

Gathering Our Voice

Interviewee: John Ruud

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

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Transcriber: Erin Lunde, AmeriCorps volunteer

NW: Okay, I'm just going to check the levels here. So if you could just say your name.

JR: I'm John Ruud. And I live in 402 North Chelan, Waterville.

NW: Okay, so I think we can just go ahead and roll. So I'll just tag the tape. This is Nancy Warner. And I'm here with John Ruud at his home in Waterville. And the date is January the 27th, 2011. And we're going to do one of the first interviews for the Douglas Community Historical Association Project. So thanks John, for letting me come into your home and spend some time talking with you about these things. We're asking everybody a few standard questions, and so, we'll start with how long you and your family have lived in this area?

JR: For 81 years and about 10 months. I'll be 82 on March the 8th of this year

NW: Oh, okay.

JR: So, except for time away in professional school in Seattle in Seattle and then in the service in Kodiak, Alaska and so forth, I've lived here all my life.

NW: Mmhmm, okay. And then your family, we've been talking about it a little bit, but for the benefit of the people listening to this recording. Your grandfather came here in...

JR: My grandfather arrived here in 1883. I think it was May the 12th in 1883, and put his stake down out south of Waterville, where my family still resides. My son David lives on the homestead there.

NW: Mmhmm. And his name was Ole?

JR: Ole, yep.

NW: And did he bring a wife with him there or did he marry...?

JR: No, no he came with, as a bachelor, and was really the first guy in here who put down a stake and stayed. Planted a crop. There had been one explorer-type person who came earlier on, and he did put a stake out at the head of Corbaley Canyon but then left and went back to Spokane territory or wherever and didn't come back until later. So, my grandfather plowed a little piece of ground out there and planted some potatoes and that was the first official crop grown in Douglas County. So they always bragged about that.

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NW: That's pretty neat. So, do you have any idea – did he bring the potato seed with him?

JR: From Spokane, I presume. He stocked up in Spokane, and bought his team and wagon in Ritzville. And actually went to just west of Spokane to a place they called Brett's Post Office. It's just north of the little town between the – oh my goodness – in between Davenport and Spokane, one of the

NW: Reardon?

JR: Next one. Creston. Where the elevators stand. You turn north – there's an oiled road goes out. That was where he first landed. And he could see timber in the background. Kind of reminded him of Norway. But thing he didn't realize then I guess, was the dynamics of the breaks of the land going down to the Columbia River and then up to where all that timber was, you know, the mountainous country. And he had an affinity for mountains because, that's what Norway is. So he broke out a little piece of land there - that was his original homestead idea. And then, during the winter, in the fall, he developed a felon(?). Like a pin prick on your finger, and had a bad infection and was rather incapacitated. But in the spring he planted a little patch of oats and got his place ready to go. And about that time, the Army Engineers showed up who had been out here surveying, and there was a military road that goes off to Chelan, there was at that time. And they came back and they were talking about the wonderful grass country out west here, and he got itchy feet, and somebody came along and offered him 500 dollars for his little homestead there, so he said I'll take it. And sold out, and hitched up his wagon and came west. And he got here, and he had two other men with him. One was named Bennik, and the other one was named, uh, it escapes me right now but, there were just three of them as they came in that little caravan here. My grandfather was sort of the leader of the pack, the other ones had sort of picked up with him, as I understand it, and so he kinda had first pick of where he wanted to be.

[5:05]

And he saw that canyon and surveyed around the breaks here, and ended up there and found running water in the creek, and could see the timber up there and the pasture took right off the land there. It's rather flat there. The mountains come right down the ground, and so he could see everything. Farmland, pastureland, water, the whole thing was pretty ideal of a setting for a guy to start out. The crick, it turns it out, it turned out it didn't amount to anything. It was seasonal, it dried up in the summer, but you know, it indicated that there was at least a source of livestock for a good part of the year, and that was important to him.

NW: So, then he married...

JR: Well, he was here 12 years. And he wrote lots of letters home to his family in Norway. And eventually decided it was time to find a cook. So he put an ad in the paper in Chicago, and this Swedish girl who was there answered the ad and one thing led to another, and pretty soon she arrived on a stagecoach either in Coulee City or Spokane – I'm not sure where he picked her up.

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But he brought her here, and she was here for a couple months, and then they married and had eight kids and the whole rest is history.

NW: Yeah.

JR: Yeah, if my dad were here he could tell you that. He could give you far more accurate details. But that's essentially the way it happened. So she was kind of a mail order bride in a sense.

NW: Yeah, pretty common in those days.

JR: There were primarily all men here, and no potential housewives, so, uh, he needed a cook. Preferably one with her own pots and pans. [laughter]

NW: Yeah, I suppose that was called for in the ad.

JR: Yeah, yeah.

NW: So, they had eight children, and your dad was one of those.

JR: Dad was number four. And she had three girls, and then my dad came along, yeah..

NW: And what was his name?

JR: Oliver. Oliver. Karl Oliver. With a K. He insisted that be put on his gravemarker. C.O. Ruud was the moniker he went by here – Carl Oliver, but he said “on my birth certificate, it's spelled with a ‘K’ and that's the way it should be on my tombstone,” so I think it is.

NW: Is he buried out there in the cemetery?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

NW: Okay. That'll be interesting to visit the cemetery.

JR: Yeah, Ole and his wife are there. One of the brothers and one of my grandfather's brothers, who was a seaman came here. My grandfather came from a little farm in Norway, and there were four boys and a girl. And there was just barely enough for one person to eke out a living, so they all just had to go do something else. And the youngest brother, Martin at 12 years old, went to sea and learned a trade, learned to be a blacksmith, that type of thing, and, 'cause there was always a call for that sort of thing, even aboard a ship. So, after his seafaring days, he brought himself and his alcoholic nature with him to live with my grandfather, and work, and you know, traveled and did his own thing. It wasn't always a wonderful situation and relationship, because sometimes when there was work to do, he wasn't sober or he wasn't here. [laughter]

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NW: You had to play those cards.

JR: Yeah, that's the way it was in those days. My grandfather, like every other pioneer family, raised a big family, 'cause you need lots of help. That wasn't the only reason, of course, but they always talked like that.

NW: Yeah. So then, how many siblings do you have?

JR: I have six.

NW: Six.

JR: There's seven of us.

NW: Three girls before you and...

JR: No, no, that was my dad. My dad had three sisters, then five boys all in a row.

NW: Oh, okay.

