

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #435 Sides A/B/C

Subject: Bill Swisher

Place: Swisher Home

Date: April 4, 2003

Interviewer: Sandra Crittenden

SANDRA CRITTENDEN: I'm Sandra Crittenden, we're with Bill and Dee Swisher, and Bill why don't we start with where you were born.

BILL SWISHER: Caldwell, Idaho.

SANDRA: And your mom and dad's name?

BILL: Joe and Ruth Swisher.

SANDRA: And did they live in Caldwell?

BILL: No, no, they lived in, they lived on Juniper Mountain, which is the Owyhee Mountains ... on the map, at ... at that time.

SANDRA: So your mom had been in by herself to stay with family when she had you? Was there for awhile?

BILL: Uh huh, yeah.

SANDRA: And how old were you when she came home?

BILL: I was a month old, and I came back to the sugar bear, in a buggy, and a dresser drawer.

SANDRA: Buggy and a dresser drawer. And in the heat of summer too. Look like that would have been about July.

BILL: August, yeah.

DEE SWISHER: No, yeah, in August.

SANDRA: And so you grew up there on that ranch?

BILL: I was there until, let's see, I left there when I was about four.

SANDRA: You said '56 to '58 you were at the, and that was the Swamp Creek Ranch, right?

BILL: No, you're talking about Harney County now.

SANDRA: Oh that's right. What was the name of that ranch?

BILL: Circle Bar.

SANDRA: Circle Bar.

BILL: And it was on Grindley Mountain. And I think I was there until I was about four years old.

SANDRA: And then where did you meet?

BILL: We went to the Star.

SANDRA: The Star Ranch was where?

BILL: It was about 30 miles southeast of the Circle Bar, on the same mountain, on Grindley Mountain.

SANDRA: And how long did you live there? How old were you when --- Is that where you grew up then?

BILL: No, that's --- I stayed there until I was about seven years old. And then Dad was in partners with a fellow by the name of ... And he died, and they sold the partnership.

And then Dad bought Smith Creek, which was right next to the Star. It was another one. I was there; I was in Danner two years. We bought a ranch in Danner. Then when I was nine we went back to Smith Creek.

SANDRA: And on the ranch in Smith Creek, what was, primarily what did your dad ---

BILL: Horses and cattle.

SANDRA: Horses and cattle.

BILL: Uh huh.

SANDRA: And when, how old were you when you got to the point where you were a helper, you were a part of the ranch?

BILL: About eight.

SANDRA: About eight. And what did you do then?

BILL: Everything.

SANDRA: You were ---

BILL: Hayed, buckaroo, cook, caught hell! (Laughter)

SANDRA: That's right, can't miss that, that's part of growing up, that's part of growing up. Tell us about some of those experiences on the ranch with your dad.

BILL: Well I don't hardly know where to begin. It was just, you know, it was a cycle. A year around cycle. In the spring of the year we'd gather the cattle, run them off the winter range on the Malheur, put them on the mountain. And then, that was in April, and then in May we'd run horses for about a month, and brand colts, and castrate the studs. And then in May we'd, or in June we'd brand calves for about a month on the mountain, all outside. And then in July you hayed, through July, and probably into around the first of September. And then you start growing ...

JIM CRITTENDEN: (Too far from microphone, can't pick up conversation.)

BILL: Well when we were there at the Star Ranch we run probably about 700 or 800 head of cows, and about 400 or 500 head of horses.

SANDRA: And you would put up about how --- you put up your own hay for that?

BILL: Yeah, but we didn't feed very much hay, because we took all them cattle and horses and went to the winter range down on the Owyhee River, where there was green grass all around. So we never fed but 150 ton of hay at home. Just enough to feed the saddle horses.

SANDRA: You worked all of these without a chute. You worked them all ---

BILL: There wasn't a chute on the ranch.

SANDRA: It was rope, and brand, and castrate.

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: And how many buckaroos did your dad have?

BILL: Well the neighbors all got together, we all worked together. There was probably anywhere from ten, but maybe fifteen, depending on how many hired men the ...

SANDRA: So you revolved around the neighborhood, and when the neighbor was ready to ---

BILL: Yeah, everybody helped everybody. Except for the haying, pretty much all done our own haying. But whenever there was any riding to do, or ... horse work to do, they would haul ... because there was no fences then. Everybody was mixed. And before you could do anything, as far as branding calves, or cutting studs, or anything like that, you had to separate them all out.

SANDRA: And from that ranch, where are they marketed at?

BILL: Went to, the beef went to Murphy, Idaho. And that was the head of the railroad in Idaho for us. And that was just over on the West Side of the Snake River, about 15 miles. And everybody put their group together; it would be about a 1,000 or 12,000 head, and it took six days to get there.

SANDRA: Six days.

BILL: Uh huh. We had probably ten or twelve people with the cattle, you had a cook, and wrangle; took care of the saddle horses.

SANDRA: Did you each have your own ...

BILL: Yeah, we each had our own, what you called ---

SANDRA: Things.

BILL: We used to call them bells.

SANDRA: Bells.

BILL: Everybody had a bell mare. Horses all stayed with the bell mare. And at night you'd take your bell mare along this ridge, the other guy would take his over on this ridge, and the other guy would take his over on that ridge, all with a bell mare. Next morning somebody would go wrangle, about daylight, un-hobble the bell mare and everybody would come in, ... saddle horses.

JIM: You hobbled the bell mare everynight.

BILL: Hobbled the bell mare everynight. And those horses would very seldom ever mix. I mean there would be maybe 80 head of horses there, 80 head of ... horses, you know. And those horses would very seldom ever mix. Once in awhile one would, you know.

SANDRA: And how many would be to a rider?

BILL: Generally had five or six. Anywhere from there to ten. Some of those guys had fifteen, twenty head of horses in ... And of course whenever you went to ... you took all your saddle horses, because he was hunting for grass. (Laughter) You didn't just take some.

SANDRA: Let's see.

BILL: Would you like to know, I told you the other night ... about the stud ...

SANDRA: Yes, please, yes.

BILL: When we were there at the Star Ranch we had, Dad had six stud ... three of them were thoroughbreds, and three of them were draft horses. And each spring he'd pick the mares, one with each horse. And we had to put several fields around there, and we could hold about four of them, but the other two you had to hold outside until you got the mares bred, which was along the first of July. And then they'd just kind of let them mix. And then every year, that's the only thing that saved us was the horses, because cattle weren't worth anything. And we'd sell the ... three and four and five year old ... to ride, and sell them to the remount. And sold the horses to the remount. We was guaranteed \$150 for them. And at that time a normal saddle horse was worth about \$20.

JIM: What year is that?

BILL: That was in, about 1938.

JIM: They were still using horses.

BILL: Completely, yeah. We'd jacked our car up in October, took the wheels off and put them in the cellar and never pulled them out until May generally.

SANDRA: The remount was for the army.

BILL: The remount was for the army. And they were still buying horses then. And then the heavy horses, that was when the Boise Valley first started farming. And the heavy horses, every spring, we'd take about, whatever we could gather up, 65 or 70 head of them from two year olds to, up to four and five year old horses. And take them to Caldwell, Idaho, swum them across the Snake River, took them to Caldwell, Idaho. And then farmers would come in there, and if they wanted two, or four, or six, or whatever they wanted, we just let them have them for breaking them. And then in the fall of the year we'd have a big, they'd have a big horse sale in Caldwell and sell them workhorses as teams. And that's where you made the money off them.

SANDRA: So they'd work those teams on their farm equipment and break them to work.

BILL: Yeah. Break them to work that way. When them guys took a team of horses to break, I'll guarantee you anything when they got done with them they was gentle.

JIM: They worked all the ... out of them.

BILL: Well yeah. Worked them without bridles, you know, and half a harness, and half hooked up, and they would go, they'd been rung out.

SANDRA: When you broke the horse to ride, Bill, describe the method you used.

BILL: Well it's a lot different then than it is now, you know. These colts was broke from the time they was born, some girl has got their arm around his neck. And those horses were, you never started a horse younger than three years old. It didn't make any difference.

SANDRA: So they would run free for three years.

BILL: I started one horse ... was 15 years old. And what we'd do, we'd choke them down, tie a hind foot up for them, handle them with quite a little bit on the ground. And

do that for a day or two, drag them in the corral two or three times, then go outside with them. Somebody would go with you to pick up the pieces. (Laughter)

SANDRA: And they'd run then. Did you have them under control enough, or did you just let them go until ---

BILL: No, you didn't have any control, huh uh. You just kind of steady one, or something like that, you know, but the guy that was ... was the guy that saved your life. He could run into them, get a hold of him, and throw him for you, and help you until you got him to where you could handle him then, which would take two or three rides. And then by the time you were ready to ...

SANDRA: And from that point on then you, after using him for awhile you would decide whether he was good, going to be good working with cattle, and cutting, or roping off of, or ---

BILL: No, he got used no matter whether he was good or not.

SANDRA: He was going to do it all.

