

Gathering Our Voice

Interview with Fran Johnson

Interviewer: Amy Stork

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Amy Stork: My name's Amy Stork and I'm sitting here with Fran Johnson at her home in Twisp, outside of Twisp on July 2, 2009. So, Fran we'll just start with these background questions. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

Fran Johnson: Oh, I was born in Seattle in 1919.

Amy Stork: Great. And, what's your ethnic heritage? Your mother and your father, what was their background?

Fran Johnson: My mother is Irish and Scottish and my dad is Chinese.

Amy Stork: Did they come; were they both born in the United States? Or your dad was born in China?

Fran Johnson: My dad was born in China. My mother was born here.

Amy Stork: How long have you lived over in North Central Washington?

Fran Johnson: I've been here since 1968.

Amy Stork: What year? These questions are a little out of order now that I look at them. It says "what generation are you", first, second, third, fourth, but you already told me that you are sort of both. Your dad was born in China and your mom was born in the States. Do you know about your mom's family's background, like when they came to the States?

Fran Johnson: No, I don't know too much about my mother's side of the family. She didn't really talk about it. I guess I never thought to ask.

Amy Stork: How did your dad end up in Seattle?

Fran Johnson: He came over with my uncle from China. And then he, he got, he met my mother because they, I mean my dad's uncle broke his leg when he was helping my mother and her

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family move from Kansas. So, when he had the injury why then he knew to contact his nephew so that's how my mother met my dad.

Amy Stork: Oh, okay. And, where else have you lived besides Seattle and here in the Methow?

Fran Johnson: Well, I grew up on Vashon Island and I spent three years in China. When I came home I went to school at Cleveland High in Seattle and then I moved back to, we weren't in Vashon Island then, it's out in the Kent Valley.

Amy Stork: So, you were in China for three years as a child, like before high school?

Fran Johnson: When I was 11 years old, I went over.

Amy Stork: Your whole family?

Fran Johnson: Nope, just my brother and I.

Amy Stork: Without your dad, even?

Fran Johnson: Well he took us over there, but he left us there.

Amy Stork: Wow, who did you live with there?

Fran Johnson: His mother.

Amy Stork: Interesting

Fran Johnson: And brother.

Amy Stork: Wow that must have been a pretty big change.

Fran Johnson: Well, you know how kids are. They adapt to most anything.

Amy Stork: Do you have any specific memories of that time in China?

Fran Johnson: Oh, lots of just little stuff. Like, we would get into trouble all the time, my brother and I. When you're 11 and 12 you just....

Amy Stork: Right.

Fran Johnson: You can think of all kinds of mischievous things to get into.

Amy Stork: Since then, have you done any other traveling outside of the Northwest?

Fran Johnson: No, I went on a mission in Utah for two years. That's it. I don't remember. I don't recall going anyplace else.

Amy Stork: And, tell me about your education background, school or apprenticeships or any other training you've done?

Fran Johnson: Well, I don't know if I did anything. I went to high school and that's about it. Oh, I've gone to what do you call it?

Amy Stork: That must be Teri? [Teri Pieper, photographer]

Fran Johnson: I think they went to the wrong house because they went in there and then they came back here.

Amy Stork: Oh she did? Oh yeah, there she is.

Fran Johnson: Evidently she didn't see your car.

Amy Stork: Let me just go out and make sure she just knows where we are. Okay, we're back recording. There's only a couple more on these questions. So, after high school, how did you make a living over the years?

Fran Johnson: Oh you know, you work at this and you work at that and then you work at something else.

Amy Stork: For example?

Fran Johnson: Well, I worked in the restaurant and I worked, when I was going to high school I worked for a lady for my room and board. Went to Cleveland High.

Amy Stork: And then, over here? Once you moved over to the Methow, how did you get by?

Fran Johnson: Well, I moved over here, you know I don't recall. I moved over here when my husband moved over here. And I came along. He was farming, that's what we did until he passed away and then he got retired, we moved into here. I've been sitting around here ever since.