JR: And one of the girls passed away at age twelve or thirteen of appendicitis. You know, in those days, they didn't have a way to cure that and so, they got a big tummy ache, and pretty soon they were gone. Lots of stories about that. I mean, there were four, five of those experiences around right locally here that have been documented.

[10:06]

NW: So, your grandfather then, he shipped out of Oslo, but he lived on a farm in Norway.

JR: Yeah.

NW: And did he...how did he hear about...

JR: Well, the United States government was advertising for homesteaders. They had all this land out here, you know, after the Louisiana Purchase and all that; they had to populate it. And so, they advertised, actually, in Europe. And then of course, the people who decided to go were from countries that were poor, like the Irish, you know, came by the thousands, maybe millions because of the potato famine and people were starving over there. And in Norway, it was much the same thing, you know, and if you've got a little acre, a little twenty-or-thirty acre farm and four boys and a girl in a family that was already there, to subsist on that, it wasn't easy, so they started looking for other things to do. So, one of the brothers became, like a bookkeeper, the other one I think was in retail sales, haberdashery or something of that nature, and I'm not

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positive of that. And my grandfather, who went to Oss, a little town called Oss – O-S-S, I think, to an agricultural school for three years, and actually got a good education there and learned engineering. Civil engineer is what he planned to be, and learned surveying skills. So his instruments are in the museum down here, as you can see, and he surveyed much of this county and Kittitas County and Chelan County and what's now Grant County. Used to be Grant County and Douglas County used to be one, and then they divided it.

NW: Wow.

JR: Don't know what the age was when they did that. Back there sometime.

NW: So, he came and planted potatoes, 'cause he knew something about that.

JR: Well, of course. And he knew good soil. He was so thrilled with the soil here after the gritty soil of Norway. And I've been to Norway, and I know now exactly what he means because right, you know you walk right from where we're standing to right out in the field and it's just ground up walk. It's schist. You know what schist is? It's layered rock that's kind of crumbly, it's not very hard rock, and it breaks up pretty readily. And you know the glaciers totally covered the country of Norway, that's why it's got all rounded off, and all the soil there is ground up rock, really, that's what it is. There are probably areas that are better than that, but at least where he was, it was ground-up rock. So, it was a struggle always to raise enough good crops. I think, though, they had good moisture, probably better than here.

NW: So, he must have been thrilled to sort of find this loamy soil.

JR: Oh yeah, yeah, really. You bet. And it grew. His potato crop the first year was very successful, and I don't know what he did. He probably carried water from the creek to water it, if he got water, and one of the stories was that some group of people came and were admiring his crop and they wanted to buy potatoes. And he had to let them go very sparingly. Because not only was that food for winter for him, but he needed to save seed for next year. So, that was very early on, that primary crop that he grew. Then he started growing beans, and beans were very popular at that time.

NW: What kind of beans? Like, shell beans?

JR: Yeah, regular beans. Pinto beans. I don't know, like brown, just brown chili beans. Red beans, I think. And, then the barley and the other grains came along later than that -- I don't know exactly what time, but it all started pretty fast, you know.

NW: So then when your dad was growing up, and you grew up on the same land...

JR: Sure, sure.

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NW: So, you all experienced it in different periods of time. So, when your dad was growing up, what were their primary crops?

JR: Wheat, yeah. Wheat. And barley. And once in awhile some oats. You know, oats to feed the horses – liked there little can of oats. So, they did grow oats and put that in the bin there, and keep it just for cattle feed or horse feed. And barley – they grew it to sell commercially, but more primarily for hog feed, and they had a mill that you could put the grain through, and mix ‘em if you wanted to. And ground up hog feed is a little more efficiently digested and utilized by the pigs more than whole grain.

[15:26]

NW: So, did they have cattle or just mostly pigs?

JR: Well, pigs were big at one time. As a matter of fact, there’s one little field that comprises the creek along the canyon, and it was all fenced with hogwire-type fence, and the remnants of the fence are still there in some places. But then, uh, cattle though, on the outlying ground – the mountain ground we call it – was all cattle pasture and horse pasture. The horses were a problem because they took more feed, really, than cattle. They were hard on the pasture. They’d eat it right down to the ground. And we have a picture someplace, I don’t know if I have it, that shows the background. The hill in the background, it looks completely bare. And now if you look at it, it looks like brush, and – but the horses ate all that stuff. They were out there until the snow got too deep for ‘em, and then they brought ‘em in and fed ‘em what feed they could afford to give ‘em in the wintertime. And my grandfather was very industrious and even went out and cut the prairie hay, or some stuff that’s about that tall, and it’s big heavy stems and it’s a kind of a ryegrass, and it’s not very palatable, but when the horse is starving, they’ll eat anything. In fact, back in the 90’s, they had an experience with a big snow here, and the cattle were starving to death and a cow would die, and another cow would come up and start eating the hair off of that cow, and then she’d die, and ended up with kind of a pile of cows. A lot of people lost all their livestock practically. My grandfather had better luck because he was just industrious and a little more, you know, I don’t know if we could say intelligent, but he was at least educated and he put in extra feed. Always did that.

NW: Well, he grew it.

JR: Well, he grew it or went out and cut this prairie grass, whenever he could get it, and, you know, it’s something to do, and the horses he knew, they were going to need feed.

NW: I read something a few years ago that I’ve always kind of kept in mind. It was about Chief Moses, the people that would winter in the lower part of Moses Coulee, by that cave.

JR: Mmhhh.

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NW: They would cut that giant wild rye to feed their horses. So, do you think your grandfather learned from the Indians anything?

JR: Well, that's very possible, because he had lots of interaction with the Indians back in those days. He was a friendly guy, and he liked the Indians, got along with them really well. One of his first experiences here, when he was plowing to plant his potatoes, was a group of Indians rode in on their horses and just rode a circle around him and stood there with his guns pointed at him. And so, what would a smart guy do in a case like that, you know? He didn't have a chance to get away or fight his way out if that was what their motive was. But he knew enough pigeon English or whatever it took to communicate with those Indians, or they did, and so, he had them all get down off their horses, and invited them into his house and he cooked them in a meal, and that made them happy. And so from then on, he was their friends, you see? And the Indians used to come back for years, to the ranch there, and camped below the ranch, and they picked camas and bitterroot all around the whole hillside out there. It was a good spot for 'em because it was territory that they knew, I guess, and also there was water where they could camp and put a little tent across the crick and that was their bath – cold water. And they built a pit and dug a big hole. They'd build a fire and put rocks in, heat the rocks, and when the fire'd go out, or maybe they'd put it out, they'd put the camas in, and cover it all up and cook it. And the bitterroot, I'm not sure exactly, I'm telling you more than I know. But when it was done, they made some kind of a flour deal out of that, and cooked it together with beef fat or something like that, or maybe some berries and whatever, and pound it all together and made a pemmican, like what we'd think of as kind of a soft beef jerky type product, then. That was their traveling food.

