

## *Gathering Our Voice*

Interviewee: Jay Stokes

Interviewed by: Nancy Warner

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NW: Okay, so it is December the 30th 2004, and I'm here with Jay Stokes and Elsie, at their new home in Moses Lake. So I did ask you a few questions before we started about your background. But I would like to ask you some of them again, now that I've got the tape rolling. So, could you tell me about how long you're lived in the Methow Valley?

JS: I didn't get that

NW: How long did you live in the Methow Valley?

ES: [unable to hear]

JS: Okay, I say, eighty-six years.

NW: Okay, and your family, your parents lived in the, the Methow Valley

JS: In nineteen Three

NW: They moved here in 1903?

JS: Yes

NW: Okay, and you were telling me that they moved here from Chicago?

JS: Yes, they were from Chicago. My father was a piano tuner and my mother was a school teacher.

NW: And did they specifically move to the Methow to ranch? Why did they move out?

JS: I never really knew. They ah, my father's ambition was to raise black horses and white cattle, and he succeeded in that. And other than that, well, I guess I do know the reason is There would be my father's grandfather, Leven Bridges, was a builder, and he came into the Methow in the 19, ah. the eighteen nineties, sometime in the mid 1890's, in the peak of the gold rush on Baron Creek, and I assume he was here with building in mind, ya know, building houses or whatever, and on his return to Chicago he informed my parents and his daughter and her husband, which were my parents parents, that this was just absolutely a fantastic country. The grass was high, it was moist, it was just a terrific opportunity. And there were a lot of homestead openings. So as soon as they could get everything closed out in Chicago and move west, why

they did; which was including my grandfather's family, my grandfather and grandmother, Jim and Judy Stokes, and their eight children. They're baby was, I think, about 6 months old, and the oldest one was twenty-three. And they moved out here at that time, in nineteen three. My folks were not married at that time. She had been in Spokane with her mother, teaching, and um they were not married until nineteen six. My father used to ride horseback to Spokane to meet her and do a little piano tuning on the side, and so he courted her for about three years in Spokane before he finally married her. They were married in nineteen six, and she came to the country soon after, she and her mother. And so in homesteading area my father had a homestead. My grandfather Jim, James had a homestead. One of the brothers, Julian, had a homestead. And another brother bought a homestead from just a squatter. And then my grandmother on my mother's side would, her name was Marianne [unable to understand] homesteaded. And so they locked out a whole block of country up there. Okay.

NW: Great. Okay, I wanted to talk to you about, about your family's source of food, basically. When you were growing up in the Methow, your family

JS: When I was growing up in the Methow?

NW: Yeah, if you could talk to me about what you did for food. Talked about ranching? So, if you could just tell me a little bit about where you got your meat?

JS: Well, in growing up, well ah most the families that I was familiar with were farm families. And almost all the children learned to milk cows at a tender age, because that was part of the income was dairying. By today's standards it was very small scale, maybe 12 to 20 head of cows was all. And they kept eggs to feed the milk to the pigs so, I know in our family particularly, well, we separated the milk sold the cream, fed skim milk to the pigs. In our family we, all of us learned to milk when we were six years old. There was always a gentle cow for us to learn on. So, we were on our way. And, of course, as the older ones grew up they, they kind of strayed away from it, and got to working away. I was fifth in the family of seven, so I got a little over siege some of the others. But then, um, it's hard, shucks ..

NW: That's alright. So, maybe, tell me where you did get your meat?

JS: Where we what?

NW: Jay, it would be great if you could tell me then where you got your meat. Did you butcher the dairy cattle, or did you have other kinds of cattle?

JS: We had beef cattle as well.

NW: Why did you have, why didn't you butcher the dairy cattle?

JS: We, um, I think that almost everyone that was farming had a garden. And, you raised your winter produce there. And if you couldn't you'd kind of trade for [unable to distinguish]. You could, of course there were stores where you could buy things. But money was so scarce, ya know, that people were inclined to try to raise as much as they could. I can remember almost everyone, as I said, milked cows, they had some hogs, and there was a butcher and the people get together in the fall, ya know, and they would get together and butcher hogs and process them. And, there were not a great deal of apples in the area, but what they did, I know I can remember going to these orchards which were right next door and making cider. We'd get apples there, and making cider. I don't think they sold a great numbers of apples. They had four or five acres but by the time the neighbors all came and got their apples and made cider why there were probably not a great number of apples left, you know, and if there were they'd feed them to the pigs.

