

# *Gathering Our Voice*

Interview: Marvin Ludeman

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

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NW: Ok. The day is Friday, August 11<sup>th</sup>. And I'm here with Marvin Ludeman. This is Nancy Warner. And we're going to talk about your history in Douglas County. I'm particularly interested in talking with you about wheat farming and what you've experienced in your life. Because here it is August and your son and most of Douglas County's are out there harvesting right now. So let's start with when and where you were born.

ML: I was born in Waterville at the home of Mrs. Brownfield and don't ask me her first name cause I don't know. She was the mid-wife who delivered my wife and just about every other little kid in the town. So, that was my beginning I guess. I don't know what else to tell ya but...  
[chuckles]

NW: So I'm just going to move a little bit closer to you actually so I don't have to stretch quite so far. So, the date on that again...?

ML: That was June second 1933

NW: And so we were talking before I turned the recorder on and you come from a family that's been in Douglas County for...you're the third generation and your grandchildren are fifth generation, the Ludemans. Could you tell me a little bit about how your grandparents first came here?

ML: I can't tell you how my - the Ludeman part came. But my mother's side of the family, they came by train to Ritzville and wagon to Ritzville. So they were Andrews is their name. That's... And I can't...It was 1903 I believe it was when they made the trek from Illinois I think, to the state of Washington.

NW: So did you grow up hearing stories about how they decided to come to Withrow? What brought them? Were there fliers? Promotional fliers?

ML: My grandfather, Jim Andrews, had a good friend by the name of Jack Withrow or Gene Withrow I'm not sure what it was but his last name was Withrow. And that's how the town I think got their name. But he wrote him a letter that said come out and there's an abundance of people that need for your expertise as far as a store keeper

NW: So he was a store keeper in Illinois?

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ML: Apparently so, I don't know that for a fact but must have been or why else would he invite him like that?

NW: So you showed me wonderful old photos of the store in Withrow. How long did they, did they have that store?

ML: Until my grandfather was 93. Not too many years ago. Well, yeah it was 34 years ago but uh...

NW: So is it still there? Is it still open?

ML: The building is still there. It's no, it's nothing in it, it's empty. Everybody's gone. Even his sons are dead now.

NW: So how many people lived in Withrow at the time? I mean I know you weren't around when they first came there but compared to now. It was a thriving community?

ML: Yeah it did have a bank, a jewelry store, a couple taverns, a grocery store, repair shops, grain elevators, couple of 'em. So it had a lot of uh...a hotel. What else I can't think. A [?]. jewelry store. I told you that, yeah what else? [NW asks about another shop] Not that I'm aware of.

NW: So being in the store business for all those years he must have known every body in the community.

ML: Oh yeah.

NW: And did people just sorta have charge accounts there?

ML: Yes he had. People would come in and pay their bill once a year with his name on it for payin' the bill. [5 minutes] And he also sold farm machinery and tractors and [?] and just about everything.

NW: So this was your mother's father?

ML: Right.

NW: Ok. So then when, when your mother met your dad she had grown up in the grocery store business, in the, the store business?

ML: Well yeah I don't know that. I'm sure she probably helped in the store. I don't know that she spent a whole lot of time there but uh...

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NW: But then she got into farming? She basically...

ML: Well after they... she married my dad right after he come home from WWI. And then, and then they were in farming the rest of their life a'course but uh...

NW: So your father, your... and what was your father's name?

ML: Harry Ludeman.

NW: Ok so he, he was the one that taught you farming?

ML: Right. And the neighbors. I worked when I was a teenager I'd work for a neighbor lived right next close to us. I would drive a tractor for him after school and things like that. I just learned by doing it I guess. Didn't...nobody gave me any formal education. I just figured it out.

NW: Well there's a lot to it. A lot to it and unless you'd grown up in it you would have no clue. When you drive by today and you look at the wheat fields and you see people out there in combines those people have no idea what, all the work that goes into it even now let alone then. So I'm really interested in the detail of it actually and how you did learn. Was the Grange a big deal at all in helping you learn?

ML: We went to the Grange. But not really, they didn't teach me much. I think I learned more from the older people in the community. Just watchin' what they did and kinda imitating. If it worked for them, if they were a good farmer, than I'd try to imitate 'em.

NW: So how would you, what do you mean by a good farmer?

ML: Well you could see he had a good crop, no weeds. And a lot of uh... and he was on time with his work. A lot of people weren't. ya know, they weren't on time. When it showed up, they had poor crops. We used to watch for the good guys, a guy that's making a good living and try to follow what he's doing. If you see him go out there then you get out there yourselves and do whatever he's doing ya know just imitate 'im.

NW: So one of the things that's interesting to me is every year's different weather wise. And so how did the farmers you watched, did they tell you about what to look for in the soil condition or the, so many consecutive nights in the temperature. What kinda things did you learn from them?

ML: They just said farm your lands so that you have the [stubble] that'll hold the moisture that you do get so it'll be there when it comes time to seed your new crop. And uh that's all I did and whatever... sometimes it worked or sometimes it didn't work. Sometimes it's too dry and it never did have enough moisture. But you could always see wheat in the spring then after winter moisture so but basically there was no, nobody told me. I just kinda figured it out. And then they

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would say too ya know, you need this much [stubble] or whatever it is to keep that moisture good. So what's what we tried to do.

NW: So once the snow was melted you'd have to let it dry out a little bit before you could get out there.

ML: Right.

NW: So about how long, how long would you wait before you could get out?

ML: I usually waited until I saw the weeds starting to grow and then it was time to get out there and kill the weed and at the same time establish your

NW: So you're talking now about, that was the pattern you followed when you were using a tractor.