Amy Stork: Um, are there any other special interests or hobbies that have taken up a lot of your time over the years?

Fran Johnson: Yeah, farming

Amy Stork: You don't need any hobbies if you're a farmer, is that right?

Fran Johnson: That's exactly right.

Amy Stork: Okay.

Fran Johnson: When you own any acreage, you're busy all the time. Period.

Amy Stork: Okay, this is the second part of the interview with Fran Johnson on July 2nd. Fran, as I've mentioned I'm focusing on exploring the Twisp Farmers' Market and how that got started, along with other elements of your experience with the community. Can you tell me what you know about how the Farmers' Market got going?

Fran Johnson: Yeah, well it was a couple of us that wanted to sell stuff that we grew and I came from the west side and we had public market. And that's where I got; we always, even when I was growing up my folks went there too. I understood how it worked, so I started one here.

Amy Stork: What did you have to do to make that happen?

Fran Johnson: Well, there was a couple of us. There was Bob Elk and I think, Ed Welch. We got to talking and wanted to find a place to sell our stuff and it's too far to drive to the coast, so we decided we would do something here. Like, I explained to them how the Farmers' Market worked over there, so we got altogether and decided that we, the three of us started the market.

Amy Stork: So, what did you have to do to find a place for it? How did you get other people involved?

Fran Johnson: I was involved in the Community Center at the time and it was a big area when we could use it. In fact, when I think back, we never asked permission. We just took it for granted that you know, it was okay. And, I have no idea to this day, who is in charge or who owns the parking lot that we used. You know. Well, it was a good place. It was empty and there was plenty of space. There was just three of us for awhile and it didn't take long. Small community, so everybody just... Cause, I came to the coast and you could go to the public market there. That's how we started.

Amy Stork: And, you saw it grow over the years?

Fran Johnson: Whoever thought it was going to grow like that? The first year there was maybe half a dozen of us, but after that it just went. I finally got out of it.

Amy Stork: When you stopped farming?

Fran Johnson: No, when I, well yes I didn't have anything more to sell. I didn't want to do it anymore. I had a wreck. I don't have a car and I don't drive anymore, so it got kind of iffy, so I quit. Somebody else will take it over.

Amy Stork: What do you think having the Farmers' Market has meant to the community?

Fran Johnson: I think you have to ask the rest of the people. It was a nice place for the growers to dispose of their items because this little community is too far away from a big city market. This is why we started the Farmers' Market because it was too far to take stuff and it just grew like that, got so there was no space.

Amy Stork: So, obviously people really liked having it?

Fran Johnson: Oh yes, it went along fine. I mean it grew ever since it started. Just three of us and then there was no space.

Amy Stork: How do you feel when you think about getting that thing started? Does it make you feel proud of being something like that?

Fran Johnson: I mean I never think of it. It's just a community effort. I don't see where nobody has the right to feel that they did it because we all did it. You know, it takes people to do it.

Amy Stork: Besides yourself and the other few people who helped start it, what other resources did you need to bring in to make the Farmers' Market start?

Fran Johnson: We didn't have to bring anything in, we just brought ourselves in. We started selling and others that grew stuff, they saw the opportunity. It didn't take long cause it was full.

Amy Stork: Did that change over time? For example, did you have to put more in to organizing? I'm thinking from what you're saying it started out really simple. Did that change over time?

Fran Johnson: Well, it stayed simple except that when we got bigger and bigger then we had to pay a little bit of, well at first we just donated. It was non-profit so any extras at the end of the season, we donated it to the Community Center because it was only to be there to help. Have a place where they could sell their stuff. You live up here in this little, it takes thirty miles to get out of town, so you can't just, that just made a place for people to get rid of their stuff.

Amy Stork: So, um, in terms of the broader picture, moving away from just talking about the Farmers' Market. You were a farmer in this community for a long time, a few decades at least, right?