BILL: He was going to do it all. You did have the horses that were better with cows, and better for ... and then you had them horses that you could ride a 100 miles a day. And they kind of sorted themselves out. And that's kind of what, the way we ---

SANDRA: Where did your dad get his stallions?

BILL: He bought, he bought two or three thoroughbred horses from the government ...

SANDRA: And if not there, then he'd go to a sale, there were sales?

BILL: No, he just got them from the government. There were some horses that did come into that country from Kentucky. But they flunked out of the racetrack, you know, and couldn't run. And they sold it to ...

SANDRA: How old were you when you broke your first horse, when you ---

BILL: About seven or eight likely, something like that.

SANDRA: Put ... on your backside Bill? Wow. Those moms were tough moms I'll tell you.

BILL: Yeah, she wasn't around much to see all that. (Laughter) Those old guys took awful good care of us kids. I mean I was, when I was a kid I would ride a horse that was just ready to drive my head in the ground. And one of them old guys would ride up along side you and grab you by the shoulder, or straighten you up, and set you down in that saddle ... And then we'd grab them and pull that horse's head up and make them buck longer.

SANDRA: That's great.

BILL: I don't think we did --- maybe one guy in Harney County that could do that now that I know of.

SANDRA: It's a lost art, I'm sorry to say, you're right. It's a whole different world out there now. Wasn't it, when you were living at home, and you were there by yourself, you told me about one evening some fellow came by needing a horse. He was riding through ---

BILL: Oh, he broke out of the pen in Boise. He was trying to get to Battle Mountain, Nevada. He told me he had a wife and baby down there. And he had never seen the baby. Anyway, he got away from a work crew in; it's on this side of the Snake River, one of them little towns there. Anyway, he got away from the work crew, and got into somebody's ranch out there and stole a horse, and he rode him to Toterica, there was a sheep company there. And he left that horse ... and took ... a gray mare of theirs, and he

come into ... about dark. And I was all-alone. And he told me exactly where he was, you know, what he was doing. He said, "I'll take these horses, if you guys will give me a horse, I'll just ride him so far and I'll leave him, then you guys can all go get him again." He was going from our place to Bull Basin over to ... and he said --- he knew the country, knew the people. "You give me a horse, I'll leave your horse at Ollie's, and I'll get a horse from Ollie's, and go 45, and get a horse from Bert Brown, then I'll just work my way to Battle Mountain." And that's what I did. I gave him a damn good --- he stayed all night, and then I gave him a damn good horse the next morning.

SANDRA: ...

BILL: Yeah, and everybody got their horses back.

SANDRA: That's great.

BILL: He did just what he said he'd do.

SANDRA: We were talking the other day about gathering horses. Was that when you were in Nevada, or when you were with your dad, on your dad's ranch?

BILL: Both places. See I didn't, we never gathered too many horses in Nevada. Well I gathered most of those, ... on ... Mountain. When, we took almost 3,000 head of horses out of there at Owyhee ... in about three months, when they run those horses.

SANDRA: How many?

BILL: Almost 3,000.

SANDRA: And what did you do with them?

BILL: Most of them went for chicken feed, a cent and a half a pound. There wasn't a good horse in it.

SANDRA: You took them over to Idaho?

BILL: Yeah, they were shipped out of, they were shipped out of Ontario, Oregon.

JIM: ...

BILL: All of them.

SANDRA: And ---

BILL: They ...

SANDRA: You were doing that for your dad, that was dad's ---

BILL: No, my dad didn't have anything to do with that. I was working for Bill Johnson.

SANDRA: When you drove those horses over to Idaho, what route did you take?

BILL: We went through ... Mountain. That was when the BLM was first going up, and they made us gather all the excess horses ... So many horses, on your permit. Everything else had, everything was figured on ... of how long you commit, you had to get rid of. So everybody ... just went and run horses and we kept what we could keep, and we put the rest of them together, and there was something like 1,200 head that we took to Murphy, Idaho. Put on the train, ... two cents a pound. And we went to Jordan Valley, then we went to Reynolds Creek, and then we went to Murphy, put them on the train. They went to ...

SANDRA: Again about a six day ---

BILL: I was about, yeah about six days.

SANDRA: When --- what year was that, that you did that?

BILL: I was, let me think. It must have been 1943, I think.

SANDRA: And you said that was when the BLM ---

BILL: That was when they first started enforcing the laws there. In those days they were known as the Taylor Grazing. But they went in, in the early '30's, but that's when they

first started to enforce it. And no colts, and no yearlings. Yearlings were too small. If a mare had a colt, it had to be a colt. It's the ...

SANDRA: And that was just for dog food.

BILL: Dog food, two cents a pound.

SANDRA: And they were considered wild horses? That was ---

BILL: Well they belonged to people. Them horses that we took that belonged to my dad, they were all branded. These horses that come out of Owyhee ... they weren't branded. My job was, when we got to Murphy, they were working them horses, my job finally working them horses, they give me a gunny sack and I just went back and forth from the shipping pens down to ... saloon and hauled beer, that's all I did. (Laughter) That's all I did, gallon jugs of beer.

SANDRA: Not the big old galvanized can, it was a gallon jug.

BILL: No, a gallon jug.

SANDRA: Got to keep the guys going. So we are up --- now you know the good things that you remember, and things that I probably am not asking about Bill, between the time you were working in Juniper Mountain, and the time you went to Nevada. Is there, how old were you when you went to Nevada?

BILL: I was 16.

SANDRA: 16. '47, so it was a couple of years after you had gathered those horses.

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: What was the reason you went to Nevada?

BILL: I starved to death in Jordan Valley.

SANDRA: Well when were you in the --- You were in the military for a couple of years.

BILL: Yeah, yeah. I went into the army in the Korean War in 1952 to 1954.

SANDRA: And that was after you were married. That's right, you were just married when he was in, just after boot camp.

BILL: I was 21 when I went to the army.

SANDRA: So you were starving to death in Jordan Valley most of the time. (Laughter)
By this time you were out on your own, more or less.

BILL: Yeah, I had been since I was a teen.

SANDRA: When did your dad pass away, Bill?

BILL: 1935, I think.

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: So you still were, even though your folks were living, you were still out there, make your own way.

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: What made you pick Nevada to go to?

BILL: Well lots of big ranchers.

SANDRA: And you just headed out?

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: And decided you would find a job somehow.

BILL: Yeah, I went to the White Horse Ranch, and I had a friend take me down there. And I asked Paul Stewart for a job buckarooing. And of course he wouldn't know me from Adam. And he said, "Oh I don't have any buckarooing jobs right now, but I need

somebody to ... and break workhorses and irrigate. Can you do that?" And I said, "You damn right." I had eight bucks in my pocket. And that's why I worked there for about a --- did that for about a month, and then they found out I could buckaroo a little bit, so they put me with the buckaroos, and I stayed there another month.

SANDRA: When you started there, what was the wages you were getting?

BILL: Sixty bucks.

SANDRA: A month? And when he picked up on the fact you could buckaroo, did it change, or did you still ---

BILL: Sixty bucks a month, same thing.

SANDRA: And that was at which ranch?

BILL: White Horse.

SANDRA: White Horse.

BILL: Uh huh. Paul Stewart was the ---

SANDRA: So how long did you stay there?

BILL: Two months.

SANDRA: Oh, just for two months.

BILL: I just got enough money to move. (Laughter)

SANDRA: And you kept going south.

BILL: Yeah, I went to Winnemucca.

SANDRA: And found a job there?

BILL: Yeah. I went to, they were gathering cattle there, and I went to work for Bob ... about a month, and he didn't need any more help, so I hayed for an old Italian about a month. And when the haying was over, he didn't need any more help. And by that time

the word got out I could ride broncos, so I got a job riding colts for the Williams ... Company, ... And I stayed there two years.

SANDRA: Sixty dollars a month?

BILL: No, I think I got a hundred dollars a month for ... those colts. Yeah, for riding that bronco. So I did ...

SANDRA: Yeah. And you were closer to town, right?

BILL: Yeah, yeah I was. I was in civilization.

SANDRA: With a dollar in his pocket. (Laughter) At this point you must have been about --- let's see, this is 1947, '48?

BILL: '47.

SANDRA: '47. So you were 16.

BILL: Uh huh. Yeah, I went to work for Stewart when I was 16, that summer.

SANDRA: How many horses did you --- was there a --- just ---

BILL: I started, how many did I, did you start there, that first fall? Right at 14 head, the first fall I was there. And then after that why, that was the lone bunch they had to start, and they were all three and four year olds, and nice horses. Really nice horses. They were half quarter horse, and half Arab. Really nice horses. And then after that, you know, between the time until I left why, maybe tie up two or three every year, something like that. But that was the main ...

SANDRA: You did that for two years?

BILL: Uh huh, yeah.