ML: Yes, you bet. I can't ...I think I never had, I never did farm with horses myself. [10mins] My dad did and I can remember when he was doing it but I, when I was old enough to be involved he had a tractor. And it wasn't a big tractor, wasn't much of a tractor either but it did the same thing as the horses did.

NW: Oh yeah you were telling me about the horses when we were looking at those old photos and I did want to ask you to talk about that again because it's so interesting. Tell me what you do remember observing of your dad, your dad workin' the horses.

ML: Well when we'd go out to the field he'd take everything with him. Water for the horses to drink and feed for the horses to feed on so he didn't have to run back and forth to the house sometimes it was quite a distance. So you used...you took everything with you, including your own lunch and took care of your horses cause they were your livelihood. If you didn't take of them they'd quit on you.

NW: Yeah that's interesting. So, so you had a separate wagon that you would use to haul food and water out to the horses. And so did you have somebody runnin' back and forth four times or a couple more times during the day to resupply that wagon?

ML: No we took enough to last for the day. And I was, as a little kid I got the job of runniin' the pump-handle to fill that water tank for the horses. And my mom did the lunches and that was about it. Dad harnessed the horses.

NW: So what kind of feed would you take out for the horses to have?

ML: A grain. Oats usually.

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NW: So they were growing oats for the horses and wheat for your family's consumption as well as to sell?

ML: The wheat was mostly to sell except for the seed that you save for the next year's crop. And oats was for the hay and for the feed. You harvest the oats for the grain and just like you would the wheat and then you'd save that or have it rolled. Some of the guys... My dad never had a machine that rolled the oats but we had neighbors that did and we'd take it over and run it through their machine... rolled the oats to make good horse feed, and cows also. If you had to milk cows you had to treat them good or they wouldn't give you any milk

NW: So when you rolled oats the thing that comes to my mind is oatmeal. Was it rolled that flat?

ML: Looks just about the same. You can't hardly tell the difference when it's through.

NW: So do you roll it because it's easier for them to digest?

ML: Right. Yeah. Yeah it's just quicker... yeah, the whole kernel just goes through undigested so...

NW: Ok so you'd take rolled oats out into the field when you're doing the wheat harvest to feed the horses and then actually how... and you'd pour it into a trough for them?

ML: No you had a little bag you hung on every horse with the oats in it. They'd eat that. And then he'd want a drink of water when he'd get through with that and that was about it [laughs].

NW: Ok, ok. The old feed sack. So were those the kind of things that were also sold at your grandpa's, your grandfather's store?

ML: Yes. he sold everything from buggy whips to all the harnesses that you could buy and... trying to think, just about anything that involved even the first gas engines that came out. Water cooled gas engines he sold those. Just... they'd just go big old pop pop pop that's all they did is make a noise but they would run a great big engine would be about a half horse, what a little half horse electric would do today.

NW: Things have changed. Well, I want to talk more about horses. You were showing me that picture of the team. If you'd tell me about that again about how the sort of ratio of horses to mules.

ML: Well... had two main horses that... and I'm just guessing I think they were Purcheron but I'm not sure but they were big horses. And they were in the lead. But the rest of the teams were mules and for some [15mins] operations you did out there you only needed five or six mules and a team of horses. For harvest we had a combine, you used a whole bunch of 'em ya know, 15/16

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mules and two horses or whatever. And the flat land, flat country you could get by with less horses because it's tough to pull that machine up over hills and so you needed more horses in the hill but pretty much flat country where I grew up.

NW: Yeah tell me a little bit about how you would guide those horses. Is that something you were able to do as a little kid? Be with your dad and watch, learning from him how to guide those horses?

ML: I could do just like on a one or two horse team I could guide, and you use reigns you know for that but I've heard him yell 'gee' and 'haw' and the horses knew what that meant and they turned right or left or whatever but most of the time you used reigns. Center reigns with the lead horses and then the mules just followed and that's all I can really, really remember. I was pretty little when they, oh I was in school when we got, got rid of the horses so...

NW: So gee was right and haw was left?

ML: I think it was just the opposite. I think it was gee left and right haw. I'm not, I'm not sure. It's been a long time [chuckles]

NW: Well let's talk about where you actually did grow up. You were born in Waterville but tell me where you did grow up

ML: Well I lived...my folks lived a mile east of Farmer and 3, 3.5 miles south and we went to my grandparents for Christmas even and when we come home all that was standing was the chimney. So our house had burned down when we were gone. And a neighbor, just half a mile or less than half a mile away was in the process of moving out. He was gonna give back his farm and go work in a logging mill up in Entiat and so he said why don't we just trade land. He says mines got a house on it, a barn and everything and he said so why don't we just trade land. And I'm not sure they ever went to the County and recorded that transaction but they traded land. And we had a house. And that was...and a barn and the whole everything. Just because they were a gentleman agreement between two guys. No money ever changed hands they just, they traded land.

NW: That's pretty neat. Was that on Christmas day? Like the day after your house burned down?

ML: I can't answer that. I don't know. I think it was probably in the spring

NW: How old - What year was that that your house burned down?

ML: I don't know. I was very little.

NW: So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

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ML: I had one sister.

NW: That was it?

ML: That's it.

NW: Ok. So was she younger?

ML: She was older. She was 4 years older than I am. But she's, she's gone now. She had breast cancer and...5 or 6 years ago she passed away.

NW: What was her name?

ML: Helen.

NW: So you continued to grow up then in that same area, on the neighboring land, and then your neighbor who traded land with you did he sell the land that you traded for and then moved to the Entiat or?

ML: No he just handed it over to his kids when they grew up. They don't, they never did farm, they just were landlords to the people that farmed it. And so it was interesting how they took care of it. My son now is farming for the son of the original, who is a very old fellow right now, he lives in Entiat right now so...