Fran Johnson: Well, we moved here in '68 and we had cattle. I have no idea what, it was in 1972 I think that we started the market, but I got to know a few people around, can't remember his name...Dave Sabold. He had bees and honey, so we just, Bob Elk too. We just all got together and decided that we needed a place to do it. So, we started out the three of us. That was it.

Amy Stork: During the time that you were farming, how did the community change or how did the resources that you needed to raise cattle or grow food, how did that change over time while you were farming?

Fran Johnson: How do you mean change?

Amy Stork: Well, that's just the question that's on here. Basically, as change comes through, how do people adapt to it? You know, did the economy change, did the community change? Were there ways in which things that were one way when you started, the circumstances changed over time and you had to adjust?

Fran Johnson: No.

Amy Stork: It was pretty much the same?

Fran Johnson: The situation. We didn't change. The situation changed to adapt to us as we came in and sold, had a place to sell. In fact, we never asked any questions if we could use the spot or not, we just went in and used it. Afterwards, at the end of the year we donated because it was non-profit and any extras, because we charged 25 cents a spot, when I think of it and what do they charge now \$10?

Amy Stork: I think its \$4 a week, so pretty cheap.

Fran Johnson: It was, you know, we used to advertise, that's why we charged a little something, so we could have an ad in the paper. Then each year it got bigger, the ad got bigger, so we charged a little more. Then, after three years, always at the end of the year we gave whatever we had left over. We used to advertise in the paper, but we quit that because there was no space for anybody anymore. Then the money was divided between the Community Center and the Senior Center. The money that we took in cause we're non-profit and nobody, so we just divided it to give it to them for rent.

Amy Stork: So, one of the things that the organization organizing this project is doing is thinking about the concept of stewardship. You know stewardship of the economy, the environment, the community. So, the next question is, for you, how would you define good stewardship of the economy or of the environment or of the community?

Fran Johnson: Well, the reason we started it was we needed a place to uh, dispose of our stuff that we grew and uh, it was too far away to take it to a market, so we had to find a way to. And, I had come from the coast and I knew about the Farmers' Market so I talked to Dave Sabold and Bob Elk. I said we could do that can't we? Well, how do you start it? There was three of us that had a table at the parking lot there and it just grew from there. I mean it really grew. People were happy to have a place to get rid of their excess.

Amy Stork: Do you think the Farmers' Market is a good example of people taking care of the community? People taking care of each other?

Fran Johnson: Yeah, I think so.

Amy Stork: How?

Fran Johnson: Cause each one needed a way, a space to get rid of their excess.

Amy Stork: And, what do you think the customers get out of it now or got out of it then?

Fran Johnson: Well if you can't grow it, don't grow it you have someplace to buy it.

Amy Stork: You mentioned how isolated and faraway we are from other places. Do you think the Farmers' Market is particularly important here compared to other places?

Fran Johnson: Well, I think each person copied _____ along. I don't recall any Farmers' Markets in any of these little towns around. And, so when we started ours it wasn't long until they started another one. Every, you know, little town cause we had some of them came clear from Oroville.

Amy Stork: To shop at the Twisp market?

Fran Johnson: No, to sell. So, now they have one in Tonasket. I think they have one in Wenatchee and I think they have one in Brewster, but I'm not sure.

Amy Stork: Yeah, they do. And, in Wenatchee I think there's three or four markets in the area. Now, when you were getting started, did the Farmers' Market bring together people who had different backgrounds or different points of view?

Fran Johnson: Well, I suppose it did, but that didn't have anything to do with anything. If they had the stuff to sell they would come and find out where they had to go, what they had to do.

Amy Stork: They all had the same purpose for being there and that was enough?

Fran Johnson: Well, yes they knew that they had a place they could get rid of their crops. You know, up here you're kind of isolated. What are you going to do with your excess? Give it to the pigs.

