

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #426 Sides A/B/C

Subject: Steve Miller

Place: Steve Miller Home, Burns, Oregon

Date: March 5, 2002

Interviewer: Christine Stott

CHRISTINE STOTT: This is a tape of Steve Miller of Burns, made on March 5th, 2002.

Okay.

STEVE MILLER: Well that Pacific Livestock Company, they come into the country from every place. And they had me as the tour boy on that Kimball Flat Ranch they call it now.

CHRISTINE: They had you as what?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: You were the what, the tour boy?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Okay.

STEVE: I slopped the pigs, milked the cows, got the wood in, and packed the water in and all this good stuff.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Cowboys, they come there and brought all these old horses, and it was up to me to feed them and take care of them. So the ranch boss, he wouldn't let me grain them, so I'd wait till he'd go to bed at night, and I'd go out with three, five gallon buckets of grain and I'd grain them old horses. And the cowboys come in the spring to get their horses. And they'd run them into the corrals, and one of these smart aleck fellers caught one of them old horses and they was going to show off quite a bit, you know, that old horse bucked him off right there.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Cow boss, he looked at me, and I was standing on the porch of the bunkhouse, and he said, "Say," he said, "you get your bed and your saddle, when we leave here you're going with us." So that's where I went.

CHRISTINE: Oh that's how you got that job, huh. All right.

STEVE: Yeah. And I worked for them for, oh a number of years. Different jobs here and there and every place, you know.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. That was back in the, like the '30's, '40's?

STEVE: Yeah, it was anyway in the early '30's.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh. So you were just a young one then.

STEVE: Yes, I was ten years old when I went to work for them.

CHRISTINE: Oh my gosh, wow.

STEVE: Yeah, I was ten years old. And I stayed with them quite awhile, different places, and every place. Bucked off, and kicked, and run over, and a few other things.

CHRISTINE: Yeah, you have had your share of injuries haven't you?

STEVE: Yeah. Oh it was, I wouldn't want to try it again, you know, but I wouldn't have missed it for a whole lot. No, it's funny to me how things have changed. It ain't a going to bother me much longer, but these little kids raised, coming up now days --- I hate to think what they're going to have to go through.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: Times is changing, everything.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: It's like people coming here and burning this, and burning that, you know. And I seen this place right here one time in my mind when there wasn't nothing. Not a damnable thing, wasn't even a --- nothing? Didn't look good.

CHRISTINE: Sagebrush. Yeah.

STEVE: When my wife died here, if it hadn't have been for my daughter here, I wouldn't have been here.

CHRISTINE: Yeah, she is taking good care of you.

STEVE: Yeah, I would have been over the hill and gone. That undertaker would have had his job. But I don't know --- of course I guess it is for the best, but ---

CHRITINE: Do you miss her?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: I'm sure you miss her.

STEVE: Oh yeah, damn I just --- You know we lived up there at that Soda Flats for 37 years.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: And that's a funny thing now, down the lower end of that flat, below the house and barn and things, there is a big soda spring in there. Boiled right up through the solid rock --- blub, blub. (Laughter) I'd keep a horse in the barn lots, turn him out to go to water, he'd go down there and cross the river and down there, and cross the river and go and drink out of that soda water.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: And the cows would do the same thing.

CHRISTINE: What was in it that they liked?

STEVE: Soda.

CHRISTINE: The soda itself.

STEVE: Even the cowboys done that too. I used to go down, I still do, I go up there ever once in awhile and get a gallon jug of soda water and put it in the refrigerator.

CHRISTINE: Oh, tastes good, huh?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Funny thing, there is an old feller worked for me up there, and he was a riding and one thing and another, and he had two boys, they was about 10 years old I guess. We stopped there to get a drink of water, and that water, blub, blub, blub --- That feller said to them boys, he said, that damned bull frogs are farting today. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: Damned old bullfrogs are farting today! That's a good one.

STEVE: They wouldn't drink it.

CHRISTINE: Oh, they wouldn't drink it.

STEVE: Oh hell.

CHRISTINE: That's a good one.

STEVE: Oh my god, you know that water is really good. I used to go over there every once in awhile and get a jug of water.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: And we used to trail cattle from John Day out there to Seneca, and out in that country for the summer. And we'd always manage to stop there along that road there. I wasn't living there then, I was living over on the river. We'd stop along that road there and have a lunch, have a soda water.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: That was a hell of a deal. And I finally bought that place. I wanted to do something with that soda water, but after I bought the damn place, I found out it wasn't on the property I bought.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: So I wasn't any better off than I was before. No, it's a funny deal. Them cowboys, they thought a lot of them old horses when I was feeding them good. And that ranch boss, he wouldn't let me grain them.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: Oh, he thought it would cost too much to grain them.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: So I'd just wait until he'd go to bed and I take about three to five gallon buckets out there and pour it on the ground and them old horses ate that.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: He might have knew I was doing it too, but if he did he didn't say nothing.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: When the cowboys come there to get their horses, why I run the old horses in the corral, and they went to catching them and that one smart aleck he had to try one of them old horses, and he bucked him off. Tickled the hell out of me. But that cow boss, he hollered at me, he said, "You go get your saddle and your bed," he said, "when we leave here you're going with us." I was ten years old.

CHRISTINE: Wow. What did your mom say about that?

STEVE: She didn't have much to say about it. No, I kind of done what I wanted to do. She never said much about it.

CHRISTINE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Did you have brothers and sister?

STEVE: Oh yeah. Yeah, I had a half brother that was older than I was. My dad died when I was 7.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Oh, he took, kind of looked after me a little, and one thing and another, and sister too. Half-sisters, and what not. I just kind of kicked off in the corner.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Main thing, I had to make my way. I took that job of tour boy on the ranch there, and I knew the ranch boss and everything. I was well acquainted with them. And I had to go to school too, what little schooling I got.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: And I'd go to school, then I'd do the chores, milk the cows, and feed the pigs, and feed the chickens, and get the wood in for the cowboy in the bunkhouse, and the cook's house. God damn it, a weeks work a getting my chores done.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah, but I guess it didn't hurt me, I lived through it. (Laughter) Some of them was pretty close ---

CHRISTINE: Pretty close calls, huh. Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. I laugh out here --- did you ever know the Triskas that lived out here?

CHRISTINE: No, I didn't.

STEVE: Well they lived right out there. And one of my cousins married their daughter. Anyway I was a working out there, and they had a lot of horses there, and these horses would come in, and the house was here, and there was a lane down here going to the corral and the barn lot and everything. Them damn horses wouldn't go down there; they'd go around that house. And they come in there one day and I was going to make them go down there so they would get to going by there, and wouldn't kick up all that dirt in the house. And I cut in there to head them off, turn them there, and that horse I was a riding fell down. When he fell it throwed me and I went under the porch. And I can hear that old lady scream yet.

CHRISTINE: The woman in the house?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: She was looking out the window and seen that horse turn over with me. And I went under the porch, and after everything cleared away, the horses, the dust and everything, I crawled out from under there. God damn what a --- Yeah, I had a lot of things happen over the years.

Below Dayville, down the river and I was camped up on the mountain up there, shoving the cattle back. And I was breaking some horses, and down on the river below me was an old homestead house down there, and there was some fellers camped in it. So I come off of that mountain one time, and down there to see what they was a doing. And I come down off of the mountain, and I come around the end of this house, it had an old porch on it, you know. And when I come around the end of that house, they'd had a newspaper out there, reading it on the porch, and the wind blowed it right out under that horse. And he whirled around and tipped over, went right over top of me and got up. And my foot was hung in the stirrup, pulled up over the saddle, and they took right around that mountain dragging me. And if he'd went the other way, I'd have been a dragging right through under him. But he went up the river, and left me on the lower side. Anyway, drug me around there a half a mile or better. I guess they figured it was three quarters of a mile. But anyway, I looked all around, and I felt it was my last look at this territory. Pretty quick he drug me up over a big pile of brush, and it raised my foot up and the stirrup come off. And I had a pair of contest stirrups. I don't know, you

probably don't know what they are. But they are smaller stirrups for riding a bucking horse, so you can hold your stirrups, you know. But anyway, that damn stirrup was so light it just followed my foot, and I couldn't kick it off.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Finally, when it did come off, that horse went down there next to the river to the fence corner and stopped. And I went down there and caught him, and I pulled them stirrups off of that saddle and threwed them in the river right there. I rode him about a week with no stirrups. But I was sure glad to get that thing off of my foot.