SANDRA: And then what did you ---

BILL: I went to work for the Circle A, and then it got serious. They had, Stewarts run about 3,000 head of cows, and they had probably 60 head of saddle horses. And when I went to work for the Circle A, they had about 120 head of saddle horses, and about 13,000 head of cows. And lots of home broke horses. And that's all I did. There was stud colts ... and ride them or not, so the young guys could take them and use them on the wagon, probably about 20 ... that many times, and when he was half decent why they'd take him to the wagon, and somebody else would take him.

SANDRA: When you say take him to the wagon, is this sort of the --- the men were working, that's where they worked from is the wagon.

BILL: Yeah, that's where they put him to work, yeah.

SANDRA: A place that big, that had that many head, they must have had a pretty good-sized buckaroo ...

BILL: About seven, and cook, and wrangler. And they branded, we did, we branded between 8,000 and 9,000 head of calves a year. And the ranch, the outer circumference of it is about a 100 x 150 miles. And those cattle made a circle. And it started in February, we turned out. And right along the desert, and turned down the mountain, and then they come right home. Just one big circle.

SANDRA: And the seven of you guys could handle that many?

BILL: Oh yeah.

SANDRA: And you did all of the castration by rope and tying?

BILL: Oh yeah, did all the branding by roping them. Then about --- you think --- I know it is hard to imagine that many cattle, but we tried not to ever handle more than, when we

were branding, maybe 250 or 300 head of cows at camp. Because that's all you could get branded in a day.

SANDRA: That's all you could get branded in a day.

BILL: Yes. You did what you could handle, you know. And then like in the spring when those cows were dried, before they started calving, and we'd take and turn out, generally the first bunch that went out was about 3,500 head, and we took them all ... And that was three bulls ...

SANDRA: How many bulls did he have to take care of that many head?

BILL: Well I don't know, but he went there, I don't know for sure how many he had, but he went to Elko one time, and bought a 150 in one bunch. (Laughter) Then they figured to one bull is 25 cows. So I always remember that ... but there was a lot of them.

SANDRA: You spoke of that, those being quarter horse and Arabian mix, did he breed for that, I mean, or did he go somewhere else and --- he had a breeding program of his own.

BILL: He bought a bunch of Stewart beef, bought a bunch of thoroughbred mares, and the original quarter horse was a horse that was called Steel Dust. Are you familiar with that?

SANDRA: Yes, I am, Steel Dust.

BILL: Okay. Steel --- he bought a colt out of Steel Dust they called Champagne. He was a palomino horse with a white main and tail, and he said that's worth ... So its origination was a quarter horse ...

SANDRA: Huh.

BILL: And they were ---

SANDRA: He was a man ahead of his time.

BILL: He really was, he really was.

SANDRA: I think there is a whole lot of history in the horses in this area that is just being lost from Boise to here ... The racing history of, for one thing, there was a track on every ranch, wasn't there?

BILL: Oh yeah, run them over ... you know. I rode a race horse for a guy by the name of Jim Carter in ... He bought this stud, I don't know where he got him, but that horse made him millions and millions of dollars. He took him to California; he owned a big paddock in California. Ran him at Santa Anita, run his colts at Santa Anita. They were worth millions. And when he first bought that horse, he got him in Jordan Valley, and I used to ride him at Caldwell and Nampa and Marsing and them little old race meets, you know.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: And all I had was a kid's saddle. And take off my boots and put my feet in the stirrup leather, take my shirt off, so all I had on was a T-shirt, and that's the way we run them. He'd hand me a whip about that long, and he'd say now I want you to keep him back about that much of that, at the end of this race. We never was beat. (Laughter) Oh that's quite a deal. Yeah, there is --- would you like to know the history of the Kiger Mustang?

SANDRA: I sure would.

BILL: Would you? Would you like to know where they originated?

SANDRA: Yes, I would. Mercy, I guess so.

BILL: Well I'll tell you where they ... when the BLM first started clamping down here in the early '70's, making everybody taking their horses off, and everything else. Out here on Sage Hen, right in your back door, Don Miller had a, probably 150, 160 head of horses out there. And in them were several Lemoncia mares.

SANDRA: There were several what?

BILL: Lemoncia mares. They're a light sorrel, with a black stripe around their legs, and black stripe down their backs, and a red mane and tail. Don went and run them horses and he got them all but one mare, and one mare, and one two year old stud and one yearling stud that belonged to ... And they were both tiger stripped Lemoncia sorrel. Couldn't get them. The BLM went and run them with an airplane, and they got them. And when they did, stick them to the Kiger Gorge and turned them loose, and that's where your Kiger Mustangs come from. Crossed with them horses, with up there. (Laughter) I hope that these idiots give \$40,000 for one, that's where he comes from. (Laughter)

SANDRA: What year did this happen?

BILL: About '72. We went to the ranch in '68, didn't we? It was the early '70's. '71 or '72. That's where the Kiger Mustangs come from. They didn't come from Hernando De Soto or any other ...

JIM: Until that time, that your horse, you're running up the Kiger Gorge is just regular old mustangs.

BILL: Regular solid colored mustangs, there was no color in them. That's where the color came from. And if you don't believe me, ask Don Miller. He'll buy you a drink of whiskey and laugh with you too. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Oh that's great. You worked on that ranch --- what was the name of that ranch that you were on?

BILL: The big one?

SANDRA: Yeah.

BILL: Belonged to Frank McClary, they called it the Circle A. And Frank McClary was from Washington, and there was a McClary, Washington up there. And he ran thousands and thousands of acres of timber, and sawmills and stuff, and he sold it, and then bought that ranch.

SANDRA: How long were you on, how long did you work for them?

BILL: Well I went there when I was 18, I guess. I left there the year I was 21.

SANDRA: So that's the ranch you were on when you had the responsibility.

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: You were ---

BILL: Yeah, uh huh.

SANDRA: You were about 20 when you did that?

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: How did that come about?

BILL: Well I had been working there for --- in fact the guy, the buckaroo boss there ... and I went to work there at the same time. And he was buckarooing, and the buckaroo boss --- his dad had a ranch in North Dakota. And the old fellow was dying, so he sent for his boy. He went back, and Tim got the buckaroo boss job. So we was good friends right from the start. And in the spring ... anyway he broke his leg in the spring and I was the only guy there, other than him, that knew the country, you know. Where the cattle

went, and what went where and all that kind of stuff. So I just went ahead, and we done it, whatever there was to do. And I was buckaroo boss, but I didn't get paid for it.
(Laughter)

SANDRA: Let the buck stop here, right?

BILL: Yeah, but I got --- had a lot of, several older guys there, but I got along with them, you know, because I had lived with them all my life. And instead of just giving orders, they'd say; well what do you guys think?

JIM: ...

BILL: You bet it does. And we took, we took thirty --- it was the same ranch, we took 3,200 head of steers from Paradise Valley to, and swam across the Owyhee River to Charlie Sewell's. That's up by ...

SANDRA: Been up there, wow.

BILL: Have you been in ... pretty country, ain't it?

SANDRA: Yeah, it's beautiful.

BILL: Well Sewell's headquarters was at ... and the fellers ... on the grass, so he made the deal with Sewell to take these 3,000 steers, or 3,200 head. And we left Paradise with them, I never will forget those dates, 17th of March, and we swam across the Owyhee River, and give them to Sewells the first day of --- and we guarded them every night.

SANDRA: You left the 31st of March?

BILL: No, we left the 17th of March.

SANDRA: You left the 17th of March, and you gave them to him what date?

BILL: ... And we guarded them every night. No frills, no nothing.

SANDRA: That's quite a distance, isn't it?

BILL: You darn right it's quite a distance.

SANDRA: How far is that?

BILL: It's probably, the way we went, right at 100 miles I would guess. Maybe a little more.

SANDRA: That was some trip.

BILL: We got, we ran into a snowstorm the third night out, and lost the whole goddamn outfit. Never had a steer left the next morning. You could look for five miles in every direction; there was 400 or 500 head of steers going through the snow over their heads. (Laughter) But we finally got them gathered up. And like I say, we started with 3,200 head and when we got them across the river, there was a little over 3,000, so it will give you ...

SANDRA: This ... and you said there was about seven ---

BILL: With that outfit, there was nine of us, and we had a cook and a wrangler. We lost the cavayarda, we lost the chuckwagon, we rode one horse for two days and three nights, nothing to eat, no sleep, before we got everything gathered up. (Laughter)

JIM: So you lost the chuckwagon, did you?

BILL: He just got lost.

JIM: He just got lost.

BILL: He took a wrong turn, he finally figured out what he had done. Had an old blind guy driving the chuck wagon. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Did you guys have something to say to him when you finally got a hold of him again?

BILL: Quite a little bit. And that wrangle, that damn wrangle too, that was the worst part of it, we didn't have any fresh horses. You know on a trip like that, just for instance, I was riding a green horse that could buck me off any time he wanted to, and he would too. You don't take horses like that to ride at night, you know. As luck would have it, he didn't give up. I know there were several of us in the same shape. You know you had to do your job, you still had to save your horse until you could get fresh horses.