Amy Stork: Were there relationships that formed between you and the other vendors and farmers?

Fran Johnson: Turned out to be a group.

Amy Stork: Did those relationships lead to anything else in the community?

Fran Johnson: Well, I have to ponder that. I don't know. There were lots of, no; I don't know how you'd answer that one.

Amy Stork: Do you think that, like obviously there were really practical reasons why you made the Farmers' Market happen and why people came to the Farmers' Market, but on sort of a more symbolic level, do you think there's another value to the Farmers' Market as part of the community?

Fran Johnson: Well, yes. You know you got to know the other farmers. You got to understand what was needed and that way you get to help each other too. They, uh, we had uh, it made it so that the people that didn't, that live in apartments or don't have acreage, they had an opportunity to get farm fresh, farm fresh. Nothing's better than farm fresh. Do you know how long it takes to get the vegetables that you buy when they come out of the ground or when they harvest them? Ten days, by the time you get them because we have been on both ends of it. When my husband was alive, we used to grow produce for the fresh market. We did that on the coast. And you'd have to have someplace to get rid of them and so you'd take them to what they call wholesale row and sometimes that stuff was sitting there a week before it ever got to the store. And then, when it got to the store, like I remember when I first came off of the farm and was going to school and I was working for a lady doing her housework, while I went to school and I'd have to go buy the groceries. I remember that I asked that fellow if they didn't have something fresher than this and he says "that just came in, it's fresh". I says, "No, it's not, it's a week old or more". Cause I had never been to a store. We had always grew our own stuff. Talk about a greenhorn.

Amy Stork: So, it sounds like, do you have any stories about, over the years, who was coming to the market? Did you get to know other people in the community that way?

Fran Johnson: Oh sure, got to know the whole town. The whole Valley. We even had them, well when we started it I said just the Okanogan County because everybody and his brother wanted to come. And then, we had one party came and he had his car full of stuff and I looked at him and I knew right away that it wasn't homegrown. He had bought it. So, we put a stop to all that. You know the farmers are, look at how crowded it is now and it's just from the farmers and every little town now has a Farmers' Market. So, it's a, no ____ I remember that the car was chock full and he parked, we wouldn't let him park inside, so he parked out on the street. I said to one of the fellows, "Doesn't it look like he bought that stuff." In all these crates and stuff. And, so we

finally had to ask him to move because we decided he didn't grow that stuff. This is only for people who grow it, not for people who go buy it. Anyway, lots of things you learn.

Amy Stork: What were you selling at the Farmers' Market?

Fran Johnson: You gonna ask me that? I sold anything I had that come out of the ground. If you made it or grew it, you could sell it.

Amy Stork: Was there something you were known for though? People said "I'm going to get my such and such from Fran?"

Fran Johnson: Oh, I used to grow lots of corn.

Amy Stork: What did they say about your corn?

Fran Johnson: Well, I don't know I was on the selling end. I don't know what the buyers had to say, well they liked it. Long as it was picked fresh, that's when it was good, didn't make any difference whose it was.

Amy Stork: Tell me about as a farmer, so not talking about the market just you on your farm. What was your relationship like with the land? How did you feel that you as a farmer were taking care of the land?

Fran Johnson: Well, if you don't take care of your land, you don't get anything. So, I had, you got to remember I was born of the farm. I've been ___the farm only just a short time, maybe about five years that I was in the city. Rest of the time I was always out in the dirt.

Amy Stork: Um, so, when you came to the Methow, it must have seemed kind of different from the west side?

Fran Johnson: The only thing that was different, you had to irrigate.

Amy Stork: Yes, it doesn't rain all the time. But, what did you think of the place? Did you like it when you got here?

Fran Johnson: Oh yes. Anyplace it didn't rain all the time.

Amy Stork: So is that what you appreciated the most?

Fran Johnson: Yep, you get webbed feet when you live on the coast.

Amy Stork: So, when you look at the community here, the community of people, what is some of the best things about the community here?