CHRISTINE: I bet.

STEVE: Up over there, you know. And he never did kick at me. And it was the first time I'd rode him outside. And goddamn, I got along with him --- Look there at my neighbors a coming, see them flying in here?

CHRISTINE: What?

STEVE: Do you see that seagull a coming in?

CHRISTINE: Oh, no. Are you still getting seagulls out here?

STEVE: Oh god, they was out there by the dozens this morning.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: If I hadn't been right here in town, I would have got my shotgun after them.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah.

STEVE: They come in --- I feed the birds out there. I have been a feeding them quail and I had better than a thousand quail here at one time. And I feed them every day. I go to the senior center and I get that old bread over there at the senior center. Pick up loaves

of it, bring it here, and I feed them birds out there. Here come them seagulls this morning and they just cleaned the bread up. God damn, I don't know, had quite a time. I looked out here the other morning and there was an old raven a setting out there eating a loaf, a piece of bread.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. Oh, it is hell to get old and worthless.

CHRISTINE: Your stories are valuable.

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Your stories are valuable.

STEVE: Oh yeah, I guess.

CHRISTINE: They are.

STEVE: Ought to be good. They carried me over some pretty rough places during my life.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. What about that time when that fellow out in the country had those exotic animals. You remember you were telling me about that one time.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: I've been a working with them all the time. They had, well they had them zebras out here at the sand hill, and he wanted me to go out and brand them. And I said, "Hell fire man, what do you want to brand them zebras for, they ain't no more in the country." Well he said, "One gets out along the highway and somebody sees that brand they'll know where he belongs." Well I said, "All right, I'd go out and I put them in ---"

Got a calving barn there with a big board gate, and I shut a cow in behind it to pull a calf. So I said that would be a good place to put that damn stud zebra, we'll just put him in there and shut that gate again him, and I'll brand him through the gate. So that's what I done. And had this guy holding the gate, and when I put that iron on that zebra he jumped on top of the gate. The guy turned the gate loose and caught my arm between the gate and the post and broke it right there, right through the elbow. (Laughter) I was at the doctor's office, and the nurse was pretty aggravated at me. She said, "How did this accident happen?" I said, "Well I was branding a zebra." "Oh damn it, come off of it, I ain't got time for foolishness." Well I said, "Lady that's how it happened. Put it down, branding an animal." Oh hell.

CHRITINE: What else did he have out there?

STEVE: Oh, zebras, and had all kinds of elk, and buffalo, and deer, different kinds of deer, and sitka deer, and fallow deer, you name it, he had it. Even had a dumb herder up there. Oh, he was a nice old man, but god damn, I don't know what he --- We broke 86 head of bull elk, and sawed their horns off when they was in the velvet. Korean government come over there and bought them horns. And they sent a couple guys over there to help us. And I roped about everything but a grizzly bear and a mountain lion, and them is the hardest damn thing to catch by the feet I ever throwed at.

CHRISTINE: What's the hardest thing?

STEVE: Elk.

CHRISTINE: Elk, are they?

STEVE: Stand this high, you know blind man ought to catch that so and such. But you throw in under that way to catch him by the feet, and he will just kick that rope right back in your face.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: God damn, you'd catch him on a --- somebody catch him by the head and he's spinning around out there on a loop. You throw a hoodoo on him, over his back, and you get him by the hind feet and hold him. But you throw any other way; he'd kick it right back out. Oh they had a hell of a time.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Thirty bucks a pound they paid for them horns.

CHRISTINE: Wow. The Korean government did?

STEVE: Korean government sent a man over here and they saw a horn off, they'd weigh the horn, catch the blood and weigh it, and put it all in a quick freeze.

CHRISTINE: What did they use it for, do you know?

STEVE: For medicine.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Yeah they made medicine out of it of some kind, I don't know what for. I don't think it would have been good for anything but poison a coyote maybe.

CHRISTINE: Poisoning a coyote?

STEVE: Poisoning a coyote with it.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Oh I trapped for the government here, right here in this town. I trapped for the government, had the whole north end of Harney County to look after.

CHRISTINE: Wow. What all did you trap?

STEVE: Bobcats, coyotes, anything else that bothered the sheep.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Lots of sheep in the country. Well they killed calves too; hell them coyotes killed calves so damn quick you'd think he was dead all the time. But it's --- well I just lived out there with them most of the time.

First wife and I was a having troubles, and I had a place here in town, well I had three houses and a barn, and a machine shop, and 20 acres of ground, and we was a having problems. And I just pulled my hat down and I never looked back. Went up the road, riding along a whistling.

CHRISTINE: Riding along whistling.

STEVE: Yeah. I don't know what the hell she done with it, sold it, give it away or something, I don't know. Yeah, my granddad died right here, he was 107 when he died.

CHRISTINE: Who was your grandfather?

STEVE: Cougar Jones.

CHRISTINE: Cougar Jones.

STEVE: You know how he got that name Cougar?

CHRISTINE: I don't know.

STEVE: Well he had a ditch, had a ranch over there up this side of Drewsey, and he had a ranch there and his irrigating ditch went around the hill and into the river. Well when

he was irrigating he went up to the head of the ditch, put water in the ditch. And that old she cougar had her kittens down there in the road by it, and she come out of there after him, and he knocked her in the head with his shovel. That's where he got the name Cougar Jones. Yeah, whopped her in the head with that shovel. Yeah. Oh, I went through a lot of different things over the years.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: That feller down there at Dayville, he wouldn't believe that horse drug me around that hill that far and didn't kill me. (Laughter) I looked all around and I thought, well that's my last look at this country. You know that horse never did kick at me. Dragging along there, my foot in the stirrup. My god, he never did kick at me. If he'd of went the other way down the river I would have been a dragging right through under him.

CHRITINE: Yeah.

STEVE: So that old feller up there was a looking after me.

CHRISTINE: I guess so.

STEVE: Had that horse the right direction.

CHRISTINE: He sent the horse in the right direction.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah sounds like it.

STEVE: Yeah, I have had some pretty narrow escapes that way once in awhile. But, I made it. Yeah, a hell of a deal.

CHRISTINE: What about when you used to --- you raised horses for meat, right?

STEVE: Yeah. I didn't raise them particularly for meat, but I worked for that outfit that killed them horses for meat.

CHRISTINE: Oh, uh huh.

STEVE: And I bought horses, traded horses, and bought horses and brought them in there for him to make meat out of.

CHRISTINE: And that was during the war?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Right up here at the Elkhorn. They put on a banquet up there, and I brought a half a horse in there in the evening. And about 11 o'clock I had to go back and get another one. And I come around and backed in to the back end of the Elkhorn there with my pickup, and took that meat in the back door. And when I opened that door, just opened that door, you would have swore to Christ they was a butchering hogs in there.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: Blood, snot, crap all over there.

CHRISTINE: Fighting?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Yeah. And there was a big guy; a big cowboy standing there and he had one of them big beefsteaks. And he was eating away on it, and he said, "For Christ sake don't holler whoa." He said, "This son-of-a-bitch stopped in my throat and choked me to death." (Laughter) God damn, oh my god. Why there is a lot worse meat than that

horsemeat. But I was used to that when I was a kid. We was riding out in the mountains and around, camped out there, and hell we'd just shoot a colt and use it for meat while we was there, you know. Yeah. Oh I've had quite a life. I'd hate to think I had to go through it again. A lot of it I wouldn't make it, I don't think.

CHRISTINE: Wouldn't make it this time, huh?

STEVE: Probably not. I come out of that dance hall down there at Drewsey one time, store over on the corner, and they had a big old cast iron pump right on the corner. And I come out of that dance hall over there, and I'd been whipped three times going to that pump to wash, and got whipped again before I got there.

