

## *Gathering Our Voice*

Interview with Wilfred Woods

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

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Nancy Warner: Ok today is October the 17<sup>th</sup> and its Nancy Warner. I'm here again with Wilfred Woods and we're going to pick up where we left off last time if that's ok with you. And we had brought you back from – you were back after WWII and we had talked about your time down in southern California so let's pick it up there and bring you back up here.

Wilfred Woods: Oh, ok, ok. I came back and finally finished college after the war at the University of Washington with a major in History and got acquainted with Charlie Gates and Bob Burks and a lot of the historical folks at the University of Washington. And came to the World as a reporter. I was here in '47 and '48 during the great flood of 1948. I was the photographer for the World during that time, packing a 4 by 5 speed graphic around to shoot my pictures. That was about 10 pounds and it had big negatives - 4 by 5 negatives - but it was sure bulky. But I flew up and down the country taking aerial pictures. The World had to deliver some of its papers to the Okanogan by plane. I flew into Twisp, with Spider Anderson in a little, a little plane. We landed on what was the ball field above town because all of the bridges in the Methow Valley were washed out. Took some pictures of the town and the washouts and came back. The Okanogan Valley was awash with the flood. That flood did great damage to all of the back country. It messed up the Okanogan and the Methow and the Wenatchee and the Entiat. I mean every river out of the Eastern slope of the Cascades was really awash with water.

NW: (inaudible)

WW: And the flood even flooded the pumping plant in the city of Wenatchee. It came up above Worthen Street. And the city's pumping plant was out of business for a day or two. It was an interesting time. Then in the fall of 1948 I decided to go to school and had the GI Bill so I went to Paris and enrolled in the Institute Brittanique to study French. Spent the winter in Paris and then in the spring I traveled around the continent. Went to Germany and flew into Berlin during the airlift on Berlin in the spring of 1949. I flew in a coal plane: C54. The biggest thing

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that was hauled during the airlift was coal, rather than food because that was what they were short of mainly, that was the heaviest thing. It was an interesting time. Then I went down – traveled around Germany during that period. Came home in the spring of 1949 and...stayed with the paper. And in May of 1950 my father and my mother and I headed back East, bought a new car in Michigan and were heading to Toronto where Dad was interested in the Toronto Hydro program. They had a big program, public power, in the province of Ontario. But when we got to Ontario Dad had a heart attack and died in May of 1950 so we shipped him home, had a big funeral, and I took over as publisher of the paper in the latter part of May of 1950.

5:00

NW: Oh my, I did not know this. How old were you then?

WW: I was 30 at the time.

NW: So how old was your mom then? How old was your Dad when he died?

WW: Dad was 73. But he'd had heart trouble and been in the hospital the year before. It wasn't a great surprise but certainly unexpected.

NW: (inaudible) So we'll keep on. So, so you came home from the trip to Toronto, you were going to be gone what? A week or two?

WW: We were away a couple of weeks. And I came home and I took over the paper at that time.

NW: So tell me a little bit about what that was like. What a - I can't even begin to imagine what that was like. You'd been mentoring in the paper?

WW: I'd been here in the paper, but I hadn't been here very long. Although I'd worked as a younger man. But fortunately I had a bunch of strong department heads. I had my cousin Bob running the newsroom.

NW: Was that Bob Warren?

WW: Bob Woods. My - his father Warren was our accountant. Warren Woods was 10 years older than father, he was in his 80s and it was very apparent that we needed somebody to help him out because our accounts were, to put it mildly, very inadequate. So that next winter I hired a young CPA to come in and join Uncle Warren in helping to run the accounting and Jack Watkins was his name. We had to rebuild the physical plant of The World. The only thing that had been bought new in the whole World operation was a new linotype which was bought in 1948, otherwise everything was old. The presses were old, the mechanical equipment was old and used. Even the adding machines were hand operated. The typewriters were used, the desks were used, everything was used. We had no air conditioning in the plant. So starting in the early 50s we started to rebuild the plant. The biggest expenses were the linotype machines which were line casting machines for the composing room and they were very expensive. My father had put in a used press in 1949, the year before he died so we were in pretty good shape for the press. He'd bought a used press from Dallas, Texas that had originally printed the New York Times. It was used, of course, but it was a much better press than the old one. A group of us would travel around the Northwest looking at other papers, seeing what other people were doing, upgrading the place. We had a good pressman: Bud Preston was his name. Harlen Honeysett was our production manager and in '55 I hired Hu Blonk to be our managing editor. Hugh had been with the Bureau of Reclamation but had worked all during the construction of Grand Coulee Dam at the dam site. And was an expert on power and reclamation. He was a good addition to the plant. Dick Bell was our advertising manager, had been with us since 1940.