Fran Johnson: Well, everybody is warm. They are not shy about visiting with you and it's, I'll tell you it's a whole lot different than living in the city. That's all I have to say. In the city, they're cold. They don't help you. No, there's nothing like living in a small town.

Amy Stork: What about the environment here, the natural environment? What do you think is the biggest blessing in this natural environment?

Fran Johnson: That we stay green, that we don't have webbed feet.

Amy Stork: And, what about the economy here? How do you see the economy here? Is it easy to make a living? Is it hard to make a living?

Fran Johnson: Every place you go, you make your own. I mean, if you want it, you go get it. You can't get it, _____. You just, I mean some people can't, they can't get along in the environment where there's no access to every little thing. I mean you have to live with what you've got. You live with the community that, what's in the community. I mean, there's no, I see some people can't make it cause they've got to have the shopping center, got to have the shopping. I know several women have caused the problem of moving away from here because there's no place to shop. I mean I could care less about shopping, but some people just see what I wear.

Amy Stork: Um, when you think about the Methow and where we live, what kind of feeling do you get about it? What thoughts and feelings come to your mind?

Fran Johnson: Peaceful. Quiet. None of this harassment that you have when you live in the city. You have to lock the door every time you turn around. You lock the door when you're inside of it. I don't do that here, even when I go away. I've gone to the coast and left everything open.

Amy Stork: Are there any images that come to mind, when you think about your farm here? When you picture it in your head, what do you picture right away?

Fran Johnson: What do you mean?

Amy Stork: Like if you imagine the farm that you and your husband were farming here, what comes to your mind? Like, describe the image to me.

Fran Johnson: Well, life is much different than it was when we were living on the farm. He wanted to milk cows, so we had cows and refrigeration and milk. And he loved to go deliver his milk. That was, that was in the 60's and 70's. It's a lot different than it is now. I mean, there really is a difference. Could never go do that now, somebody would squawk. He had one cow and he milked her morning and night. He had a few customers

Amy Stork: You mentioned about living in a small town, people helping each other out and feeling connected. Can you tell me a story about that? Either you helping someone out in the community or getting some help from a friend or a neighbor?

Fran Johnson: Oh, I couldn't tell you anything. It's something that you don't keep as part of your life because if you do it's not helping. It's like selling yourself. Nope. You know how the water rolls off a ducks back, that's how life goes on for me. Each day goes on. Very few things that I remember that I keep.

Amy Stork: What about now? Do you still feel connected to the community?

28:00

Fran Johnson: Oh yes, I'm part of this. Been here since '60, since '60, in this house since '80. The farm we went there in '60. When my husband got, he was about fourteen years older than I was and got too old to farm. But, he missed it.

Amy Stork: I bet. Did he grow up farming also?

Fran Johnson: Oh yes.

Amy Stork: He did? On the west side? How did you meet your husband?

Fran Johnson: Well, I had a little grocery store and I made milkshakes.

Amy Stork: On Vashon?

Other voice: No, no in the city

Amy Stork: Oh, in Kent?

Fran Johnson: Yep.

Amy Stork: So, he liked the milkshakes?

Fran Johnson: No, he didn't like my milkshakes. That's how I got to know him. He said "this is the worst milkshake I ever drank" He liked it like milk and I made it thick.

Amy Stork: And you put up with that?

Fran Johnson: I said, well, I was trying to be good. Give you a nice thick one." "I don't like them thick; I like them so I can drink them." And I still put up with it.

Amy Stork: Um, so again, on the community. Such a strong community of people here, have you seen it change over time since you've been?

Fran Johnson: Oh, yes.

Amy Stork: What kind of things have changed in the community?

Fran Johnson: Well, before you were all closely connected and now I think it's not as close.

Amy Stork: Why do you think that is?

Fran Johnson: I suppose it's because, you just, life is too fast and you don't have time to stop and say "how are you?" Life is much different than when I was young.