[20:31]

JR: Yeah, and the canyon there is full of things like sarvus [service] berries and chokecherries, and rosehips. And they utilized all that stuff, I think.

JR: And this is Alice, she's just been out socializing with the girls downtown.

NW: So, Alice just came in, and we took a little break and now we're back on this topic of your grandfather living there on the north end of Badger mountain and interacting with the Indians quite a bit. And he may, his memories, and your memories of what he told you about that, well are, among the earliest memories in this region.

JR: Although mine didn't come from him, actually. He moved to California about the time I was born. All my memories, interest in memories comes through my dad, who talked a lot about it as we were growing up. And my grandmother would come from California, his widow, and she would like to tell us a few stories about, sometimes in Swedish, sometimes in English.

NW: So what was her name?

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JR: Augusta. Augusta Lawson. Larson. Her paperwork said Lawson – L-A-W-S-O-N, but she went by Larson. I don't understand that totally, but doesn't matter. She was from Sweden. She came to America for the same reasons. Her brother lived in New York, and she came to visit him, with intentions I guess of going back to Scandinavia, to Sweden. But she got so terribly seasick on the boat that she said she would never, ever put herself through that again. So she decided to stay. So she went and lived with this brother. Well then, he got diphtheria and died. So, she decided she didn't want to stay around there, that part of New York. There was nothing to keep her, so she read of work in Chicago, so she got on the train and went to Chicago, and became – worked as a domestic person, doing housework and as a hotel maid, and whatever she could do, which any immigrant would do. And then read the paper, apparently, and saw this ad and answered it, and the rest is history.

NW: So, how old were you when they moved to California?

JR: I was just an infant.

NW: Oh, okay. But your dad had lots and lots of stories that he's passed on to you.

JR: Oh sure, that's where most of my information comes from. And then looking at their things. Like, if you go down to this museum, you'll see a starch-maker, for example. It's a metal can about this big around, with holes all poked in it, it has a handle through it and you can turn it like this. And it had a box on top, and they poured potatoes in that, turned it over a bucket of – over a big galvanized tub, and the ground up potato would go in there, and the stuff would float. The pulp would float, and the starch would settle to the bottom. They used to starch in the wash, and they starched everything, even the bed sheets. Can you imagine that? For whatever reason, I have no idea. But they did. And then the pulp they would take that and cook it and give it to the pigs. So, everything served a purpose, you see.

NW: Oh, that's interesting.

JR: The starch machine was up in our house in our garage out there for many, many years. And we watched the sparrows had a nest in it every year we watched the sparrows. And eventually though, we got it down, because I recognized that as a real antique-y thing, and I got it all cleaned up. And it's down in the museum. It's a work of art, because my grandfather, or that uncle I mentioned to you, they were artistic with their work and their metalwork and so forth, and you wonder how they did things as well as they did with as few tools as they had.

[25:00]

NW: Well yeah, he sounds like a really talented man, your grandfather. So what were the years then he was doing the surveying? He got here in 1883, and...

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JR: Yeah, 1883. Well, he became the county engineer, and I can't tell you what year that was, but I'm thinking about, maybe '87 or something like that. And he served in that office for 18 years, I think. You had to go be elected every two years, so I think – my dad talked about – I think there were like nine terms. And every time he ran for office, he ran under a different political party.

NW: Oh, yeah! You mentioned that the other night. That's interesting. An interesting technique. Whatever works.

JR: That was his way of keeping friends with everybody.

NW: So, I've got a few more general questions but then I want to get back to food because I want to talk more about potatoes and wheat, specifically. And cattle. But, this project as you know is focused on Douglas and out. So it includes your family and Badger Mountain. So, what is it that you like most about this place? What is there about the Douglas area – Douglas and Badger Mountain, included. What is there about this place?

JR: Well, it's where my roots are! I mean, I have tremendous memories. I grew up as a kid on that ranch and was very much a free spirit. And most of the summer we wore no shoes, sometimes no shirt. And we lived in the crick and in the brush and on the saddle horse. When we got big enough, I wrote a letter to my grandmother and I think I was thirteen years old. And I told her that I had my own horse now. It was this colt – dad gave it to me. Hadn't even broke it yet. I just read that this morning. So, by age 14 or 15, I was riding all over Badger Mountain. And we were driving cattle, or just going for recreation, or hunting. Deer hunting became a big issue. So, we got a lot of our meat that way. Not that we had to. We had our beef, but we were strong and it was there, so why not go shoot at it? For a boy, that's a big deal, you know? And our food crops, we always raised a big huge garden. And at the end of the season, when everything was pretty well done, we'd have a major harvest, and bring everything in out of the garden and clean it up. And then we all sat around the table, chopped all this stuff up, put it in big kettles, and canned that. And that was called "soup vegetables." And so, in the winter time, we had soup vegetables more times than I'd like to think. It was not the most palatable food, but it was vegetables, and it was good for you! And I don't know how my mother canned it in an open water bath, you know, not pressure. Not boiling water bath. But an open pan, with the jars. How we kept from dying from toxemia or clostridium or botulinum or whatever it is that kills people, I don't know. There's still stuff in that basement that I'm sure is very hazardous. It's an old dirt, dug basement under the house. And that's where we stored everything. Stored potatoes, huge 10 or 15 sacks of potatoes. And then, come summer, we had not only the fruit there. We had apricots and prunes that we grew. As they developed these homesteads, most of them had little orchards. That was one of their requirements, as I understand it. So, we had lots of apricots. And we had some machine sheds that had a tin roof, and they used old bed frames with spring, kind of woven springs. And they'd spread the apricots out and dry 'em in the sun, and maybe treat them with sulphur, I think they did. I don't know exactly. I don't remember that much. And then we had dried fruit as well as canned fruit. And of course, we lived close to the

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river, and my grandfather owned a piece of property down at Orondo. So they had orchards, apples, and peaches, and things in season. And my mother, the big part of every summer or fall was canning fruit. I think of numbers like 40 boxes of tomatoes – 400 quarts of tomatoes. Is that possible?

NW: Well, you had a big family!

(30:00)

JR: Oh, half gallons! Had eight people, nine people around the table. So it sometimes took two half-gallons of peaches to feed us. Big appetites.