CHRISTINE: Going to the pump to wash?

STEVE: Wash.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Wash my face, I had blood all over it.

CHRISTINE: Oh boy.

STEVE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I put in a lot of time around this hospital up here at one time. Oh I've had a hell of a life. A lot of it was good, and a lot of it wasn't worth a damn. Some of it I'd be ashamed of it now but ---

CHRISTINE: Did you used to drive cattle, you said, up through town?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah, we drove cattle from over below John Day down there, below Mt. Vernon, plumb up through here to Silvies Valley, and summer them up there.

CHRISTINE: Oh, uh huh.

STEVE: And brought the cattle down here and right up through the town here, and took them up to Silvies.

CHRISTINE: Up to Silvies.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Summer them up there.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Yeah. Took a lot of horses them days too. You didn't do it all on one. And you never knowd what you was going to get next.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: That's my granddad there along side of that clock.

CHRISTINE: Oh that's Cougar Jones.

STEVE: Cougar Jones.

CHRISTINE: Oh that's a wonderful photo.

STEVE: Yeah. That old feller over there on that horse, I don't know who the hell that would be. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: An unknown rider, huh?

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, I drove stagecoach in John Day one time for --- they had a '62 celebration in Canyon City, and they had the fair in John Day. And I hauled all them drunks out of Canyon City down to John Day in that stagecoach. Yeah. Yeah, I've seen a lot of changes go through the country.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: A lot of it was for the better, you know. But it worries me right now to see these little kids a coming up, they wouldn't know which end of the god damn cow to put the hay in. Well they wouldn't. You know if they had to make a living on their own, where in the hell would they be? They'd just starve to death. Maybe it ain't --- but since I've been a studying on this thing here, I seen this town when there wasn't a living damn thing there, in my mind. That old feller a coaching me.

CHRISTINE: Coaching you?

STEVE: Yeah, it didn't look good. After my wife died I just --- well I just studied on things too much, I guess. If it hadn't of been for my daughter living right here, I wouldn't have been here now. I would have been over there someplace in a pile of rocks. Yeah, she has just kept me alive. Oh, it's funny.

Well all-them pictures over there, they all got quite a story with them. That Pacific Livestock Company, I worked for them. I went to work cowboying for them when I was ten years old. And we gathered all the cattle out of this country around here took them to the Island Ranch and trailed them to Winnemucca, Nevada and shipped them on the railroad to California. Didn't do that all in five minutes either. No, the old man up there, he had all them yak, and tapir, he had a tapir. Did you ever see a tapir?

CHRISTINE: Just pictures.

STEVE: Well he had a tapir about twenty feet long. And he called me up out here at the Triska place, and I was up at Silvies. And he said, "For god's sakes get down here." He said, "These fellers trying to load this tapir and they tipped the crate over." They built a

crate to put him in and slide him up in the pickup. And they tipped the crate over, and one of them was under the crate, and the tapir was a piece of him. I jumped in the truck, and hell I come down here, hell bent for election. And got out there and this guy was still under that damn crate. And I rolled it over, got him out of there, and took him to the hospital. Went back out there, and that old tapir was out there in the field, and I went and took my buggy whip and went out there and drove him around there and got him in the corral. Backed the truck up to the gate, run him up in the truck, and shut the gate on him and took him back to Silvies.

CHRISTINE: Back to Silvies, yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. I had him up there to Silvies

CHRISTINE: Is that the same fellow that had the zebra?

STEVE: Yeah. Harry Pon.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Harry Pon. Yeah, I've heard of him, PON, Pon.

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I worked for him a long time. He had all kinds of damn animals. Yaks. My wife raised buffalo, a buffalo in the house.

CHRISTINE: Oh my goodness.

STEVE: Yes, she'd come in the house, and she'd be a setting here, the buffalo would come over here and stand by her, and I'd get over there she'd --- kick, kick, kick at me. There are pictures over there on the wall someplace of that buffalo. I don't see it now, but it is somewhere around here. You see that picture there, that spotted horse?

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: You see that thing on top there with a face in it?

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Well that come there --- there is another one there the other side of it that don't have that --- I had that picture put in there.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: That was my wife's picture, but you can see the other side of it there. That white field is in it.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah.

STEVE: And I had that picture put in there.

CHRISTINE: That was her presence there, is that what you feel?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: You feel like that was her presence there?

STEVE: Yes.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: I think when she died she left me that to look at.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: That's why I had that picture put in it.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: I don't know --- I think too much, I guess. That's her buffalo.

CHRISTINE: Oh, here she is with her little buffalo.

STEVE: Yeah. She had it for two years, three years.

CHRISTINE: Three years.

STEVE: And right below where we was living, there was a field there and the old man had buffalo in there. And of course this buffalo went down there to visit. She got in the truck, or pickup, and drove down there in that field, and that buffalo had been out for a year. She hadn't seen her, only just down there. And she drove out there and got out of that pickup and hollered at her, and that buffalo answered her, left her calf there and walked up there and put her head again her.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Stood there with her head again her.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: And I'd go over, start up to her and say Elsie, and that buffalo would get between me and her and take a whack at me.

CHRISTINE: Jealous, huh?

STEVE: Yeah. And around the house up there, and the barn lot and everything, she wouldn't let a dog or cat or nothing else up to it.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: She just herd her.

CHRISTINE: Herding her, huh, yeah.

STEVE: There is some country there on that big picture up there, where we used to live. That was a big irrigating canal to see there.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: And down this side of it was the highway, and down under it was our house and lot, and barn and everything. And that was a calving bunch of cows, calving there. We calved them down there, and branded the calves, and trailed them up to Silvies.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. Oh I've had a hell of a life, but I guess it has been a good one so far. I don't know why in the hell that old feller had to take my wife. Could have took me and then been done with it, but --- I don't know, she was a lot of help. We cowboy'd all summer long in them mountains up there. Looked after them cattle and everything, gathered them in the fall and took them all home.

CHRISTINE: How long were you married?

STEVE: Let's see, well we was married about 50 years or better than 50.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: I've got a picture over there of our 50th wedding anniversary right over there.

CHRISTINE: Oh, uh huh, oh yes I see. Great.

STEVE: That was one of my, was my half-brother with that horse up there.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Had that horse and that little sled. And one of my sisters, and a half-sister he is a hauling them around in that sled.

CHRISTINE: I suppose they built that sled. Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Did you ever serve in the military, Steve?

STEVE: I went up here and volunteered for immediate induction. They shipped me to Portland and run me through and sent me back.

CHRISTINE: Why is that? Your heart, oh.

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah I volunteered for immediate induction. I got mad at a fellow out there at the mill, I was working out there in the mill, and I was working on the green chain. And he put me over in the dry sorter shed, and that damn dry lumber, I couldn't handle it. I'd throw a piece up on the chain, and it would go from over here to across the street. And he come down there one day, and I said, "You got anything else for me to do besides this?" "Well no." Well I said, "I just quit then." And he said, "You can't, your froze on the job." I said, "Like hell I am, I just thawed out." And I just come up here and got --- He'd come up and turn me in to the induction center, but I was already in Portland. (Laughter) Oh, I didn't care, because I went and volunteered for immediate induction. They run me down there and run me through and sent me back home.

CHRISTINE: How old were you then?

STEVE: Oh, I was probably, well I don't know, probably 30.

CHRISTINE: Oh 30, oh.

STEVE: Yeah, crowding that anyway.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. Was the war still on?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: It was about the start of it when they was grabbing everybody and taking them to the army, you know.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: And I was working out at the mill, and that guy, I was on the green chain, and hell I was making it all right on that green chain. Nobody wanted you to pull it anyway. And he took me off of there and put me over there in that dry sorter. Well that damn dry lumber I'd throw a board up there and the son-of-a-bitch would go maybe to the other side of the road. And I told him, I said, "God damn it if you ain't got something better than this for me to do," I said, "I'm going to quit." Said, "You can't, your froze on the job." I said, "Like hell I am, I just thawed out." I pulled my apron and my mitts off and threw them up on the chain and walked out the door. And I come right on up here to the induction center, and I knew he'd turn me in to them, you know, when he --- But I just come up here and volunteered for immediate induction, and they took me to Portland. I was in Portland when he was up here trying to turn me in.

