

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #484

Subject: Floyd Clinton Purdy

Place: Harney County Library, Burns, Oregon

Date: May 16, 2017

Interviewers: Karen Nitz & Denny Presley

Nitz: Today is May 15, 2017. And we are here with Clinton Purdy, who is the 2017 Pioneer President for the Pioneer Association this year. With us is Denny Presley who is a Board member of the Pioneer Association. My name is Karen Nitz. And we're going to go ahead and just talk a little bit with Clinton and get a little bit of his basic history for the Pioneer Association. So we're going to start. And what's your full name?

Purdy: Floyd Clinton Purdy.

Nitz: Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about when you were born? Where were you born?

Purdy: 1935, 27th of March 1935 in Burns, Oregon.

Nitz: In Burns.

Purdy: Yeah. And I think I was the only lucky one that got to be born in Burns, of the family.

Nitz: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Purdy: Three brothers and two sisters. There was six of us all together.

Nitz: And what are their names?

Purdy: Mervin Purdy was the oldest. And Madora... I'm just going to give you just the two names. Madora Purdy and George Purdy and Donna Purdy and Wayne Purdy, which is still alive. He's had a broken back for... [Cell phone ringing] I hope that ain't mine.

Presley: No. It's mine. I'm shutting it off.

Purdy: Anyway, where was we at?

Nitz: We were at George.

Purdy: We was with George?

Nitz: Uh huh.

Purdy: Age? 1925. Did we get Madora's age?

Nitz: Not her age, no.

Purdy: Mervin was born in '22. And Madora was born in, near as I can figure, it must have been around '23. And George was born in '25. And then I didn't get Madora, did I?

Nitz: Yeah, you got her.

Purdy: Okay. '22, yeah. George was '25. And Donna was '30. And Wayne was '3...

Nitz: Yeah, the numbers don't matter.

Purdy: About '33...or 4. It had to have been about '34 [1932].

Nitz: So you're the baby?

Purdy: I'm the baby of the family, yeah.

Nitz: Okay. And you told me a little bit about your parents. They came here from Montana.

Purdy: Yeah. They were married in Montana. And most of the kids was hatched out there.

Nitz: And what were your parent's names?

Purdy: My dad's name was Ray Purdy. And mother's name was Ruth Purdy. And her maiden name was Howard. She was a Howard. Where they come from? She come from Mineral Well in East Texas some place. And the family moved to [Oklahoma]...looking for work. Her father, I think was working on the railroad or something back there. And then they migrated to Montana. That's how her and my Dad got together. And they were... Her folks was working on...Have you ever heard of the Highway to The Sun, or something, out of...that comes out up there by Browning, Montana?

Nitz: Hmm um.

Purdy: It comes up there. You maybe heard of it. They were...The Howards was helping build that. It's about that wide. And it's still that wide. A lot of it was rock. But it was all done with teams and, of course, dynamite to get rid of the rock. And you can drive along there. Looking down it's kind of spooky.

Nitz: So your parents were, basically, just homesteaders in Montana?

Purdy: Yeah. Well, Dad...Dad come to Oregon with part of his family. He had an older sister, which was born in 1888.

Nitz: 1888?

Purdy: 1888, I mean. And he was born in 1890. And his parents, their parents homesteaded in Geneva, Nebraska. Then that's when we lost...lost track of Grandpa Purdy. That's Dad's folks. Mother was still alive, and his sister. But where Grandpa went, we never did find out. They split the sheets for some reason or other, separated. And Grandma Purdy and the kids then moved to... Things was booming around... Canyon City. The big gold rush was there. And that's where they landed, out of Geneva Nebraska, some place in that area. And that's where my...his sister died, early in life. I think she was about twenty-two years old. And she's buried there, in Canyon City. And Grandma Purdy then, she migrated out of there eventually.

But in the meantime, Dad was...worked here and there. And he was a young...just a kid, for ranches here and there up and down the river, the John Day River in that area, and Paulina and Suplee and that area.

Nitz: How did they come to settle in Harney County?

Purdy: Well, this was... The Howards moved to...run out of work up there on that road job. And they came into Idaho and started with these teams and fresnos and what have you. That's how they done their dirt work; help build a lot of canals in Idaho out of the Snake River, for that farmland over there. And that's...They kind of worked their way out of a job there, eventually. And that's when they migrated over here to Burns. And I was trying to think what year they got here. I can't tell you, really, what year they landed here. They had a pretty good sized family, the Howards did. I think born kids... And all of them didn't live. I think they had about thirteen at one time.

Nitz: That's pretty common though.

Purdy: In them days, it was. Yeah. One of them things that nobody knew anybody better, I guess. And they had an awful time feeding themselves, let alone a whole bunch of kids.

Nitz: Yeah.

Presley: Were they tied to the Howards from Drewsey?

Purdy: No. No relation. Nope.

Nitz: So when did your family first settle where you are now?

Purdy: Oh, well, they come... They moved from Montana. Dad went back. He was already in Oregon. He went back, him and another young guy, rode horseback. It took them two years to get back.

Nitz: Wow.

Purdy: And this is how he told the story. And I can't remember the name of the town. There was a river that runs through it. They made a movie of the River Runs Through It. I can't remember the name of the town yet. But anyway... And one of them built a kind of a shanty to live in. And the other one built a place to keep the horses to live in, you know, to be out of the weather. And the next year, why they made it all the rest of the way into Montana. And whether it was a premonition or just sheer luck, why... They was homesteading up there. So he got a homestead there just out of Cut Bank. And that's when they started raising a family. Built a shack out in the middle of nothing. You could throw a... If you could throw one that far, you could throw it plumb into Canada. [Chuckles]

Anyway, like I said, they had a whole bunch of kids before they decided to... And the Howards was here already. Well, they come to visit, I guess. And they thought, well, it looks a little like this is a better deal than where we're at. At least the wind don't blow ninety mile an hour most of the time, here. And so they decided that they would move. So Dad went back and got the livestock. They had about thirty, forty head of cows. And he was a cowboy for some outfit up there. And no fences. Cows went plumb into Canada and all over. So he had quite a cowboying job. But anyway...

Nitz: So they came here and raised stock?

Purdy: Yeah. He went back after they decided they was going to move. He moved Mom and the kids here with what they had on the ground at the time. And he went back and got the livestock and put it on the train. And had to make quite a circle before they could even get here. And I think they come... I can't remember where they come into. I don't think it was here at Burns.

Nitz: No. You can't come straight to Burns.

Purdy: It must have been---

Presley: Ontario, wasn't it?

Purdy: Ontario was probably the closest. It might have been coming by Vale. Well Ontario would have about hit. I don't think they had one started this way at that time, a railroad.

Nitz: No.

Purdy: That kind of come in with Hines, I think. And...

Presley: A little before. Not much.

Purdy: Pardon?

Presley: A little before Hines, but not much.

Purdy: Yeah. But I think that was one of the things, the drawing card, that brought them...brought that railroad here. But anyway, then they... Here they was with no place to live. They lived just here and there. I think the first winter they put in there was down by where the depot used to be, down there by the railroad tracks, in that area some place there.

Then they moved out at Poison Creek, in a tent house. And they kind of migrated up Poison Creek. And I think about... They landed... They decided that if we found a place, this was the one we're going to have as a homestead in Silvies Valley.

Nitz: Did they homestead it or did they buy it?

Purdy: No, no. No, they bought it. They bought it from Albert Cross.

Nitz: Okay. Do you have the old school on your property then, the old Trout Creek School?

Purdy: Not the one that was in the paper. It was a log building. It was on the old Canyon City road at that time. And the road still exists up there. We use it to go back and forth between the ranches up there now.

Nitz: The old stage road?

Purdy: Yeah, the old stage road. And I think Lamberts must have moved it because that place is burned down. After we bought it, things got tough. And they finally come to town, Pat and Eunice Lambert and their family. I lost my train of thought. Oh, Lamberts and the school house.

Nitz: Uh huh.

Purdy: I think they went up and drug that log building down there, because it was in that vicinity about where... There's a piece of a trail there yet. You know where the old

Cross ranch is where Wayne and Carol live now? And then one of the Purdy's lived in the new log house that was built there. That's where the Lamberts had the school house. And they added onto it, of course. And they was starting a family too. So, but anyway...

Nitz: So were you born when they lived at the ranch up at the old Cross place?

Purdy: No. The one that they bought and built in the home. And Grandpa Howard come up and helped them build that log building. They had another carpenter of some type. And it was native timber from the old days of the mill up there...that they pulled down there, hauled it down there or something. But anyway, Grandpa Howard helped them build that house. And that was in '34...1934. And then I was born in 1935. But Mom hadn't moved up there yet.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: But as soon as we got the house where it would kind of give you children, why she brought all the offspring that she was taking care of up there.

Nitz: So where did you and your brothers and sisters go to school?

Purdy: Okay. At the upper end of the meadow, you know where the old Cross place is...the old Albert Cross...not Albert, but Walter Cross. That's where Wayne and Carol live, Purdy. About two miles down you run into the place where the folks built the log house. And the upper end of the meadow there... You go down to Crooked Canyon. And you break out in the meadow. Right there is where the school... They built a school house out of lumber, right there. And Lamberts went to school there. And I even started school there.

Nitz: What did they call that school? Did it have a name?

Purdy: It was called number...by a number. [Pause] You know I can't think of whether it was four or three or what it was now. I can't remember.

Nitz: Because I know that in the old school records, there's like a Trout Creek School that they referred to as Silvies Valley school.

Purdy: No. Silvies Valley school was plumb up at where the Silvies Store used to be. Yeah. And that must have been Trout Creek is what they're talking about. Like I said, the school house, you had to... We walked to school around the hillside from the log house up there. And in order to get out on the meadow, why there was a foot bridge there. And you could go out. And that's where the kids got to open the door. And they went across the foot bridge and out in the meadow and played, at recess and what have you.

Nitz: So what do you remember about grade school out there?

Purdy: Out there, uh...

Nitz: Do you remember your teachers?

Purdy: I'll have to think about that.

Nitz: That was awhile ago.

Purdy: Yeah. The older two kids, Mervin and Madora, went to school. I remember that guy's name. No, I didn't know him. But I heard talk about him. His name was Pape. And that's all I can remember was his last name, Pape. And he taught them...also taught them their first grade of high school there, him and Mervin and Madora...there. And then they had to figure out some way to get to school in Burns. And I went through school there from the first grade through the fourth. And then they closed the district down. So Mom had to come to town. And she bought a shack down here. And they kind of cleaned it up and made it livable.

Nitz: So you finished your school in Burns?

Purdy: Yeah. I started the fifth grade in Burns, yeah.

Nitz: And then when you went to high school, it was in the old Lincoln building?

Purdy: Yes. Yep. And I was the first one...first to... Well, I graduated out of the eighth grade out of the new one up on the hill.

Nitz: Okay, uh huh.

Purdy: Yeah. I was the first class that graduated out of there. But anyway, what year was I? I don't remember. That's asking way too much.

Nitz: People can look that up.

Purdy: Yeah, if they're that interested.

Nitz: So what do you remember about high school here?

Purdy: Oh...

Nitz: Did you play sports?

Purdy: Not much. No. It was... Wayne, he was the... He was the football player. And that's about all he done was play football. And he was one of the main players. And he had a lot of grit and was tougher than a boot. When things was getting...looking kind of bad, boy, they'd give him the ball. And he'd run up the line with it, you know. And he'd

come home all tore to pieces, you know. But anyway, he was the football star, his high school years, basically.