10:00

WW: Our circulation manager was Lea Brown and he continued in that spot. We spent a lot of money every, every nickel we could find we spent on the plant. Put in air conditioning. Moved the newsroom to the second floor. Put an elevator in. It was a large project for us. During the 60's it continued and then finally in the late 60's we could see that offset printing was coming on and so we were starting to look at new presses. And finally in 1970 we bought a new off-set press from the Goss people, a Goss Urbanite. In 1955 we had put in a profit sharing plan for our employees. Fortunately we had enough money in that fund to borrow from it to help pay for the new press in 1970. So, that helped us. We put a big addition on the

north side of the building to house the composing room, the press and the packaging and finished it in the spring of 1971. Offset was a revolution because it meant all of the hot metal operation had to go. No more linotypes, no more casting plates, it meant retraining all of our mechanical people. And it was really a trauma for a lot of our long-time employees who had trained as printers or stereotypers and had to retrain in the new systems. So our head stereotyper, Dave Graybill went to our packaging department and ran the packaging and Honeysett and most of our printers trained on the new system. But it was a difficult time for them because offset printing was in its infancy and we had to experiment with new types of cold-type printing. We went through a lot of different kinds of equipment before we finally settled on the things that made it possible. About seven years later we finally got our first computers. And we had bought a system that had 50 megabytes of storage for our newsroom and our advertising department. 50 megabytes was all that we had. It took a lot of maintenance on it but we were embarked in the computing age. And from then on, computers became more and more sophisticated and finally we of course got rid of everything that was mechanical and all the input today is into the computer.

NW: Gosh, that's quite a...that's quite a journey you've been on. All these changes in technology just during your life time.

WW: Oh yes, yes.

NW: It's huge isn't it?

WW: Oh it was immense, immense. We started with cold-type paste-up and making our pages in cold-type, which was on film. And then pasting them and then shooting negative and then from a negative making an aluminum plate. Well that's gone away now and we go directly from the computer to a plate so we don't have any of that anymore. It's a complete transformation, yes. Then finally in 1999 we went to a new press and bought the old Ninth Street Skookum building on 9<sup>th</sup> Street. I turned over the management of the paper in 1997 to Rufus so he had the fun of ordering the presses, going to Europe and shopping and finally borrowing a lot of money to put in new presses and buy the new building out there.

15:00

NW: Well you got to do some shopping it sounds like in the early days when you were re-fitting after your dad died.

WW: Oh yes.

NW: But you didn't go to Europe then, you were going around locally?

WW: Everything when I was re-fitting the paper was domestic. We didn't get into off-shore until we bought this German press in 1999.

NW: So that was a great sort of overview of, of the paper through, you know, from the day that your dad died until now.

WW: That's right. Oh yes.

NW: So let's go back and talk a little bit about what you were doing besides working, I mean, I can't imagine what that was like you know, to lose your dad suddenly when you're 30 years old and come back home and be in charge of this paper that runs every single day, 365 days a year, well maybe 364 days. So...tell me a little bit about what that's like in that day to day situation, what was that like?

WW: Well fortunately I had a group of good executives that were looking after things and so my role basically was sort of management role. Course I had to hire management folks but I started writing a daily column back in those days and that kept me busy, every day I wrote a daily column for the paper. When I took over the paper, things were really popping in the valley. In 1951 Alcoa was just preparing to come into operation. The Korean War had started and they needed aluminum and so the man that was really responsible for Alcoa was Kirby Billingsley. Kirby had been the managing editor in the paper, had been my father's lieutenant all during the promotion of the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project. And he became a PUD commissioner in 1948. In 1950 he left the Columbia Basin Commission, a state group overseeing the development of irrigation, and I hired him to write editorials. He left us in 1953 when he was named manager of the PUD. It was fortunate because he had a better vision of what ought to be done with the river than probably anybody else in the Northwest and he was responsible for our negotiating with the federal government which helped us because the PUD had to get their power from Rock Island Dam which was unfinished. It had built by

Puget Power from 1929-31 and had an unfinished powerhouse so those slots were open to add more generators. The PUD with the help of the federal government was able to persuade Puget Power to lease the unfinished portion of the power house to the PUD and which then was committed to the new Alcoa plant to make aluminum for the Korean War. That was the biggest thing that probably happened to the valley because the advent of Alcoa had completely changed this community. At the same time the Columbia Basin Project was being completed. The first water came into the Quincy area in 1952. They held a “Farm in a Day” outside of Ephrata They built the complete farm and a farmhouse and a barn in 24hrs. It was a great event.

