of course being my age, I suppose that's true. But we used to have some, seemed like we weren't as harassed or harried as we are now. It just seemed like that ---

BARBARA: Things were not so stressful.

WALT: I don't know. Yes, it seemed like we had a little more leisure time. Now, you never have enough time, and I don't know what you do with it.

BARBARA: Families are having more troubles with the mother having to work, and the father having to work.

WALT: Yes.

BARBARA: And they barely have time to say hello to their children in the morning and at night. And when they get home and its, the family unit has kind of gone by the wayside anymore, I think.

WALT: I think so too.

BARBARA: Maybe that's why we have more problems with our young people too.

WALT: Well I'm sure it is. But, that is something you could ---

BARBARA: We just have to go on.

WALT: Yeah, can't dwell on it forever I suppose.

DOROTHEA: Well if you don't have anything else that you would like to discuss with us, or tell us about then, why don't we close for this afternoon and we'll get busy with our video.

WALT: Okay.

DOROTHEA: And we'd like to thank you for coming and visiting with us.

(END OF TAPE)

b1