SANDRA: And he just got, finally found you guys.

BILL: He finally found us, yeah. He finally found the chuck wagon, and followed the chuck wagon.

SANDRA: You needed to get him tied to a bell mare somehow or other, Bill.

BILL: He got a lecture. And that was the funniest thing. I've swam a lot of cattle across that Owyhee River at different times. And boy we had a lot of luck there. There was just a trail going down the point, going down the, what they called the ... that's where we crossed them cattle. And we had them strung for about three miles, from the tip of that rim rock. They just strung them right down that trail, and there was three of us in the lead with them. And we'd drive about fifty up, and pushed them off into the river, and they went to swimming and every damn one of them cleared, they jumped right off in there like a duck. And we got clear down to about the last hundred head before we ever broke stream, and then we had the last to drag them. But we got all them cattle across, no ...

SIDE B

BILL: ... and a white man buckaroo boss. And pack horses, that's all they had. Greasy sack outfit. They didn't have no ...

SANDRA: A greasy sack outfit, I have never heard that term.

BILL: That's what you call it, a greasy sack outfit. Running the ...

SANDRA: You were ---

BILL: Thirteen Death Valley Indians.

SANDRA: Thirteen --- How long did you boss that outfit, that you were on that ranch?

BILL: Well he broke his leg in April. We was just getting ready to pull out, right at the critical time, you know, and ... It was October before he got back to work that fall. Of course I lost my high paying job. (Laughter) I had to go back to just riding broncos. I was riding broncos and doing it anyway. But I guess I told you that just before I left in February why McClary came around and said, "I want you guys to count these cattle." And it took us two weeks to count them, and they had 15,000 cows, 9,000 yearlings, and then they had about 6,000 head in California at the feed lots.

SANDRA: Pretty good-sized outfit, yeah.

BILL: All Hereford cattle, with horns. They never de-horned any cattle.

SANDRA: Do they have to feed hay down there?

BILL: Yeah. And the way they did that, the superintendent, Frank Robbins was his name, that was one of the first mechanical deals of feeding in that valley. He drilled a crane on the back of the D-7 Cat of a ... with a ... fork about 8 foot high, and about 5 or 6 feet wide. And, because they used about 9 or 10 wagons, one man to a wagon and the team. Took two ... to fill that wagon, that's the way we did it. You'd take it out of the stack and put it on there ... all the way down.

JIM: Was everything loose hay?

BILL: Everything was ---

JIM: Nobody ...

BILL: Loose hay, everything was loose hay ...

SANDRA: And you did the haying too?

BILL: No, I didn't hay there.

SANDRA: So he had a crew that came in and just hayed.

BILL: He had his own crew, yeah. And when, to show you how much meat they ate, when we left there in the spring, they worked 50 or 60 when they were haying, and we left them a 100 head of dry cows, every spring.

SANDRA: For the haying crew.

BILL: For the haying crew, about two weeks.

SANDRA: How long did it take them to put up hay for that many ---

BILL: When they started, they started right around the first of July. The last of June, the very last of June we were on the desert gathering cattle and stuff, we shut everything down, take about half the cavayarda and go to the home ranch and gather the work horses for them. They'd start haying about the first of July, and sometimes they were still haying in November.

SANDRA: How big a hitch have you ever been around, worked or seen worked, a team?

BILL: Eight is the most I ever drove. But I seen my uncle have a run-away with a 21 head one time on a combine, that was kind of exciting.

SANDRA: Oh. How did he stop them?

BILL: It took about five guys.

SANDRA: Tell us about that.

BILL: You don't know what four-horse eveners are, or anything like that?

SANDRA: No.

BILL: Okay. Four-horse eveners --- the first bar, up here is another bar. You can hook four horses to each of these ... bars. And then you can tie on to them, string them out that way.

SANDRA: So it ends up being a triangle.

BILL: Triangle, right.

SANDRA: So you start with a span of eight, and a span of eight, and then you go down to ---

BILL: Yeah. Six, or whatever.

SANDRA: Six.

BILL: And two in the rear.

SANDRA: And the lead is right at the machine?

BILL: No, the lead is the farthest away from the machine.

SANDRA: The farthest away from the machine.

BILL: But ---

SANDRA: It took about five guys to get to these ---

BILL: It took that many to hook him up, and then he ... so then it took that many to unhook him. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Did they go very far before they got tangled?

BILL: No they only went about, probably 200 yards and they were all tangled up, and some down and some out ---

JIM: Did they ... horses ---

BILL: No, they were, what they were Jim were quite a lot of good old honest horses in there, but he had a lot of horses --- you know in those days you had a lot of horses going ... and worked during haying. And they were about half-broke. And you try and put them in the middle, but ... But the most I ever worked, strung out was eight, myself. And I've seen a twenty-one team jerk line ...

SANDRA: I think you told me you saw one of them just almost turn on a dime and ---

BILL: Yeah. Now you been to Winnemucca?

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: Then you know when you come into Winnemucca from Burns, right back up this way a block, or is it two blocks, the main intersection used to be, by the old Humboldt Hotel, one block.

DEE: Two.

BILL: Two. A guy had 20 mules in a jerk line horse. And he was ... and he turned them around, right in that intersection in two ... It was the prettiest site I ever seen in my life.

SANDRA: That is one thing I am so sorry I am not going to get to see --- I just ---

BILL: Well they were out when I was a young guy, you know. The only time you ever seen them was an Odyssey or something like that.

SANDRA: Parade.

BILL: Parade. Now, what was that old guy's name? We, he bought an old cow from us, and we bought cows from him, around Baker. ...

DEE: Uh huh.

BILL: But he used to be ... He had twenty head of miniature mules to a wagon, all white. And the cutest damn thing you ever saw. And they would take ... out in the arena, and all those kinds of things. Twenty head of them little devils.

SANDRA: Do they have, they have workhorses, they have them in a ... over at Redmond isn't it?

BILL: Uh huh.

SANDRA: Have you ever gone over to see that?

BILL: No, I haven't. But they say it's really good. They was a high class horses over there, you know. They were bred and ... broke.

SANDRA: You don't gain ...

BILL: No. Nothing very exciting.

SANDRA: No. So you, let's see, what year are we up to Bill? How long --- you were there on the Circle A '52 to '54 you think?

BILL: No, I left there in the spring of '52, in February. I went to the army.

SANDRA: Oh, that's right, you went to the army. So it was while you were on the Circle A that you got the lady of your life?

BILL: No, it was at Stewarts.

DEE: We fooled around for five years.

SANDRA: Oh, five years.

BILL: Stewarts was really handy, and when I was starting in ... it was only two miles up to the swimming hole, and I got ... up there, and I did that for about a month. Finally ... don't you think you ought to ... besides where that swimming hole is?

SANDRA: (Laughter) So when you got out of the army, you were married in '52, and then you got out of the army in '54.

BILL: '54.

SANDRA: '54, where did you guys go?

BILL: We went to work for the Lucky Seven in McDermitt.

SANDRA: And you were there ---

DEE: Two years.

SANDRA: Two years.

BILL: Two years, yeah. They run about 2,500 head of cattle, not very many.

SANDRA: Did you cook there, while you guys were there?

DEE: Just at the buckaroo camp, not at the main ranch, no.

SANDRA: Did you have Cam by then?

DEE: Uh huh. He, we, he started in February, and Cam was born in July of that year, of '54.

SANDRA: So you would take Cam and go to the buckaroo camp.

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: But he was just a tiny little guy.

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: We'll have to get into that, that story, how you handled that. So you worked at, there two years, and then in '56 came back to Oregon.

BILL: Yeah. Came to work for Jim McEwen down there at Riverside.

SANDRA: You were there for a couple of years, doing the same things that you had done buckarooing, and ---

BILL: Haying, and everything there is to do.

SANDRA: What made you decide to move on from there? You went from there to the Circle Bar?

BILL: Yeah. The idea of ... got kids, and we're going to have to educate that kid pretty quick, you know. We didn't have any schools at McEwens.

SANDRA: Oh. So you were moving closer to Crane when you got to the ---

BILL: Trying to get a little closer to civilization.

DEE: That's when he started to school.

SANDRA: Were you close enough that you could, you took him each day, or did he stay?

DEE: No, I took him every day, it was just a few miles.

BILL: I think it was seven miles.

SANDRA: Did the same thing at the Circle Bar that you did at the other ---

BILL: Uh huh, same old story. Only ... at McEwens. I never did ... We were on the Refuge in the wintertime.

SANDRA: For feeding cattle.

BILL: For feeding cattle. Then we were there from, oh we went there and hayed, started haying in July at the Refuge. And then some of us were there until the first of April when you had to be off all the time. And they didn't count the wildlife by the head yet; they counted them by the section. The white geese when they'd take off, it just blocked out the sun. Hundreds of deer, the pheasants everywhere. I couldn't believe it; you just couldn't believe it.

SANDRA: (Unrelated)

BILL: (Unrelated)

SANDRA: How much hay did you put up when you were on the Refuge?