Amy Stork: Have you seen changes in the way people come together in the community to get something done, like the Farmers' Market? Do you think that could still happen?

Fran Johnson: I don't know. I really don't know. I've been out of the circle for awhile. I always, if I want something I would make it happen. I mean, if you don't do that, you are just sitting on the sidelines. So, lots of things in life, you have to make it yourself because if you don't, who's going to? Who's going to make that first step and the last step? One of those things, I've been

around long enough, I've been in enough places, started many things. I found if I wanted it to happen, I had to make it happen.

Amy Stork: What do you see in this community or in the whole region that we're in, do you see anything that give you, gives you hope for the future? Makes you feel like we're going in a positive direction?

Fran Johnson: Oh, don't get me started on that. I see in places, in areas there might be, but a lot of it is the people and what they want to see happen and how they want make things. There's a lot of people that are go getters and they go and make it happen, then there's a lot of them that like to ride along on the coattails. But, I'm getting too old to be concerned.

Amy Stork: Well Fran, it's been so great talking to you. I so appreciate you telling us your stories and sharing your insight.

Fran Johnson: Yeah, you'd have to sit for a week if you wanted to hear all I had to say.

Amy Stork: Well, that would be fun. Seems like you've done a lot around here. Besides the Farmers' Market, when, let's say you see something and you make it happen, what else? Tell me something else you made happen?

Fran Johnson: Well, I had a little bakery in town.

Amy Stork: In Twisp?

Fran Johnson: Mmm...hmm.

Amy Stork: What happened with that? When did you start that?

Fran Johnson: Well I couldn't get, when I went to sign the lease for the next year, I said something about the plumbing and so he went, moved the store over, lifted up a piece of the floor to fix the plumbing and I took one look at that plumbing. It was hay-wired together and I thought to myself you know I have enough problems just with the six months I was there, so I didn't sign it. I gave it up.

Amy Stork: That was the end of the bakery?

Fran Johnson: Yep, I had to bring home a lot of cause this was the end of the year and I had gotten my stuff all ready for the, so, had to eat a lot of it.

Amy Stork: So you had a farm, you had a bakery, you did a Farmers' Market?

Fran Johnson: I had a grocery store.

Amy Stork: Grocery store on the west side. Lots of experience.

Fran Johnson: Like I said, if I wanted it done, I'd go do it. That's where I got all. I even get myself into problems sometimes too.

Amy Stork: Oh like what? Tell us one good story. Come on.

Fran Johnson: No, no, I got too much to do and can't get it done. So, you have to back off.

Amy Stork: Did you have some kids in that time too?

Fran Johnson: I have one son.

Amy Stork: Was he born here?

Fran Johnson: He was born in uh, Seattle. No, No, No, he was born in Yakima. Did I move from Yakima to, where did I move? I think I moved to Kent. Anyhow, where we did we went.

Amy Stork: Where's your son now?

Fran Johnson: In Kent.

Amy Stork: He's in Kent still?

Fran Johnson: He didn't get very far. No, he went to Bellingham to school and I think that's the only time he's been out of town outside of when he goes fishing.

Amy Stork: And, is he a farmer?

Fran Johnson: No. Yes and no. He likes to play in the dirt, but he was a truck driver for a long time. Cause that's what he did on the farm was drive truck, so he decided that. When we moved over here, he decided to go drive truck.

Amy Stork: And, does he have any kids?

Fran Johnson: Yep, he has, he had three, he has two now. One of them had a bad accident. He's retired. He has, I have a son then I have a grandson and for heaven sakes, the grandsons have nothing but girls. I could have used a girl.

Amy Stork: Could have used a girl around, huh?

Fran Johnson: Yep.

Amy Stork: You know everything that's going on now. People say there's a recession and things. Do you think, have you seen hard times economically compared to now?