NW: Yeah, 'cause you were working!

JR: And the potatoes. My brother Karl would start his meal by filling his plate with potatoes, and he'd eat that first. And then he'd get the next meal, and the wonderful thing about growing up on the ranch like that, was that we had bacon or ham almost every morning for breakfast. And we always ate breakfast. I mean, that's the most important meal of the day. And we still believe that. And then we'd come in for noon, and it wasn't unusual to have a steak for lunch. And sometimes, roast beef for supper. All on the same day. (laughter)

NW: A few calories!

JR: And believe it or not, none of us ever got fat!

NW: No, I do believe it.

JR: 'Cause we didn't eat – well, we had sugar – used to buy sugar in 50 pound sacks and put it in one of those tip-out drawers, you know. Get the flour in one bin and sugar in the other, and we liked to sneak sugar. But my mother was around most of the time, and she policed that pretty hard. So, we always had a wonderful diet. There was nothing the matter. We had a complete diet then – probably better than the average family eats now, because everything now has to be laced with sugar. You know, at that time in history, in 1800, that's of course way before my time, but the average American consumed 12 lbs. of sugar, that's what disappeared into our food chain. 12 lbs. per capita. Today it's 150. And so you can understand why everybody, well not everybody – they're all obese! And they have diabetes, and if they didn't get obese or didn't have diabetes because they have compromised pancreatic function as a young person, they would develop it as they got older and got fat – that'd be just two –well, some people have both. What they call diabetes three, which is very complicated. Very difficult to manage. Well, somehow, people just don't get it. They think if it doesn't make their tongue feel good, it's not good to eat. That's terrible.

NW: Yeah, so tell me a little more about that soup mix. What was in that, besides carrots?

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JR: Well, corn. Corn was a big part of it. We'd pick all the corn. And shuck it and cook it – well I mean, not cook, but cut it. Cut it off the cob. That was a big deal. Everybody liked to do that. With a butcher knife, right on the table. The table was linoleum, and it was all cleaned off, so you just cut right on the table. And then, that was scooped up and put in this big kettle. And then you'd put in turnips and onions and string beans and just whatever there was. Some of it was maybe a little over the hill, but so – it was what it was. If you didn't eat that, you didn't eat. You understand?

NW: Yeah.

JR: So, we had no trouble with it. And it was well-cooked. My mother loved to put her stuff on to cook and then take a big long nap! [laughter] She was tired all the time, you know! We worked, my goodness. You have no idea how hard people worked in those days. People today – it's work for 'em just to go to the store and go home. Get the groceries in the house.

NW: Right, right.

JR: There, it was from daylight to midnight, you know. Every day, all summer long.

NW: So, one thing. I just want to stop this for a second – I'll put it on pause. Okay.

JR: Well, we can't trap coyotes anymore. And we can't trap weasels, which are a vicious little guy. They'll go right in the rabbits' burrow and take 'em out. They worry about the pygmy rabbits out in the Basin, but their predators are growing by leaps and bounds. I mean, there are weasels everywhere, and so are the coyotes. So, the poor little rabbit, he just sticks his head out of the ground and somebody'd take it off. His enemies. So, if they want to raise rabbits, they'd be better off if they'd let us go out and harvest some coyotes, you know? Wouldn't hurt 'em any. I mean, they only feel pain for a little while, and then they're gone, you know. But somebody in Seattle says we can't use steel-drawn traps. So we don't use 'em. They'd put us in jail for that.

NW: So you did then, though? That was when you were a kid. So that was in the thirties that they offered the bounty?

JR: Yeah, even into the fifties. I don't remember exactly. We trapped weasels, my brother and I. We always had a route. We'd go by saddle horse, and brought our trap line, particularly on the weekend. We had some close set traps we could get to, you know, say, every day if we wanted to. But there are only so many weasels in a given territory, so you have to take your trap line farther.

[35:10]

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And when we were in high school, it would take us all day to ride our trap line. We'd ride three miles to Perry William's house, and stop and have lunch. And then Perry would go with us, and make another big circle, and pick up our weasels and bring 'em home. It was lots of fun. We made sometimes 50 cents, sometimes three dollars and seventy-five cents for a nice big prime weasel. Sold 'em to Sears & Roebuck, and in those days, you could buy a little booklet called "Tips for Trappers" and boy, we treasured that. That told us all the secrets about how to catch a weasel and whatever you wanted to catch. A weasel is easy. And the weasel is not too smart when it comes to traps. If he just smells a feather or a little blood or something, he'll stand on the pan of the trap to reach it, and that of course sets off the trap and he's toast. [laughter] Yeah.

NW: So, you hunted for rabbits, you said a lot of rabbits. And then you saw a lot of grouse – so did you hunt the grouse?

JR: Not so much. You know, you needed a shotgun for that. My dad did some of that. Went out to Jameson Lake and such to hunt some ducks. But that was beyond the reach of us kids, I think.

NW: Did your dad, through your dad – relay stories about hunting with the Indians? Did he get any ideas from the Indians about how to hunt?

JR: In the very early days, he said that you could look out from the house at the hills and almost any time of any day, you could see a coyote there. There were that many of them. And they gradually disappeared, you know, as the people came along and populated the country. The Indians – not too much interaction there. Only when they came to dig camas. There were – we didn't have a resident Indian population – although this was a very important gathering ground for them. There's a spot on Badger Mountain about two and a half or three miles from the ranch that's called the Indian Camp. That's where three little valleys come together, and there's kind of an open, flat area that's a very nice camping area and had running water there and so forth. And so, the Indians would come from all around to that place, and then the hills there are very richly coated with lots of bitterroot and the camas plant. And then they would have – the kids would have horse races. The women did the work, mostly. The men sat around and smoked, mostly. The kids played games and rode their saddle horses and had horse races. And my dad would take his horse from the ranch there and ride over there and race with the Indian kids. And he could always beat 'em because first of all, he had a really, really good horse. And secondly, he took care of him. The Indian kids, they – if the horse had something to eat, it was because he did it himself. They didn't carry feed for him. They just, you know, you've seen pictures of those Indian ponies, they look pretty scummy sometimes.

So, anyway, we had a tradition in our family that nobody was allowed to get on the saddle horse. If you had a saddle with stirrups, you could not get on the horse unless you had cowboy boots on. And the reason for that, you can probably imagine, is because if you fall out with street shoes that have a heel and so forth like these, well, you can get hung up in the stirrup and drug. Well, he saw that happen, I think at one of these Indian races with those kids over there, and so that was his rule for us. We never had an accident, ever. Except, well, you'd get bucked off or

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something like that but that wasn't an accident. That was because you weren't a good rider. Or the horse was better or whatever.