NW: So let's go back to the wheat farming and the wheat cycle. I know that you, so you learned from the good farmers around you, practices and you –

ML: And my dad too.

NW: And from your dad. [20 minutes]. So it would help me... I'm learning more about farming by interviewing people like you. And asking people to just sort of walk me through the year of your annual cycle. So it's spring and you're getting out there when the weeds are starting to come up to start plowing to plant... you've saved seed from the year before...

ML: Right.

NW: Tell me how you decided what seed to save.

ML: Well...there was basically, as I recall it, there was only one variety of wheat back in those days. And it was called Turkey Red. And everybody saved that. And that's what they seeded in the fall for winter wheat. And then there was different varieties, I don't remember what some of 'em were, for spring wheat. If you couldn't get the wheat up in the fall you had to seed spring wheat. And it was not a, a different variety al together, a different kind of stuff. Wasn't the other

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was really red, hard wheat, almost brown in color kernels and the other was more white. That I recall anyway. But the process of the, of the planting started in usually in September and planted next year's crop on, not on the same crop you just cut off, the crop off of. You had to have half your land in what they call summer fallow which would give you an extra year to accumulate moisture for the next crop. So with that philosophy I guess you conserve, best the farm you could, to conserve the moisture for the following year. And most of the time it worked good. Once in awhile it didn't work at all depending on the wheat. You took the moisture the good lord gave you and that's all you got. Not second chance. [chuckles]

NW: Risky business for sure.

ML: It worked ...pretty much.

NW: So you have seen a lot of changes in how wheat production has occurred, huge changes. And when I drive by today, like last week or a couple days ago, drive across the Waterville plateau and you see them out in their combines harvesting and there was all kinds of dust coming up and everything. What was it like before you had all those enclosed combines? How did you handle the dust of harvest?

ML: You had big muddy tears roll down your cheeks and you spit mud. It wasn't nice. And that's about it. You just set out there in the open and took it.

NW: So did you put like a handkerchief around your face so you wouldn't have to breathe it so much?

ML: My dad said they did when he were a kid but I never did. I just spit the mud out [laughs].

NW: That's a lot of dirt isn't it?

ML: Yeah it is.

NW: All in your eyes...

ML: Yeah that was the biggest problem with me was the eyes. My eyes would just water and I would have big muddy tears roll down my cheek. It was –

NW: That doesn't sound fun.

ML: Everybody had the same thing. So...

NW: So did people have goggles?

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ML: Some. But they'd get so dirty you couldn't see through 'em so...I didn't like 'em for that reason. I just blinked my eyes a lot and I could see [laughs].

NW: I wear contacts so just the thought...

ML: Oh that would be terrible

NW: So I couldn't do it. So um, well...the day, the harvest, harvest time, besides it being dusty they're long days. You've only got so long to do it. Why is that? Why do you have to - Because you're trying to beat the weather?

ML: You're trying to beat the weather. The rains come usually sometime in September and so you best get your crop in while you could. If you get enough rain the wheat would sprout right in the head while it was standing in the field and you couldn't, that isn't even good for feed at that point.

NW: Why not because it would mold?

[25 minutes]

ML: Yes, it would...turn mushy.

NW: So did you ever have that happen?

ML: No but I've ... one particularly wet year people in near Waterville and north of Waterville people had that happen, this was later on when we had self and a lot of us went, we'd finished already and we'd take our combines and go in there and help them because it was starting to sprout in the head and we'd go in there help and try and get their crop in before it had all ruined. It just happens, we do that a lot. You know I've seen people get...we had a neighbor right near Farmer that had a heart attack, we got one all together they called the we had a grain company and they opened the elevators for us and we had guys all show up Sunday morning at 7:30 or 7 in the morning with all their combines and trucks and everything and that one case, that particular case I'm recalling I think it was 11 o'clock we were all done. His whole crop was harvested. And it was kinda like a demolition derby out there with the combines cause you wondered where the next guy was gonna go but you just tried to stay out of each other's way and keeping going. And it was actually fun. You knew were doing something good for somebody that needed it. The same thing happened for my son just this last year. He was up on the mountain, on Badger Mountain, and all his neighbors up there pulled in and cut his crop in one day.

NW: That was just last year?

ML: Two years ago.

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NW: Oh that's right, yeah. That's great so there's just –

ML: That's just the camaraderie that farmers have

NW: Yeah, that's neat. That's a good thing. That's alive and well in Douglas County.

ML: Oh I think it is. It's never left that I know of. It's pretty impressive you know, it makes you really...kinda emotional about it that people do that without being begged or asked, they just do it. It makes you realize who your friends really are.

NW: Makes you glad to be part of a community that responds like that.

ML: Right, right. And the women all get together and they put on a big feed. Right out there, well not out in the field so much, but they set up some place like in, in the case of my son's they had...right there, little place called Beaver Creek and they had their big dinner there for everybody. It was neat.

NW: Really neat, yeah that's neat. So this transition from horses to tractors and how that affected the whole wheat harvest. You were telling me earlier that, well you mostly just learning about the horses by watching your grandfather when you were a little kid and then, and then your dad was farming with the tractor. He would pull the combine with the tractor?

ML: Well originally I can remember the horses still being out there but I was pretty little. And then we got a tractor and I don't know what year it was but all I remember it was an Oliver. And it was...anyway we...it would do the same thing the horses did except we didn't have to haul the feed out there and everything else we had to haul barrel of gasoline out there to keep the tractor full and that was about it. And it was probably more dusty than the horses were for some reason...I don't know, but it was as dusty anyway if nothing else but you get the dust when you get the tail wind and you're going the same direction as the wind and then you got that stuff...