BILL: At McEwens we probably put up around 3,000 ton of hay on there.

SANDRA: Was all ---

BILL: We didn't put it up, didn't stack it all. Just stacked probably a thousand tons. The rest of it was loose ... And that's mostly what they gathered in the wintertime. About the only thing we used to feed hay to was weaners, after we weaned them off the cow, it was generally about a thousand or more. And that's what we fed them. The cows wintered off the ...

SANDRA: For the sake of history, define the rake bunch.

BILL: Well just, you just cut it and then rake it, and then you rake it into little bunches with a dump rake, about five-foot around, two foot high.

SANDRA: You worked for McEwen up until you got your property at the Red Barn Lane?

BILL: No. Yeah we did, didn't we? Yeah, we did. We got sick of the ranching business, so we bought that little place at Red Barn Lane. But we had cattle there too, a few of those ...

SANDRA: What did you just run them on leased ground?

BILL: Uh huh.

SANDRA: And then you worked in the mill for awhile while you were ---

BILL: Two years.

SANDRA: And got on with the county road department then?

BILL: No, went to Silver Creek in '78.

JIM: ...

DEE: '68.

BILL: '68, that's right. And run the North Silver Creek, and the South Silver Creek. Ernie Ford owned the most of it. And we run about, between 2,000 and 2,300 head of cows, and put up about 6,000 ton of hay.

JIM: Wow.

SANDRA: Describe the history of the location of where the Fort, the Camp Currey was.

BILL: Well it is right across from where, used to be Mayo's now it is Hotchkiss'. It's right west of Hotchkiss' corrals on Silver Creek

SANDRA: And do you know where the battle was, the, in 1878 up at --- was it up that canyon?

BILL: From what I understand it was on the flat up there between Chickahominy and North Silver Creek. ... Ridge, between where Chickahominy is now and the North Silver Creek runs. That's what I understand. And there is supposed to be a couple graves out there, although I never found them.

SANDRA: Which is Sagehen Creek? Is there a Sagehen Creek out here?

BILL: Right next to where you are. Right down past, what you calls house there.

SANDRA: Bishop?

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: Hum.

BILL: That used to be --- one time when we were at the Silver Creek there, because we leased ... ranch, and where Bishop is. Oh, not where Bishop is, where the judge lives, and where the good doctor is over there, and this whole valley. That's what they call the

... And we had that leased. Of course there was no buildings or anything on it then, just grass.

SANDRA: Fodge.

BILL: Fodge Field. And the field above Bush's up there is what they call the Long Field that belonged to Tom Clemens now, we had that field. And then when we had Silver Creek, when we were at the Silver Creek Ranch, there was --- we had a township north of us, a township west of us, and a township south of us. You know how many sections there is in a township? Thirty-six. So that's quite a little ground

SANDRA: You sure did.

BILL: We wore out a lot of horseshoes. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Bill Brown's old headquarters out there in that?

BILL: We had that, we had that, yeah. I'll tell you a little story about that, and my boy. Every spring when the cows started having calves, why we had that Gap Ranch, and then in the summer we hauled a couple hundred ton of hay out there. And just before the cows got ready to calve on that permit that was a 360 ... permit. Just before we got ready to calve why we'd take them out there and feed them and calve them right there. Well anyway this boy of mine, and this one we were raising, they were about 16, on a Saturday, and they were out of school so I'm going to work them a little bit. So we got the cattle started, and I helped ... We come across the dam at Chickahominy, and right up the highway, and right straight to the Gap Ranch. There is plenty of room; the old cows just string along there, you know, along that bench one by one, no problem. Got them started, and I come back to the ranch and got the truck, started to haul the horses back, went out to the Gap Ranch, and put out the hay. Asked them guys ... along ... and

put out hay, opened the gate and the cows started stringing in, they were coming for two miles. Cows kept coming, cows kept coming, no boys, no boys, no boys. The last cow come in, no boys, no boys. What in the hell could have happened? Well I jumped the gate, cows was ... hay, had plenty of water. Went back down the highway to see what happened to them two kids. And it just happened to be spring break at OSU. And down the road about four miles sat them two boys with three girls, and I don't know how much wine, but they were having a good time. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Forgot what time of day it was. Did you say boys, what happened to the cows?

BILL: The cows just come on into the ranch.

SANDRA: I know, but did you ask the boys if they knew what happened to the ---

BILL: They didn't know what happened. Didn't care either.

SANDRA: Didn't care. (Laughter)

JIM: That Gap Ranch, do you know any of the history on that?

BILL: Yeah, a little.

JIM: What --- Nobody, I've asked up at the Gap Ranch knows nothing about it really.

BILL: There used to be at one time, it was all in alfalfa, Jim.

JIM: Really.

BILL: And right behind it there is ---

JIM: ... headquarters.

BILL: Right there.

JIM: Right there along the highway?

BILL: Right there where that tree is.

JIM: Yeah, I remember seeing ---

DEE: There used to be a house there.

JIM: I didn't ...

SANDRA: We're talking about right along Highway 20.

DEE: Uh huh.

BILL: Yeah. And that --- I was going to tell you, that old ... is pretty ...

Do you build a ditch that runs along them ... hills, it's right north of the Gap Ranch ... every drop, he got that ditch ... and level and ... And he dumped it in to what they call Sheep Lake now. Put a little dam across there, it's not as big as this house. Put a little dam across there, and built that reservoir, and irrigated that whole Gap Ranch and raised alfalfa.

JIM: How many acres of alfalfa ...

BILL: Probably about 150.

JIM: Did he start the Gap Ranch?

BILL: I don't know if he started it or not. It probably was a cow camp at sometime or something you know, to begin with. He really had it working, but it was one of his main horse outfits when he was running horses. Because we knew several guys that worked for him, and they talked about staying there and running horses.

JIM: I can remember going by that as a young person. It seemed like an old tumbled down place there, saw hard times is what it looked like.

BILL: Yeah, yeah.

DEE: I was in a painting of that, but I give it to my daughter, when the house was still there.

BILL: All it had was --- what was it, kitchen, and a family dining room, and an upstairs bedroom and a downstairs bedroom.

SANDRA: We're still talking about right along the highway there. Well why --- somebody has said that you drive down a lane and that his main house was back ---

BILL: No.

JIM: That was Bill Brown.

SANDRA: Oh that's right, okay, okay. Do you remember the CCC Camp at the Gap Ranch?

BILL: No, that happened here before I came here. They had one in Jordan Valley.

SANDRA: A CCC Camp?

BILL: Yeah, a big one.

SANDRA: Where was it located there?

BILL: It was --- are you familiar with Jordan Valley?

SANDRA: A little.

BILL: Have you ever been into it from the Burns side?

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: Okay. Just before you get to town there is a flat there, on the, I think there is probably a trailer house in there now.

DEE: There is.

BILL: On the left-hand side of the road. That's where the ---

SANDRA: And then there was a CCC Camp out here, somewhere out, not by the mills, but ---

BILL: There was one up at, this side of Frenchglen. There was one at Buena Vista. There was one at the mill. There is another ---

SANDRA: And do you know anything about Buena Vista? What was, what is --- where does the name Buena Vista come from?

BILL: Beautiful view.

SANDRA: And that's ---

BILL: I'm not sure, but I think it belonged to Pete French.

SANDRA: It seems like such an unusual name stuck out there in the middle of ---

BILL: Uh huh.

DEE: He had all those Spanish vaqueros, you know.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: I think that's where it --- But since we've been here, why the Refuge has owned it. They've got that bunkhouse that's there now, and a lot of stuff.

SANDRA: Did you ever run cattle up north, very far? Or, yeah, north?

BILL: To ---

SANDRA: Towards Seneca.

BILL: Not towards Seneca, no. Emigrant Creek is as far as I go. A little bit over on the Devine Ridge, where the highway goes up to ---

SANDRA: Have you ever heard, or were you familiar with Japanese camp up there during the war?

BILL: Yeah, that was on this end of the ---

SANDRA: Ponderosa?

BILL: Yeah, Ponderosa. This end of the Ponderosa where you come out of the canyon and hit those first meadows, it was just off to the left, and there was a big Japanese camp. Railroad camp, that's what it was. They were railroad guys.

SANDRA: Oh they weren't war ---

BILL: No, they were railroad, it was a regular Japanese camp, and they were railroad guys, and they worked for Edward Hines.

JIM: So it wasn't an internment camp then?

BILL: No.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: Yeah, they maintained all this railroad from here to Seneca.

SANDRA: The other thing that you mentioned as you started working for the county road department, and of course you said it was at a time that the timber operation was going good, and money would come in, and they were ready to start paving. But paving was a whole new thing, you guys were all kind of ---

BILL: The only paved road we ever saw was something that somebody else had built.

SANDRA: That's when you --- when you went to work for the road department, that's when they started paving roads.

BILL: Yeah.

SANDRA: And that would have been in what year?

BILL: '78, about '79 we started.

DEE: Early '80's.