CHRISTINE: So if the man didn't have a job, then he had to go to the service?

STEVE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I volunteered for immediate induction. Put a stop to him to doing anything.

CHRISTINE: So when you came back from Portland, what did you do?

STEVE: I just went out and went to cowboying out around the country here.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Part of it I was trapping for the government, part of it.

CHRISTINE: How long did you work at the mill?

STEVE: Oh, I was there two or three years, I guess.

CHRISTINE: That was Edward Hines?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: When they first come in here, you know, and built that mill and I worked there and every place else. And a lot of people that worked there had stock. While they was a working there, I was taking care of their stock.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah, their livestock.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Cows, and calves, and whatnot. Brand the calves, and see that the old cows had their calves all right. Pull the calves if I had to. Hell when old Harry Pon, he was out here at the Triska place.

CHRISTINE: Triska, uh huh.

STEVE: Yeah. He was a nice old man; I really liked him.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Oh I had, they got, give me one of them prostate operations, and I got prostate cancer now.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: So my time is kind of numbered. But I'm going to live as long as I can.

CHRISTINE: Okay.

STEVE: That animal there with horns, that was one of his pets.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Harry Pon's pets? Uh huh.

STEVE: Yeah. Big long horn steer; he's a lead steer. My wife would get on her horse, and we'd be trailing cattle from here to Silvies, you know. She'd get on a horse and go around the lead and holler at him, come on Sam, let's go. He would go behind the horse and they'd take off up the road. She'd stop, and he'd stop. And she'd get ready to go on, come on Sam, let's go. And she'd stay in the lead of them cows and keep people from running into them, and one thing and another, you know. And you can see that bell; he wore it a damn long time, a beating and hammering that clapper on the side of that bell. Beat it plum thin.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: To start with, it was Baunam Kerns, (sp.?) you might have knowed him, or know of him over in Izee country. He bought that bell brand new and put it on a mustang horse, mustang mare. About the time he done that, he sold the horses, and they run them in the corral, and he pulled that bell off and throwed it down there, and I picked it up.

CHRISTINE: Well, are you needing to take a break or anything?

STEVE: No, do you want a coke or something?

CHRISTINE: No, I'm fine, thanks.

STEVE: I got a root beer, and I got a donut in there that ain't even been chewed on yet.

(Laughter)

CHRISTINE: You always have donuts and cookies, don't you?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: They are in there if you want them.

CHRISTINE: Oh, I'm fine, thanks.

STEVE: Root beer --- I got root beer out there.

CHRISTINE: I'm good. You want something?

STEVE: No. Only more time.

CHRISTINE: More time. Well you got a little bit anyway. You look good.

STEVE: Yeah, I feel pretty good. But they operated on me, and I had an aneurysms though in the vein in my heart. And it was about the size of a football. They cut it out, and when they cut it out, they had to put a sleeve in there. Now what that is, I don't know. But they told me whatever you do, don't pick up over ten pounds no higher than your knees. I said, "For christ sake, if I can't pick up more than that I'll starve to death." (Laughter) Oh that doctor said, "Get the hell out of here." I said, "God damn, I got to pick up more than ten pounds." "No," he said, "you ain't, and don't practice it either." Because he said, "We had to put a sleeve on that," wherever they cut that damn thing out of there. Had to put a sleeve on there. And you go to pick it up; cause backpressure and if it blows that sleeve off you've got three minutes. And that's pretty short.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: So that's what I've been a living with.

SIDE B

STEVE: ... nobody around here. Tell them a lot of lies, and one thing and another.

(Laughter) Yeah.

CHRISTINE: You told me once about driving some cattle up through town, and they went into someone's yard, or something.

STEVE: Oh yeah.

CHRISTINE: Some woman got really upset.

STEVE: Oh yeah, I've got more cussings than anybody in the country. Dammed old cow go right up in the house, you know, some of them. Yeah, we used to have to go right through town here. I used to take them mustang horses through here up to that killing plant. Yeah, used to --- And cattle, hell we took cattle through here all the time. But this town has built up to holly hell. I got up there on that hill the other day and I couldn't believe it. It has spread out this much. When I lived here I had three houses, and a barn, and a corral, and a big machine shop, a metal machine shop, three bays in it. Goddamn, you couldn't put none of it in here now.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: Not room enough. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: ... That shop took up a half a block, you know, three bays. And they had cutting torches, and welders, and everything else in there.

CHRISTINE: Did you have someone working for you?

STEVE: Oh yeah, they worked in there. They didn't work for me, they worked for themselves, or they didn't eat. Yeah, they --- No, I was fortunate that way, I never had anybody work for me. They worked for me, but through themselves. They made the money themselves, and they knowd where they got it. Yeah, hell I did --- Yeah, I had

quite a time over my lifetime. I'd hate to think I had to go back over it again. There is some of them animals over there, you see on that, I think there is a zonie over there.

CHRISTINE: A what?

STEVE: A zonie.

CHRISTINE: Zonie, what is that?

STEVE: Half zebra.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Zebra and pony cross.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Right over on the end there.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah, I see the stripes.

STEVE: Yeah. I got on that old stud zebra out there one day, and he just collapsed. You know a burro that big would pack damn near his own weight, but that zebra couldn't. My weight, he just folded up like a wet sack. Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Do you have grandkids, Steve?

STEVE: Yeah, there is one of them around town here someplace.

CHRISTINE: Fran's boy.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Does he have children? No.

STEVE: I think he has two. I think he's got --- well I don't know. It's too much for me to keep up with them. I do pretty good to keep up with myself. (Laughter) Yeah, yeah, all them exotic animals they had up there, they was kind of funny. Had a big old bull yak and he was a big old son-of-a-goat? And had a pair of them and the old man called me up and he said, "You take them yaks and put them across the river out on that bench up there. That old cow yak is going to have a calf, and she has it down here in this river bottom, she'll probably drown it." So I gathered them up and I drove them down to the river, and the old cow she went down the river and just swum across and out on the other side. And that old bull, he just whirled around and took after me, and I went that away. Come back across that meadow, that son-of-a-goat run me. I was a horseback, of course, but he run me plum back over there, and twice I went around my pickup, him after me. And about the second time I went around, he was a getting back behind, and I just stepped off and took the door open. Shotgun was a laying on the seat and I got my shotgun. When he come around that corner I let him have it right in the face. Didn't kill him, just birdshot. But it flattened him out a little, and god damn he jumped up and I took after him, and I followed him with that shotgun plum to the river, and he didn't bother to look at it that time, he just --- (Laughter) went right out the way the cows went. Yeah, I threatened to kill him. I didn't give a damn much if I did kill him. I shot him in the face with that shotgun. Yeah.

Oh, we had all kinds of damn animals to take care of, you know. Yeah we broke them, 86 head of them bull elk, and sawed their horns off. Thirty bucks a pound he got for them horns.

CHRISTINE: Did they grow back?

STEVE: Oh yeah, sure. Just left a stump like that on them.

CHRISTINE: About three or four inches long?

STEVE: Yeah, about four inches. When they rubbed their heads, when they'd go to change horns, you know, shed their horns, they rubbed right off. Yeah, that was quite a cow. Scots highlander.

CHRISTINE: Scots highlander, that was the breed?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: This is quite a breed either, you don't know what it is.

CHRISTINE: No, I'm a city girl, I don't know what it is. What is it?

STEVE: Well, I crossbred sheep. They had Hawaiian sheep, big sheep, but their damn horns come right down there next to their head. So we got those Mouflon sheep, little sheep, but their horns come out away from their head. Made a good mount, you know. And we crossbred them, and some of the second cross was, come out, didn't have no ears. He's got ears like a cottontail rabbit. Some of them didn't have no ears at all, just a hole in their head. But they filled the bill.

CHRISTINE: You said they were, you had Hawaiian crossed with what other kind?