NW: So I'm just thinking about another thing related to the switch from horses to tractors and that's the fertilizer to the fields. Did you guys see a big change in that when you went from horses to tractors?

ML: Well there was no fertilizer ever used until in the 50s

NW: I mean like horse manure

ML: Oh, I don't think that affected anything

NW: Oh it wasn't enough?

[30 minutes]

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ML: It wasn't enough. And then somebody came in, in the Waterville area, [?] was his name and he developed, or put out machines that you, you rented the machine and applied the fertilizer in the form of anhydrous ammonia and it injected it into the soil. There's a big hill just out of Waterville, east side of Waterville and he went up there and he wrote with his machine he put NH<sub>3</sub> which was the [chuckles] nomenclature of the fertilizer and it stood out dark green in this pale green field and it was good advertising I'll tell you it was excellent and it caught on pretty fast after that point.

NW: Oh that's funny. So what year was that approximately?

ML: I...I'm gonna say 1950-51 in that area someplace

NW: Oh that's interesting

ML: It was very interesting to me because it was...obvious [laughs]. The wheat was taller and it was darker green in the spring and you know and it just, looked really good

NW: So what were the yields like when you first started farming on your family's place by farmer versus hmmm...maybe when you stopped farming and your son took over?

ML: Well, when I first started farming my dad was using fertilizer before I started and I continued to use it. I can remember before that, before we used fertilizer, my dad didn't use it, nobody did...it would...there'd be on a good year you might get 35-40 bushels/acre and on a bad year you'd get 20 bushels/acre which wasn't much. And with fertilizer it got better. Once in a while we had some...most of the time you get 35-40, 45 bushels/acre. Once in a while you get a good year with a lot of rain you could get 50, sometimes 55 bushels/acre. And I remember one year, I can't remember what year it was now, 1985 I think, I got 85 bushels/ acre on a half section, 320 acres. And that was unheard of. Still is almost. It happens but it's pretty rare. That was really astounding you know because...I bought a new combine that year and paid cash for it and had money left over.

NW: Wow, so that was the land out there by Moses Coulee.

ML: Right.

NW: Wow, 85 bushels.

ML: Yeah that was just an extremely good year

NW: Wow...what year was it, 84?

ML: 1985. That's why I can remember the yield. Cause it was the same year as the...

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NW: Oh yeah, wow. Huh. Well, yeah you have definitely seen some changes. So what kind of fertilizer was your dad using then before the... Was he using anhydrous ammonia or he was using something else?

ML: Oh he used – when fertilizer came we were all using anhydrous ammonia. That was the only available. And they used, you rented a machine from Kimcam (?) they called it, the fertilizer company and...it...trying to think what...there was no, there was some other types of fertilizer we added. We added sulphur sometimes. You could inject both at the same time. That worked especially good in spring cropping with spring week, but most of us or a good percentage of us, soil sampled. Tested our soil. They'd come out with the thing and they'd bore a hole and they'd tell you were your level of nitrogen is and nitrogen is the big thing that you're looking for, and water. You needed a certain amount of water to make the nitrogen work. And so the soil testing worked extremely well.

[35 minutes]

ML: And that was the fertilizer company that did that. Kimcan(?) was his name in Waterville and Dick and Dales took that business over when he retired and they've treated it well. Handled it good.

NW: Ok well I wanted to ask you about how the changes you've seen in weeds over the span of your farming career. When you first started out what was your main wheat and when you turned the farm over to your son how had that changed?

ML: Well the original wheat was called Turkey Red and it was a hard red winter wheat. It was the big yielder. It grew real tall on a good year, taller than I am. Yeah, when I was a kid I went out there and played out there in the wheat and I got lost. Couldn't find the home, house. And I wasn't far from the house but I couldn't find my way out. It was interesting.

NW: Nightmares.

ML: Anyway it was, well it was fun too you know. But uh...and I could hear, you know they'd yell at me it was time to come in you know and I'd head for the sound and I'd find my way out eventually. And as time went on they came out with a...they call it Club wheat, it had little club head, no beards on it. It was a bit yielder. It was a soft white wheat and good for pastries that kind of thing. Not much good for protein. If you had too much protein they'd dock ya because they wanted that for cake flours and that type of stuff. So it all changed. It didn't make wheat, er didn't make bread very good. It was lousy for bread. Red wheat was a good one for bread. And then as time went on, you know, there was these disease came in ya know it was called snow mold. The snow would stay on a little too long and the stuff would turn moldy under neither the

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wheat or under the snow and die. You had no wheat. So you had to plant spring wheat. And that was a soft white wheat and that would come out. When it survived they paid a premium for it, it was good. And as time went on they finally developed wheat that was resistant to snow mold. It looked like it died but it would all come back. As it warmed up in the spring the wheat would come out of there and just look good again. It was really good. Good thing they developed ya know. The WSU did that. They had research farms and test strips all over the county that they worked with this stuff until they found the right thing and that seed stayed around for a long time. Now the seed they're using today is just a, a natural progression I guess from the same type of wheat. It has beards now, but it's... I think that just...it really doesn't matter whether it's bearded or beardless, it still works good. And the wheat today is... there's many different varieties, names. It's all basically the same kinda wheat.

NW: So when - the turkey red was good for flour?

ML: Yes.

NW: So your grandfather had the store in Withrow, did he sell local wheat that had been ground to flour or did he grind flour?

ML: He didn't, the grain company did some of it. He didn't sell any of that, he didn't sell any seeds. He sold the implements. He sold combines and tractors and ploughs and all that kind of stuff.

NW: So where was the grain company, was it there in Withrow?