NW: Now could you describe the hog butchering to me?

JS: The what?

NW: The hog butchering. Tell me about the hog butchering when the neighbors would come over.

JS: The hog butchering entailed getting your water at the proper temperature. And then you slaughtered the hog, and they had a table with a vat, what we call a vat they had a vat, probably six feet long, and maybe longer and three feet wide and, as I recall, maybe eighteen inches of water in it, and maybe less. But um, then you'd put ropes, , ah they had ropes on the table around the hog, then you'd put em round the hog, then you'd em down and roll em in the hot water, and bring em out. And you'd want to be sure that water was pretty near the right temperature. Sometimes you could kind of set the hair, ya know. And that could really be kind of a problem. And so once you got em out it really didn't take that long, they could hang em up and somebody could process em there while they were working on another one, ya know, when the neighbors got together like that. So, that was what it amounted to.

NW: Could you tell me a little more about why you put them in the hot water? Was it to loosen up the hide?

JS: Well, oh, I guess I wasn't aware that hog skin really had any great value over the years but apparently they did because they make gloves out of them and everything else. But I even worked at a slaughter house momentarily, I say momentarily, for actually for a couple of weeks one fall, and they did the same thing. They peeled the hair off of them and cut them up. They didn't skin them. But in recent years, I know we had a farm slaughterer come to our house and butcher a beef, and he had a whole truckload of skinned hogs. He said he didn't have any way of

getting the hair off, so he just skinned em. And he said it took just a little time to do it. So now, apparently, there's more of that done than was back when I was young.

NW: So, you would leave the skin on then, you would butcher them with the skin on?

[talking in the background]

JS: That would be a lot of ham, even now.

NW: That's interesting

[more background discussion]

NW: So once you had them cut up you'd, would you smoke the ham?

JS: Salted them down and sometimes I know we'd have just what we called salt pork. You'd get to put the layers of pork and layers of salt and other times you'd salt em and smoke them. But we primarily, as I remember, most of ours were just salt pork. We didn't smoke a great number of them.

NW: So, you would, would do this in big barrels then?

JS: Yes.

NW: OK, now that's interesting. OK, so that's milk, we've covered milk and we've covered pork. And, in terms of beef?

JS: Well the beef was, the beef was kind of a little more of a problem as far as marketin. Now, it may have been with the pork, but I was not made aware of that. I know that there were, would not have been a great demand for pork right there in the valley, I wouldn't think, other than what people were raising. But with beef, there was far more beef raised than what the demand was for. So I know I had an older brother that for years he'd take two trips a week out of the valley, drivin' cattle. And it took him two days to get to Pateros and load them on a train there, a box car, and ship them to Seattle to what they called commission houses. And it'd take him two days to get down, and one to get back, and then he'd pick up another bunch and start out again. He did real well, had a good business at it but, ah, what he did, there was a cattle baron, who would go around and collect these cattle and have them all ready for him when he was ready to go. And usually it would be about a carload at a time. That would be when you had mixed cattle, particularly about a one man full work load, driving a carload, about 27 men, because they'd be from all areas, ya know.

ES: She wanted to know about the butchering.

JS: Well the butchering was no different. You just shot em and hung em up and took the skin off.

NW: No water? Would you also loosen their hair with water?

JS: No. No we didn't. We just take the hide off, because the hide had a saleable value, you know. And like I say, I wasn't aware that maybe the pigs did too. I was not aware of that. So, ah, we did sell the hides, in fact, I think sometimes the hides were worth almost as much as the cows.

NW: Where would you sell them? Would you sell the hides in Okanagan?

JS: The hide? We just took ours into the slaughter house. And I don't know where they sold them. That was the slaughter house. They maybe butchered four or five head a week to take care of the local demand. And ah, so ah, they'd collect the hides and sell whole works at one time.