NW: Who was “they”? Who organized the –

20.00

WW: The Bureau of Reclamation organized it and they had a drawing for a veteran who was given this farm free of debt. A man by the name of Dunn was the lucky veteran who got the farm. Quincy was booming and the advent of water to the Columbia Basin transformed the whole Columbia Basin. And of course there was a lot of business being done in the whole area as farms were being built and there was tremendous investment into the Columbia Basin as they built the canals. It was a transformation of hundreds of thousands of acres in just a few years time. Shortly after that this area got busy and Chief Joseph Dam came in as a Corps of Engineers Dam. Traditionally the Corps of Engineers did not get involved in irrigation. They were only normally interested in power and navigation and flood control. But thanks to our senators and Congressman Walter Horan from Wenatchee, Fifth District congressman, a bill was passed by Congress in the mid 50s which authorized Chief Joseph Dam to support irrigation just as Grand Coulee Dam had supported the Columbia Basin project. This meant that we had the ability to help develop irrigation projects from Wenatchee all the way to the Canadian border north of us. And so starting in the late 50’s the Greater Wenatchee Irrigation Project was authorized which irrigated all of East Wenatchee and as a pumping project, along with the Bray’s Landing up above Orondo, the Manson project which made a pumping plant out of Manson, Howard Flat above Chelan, Bridgeport Bar, the Brewster Flat and the Oroville/Tonasket Project were all developed as part of subsidy from Chief Joseph Dam Project. And that went on for the 60’s and 70’s

and it made possible the expansion of apple growing in this region which was a major factor in the growth of Central Washington.

NW: So first you had Alcoa coming in, the Korean War and...tell me about what that transformation looked and how did you experience that, during the Alcoa days, before we get back to apple growing

WW: Well Alcoa transformed the city of Wenatchee instantly because there were 800 men – 800-1000 jobs instantly. We had a war baby, the Keokuk Electro Metals Company had purchased a wartime Rock Island plant that was put in during the war to make ferro- silicon. And it had been shut down but re-opened in 1950 by the Keokuk plant and that had a couple of hundred jobs. So that came along and helped us out but it paled in significance compared to 1000 jobs from Alcoa. And all of a sudden people were building tract homes and the city of Wenatchee really felt those jobs very, very quickly.

NW: So like what neighborhoods around Wenatchee were built on those tract homes for the Alcoa workers?

WW: Well...there was a whole tract out on Cherry Street which was built very, very quickly and it affected not only Wenatchee but also, you know, other towns in the area. And it was a stimulus for business. Not much was happening in East Wenatchee. In 1950 the population of East Wenatchee was only 3 or 4 hundred people. So that had barely started to grow.

25:00

NW: So some of the tract homes for the Alcoa workers were built in East Wenatchee?

WW: Actually, Alcoa affected every community around here, as workers found housing in the Wenatchee Valley, Entiat, and Chelan as well as locally. In 1952 the first pour of aluminum was made. And later the plant was expanded to four potlines.

NW: So then the apple boom started after the irrigation went to Douglas County in, did you say in the late 60's and early 70's?

WW: That's right. There were a number of things that happened in the apple business. The apple business changed from boxes to bins and that meant that the automation of apples came along with new warehouses so they could high pile bins. And also in the late 50's came along controlled atmosphere storage. The leader on that was Archie Van Doren who became the head of our tree fruit research center. And I think '59 was the first CA storage (that was controlled atmosphere storage), which meant that you could store apples year-round. Before that, you had to move the apples before summer. So that meant a tremendously expanded apple marketing program. In addition to that, of course, came along the expanded marketing program of the Apple Commission and the expansion of growing Red Delicious apples which dominated the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. The growth of the apple growing in the Columbia Basin came along later. And the center of gravity of the apple business moved down to lower Grant County later on. So the Grant County today probably is the center of gravity of the growing of apples today.