Presley: Yeah, they didn't have good helmets and padding then.

Purdy: Well, I don't know. But a lot of them got pretty well skinned up. Yeah. And there was a lot of sad gear. I think he lost a knee when he was playing football. My boy, when he decided he was going to play football... And he never even made it to the first game before he got a crippled knee. So that was the end of his football days.

Nitz: Tough sport in those days.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: So who were some of your classmates that you remember from high school?

Purdy: Well, let's see. I'll have to say our local cobbler...saddle maker, Mark Anderson.

Presley: Oh, Anderson.

Purdy: Andy Anderson, his son... He had a daughter, two older daughters. But that was...oh...some more classmates. Well, I've had... You know Carolyn Christensen? Her and I went to school together, Carolyn and I. We're both about the same age. And there was Carolyn Long also. Her name was... Carolyn Christensen was Carolyn... Her dad was a truck driver for Hines. I can't remember his name right now. Anyway...

Nitz: So did you work when you were in high school? Or what did you do during the summers? Did you work on the ranch?

Purdy: Yeah. We went back to the ranch, yeah. Yeah. That's where we went to school, really. Went back and learned the ranching business, the hard way.

Nitz: Of course.

Purdy: Yeah. That's what we done. We hayed and we broke horses and moved and branded cattle and what have you...and built fence. There's a lot of fence been built. And we're still a repairing a lot of it.

Nitz: Oh, I bet. Yeah.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: So where did you meet your wife, in school?

Purdy: I knew her vaguely in school. But we never... She went to school with...Boy, they just come up the facility at the end of the day and visited. Bossuot? Ethel Bossuot and... Had the distributors here in the hill.

Presley: Daltons?

Purdy: What was the name?

Presley: Dalton?

Purdy: Dalton, yeah. I can't remember her first name.

Presley: Sue. Sue Dalton. But she wasn't a Dalton though. She married Truxton Dalton.

Purdy: No, no. That's too old for me. They were a year younger than me. Anyway, but Carolyn Coleman... There, I got the guy's name. Carolyn Coleman was the girl that I gone with. George... I can't remember his last name. But his brother was a ripping fiddle player. It didn't make any difference which way he was a going, he could play behind his back or---

Nitz: Frontwards and backwards.

Purdy: ---frontwards and backwards and under his leg or any place. But I can't think of his last name, right off.

Nitz: So your wife's name is Dorothea. And what's her maiden name?

Purdy: Maiden name is Howes.

Nitz: Howes, okay.

Purdy: Um hmm. And there was two boys...three boys in that family...and one girl, I guess.

Nitz: So when did you and Dorothea get married?

Purdy: In 1956. It was April...about the middle of April, I think the 14th.

Nitz: And how many children do you have?

Purdy: We had a girl, a boy, and a girl-- three of them.

Nitz: And what are their names?

Purdy: Rhonda was the oldest. You might even know her. She works for the BLM down there.

Nitz: I know who she is.

Purdy: Yeah. And Tim was a year behind her. And he's on the ranch and runs it now. Basically, he's the operator. I just kind of---

Nitz: You're the supervisor.

Purdy: No. I don't even do that. I just kind of... If I can sneak on and go fishing someplace once in awhile, that's what I do...or hunting or something like that. But I haven't done much of that in the last few years.

But anyway, some more of the kids that I went to school with, I'd have to think about it. Frank Dunn, you probably remember Frank. Boy, you know, that's... I knew them all well, of course. But I can't think of their names right off. Just a few of them. So that puts us down to when we started our family. That's where we're at now.

Nitz: Yeah. So you and Dorothea, did you live out on the ranch then when you got married?

Purdy: When we got married, yeah, I was running this ranch here. My brother went into the Service. I run that ranch. Then I come back when I got out of school. I helped all the people that was on the ranches. We hayed off both places, Silvies and here both. And basically, when he went in the Service, why then I took over this end of it. And that's mostly how I got acquainted with Dorothea. It was after I started living down there. But I knew of her. She rode a bus. And I lived in town. And then I rode the bus back and forth to Silvies part of the time. And I was a year ahead of her in school. And I wasn't much on chasing girls in them days. Didn't have time. And no transportation. No way to get back and forth.

Nitz: So did they have dances and things then? Is that where you guys---

Purdy: Well, school dances, yeah. And then of course, used to have grange hall dances here and Drewsey dances.

Nitz: Did you guys ever go to the movie theaters much in town?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. That's about... Dorothea and I, that's about all we done...as far as romancing and all that. We probably went to the... We didn't do that much dancing. She never did like to dance that much. But anyway...yeah.

Nitz: And what was she doing? Was she working in town somewhere?

Purdy: She was raising kids. We got married and started a family.

Nitz: Right away, huh?

Purdy: Yeah. Yep. And so she raised... She spent the first few years raising kids and got them into school.

Nitz: Did your kids go to school in Burns then, in town?

Purdy: Yes. Yes, there was no school in... And they'd even closed down the Silvies school up there. It closed down...I don't know, about a year or two after the Trout Creek, we call it now, that school. And so that sent all the districts down there. Either that or you went to school in Seneca, one or the other. So the folks... Then you had to go to school...graduate...go to John Day to go to high school.

Nitz: Oh, if you went to Seneca?

Purdy: So that kind of... That kind of raised havoc with where we---

Nitz: Yeah. You guys are almost kind of in the middle, but not quite.

Purdy: Yeah, not quite. It was a lot handier to get to Burns. And then of course, that was our County anyway. That ranch up there was in Harney County, not Grant. So all the traffic come this way from our place.

Nitz: So we talked a little bit earlier. You mentioned working for the Hines Lumber Company.

Purdy: Oh, that come along later. Like I said, Dorothea and I moved into... The folks bought this place where we're living now. And we eventually finally bought it off of George and his wife, Dorothea and I did. But anyway, that was when, more or less, the folks, they was retired and wanted to go back and look things over in Montana and see friends. And Mom had a few cousins and stuff up there yet. So they wanted to get out of it and get out away from it. And so they sold it... The ranch then, sold it to the four boys. And the girls got the Geneva, Nebraska homestead, one of them did. And the other one got the Cut Bank homestead. And the boys bought these two ranches here.

And so Wayne and I ended up with about a hundred head of ranch apiece, which wasn't big enough. So we had to do something. So we started taking turns working out. And the only place you could work out was in the woods. So that's how we got hooked up with – I did – with Hines. He went to work for a gypo for Hines. And the next year, why, he thought, well, he might just stay on with that gypo. And I was running the ranch anyway...more than I wanted to do because we also had a forest permit, plumb down here at Burns. And here I am cowboying from Silvies Valley down to Burns. So I thought that's enough of this. So we decided we'd split that deal up. So we did. We got it evened up pretty good. He ended up with forty acres of BLM more than I had.

Presley: Pretty close.

Purdy: [Chuckles] It was just a headache was all it was anyway.

Nitz: So did you have different jobs when you worked for Hines? Or did you do the same thing?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. I done a little bit of everything. First thing I done was set chokers, naturally. That's what you did.

Nitz: Like most people, right?

Purdy: Yeah. Everybody started at the bottom. And I was with them about nine years, I guess. And I went through at least about everything that they had to do.

Nitz: Did you mostly work in the woods? Or did you ever work in the mill itself?

Purdy: No. I never did work in the mill. I got into the mill with the log truck a few times.

Nitz: So you drove log truck?

Purdy: Well, I did for a year or two, yeah. You're going to end up in a log truck for Hines, you know eventually. Either that or you're going to be a foreman. And I didn't want to be a foreman. So, they already had me with a chauffeur's license. So that's why they had me in a truck, just that quick, because I had to have a chauffeur's license to... I was a kind of a...not a real shy boss. But I run a great skid crew, like I was telling you about. And kind of took to watching them, told them...showed them what to do and where we was going to move to and all this. But anyway...

Nitz: Were they not using the railroad by that time?

Purdy: They was changing over to trucks. And that's partly what happened. Well, the old Oregon Northwestern went down. It just shut down. And they had to put everything on trucks. They used to offload at Silvies, at a siding there. They offloaded there when it was... It was closer to offload there. And then they offloaded the railroad in Logan Valley, Oregon Northwestern did. And that kind of petered out finally. And they started decking logs for the spring break up in Seneca. And then they'd put them back on the main train down the railroad. Well, they finally gave that up too. Went to the diesel engine and so on and so forth. And they had to put them on a truck. And we would haul it to Burns. After you got it on the truck, they upgraded the roads and highways and everything better to where, you put them on a truck, you just well take it to Hines.

Nitz: Yeah. That's true.

Purdy: So that kind of ended the railroad right there, the Oregon Northwestern Railroad. Anyway, I done a little bit... Like you said, you asked what I done for Hines, a little bit everything.

Nitz: So what did you do after that? Did you just stay on the ranch? Or did you work for some others?

Purdy: Well, like I say, when Wayne and I split our partnership up, why you had to do something. So we was both working out. And that gets pretty strenuous too. So you come home from work and the fence is down. So you've got to go put the fence up and get the cows back in, where they belong. So I decided this is enough of this. So, and George and Mary – that was his wife – they were kind of thinking about doing something different. He's about had a belly full of ranching. And we stepped out of...and took a shot at buying it. And it was a poor time to be a buying. Just a typical ranching deal, you know? Ranches is a poor thing to be a buying at any time. [All chuckle] And so that put me right back out working out, as well as ranching in Silvies Valley and here both. So put a lot of strain on a person. And had to have in income of something though to pay that...that loan off, you know, or make a payment on it at least. [Pause] One thing about it, you'll have to fill in a lot of blank spots here.

Nitz: That's okay.

Purdy: You'll have to jog my memory and see what else you want to learn here.

Nitz: Did you have any questions, Denny?

Presley: You told a story about Helen McCart to me once.

Purdy: Oh, yeah I did. This was way... This was back when the folks first bought this place down here, where we live now. And I remember I was just a big ol' kid. And she was there where Geers used to live. Her family was Clemens. And she used to help them hay. Well, we were joined right there. And we'd hay. Every time I'd come around and get close to there, where here she'd come out on a mowing...mowing machine or whatever she was doing, the raking. And all she had was a halter top on...and a pair of shorts. So I remember that, real plain. And I was just a big old kid, you know?
[Laughing]

Nitz: Got to get through summer camp somehow, right?

Purdy: Yeah.

Presley: You mentioned something to her. And she denies it, right? You mentioned it to her and she denied it.

Purdy: Yeah. Well, she just... I don't remember any of that. Then, she's always been a talker and always knew---

Nitz: She's a spunky gal.

Purdy: Yeah. And she's still a-going. But she's in Aspen's or some place now, I think. No, no. No, she's not. She's in Davis's. That's right.

Nitz: So we were talking earlier about haying and horses and using all of the horse-drawn equipment. Can you tell me how that process worked a little bit, with the horses? Did you guys use nets and stack hay?

Purdy: Well, yeah. Everybody was... Because we was poor people, of course. And Dad never did buy a tractor. And Mervin finally... What happened? Dad and the folks gave all the older kids a cow. Well, the first thing you know, they had ten cows...at least one of them. And of course, they had... That's how this ranch down here come about. Needed some place to go with his cattle. So Louis Hughet had a permit, a forest and BLM permit, down here. And BLM and forest both. And there was a little piece of deeded property up there. Some of us was scattered all over the BLM, an eighty here and a forty there and what have you, unfenced some of it. But they was about... One chunk was thirteen hundred and twenty acres. And that's where the cabin still stands. It's in not too good of shape. We fixed it up once, George did. He fixed it up. And it's getting ramshackled. At least it's got a roof on it yet. And that's kind of saving it a little.