SANDRA: So it was still, old highways, old Highway 20 coming across from Bend.

DEE: No, it was paved.

SANDRA: It was paved.

BILL: But none of the county roads were. Like from here to Diamond, or any of that, you know. All of Drewsey --- we paved from the Roaring Springs to the Nevada line. That was one of the big ones. And from Crane to Buchanan. We built all them roads, and then paved them. And none of us knew nothing about it.

SANDRA: So how did you stumble through this paving operation to ---

BILL: Well, I'll tell you what, you know these surveyors and all that kind of stuff, we had a guy that was there, he could lay down on his belly and say yeah, that's a 3% grade. (Laughter) But no, seriously we had to learn it all. But we did have the county surveyor do most of the surveying for us, and he did most of the ...

SANDRA: That must have been handy.

BILL: It was, it was. And we paved the road that had gone into Pine Creek from the highway. I don't know, something like over, way over, something like two hundred miles of road we paved back that year, something like that. You'd have to ask Terry Landers, he was --- It all run together. I run the heavy equipment, and the ... and mixed all the pavement, and ...

SANDRA: Was this your first experience with the heavy equipment?

BILL: Yeah. Oh that's easy, compared to what I've done.

SANDRA: When you come off the ranch work you've done, this is a piece of cake, piece of cake.

BILL: But that was really something. We didn't have anybody that could drive a ... we had no idea what we was doing. We did know a little bit about foundations, you know, ... But we had to figure out all the rock, and all that kind of stuff.

SANDRA: Do you remember what year, Dee, that the new highway was put in here?

The, where it is now?

DEE: I don't know. It was here when we moved here.

SANDRA: Well, old Highway 20, you can see parcels of it, you know, along the edge, you can see the old highway. And then there is this one that we use now, has variations that were supposed to be an improvement.

BILL: I can, about the time we came here Dee, yeah. Because I remember this deal going up Sagehen, remember the old road takes off there? I can remember when they changed that. And I can remember when they modernized the road to Vale from Juntura. When they made that so you could get down, didn't take you a half a day.

DEE: When was that, the same time they did ---

BILL: 1970's, early, earlier, early.

DEE: --- going into Bend too?

BILL: Early --- Think it was in the '50's there somewhere. Because the first time I ever went to Vale with a load of cows was ... They were working on that big ... and we was ... on the old highway.

SANDRA: Did you live down at Crane when the train came in there?

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: And then it came, it did come from there into Burns, to the mill?

DEE: Right.

BILL: And then there was a train that went from Burns to Seneca.

DEE: Seneca.

BILL: Strictly logging train.

SANDRA: Just a logging train.

BILL: In fact we had a good train crew out there on the road to the Narrows, at that crossing. Remember that ... kid?

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: Killed by the train?

BILL: Uh huh.

DEE: Where the experiment station is now.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

DEE: Right out in there, where the track went across there coming into Burns. He was just ---I think he was a senior in high school. His folks lived at the Refuge.

BILL: We lived --- when we first come here that's the way the cattle went out of here. We loaded thousands, thousands of cattle out of them stockyards in Crane, ... Most of them went to Ontario, and then ... sent on back to the Midwest.

SANDRA: At that time did Crane have a business district?

BILL: Yeah, they had a post office, and a bar.

DEE: And a school.

BILL: And a school, and it was all one building. Well you didn't have a shopping mall and all that stuff. (Laughter)

SANDRA: The school was there, where it's at now.

DEE: Uh huh.

BILL: But the old one burned down, it's brand new. The old one was a great big rock building.

SANDRA: A rock building. That's something else. There is a lot of rock buildings in this area. Where did that rock come from?

BILL: A lot of it came from right up the river, there above town. And a lot of it came from right behind where the old mill used to be, where the road goes up to Emigrant Creek.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: And then, I don't know, from several other ---

SANDRA: I'll be darned. Well Bill I think I've --- I know I've missed a whole lot, and may be knocking on your door one of these days with a whole new yellow sheet full of things I've missed.

BILL: That's all right, that's all right.

SANDRA: We sure do appreciate this. And like I say, I may bother you again one of these days. But thank you very much for now.

TAPE 2 – SIDE C

(Some of this information was already covered on Tape 1.)

SANDRA: Okay. You were at Stewarts two years in Paradise?

BILL: Yeah. Then I went to work for the Circle A, and it was owned by a fellow by the name of Frank McClary, that originally came from Washington. McClary, Washington is where he was from. And that was a pretty big layout. That place was about 100 x 150 miles square. And I broke horses for him all the time I was there. I left in '52. But in '51, I think, I was still breaking horses there. And the buckaroo boss broke his leg that spring. Nobody knew the country on the crew but me, so I run the cattle, and broke

horses for him. And when I left in February of '52, why McClary come around and he said, "Let's count these cows and horses." So we counted them, we had 13,000 head of cows, 9,000 head of calves off of them, 6,000 head of cattle in the feed yard, in the feed lots in California, about 175 head of sod horses, and about a 100 head of mares. And that was a job!

SANDRA: Astronomical numbers, absolutely astronomical.

BILL: Yeah. We branded calves all summer. And about six or seven of us did the whole thing.

SANDRA: I was going to ask next, how big a crew did you have?

BILL: Six or seven in the crew, and a bronco twister and a wrangler.

SANDRA: How old were you then?

BILL: Well, figure it out.

SANDRA: Let's see, '52 you said, didn't you?

BILL: Yeah, '51 is when I took the wagon, I was born in '31.

SANDRA: You were 20.

BILL: I was 20, I was just a kid. And the superintendent --- the funny part of it was the superintendent come around, and he said, "Well you're going to have to run the wagon, but we can't call you wagon boss, because you're just a damn kid." (Laughter) But I run that anyway. And they didn't pay me for it. I was getting \$125 a month for riding broncos, and that's what they paid me for running the ...

SANDRA: How about your crew, were most of them ---

BILL: Older guys, all of them older guys. I had a lot of guys that was 40, 50 years old.

SANDRA: Did you have any trouble?

BILL: No trouble, good old guys. No problem, good old guys.

SANDRA: Isn't that something, to think of that many numbers. Did you have a, you had to realize you were caring for large numbers.

BILL: I was young and dumb, it didn't bother me a bit. I had done that all my life, you know.

SANDRA: That's true.

BILL: I mean it didn't bother me a bit, you just did what you had to do.

SANDRA: That is something.

BILL: Anyway, I'm kind of proud of that little feat.

SANDRA: I think you ought to be, I think you ought to be. That is something to be proud of. Not many people can say they have done something like that.

DEE: Not at 20 years old.

SANDRA: Not at 20 years old, no, not at 20. Definitely not! How many --- you had about 150 acres when you ran your own place out on Cricket Creek, is that where it was?

BILL: Yeah. That was, let's see, there was 360 acres of deeded land, and then there was about a 1,000 acres fenced in. And then we had the state ground up here right below Twelve Mile Dam, 140 acres there. And that was our headquarters for our little outfit.

SANDRA: And is that where you came upon grazing permits, and you had to, you had to work with the powers that be to deal with.

BILL: And I got into some dandies, and they women too. (Laughter) I just want everybody to know the truth.

SANDRA: It's the, facts are facts.

BILL: The women that were running my, over my permits and one thing and another, I went out there to see the first time. And I swear to god she hadn't took a bath and changed her clothes in three months. And the next time I seen her, she was down on the floor in the Elks Club, she was so drunk she couldn't get off her hands and knees. And the next time I seen her she had on a pair of snake hide boots, a \$50 shirt, and a \$50 pair of britches. So that's what, kind of what I had to put up with. (Laughter)

SANDRA: What got to be the toughest thing to deal with, with the permits, Bill?

BILL: The ---

SANDRA: The grazing permits?

BILL: The people that worked for the Forest Service and the BLM, 90% of them have no idea about livestock. And they make no effort to learn. All they do is read something out of a book, some idiot has written, and they make no effort anymore to learn it. Now when we were at Silver Creek twenty years earlier, those guys were all knowledgeable, and you could sit down and visit with them. And you could make deals with them. You could go down to the Elks Club and have a drink and come to a conclusion. These people, I mean they treat you like you're dirt.

SANDRA: For the sake of history, Bill, what, how did a grazing permit work?

BILL: Huh?

SANDRA: Twenty years ago at Silver Creek, versus '78 when you had ---

BILL: Let's go back to 1937.

SANDRA: Okay, '37.

BILL: When we called the Taylor Grazing Act.

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: That's when we had to gather all the horses. Then they started to issuing permits, or trying to. But the first thing they did was to gather all the excess horses off of the government range. And we took, we calved, I think Dad kept four stud ... and they give him permission to keep them two thoroughbred horses, and two draft horses. And the rest of the excess horses went. And off of three ranches in Juniper Mountain, we took 1,200 head of horses in one bunch off of it. Took them to Jordan Valley, and Jordan Valley to Murphy, Idaho to the railhead. Sold them for two cents a pound. No colts, no yearlings. If a colt was born on the way, you killed him. And no yearlings, they were ...