NW: So big changes in everything, during your lifetime you've seen everything from printing, to electricity, to irrigation, to the way apples are done.

WW: We got involved also in the formation of port districts in this area. And that came about because our local development group was interested in the expansion of navigation upstream from the Tri-Cities into our area which would have meant trying to put locks in the Grant County and Chelan County dams between us and the Tri-Cities. That would have required the Corps of Engineers to study the area and to get appropriations to do it. So we put on a big push. As part of it port districts were organized in Chelan, Douglas and Grant counties. And we had lots of meetings about the advantages of water transportation into the area. The area joined the Inland Waterways Association which was the major promotion group which was responsible for bringing navigation up the Columbia as far as the Tri-Cities and on into Lewiston, Idaho and we wanted to extend it into this branch. And the ports here were primarily their aim was to try to get that. So we expended a lot of meetings and during the 60's and the 70's I hired a man by the name of Chester Kimm to help direct our efforts at promotion of economic development as well as looking into the expansion of recreation and we held a series of regional meetings here in Wenatchee under the auspices of The World.

30:00

WW: They were big meetings. We had our senators, our governor. We had the heads of the Bureau of Reclamation the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation all came out from Washington D.C. to speak to us. We had Senator Muskie come for a big meeting on outdoor recreation which was attended by lots of big names in the recreation business. We had meetings on trails and then we had a series of meetings on resource subjects on reclamation, on power, on water resources which attracted Northwest attention. In addition to that Mr. Kimm was responsible for holding a series of flying tours to the Arctic out to Alaska and Northern British Columbia. During that period there was a push from California and the Southwest to divert part of the Columbia River especially the Snake River, down to the Southwest. And we were fighting that program and felt that we ought to be looking farther north if they wanted to find surplus water. And so we organized a series of flying tours. We went from here to British Columbia, saw the dams up there, to Alaska, to Prudhoe Bay, to the Northwest Territories and to the tar sands area.

NW: In Alberta?

WW: In Alberta. Looking at water resources. We had people from all over the West that were interested in water resources. From California, and Texas, Arizona, Nevada. And we held flying tours in '68, and '70 and '72 and '74 with a plane load of people. It was an interesting time. Well, the diversion of the Columbia River of course never got authorized. Our Senators Magnussen and Jackson were really able to fend off any studies of that time. And then as time went on it was obvious that large scale water diversion projects were going out of style. And so we were successful in keeping that from happening. But we had some wonderful big meetings during that period.

NW: So that period again was '68 to '75 around there?

WW: Yes,

NW: Ok. I remember that proposal. I was living in Colorado at the time but I remember the proposal to divert water from the Snake River down to Arizona.

WW: Oh yes, that's right.

NW: So, in the – was The Wenatchee World organizing these tours?

WW: Yes.

NW: Ok. Not the Port?

WW: No, this was The World.

NW: Oh ok, alright, alright.

WW: And these big meetings as well, yeah.

NW: Wow. You have just been so instrumental in the whole history.

WW: Oh yes we had large, large influential meetings during that time. I was named a State Parks Commissioner in '66 and stayed on the commission for ten years. The parks were expanding and we had a good time during that period.

NW: What do you mean stark parks?

WW: *State* parks

NW: Oh state parks! Oh I'm sorry.

WW: I was the State Parks Commissioner.

NW: Like Elliot Scull?

WW: Yes, that's right

NW: Oh all right. Oh I bet you enjoyed that!

WW: Oh that was an interesting time.

NW: So I want to back up a little bit to your – trying to – just trying to understand what it was like for you personally have this job, kind of...

WW: Oh, running the paper?

NW: Yeah, running the paper and when did you have time to spend time with your family and go on these vacations 'cause I know you've traveled a lot. Tell me a little bit about your - that transition from being young and single to being married and running a paper and having kids.

35:00.

WW: (laughs) Well, I got married in '51, only a year after I took over the paper. So...and we started raising a family in the 50's. So we had three kids, in '54, '56 and '61 so...We were also involved in the promotion with the Chamber of Commerce of highways up and down the river. We had an organization called the Okanogan Caribou Trail Association which was the north-south route. And this was a Chamber of Commerce promotion and we held tours every summer clear up into northern British Columbia helping promote the highway development up and down. The Association went from Klamath Falls, Oregon all the way to Dawson Creek, British Columbia. So we had lots of travel back and forth on that period.