Nitz: And then where is that located?

Purdy: We call it Baker corrals. But it's in Baker---

Nitz: It's up on the forest.

Purdy: Right against the forest boundary up there. Yeah. That's where the deeded acres is at, is right against the forest boundary up there...the biggest share of them. Later on, why there was some put together down below too. And traded with the BLM this piece of ground here for a little bit different one that fits you better over here, that kind of a deal. And now where we at? We've got another piece of ranch bought off of Hughet. And they didn't stay with it too many years, after the folks bought it. The folks bought that place there, as well as this one down here. And they needed some place for all of his cattle to go, that the kids had. That's why they bought this place down here. We've got to go someplace. Got to get something to feed these cows. And then of course, the kids is the one that had the... They wasn't paying for anything. That's the way it was.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: They had quite a chunk of cows, pretty near half of them. And they wasn't paying for anything. And they wasn't even making payments on the ranch that he bought. So that's how it was. They decided they'd finally just get out of it. They had enough to split it up, you know, among whoever wanted...the four boys. And that's what took place there, split up the ranch.

Nitz: So you were saying your brother was the first one to buy a tractor though.

Purdy: Oh, back to... Yeah, my oldest brother bought the tractor, bought a John Deere tractor. And he had a little bit of money. And George, he was too busy buying cars. [Laughs] I don't know how many cars. I was trying to tell Dorothea the other day how

many cars he had bought and I can't remember. He bought a bunch of them...more than I have in a lifetime. Anyway...

Nitz: So did you guys ever take family vacations or do anything like that? Or just no time?

Purdy: You couldn't take a vacation. You snuck off and went fishing once in awhile, maybe. And you generally paid for that. Something would go wrong because you shouldn't have been gone. So you didn't feel good about doing it after you snuck off.

Nitz: You guys hunted?

Purdy: Oh, the whole family was hunters. I don't know about Madora. I don't remember about her. She kind of pulled out early and took her cows to Mt. Vernon. She married a man from Mt. Vernon. And they had a little place over there. So she went with her whatever it was, thirty-five head or forty, you know, over that way. And then she went to work doing the same thing as the rest of the family. She went to work trying to help support them cows...over there. And so she generally worked some place in John Day or one of those little towns around there.

Nitz: So she didn't stay around here?

Purdy: No. No. She never was around here that much. After she got out of high school, why she more of less went the other direction. She went to John Day country. And then Donna, she took off too. She married out of the family, of course, and away from here. The guy come through. He was... I can't remember who he was working for. But he was kind of a whatever they call them kind of guys that just, here and there, working where---

Nitz: Kind of fly by night, huh?

Purdy: ---fly by night kind of guy. And so they ended up Portland. And come back a couple of times. And the guy would come back with her. He'd think he might ranch a little bit. And first thing you know, why he wasn't caring for that. So they'd go again. Of course, they were raising a family too.

Nitz: So how many generations of your family have been here then? There were your parents and you and your children.

Purdy: That's it.

Nitz: Do you have grandkids?

Purdy: Yes. Got a rash of them. Well, Rhonda never had any. And Kelly, that's our youngest daughter, she never had any kids either. Couldn't. But anyway, so consequently Tim is the only one, him and Cindy. Maybe you might know Cindy Purdy, possibly.

Nitz: Yeah.

Presley: Drove bus here for a long time.

Purdy: Yeah. She drove school bus here for...I don't know, pretty near thirty years, didn't she?

Presley: Um hmm.

Purdy: Anyway, tried to keep them alive. It's really kind of a survival, all of us. But anyway, yeah, Tim and Cindy had two boys. And their oldest boy never has married yet. Right out of high school, he went into the Navy. And they put him on a submarine. And it was a nuke sub. And he's still in that business. But he didn't stay in the Service. He come back out, went a couple more years to college. And they gave him such a deal in Bremerton or someplace, Washington, where they rebuild these nuke subs. But he's a civilian.

Nitz: So he's like an engineer?

Purdy: Basically. What he does is he runs around with a book, making damn sure that these people get the job done right so they don't blow the world up.

Nitz: Yeah, that's important.

Purdy: That's what he does.

Nitz: And your other grandson?

Purdy: Other grandson is... He married. And him and his wife had a set of twins. And he was in the process of... I think he landed a job. His wife was in Reno. And he landed a job there. That's how they got together. And we all went to the wedding down there, Tahoe...Lake Tahoe. And a year later, why they had a set of twins and they was divorced. So he has the set of twins. And they're cute little guys growing. They're in the second grade now. And they come up. He brings them up here every chance they get. Yeah, so that's the extent of our...our offspring. Yeah, we've got great-grandkids too, a set of twins. Let's put it that way. And I don't know whether Nick will ever get married. He's married to that job, I think.

Nitz: Some jobs are like that. You don't have a choice.

Purdy: Yeah. I think he's probably planning on retiring. What he'll do after he retires I wouldn't know. He'll probably be taking an early retirement out of there, probably with so many bags of money that he can't pack them all. But anyway, yeah, he even bought a house up there now. So I think he's planning on finishing out his work years right there. And like I say, he had a girlfriend or two when he was in college and after he got out of

the Service. That didn't work out too good. So he never has looked for one since. Yeah. Anyway, that's the extent of our family.

Nitz: Okay.

Presley: Rhonda, wasn't she the Fair Queen one year?

Purdy: Yes.

Presley: And she was also Miss Harney County, wasn't she?

Purdy: Miss Harney County and Fair Queen. And she was runner-up for Miss Oregon also, first runner-up I guess. But she just... Just one of them deals. Somebody just had... whatever they was doing was just a shade better.

Nitz: That's right. And Dorothea, she was very involved with doing the oral history program for the library.

Purdy: Right here, yeah. Yeah. Her and another lady, like I said, the lady's husband worked for the BLM, I think, at the time. And they both... Both of them worked here. And so that gal, I can't remember her name.

Nitz: Was it Barbara Lofgren?

Purdy: Barbara Lofgren.

Presley: I couldn't tell you.

Purdy: Yeah. You got it. You probably maybe knew her. I don't know.

Nitz: I didn't know her personally. She was gone by the time I came here.

Purdy: Yeah. They moved away from here. And Dorothea communicated back and forth with them. I don't know what happened. They just kind of... just kind of moved away. And you kind of just separate friendships. Once in awhile, they would... We happened to be at the same place at the same time, why they'd visit a little bit and what have you.

Presley: You said that Dorothea didn't dance. But I know that Rhonda's talent, when she was Miss---

Purdy: That's what she done.

Presley: Yeah. Her talent was dance. She must have got it from you.

Purdy: Well, I used to like to dance. And I never did know why I picked a woman that didn't like to dance. I never have figured that one out. Because I used to go to all the dances, every one that I had gas enough to get to...and the time to do it. Yeah. Used to take 17th to [unintelligible] at Juntura. And they always had a Drewsey dance. And they always had a dance... Every week, there was a dance at the grange hall out here. Yeah. And maybe even go to one at Diamond...or some place, you know.

Nitz: So did you guys ever participate in the fair, like with animals or any of that kind of thing?

Purdy: No. The only time I ever participated is a guy talked me into team roping with him. I mean it was... What do they call it? Jack Drinkwater is who it was. He said, why don't you come and we'll win a belt buckle?

Nitz: Pretty confident, huh?

Purdy: Yeah. And anyway, so I went down. And we done good. We got a second. It cost twenty-five dollars to get in. And we won probably twenty-five or thirty dollars worth of silver stuff. I don't know what he got. I think we got a buckle for a bridle and some more jewelry that you paste on the headstall

Nitz: So you just did that once?

Purdy: Well, I tried it again. He wanted to do it again. And we didn't do any good that year.

Nitz: Then he dumped you, huh?

Purdy: No. He quit also because he said, now I can't get anybody to go with me, so... That's the only participating...

When I was a kid, why me and a friend decided we was going to go and participate in a junior rodeo. And I can't remember how he performed. I remember my performance.

Nitz: How did that go?

Purdy: Well, they wouldn't let us ride anything but a bareback horse. So I drew this big old black mare. I'll never forget it. Hell, I'd never rode a bareback horse before in my life.

Nitz: What was its name? Do you remember that?

Purdy: No, I have no idea what her name was. It was a mare. And that's all I can remember. And I remember I made about four jumps out of the chute on her. And I'll never forget it. Remember Jimmy Howard?

Presley: Um hmm.

Purdy: He was a watching. He says, boy, this looks like it's going to be a pretty good performance he thought. I don't know if you ever remember Red Dunbar?

Presley: Oh, yeah.

Purdy: Red used to be a hell of a bronc rider. And he'd spur on one side and then on the other. Well, I wasn't doing it naturally...or intentionally. It was just happening. And about the fourth time she hit the ground, why we separated. [All chuckling]

Nitz: So no buckles there.

Purdy: No belt buckles there either.

Nitz: Do you remember going to the fair when you were a kid? Did you guys go?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. The family always went to the fair.

Nitz: How about the Fourth of July, did they have big Fourth of July celebrations in town?

Purdy: Yeah. But we never did get to them very often. Generally, we was haying about that time. The older kids went. You can bet on that. But the younger ones didn't go.

Presley: Were any of the Japanese still there at the internment camp?

Purdy: Yes. And there was some dang good people there.

Presley: Ekis and Okitas and...

Purdy: Right. That was the two families. And they had kids. And Ekis, Donna Eki and... I can't remember.

Presley: Gilbert.

Purdy: Yeah, Gilbert and Donna both started school---

Presley: And Elliot.

Purdy: Yeah. He didn't start school. See, I went to the fourth grade. And they also started about the first grade there. So that's the only time I went to school... They was nice kids, smart as whips. And they come from a family... Well, they got into the railroading deal.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: And it wasn't a fair deal. And he happened to be a foreman on the...on that stretch of railroad track through Silvies Valley, plumb back to the tunnel...well, plumb back to Poison Creek actually. They had another section down here. But anyway, no, real nice people.

Nitz: Do you ever remember any train accidents or anything when you were growing up on the ranch?

Purdy: Oh, yes. Yeah. There was only one real one. And that was out there below the tunnel. They used to... With the small engines, why there was a siding right up there on top of the mountain there...at the tunnel. And they'd pull what they could with two engines up there and park them, the logs, and go back and get another load and then hook them together and take them down to Hines. Well, this one deal, why... And it had a bigger engine on it. They had a runaway. And they scattered that whole mess all over Poison Creek up there, I think probably for three quarters of a mile, just scattered it. Tore it all to pieces, everything. And not a soul got hurt.

Presley: Well, it put Charlie Pearson in the hospital.

Purdy: Yeah. I guess---

Presley: He was the last guy off. And he was looking for a place to jump. So he jumped into a snow bank. There happened to be a bunch of logs. [Laughs]

Purdy: I don't blame him for jumping. I wouldn't have rode that thing. Well, there wasn't no way he was going to live through it. Because it just kind of tore it all to pieces. God, they spent several months hauling iron out of there...and getting some of the logs out of it.

Nitz: And that happened in the winter, right?

Purdy: Yeah. Yeah. That's the only one I know of.