NW: Oh, it'd be awful to be dragged.

JR: Yeah. Oh my, yeah. So...

NW: Well, I want to ask you a couple questions about the church. Back to Douglas. So when your grandfather, your grandmother, and then your own mom and dad. Did you have – were you some of the earliest members of the church?

JR: Well, I'm sure they were. They used to go by team and sleigh. Or team and wagon to the Oaklands, northwest of Withrow. And they were friends. And they'd have dinner with them and stay overnight and go to Withrow and go to church, and then from there they'd come all the way home again. So it was a two day trip. And they were very loyal about that. I mean they went to church all the time.

[40:11]

And then eventually, the Douglas church was built, and I think they probably were members there. And then, eventually, at our Lutheran church here in Waterville, their church family was really out in that part of the world in those days.

NW: Wow. That's an interesting rhythm. Staying overnight...

JR: Oh yeah.

NW: And then going to church, and then coming home.

JR: Well, it was social interaction as well as taking care of their religious needs you know.

NW: Right.

JR: Strong Christian people, they were.

NW: So what are some of your favorite memories about the church and the connections with the community? You were gone a lot...

JR: Yeah, I was gone a lot. When I was a young kid, we went to church in Waterville, and there's a corner there with the Lutheran church is now. Kind of a rocky-looking knob there that's where the bell tower is. That was our church. And we always had that choir, we sang a lot. They had an old pump organ – pretty antique. And then I was involved in a boys' singing quartet, we sang there and at the Douglas church once in awhile for a funeral or a wedding or that type of

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occasion. And those were the most important memories for me. Most of my memories about going to church were we always seemed to arrive late! [laughter]

NW: You had a long ways to go!

JR: Well, a big family. You know. And there was always consternation getting the chores done. You know, dah te dah. By the time we got everybody in the car and we got to church, sometimes, you know, we weren't at the end of the service, but sometimes toward the middle, maybe.

NW: So in Douglas – Jim was telling me this morning that it was common to have potlucks after church.

JR: Oh yeah.

NW: So, in the basement we were in, do you remember that?

JR: Oh sure! That was pretty common. We had lots of...you know, in those days we didn't have television! So, church functions were important, and so were picnics in the Douglas grove out there. A flat place that used to be a little lake out there. Now they've cleaned it up and farmed it, so it's not that way. Particularly like Fourth of July, there'd be a big picnic there. I was telling a story about coming to that church once. I don't remember if it was that early or not. It seems pretty early to be Fourth of July, but my dad had a field out here of, I believe it was a spring wheat. And it was just as pretty as it could be. Just like a lawn. And we went to church. Maybe we went to church. And we went to this picnic. And we were there all day, had a baseball game I guess. But by the time we got home, the hot wind had come and turned the wheat white and just cooked it. So, it went from maybe thirty-five or forty bushel crop to maybe something like seventeen or fifteen bushel crop. Just in one afternoon. It could happen that fast. The wheat would just shrivel. And sad you know, just sad. Just heartbreaking. Like my dad, you wouldn't believe. Because in those days – I have to show you something about the economics of this country. Let's see if I got the right book here. So this was their ledger, the income, the money they spent. A hundred and eighty-six dollars – that's what they spent this month. In 1932. This is Depression time.

NW: Right, right.

JR: And their income was a hundred and eighty-six. It was a little bit of – actually they had – it looks like fifteen dollars and twelve cents circled there. It must be, well, I don't know if that's excess or deficit.

NW: Wow, that's neat that you have those records.

JR: Yeah, isn't it though? And then there's one day here that's kind of interesting because... December 1930. I have to keep going a minute. July, June, March 1930. It says that he paid

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Mrs. Julia Johnson, care of Isabelle (that's his wife) in the hospital. Eighty-five dollars and sixty-five cents. Down here it says DJ Ellis. That's Doctor Ellis. Care of Isabelle and Alice Malloy – this girl right here. Forty dollars. That's what it cost to get her into the world.

[45:18]

NW: Wow.

JR: Isn't that something?

NW: That is something. Prices have changed.

JR: And that month they spent three-hundred ninety-two dollars. And they had a hundred and twenty-seven eighty three left over.

NW: Pretty good month. New baby, too.

JR: Yeah, and a new baby on top of it, isn't that something!

NW: So let me ask you...

JR: And their egg bill was EA Sandstrom. Milk from March 1930. Three dollars and eighty-eight cents. That was for the whole month. And it goes on like that. Little things that you can kind of pick up.

NW: Yeah, very good.

45:56

JR: EL Hall. Estelle Hall alone, five dollars. Estelle -- EL Hall lived down there, and he was a hillbilly guy. Alice has a couple letters from my grandfather, her father – her dad was negotiating with EL Hall to furnish him a goose for Thanksgiving Dinner. Now there are two letters involved, so he had quite a bit of trouble with this guy. In later years, he came to the ranch. He had a milk cow, and whatever, and he'd show up at my dad's. We'd be out getting a haystack out, getting feed up for our cattle about all done. And he'd show up and want to know if he could maybe buy a load of hay. He'd bring his little old one-ton truck, and so my dad would say "Well, I guess so." But he didn't want to go out in the field and get it. He'd take it off the stack, 'cause he could pitch it all down hill. And he'd say, "Well, how much is it?" And my dad would say, "ten dollars a ton" or whatever it was. And he'd say "well I'll pay you whenever," and my dad always charged him half price he said, because that way he wouldn't lose as much money. Because he never could get paid.

[Laughter]

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NW: That's good! He had a good neighboring attitude.

JR: Yep. He always helped Shorty out with a little bit.

NW: So, I wanted to go back to asking a little about flour. In terms of what you, and your family growing up. Where you, and your dad, when he was growing up, got their flour.

JR: We had two mills in the granary. Big building, we called it the granary. We had one big mill, where we put a belt on from a vehicle outside. Had the wheel off a pulley and we'd grind feed for the cattle. We'd haul it to the cattle. Then he had another little mill that had a smaller, what do you call it, the tub on top, and that was actually a flour mill. And so they ground their own flour in those days.