ML: There were two of them there. There was Centennial Mills and then there was Waterville Union Grain Company they called it. They were the two warehouses there and they competed with each other. The price[40 minutes]. They would compete somewhat in prices and it was interesting. But everybody had their favorite ya know. I just took to the one that had the best offer, that's the way I went. And that's when I did it. By then there was... the Centennial Mills closed in, oh I 'suppose the late 50s and they both, one company, the Waterville Union Grain company took over both of them. And that's was – it's a progression of the same company that's there now.

NW: In Withrow?

ML: Well in Waterville. The main office is in Waterville. They have branches, elevators in Alstown, Withrow, Mansfield, Brewster, Coulee City, Wilbur...

NW: Farmer?

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ML: Farmer.

NW: All the same? Ok.

ML: All the same company now. They've managed it well. They've done a good job of warehousing the grain and shipping it and marketing it. They've done a good job. They've worked for the farmers really well

NW: So when you're growing turkey red wheat you'd save some of it for seed for the next year and then you'd grind some of it – you'd take some of it for the grain company and have it ground into flour for your family's use?

ML: No, we never did. We'd buy the flour from the grocery store. Wherever they had it. Wherever they had that it was available. The only thing we'd take would be if we had feed, we got so everybody had their own mill and we'd grind our own feed just for our milk cows basically. A few of us had a horse or a few things like that around but not too many horses. Most everybody had one or two horses just for all the hay wagons. We'd open the fields up because that was before self-prepared cumbines. So rather than drive a cumbine in there and tramp down all this wheat just to get the first round cut, we'd go in there with a mower, a horse drawn mower and mow this and shock the hay and that would be the feed for our cattle. And our cows. And the horses too a little bit. Then we could...that was about it. We didn't – we'd take oats. We would take to a mill and have it rolled or ground for feed but that was about it. Some of the people had their own roller mills. My father in law he had a roller mill we could roll oats in. My dad never had any mill. Took it to somebody, a neighbor that had one.

NW: Ok well we've been talking a little bit about Badger Mountain and how it was summer range for some of the people that ran cattle but you lived really close to Moses Coulee so one of the things I wanted to visit with you about was your memories and experiences in Moses Coulee. So when you were growing up from the time that you were little to as long...what have you seen in the older days, in the earlier days how did people manage cattle in the Moses Coulee area.

ML: Well I had one neighbor, he had pasture down there and at that time they called it the Old Camel Place. It used to be kind of an overnight stop on the travel between Ephrata and Waterville. The only bad thing about it was it had a lot of bed bugs. But people stopped there anyway because it was a mid-way point. A neighbor of mine, the name of Bob Olsen, he leased the ground in there by the camel place where the spring come out of the ground or the crick come out of the ground again and he would cut, he made hay [45 minutes] or alfalfa he planted in there. And he cut that for hay. And he farmed for oh, I can't tell you what year he finally quit and he went to work in Ephrata for the conservation district, the soil district – a government job. He didn't have enough land to make a good living on. He was a cowboy. He was a cowboy's

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cowboy. He did everything by horseback. He'd rope the calf, run down, snup it down, throw it, tie it up, brand it, notch his ears and did everything else you gotta do with a calf and then turn it loose he'd go back with his mama and he'd go rope another one. He did it the hard way. And I'd help it, it was fun because I didn't have to do it every day of my life. It was fun. And he was a neat fellow and that made it more fun too. But it was...just a...they had some dry land farming, a wheat farm up on top. But it was poor ground, it was right on the edge of the sagebrush and it didn't seem to get much moisture there as it did other places. It was tough for him, really hard. His folks were, I think they were Swedish. But they put on a, she did a big spread for dinner when we'd go help him and stuff like that. It was really neat. They were fun, fun people.

NW: Is that why it's called Olsen hill road, that one road out there?

ML: I think it is. It's the county kinda made a...used that as a guide line and made a [?] there that the county road is down through there now. It's basically what used to be the Olsen Road, a lot of it.

NW: So tell me what that country looked like before Rim Rock developed those big alfalfa fields in there with those wells. What did it look like from like Camel Springs North?

ML: Rim Rock didn't develop that. It was a fellow by the name of Dale Schick who lived up north of highway 2 up on top, on Division Road. And he went down there, he put cable between poles and strung water lines on those cables and put sprinkles in. He irrigated that like overhead sprinkles. And it was all his venture. He had dry land pasture further north as you're going North, in the bottom of the Coulee, the last house on the right is where he had his vet shop and he took care of his cattle. And any dry land...when I first came back from the service I worked for him for a couple years as a quote unquote cowboy. Worst job in the world [laughs]. Hardest job in the world. And he had pasture up on top of Badger Mountain and down in Douglas Creek, he had pasture there. And he had corals down there. One incident I'll tell you about it was in the fall. Missing a few cows so I went up and found 'em finally. Took 'em down to what they call the Bard place, by Douglas creek. We put the cattle in there and we'd haul 'em in trucks and we'd put them down there in Moses Coulee. I was following the cows, And the cows knew where they were going, I was following on horseback. And all of a sudden I looked down and there were snakes everywhere. Rattle snakes everywhere. They were all just going one way, they didn't care about us at all they were going to den up I'm sure is where they were going. But anyway, I grabbed on to that saddle horn and I hung on tight, I didn't want to get piled out there in the middle of that. And the horse walked on through 'em all and the cattle did too and they never got [50 minutes] – nobody got bit. They just had one thing in mind, going to their den I guess. Anyways I was, I never seen anything like that before and I never have since.

NW: And what month was that?

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ML: October

NW: Oh how interesting to see that

ML: It was getting late

NW: Oh wow that's really interesting Marvin. Could you tell me more about where it was?

ML: Well, there's a – if you go down Douglas creek there's what they call horseshoe bend, it's a big sweeping curve. It as a 90 degree or a little more than a 90 degree bend and that's where I was going through there with the cattle and on my way down stream to where the barb place was.