Presley: Yeah. They said they thought that train was going over 80 when it went off the road.

Purdy: I wouldn't doubt it. And it wasn't a very crooked track right there in that area. It was kind of turned a little bit to the right. And then it went to the left. And they turned to make it before the bend at Poison Creek, come back this way. Why that's where it quit that right there. Yeah. Made that last turn and that was the end of it.

Nitz: Couldn't hold on.

Purdy: Yep. She couldn't stay on the track no longer.

Nitz: We were talking a little bit earlier about some of the really hot summers. Do you ever remember any really big forest fires? Did you guys ever get pulled off to work on those?

Purdy: George went to work for the Forest Service, on one of his deals. And he fought fire. And of course, everybody fought fire a little bit, you know.

Nitz: When you were needed.

Purdy: Yeah. If you was needed. Back in them days, why, they was... You was probably a first responder, if you was in the ranching business. If you was, you know, where you could see it and get to it, why you went and fought fire. But I didn't... We didn't do that much of it. So I probably was on three or four fires in my lifetime.

Presley: Did you have any experience with Harry Pon's exotic animals?

Purdy: Yeah. Yeah. They got brucellosis in that herd of buffalo. And I was working time off in the early spring, when the mill was shut down and everything, you know. Logging was shut down, let's put it that way. The mill wasn't. So I'd go to work up there. Anything to earn a dollar or two, you know.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: And they said, you have to start off with a bunch of buffalo and run them through the chute and test them. And so you had to... You gathered them on horseback, of course, and corralled them that way. And they're fast.

Nitz: Yeah. Do they act different than cows, regular cattle?

Purdy: Yeah. Quite a little bit different, yeah. They're a little bit snuffier. And there's some pretty rotten cows too. But anyway... But the buffalo, that's their life. You know, especially when they got lots of room and you start crowding them, why they turn them back to the wild bunch kind of. And it was a never-ending deal, until... I think Laverne Starbuck and I worked in break up feeding the buffalo, I think about twenty-five hundred head that we was feeding.

Nitz: Wow. That's a lot.

Purdy: That's a lot of buffalo. And they ended up zero buffalo. Yeah. They worked it. They'd separate a bunch and test them and haul off the reactors...to the slaughter house. The next weekend, when they can gather up enough people to get it done, we'd run another bunch through and test them. It was just an ongoing deal. And you put them back. And you couldn't keep them separated. So they just kept contaminating the rest. And that's where you got a lot of... Kind of a little bit on the dangerous side. And Silvies Valley, there's nothing but badger holes anyway. And boy, you've got to have a horse that will look out for the badger holes.

Nitz: So did you ever run into any particularly ornery buffalo?

Purdy: Well, I did. Laverne and I was going around checking the fence one spring, up there. And the cow had just dropped a calf. We didn't see the calf. But we could see, just by looking at her, that she had evidence that she had just had a calf. And she decided she was going to make sure we didn't bother that calf. And about, I guess it was... I was trying to think which creek it was...took place on. Jump Creek I think it was. The backside of it hooked onto the forest at Jump Creek down to where the old school house was...the old school house with a bell tower on it. Probably close to four miles. And we was running our horses about as fast as they could go. And she was right on our tail all the way. We got through the gate and shut it. Then she put on the brakes when she come to the gate. Yeah, they're a little bit...a little cranky.

Nitz: Well, Denny was telling me... And I don't know if you told him this story, something about a buffalo that would keep opening the gate...or guard the gate.

Purdy: Oh, that was White's.

Presley: Judge White's.

Purdy: Yeah. He finally de-horned him. He had outrun him to the gate. He was just mean. You had to be a little bit... He didn't seem to be mean. But he was awful dang friendly. So you'd go through the field, why he was going to be up pretty close to you. So you hurried right at the last minute and opened the gate. And when you shut it, he'd come up there and unhook the latch with his horn.

Nitz: Do you think he knew what he was doing?

Purdy: You bet he knew what he was a doing. And the fence has been raised. So they didn't jump out too bad. But they still would get out occasionally, some of them would. And they had a fire up there. It was the Jack Knife fire, I think it was. And I didn't go. I stayed down there and hayed, at the time. George went up. But anyway, the National Guard went up there and set up camp right there. Was their grocery wagon...feed wagon.

Nitz: For fire camp?

Purdy: Fire camp. And then they fed the fire crew. And I didn't go because I was in the National Guard at the time. But I didn't go up and fight the fire or help them cook either one. I was down here haying. And anyway, the buffalo bull, well, he didn't like the sound of that motor. They had a light plant for the National Guard there. He didn't like the sound of that. And he was giving it the waller jaw. And it ruined it, I guess, the motor. But anyway, that's when he decided he'd take the horns off of him.

Nitz: Oh, that's the same one?

Purdy: Yeah, that's the same... They just had the one bull. Yep. And we got the chance to rope them buffalo, the calves. The cows, anything that they branded there, or the bull buffalos, why they ran through the chute. And it was dangerous. You didn't dare get in a foot because we had walkways around the top of the coral. They're big ole heavy corals. And you could walk around there and hurrah a little bit and maybe poke one with a stick. And he'd kick at you. And they'd start down the chute, you know. And they had to put a stop down there on the gate, Powder River squeeze chute -extra large. And they had to put a... They put a piece of railroad track, I think drove in the ground out in the front because you couldn't shut...shut the gate quick enough. The gate was one of these sideways deals. And by the time they come through the back gate, well, it was pretty near too late. So they put this big steel post in the ground with a plate on it. And pretty near half of them would hit that head on...before they got stopped. But anyway, they was pretty rough to handle.

Nitz: So did you have experience with any of the other exotic critters he had up there?

Purdy: Elk.

Nitz: He had zebras, right? Didn't he have zebras?

Purdy: Pardon?

Nitz: Did he have zebras up there?

Purdy: Yeah. And I don't even want to tell them zebra stories.

Nitz: Well, I've got to know now.

Purdy: Well, it's a thing of the past. The owner, he got rid of the ranch a long time ago and so on and so... Anyway, they had crossed them with some ponies, the zebras. And this stud zebra, a colt... Steve Miller, he was the boss. You guys get in there and rope that and we're going to brand that zebra. And I can't remember if it was Vern pitched one on his head, I think, just as he hit the coral and broke his neck.

Nitz: Oh, no.

Purdy: So there went the---

Nitz: That was the end of the zebra story.

Purdy: ---the zebra crew cross. And that's the only zebra. And of course, he had a bunch of ponies. And I don't know.

Presley: He had those Texas Longhorns too.

Purdy: Oh god, he had a bunch of them. And that was bad.

Nitz: So what was bad?

Purdy: You couldn't keep them home. They had about over three hundred head of them. And that's what he was a doing. I don't know why he wanted to keep all them bulls. And he didn't cut anything. He didn't castrate none of them. And he had about three hundred. And of course, you can imagine three hundred head of bulls. And they didn't pay any attention to a fence. Come spring of the year, why they was in everybody's field...chasing cows, you know?

Nitz: Yeah. And then you said he had elk too?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. He had a bunch of elk there. And a young bull got to fight... Had one big older bull, seven pointer there. And the younger bulls was a working on him, you know, fighting with him. And they was afraid they was going to kill him. So he goes up. And we finally de-horned him. And they went in. And I didn't get in on the roping. They wouldn't let me in. They was afraid I would get in front of one. But then the bulls didn't bother you. It was the cows you had to watch out for...protecting them calves. And you didn't dare get in there afoot. You had to be a horseback. But anyway, yeah. Cows just come right up and stomp you to death, so...But the bulls, it was the plumb opposite. They would kind of... Actually, they're really a lot more docile than I thought they'd be.

Nitz: Just walk away.

Purdy: Anyway, one of them got in a fight. And one young bull went out through the fence. And Miller, as soon as – Laverne was already there – waited until I got there so I can get on horseback and do something with this...see if we could get him surrounded and get him back. Finally, after he went – I don't know... Steve took after him down in the pickup down in the old road there. And he kind of... About got around, and the bull decided he wanted to go back to the bunch anyway. So he went back. And he got in behind that old company house there and the fence. And Laverne got in there and got a rope placed on him. And he just laid down.

Nitz: Huh. [Laughs]

Presley: No fight in him, huh?

Purdy: There was no fight in that one. I had to help him put another rope on him. I drug him back in the L pen. So that's what happened with that deal.

Nitz: Did you guys ever have any experiences with like mountain lions or anything like that?

Purdy: No. We didn't have much trouble with them.

Nitz: No?

Purdy: Nope. And the wolves was pretty scarce, in them days. They're there now.

Nitz: Yeah.

Purdy: But they were pretty... Dad and I, they thought they had... You just did never did see them. And there wasn't a big bunch of wolves anyway. And then I was riding up Lost Creek after the horses one day. And this... Well, you can tell a wolf anyway. He told me, watch out. He knew what wolves looked like in Montana. And he says that's a wolf right there. He was looking off on the rimrock down at us...and nice round ears. And a coyote, he got pointed ears. And same way with the buffalo. Cow, he's got a pointed muzzle. And they've got more of adult type muzzle. Anyway, so they...

And also, Henry Geer, and that was Thad's dad, he was more or less took care of... He was in charge of the railroad up there. And him and the guy, when they put that fill in, the railroad come and took that old trestle down. Him and the guy that was building the fill were standing there talking about it...what was going on. And this wolf run a deer down and killed it right there on the edge of the fill, right underneath of them. And no mistaking, this was before...before the wolf turn loose protection deal even was thought of.

Nitz: Right. This is probably, what, back in the 50's, 40's?

Purdy: I can't...when that took place. I'd have to... It might take me an hour to... I'd remember eventually.

Nitz: Yeah.

Purdy: I can't really tell you just when that took place.

Nitz: Yeah. I'd be curious to know. What about when they used to have the rabies outbreaks and the coyotes. And people had some kind of scary encounters from the coyotes back in the early days?

Purdy: We never did have any trouble with them. The only problem we had was coyotes. We had so many of them that they were hard on the calves during calving season. We've had them kill a calf before it was completely born, just eat his head off you know. Terrible goddam deal. And so everybody was declaring war on the coyotes, actually. We'd whittle them down. And the jackrabbits come and go. And if they get thin, look out. Boy, you're going to get lots of coyotes in the cow herd in the spring, if there's no rabbits to feed them.

Nitz: And you guys probably didn't have the jackrabbits as bad up there.

Purdy: No. But we had plenty of them. Yeah.

Nitz: In the canyon.

Purdy: Oh, yeah. They was plenty thick, I'll tell you. They killed a lot of calves.

Nitz: How about rattlesnakes?

Purdy: No rattlesnakes. Unbelievable. Us kids... a little ways down Poison Creek is just lousy with them. The first place you come to, coming back down the canyon and there's a trailer house the first one out. But there used to be a house... Well, I'm trying to think who lives there now. But the house burned down, the old house. And they built another one. But anyway... The folks lived there, when they first come here. And of course, they had a few cows and a milk cow. And they taught the kids, when they went out to get the milk cow in – they just run with the other cows – take a willow and beat the...beat the sagebrush and everything ahead of you so you wake him up, make sure you didn't just step on it. And there's hundreds of them at that place. I don't know how many they killed there in that yard. I don't know, like twenty or thirty, just the time they lived there. And it's a been a going on for...and everything.

Lyle Tyler... Bob Tyler has ended up with that field and the house and everything. And some people wanted to rent it. So I took them out to show it to them. And they opened the front door and walked in. And there was a big old rattlesnake coiled up in the middle of the floor.