When I come along, I didn't see that. I don't remember that happening. That was kind of activity with belts when my dad wouldn't want us kids around. But I do know that when things were really, really bad, in the thirties, like this time, my dad would take wheat up there and grind it coarse, and sift it a little bit, and then the coarser stuff he'd bring it in and put it on like a cookie sheet or something. Bake it 'til it turned brown. And that was his coffee. He cooked that. Made it look brown. It tasted something like coffee! [laughter] Not very much, but you know. If you couldn't afford to go to the store and buy coffee, that's what you did. They were very, very poor. I mean, very poor. I can remember my folks sitting at the dinner table in the kitchen, with their arms around each other, just sobbing, because – I heard the commotion, I came down the stairs, peeked around the corner, and the issue was that they didn't have any money, and they couldn't afford shoes for us kids to go to school. School was going to start. What do you do? So, you saw the picture? Did you see the picture?

NW: I saw the picture of you, the little...

JR: Right here! Oh, that's it! Look at those shoes. Do those look like store-bought shoes?

NW: They look like sandals of sort.

JR: Yeah, that's exactly right. They're homemade shoes.

NW: Oh, that's great!

JR: See all the way along the edge there?

NW: They look like moccasins, sort of!

JR: Yeah, sort of. They were very plain.

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NW: That's so great.

JR: One piece of string on the top, to hold the top together. And that might have been my older brother, or maybe even one of my uncles' shoes. That stuff was around. This was my uncle's hat.

[50:00]

He'd come in and pop his hat on me at noontime, you know. You see where the sun is? This is directly south. So, it's just a little bit before noon. Otherwise the shadow'd be right behind me.

NW: Oh! That's a great photo.

JR: Isn't it?

NW: It says a lot.

JR: I've got a little pamphlet that I made down in my office with that picture on it. Talks about how I've been a workin' man all my life. In those days, I was helping around the chicken house, and you can tell by the chicken feather that was stuck either to my shoe or my pants. I don't know what the glue was, but you can imagine, can't you? [Laughter] I used to always go gather eggs; that was my big thing.

NW: So, did your family sell eggs at the grocery store?

JR: Oh, no. Well, somewhere. We used to have cartons, and we candled eggs, and we took 'em to – either to Wenatchee. I don't know – Metamore Dairy, we used to ship cream down there. And every week, we had a cream can that went down there. And that was a three, four, five dollar check or something like that, you know. It was important. Those little bits of money were very important. And so they did take eggs. They would take eggs to the store here and apply them to their grocery bill. I don't know. Seems like I can remember eggs going to Wenatchee. Do you know what an orange carton used to look like? They're about that deep and about that long. And then they had an egg carton. Maybe it was the same box. But it was two – you've seen those egg cartons that are about that big – fit in there. They have the cups for the holders, and then they have the dividers that go across. Oh yeah, we filled those and took 'em down. And of course, when we took 'em in, they would candle all the eggs. Run 'em through a bright light, you know. See if there was a baby chick in there.

NW: Right!

JR: Rotten if it didn't have a yoke, you know. So, that was always disappointing when they culled out a few of our chicken's eggs.

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NW: So then, Metamore Dairy would actually come to your ranch?

JR: No, no. We brought the cans in and put them in by the old butcher shop. Let's see. Don't we have a barber shop there now? Yeah, a little girl has a barber shop there now. The opening to the locker plant was in the back. We'd bring our cream in in the morning, set it there, and the Metamore Dairy would come to town, pick up their deliveries, and the cream would go back to Wenatchee.

NW: So what years are we talking about there? Forties?

JR: Oh forties, thirties. More the thirties than forties.

NW: Before World War II?

JR: Thirties were poor -- the whole ten years were poor. It took a long time to recover from that Depression. In the forties, there were -- you know, the war years. Things got a little better. Prices of commodities went up. Cost more to live, but the price of wheat got a little better. There was a time there when they were selling wheat for, you know, twenty to fifty cents a bushel, maybe. And lots of times it was never a dollar. And now, oh my God, it's the big ritz -- I mean, Dark Northern Spring -- over ten bucks! That's unbelievable. Never thought we'd ever see that.

NW: Yeah, there have been some pretty big years for wheat. So, well I've got some other questions on here. And it has to do with learning. A lot of it has to do with learning -- how to care for the land, how to take care of food, and so, you learned a lot from your dad it sounds like.

JR: From Dad. And he learned from us. He was quoted once in the National 4H magazine. There was a man whose name was Guinoble, who as a kid came through this country, and he lived on our ranch and worked there for a little while. Then he went back east or wherever his family was, and he eventually became director -- national director of the 4H movement, whatever that means. And he was the editor, I suppose, of this 4H magazine. So, it had a picture of my dad and quotation from him that said "most of the things I know about the livestock industry, I learned from my sons, through their 4H work." So, we did. We did learn a lot there. How to feed a pig, and how to take care of it. And a steer, and that. And then the soil conservation was a big issue. They had a very active...and during the war -- just before the war, we had this Civilian Conservation Corps here. You've maybe heard of that. When the war hit, those people automatically went into the Army. And Charlie Bisby, who was the director of the camp, became the director of the Soil Conservation Service here. So maybe he had a lot to do with that before, because that's a lot of the work the CCC did. They put in the diversion ditches, and they worked to develop springs, and they did timber thinning and all kinds of good stuff like that. And so, they did a great service for this part of the world, because, you know, we had a thing called the **morboard** plow, and it was the worst thing that ever hit this country, because it left the dirt -- it plowed too deep; it put all the ruffage under, and made it exposed to the wind and erosion and so forth. The problem was, by the time (and they pulled the equipment with horses at those times) --

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by the time they got the ground plowed, harrowed, weeded, and seeded, most of the moisture would be gone. Evaporated into the atmosphere. Now they use these big huge sweep plows, and they leave a trashy fallow, and they pull the harrow behind this plow because they've got this big articulated four-wheel drive tractor that's better than, you know, 80 or 90 head of horses on the front of your plow. And they can do it in one trip. And so they can farm now on half the moisture it used to take in those days. That was one of the tragedies. And they would plow a field, go halfway around the outside, and then you end up with little skips in the corner when they turned. So then they had to go back and plow up the corners. And that always left a dead furrow. A furrow that wasn't filled. And so then the rains come. And you go out there in the fields – I can take you out there and show you – the draw that goes right up the corner. Now of course, they go back and forth on the contour and you know they don't allow that thing to happen. The soil only comes around once.

NW: So where was the CCC camp? That Bisby was the director?

JR: South of town – north of town – by – you know where Evan Schmidt lives? You know where the PUD thing is right here on the edge of town? Just east of there. Between there and the fairgrounds.

NW: Oh! That'd be interesting to see some pictures of that camp and everything.