Fran Johnson: I have never and I always wonder, am I different? I don't see it. And they, everybody's talking about it and I don't see it. When I was younger I didn't see it then either. But, I guess if you want, if you need, if you have the desire, you don't have to have a recession or depression or whatever it is. If you get by on what you have, don't have any excess wants, where's the bad times?

Amy Stork: You mean if you just keep it simple?

Fran Johnson: Well, yes if you don't have any wants. What's the, I don't see. I mean I grew up in the 30's and that was supposed to be bad, but I had to be in the 40s before I understood what the 30's was. It was just, it's all in how you look at it.

Amy Stork: Do you think part of it has to do with being close to the land and growing your own food?

Fran Johnson: It could be. It could be, but I don't, I always, when I was younger I always would look at these other people and they would be struggling. I thought it was just because they were lazy. They don't get up and go. When I grew up when I was a young person, I think I was ten, twelve, we had a neighbor. He had a chair that he wore out he sat in it so much. I mean, he just sat. He says "now that I'm 50 that's it, I don't have to work anymore" and he didn't. Well, I hate

to say, to think about it and I hate to say it, but he couldn't walk when he was 62 because he sat. You get what you put into it. You know, people don't understand. Sometimes people think of themselves too much. Why do I have to work? Why do I have to do this? So, I look at him and I think to myself, that poor man. I shouldn't have said poor man because it was his family that, his boys never turned out like that, but boy he was a handful for his wife. That's where he got the idea that he didn't have to work.

Amy Stork: Sounds like your husband wasn't like that?

Fran Johnson: No.

Amy Stork: He liked to work?

Fran Johnson: No, he liked to sit once in awhile, but you know when he sat, married to me, you wouldn't have the time to sit. He'd go around with a cigarette in one hand and the other one in his pocket. I don't have to do if I don't want to. I says, "oh yeah, living with me you're going to do it".

Amy Stork: Did you know that some people here have now started to do the milk again? So people, you know I get milk from someone who just has a cow. She gets, you know, there's probably twenty of us that get half a gallon or a gallon of milk each week. Kind of back, going back to where you were.

Fran Johnson: Yep. We had the farm on the East County Road.

Amy Stork: Which farm? Who has it now?

Fran Johnson: The, Vanderyacht had it last, but he committed suicide.

Amy Stork: Oh, you had the Vanderyacht Dairy. Oh.

Fran Johnson: Yep. Well, she's still got a few cows out there.

Amy Stork: Yeah she's just doing the same thing. It's not official. She just has some people come by for milk. But,

Other voice: I think she has a few cows. Yeah.

Fran Johnson: My husband used to deliver that.

Amy Stork: Uh huh.

Fran Johnson: He liked that part because he'd get, you know he liked to socialize. So, it was, it was nice for him, but I had to do all the work. I used to raise cain once in awhile. I have to do all the sterilizing; I have to do all this. Well, he says "that's your job". I says "if I said no, what you would do?" "I'd sell the cows" and I said "you'd better sell them". He finally got so he couldn't milk either. We sold the farm and we bought this place. And he did the very same thing, he bought that without my even, without even asking me. He bought the farm and I went along with it. He bought this place and you should have seen it.

Amy Stork: Was it a wreck?

Fran Johnson: It was just this space.

Amy Stork: And, that's all added on?

Fran Johnson: Both sides. I added it on. There was no way I was going to live in this little spot. Even had the kitchen right here.

Amy Stork: Wow, it was really tiny.

Fran Johnson: Well yeah, but just this space. I took one look at that and I said "I'm not moving in there." "Oh." And I says, "no I'm not going to move in there." So, I got a friend of mine that was a builder to come in here to go over the top of this with the rest of the house.

Amy Stork: So, how did it feel for the first time to not be on a farm, to just be in a house on a road without a bunch of acres?

Fran Johnson: I have two acres here.

Amy Stork: You do?

Fran Johnson: No, you couldn't get me away from that.

Amy Stork: So, did you still have a garden here when you moved here?