NW: So were those family trips? You would take Kathy and the kids?

WW: Oh yeah we took Kathy along. We had a good time during that time, yeah.

NW: Now we have a map in our office that I got from Department of Transportation. It's a reproduction of a map from like 1929 that shows the highway 97 corridor up into BC and I don't think the World published it but -

WW: No.

NW: But I'll have to show you sometime that map, you've probably seen it. So the paper then was very much behind the Caribou, what did you say it was again?

WW: Okanogan Caribou Trail Association. It had been formed back in the early 30s. Chester Kimm, who was Chamber of Commerce secretary in the 1940's, took it over and made it a great promotion. Kimm was responsible for for making the Apple Blossom Festival the big time it is today. He turned it into the State Apple Blossom Festival instead of the Wenatchee Apple Blossom Festival. And was responsible for sort of making it a much bigger operation than it had been before that. And he was a real organizer, and always in the background. But he knew how to get things done.

NW: Now that road down there by Old Station means a lot to me, that name of that road. Chester Kimm Road. I never knew what that meant.

WW: Oh yes, that's right. Yeah, that's right.

NW: So tell me a little bit about that...I'm really interested in this corridor, that Okanogan - Caribou Okanogan Corridor and community sort of collaboration around that. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

WW: Well the Chamber of Commerce also organized a regional meeting of Chambers of Commerce, North Central Regional Chamber of Commerce organization which was engaged primarily in road promotion. But the chambers met quarterly and had big meetings and it was a regional meeting. It was during this time that we were needing to promote money from Congress for our irrigation projects. Columbia Basin required a lot of money, as did the irrigation projects north of here. So we were always lobbying our representatives and senators for projects. So that was part of it. So we were back in Washington D.C on occasion, and I was back there every so often, take my wife down there. We'd drive back East during the 50's and 60's. And it –

NW: How long did you take to drive back there in the 60's?

WW: Well we'd take a week, and ya know, it would be a fun time. And took my kids to Europe in '58. Two little kids. We had a good time. And I took a number of European tours. I went to the Middle East in 1954 with Reverend Jim Albertson then I went back in late 50's again with him and to Europe a number of times. I was running around the world now and then.

NW: So who is Albertson? Is this-

WW: Jim Albertson is a Methodist preacher who came in 1950 and became great friends of ours. Their girls, well Ann Deal is the oldest daughter of Jim Alberston, lives here now. And Alberston was a great pal and we traveled a lot together.  
40:00

NW: Did you climb and ski when you were over there? Did you go in the winter or summer?

WW: No these were summer trips, no, no. I did my skiing in Europe later years

NW: In Switzerland and Austria?

WW: In Switzerland and Chamonix, France and Austria and the Czech Republic.

NW: In the 70's? 80's?

WW: In the 80's, . 90's. Yeah about 10 years ago, my last trip.

NW: Sounds fun. So tell me, where does Rufus lay in the birth order, the kids? Is he in the middle?

WW: He's the middle. He's the pickle in the middle

NW: (laughs) So, does he have sisters on both sides?

WW: Oh yes, on both sides. His older sister Kara is two years older and his younger his younger sister Gretchen is five years younger.

NW: The pickle in the middle (laughs). Ok. So in the, in the 50's then you were going on road trips.

WW: Oh yes,NW: Because you were promoting highways and looking at the irrigation. So you were combining family pleasure and work all the time.

WW: That's right, that's right. We were traveling a lot and running all over the country.

NW: So were there particularly memorable trips, road trips of you and the...of Kathy and the kids? Any, any stories of – what were the road conditions like?

WW: Well, Reverend Albertson was a good promoter and he promoted us taking two Volkswagen buses to deliver up to a Volkswagen dealer in Anchorage so in 1958 we went...we took a trip to Alaska with the Albertson's and our two little kids. Let's see, Kara was 4 and Rufus was 2. So, and we camped our way up to Alaska on the Alaskan highway and -

NW: With Volkswagen buses?

WW: With Volkswagen buses. And he was a photographer and was taking movies, promotion movies for Volkswagen as we delivered these buses up to a dealer in Anchorage. He was a very skilled 16mm photographer and had done a lot of wildlife work and so we had a wonderful trip on the way up to Alaska.