JR: Yeah, well, there probably are pictures at the museum of the camp. In front of the museum is the old stone CCC thing that was moved from here. Pictures of the fountain or something.

NW: That's good. I wanted to ask about harvesting and food processing. You talked earlier about how you would chop up the soup vegetables and then your mom would can them. Were there – when it came to harvesting wheat, harvesting barley, butchering cattle, butchering pigs – did you team up with the neighbors and share equipment?

JR: Sometimes. In the old days, when they used the pull machinery and farmed with horses, they very often would have a big crew. The neighbors would team up together and put together one thrashing outfit and they'd do everybody's crops. Then when they developed the more single unit that you could pull with a tractor, it seemed like most farmers eventually ended up alone if they had enough land to justify it. Now they're all self-propelled. And they've gone from the old Massy 21, which was a little, like a 12-foot header to a big 30, 40 foot headers. Big huge machines. They cost a quarter of a million dollars. My dad bought his first combine – sits up in the rocks up there at the Sasser place for I think like 2500 or less. And he would go out north and harvest for other farmers who didn't have a combine, and they'd pay him, you know. A dollar an acre, or two dollars. Whatever. He could harvest for them. And I'm glad he had to pay his crew, and feed the horses and all that. Wasn't a lot of money in it, but it was something. Made money he wouldn't have had otherwise with a lot of work.

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NW: Right. So how about running cattle on Badger Mountain? Did you team up with neighbors to do some of that herding?

JR: No, just very little. Very little. I know that Herman Daling had an eighty-acre piece of ground on Badger Mountain that was really incorporated into our pasture, and so his milk cows and maybe one or two for beef went in with our herd and we took care of them. As far as summer pasture, it wasn't any problem. The water – there are good springs up there – so there's always a place for cattle to water.

[1:00:07]

And they would come, and one day a week – excuse me, one day a summer – we'd come and we'd have to fix the fence. You know, around the place, and he always helped with that. That's the way it worked out. He was a wonderful neighbor.

NW: Sounds pretty good.

JR: And the cattle, you know, it takes about 40 acres of this mountain ground to keep a cow and calf all summer. 40 acres. That's a lot. That's not every bit of it. But a lot of its scab rock. Especially out the southeast end, here, it's pretty dry and when you're dealing with 8-12 inches of rainfall, you're not growing a lot of grass. Especially where there's rock, you grow nothing.

NW: Yeah, especially compared to some places – you had perennial water, so you were kind of in a lush area, relative to like where the Danielson's had to haul water from Douglas. So you never had to haul water? Did you sell water to others?

JR: No, I don't know. I don't know if anybody came here to get water. We had a – our water comes from a spring up in the canyon. It's about three quarters of a mile, and my dad and his brother hand-dug a ditch, and put in a waterline that comes from that spring. Then during the CCC years, they came in and further developed the spring, and put in a big spring box, or concrete box and put a pipe out to the watering trough for the livestock. And then, my dad said they didn't know – they didn't tell me, but they knew I was going to go put in my own line and take that down for domestic water. They weren't allowed to do that. Had to pay somebody to do that. But the CCC work, that was all free. You had to sign up for it. Congress probably had to – I don't know.

NW: Had oversight over it.

JR: I don't know – not that much oversight. They probably had a little local committee, and maybe Bisby himself could make the decision, but now you'd have to take – it would take three years, and an act of Congress to get anything done.

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NW: Yeah, 'fraid so. So, did you know if there were people who – were there people in need who didn't get enough food?

JR: Oh, sure.

NW: And how did people respond? What was the safety net in those days?

JR: Well, there were some older men. Peter Bakker and Pete Danielson, and Nils Sundom – old, bachelor guys that lived on the Mountain. And if you can visualize a little old Mayan walking along with a stick over his back with a sack on the back of it with his provisions in it – that's Nils Sundom. Came into town every two weeks or something. Bought a little bacon and he grew a little garden. But he slept most of the time. Didn't have horses – didn't really have any ambition. And then his next-door neighbor was Pete Danielson. He had a raspberry patch, he had a big garden; he had a team of horses. And I think he helped Nils, you know, he took care of him. He was a very industrious guy. And Pete Bakker was much the same. He lived down the canyon here, and he lived on a place that belonged to another guy. Those other two guys each had a hundred and sixty acre homestead up there. Peter Bakker lived on Les Clark's place, and Neal Peterson owns that now. And he always had a pretty nice garden. Big on carrots, so he made carrot juice, and he'd turn orange every summer! [laughter] And he made a lot of home brew in the early days, until the doctor told him he had to quit that. That he was gonna die. [laughter]

NW: Home brew beer, or...?

JR: Whole [?] brew beer.

NW: Oh, okay. Okay. Did people make whiskey?

JR: Oh, yes! Jim Rose – he had a still on Badger Mountain. And I remember my dad went over there one time. Had to get a load of hay! And we never could understand why he went there to get that load of hay. Well somehow, he got mixed up with Jim and whoever was at the other end of the deal then he hauled a load of whiskey off Badger Mountain in this load of hay, you see? So... [chuckling]

NW: Ha. That was your dad?

JR: Yeah. That was only a one-time deal. He – my dad wasn't – there was nothing crooked about that man. And I don't know why he got involved or maybe got a bottle of whiskey out of it – I don't know. Even in the poorest times, my dad always could seem to find a way to have a little pint of Jack Daniels or something in the barn. It never was in the house. And they curried their horses all the time, and they would push that hair down in the two by six framework around the inside of the barn– stuffed that full of horse hair. And somewhere in there was where he kept his bottle.

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[1:05]

NW: That's valuable information! That's a good hiding place! [laughter]

JR: Exactly! Exactly. And he didn't – you know – it was there – he would share that with his neighbors and his friends. He was not a drinking guy. If I ever saw my dad drunk, like we would find it nowadays – never. Never.

NW: Yeah, it didn't really go with the times, and with all that responsibility with the family and everything.

JR: Yeah. And we did a little brewing there, but it was root beer!

NW: Oh, did you?

JR: Nice big batch of root beer, and we put it in the sack, and put it down in the well, and the rope came untied. And the root beer is still in the bottom of the well out there! My brothers and I have talked about draining that thing.

NW: Get that root beer out...

JR: Yeah, I don't think – it's probably no good at all. Probably all rust off the bottle.

NW: So, now where did you get the... you would use sassafras root for your root beer, right?

JR: We had to buy the mix to do that. I guess that's what it is, isn't it? Well, I've still got the capper! You know, believe it or not, right under my shed. A bunch of caps and so forth.