Fran Johnson: Oh yeah. I even went up to Farmers' Market.

Amy Stork: What about your husband? What was it like for him without having the cows? Did he get bored?

Fran Johnson: No, he liked to go uptown and have coffee all day.

Amy Stork: So, he still got to do the socializing without all the milking. Well, sounds like he earned it.

Fran Johnson: Well, maybe? You know that when you say that I think to myself, you know he had a milking machine and he had two cows that he milked and that's all he did was milk them.

Amy Stork: And you did everything else?

Fran Johnson: That's right. That's right. Well in those days, nobody, you know now I don't know if you can still do it, sell raw milk.

Amy Stork: Well you can, like the Vanderyachts were, but you know you have to keep the temperature all the time and track it

Fran Johnson: Yeah, he had to have a cold room.

Amy Stork: Yeah.

Fran Johnson: And all we did was milk two cows and put it in gallon jugs and put it in the refrigerator and he'd deliver it in the afternoon or evening. He liked the evening part because he didn't have to come home until he got ready to go. He'd go visiting.

Amy Stork: Fran, I should probably let you go, but it's really nice talking to you and hearing your stories. You're a kick.

Fran Johnson: That's what you have to do is make life a kick. I mean, the other side is no fun.

Amy Stork: Right. Well I can't believe you're 90. You're 90, right?

Fran Johnson: Yep.

Amy Stork: You don't look 90. Do you think she looks 90?

Teri Pieper: I think she looks great.

Amy Stork: I thought you were like 70 when I came in here and then you said "I was born in 1919". Wow. That's the same year my grandma was born.

Teri Pieper: That's that healthy outdoor living.

Amy Stork: Yep.

Fran Johnson: Farming, working in the dirt.

Amy Stork: So, you must have been 50 when you came over here and had the farm on East County Road. You must have already been...

Fran Johnson: Yeah, 1919 and 1968.

Amy Stork: Yeah. Some people are retiring and you started a new farm.

Fran Johnson: Oh my husband didn't particularly appreciate it, but he didn't mind as long as he could milk cows.

Amy Stork: That's all he wanted to do?

Fran Johnson: I pitched the hay. I mowed the hay. I bailed the hay. But, you know when he died I got mad. He left me with all of it to do.

Amy Stork: Including the milking. But you didn't have the cows anymore by the time your husband died?

Fran Johnson: No, cause we moved here.

Amy Stork: Right, but you still had everything here?

Fran Johnson: He never did much because he was bedridden for about two years, two and a half years.

Amy Stork: When did he pass away?

Fran Johnson: He passed away in '89.

Amy Stork: So, you've been on your own for awhile?

Fran Johnson: Mmm.. hmm.

Amy Stork: Twenty years.

Fran Johnson: Uh huh. Went to market. I did all of that until I wrecked the car. That was the craziest thing. I was coming down the road and the next thing I know I'm upside down on the other side going the other way.

Amy Stork: You have no idea what happened? Was it winter?

Fran Johnson: No, summertime.

Amy Stork: Whoa.

Fran Johnson: Had baked potatoes in the oven cause I was feeding the ladies at the church that evening. I have no idea, have no idea. I was going down the road and I all of a sudden, I thought that it was too, the edge was too close. That's the last I know.

Amy Stork: Wow, how long ago was that?

Fran Johnson: That was in, gee, I've forgotten. I guess some of those things you just don't remember. No, I don't remember what year it was. Hmm.

Amy Stork: So, now do you get to go to town? Do people come and take you for rides and take you into town once in awhile?

Fran Johnson: Oh yeah.

Amy Stork: That's good.

Fran Johnson: My neighbors are pretty good to me. They go to town they ask me if I need it. Then I have a lady that lives in Mazama, two of them, they come to town and they ask me. They go to Omak, they ask me or Wenatchee.

Amy Stork: Well I think we're good. I think we've had a great interview.