NW: Wow yeah, so you were adventurous with two little kids. And so how'd those Volkswagen arrive? How'd they survive the highway?

WW: Oh we had to wash them at every place so they were clean when he took photographs of them as we went up the road (laughs). They we were cleaner than we were.

NW: How did the tires do and the axles and everything?

WW: Oh we did fine, oh no. It was dusty and of course mosquito-y but it was - they came through fine, oh yeah.

NW: Oh that sounds totally fun! It sounds like a big adventure. So then did you fly home?

WW: Then we flew home,

NW: Well so then we talked last time about your family's place at Lake Chelan and of course I was thinking of you when I went to Stehekin last week and...oh that must be – is it on the north shore or the south shore? Your family place where you spent a lot of vacation time.

WW: Well we were up near the yacht club, 13 miles up on the south shore, not too far from the yacht club.

NW: Oh ok, so not too far from Field's point?

WW: Well, it was 5 miles this side of Field's Point. Yeah, near the Cove Marina. Yeah, yeah there's a big slide area there.

NW: Neat. So I know you had spent a lot of family time up at Lake Chelan, swimming, boating and...so how...I always picture those guys in New York City and that, you know they send their family to New England for the summer and they'd go up and they spend weekends with them. Is that what you did here? Was the family up at the lake and you'd go up and join them for weekends?

WW: Sure, sure. The family would be up there and I'd commute and spend the time with the kids up at the lake. It was wonderful time.

NW: So that would go on for like two, two three months?

WW: Maybe a month or so usually,

NW: Oh that sounds great. Well so, 'course I'm interested in skiing and backpacking and...so let's go there a little bit. I know we talked last time about your introduction to backpacking with this mountain goat of a person (laughs).

WW: (laughs) Oh we didn't backpack, we were on horses that time.

NW: Oh, oh ok.

45:00

WW: No no, I started skiing, my two sisters and I we all got Anderson and Thompon skis in 1935 down at Anderson Hardware. There were no ropetows in the area. We would go over in East Wenatchee and find wheat fields that didn't have a fence at the bottom 'cause we couldn't stop

NW: That's why you're alive today (laughs).

WW: But in high school we had a ski club. And we would...we would go up to the Entiat, there was a place up there. Or we would go to Stevens Pass. Before there were any ropetows at Stevens pass. We would just go up the mountain and ski for half, maybe one run, half a day skiing.

NW: That was it?

WW: Yeah, a car load, a couple car loads of us. They were all boys, we didn't have any girls along. But then they finally got rope tows up there. Don Adams and Bruce Kehr finally put the rope tows in. And then Wenatchee Ski Club got active. In 1939 and '40 put a rope tow up on Wheeler Hill on Wenatchee Heights on the Cockrum property. They even put lights up. The Wenatchee ski club had 100 members and it was organized I think in 1935 and it was responsible for starting that ski area there. And then right after the war they went up and promoted a ski tow up on Pole Ridge at Lake Wenatchee on the south shore which wasn't a very good location. It faced the sun. And that wasn't very successful. The road to it was terrible. But Stevens Pass was the big place. The Wenatchee ski club put on big fairs with the Everett Ski Club and Wenatchee and Everett kind of owned the pass for a number of years during those early years. They kept adding more and more rope tows and it was a fun time. There were of course local ski - rope tows as well as the one on Wheeler Hill. The folks at Waterville put in a rope tow there. There was ski tow put in on Chelan Butte that operated for a little while. There was a ski tow up near Patterson Lake in the Methow, not far from Winthrop. There was a lot of activity all over the area and of course Leavenworth was the big thing with their jumps at that time. There were no rope tows at Leavenworth but jumping was the big operation and that, that was the big attraction because the Great Northern was bringing its ski trains and they had a siding that came right in to town and would park the trains right in town. And then take the folks up by truck to the ski area at

Leavenworth. It was interesting to watch because lots of folks didn't come properly attired for deep snow, and...but they would be haulin' in there.

NW: How interesting. So they were coming over from the West side?

WW: Yes, oh yes, oh yes. Seattle. Special trains from Seattle, that's right.

NW: Ski trains.

WW: Ski trains, that's right.

NW: Oh how interesting. So this was in the 40's?

WW: In the 30's and 40's.

NW: Wow. How interesting. So were the Norwegian's the ones that built the ski jumps? Or who built the ski jumps?