Nitz: Oh, gosh.

Presley: Change their mind, did they?

Purdy: Yeah. They didn't rent it. [All laugh]

Nitz: Do you know anything about some of the old saw mills that used to be up in that area, like up around Theimer Canyon and that area? The Dickenson Mill was in that area.

Purdy: Oh, yeah. Dickerson Mill was on Trout Creek. Yeah, I know it well. And I'm not going to get into who sold it. It belonged to Ozzie... Homer had that field, bought that place. Homer, I guess. And anyway,... Forgot what I was going to tell you.

Nitz: And there was a Larson, I think a Larson Saw Mill... Larson Springs.

Purdy: Larson was right on the highway up here. And it was about... You know where the monument is there.

Nitz: Yes.

Purdy: And just down this way, south of that monument, if you look real close, there's a... I can't remember what mile post it is now...50-something, I think. But anyway, there's an old grate that goes up. And there was a mill, right there alongside the... Wasn't it? They called it a highway in them days. But it wasn't really a highway. They didn't finish that highway until '54, I think.

Nitz: Yeah, it was late, really.

Purdy: Yeah, really late. Finally got it paved, I think, in '54 and all in there. But yeah, I'll never forget my first... I had this place down here. Why, we had to wean the kids off. And replacement heifers, we'd truck them to Silvies. And it was quite an ordeal going that early in the spring.

Nitz: I'll bet, ya.

Purdy: And so my brother had just bought a truck, my oldest brother. He bought a tractor and a truck with his cows. Anyway...[chuckling] And it was just a little old fourteen-foot truck, but anyway...with little calves on it. And you'd get stuck in the middle of that road on a hill. And it was that bad.

Nitz: So it was mostly mud?

Purdy: Yeah. You just fall through, you know. When the frost went out, why it wasn't... There was gas trucks bogged down up there. Just a very poor quality road. And in fact, the government people, all of them wonder how come they ever built that road up that canyon, you know?

Nitz: Rather than up where the old stage road went?

Purdy: Yeah, come up there. And most of that is rock, you know? I don't know why they built that road up that canyon. What they was concerned about is the scenic view, you know, for cattle grazing the creek. I don't remember. The bulls fighting in the middle of that road...same road.

Nitz: Really?

Purdy: Yeah. There was no fence... The highway wasn't fenced.

Nitz: So when you drove log truck, it was paved then or not?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. Yeah. No, I got in a log truck in later years...and several different... Hines, I drove for them and Bob Otley. And of course, Bob was a good guy to work for. If he didn't have some kind of a road job a-going, Billy Duncan would be doing something...as well as hauling logs in the winter. Yeah.

Presley: Daryl Eggleston told me Mervin was trying to learn to fly.

Purdy: Yeah. And they even soloed, believe it or not. And they never did get back in an airplane. I don't know whether he scared himself or what. I have no idea. It wasn't because he didn't have enough money. Like I say, he bought a tractor and a truck. He bought both of them new. And at that same time, why he was a flying with Daryl. Daryl was teaching him how to fly. Yep. And never could figure that out, you know.

Tim and I got into it...and another guy or two. A guy from John Day come over here. It was a rip off deal the way it turned out. He says, I'll give you guys some lessons if you want to learn to fly because he was a qualified pilot and I guess a teacher. He was a good enough pilot. But he wasn't very good with the pocket book, I guess. But anyway, \$500 he was going to teach each one of us. And I think he got about five of us together in that deal. And then we lost track of him.

Nitz: So did you ever get a lesson?

Purdy: No.

Nitz: No?

Purdy: No. I put my few extra funds that I had, that I usually spent on beer or something you know, in with Tim's. And he went out to... I can't remember who was in charge of it down there then...out at the airport, running the airport. But it wasn't... Where was it? There was a guy that worked... What's his name out here?

Nitz: The Sitz's ran it for a long time, I know.

Purdy: Yeah, yeah. The Sitz---

Nitz: It was probably before them?

Purdy: Before Sitz...just before Sitz. I'm trying to think of what year it was. And I can't remember that either, really. It had to have been in the early or mid-50's.

Nitz: So it was after Eggleston then, probably.

Purdy: Oh, way after Eggleston, yeah. Yeah. He was... Oh, he just sold his a couple years go. Somebody opened the station back up, down here, sold...sold the GMC pickups and Jeeps and...

Presley: Teague?

Purdy: Huh?

Presley: Not Teague?

Purdy: Yeah, Teague. Ruel Teague.

Presley: Oh.

Purdy: It was a guy that worked with Ruel. And he was the instructor.

Presley: I know who you mean. But I can't think of his name either.

Purdy: Can't remember what his name was.

Presley: Because he gave quite a few people lessons.

Purdy: Yeah, he did. And he taught Tim how to fly. And Tim soloed. They sent him off to, I think, Redmond. And from Redmond, why---

Presley: It wasn't that Curtis was it?

Purdy: I don't know. I don't think I remember his name at all. Anyway, some little place down there just before Klamath Falls. And good thing he got good lessons.

Nitz: He had to use it, huh?

Purdy: Yeah. He had to use it. They was landing on Silver Lake and places like that, you know, and flying down any place the sagebrush wasn't too high, landing on these little two leg...two track roads with his airplane.

Anyway, when they landed down there, he said one wing was pretty near dragging in wind...in the ground. They had to buck the wind that hard. And I think that's what decided maybe this isn't a bright idea. But he got his license. And actually, he couldn't really qualify because he had an allergy. And on account of his allergy, they wouldn't let him have a license again.

Nitz: Really? Wow.

Purdy: Yeah. But anyway, I don't think he was that enthused about it after that. No. We helped him get his license. Or I don't know. I had probably eight, ten hours myself, you know, in instruction. Didn't have any paperwork though, just the flying.

Nitz: So did you guys ever spend much time like out on the Steens or the southern end of the county?

Purdy: Very little. You know, we was too busy where we was at. I had an Uncle, Paul Howard. He had a hunting lodge up there, him and Velty Pruitt I think his name was.

Nitz: Okay. I know that place now.

Purdy: I can't remember if it was log or board. I can't remember. Paul Howard had a homestead up there. He built the trail off into the Blitzen Gorge. And it's so danged steep you can't hardly stand up afoot.

Presley: Blitzen?

Purdy: The Blitzen Gorge, it was up on the north Blitzen rim, where the cabin was at. And George had bought a... Him and Dick Corbett... Dick Corbett had a Jeep that he bought. And George had a yellow one that he bought, about the first two in Harney County. Anyway, Fourth of July, he goes up there with Uncle Paul. He was going to take us up there. And he thought maybe we could get in there. Well, we never did make it. We bogged the Jeep down before long. And we walked the rest of the way, packing our sleeping bags.

Nitz: Is that coming in from the top, like up above Fish Lake, or from the bottom?

Purdy: Come in by Frenchglen there. And you go right up the road by all the---

Nitz: Right, past Fish Lake and all that stuff.

Purdy: ---Fish Lake and all that and right around out at the top. And you get around pretty near to the...

Nitz: Close to the top.

Purdy: Well, where you look over, you can look off to the Alvord there some place.

Nitz: Yeah.

Purdy: And you turn off and went down the north side of the Blitzen Gorge. That's where that cabin was at.

Nitz: Right. Did John Scharff buy that later? Did he ever own that cabin?

Purdy: I really don't know who owned it. John Scharff? I don't know what ever happened to it. I know Uncle Paul got really into debt getting out of it.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: That's all I can remember. Him and Veltly had a hunting lodge. Or they run it as a hunting lodge. And they also had a bunch of horses. And they had a riding camp, or something, that they started up.

Nitz: But you never did spend much time up there?

Purdy: No. No. That was the only time I was ever down there...until later years, of course. I think I was married after. But the next time, took the wife and kids and went around the loop...and looked off at Wild Horse Lake. And that's about the extent.

Nitz: Did you guys ever spend much time in the Strawberry mountain area?

Purdy: And that's another way. We never did have much getting away from home experience. Some of the other family have made it up there. Madora, she made it up there. And I don't think Mervin ever made it. Rhonda may have made it, rode in horseback or something.

There was a woman. Wait a minute. Dorothea belonged to a... Her and... The boss that runs... Harry Pon.

Presley: Miller?

Purdy: Yeah. Boy, we just buried not too many years ago.

Presley: Steve Miller?

Purdy: Steve...a great storyteller. I'll never forget the last two or three years I was running. He'd tell the same story and just laugh like hell. And everybody else would enjoy it too. And I don't know how many times I'd heard that same story. But anyway...yeah.

Presley: I did an oral history with Steve. And when I got through with it, his daughter wouldn't let me have it.

Purdy: Oh, yeah?

Presley: No. She said they're going to make a book. She never did.

Purdy: Never did do it, yeah.

Presley: No.

Purdy: Yeah, that's too bad.

Presley: Yeah. He had a lot of stories to tell. And a lot of them... Most of the lot of them was funny stories.

Purdy: Because he had experience with that Connor...you know, the movie star out of Gunsmoke...I mean out of the Rifleman?

Nitz: Chuck?

Presley: Chuck Connors?

Purdy: Chuck Connors?

Presley: Yeah. He come up here and went hunting with Steve all the time. Steve says he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn.

Purdy: I'll be darned, yeah. [All chuckling]

Nitz: It's all an act.

Purdy: Yeah. Well, that's possible.

Presley: He said they filmed a movie there by those buffalo.

Purdy: They made a movie up there once.

Presley: Yeah. And they run those buffalo back and across in front of them. You might have got in on that.

Purdy: No. No. I didn't get in on it. I remember when it happened though. Yeah. I remember it taking place. But I didn't get involved. Donna married a guy that was... I think he got in it a little. He worked for Harry Pon, under Steve... Frank Jones, little short guy. And I think he got in on it, done a little buffalo herding or something for them.

Nitz: Buffalo wrangling, huh?

Purdy: Yeah.

Presley: Well, I know you've got one or two old mining shafts on your place. Did you ever have an inclination to go mining?

Purdy: You know, the only thing I would develop is springs. And boy, this is looking like it's pretty rich stuff, you know.

Nitz: You're not that far from Idol City.

Purdy: Oh, no. No. We're right close to Idol City. In fact, just a little ways straight north of there. And way up on top of the hill, just under the lookout, there probably about, oh, half, three quarters of a mile from King Mountain Lookout west. Well, we was working on two springs there. That's why we'd hold cattle up there because it's always steeper ground and sagebrush and it was pretty open. But there was a lot of feed up there. And one of them had been developed before. And we got into that same stuff there. And then the other one had never been developed at all. We put in a trough there. We dug the spring out. Digging out the spring, here's this... Boy, that stuff looks pretty dang good. As soon as you got it out the water, it changes colors.

Nitz: [Laughs] Darn.

Purdy: Yeah. No gold there. It was iron pyrite. Yeah, both of the yields. But there's holes dug all over that country.

Nitz: Oh, I bet.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: Have you ever run across any other unusual stuff laying out in the brush or come across any...?

Purdy: They put a dam in on...probably done with horses, no doubt, back in them days. I'm trying to think of the name of the creek. I should know it. Well, anyway, it's just an offshoot. Then there's a cabin on it too. I'll think of it after I'm out of here, probably. But anyway, all through that area, there's mine shafts in the hills. And where they built...got a little reservoir in this creek, why they put it around the hillside. And when it got so steep, they tried to flume water around the hill. And I can remember... Most of it's gone now. Part of the boards...lumber flume was still there.