NW: I am actually interested in how you handled the animals when you were slaughtering a cow. When you were slaughtering a cow, would you choose an older cow and just herd it back to the ..

JS: You mean for beef?

NW: Uh-huh

JS: Well, ah, it was not different, as far as beef was concerned, than it is now. You have your steers and your young culled cows that went directly to market, and the old culled cows went for grinders or hamburger and what-have-you. No, it was probly as the same thing now, except that far better utilized they are now....the cattle.

NW: You mean there's not as much waste, not as much wasted meat now as what there was then?

ES: Not as much waste. Was there much waste?

JS: Well, I think more. I think probably there was considerably more waste than now . I think that actually even yet, a farm butchered animal you'd have more waste. A lot of people will not eat the jowl meat, they will not eat the brain, they won't eat the tongue. I remember we kept the jowl and the tongue, but we didn't eat the brain. And so, I've heard that like at the slaughter houses, the commercial slaughter houses now, they use everything, for instance, on the pig except the squeal. And, and then they do a lot of, a lot of medicine come extract from cattle. And of course we didn't extract any of that, so they certainly are more efficient nowadays than they were then.

NW: What did you do with the brains? What did you do with the cattle brains and the other things that you didn't use?

JS: Let the birds eat em.

NW: That's what I thought.

ES: She doesn't want you holding onto that thing.

JS: Okay. Well I just ...[voice fading]

NW: A lot of people do, it feels like a normal thing to do. Well, let's see. I wanted to ask you about packing sheds.

JS: About what?

NW: Packing sheds.

JS: Well, I was not particularly familiar with the apple business to a great extent. Like I said there was just little orchard next door. And as I recall there may have been one in the Winthrop area. There was one creek in that area. There was a shed that appeared to have been a packing shed. And then there were, ah, a couple of them down below Twisp, between Twisp and Karlin [?], west side of the river. And they were just small orchards that they decided to do everything they could to create a little more value in their fruit, you know, but I really was not, I never was really familiar with the fruit production. Because in our area it was just slightly too cold for fruit. About every time someone got an orchard well started they'd freeze out. So we didn't have anything up...[voice muffled]. Now a days they don't consider too much orchard country north of M..... So, it's just too cold for it.

NW: Okay, well let's...lets switch gears. I wanted to come and talk to you this winter, because one thing I wanted to talk to you about was what it was like raising cattle in the winter time. Can you tell me what you would be doing?

JS: That's a very good question. Winters were tough. After all we were feeding with horses and sleigh. And there were considerably more cattle in the Methow than there is now, and probably not near as much hay, because the methods of raising hay has improved considerably, you know, and are much more efficient. And so, it got kinda tough sometimes. I know in our case we were on the ranch that we're on now when I was a boy, and up until I was fourteen years old. And the depression came and my folks lost it, and they had to go back on the homestead. And, and we couldn't raise hay enough for the cattle. And I know a lot of other people were in the same fix, and they'd have to buy hay. Of course hay wasn't very expensive, ya know six to eight dollars a ton. But then six to eight dollars was a lot to come by. And we'd have to haul it all the way back

up that hill with a team and sleigh. We'd use a four horse hook-up to pull. It was two or more than enough going down, but four were not any too many going up, ya know. And ah, so I know it was before my time, a little bit, but I remember one of the folks mentioning one of the situations that occurred that really kind of put a crimp in them financially was the winter of nineteen fifteen and sixteen. And it had a terrific snowpack that winter similar to, are you familiar to the one we had in ninety-six/ninety-seven? It was very similar to that. And people ran out of hay and they ah, I know my folks and I, [?] mothers had it shipped out of Montana on a train to Pateros, and then they'd load it on a sleigh in Pateros and haul it up there. And I recall as a boy would moved back on the draw land that the barn had great big pile of bailing wire that they'd taken off these bails. It must have been a lot of hay. We had oodles of horses and quite a few cattle and it probably took a lot of hay. So ah, it was kind of a tough situation see, and I know some people that had a hundred head of cattle ad would have two people out there for a good share of the day, hand pitching this loose hay off a stack, ya know onto a sled, taking it out and feeding the cattle. Now we can do that with round bails, one person can go out there in a just a little while feed the whole herd, on the hillside and roll the round bail down. That's what we do now.