STEVE: What?

CHRISTINE: You had the Hawaiian sheep crossed with ---

STEVE: Hawaiian sheep and a Mouflon.

CHRISTINE: Mouflon.

STEVE: Yeah, they're a little sheep, but they've got a hell of a set of horns.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Quite a hunting sheep.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: And he called me up and wanted to know if I could cross them. Well I said, "I don't know why in the hell I can't." So I did. And I got some of the second crosses come out, had to laugh; they didn't have no ears, just a hole in their head. Ordinarily they have ears like that antelope over there, you know.

CHRISTINE: Oh, big tall ears. This one has the ears that are what, a couple inches long?

STEVE: Oh yeah, an inch and a half maybe.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: Yeah, it was quite a deal. My wife killed that antelope. I had one of them up there at the ranch there, making a pet out of one, the antelope. Cornered him up in the fence corner and roped him. Tried to go back by me and he didn't make it. (Laughter) Snared.

CHRISTINE: And you kept them as a pet?

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, he got pretty gentle, but you couldn't trust him. He just --- wild would come out every once in awhile. So I finally just let him go to hell.

Yeah, there is quite a bunch of pictures over there of my granddad --- a forty-year marriage there.

CHRISTINE: Oh yes. A fortieth anniversary.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who is the woman on the left of the clock?

STEVE: On the left?

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Who do you think it is?

CHRISTINE: Elsie?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: That's your wife a long time ago.

STEVE: Yeah that's for sure. Well my first wife, we used to live right here. I had three houses, and a machine shop, and a barn, and a corral, and a loading shoot and what have you. We was having a lot of trouble, and I just pulled my hat down and never looked back. And I never did know what the hell she ever done with it.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. That was right near here? Down in the south end of town?

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, I just pulled my hat down and went north, and never looked back.

CHRISTINE: How long were you married?

STEVE: Oh, we was probably married close to twenty years, probably. Old enough I ought to have knowed better.

CHRISTINE: You were young when you got married, huh?

STEVE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, oh hell, I don't know. I'd hate to think I had to go back over this again. I'd just ---

CHRISTINE: Just end it all?

STEVE: Yeah. Damn right quick too. Before I'd think I had to go back over it again.

You want to go out to dinner? I'll buy your dinner.

CHRISTINE: Oh, you don't have to do that.

STEVE: I know I don't have to. I got no quits on them making me. (Laughter) But I will, if you want to.

CHRISTINE: Well that would be nice.

STEVE: It's getting nigh on to dinnertime.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah, it is eleven o'clock.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Do you want to stop for now?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Do you want me to turn the tape off now?

STEVE: No, not necessarily. Don't want to wear it out.

CHRISTINE: I got more in the box.

STEVE: Oh. No, it's --- it's quite a deal. I got a lot of pictures in the bedroom there, in a suitcase. I'll go bring them in.

CHRISTINE: Okay.

STEVE: There is some pictures over there, them eights.

CHRISTINE: Eights?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Is that what you call those guys?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Oh, here come the quail.

STEVE: Oh yeah, they'll come in. Come on in (to quail), come on in. I didn't feed them this morning on account of them goddamn seagulls.

CHRISTINE: Oh, yeah.

STEVE: There is some cowboys, look like wonder ... I can't even lie and get away with it.

CHRISTINE: So you're going to show me a lot of photographs here, huh. Get rid of this. ... see the buffalo?

STEVE: Yeah, see the buffalo in the house?

CHRISTINE: Oh my gosh, it's huge. What was it, two or three years old then?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: It's so big.

STEVE: Yeah, she'd go out there and holler at her. Do you want a chair?

CHRISTINE: You go ahead and sit down, I can drag one over, go ahead.

STEVE: Oh the --- One of my uncles and me.

CHRISTINE: Oh, what's his name?

STEVE: Bill Jones.

CHRISTINE: Bill Jones.

STEVE: I don't know who that damned old fool is.

CHRISTINE: Must be Steve Miller, huh?

STEVE: See my hat?

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Always wore my hat peaked up like that. See I was looking at some of them books from other places, and them cowboys had their hats folded up, you know.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: And I always wore my hat peaked up that way, so it wouldn't leak.

CHRISTINE: So it wouldn't leak?

STEVE: No, ride all day, you know, and it wouldn't leak.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: There is some of them trail herds.

CHRISTINE: Oh this is a post card, isn't it?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: No, it's a picture, but ---

CHRISTINE: Rankin Crow and the Oregon Country.

STEVE: Yeah. Old Rankin Crow --- God damn, that's an oldie.

CHRISTINE: Who is this?

STEVE: That I couldn't tell you, by looking at it.

CHRISTINE: It's an old photograph.

STEVE: Yeah. There is some icicles --- bicycles.

CHRISTINE: Icicles.

STEVE: Yeah. Hanging down off of that bluff.

CHRISTINE: Oh yeah.

STEVE: Oh, I don't know what in the hell they keep these damn things for anyway, but a boy here the other day, he was wanting to get them and make a book or some damn thing.

CHRISTINE: Really, who was that?

STEVE: Tells you on the back there.

CHRISTINE: Steve and Terry and Walter, and who --- Gentis?

STEVE: Uh huh.

CHRISTINE: G E N T I S. These are you and your brothers, or half-brothers?

STEVE: No that's Walter.

CHRISTINE: And who is Walter?

STEVE: My grandson. Here will give you some idea of some of that junk.

CHRISTINE: Are these wild horse, or not?

STEVE: Yeah. No, they're horses, but not wild.

CHRISTINE: Not wild.

STEVE: I think them is elk, ain't they?

CHRISTINE: I think so. Some of them anyway are elk. I don't know if they all are.

That guy in the front, is he an elk hunter?

STEVE: Yeah, them is elk.

CHRISTINE: March 1960. Oh my gosh, what is this?

STEVE: Bear, got a bear by the tail.

CHRISTINE: Really?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: That's a bear?

STEVE: Yes that's a bear.

CHRISTINE: Oh I see, it's a bearskin. Okay. Flip Campbell and Ed Chandler. And one of them has a bearskin over his head, and the other one is over on ---

STEVE: Ed Chandler that was my step-dad.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Ed Chandler was your step-dad, okay.

STEVE: Yeah. There is --- that's a crossbred cow, and meaner than a snake.

CHRISTINE: Cross-bred with what?

STEVE: Oh, different --- she was a longhorn and a --- yeah.

CHRISTINE: Oh, to Grandma and Grandpa from Walter Gentis, class of '60. Okay.

STEVE: Yeah. I don't know what that is. There is a little of everything in there. If you look deep enough it's there someplace.

CHRISTINE: A baby picture.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: To Grandma and Grandpa, love Drenda Campbell.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Now this is, she's your granddaughter?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: That old buffalo is looking for new country.

CHRISTINE: Drenda, D R E N D A, Campbell.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Are you in this photo?

STEVE: Surely am. I don't know where, but I ---

CHRISTINE: Which one, in the middle maybe?

STEVE: Yeah, right there on that sorrel horse, that black hat.

CHRISTINE: Yep.

STEVE: That is kind of rough country to get over.

CHRISTINE: Oh, I guess. Is this a deer?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Is that the white-tailed deer?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Kind of friendly.

STEVE: Yeah, there is some that wasn't too friendly. Or was too friendly, I don't know which.

CHRISTINE: They were friendly and they got shot. A llama?

STEVE: Yeah. Guanaco.

CHRISTINE: Guanaco?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: We are looking at a suitcase filled with old photographs.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who is this in this little cameo?

STEVE: That was me and my dad, I think.

CHRISTINE: Wow, you were about what, a year old probably?

STEVE: Yeah I wasn't couldn't have been any older.

CHRISTINE: Do you remember your dad at all?

STEVE: Oh yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. What did he die of?

STEVE: Heart. Yeah, I was 7 years old when the house caught a fire. And he was on the roof of the house, two-story house, and he was up on the roof, went down to pull a board off, fell there. And one of my uncles was home, and he'd just come back from the war and he was shot in both ham, and he couldn't get up there. And my mother come up on that house and got my dad on her lap and slid off of that roof with him, two story house.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: How in the hell she done it, more than I'd ever known. He was a man bigger than me.