SANDRA: And the colt would just hold up the mare. She'd just keep fighting to get back to that colt.

BILL: No, mares don't do that ... You kill a colt, the mare just ...

SANDRA: Oh really.

BILL: Just the opposite, yeah.

SANDRA: I didn't know that.

BILL: They'll go right to the lead.

SANDRA: I'll be darned.

BILL: And everywhere we stopped over there, we stopped at three or four ranches you know, we give I don't know how many colts away to the kids. Made the old folks mad, but made the kids happy.

SANDRA: Yeah, it's ---

BILL: And when we got to Murphy, them guys had contracted them horses for two cents a pound. When we got to Murphy, the horse buyer shows up, and he had us, you know, we were stuck, we couldn't go back, we had to go on. He said, "I can only give you a

dollar and a half, cent and a half a pound is all I can give you.” Well them old buckaroos, including my dad, took him down to the ... saloon and they had a big visit for about two hours. And when he come back he paid two dollars a pound, or two cents a pound.

SANDRA: Had some negotiations.

BILL: Yeah. There was 1,200 head of horses. I’ve got pictures; do you want to see them?

SANDRA: Yes.

BILL: I’ll show them to you.

DEE: Well my dad always said that the Taylor Grazing Act was the best thing that happened to sheep men in the county.

BILL: Oh, they had this country eat out. I mean cattle, horses, were eating the bark off of sagebrush. They went too far.

DEE: But through the years he saw the bureaucracy grow. And in 1950 when, the ‘50’s when Bill ...

...

SANDRA: Yeah.

BILL: They’re putting the squeeze on these guys now that you wouldn’t believe. I mean people that have been in the business for generations and generations; they’re putting the squeeze on them.

SANDRA: And I’m afraid it’s going to hit right when they need the grazing, and they’re just --- well, they’re probably starting to prepare for it, but they’re going to end up planning on this grazing permit, and it’s not going to be there.

DEE: That’s right.

SANDRA: They'll take it away.

BILL: Well, you take like, just take Otleys for instance, ... Probably worth three or four million dollars. You take all the grazing off of it; it might be worth five hundred and fifty thousand. You know all we've got is the meadows. And that's the way with all of them.

SANDRA: That's right. They're going; it's going to hit the grocery store one of these days.

BILL: Some of these days.

DEE: Well according to ... we're going to have to depend on foreign --- I think it's coming to that.

SANDRA: That's right, yeah.

BILL: When I was a kid we run horses down there ... you've heard me talk about that big country down there, along them ...

SANDRA: Uh huh.

BILL: When I was 13 ... that's part of it, ...

SANDRA: Oh, Bill, this is great. We'll get copies of this too, to put with it, okay?

BILL: We took a, about 3,000 head of horses out of there in three months.

SANDRA: And that was out of the Owyhee Breaks.

BILL: Out of the Owyhee Breaks, yeah.

SANDRA: 3,000?

BILL: Uh huh.

SANDRA: When you gathered those up, they --- were they the ranch horses or were they part wild, part ranch?

BILL: They were all wild, inbred horses out of that 3,000 head of horses we got ...

SANDRA: And how many of you worked to get those 3,000 gathered?

BILL: Here is the crew. (Looking at pictures.)

SANDRA: Three, six, seven of you. And what did you do with them after you took them ---

BILL: They were sold for a cent and a half a pound. And we took the, we took the young studs, and they castrated the young studs, and us two kids in that crew would ride them about twice in the corral. We'd take them to Ontario and sell them to them farmers for saddle horses. And you'd get a wild horse in a place like that, if you ride it twice, you can do anything you want with him. You can turn him around and ---

SANDRA: In the corral.

BILL: Along as he is in, around, scared, you know. And they sold them to them guys for \$150, \$175 a head. (Laughter) But the fun part was, was when them guys would go out and load them in their little old broke down trailers, you know.

SANDRA: And, or you open the gate on the corral, what happens?

BILL: Well they're gone.

SANDRA: They're gone.

BILL: Yeah. Tail over his back heading north.

SANDRA: Sounds to me like there is a little bit of an orneriness in this --- just a little bit.

DEE: ... you get these old buckaroos in Burns, you wonder why somebody didn't shoot them.

SANDRA: Oh, they were just ---

BILL: Trying to make a living.

SANDRA: Tell me Bill, when you broke a, did you ever break the wild horses?

BILL: That's all I ever broke.

SANDRA: All you ever broke. Tell me what the ---

BILL: It wasn't these damn luckys like you see these guys ride here on ... broke from the time they were born. These were horses that generally branded and castrated when they were yearlings, or two-year-olds. ... Then when they were about three or four years old they just started to break them to ride, and they were wild horses.

SANDRA: And your method of breaking them was get on and stick with it.

BILL: No, no, no.

SANDRA: Tell me about that then.

BILL: You handled them a lot. Not a lot, you know. The last one took him down and tie up a hind foot. Put a halter on him, get you a gunny sack, rub him all over, and slap him all over, and get him so he is not just plumb scared to death, and get him so he will trust you a little bit. You do that for a day or two. And you keep tying up each; by the time you tie it --- tie up one you hadn't tied up before. And handle his feet, because you're going to have to shoe him. And then put the saddle on him, lead him around while tied up, get on him, pet him, be good to him. And most of them are pretty good, you know. And then you let the foot down, and ride him around the corral a little bit, and get so you can pull him. And about the third time you ride him, you go outside. Somebody goes with you; sometimes you go like hell.

SANDRA: Uh huh, uh huh. Both of these we need. (Pictures) Oh he said I could have this copy. Okay, get that too. Did you ever ride, Dee? Did you ---

DEE: I did a little when I was real young. But my dad was of the old school that girls came home and helped their Mamas. And the only time I got to ride with him, was just the two of us. He didn't want me around those cussing, swearing buckaroos.

SANDRA: Did you want to more?

DEE: I would have liked to have, but like when they would castrate the horses you know, bring them into the corral, he'd send me to the house, you know. No place for a young lady, go home. But no, I didn't, I'm not a horsewoman, never was, you know, so to speak.

SANDRA: Just hard work, just hard work on the ranch. There is always hard work out there. When they do, when they get the kids ---

BILL: Boy she did, when we were there at that Sod House ... had 14, 15, 16 men, you know. We'd get up at 3 o'clock in the morning, and never get to bed until eleven at night. And that would go on for three months.

SANDRA: So you were fixing breakfast by 4 or 5 o'clock.

DEE: ...

SANDRA: Was that with tractors? Were you haying with tractors?

BILL: They had just got rid of the horses. The swathers was brand new. They just went from the old mowing machines to the swather.

SANDRA: Is that when you were haying out on the Refuge?

BILL: Refuge.

SANDRA: How many ton did you put up?

BILL: Somewhere around 3,000 ton of hay.

SANDRA: Was this in stacks?

BILL: Yeah. And then the rake ... There was one field then that they called the Big Sagebrush Field, that McEwen had rented from the government. It took, well we were still doing it with mowing machines then, seven foot John Deere mowers, ... mowers. It took six mowers three weeks to cut it. That's how big it was.

SANDRA: Three mowers, six weeks.

BILL: Six ... just to cut it.

SANDRA: So you were putting it up in stacks, you weren't bailing.

BILL: No, no bailing at all. What we stacked was loose.

SANDRA: So it had to be fed out there.

BILL: Yeah. ... But a lot of it wasn't raked ... You've seen them rake bunch? Just the bunches of hay around?

SANDRA: All over the field.

BILL: Uh huh. A lot of it was that. That field was big enough that it wintered 1,200 head of cows, almost. I want to say three sections ... but it wasn't ... And now you can cut what hay is on it in fifteen minutes. They let it go ... It's nothing but thistles, and cattails.

SANDRA: ...

BILL: I've, oh that's government progress. We used to count the ducks and geese by the section. They'd take off; they'd blot out the sun, wouldn't they?

DEE: Yeah. It was the most magnificent view. I mean that Refuge was a showcase. It was a showcase. And for an old high desert kid like me, I was absolutely fascinated.

SANDRA: I can't believe seeing a sight like that.

DEE: Oh, it was magnificent.

BILL: And deer by the hundreds, and big ones. Old John Scharff, and I knew John Scharff very well, in fact. He was a darned good friend to us. And me and two or three other guys, there were so many good bucks on that thing, of course you weren't allowed to kill them, not on the Refuge. But when they had the big buck contest with the elk, they were all over town about the same time we were shipping calves, and everybody shipped off the Refuge out of them fields. We'd see a big buck; we lassoed him and measure his horns, if he was big enough for the big buck contest. (Laughter) Well he won it two years.

SANDRA: It's what you call pick and choose, right.

BILL: I shouldn't ... that.

SANDRA: No, it's long time past. That was history. Now John did wonders for that Refuge. He really put it on the map.