NW: That is so neat you got to see that. Wow that must have been – how many snakes do you think there were?

ML: 500 [laughs]

NW: Really?!

ML: At least [laughs]. looked like there were thousands but I don't know, it was lots of 'em .

NW: So did you ever see anything like that in Moses Coulee?

ML: No. Never did.

NW: Cause people say it was so snakey?

ML: Well it was, but when he had the irrigation down there I still worked for him a little then and there were snakes. You'd bail your hay and there's always a snake in the bail it seemed like. Dead, but it was in there. There were a lot of snakes down there. But I don't think anybody – a few dogs got bit, got sick but I don't think any livestock ever got bit. If they did it didn't bother them. And I don't know of any people that got bit. There's people that lived there, that stone house there, where the racetrack was at, they were Petersorage [?] was their name. Their kids went to school with my kids and they hauled 'em up the Olsen grade to the little school there by Gary Ludeman's. At the Shilo School at that time. Everyday they'd come up that grade you know, and they had a lot of snakes in their area down there. Everyone knew what they were. Snakes. If you give em enough time they'd get out of your way cause they're scared of you as you are of them. Just make a lot of noise when you go through there and they'll run from ya. But if you corner him he's not gonna run. I got bit once. I worked for the telephone company in... I can't remember when it was – 50s, early 50s. And I was working up on Badger – Tichenal Canyon going up on Badger Mountain and I was diggin' holes for a telephone pole and I laid the

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bar down in the grass, it was a cold day. It was sunny but it was cold and I cleaned the my hole out and I went and picked up the bar and well a snake had stretched out against the bar cause it was warm and he bit me on the palm of my hand [laughs]. They had a snake kit in the truck and I didn't even get sick

NW: Wow that's great. I've always wondered what it would feel like.

ML: It hurts! [laughs]. But it was just uh... He just turned around and bit me right in the heel of my hand. They had a snake kit and you squeeze it and the teeth come out and they just jab it in there, makes it bleed and then they release it and sucks that - it's rubber and it sucks the venom out and I never even got sick or anything.

NW: Finish working that day then?

ML: Well they took me down to the, there was a hospital in Waterville at that time and they took me down there and the guy gave me a shot of something, anti-venom or something. And yeah. It was quittin' time by then and I went home but I went back to work the next day.

NW: Well, so this is interesting cause I had thought that Rim Rock had developed those alfalfa fields but it was Schick?

ML: Schick did that. And then the alfalfa fields from where the old camel place was on downstream was Bob Olsen [55 minutes] or Bobby Olsen, he put those in. There weren't very many acres involved, it's a pretty small area because it narrows, the canyon narrows up down there down where you get down to where McClure's lives. Actually the alfalfa stopped oh I don't know, a couple hundred yards north of their house, of McClure's house.

NW: So I'm anxious to get you out there. How long has it been since you've been to there, where the McClure's house used to be?

ML: Oh, I went down there one time, it was posted and I snuck in anyways to fish [laughs]. I went in just below their house and fished.

NW: Is their house still there?

ML: House was still there then, yes.

NW: Oh yeah, see the house is gone. We've never seen even a picture of the house.

ML: It was a nice house.

NW: I would like to talk to you about photos. We're just getting' so anxious to find some photo of the McClure's house and the way the whole area looked

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ML: I don't think I've got one. I don't know anybody that's got one. I don't know that ever one was ever taken

NW: And yeah I can believe that that would be the case. Well what can you tell me about the McClure's and how they, what it looked like when they were living there and how long they lived there.

ML: When I was born, my mother was arthritic and she was bed-ridden for quite some time after my birth and she stayed there, Mrs. McClure she stayed there and he stayed down there on the place and took care of our house and my mom and us kids and the whole bit. It was – they had sheep and they'd sell us the sheep once in a while, butcher sheep. I never did care for mutton especially but lamb is alright. But an old grown sheep has got a funny taste to it that I didn't care for but anyway, they had a garden, a huge garden. They sold produce out of that garden. They had chickens, they sold eggs. They just made a – they scratched out a living down there. They worked hard at it but they did well I think. We would trade cream 'cause we had milk cows and we'd separate, had a separator and we'd separate the cream and we'd trade cream for some of their garden produce. We had a garden too but it was kind of a token thing, we'd take some of theirs in exchange for the cream and they were happy and we were happy.

NW: I can't wait to get you out there so you can actually point out where the garden was and there's a...

ML: Well we could walk up to it I think but that's the only one. You gotta drive in, well, it's all fenced now I think I don't know. There used to be a gate, you could go – there used to not be a gate at all and you could just drive in the road and come in right at their house from the west side of the creek.

NW: Oh yeah, you can still do that?

ML: You can?

NW: Yeah, I mean there's different gates. There's old Todora Road that goes to Rim Rock and then you come down into the area now. So what was called, what did people call it when the McClure's lived there, the McClure's place or did they refer to it as the McCartney place?

ML: Charley and Martha's [chuckles]. That was it.

NW: Charley and Martha's. Cause, um, and so how long did they live there? Did they come like as early as your grandparents?

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ML: I have no idea. They were there when I was a little kid, I can remember that. And they were still there when I was growing up, just about grown up. And later in life they both ended up in a nursing home. Or, not necessarily a nursing home. Charley - she was in a nursing home and he was in an old town here on the end of 5<sup>th</sup> street there was a retirement inn that's there, by the mall.

NW: Oh, on your side of the river? [60minutes] In Chelan County?

ML: He was in there, cause my Dad was in there too. And, so they were both there at the same time.

NW: Gee yeah, so you knew them for years, she took care of your mom. They were like family almost.