CHRISTINE: And he died shortly after that?

STEVE: Yeah. That's quite a picture.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Buffalo skulls.

CHRISTINE: Buffalo skulls. How come they are all gathered together like that?

STEVE: Oh, we just piled them out there. Stud horse. There is a gentleman cow.

CHRISTINE: A gentleman cow?

STEVE: Yeah. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: Why do you say that?

STEVE: A steer.

CHRISTINE: A steer. Oh, half-buffalo, and half-longhorn bull.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: In June of 1971.

STEVE: Yeah. I think that's a relative of mine, but who I don't know.

CHRISTINE: Oh, it says something on the back, dear brother and sister.

STEVE: Oh.

CHRISTINE: Is it Darcy, is that what it says?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Darcy, hum, what, Kirkby? No? Something starts with a K. Leary?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Leary, is that her last name? Yeah. He is nodding his head.

STEVE: That's a crossbred animal too.

CHRISTINE: Half buffalo, and half charolais, with longhorn calf.

STEVE: I think that's a crossbred animal too.

CHRISTINE: You do? Are you joking with me?

STEVE: No. Lindsey Hall.

CHRISTINE: Lindsey Hall.

STEVE: Yeah. That was a nice horse. Gooses around the hole up to Soda Flat.

CHRISTINE: Oh geese, yes.

STEVE: And the deers ---

CHRISTINE: The deer and the llama all running around together.

STEVE: Yeah, yeah they just bunch up and go here, and go there. That was an odd colored horse.

CHRISTINE: What color would you call that?

STEVE: He was a buckskin really, but ---

CHRISTINE: Buckskin.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Bev Weeks and our dusty Cherokee.

STEVE: Uh huh. That's some of them lakes up in the mountains someplace.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Where I don't know. That colt there, I've got down here to Doc Minar's, about thirty years old.

CHRISTINE: Oh, it's still there. Doc Minar takes care of it.

STEVE: No, I do.

CHRISTINE: Oh, you do. You still go down there and ---

STEVE: Yeah, I go down there every morning.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Grain them and ---

CHRISTINE: Evelyn Jones, 1957, married to Bill Jones.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Was Bill your uncle, or cousin?

STEVE: Yeah, my uncle.

CHRISTINE: Your Uncle Bill Jones.

STEVE: Yeah. This is my half-sister.

CHRISTINE: Irene Chandler.

STEVE: Yeah, that's another picture of ---

CHRISTINE: Oh, uh huh. Same one, I think.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Is this you?

STEVE: I don't know whether that's me or not.

CHRISTINE: Oh, it says Harry Reid on the back.

STEVE: Harry Reid, yeah.

CHRISTINE: Rodeoing at the Malheur County Fair in 1912.

STEVE: Yeah. That was a couple of days ago.

CHRISTINE: You weren't even born yet.

STEVE: No. Out a poking the logs around.

CHRISTINE: Bill Jones poking the logs around.

STEVE: Yeah. Now there is a school, and I was a kid a going to school.

CHRISTINE: Now this is out at Drewsey?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Wow.

STEVE: I'm in there someplace.

CHRISTINE: There are quite a few kids out there.

STEVE: Yeah, there was a hell of a lot of them little brats.

CHRISTINE: Like about thirty kids?

STEVE: Yeah, must have been that many. I was thinking more than that, but maybe there wasn't.

CHRISTINE: Well thirty to forty.

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: You went to school until you were about ten then?

STEVE: Yeah. I'm in that picture right there, someplace.

CHRISTINE: You don't know which one, huh?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: I bet if we looked at it long enough we could figure it out.

STEVE: Oh, probably.

CHRISTINE: That's a good photo.

STEVE: Yeah, it is.

CHRISTINE: Is that you roping a calf?

STEVE: Yes. Probably is, I don't know. I never looked to see.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Rooster Rock on the Columbia River. Here is a picture of a baby, Alfred Miller.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who is that? Alfred Miller.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who is that?

STEVE: Well he was one of my brothers.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Here is a wooly looking outfit.

CHRISTINE: Pretty fancy.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Irene Chandler and Thelma Miller.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: 1944. What in the heck is this?

STEVE: Reindeer.

CHRISTINE: A reindeer.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Where was this taken?

STEVE: Silvies.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: I got a boy looking at these pictures. If he had seen me a doing them this way, he'd kill me.

CHRISTINE: You mean, just throw them in a suitcase?

STEVE: Yeah. I don't know, it tells you on the back who they are.

CHRISTINE: Millie Dunn and Leona.

STEVE: Huh? Oh, yeah.

CHRISTINE: Are they related to you?

STEVE: Yeah. No, they ain't related.

CHRISTINE: No.

STEVE: There is my brother in the hospital.

CHRISTINE: Jack Miller.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: What happened to him?

STEVE: Chopped a leg off. Didn't chop it off, but he could have.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Just chopped the bone plum in two.

CHRISTINE: David I. Miller, and Hugh Franklin Miller at age 1, and age 3 respectively.

Two fifty pound Chinook salmon.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: That's you and Lloyd.

STEVE: That's my brother there, actually, half-brother.

CHRISTINE: And what's his name?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: What was his name?

STEVE: Jack Miller.

CHRISTINE: Oh he's, oh, Jack Miller the one that was in the hospital.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Is he still living?

STEVE: No, huh uh.

CHRISTINE: Are you the last one?

STEVE: Yeah, I'm about to last, I guess.

CHRISTINE: Oh, here's a picture of Elsie.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Holding a calf many, many years ago.

STEVE: That's Garth Johnson up at Silvies. Some branding scenes and --- That boy is going to put them together and make a book out of it. I don't know when he'll do it, but

CHRISTINE: Who is this fellow? Do you know where he is from, the one who wants to do this book?

STEVE: Yeah, Harlan Jones.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Harlan Jones, okay.

STEVE: Did you know him?

CHRISTINE: Yeah, he is a year or two older than me, right.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Is he family?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Is he related to you?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Yeah, he is a cousin.

CHRISTINE: Oh, okay, a cousin.

STEVE: Yeah, I'm related to everybody in Harney County, I think. Here is another one of them. It's an uncle there.

CHRISTINE: An uncle beside the, oh, Uncle Bill Jones.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Beside a grave of Carrie and Amos Newell.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Died mid-century.

STEVE: Gives you some idea of what them cowboys do in their spare time. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: What's he doing?

STEVE: He's washing his face.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: God damn, that's a wooly looking crew.

CHRISTINE: This is some of the crew at the packinghouse where we worked. We are marked with a --- and the rest of it is cut off, I don't know what it says. Does Harlan Jones live around here?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Does Harlan Jones live around here?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Does he, oh. I didn't know that.

STEVE: I don't think he's got any permanent residence now, but ---

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Oh he might have. I don't know; he is always a buying and a trading. That picture was made down on the Rogue River, Whitlatch (sp.?).

CHRISTINE: Whitlatch, yeah.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Oh, they called him “Whitty”.

STEVE: Yeah. Them son-of-goats didn’t run fast enough, I guess.

CHRISTINE: What are they?

STEVE: Elk.

CHRISTINE: Elk.

STEVE: Yeah. One with the hat on is me.

CHRISTINE: The one with the hat on is you.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: And the other three are horses. Who is this? Nope, doesn’t say. Oh --- in memory of Delbert Roy. Delbert and Blondie, taken in 1936.

STEVE: Big horseshoe game a going on there.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. Steve Miller, Dave Tripp, and they don’t know who the other one is. This is Jessie Miller’s gravesite?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who was Jessie Miller?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Was that your mother, Jessie Miller?

STEVE: My wife.

CHRISTINE: Your wife, oh your first wife.

STEVE: That’s quite a conglomeration.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh.

STEVE: Oh, who the hell that is? Wouldn't know her if I met her in the street, I don't think.

CHRISTINE: Uncle Billy Miller, and Nick Hulse.