NW: Yeah, Ethyl Pool was just telling me last week, when I interviewed her two weeks ago I guess, that they would make root beer and keep it up in the root cellar in Mansfield. And she remembered going in and dipping it out, before it was bottled, I guess.

JR: Yeah, see if it was ready maybe. Well, in those days, we did more of that. It was what we did. We made ice cream, you know. And we had our own butter churn, a big, tall one. I think maybe that's in the museum with a cross-piece and a stick, stir it like that. And then the kind that churn, you know, the wooden ones – you've seen that. And we had a bottle – a gallon jugs, or a little metal one that you churned and it was like an egg-beater in the bottom.

NW: Yeah, I think they have one of those at the museum.

JR: Yeah, probably. I mean, they were very common in those days.

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NW: So, where'd you get the ice? Did you just have it in the wintertime?

JR: Ice? Yeah, well we maybe would bring some ice from town if we were gonna make ice cream. You could buy a block of ice then. And we had a – for – my goodness, ten or fifteen years – before we had a refrigerator, we had an ice box. Always had to have a block of ice in the top.

NW: So you'd come to town to get that ice?

JR: Oh, sure.

NW: And then, the ice house would get it here in town from...?

JR: Probably in town.

NW: The river?

JR: There was a plant in Wenatchee that made ice. I'm sure. Yeah, I remember those ice blocks sailing along the floor. And then they'd take a pick, and mark a line, and then it would pop apart and the whole block, you know. If you knew how to do it, it was easy.

NW: So then, how did you get it home? Was it wrapped in newspaper?

JR: Oh, yeah. Or gunny sack. Probably put it in a gunny sack. You know what a gunny sack is?

1:08

NW: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, let me just ask a couple more questions. And then I've probably kept you long enough for today. If you could think back to one of your favorite memories of farming or harvesting food.

JR: Being able to go with my dad somewhere was always a big deal. Because he's out of the house, out get the horses in out of the corral, put the harness on 'em, give them a bucket of oats and then come into the house and he would have this breakfast and then he'd back out take the horses out, give them a drink at the water trough and go out and work until noon. He was out there working before we ever got up, all summer long. So a weekend would come when we could get our family in the old clunker car and maybe go to Park Lake for a swim or to go to Douglas for a picnic or maybe get to Wenatchee to buy some school clothes. Those were big, big deals. Big deals. And if my mother spent 20 or 30 dollars that was huge. Forty dollars was catastrophic you know on the budget because it just wasn't there. But as time got older and kids got bigger they needed more. Can you imagine clothing kids like that? Part of the answer is in that picture. Hand-me-downs. Pants were to kids now they'd pay \$125 for them – we had them for free out there. I think my folks got clothes from neighbors. My family in California sent them

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a few things. They were pretty independent though. We always had one coat we had to take care of. And shoes – that was the big deal. A new pair of shoes, a new pair of oxfords with wingtips with the holes all over them. We were going to have a school picnic and I didn't want to go unless I had new shoes. So I went to the store and got a pair of new shoes. Cost me \$5 - cost my dad \$5 – I put it on his charge. Then we went on the school picnic and we were down in the bottom of Pine Canyon down on the old road and it rained, and it rained. So we were sopping wet and we played outside anyway so by the time I got home my shoes were just sopping wet. So I had to go milk the cows or something so I took my shoes off and I didn't want my folks to see them so I put them in the oven, it was kind of warm. And you can hear the rest of the story coming can't you? I went out to milk the cows and by the time I got in my mother had come downstairs and fired up the stove to cook supper and then smelled this funny smell. She opened up the oven and the soles had separated from the tops and they were just like that. So there went five bucks. And I didn't get new shoes. I still can't remember – I guess I just went back to my clunker shoes, poor-boy shoes, work shoes.

NW: Oh gosh. How old were you? About 12?

JR: High school, 15-16 years old. I don't remember which year it was. Alice [his wife] was along – she would remember. She and I were in the same class. Yeah going on any kind of a trip. Like my grandfather would come from Spokane. And I remember one time we went to Grand Coulee to look at a stallion. And to get in a car and go that was huge.

NW: Right.

JR: Otherwise I'd stay home and would be out shocking hay, hoeing potatoes or weeds or – keep the Jim Hill mustard out of the field. Summertimes we had gallon jugs – like a vinegar jug (you know what I'm talking about don't you?)

NW: Yep.

FR: With a gunnysack or burlap sack sewed around it – maybe two layers. Then you'd fill it with water and soak it up wet and that would be what you'd take to the field. Set it down in the shade somewhere and you'd work and when you were thirsty you'd get your drink and carry it to the next place.

NW: Early canteen.

JR: Early canteen. And then came the days when there was the canvas bag that would leak water. They would leak enough water that it would keep it cool. It was its own evaporative cooler.

NW: Yeah I remember when we used to hang it on the front of our car when we were traveling across the desert.

Suggested citation:

Gathering Our Voice, 2011, Initiative for Rural Innovation & Stewardship, www.gatheringourvoice.org

JR: Yeah, exactly. You carried water in those to put in your car.

NW: Let me ask you one last question John. What is there we're doing now that gives you hope for the future?

JR: We've gone through a huge transition. From the hunting gathering days, the primitive people came and we didn't eat unless we could chase it down and kill it and eat it. That was when we were carnivorous. When we're herbivorous we could dig a root and eat that or pick a berry and eat that. And we had a pretty decent supply if you lived in a pretty good area. And that's why the Indians here would travel. They were hunter gatherers too only a couple hundred years ago. So then comes along a few new crops like they discover the sugar beet somewhere and Cuba had sugar cane and they squeezed it and made molasses and they learned how to get maple syrup out of trees you know. That's a big deal. And so we've evolved from hunters and gatherers to now the point where we don't want to eat anything unless it makes our tongue feel good. We didn't eat just to subsist and fuel our bodies cause our body can take anything and convert it to sugar – anything organic you put in your mouth. So now all this good-tasting stuff all the good stuff is gone. The best thing that's happening now is that we're learning to go the other direction. But we have to do that with the food that we subsisted on that kept us healthy and kept us able to work. We evolved because of the sugar molecule that made our tongue feel good. So now we have all these elective diseases called diabetes, heart disease and probably Alzheimer's like I said in there [letter he wrote to President Obama] that are pervasive in our society and obesity is now the norm. You know. Thirty forty percent are classed as overly obese and most everyone else is overweight except you and I. You're a wisp of a little thing – you're perfect.

NW: Not exactly but it's good to have that on tape. [laugh]