ML: I knew them my whole life. They were good people. They worked hard. They worked really hard for everything they had. They lived in Waterville for awhile.

NW: During WWII was it?

ML: Yeah everyone had to move out of Moses Coulee cause that was a bombing range. And the house, that stone house has till got marks where they shot at it with the airplanes.

NW: I've never really been - I don't get over there much cause we don't have any business over there. I need to though.

ML: Yeah you need to get over there.

NW: Yeah. Well this is great Marvin, this is so fun! Did the McClure's have children, relatives that we could look for?

ML: No children, they didn't have children. I don't think they could. I can't answer - I don't know why.

NW: Ok. So they built that root cellar?

ML: They had...let's see...she was related to-

NW: To Mary O'Brien?

ML: Well, were they related?

NW: In some way. Mary told me -

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ML: They mighta been in some way related. But she was also related to...gotta think a minute, I can't think of their name. They're Waterville people. Koenigs.

NW: K-o-e-n-i-g?

ML: K-o-e-n-i-g yes. The only ones left are the kids now.

NW: The Koenig kids?

ML: Yeah.

NW: Well maybe I could learn something from them, but did you go down to their place very often?

ML: Oh yeah

NW: All the time huh?

ML: Oh yeah. Sunday afternoon we'd go down and fish at little Red and they'd invite us down to eat. Or we needed some produce, quote unquote produce, and it was good produce, I mean great stuff. But it was more of a token thing. We had a good garden too so we didn't really need it.

NW: So what was the creek like when you were there? What did you catch in it?

ML: Rainbow trout! We could the limit in 20 minutes. 20 limit. It was...fish! [chuckles]

NW: And was it stocked, they stocked it a lot?

ML: No, never was stocked. The game department kept saying they stocked it but I know the only place they could get in there was with a truck and there were never any tracks. They never went in there. That was just their own spawn.

NW: So I somewhere early on heard that Molly Camel, was it Molly Camel? That she stocked the creek

ML: Well if they did, I've never seen it. Usually you knew when they did that. I never saw anybody, never showed up.

NW: So you think it might be a distinct population in there?

ML: I think they just, they spawned. They could grow their own in there. Cause it goes on down past the McClure's, not a whole lot further and then it goes back underground again, the creek does. And then it goes out again down below and then there's a...there's a pine tree down there

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that's the only thing I can remember and there was a little kind of lake, almost. And then it goes down into the palisades.

NW: Well it would be really great to also take you to this place where Rim Rock dammed up McCartney Creek? It's, you know that -

ML: Yeah they weren't supposed to do that

NW: Yeah, well, so we were dying to know what it looked like before the dam went it, ya know, up stream. And maybe you could remember.

ML: Well I know what it was like before.

NW: Yeah!

ML: I've only seen it once after the dam went it.

NW: Well we need to get you out there so you can describe it to us but, generally after you would [65mins] go through Charley and Martha's place and the canyon would get real narrow, we call that the slot now. Did you call it something? Did you have a name?

ML: No, nothing.

NW: Nothing? Ok, well... well on the other end of the slot back where it opens up again that was where the reservoir was that they created when they dammed McCartney Creek. Do you remember, is that where the stream would have gone under ground again?

ML: Yes.

NW: Oh! That's interesting!

ML: And then it came back up. No, I don't know there's a...all I can remember is there's a pine tree down there.

NW: Yeah I remember, I think I know what you're talking about.

ML: And that was the only pine tree in that whole area. And that's where, there was a little lake there. But it was just a natural thing. And then it went under and it didn't come up until...I don't know if it ever came up again. Down in Palisades someplace it probably did...no the Indians used to, no it came back up.

NW: Well it's just gonna be great to get you out there. We've just gotta drive that and you can just point out.

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ML: Yeah because I can't walk it anymore.

NW: Oh no, we can get you to I think, to the places in –

ML: Can you go to that campground where the Indians used to be? That's neat.

NW: Is that on Billingsley's lease?

ML: Well it was on the past ground that he had. It was leased ground that he had I think.

NW: Rattlesnake Springs? I don't know but we could go there too! If we could just get you out there for the day.

ML: I don't know if you can get out there even, it's all fenced. Where the Indian camp ground was. They had clay ovens and everything.

NW: Really!?

ML: Yeah

NW: Well I wonder if this is on our land, or on Billingsley's leased land? I need to show you a map of what we –

ML: I could take you right to it I think except for the fences [chuckles]

NW: Wow, clay ovens?!

ML: Yeah. I don't know if they're still there

NW: Wow, I don't. That area's been just looted so much

ML: It's a bluff. It's right up against that bluff is where they camped and there was a spring there. And that was where I think they called Rattle Snake Springs. I don't think it was a lot further east than McCartney.

NW: Right, right. And that's a huge source of water that provides some surface flow for the lower part of the Coulee. But Dave uses most of it for irrigation of his corn. That's where – cause it doesn't flow to the Columbia anymore but...

ML: No.

NW: Oh. Well so, that is...

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ML: And then of course Douglass Creek comes in after you get down below Dave's stuff. And they're pretty close to where Jordan's have their hay ground in there someplace I can't remember.

NW: I don't know a lot of people in the lower coulee because...

ML: Well Jordan's used to live up by Withrow. Herman Jordan, and then his son...I can't tell you his name.

NW: That's ok.

ML: His son is still there. His wife, they just separated. She has - Debby Jordon, she has an insurance agency here in East Wenatchee. State Farm or something like that.

NW: Ok, that sounds kinda familiar to me. I guess because we had State Farm insurance or something. So they're Withrow family and now they live down by the mouth of Douglas Creek?