Nitz: Oh, that's cool.

Purdy: Yeah. Yep. And of course, they went in there with a dredge after that. And they worked the whole creek over. Yeah.

Nitz: So were they still mining up in that area then? They must have been.

Purdy: When I was a kid... When I was a kid, there weren't any fish alive in Trout Creek.

Nitz: Really?

Purdy: No. It was just so danged... They was running the dredges then. Or probably one is all they had, as far as I know. But anyway, when they're dredging that creek, why it was just straight mud. And I'm sure there wasn't a fish that could survive in it. But, yeah.

Nitz: So where did you guys go fishing when you went fishing for fun?

Purdy: Probably Silvies River.

Nitz: Yeah?

Purdy: Yeah. That was the closest thing. It was not very far. Not very far. And of course, we went into...It's the first one you come to. Runs out of...

Nitz: Poison Creek?

Purdy: No, no. Poison Creek, but we never did fish it much. Basically, most of it was on the highway...that you could get at easy. Either that, or you could go up to the railroad track. And then when you got up above the Jap camp, we used to call it, on Poison Creek, on the lower one, why the Japs had kept a crew there. Kept it fished pretty well out. And there wasn't enough creek above that, really, to...for a fish to make it.

Nitz: So what did you catch, mostly just trout?

Purdy: Yeah. Yeah. And mostly little... I call them red band now. They're just red...just rainbow trout, basically, is all they are. And of course, later years, why Trout Creek itself, when they got the mining done up there and everything, why they started coming up out of the river.

Nitz: A little ironic, huh, Trout Creek with no fish.

Purdy: Yeah. Well, I imagine it had lots of them, to begin with, no doubt. There were very few dams in that creek, you know, earlier, before they started mining it. Of course, I suppose they was---

Nitz: They started mining up there pretty early.

Purdy: Yeah, they did. But a lot of them was hillside mines, like I say. And they didn't really muddy the creek that much. The dredge is what... There was great piles of round, smooth rock that they dredged up out of there. And they wasn't a crushing any of it. All they was doing was just taking the gold out of the sand that was in with the gravel and stuff...and washing it with... I remember the dredge sit there and in a pond up by Idol City, itself, sit there. That's where they parked it. And it had two electric motor on in, that run with a generator. And it ran two pumps. 32 volt pumps, I remember that plain. I can remember that kind of stuff. But the stuff that people want to hear about, why I can't remember that.

Nitz: So I think his name was Clyde Ridell? CW Ridell, was he working the mine up there? Do you remember him?

Purdy: No. I'll have to dwell just for a little bit. Mary and...

Nitz: And there was Pardee.

Purdy: Pardees was up on the hillside, pretty much back towards Parker Spring up on top, the 2820 road that runs right up at the top of the ridge there. And of course, you go off the other side, that was the Chinese mines.

Nitz: Yeah? Oh, really?

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: I didn't even know they had any up there. I never heard that.

Purdy: Yeah. You drop off Parker Springs. And then that whole thing kind of turns into like one draw down through there. All the way down that draw a ways, you can still find holes in the ground. And they're used to be little buildings set on top of it. I guess they got in there. I don't know why. Maybe they lived in them. I don't know. But...

I can't even think of his name. He used to be our range rider, years ago. Jim Lumsden.

Nitz: I know Lumsden Spring.

Purdy: Jim Lumsden told me, when they first started... He used to take care of the Pine Creek people and our area, plumb over to Izee and kept cattle scattered when they didn't have a lot of separation fences and stuff.

Nitz: Did he work for the government then?

Purdy: No. We had independent... Each one of these localities had an old little...

Nitz: So he was hired by the private cattle---

Purdy: Private cattlemen around in that area, why they was the ones that hired him. They paid him. And we paid him. And then the Drewsey people paid him. And he used to camp there, at Idol City, quite often and any place else. And he'd stop at our place, when we come by. Wherever was handy, that's where he just rode in there. Never get... He was a Scotsman. And he rode this old buckskin horse or palomino. And you'd see him a coming. And every time his horse took a step, why he'd kick him in the ribs.

Presley: Couldn't make him go any faster though.

Purdy: No.

Nitz: Did he ever have a family?

Purdy: Jim didn't, no. When he died, why George kind of more or less took over his estate and buried him. And...

Nitz: Where is he buried? Here, in Burns?

Purdy: He's buried right here in Burns, as far as I know. And his sister come from Scotland, here. I remember that. I remember, vaguely, of seeing her. But you know, I wasn't around her really to know anything about her. But I remember when she was here at the funeral and all. And then she just turned around and caught a... I don't know whether she was a flying or how she got here.

Nitz: On a boat.

Purdy: It was several years back when he died.

Nitz: So he was kind of a character, huh?

Purdy: Well, yeah. But he was business, straight business. And he always had a pack horse. Yeah, he took his camp right with him. And he had certain little places where he could...a place fenced in where he could turn a horse overnight. Otherwise, he had to hobble them some place.

Nitz: Do you know much about Walter Lowe, who used to be a trapper here?

Purdy: Nope. No, I didn't know Walt Lowe. No. All the older kids probably knew him, you know, Mervin and George and them. But I didn't know him.

Presley: What do you know about old Fred Black?

Purdy: That's another one of them deals. I'll never forget his daughter. I mean she was, more or less, Madora's age. But yeah, the folks was real friendly with the Blacks.

Nitz: They had a homestead down in the canyon too, right, maybe below you guys?

Purdy: Oh, they was on Poison Creek right there at the forks in the canyon. The road goes up one fork. And that's Devine...Devine Creek, actually. And Poison Creek goes right straight up.

Nitz: Now, there was a school... Was there a school somewhere around their homestead...or a building?

Purdy: Yeah. Right there about where that building sits along the road, the one I told you had burned down, there's a canyon runs off like that. And Buck Clemens had a cabin up there. And I was trying to think. Poison Creek school, Madora and Mervin went to school in it...started school in it, down here. And it set below that... The building is still there. But they moved it. It used to be pretty close to the junction there, 395 and 20. And they pulled it on down. And it's on Tyler property, yeah. And there's some people lives in it now. But it's been redone. And that's where they went to school. And Bessie Clemens taught them.

Nitz: Oh, really?

Purdy: Yeah. That was Buck's wife.

Presley: What did old Fred Black do?

Purdy: Well, he had a little alfalfa field up there and a hay derrick and that's how he stacked the hay.

Presley: On Poison Creek?

Purdy: Yeah, on Poison Creek, right there at the forks of the canyon. Yep. And mostly the ground was at Poison Creek. And it was just a small deal, you know. I don't think they had over forty head, something like that.

Nitz: So who were some of your other neighbors, really, up in that area?

Purdy: Well, I didn't even exist when the folks was there. I wasn't hatched out yet. Mom was living down here. Probably as close as I could get would be like the year before I was born, before any activity went to Silvies, Purdy family. They went up there and started building that house. [Pause] What was the question you asked again?

Nitz: I was trying to... Do you remember who some of the other people were that lived up in that area?

Purdy: Clemens was the last one. Blacks. Bill Theimer, my folks knew Bill Theimer.

Nitz: Oh, did they?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. We got a picture some place.

Nitz: Do you really?

Purdy: Got to dig it up.

Nitz: I would love to see that.

Purdy: Do you know where that monument. He's got a suit of clothes on. He was probably gone long before you come along.

Nitz: I think he died in like '40-something.

Purdy: Yeah. And he's standing right there by the Devine monument, right by the...the turnout right there.

Nitz: Yeah, I know where it is.

Purdy: And he's got a suit of clothes on. And the folks knew him. In fact, when he died, they got all of his stuff. They give it to him...to them. He had a couple of old rifles. One was a .32 Special with a long barrel on it. And somebody stole it out of the house at Silvies. But anyway, the other one was that old wore out one...an old .44 [unintelligible] or something.

Nitz: Yeah.

Purdy: And that was the extent of the guns, I think. A whole raft of stuff. Shoeing outfit and a saddle and I don't know.

Nitz: He was pretty self-sufficient up there in that canyon.

Purdy: Yeah. Well, he took... He didn't go to town for much. Yeah. And boy, he raised his... He had a rye field up on top of the hill. That's where the house was.

Nitz: Yeah, I've been to the house.

Purdy: You went to house just under the rim there?

Nitz: Yeah. Uh huh. I've been there. There's a barn or coral of something, kind of in that little...kind of a box canyon almost...under the rimrock.

Purdy: Its just under the rimrock, yeah.

Nitz: Yeah, that's all falling down.

Purdy: Out on top. And I don't tell you, probably most of the fences is gone by now.

Nitz: There's a little bit of fence left.

Purdy: A little bit of fence left there yet, I think.

Nitz: Hiding under the bushes.

Presley: Going up to canyon, there's kind of a little thing that looks like a dinosaur head that sticks out there. Dad always called it Guggenheimer.

Purdy: Guggenheimer.

Presley: Yeah.

Purdy: That makes me think of a whiskey.

Presley: Yeah, I know it did. Dad always called it... It was Guggenheimer. He always told us he was an old hermit that lived up there. And he sat up on that rock until he turned to stone. [Chuckles]

Purdy: Guggenheimer, I don't---

Presley: They all call it the dinosaur now or something. I don't know what they call it.

Nitz: I've heard it called the dinosaur.

Presley: You go up the canyon, it's just when you start into the trees. It sets on the right there.

Nitz: And there's another one that we always see. And somebody calls it the princess and the pig because it looks like a princess with a crown.

Purdy: Well, when you get down here, you know, where there's a trailer house there now. And I should know the people. I think he works for a pine tree outfit. Him and his wife live there, I think. And I think she must work for the BLM. But anyway, right there close, there's a... Dad always called it the Mormon family. Here's dad standing behind. Here's mom a holding a...in front of him, holding a kid. And then there's a couple of...two or three more lesser ones below her.

Nitz: There's a lot of things up in those rocks.

Purdy: Yes.

Presley: Everybody has their own names for them.

Purdy: If you look that over, why you can see where it might come from.

Nitz: Oh, there's one place that I've always been curious about. As you're going up the canyon, I think it's right before you get to the Devine Canyon sign. There's like a little... It looks like maybe a log cabin or a little dugout or cellar type thing on the left-hand side of the road. There's a bunch of trees in front of it, so you can't see it very well. And there's a place right there. And I've always wondered about that.

Purdy: I'm trying to picture it.

Nitz: Let's see, you go... You go past where Poison Creek takes off. And you go around that kind of first big, wide sharp curve. And there's a big straight away. And it's right before you kind of really get into the canyon on the left.

Purdy: Oh!

Nitz: Somebody's got a house here. Just past the house---

Purdy: There's a trailer house below it...there now?

Nitz: Could be. And there's like a little coral. And sometimes, they have a few horses.

Purdy: Yeah, okay. That's a cellar. Yeah. They used it with the first house that was there. And I was trying to think of who owned it. I just can't put a name on it. But anyway, but that was a cellar. And the house, I'll never forget it. Wayne and I, we were boarding down here at this house I was telling you about. Mom had bought the shack that she had fixed up. And we was boarding there, with the people going to school. And

they was coming down, once in awhile, and picking us up. They was gone for the weekend. Well, they didn't show up. So Wayne and I... And this was in the middle of the winter.

Nitz: Yeah.

Purdy: Wayne and I decided we was going to walk home. To hell with this.