50:00

WW: Actually the man that started Leavenworth Winter Sports Club was a forest service ranger by the name of Walt Anderson and he organized Leavenworth winter sports club in about 1929. But the Bakke family was in there, Hermod and Magnus and they named the big hill for them later on. Bakke Hill was the hundred meter hill. They were the chief promoters and the workers, they had to tramp that hill ya know. It was a labor of love. They had three hills, they had an A hill, a B hill and C hill. And it was a lot of work. The CCC's put in a lodge which is still there, that little ski lodge there built out of logs. And big time in the 30's and the 40's and into the 50's. And I'm trying to remember the year, I think 1940 when a national record was set by the Norwegian Torger Tokle. I think 285ft. He was subsequently killed in the war during the Italian campaign but I believe it was 1940. But there were, there was another big hill over in Snoqualmie Pass, the Snoqualmie Ski Bowl which was right near the tunnel, the Milwaukee Tunnel. Was on the Milwaukee Road. Was right at Hyak.

NW: So you can kinda still see it when you drive by?

WW: Yeah, yeah that's right. On the left hand side of the highway. So there were, there were hills around, ya know there was a hill in British Columbia, one at Revelstoke, another near - I think near Vancouver, there was a hill down ...near Mt. Hood. There were a number of pretty good size jumping hills.

NW: And then Sitzmark for a ski area, up in Okanogan, it's pretty old too isn't it? Sitzmark is in the Loup?

WW: Sitzmark is fairly old, it was developed by a man from Tonasket. And then the Loup Loup came in a little later I think. Yeah. But it certainly has developed since that time. They have a very nice quad chair in there now.

NW: So I remember the - I just first started skiing in the 60's myself and I totally fell in love with it and I can remember what the culture was like. Oh it was so cool! Everybody was wearing those stretch pants ya know,

WW: Oh yeah (laughs).

NW: And wool sweaters and those big hairy coats, I remember those bear parkas (laughs).

WW: Yes! Oh yes, yes.

NW: You remember those? Oh they were really the thing. And so...oh gosh...I can remember as far back as the, well I guess the early 60's is probably where my memories are. People would drive their old jeeps up into the mountain in Colorado to go skiing and there definitely weren't rope tows, it was like a tipping point. Suddenly it became, it became so... just like everything we've been talking about. It kind of got to a point and then it went like...really big, in a hurry, in Colorado. So one of the things that fascinates me that I want to do this oral history on is how these, all these little rope tows, community-supported ski areas kept on in the face of all those chairlifts, and everything. So...this is a longer term topic but maybe you could tell me just a little bit about why you think that is.

WW: Well...typical as Waterville is it's close! That's why. And still operates. And they've ya know, kept their interest in it and...up at Chelan at Manson NW: Oh, is that Echo?

WW: Yes, Echo valley. There's Echo Valley. Echo ridge is up above it which is a cross country area. A very, very fine cross country area. But of course there was a big push to put a downhill ski area in the Methow valley ya know, up on Sandy Butte and the folks, the environmental folks in the Methow opposed it and that never went. But the Methow has turned into be a tremendous cross country ski area. And the value of real estate alongside those cross country trails is the best – the highest value real estate that there is. You want to be up there on a lodge, you want to be on the cross country trail. It's an interesting economic side light.

55:00

NW: Yes, that is interesting.

WW: Yeah, yeah.

NW: So...but there are other parts of the country, like in Colorado, where there aren't these community rope tows. I mean, I don't remember any, except maybe at Lake Isabel, there was one which was fairly close to Pueblo. But I kind of think it might be a Northwest thing, or maybe it's also true in the Midwest but people had to volunteer to keep them going.

WW: Oh yes, they were operated by volunteers, there wasn't any – the only commercial thing around of course was Stevens Pass. And that was big enough and had a long enough season that it could afford - somebody could afford to invest in that and Don Adams and Bruce Kehr were able to really make that a first class ski area.

NW: And so then Mission came along a little bit later didn't it?