ML: Yeah. One of their daughters lives up in Chelan now. She married a Rock.

NW: Oh, mm-hmm. Ok, yeah [laughs]. I know Jeff Rock.

ML: Yeah, Jeff would be...her son.

NW: Oh, ok! He's a nice guy. He's a South Douglas Conservation District board member

ML: Yeah!

NW: Yeah, he's a good guy.

ML: His dad was Phil. And Phil was married to Jordan Grill [?].

NW: Well we'll come back and get her name later.

ML: That's part of my short term memory loss. Well long term memory loss now. Used to be just short term.

[70mins]

NW: [laughs] Well I'm so interested in what you saw, what you learned from the McClure's and what you saw when you went there. Did they have, did you see pygmy rabbits when you were little did I ask you about that before?

ML: Pygmy rabbits were all over.

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NW: Yeah, tell me about pygmy rabbits.

ML: They were just a little tiny rabbit. Little short ears. Little tiny thing. My dog used to chase 'em all over the place. Never could catch one, but he chased 'em.

NW: Did you see the burrows?

ML: Yeah. Just a little mountain of dirt and a little hole in the ground and they'd burrow in. They stayed where ever the cattle were, that's where they liked to be. Cause the cattle would eat the tough grass and leave the short tender shoots and that's what they ate. And we've had them ever since I was a kid. They were just there, nobody thought much 'em. We had those, we had cottontails and we had jack rabbits. I can remember jack rabbits when they'd come through, up through Olsen grade outta there and there'd be 40 or 50 of 'em out there in the head lights at night.

NW: When was that, like in the 60s you think?

ML: Very early 60s. Probably just 60, or 59 or 60 in that area, very close. Cause I used to come, I lived in Ephrata and I'd come up the back way and I'd see jack rabbits all over the place at night. They'd get in the hay stacks, Olsen had a hay stack there and they'd get in that hay stack and just ruin it [laughs]. It was...well I used to...a neighbor of mine had a J3 Cub, airplane. And we'd go jack rabbit hunting, there was a bounty on 'em. And he'd put skis on this thing in the winter time and we'd chase those things and coyotes same thing. We did coyotes too. We'd chase 'em until they'd get tired and then they'd turn on you. And then he'd pull the stick back like this and then I'd shoot 'em. Then he'd slip it off and land and we'd go cut the ears I think it was, for a long time, and then I think we had to do the front paws for bounty. And I remember we got 63 in one day one time. Chasing them with airplanes. And then they'd still ruin haystacks in everybody's place.

NW: The rabbits?

ML: The coyotes chased the rabbits.

NW: Oh ok.

ML: Yeah, the rabbits too, yeah. They rabbits would ruin the haystacks but then they coyotes would go after the rabbits and dig the haystacks out and pretty soon they'd fold over and fall over. They just - they were nasty, what they'd do to a haystack.

NW: So did you eat pygmy rabbits? Did you hunt them?

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ML: No, they were just little tiny rodents. Not much bigger than...oh, half the size of a cottontail. We had a dog that chased – we had a couple of them pygmy rabbits around the house where we lived and he would chase those things all over the place and he'd never catch 'em, he couldn't catch 'em [laughs]. They were too clever for him. And he was killed by pygmy rabbits. I had a bridge timber leaning up against the barn, just saving it for I don't know why. Anyway I had a fuel tank there for my furnace in the barn for my woodshop, and he went through there and he hit this – chasing that pygmy rabbit – he chased them forever and never caught one. Anyway he knocked this beam over and it killed it [chuckles] it fell on him.

NW: You can't really say he was killed by a pygmy rabbit. [laughs]

ML: No he was killed by the timber [laughs] but he was chasing the rabbit.

NW: The rabbit takes a lot of flack. [laughs]

ML: Well it was a game they played, I think. Cause that pygmy rabbit went in the garden but they could never eat anything that I could see. Cottontails would, they'd eat whole roll of lettuce and just mow it off ya know. But pygmy rabbit never bothered anything that I could see but they were cute [chuckles]. I kinda liked them, they were kinda cute little animal

NW: I've never seen one of course

ML: More like a rodent than a rabbit. Well they looked like a rabbit, except their ears were little round things.

NW: Well lucky you! Because we don't really see them anymore. So have you been back to your land? How long has it been since you've seen pygmy rabbits?

ML: Well I sold the place seven years ago so I haven't been back – well we visit, yeah. They invite me to come back and...we had a pool and everything there ya know, now I think they're getting rid of the pool. It's a lot of work.

NW: A swimming pool?

ML: Yeah. And they work in Wenatchee, well he works in Wenatchee, he manages B&F Distributing. She worked for the county agent in Waterville for awhile and I don't know, she worked at Mid-state bank for awhile

NW: Oh I probably met her. What's her name?

ML: Nona.

NW: Nona...I think I met her...she works with Margaret Viebrock?

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ML: Yeah. She's Hawaiian.

NW: Oh.

ML: Neat, neat lady.

NW: Gosh and that's a long way for them to drive isn't it?

ML: Oh yeah. And their son just moved down the road from our house, a ¼ mile away. And he moved there before they did. I was having my sale, I had an auction sale to sell everything cause we were moving. And they came and they saw the for sale sign on the house down the road where Elma Grey used to live if you've ever heard that name. Anyway they went down there and they came back and they said 'why you selling all this stuff' and said well we're going to move closer to the doctor, I was not well. And I was getting out of the business, the wood-working and we had this wood shop and I sold everything in there for more than I paid for it new, except for one item. My [?] and it was a big [?] but they didn't...people just really went for that stuff. And I really did well

NW: Did well. Well I'm glad, I'm glad if you had to sell it that you did well.

ML: I wish I could have kept some if it but I just didn't have room here.

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