Presley: That's quite a walk.

Purdy: Yeah. We got as far as that... Well, and this was a building. And it wasn't very far from the cellar. And we had to break into it. But it was... They hadn't been gone too terrible long. There was a bed in there, a bedstead and a couple of mattresses over it. Well, we went in there and crawled between them mattresses to keep from freezing to death. And then we finally give that up. We heard a noise out on the road. We went out. And we just barely caught the snowplow going back to Silvies. So we got a ride the rest of the way. I'll never forget that episode.

Nitz: So there was a different house that sat there?

Purdy: Yeah. There used to be a little house there, yeah, little cabin type thing. And of course, down by the old Black place, there was a two-story, funny looking thing. It must have been maybe 20 x 20 or something, possibly, two-story.

Nitz: Straight up, huh?

Purdy: Straight up. [Chuckles] Set right there by the... This was just a little ways from the Black house. Probably long before... It was probably long gone before you ever showed up.

Nitz: Yeah, I'm sure.

Purdy: I don't know if you remember it or not.

Presley: Yeah. I do remember it, yeah. I went up there with Fred Black a couple of times.

Purdy: Oh, yeah? Well, I don't remember Fred, himself, to be honest with you. I do remember his daughter well. She was... She was a pretty girl. And I was the whole sum of... Oh, I don't know. I must have been maybe...maybe in the fifth grade or something. Anyway, Madora was still...and her were good friends. And the folks stopped there and visited with them. And I'll never forget. I shouldn't tell this on myself. Anyway, and what the hell I had in mind, I don't know. But anyway, and you probably don't want to put this on the...on this deal.

Presley: Well, leave it up to Karen's discretion.

Purdy: Anyway...it wasn't really a bad deal. But for a kid my age, why it was pretty bad. Anyway, Madora and the daughter was in the...in the bedroom. And the daughter was changing her clothes. So I walked in. And all she had on was her...slip. And I decided I wonder what the hell is above that slip...or under that slip. And boy, I got a slap down. I remember that. [Laughing] I'll never forget that.

Nitz: Good to learn that early, right?

Purdy: Yeah. I guess. Yeah.

Presley: Yeah. Fred, he bought him a Jeep. And he'd bring it to town and have us work on it. But I had to take him back up there and let him home and then take the Jeep back. And then we'd work on it. And then we'd take it back to him. And then he'd drive back to town. [Chuckles] He only had one rig, just that Jeep.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: So you guys didn't really have too many kids in your area that you played with?

Purdy: No. No. We were kind of really too old for the Japanese kids. And of course, you had to walk a mile and a half to get from our place to the...the camp there, on Trout Creek. And so we didn't really communicate with them. At that same time, Pat Lambert... I was telling you about Lambert that had the building at the canyon on Trout Creek there. He was... This was during the War. And they'd hired him to be night watchman for that trestle. So he was camped there most of the summer. Yeah. And I got to tell you about Pat Lambert now. I don't know where I was going with that. But they ended up hauling them...the Japanese kids to school a couple of years, after they closed the district down. And the folks took us to town and boarded us out.

Presley: Elliot Okita, he ended up on channel...I think it was Channel Two News out of Portland. He was a reporter.

Purdy: Then Donna, I wanted to get with her...with her. She and Geers, of course, was really well acquainted with them. Because Henry took care of the railroad and was more supervise for them. And...

When they shut it down, why they moved... Okita stayed here for several years. I don't remember what happened to the man, Okita. I can't remember his first name.

Presley: Oh, he was quite a gambler. He finally passed away.

Purdy: He died here?

Presley: Yeah. They bought a little house right across from the armory there...and lived there.

Purdy: Okay. Anyway...

Presley: He loved to gamble.

Purdy: Anyway, the Ekis moved to Portland area. And when Frank died, he wanted to be...his ashes dumped up here by the tunnel. And Donna contacted Thad. Of course, they was pretty well acquainted anyway and was going to let him know when it was going to take place. And I wanted to get in on the deal. And I don't know whether she ever got up here or not.

Nitz: I never heard anything.

Purdy: I never heard anything about it. But you're not supposed to be dumping ashes any place anyhow.

Presley: Both the Okitas are buried up in the Burns cemetery.

Purdy: Oh, are they?

Presley: Yeah.

Purdy: Yeah, this was home...really home to them. And I don't know why...why Ekis went back to Portland area. I have no idea. Maybe that's where they come from.

Presley: It might be because Gilbert lived up there then. You know, he was part of the news. He was a news reporter.

Purdy: Could have been, yeah.

Presley: I remember him saying on TV, this is Gilbert Eki. No Elliot. This is Elliot Eki reporting, yeah. Gilbert was a younger brother.

Purdy: Yeah. Frank and Betty Eki. Yep. Both good people. I'll never forget. I was working on the road up there. And they was all a talking Japanese. Most of them guys, I don't know. Never was around the crew much, just Frank and Betty. And as far as the crew, most of them, I think they just talked in Japanese most of the time anyway. But anyway, Pat Lambert used to... He was a guard for that trestle. So he camped there in a tent, most of the summer.

Nitz: So what was he guarding the trestle for?

Purdy: On account of the Japanese camp right there [unintelligible].

Nitz: Oh.

Purdy: Yeah. I mean it was---

Nitz: It was serious business.

Purdy: The threat was really strong, you know. And there wasn't any of them people, I don't think that was evil. They was just as American as we were.

Nitz: Exactly, yeah.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: Were there many other kids, other than like the Ekis?

Purdy: The Ekis and Okitas was the only ones. And most of the rest of the guys were single. Yeah. I think a couple of them had cars. Yeah. What they done for enjoyment, I don't know. Maybe they was card players. I don't know. Maybe they---

Nitz: Yeah, not a lot up there.

Purdy: Two or three of them would all jump in one of them cars and come to town, on a weekend or something, you know. And then they'd be back at...

Nitz: Were they pretty well accepted in the community, do you think?

Purdy: Partially. I mean there's... You can't believe how...how bad people were in this area. They looked at us like what in the hell kind of people are you that you associate with them? But they... The Ekis and the Okitas, we knew them well. We didn't do a lot of things together with them, you know.

Nitz: Didn't socialize.

Purdy: But it wasn't intentionally. They were busy. And we were busy, so...

Nitz: What about how people related with the local Paiute population? How was that? Did they kind of keep to themselves?

Purdy: You mean the Japanese people?

Nitz: Yeah. Or just the regular, you know, the white people?

Purdy: Oh. Most of them... Most of the Indians used to be alcoholics. And they didn't have a very high opinion of them. That's all I can tell you. I can remember, myself... I wanted to get somebody to buy wine. They'd be standing down there by Wenzel's Store, in the sun...and passing a bottle back and forth. I can remember plain as day. There was a few of them that were fairly good people. In fact, I worked with a couple of them.

Presley: Beers?

Purdy: Yeah.

Presley: They both worked in the woods.

Purdy: They both worked for Edward Hines.

Nitz: I know there was a group that worked up in the Seneca Area.

Purdy: Yeah, they lived in Seneca and worked out at Seneca. And they were good people. But no, I worked with both of them. One of them was strictly on the... In the spring of the year, when the road crew went down, because it was getting too soft to make fills and stuff, you know, why they'd put them. They'd bump in on the... on the skid crews. That's how I got to know them. And of course, they got the cat-skinning job and the better paying job. And they were good guys. No. And one of them... I can't remember what the hell his name. He worked out here at the Bell A for years. I think he's retired now. What was his name? I should know it.

I bought a rope just to see what would happen. It was a nylon rope. And I had a left-hand twist. And I knew what it was when I bought it. I wanted to see what would happen. And I was right-handed. And I dally that way. And what happened when you pulled it so far, why then the twist starts opening up. Well, eventually, why you can't do anything with the loop. So I took it out and give it to him. He was left-handed. So I took it out and give it to them. Pretty near brand new. I tried it out. And I seen it wasn't going to work. So I just got it for the heck of it, just to see what would happen.

Nitz: Right. Well, got to try.

Purdy: Yeah. Just proved to myself what would happen. Anyway...

Presley: She asked you if you had a favorite horse or a favorite dog or the other way around.

Purdy: I've had... I've had both. Probably not favorites.

Nitz: Memorable?

Purdy: Memorable. I had one. And him and I got along well. Unbelievable, he never barked or a bark in his life, as far as I know. And you won't believe where I got him, from Dave Reed. He was just a puppy. Put in the truck and he crawled under the seat. And I had to take the seat out to get him out from under the seat, when I got him home. But anyway, he was one hell of a cow dog. All you had to do was just... I could be a cowing out there on the hill some place. If I couldn't see him, this cow, boy that dog would just point like that. And it might be a half a mile over there. But he'd stop once in awhile, look back at you. I'd just wave my arms and he'd go. Pretty soon, why he'd get to the cow and bring her down.

Nitz: Good dog.

Purdy: Yeah. And you never had to worry about running off and leaving a calf. When you was moving cattle, babies is always dropping down in the brush or something, you know. But I can hear he was a coming, bringing him. Never... He was a dandy.

Nitz: How about a horse? Did you have a memorable horse?

Purdy: I had. I've got a black horse, Snuffy, I called him. He was a thoroughbred type, small. Wasn't a very big thoroughbred. As far as I know, he wasn't crossed with anything. He come from Cleveland's over at Drewsey there. And their dad bought two of them...two mares. And no, I got that wrong. That's the wrong deal.

Jimmy Howard was always broke. He had himself broke off. Do you remember Jim?

Presley: Oh, yeah.

Purdy: He had a habit of drinking more than he should have. Anyway, he'd always come to Mom looking for maybe he can make...borrow... Well, he borrowed some money off of Mom. And... Well, I can't pay you back. But I've got these horses. If you'll take the horses for the pay, why here they are. Well, it was two mares. And both of them was with...had a colt in them. And I know where they come from. Arnolds is where they come from. They was a good line of stock thoroughbred on one side at least. And I finally talked Mom out of this younger one. It wasn't younger. It was just smaller horse. And wasn't really an awful pretty animal, like most thoroughbreds. He was kind of, eh, a little bit shabby looking. But nevertheless, a traveler. God, that horse could travel. He'd just walk circles around anything. And he'd do it all day, week after week. And he was the same with a cow. Once he learned what you wanted to do with cows, very few ever got away from him. And it didn't make any difference if it was rock piles or where it was at. He'd get them. Just set up there and hang on.

Nitz: Did you guys ever use mules much?

Purdy: Never.

Nitz: Never?

Purdy: Nope. Never had a mule on the ranch. No. Dad come from Montana with Percheron workhorses.

Nitz: I was just going to ask you about that. What did you use for work horses?

Purdy: Yeah. We had Percherons. And from that point on... One of them was a stud...a stallion. And there was a gelding that worked with him. And they got along well. The stud didn't bother him. They generally rip into something, you know, kick the hell out of them and bite the hell out of him. He didn't bother this old horse...at all.

Presley: His buddy, huh?

Purdy: Yeah, they were buddied up. He must have broke them together from colts, probably. And we got a... Out of this stallion, why we had... They was getting rid of some wild horses out by Beatys Butte, out there. And Dad bought two of them. They was little, no withers. But they was keen little horses. The rest of them was all... They was small. And one... I'll never forget Uncle Paul. The sorrel... One of them was going to be... The black horse, Donna was going to get that one. And the little sorrel, I guess they was going to break it for Wayne. So Paul said, well, I'll take... break the sorrel. And Mervin broke the black. And the black horse was a good horse. He had a little trouble keeping the saddle on him. In fact, they didn't have any withers on them. And the sorrel, Uncle Paul come back in a little bit packing his saddle. Bucked him and the saddle and all off. So Dad got rid of him. [All chuckling]

Presley: He wasn't going to be tamed, huh?