WW: Well...the following – the first community ski area was up in the Squilchuck. We persuaded state parks to buy – Squilchuck State Parks about 1950 from the Weeks family and Lea Brown put in a ski area, rope tows in there and finally a

poma lift and operated it as a volunteer area. But it again was only 3000 foot elevation and it was obvious it wasn't high enough. So in the mid 60's, Danny Gehringer and a group of his friends started taking portable rope tows up to the upper Wheeler Hill Reservoir to a talus slope that had really, really good snow and every Apple Blossom Festival were putting on races up there. This was in the Stemilt side and they were interested in developing that as a ski area. But at the same time Wilmer Hampton who was an engineer was starting to study the Squilchuck as a potential ski area. The Squilchuck he felt had a lot more vertical capacity than the Stemilt side which was true, but it was full of trees. But he started studying it along with Dr Russell Congdon.

NW: Gordon's uncle?

WW: Gordon's brother. And the Chamber of Commerce got interested in the mid 60's, appointed a committee to start to look into the possibilities of that led especially by Archie Rolfs and Claire Vandivort. And they organized a committee out of the Chamber of Commerce, studied both of them and came out in favor of the Squilchuck and then in the mid 60's the Wenatchee Mountain Inc was organized, raised money to make a study of it, brought a...an engineer in to study it from the coast whose initial recommendation was strange. He recommended that they build a road clear to the top of the mountain and put a parking lot up on top which was to say the least...bizarre. But...they threw out that idea and persuaded the county and the Forest Service to build a road up the Squilchuck, got the Forest Service to approve the project and raised a couple hundred thousand dollars, borrowed a half a million and in 1966 opened Mission Ridge in the midst of one of the lowest snow years that they'd had. It barely survived. It had only two chairlifts: number one and number two chair. But it was so popular that they were able to borrow money from the Goodfellow Brothers the next year and build number three chair and from then on it was rolling and going well.

60:00

NW: Oh ok, ok. So was Don Kirby -

WW: Don Kirby was the first president and wrote a small booklet on the origins of Mission Ridge. If you haven't seen it, buy it.

NW: Ok. I haven't seen it yet. I lost my opportunity [to interview him] so I'm glad he wrote that down.

WW: That's right.

NW: Huh. Well this is great, this is, this is...so Mission Ridge is pretty darn new in the scheme of things

WW: Oh yes, yes, yes. that's right. But I should tell you that during the 50's the community college got deeply involved in skiing and Frank Cumbo who was running the ski program at the college was able to attract a whole series of expert Norwegian skiers to come to Wenatchee Valley College and Wenatchee Valley College was one of the powerhouses in 4-way skiing in the country. They were competitive with Colorado, with Dartmouth, with the University of Washington during a number of years in the 50's.

NW: That is a little known fact.

WW: They had some of the best Norwegian skiers in the world come to Wenatchee Valley College

NW: Like, who were some of those people?

WW: I can't remember their names.. These were jumpers, these were jumpers and cross country mainly. They did do downhill but mainly they were jumpers and cross country skiers and there were a whole series of them.

NW: Oh how interesting.

WW: Yes.

NW: Well the other thing that inspires me is that there are so many super star skiers that come out of Leavenworth.

WW: Oh yes.

NW: Because of that hill being in their backyard, because they could just go there; like you said: its close. Did you know some of those when you were growing up?

WW: Well, I knew...yes, I was acquainted with a lot of them. They were...they made jumpers primarily. And of course the Hampton brothers out of the Squilchuck here were a couple of them. Wilmer was class A, and Walt was too, who took Wilmer's place as manager of Mission Ridge. When Wilmer died very suddenly, before Mission Ridge was opened, died of a heart attack. So Walt quit his material handling business and became the manager of Mission Ridge by the time it opened and was manager of it until he had a stroke and had to quit.

NW: Is he still alive?

WW: No no, he died. He was followed by Gordon West for a number of years. Yeah. And then Gordon West was followed by another man at the time that we sold Mission Ridge. It was apparent in about 1990 that we couldn't raise money, we had - nobody had control of the operation, we had 400, more than 400 members as stockholders. And the board decided we were going to have to sell because we couldn't raise any more money to do what needed to be done. So it was about 1990 that the board that decided to sell it. And they sold it to Keith McCaw in 1990. They had two front men, Don Etherington and...and his partners were two of them that came over from Seattle to run it. And then McCaw sold his majority interest to properties who then finally sold it to the present owner.

NW: And what's the name of the present owner, do you remember?

WW: He's a Seattle businessman.

NW: Ok, well this is great. I've got to stop here, although I hate to.

WW: (chuckles). 11:15, it's time to -