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Nick Hulse, is that right, H U L S E?

STEVE: Yeah. I've got a bird or two there.

CHRISTINE: I guess you did. Pheasants?

STEVE: Yeah, China pheasants.

CHRISTINE: China pheasants, there must be what, forty of them here?

STEVE: Yeah, anyway that many. This feller used to live out there along the highway, this side of the "Y".

CHRISTINE: Oh, Frank Triska?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: I know you talked about him earlier. Quite a collection of horns. All different angles and ---

STEVE: Yeah, he was a hell of a hunter. He'd go over south and go hunting, elk hunting, and everything else. Couple ornery little brats.

CHRISTINE: Now who is this?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Do you know who these kids are?

STEVE: Yeah. This one, she is a living around here someplace.

CHRISTINE: Next door?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: This is Fran?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Wow. His daughter Fran Van Cleave at the age of probably 8 or so. And who is the little guy?

STEVE: I don't know who that is. I don't know who these is. I think one of them is Harlin, ain't it, by your thumb?

CHRISTINE: Yeah, it is. Stevie and Harlan Jones.

STEVE: Yeah. This is my --- yeah. Yeah, that's him.

CHRISTINE: Well, is there anything else in here we ought to look at?

STEVE: Well it is up to you, it's all in there.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. It's probably about your lunchtime, huh?

STEVE: I'll take you out for lunch. Where will we go to lunch?

CHRISTINE: Oh, the most expensive place in town, of course.

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: (Laughter)

STEVE: Where is that?

CHRISTINE: Oh, I'm just teasing you.

STEVE: Well I know that, but we got to go eat anyway.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. Does this shut?

STEVE: Yeah. You may have to beat on it a little, but it will shut.

CHRISTINE: Here we go.

STEVE: Thank you.

CHRISTINE: Thank you. Well ---

STEVE: Want to leave your vehicle here?

CHRISTINE: Well I parked in the driveway next door. I'm not sure if I should or not. I parked in their driveway, I think.

STEVE: Over there?

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Oh.

CHRISTINE: Do you drive?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Do you drive?

STEVE: No, I just lead that old pickup around.

CHRISTINE: (Laughter)

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Do you, well ---

STEVE: Yes.

CHRISTINE: I guess I'll shut the tape off.

STEVE: I was just thinking you could leave that stuff in here, and we'll go to dinner and come back and it will be ready.

TAPE 2 – SIDE C

CHRISTINE: Beginning of tape 2, Steve Miller, on March 5th, 2002. We just came back from lunch at the Highlander Restaurant. And Mr. Miller's fortune said, "Others look up to you." And we ran into a friend of his from up at Seneca who reminded us of a few other things that Steve might want to talk about. And something about taking fruit cocktail and canned tomatoes in your saddlebag.

STEVE: Yeah. That pretty well shook up --- Didn't work very good.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: You can imagine what that would be like. Brrr.

CHRISTINE: You said you have some animals over at Dr. Minar's place.

STEVE: A couple of horses.

CHRISTINE: Couple of horses.

STEVE: Chicken feeders.

CHRISTINE: What does that mean?

STEVE: Ain't worth a damn for nothing else.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: Chicken feed them, probably kill their chickens. No, one of them is a --- funny one horse, a feller that used to work for me had that horse, and he died, and his wife got the horse. She kept the horse, and she died, and wished the horse off onto me. Now I've got to keep him until he dies, or I die, whichever happens first. The way it's a shaping up, probably me.

CHRISTINE: And then what happens to the horse?

STEVE: I don't know. Never figured that far ahead. No, he is a good saddle horse. Been a good horse. But he is like me; he's getting too damn old to do much about it. Yeah.

CHRISTINE: You said, sometimes you used to knock over sagebrush and roast something ---

STEVE: Yes, tromp the sagebrush down and set it afire and roast some meat on it. Whatever meat you happen to have, a jackrabbit, or deer, or something. Back then you wasn't too particular. You might come along there again in a day or two and eat some more. Yeah. Oh, I don't know. I really don't know how them old timers survived. I had a hell of time surviving when I was ---

CHRISTINE: You mean the ones who came before you?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. See that --- did you notice that picture frame that lady made?

CHRISTINE: Oh, with the brand on it?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Uh huh. Beautiful.

STEVE: Yeah, it is.

CHRISTINE: A wood frame with the name of Miller etched into it.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: And what do you call the brand?

STEVE: Rafter four.

CHRISTINE: Rafter four? Like a half ---

STEVE: You might see it anyplace.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. Like a little cap shape over the top of a four.

STEVE: Yeah. That's a zonie up there, that animal in the corner there.

CHRISTINE: Yeah, a zebra and a pony, huh.

STEVE: Yeah. I never did look, I don't know whether I'm a driving that freight out there or not.

CHRISTINE: Oh, I don't know.

STEVE: I have a lot of times. I see all them cowboys up there; I must be with them up there someplace.

CHRISTINE: Who is it that made this leather plaque for you?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Who made that?

STEVE: I can't remember.

CHRISTINE: I think maybe his name is on it.

STEVE: It should be. I can't remember. He was a saddle maker here in town.

CHRISTINE: A saddle maker here in town, he says, who made him a plaque that says ---

STEVE: Take it down. You can take it right off of the ---

CHRISTINE: Seneca, Oregon, December 1986. In explaining how he has survived seventy years of cold winters, hot summers, snuffy horses, ornery cows, and heart surgery, my friend Steve Miller says ---

STEVE: What?

CHRISTINE: What does it say on the bottom of it?

STEVE: Hell, I don't know, hard telling.

CHRISTINE: This part.

STEVE: Oh. If god don't want me, and the devil ain't ready for me. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: Yeah. And that's Bill Dean.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Made this.

STEVE: Made my saddle too.

CHRISTINE: Oh, all right, beautiful piece of work.

STEVE: Old Bill Dean, he was quite a saddle maker. And on top of that, he was a good feller. You'd laugh when I killed that elk.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: I was going up the road, and here is the elk track across the road. There is a little butte up there, and I know he'll be right up there. So I just stopped and got out and went up the tracks, and I got up to right where I know he is going to be and he got up. I just shot him, and he just jumped a jump or two out there on the hillside in that little short sagebrush and tipped over. So I went up there and rolled him over, and pulled the guts out of him, and the blood and stuff. And rolled him over on the hillside and went back and got my pickup and went home and got my horse and the trailer and went back up there. When I got up there about a hundred yards below him, here was a fire, a stump afire. Five or six fellers standing around that stump. What in the hell would they be doing up there? And I could see the elk a laying up there. They hadn't touched it. And

they never --- they stood around there all that time and never did see that elk laying right on a bare hillside.

CHRISTINE: Huh.

STEVE: Damn good elk hunters I told them. Yeah, oh I had a hell of a time. I don't think I could go through it again, that many years anyway. There is a bunch of cowboys right up there. One, two, three, four, five there. I think Elsie is in that bunch. I was probably driving one of them freight outfits. Yeah, it's hell to get old, worthless. Can't even stop good food from spoiling. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: You mentioned the Senior Center being a good thing.

STEVE: Yeah it is, a hell of a good deal.

CHRISTINE: Why is that?

STEVE: All these old people go up there, and they can eat, and shoot the breeze. And if they go up town, it's either in a bar or someplace, wind up drunk or in a fight or some damn thing. I don't know how they ever got by without one. When I left here before, there wasn't one. And the older people would go up town and then go to the bar. Wind up drunk, most of them. In a fight, or some damn thing. I went into the back end of that Elkhorn there one time, and it looked like they had been a butchering hogs in there. Blood, and --- Yeah. That sheep had quite a head, didn't it?

CHRISTINE: Yes, that's that one that is a cross between a Hawaiian and ---

STEVE: Hawaiian and Mouflon.

CHRISTINE: Mouflon.

STEVE: Them Mouflon's heads kind of blue.

CHRISTINE: Oh.