BILL: The irrigation ---

DEE: The headquarters was absolutely a showplace, gorgeous. Had green lawn, flowers, and trees and stuff. You go out there now; it's a disgrace.

BILL: And the fishpond right down below John's house, he used to have trout in that long. Now they're carp.

DEE: John Scharff and Marcus Haines, when we moved into the Sod House, the two of them came over to welcome us to the Sod House. Sat around and had coffee with me. And John invited me over to their house. I used to go over and visit. He'd come over and visit with me, you know ... It was such a close community, you know. They still had the school there. All the neighbors weren't flooded out.

BILL: We had, when we moved to the tent there to that Sagebrush Field, we was working for Lloyd Hill. We had an outhouse setting about 75 yards up from the cabin. And I had a garbage pit dug out there. And there was a lot of pheasants on that Refuge. When Cam was two, three, or something like that, anyway, this old rooster got, this old China rooster got to coming into that garbage pit. And Cam would go out there all day long trying to catch that rooster. And the rooster would stay just about that far from him, and never would fly.

DEE: Never fly.

BILL: The funniest thing you ever seen.

SANDRA: Kept him entertained a lot though.

BILL: Yeah.

DEE: Oh yeah, it did. And then Bill was still breaking the colts. And then we had them in the corral there. And every afternoon a yearling deer ---

BILL: He was a three-point buck.

DEE: Would jump the fence and come and play with Bill's colts. And he would run and then jump ---

BILL: Play tag.

DEE: It was the cutest thing. If I had had a video camera --- nobody would believe that.

SANDRA: No, you just can't imagine.

DEE: He would get tired and jump over the fence and then he would go, and come back the next day.

SANDRA: Isn't that amazing? Yeah, those are times long past gone.

DEE: Yeah.

SANDRA: When you were cooking for all the guys, the 14 or 15, did you have an electric stove, did you --- you did have modern conveniences so to speak.

DEE: Not so to speak! We didn't have a bathroom.

BILL: Not in earlier years.

DEE: No, the first few years I was carrying water, pumping water so ... because we didn't have a bathroom.

BILL: Tell her about the cats ...

SANDRA: Wood stove, a wood cook stove.

DEE: A cat.

BILL: Yeah, the cats got in the stove, your ... cats.

DEE: I was packing in wood. Had to chop my wood and bring it in because I had a wood stove. It had the door open, and I had just baked bread. I had them all lined up on the counter cooling. And a dumb cat came in there and jumped up ---

BILL: A wild cat.

DEE: It wasn't one of my house cats. I came in the door with my load of wood, and let out a yelp, and the cat jumped and went across the hot stove.

BILL: Seems he made three circles around the kitchen before he found the door.

DEE: Never came back in again.

SANDRA: That must have been a sight to see. (Laughter)

DEE: Poor cat.

SANDRA: You made bread how often?

DEE: Every day.

SANDRA: And how much, when you say loaves, are we talking loaves like we would recognize today?

DEE: Yeah, about six or eight loaves. Plus at noon they would have hot rolls. And then at breakfast they would have sourdough biscuits ... I baked all the time.

SANDRA: And did you, did the guys furnish your wood, or did you have to go out and chop your wood?

DEE: They furnished the wood, but I went out, my son and I. I chopped the wood.

BILL: We tried to help you all we could.

DEE: Well they were so busy. So, I carried all my water and wood myself. Tinder.

SANDRA: Nope, not at that stage, we can do a lot of things that we thought might later think real hard work.

BILL: When we got married, the last thing her mother told her was, don't let him know that you can milk cows or chop wood. (Laughter)

DEE: She did, she said if you do it's your job. So I had to do the wood bit, because that was a necessity. But I kept telling Bill that I didn't know how to milk a cow. And he said, "You were raised on a ranch, you didn't know how to milk a cow?" Well, one time he and Mr. Hill went to the sale in Ontario, and it was getting really late, and the milk cows were having a fit. And Mrs. ... was about to have a nervous breakdown. She said, "Do you know how to milk the cow?" "Yes I do. But don't you tell the guys." And she said, "Well what will we tell them?" And I said, "Well tell them that a young fellow came looking for a job, and we said we would give him five dollars if he milked the cows." Okay. So I milked the cow, and they accepted that story, that was fine. Well the next week the same thing happened, getting late getting there. So I was milking the cow

when they got home. And I looked up and here was Bill standing there with his arms like this --- “Don’t know how to milk a cow, huh?” (Laughter) But this is it. I said, “I’ll do it in an emergency, but that was it.”

SANDRA: Did you always have milk cows around? Did you, when you were on ranches?

BILL: Yeah, you always had milk cows, because you had to have butter, and all that kind of stuff.

SANDRA: And a few chickens, a few chickens.

DEE: Make your own butter.

BILL: At the Star Ranch I was telling you about, I never will forget that old cougar we had there. That was the only ranch on the whole mountain that had running water. And the reason that it did was because there was a spring about fifty yards above the house. And them guys put in a half-inch pipe in that spring, just come right on down. It was in a rock house that they used to keep their corned beef in the cooler and stuff. And they run it down to the house, and put it in the kitchen, and into a sink. Then it would run out the bottom about ten feet into a ditch, and then back to the creek. Anyway, when ... got a partner to build a cooler. And it was just a square cooler, all ... to the spring. And wire netting all the way around. And then on top he took tin and made a reservoir of water there abouts, that deep. And he poked holes in the bottom of the tin, right around the edge of the cooler, and hung gunnysacks on it. The water would drip down them gunnysacks, keep everything nice and cool.

SANDRA: Stay nice and fresh as could be. You made your own butter, right Dee?

DEE: Uh huh.

SANDRA: Churn that. Did you have to do that every day?

DEE: No, probably a couple times a week. The guys would not like, did not like sour butter. They wanted sweet butter.

SANDRA: How often did you go for supplies?

DEE: Well when we worked at McEwens, I would give Walter, Jim's son, he lived in town, and give him the list and they brought the supplies out. I never had to shop.

SANDRA: So you just made up a list.

DEE: Made up a list and they brought it.

BILL: Walter was tighter than hell. She pretty near quit. I thought she was going to ruin everything. I got a good job. She'd get his foot down --- vegetables for a salad. Sixteen guys there, and what did he come back with?

DEE: One head of lettuce.

BILL: And two carrots.

DEE: Yeah. One bunch of radishes.

BILL: Boy, she hit the ceiling. Walter got an education.

DEE: His father was just the opposite. He would bring me too much. Like in the fall he'd bring me a bushel of peaches, and pears. And he'd say, "Now, we're not going to can them. We buy our canned goods. You give those to the boys fresh." Well Jimminy Christmas, you know, a bushel. I made more pies and ---

SANDRA: I bet you did.

DEE: Yeah. And he always, I always had lots of, you know, they brought canned goods by the case. Always had lots of food. But with Walter, you had to be very explicit in numbers, I found out.

SANDRA: What was Walter's dad's name?

DEE: Jim.

SANDRA: Jim.

BILL: He was from Tennessee. He came here and he went to work for Tom Turnbull down there at Riverside, or at Visher. He married the daughter, and ...

SANDRA: The Visher Ranch? How do you spell that?

BILL: V I S H E R.

SANDRA: And he married the daughter of that ranch.

BILL: He married Tom Turnbull's daughter.

DEE: She was his niece.

BILL: Oh, okay. Yeah, that's right, she was, wasn't she.

SANDRA: Tom Turnbull's niece.

DEE: Brother's daughter. They came from ... Their father had died, and Tom brought his sister and the two girls over here and he raised them.

SANDRA: Oh.

BILL: And Jim McEwen married one sister, and Charlie Dowell, he used to have a big ranch in Jordan Valley, he married the other one. Have you ever heard of the Dowell's?

SANDRA: D O W ---

DEE: E L L.

SANDRA: E L L.

BILL: They got a ...Owyhee River in Boise. ...

SANDRA: At this point, we had run out of time to continue the interview, and I made arrangements to meet with them again, and we would go over the material later on, on another tape. There is a second tape that goes with this one.

(END OF TAPE)

bl

FAMILY TREE

Grandfather: Frank Swisher - Married 1881 Grandmother: Mary Joyce – Died 1904

11 Children

Father: Joe Swisher – Died 1975

Mother: Ruth Pier

Children: William “Bill” Swisher & Tom Swisher

Son: William “Bill” Swisher - Born 3 July 1931 – Caldwell, Idaho

– Married 5 October 1952, Twin Falls, Idaho

Wife: Delores “Dee” Acurio – Born 22 August 1933 – Ogden, Utah

Children: David “Cam” Cameron – Born 14 July 1954

Martha Jane – Born 15 November 1961

Cecilia Ruth – Born 11 November 1964

Bill Swisher Schooling: 3 years St. Joseph – Boise

2 years Danner, Oregon

3 ½ years Jordan Valley – then to work

2 years US Army – 1952-54

Dee Swisher Schooling: Grade School Paradise Valley

High School Winnemucca

Alphonsus School of Nursing