Purdy: Yeah. He wasn't... He wasn't the breaking kind. He broke him too.

Nitz: Long walk home.

Purdy: Yeah.

Nitz: Did you guys ever have any other unusual pets?

Purdy: Well, I had another dog. Buck Miller, that's Mary, George's wife's... Buck was her father. And they sold a place at Oregon End, out there. And they had a couple of registered... Just for that purpose, they were English Shepherds. And we had this... The one I was telling you about, he was an Australian Shepherd, the first one I was telling you about.

Nitz: Dave Reed?

Purdy: Yeah, the Dave Reed dog. Or at least half. And what the other half, I wouldn't know. I don't have any idea what it was. But anyway, he was just one ripping good dog. That's all. But anyway, when George and Mary was living up where Wayne and Carol live now... They moved in there when they first got married. And Buck sold out down there. And Mary had a few cows. So they brought them up, turned them loose. And they was wanting to move to town. And he had this pair of dogs, the English Shepherds, a male and a female. And that's what they had them for was raising pups... and giving them away or whatever. And they had the makings. There's no doubt about that. And when they left...

George and Mary moved to town. There was a small dairy on this place where I live out there now. And so somebody had to come and work day and night down on this. So George come down there. And what are we going to do with these dogs? They'd already

settled in there. And so they took the dogs. And what are we doing to do with the pups now? So I got... I took one of the pups. I don't remember what happened to the other one. And he was one of them, never said a word. And he would watch ya. You didn't even have to move your arm or nothing. All you had to do was just look at him. That means go ahead and do what you're supposed to do.

Nitz: Good dog.

Purdy: Yep. John McAllister run over him. Mervin was notorious for buckarooing in the dark. And he was coming home. He was a riding down the highway. And there's a double S-curve coming down below the two places.

Presley: Yeah.

Purdy: You know where they're at.

Presley: Yeah.

Purdy: Come around the corner. And the dog made a misstep and got in front of him. He ironed him out. That's what happened to him. He never even made it quite to a year old.

Nitz: Oh, really? You never got any puppies out of him.

Purdy: No. No, I never got any puppies out of him. No. Well, and the other one, I tried to get puppies out of him. And everybody in Silvies Valley wanted puppies out. And he wasn't like I was when I was a kid...with the lady with the underskirt on. [Chuckles] He wouldn't have anything to do with a female. Absolutely zero. Nope.

Presley: Talk about deer hunting, you must have just had to open your barn door and they'd come in, didn't they?

Purdy: At times, they did. When I first started hunting, you could take your pick. And you didn't have to... You could walk a quarter of a mile away from the house, right there...and you seen the first buck. And if you didn't want him...look like what you wanted, why just walk around the hill there a hundred yards. And there would be another one to get. They were thick. I mean---

Presley: When did you first see elk coming into your place?

Purdy: Well, that was later years.

Presley: 60's? 70's?

Purdy: I was trying to think how old I'd be. When I first went elk hunting, you had to go plumb to Wolf Mountain to even find a damned elk.

Presley: I think I moved in on that little ridge by your house.

Purdy: Fifteen, sixteen years old, whatever that would be. You go back from now to then...

Nitz: Mid 40's, 50's.

Purdy: Yeah. Along in there. And it was after that. It was late in our part of the country.

Presley: Well, I don't know how many elk my cousin shot off that little mahogany knob just south of your house there.

Purdy: Oh, yeah. When they finally come in, you could count on them and they was there. And they're still there. Yeah, they come in there. And they're plumb down here now.

Nitz: Do you guys ever have many run-ins with bears, any experiences?

Purdy: Not any real experiences. We've had some in our part of the country.

Nitz: Yeah, I've seen a few out here.

Purdy: I'll never forget... The same dog I was telling you about, the spotted one, Australian Shepherd. Tim and I was gathering cows. And we was outside of...south of that cabin up there on the forest. And here comes this... It turned out to be an old she-bear, buckskin bear...with black feet. And I siced this dog onto her. And I didn't know it was a female until somebody shot her a week or so later. And she had a bunch of babies some place too, a couple babies. But anyway, so I know what was chasing... The dog would only go so far. It wouldn't get any closer. He knew when he was in trouble. He did.

Nitz: In over his head, huh?

Purdy: Yep. Yep.

Nitz: Many bobcats up in your part of the country?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And there has always been a cougar or two. But pretty near, they're as wily as the wolves. Believe it or not, I didn't... And they claimed that they killed off all the wolves, you know, because they were dangerous to livestock and, when they get thick, even people...whatever. And so, boy, it was late years. I was buckarooing by myself after the horses on Lost Creek. I was up the canyon where that fill is now, an old trestle used to be. I was out there at Lost Creek and up by Smith Flat up there. I killed a couple bobcats on the way up the canyon. One, oh, seen him first. So I shot him. And I thought, boy, I'm supposed to be getting horses. So I just cut his ears

off. And it was kind of the wrong time of the year to be skinning...skinning the animals anyway.

Nitz: Right. They had a bounty still on those?

Purdy: Well, you could sell the hide, you know, for a very good price. It was a full grown one. But anyway, that's what people done with them. If you seen one, why help yourself. And skinning, if it was the right season, kind of like coyote. Yep. I was busy cutting this one's ears off. And I kept hearing this [heavy breathe sound] sound. And I looked up. And about the time I looked up, this other one jumped out of the tree right over my head.

Nitz: Oh, cool. [Laughing]

Purdy: And just dang near hit me, but not quite. So I grabbed the rifle. It was laying right there by me. I grabbed the rifle and I shot him too.

Nitz: Did you ever trap?

Purdy: I never did do much trapping. No. Nope. Nope, never did do much trapping. Tried to trap beaver. Never did have much success. No. Best thing to do with them is, when you could still buy dynamite, why just blow the dam up and then sit down on the bank there some place where you could see the water. And he'll be along pretty quick...seeing what happened to his water. And that's the only thing I ever done with them. We've still got a problem with them up there.

Nitz: Really?

Purdy: Yeah. I mean there's... A government trapper come in. He'll get two or three. And then people come in. They don't want to trap them because it's a lot of work. And I can't get anything for the hide, for the work, you know. But they don't want to fool with them. I had a couple of years... I think the year before last, they got thirty out of the creek right there.

Nitz: Wow.

Purdy: From what's his name down there, Silvies Valley Ranch, anyway, up through Mervin's. Mervin ended up with the old home place and then the upper end of our place. And then of course, I'd taken the willows out on the meadow part above. The part below was Mervin's land. And I tried to make a deal with him. I told him you let me keep that for five years – [unintelligible] – I clear that off and reroute the creek. Well, you don't dare it anymore.

Presley: I think Scott does though, doesn't he, Campbell?

Purdy: Oh, yeah. And he gets in trouble ever little bit. He's got enough money bail himself out all the time. But anyway, he would never let me do it. And then, of course, they shut it down. I even got in trouble there, trying to get rid of the...put the creek right against the hill. Hell, the cows couldn't even get up and down the creek, you know. It was rocky and steep, about like that. And then the straight rock, boulders and what have you. So I made a trail down along there, so you could get a pickup down there, in case there was a fire or something. That's how I got out of it finally. No fires. But I claimed that's why I done it, you know.

Nitz: Right.

Purdy: First thing I know, why a State man was knocking on the door. And he... But I got out of it. So I claimed fire because people are always going... And they burnt that Lambert place up, somebody did.

Nitz: Oh, really?

Purdy: Yeah. I come home from work one day. And hell, the house was already gone. And it was a going up and running through the sagebrush on the little flat there. And there was a little building up there. It looked about the size of a toilet, an old toilet house. Anyway, just as I got my shovel and got across the creek, that thing just exploded. It wasn't even... The fire wasn't even to it yet. It was hot, you know. And just the heat off of the fire, it just blowed up. But anyway...

Nitz: I'll bet a lot of neat stuff has been lost to fire up in those areas.

Purdy: Yeah. Thank God we haven't had too many bad ones. Jackknife and then, of course, the Idlewild fire, years ago. That was a picnic field, Heinz picnic. That's what started it. Somebody threw a cigarette down there somewhere. Or one of their camp fires or cooking fires or something got away from them. And it didn't do a whole lot of damage. But it could have done some more.

Nitz: Do you ever remember anything about the McKinney saw mill? Was there anything of that left that you remember?

Purdy: McKinney, I was trying to think where exactly it's even at. I know of it. But I don't think---

Nitz: The Lowe mill.

Purdy: Lowe?

Nitz: Yeah, out by King Mountain.

Purdy: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, so there was saw mills. Dickensons had several mills. He ended up with the one on Trout Creek. He probably built the house there, which might

be gone now. Probably is. But anyway, his wife was crippled. I can't remember who she was. She was in a wheelchair is all I ever knew of her. But anyway, he finally sold out to a bunch of Swedes.

Nitz: Was that Larsons?

Purdy: No. The people that he sold out to? No, no. No. Boy, I can't think of their name either. They had a department store and stuff down here in town for quite a few, after they got through saw milling. And they was a joyous, happy bunch. No kidding. And pretty near every one of them played some kind of an instrument. And in them days, why...everybody had a little party, a get-together, some place in the valley up there. And when they'd drive in the yard, they'd get out, grab their instrument and come in the door a playing. I'll never forget them.

Nitz: The fun never stops, huh?

Presley: Wasn't the Creekmores, was it?

Purdy: No. They was musically inclined too. No. No, these were Swedes. And I can't remember what in the world their name was now. They run that Ora Dickenson saw mill for – I don't know – probably six or eight years anyway.

Presley: I'm trying to think of the department store that might have been...

Purdy: Well, I'm trying to think where it was, the one that they had. Man and a woman, that I remember. Of course, the folks knew them well. They both---

Presley: They had the five and dime?

Nitz: Eberly?

Presley: Eberly's? It wasn't Eberly's.

Purdy: No. I don't think so. No. No.

Nitz: I don't they had anything to do with the mills.

Purdy: The store was on the...beyond the west side of the main street there. And I'm trying to think which one it was now. It's been awhile. And I think they're both gone. The guy had a brother that they thought might have been a little bit...

Presley: Oh, yeah. Rod and Nyleen's.

Purdy: There you go.

Presley: Yeah, he was a little...

Purdy: He was just, you know? But anyway, that was part of the crew. The whole outfit was all kind of Swedes or Norwegian or something. But they was a happy bunch. But there was a saw mill in every canyon. Well, any place that there was a ranch within ten miles, why there was a saw mill some place on a creek some... And they had them. They was every place. Some over to...Magpie...pretty near to Drewsey. [Pause] Ethel Bossuot.

Presley: Her dad.

Purdy: Her dad, yeah, he had a saw mill. And one of the last ones to go down, I think, too.

Nitz: Is that Frost?

Presley: Frost.

Purdy: Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, I think, probably, you got enough.

Nitz: Yeah. We probably talked your ear off, huh, for awhile.

Purdy: Yeah. I don't know what all you... You say whatever you want to say about whichever. I don't care.

Nitz: I think that was good.

Presley: Um hmm.

[End of Interview]