STEVE: But the damn Hawaiian sheep was a big sheep. He is black, and a big sheep. His damn horns come right down here to his head. And nobody wanted to kill one, because it wouldn't make a mount, you know, to mount the head. So I finally got some of them crossbreds and they crossbred them and got one with horns like that, pulled away from his head, you know. Make a good mount. And they killed a lot of them too, them hunters. Portland hunters, they'd kill the hell out of them.

CHRISTINE: Portland?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Hunters.

STEVE: Yeah, a lot of hunters out of Portland. Yeah, it's a funny deal. My old grandpa there he was a scout for Buffalo Bill. It's how he got shot got shot in the leg. Indians shot him. And he outran the Indian, and got down in a lake, an old lakebed, the way I understood it. And got into the brush and let his horse go on, and he fell off in the brush there and stayed there all night. And when them fellers found his horse, of course they come back looking for him and found him.

CHRISTINE: That's Cougar Jones you're talking about?

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Cougar Jones. When he knocked that old cougar in the head with his shovel, that give him his name.

CHRISTINE: It killed it, huh?

STEVE: Oh yeah, it killed that cougar.

CHRISTINE: What happened to the babies?

STEVE: Well they just went wild, I guess, and went to the brush. Hard telling what the hell they done. But I don't think they ever worried about them any. They might have been big enough to make it on their own too, you know. But they come off of the mountain; she brought them being off of the mountain, which she would have had to, to water anyway. And brought them in there to water at the head of that ditch. And them rose briars thicker than hell. And they'd end up in the rose briars. And when they'd come in there, she come out of there and going to run him off, but she didn't make it. He took her a clout on the head with a shovel handle. And she couldn't have withstood it. So therefore he got the name of Cougar Jones.

Yeah, that's Elsie's picture up there on that bald face horse. I don't know who that other old fool is over there on that old horse.

CHRISTINE: Could it be Steve Miller?

STEVE: Might, could be. (Laughter) He has been on a lot of horse, a lot of different horses. Yeah. Some of them I enjoyed, and some of them I didn't. Had a horse or two that I kind of talked pretty good to a lot of times. That one there along side the clock, he was one of them. Quarter horse, and he was a cranky son-of-a-goat. A little something didn't go to suit him; he would get right after you. You look at that picture over there under them elk horns and see it might have been a little cold in that country.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Yeah. Well anytime you want to come around and visit, or collect something, why you know where we're at.

CHRISTINE: Well thank you, I appreciate that. And I do hope that they will do something with your photos too.

STEVE: Oh, yeah.

CHRISTINE: That would be great. Okay.

STEVE: I don't know why that boy wanted them, I don't know what the hell he is going to do. Nothing, I guess. Be about like me, I just talk about it.

CHRISTINE: Just talk about it.

STEVE: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Well I appreciate very much you doing this Steve.

STEVE: Well I'm glad to do it.

CHRISTINE: Good to have this for posterity.

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: It's good to have this for posterity.

STEVE: Yeah, it will be a hundred years from now they won't know what the hell you're talking about.

CHRISTINE: Oh, you would be surprised.

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, I got that old steer over there, that old long-horned steer followed Elsie up and down that road for miles. Wouldn't follow me. But she'd go in the lead and holler, "Come on Sam." And he'd follow right behind her horse.

CHRISTINE: Oh, the long-horned steer's name was Sam?

STEVE: Yeah. And he'd --- she'd stop and he'd stop. She'd go on, "Come on Sam, let's go." He'd get right behind her horse and walk right up the road. Yeah.

CHRISTINE: Sounds like Elsie had quite a way with animals.

STEVE: Oh yeah. Oh, she had that buffalo in the house. Fed her in the house on a bottle. I'd be a setting in a chair like that, and she'd come by, and she'd give me a kick and go over and stand by her. As much to say what the hell are you going to do about it? (Laughter) And what amazed me that buffalo had been out two years and had had a calf. And she drove out in the field where that buffalo was with a whole herd of buffalo, and got out of the truck and hollered at her, and that buffalo answered her. Left her calf there and walked up there and put her head again her.

CHRISTINE: This was two years after she had let her out? Wow.

STEVE: Yeah. Yeah, she was out there two years and had a calf. Damned if she didn't just come up there and put her head again her and stood there.

CHRISTINE: She remembered.

STEVE: Yeah. Answered her when she hollered at her. Called her April, and she answered her. Yeah, she was well named. But it's funny that she would remember it. You know out there and have a calf alone and everything. And she just left that calf there and walked down there and put her head again her.

CHRISTINE: Yeah. How old was the buffalo when Elsie took her in?

STEVE: How old?

CHRISTINE: Was she just a ---

STEVE: Oh, just a baby, yeah. Yeah, she wasn't dry yet when I packed her in the house. I don't remember now, it seems to me the cow died, but I don't remember now. Been too long ago. They were trucking them here and there, and trucking them, you know. And it runs through my mind that that calf's mother died in the trucking. Piled them up in the corner or something.

That tickled me, that old bull elk them fellers standing around there. I think there were eight of them I counted around that fire. And that elk was a laying on a bare hillside. Wasn't two hundred yards from them, and there wasn't a damn soul ever seen him.

CHRISTINE: So did you go back and get it yourself?

STEVE: Yeah, I went back and got it myself. And they --- I come a dragging that elk off of there, and you could have bought them with a nickel apiece. That elk a laying there with them damn big horns, and hell that brush wasn't this high. I just rode up there to him and throwed my rope over them horns down there, and come a leading him back out of there. And they couldn't believe it. But that's the way it was. There is one of them animals there, where I'm a feeding them.

CHRISTINE: Oh, a llama.

STEVE: A llama, yeah.

CHRISTINE: Is that out at Harry Pon's place?

STEVE: Yeah that's up to Silvies, I think, looking at the skyline there. Yeah, I had a lot of stuff up there. And that damn old bull yak, he hated the hell out of me. But he wasn't no love lost, because I hated him too. He couldn't handle that shotgun business though,

that put the run to him. When he turned to go I gave him a couple more in the other end. Damn him, boss me around a little while, but it was not for long.

I think that's Elsie and me, and Frank Jones, and George Cox and I don't know who the other one is.

CHRISTINE: Who is Frank Jones?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Who was Frank Jones?

STEVE: He was a cousin of mine, four feet tall, and two wide. (Laughter) Yeah. Did you Donna Purdy?

CHRISTINE: No.

STEVE: He was married to her here for a long time. I got the horse down there to Doc Minar's. Frank died, and Donna got his old saddle horse. And she kept him, and she died and damned if she didn't wish him off onto me. And I've got to keep him until he dies, or I do, whichever comes first.

CHRISTINE: Yeah.

STEVE: Going to be a toss up, I think. Yeah. He was a hell of a good horse too, but he's like me, he's getting too damned old. That girl made a pretty picture frame there, didn't she?

CHRISTINE: Yes, do you know who made that?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Do you know who made it?

STEVE: Oh I did at one time, but I don't know who in the hell it is now. But she is around town here. That bay horse up there to the end of that clock, that son-of-a-bitch bucked me off several times. Elsie rode him several times, but I don't think he ever did buck with her. But the son-of-a-bitch he'd sure buck me off. And he'd do it nasty, when I wasn't expecting it. Have me bucked off before I realized what was going on, you know.

My grandpa, he was an awful good shot with a pistol. Packed an old 38 pistol all the time I could remember, up till he died. I don't know what become of it after he died. Maybe they buried it with him, I don't know.

CHRISTINE: How long has he been gone?

STEVE: Oh, probably forty years.

CHRISTINE: But he was over a 100, 107 did you say?

STEVE: Yes, he was 107. He died right here in town.

CHRISTINE: Anything else you want to say to wind up our tape here?

STEVE: Huh?

CHRISTINE: Anything else you want to say to wind up ---

STEVE: No, I don't know what it would be. Only come back and see us.

CHRISTINE: Okay, I'll do that.

STEVE: Yeah, you know damn well --- I might think of something. Probably wouldn't be any good, but I might think of it anyway. (Laughter)

CHRISTINE: Okay, this concludes the --- we are part way through the first side of tape 2 on Steve Miller, on March 5th, 2002.

(END OF TAPE)

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