NW: Big changes, you've seen such big changes.

JS: In fact, on this haying situation, I can remember [?], almost everybody, when they were hayin had ten to twelve people, at least ten people haying. And so ah, it created quite a lot of work all the way around. The women had to prepare a meal for them, ya know and it just went on day after day. And now, ah, our son, there were one, two, three; there were five ranches at that time. And he puts the hay up by himself.

[background comment]

JS: Well, it's just the equipment that we have now a days. It's made a considerable difference.

NW: Well, how did you get water to the cattle in the winter?

JS: Well, you chopped holes in the ice. That was one of the fortunate things when we moved back on the homestead property, why there springs. There were spring fed tanks, and there were water that didn't freeze. That was a great advantage up there. But I remember down on Beaver Creek, we used to water at the creek. And by the time the breakup would occur, sometimes you'd be chopping through eighteen inches of ice. Well, It would choke up and flood over and freeze again, you know keep building up. And that really made it a pain to try to kind of keep the cattle watered. And yet, I think of a neighbor that lived, you know where the Tice Ranch is?

NW: Yeah.

JS: Okay. Well this neighbor lived on the Tice Ranch and from about April at his barn where his barn sat, south, the creek didn't freeze in the winter. And he didn't have any problem with water. And that winter of nineteen sixty-eight, when it got fifty below there, it did freeze and that just broke his heart. He had to chop ice too, ya know. But you can imagine the ice the rest of us were chopping that winter.

NW: So was that your job to go first thing in the morning and chop the ice? Was that your job?

JS: Yep. Well, we'd usually feed, and then we'd chop the ice. Because the cattle wouldn't be thirsty until after you'd fed them. You know, get some dry hay in there and then they'd need some water down.

NW: So did you calf in the spring, when did you calf?

JS: We calved in the spring. We do now in fact. We start earlier than we did, but we calve in the spring. I know when our oldest son came back and farmed with us we went into a fall calving program. And if I was back in the cattle business now I'd go for the fall calves. It gives you two shots at selling them, you know, you could have big calves in the early summer; you could have like yearlings in the fall. And we did awfully well with those fall calves. But ah, I don't know, for some reason or other they got back to calving in the spring, started in late January and that's where we start now.

NW: So, when did you take the cattle to the summer range?

JS: What?

NW: To the summer range, when would you take the cattle up into the higher ground?

JS: We'd usually go in June. We could go out in the lower range in, ah, May fifteenth. But usually it was June before we'd get to the high range. We have that same problem now, what we so now with, with the cattle. It was pretty much the case over the years. As most people had a certain amount of spring and fall rain. And now we lease from the game department. The very land that I was raised on, and we run cattle in there for a month in the spring before we go to natural forest. Then we have our own range in the fall, our fall pasture. And ah, a lot of people did that. ' Course I think they were a little more careless about getting them off the range in the fall, because in those days people were running two, three, four year old steers, ya know, and now we sell them as calves. We want to get them off before they start to shrinkin too much. So, we're anxious to get them off. And incidentally that is a thing a lot of people don't realize. They feel that we have a good thing with the natural and we mentioned that our son he would much rather rent from something like the game department, which is about nine dollars a month, and have those cattle fenced in where there's water handy, and everything, than be out on that range. We just go day after day after day trying to find them in the fall. And, ah, sometimes you don't find them, but I know we were down there, we came down the first of November and he was still



looking for cattle. But, ah, he finally found them all. But ah, it's such a scatter on them, and that broken timbered country, ya know, it's really quite a headache. And it isn't that good a range anyway.

NW: Well, I have a couple of other questions related to that. How, when you were young, when you were a young man in the forties, would you run your cattle on the forest with the neighbors, and would then would you all round them up together in the fall.

JS: Yes. Yes, we did. We ran on what we called the F.....[unable to understand] allotment. Usually there were two; usually there were just two permittees on there. And actually it was not a large allotment. And we'd round up together in the fall, in fact sometimes one or another of us would be riding and you just had an unwritten policy, that no matter whose cattle you found you brought them out. That included strays from the Okanagan, or whatever. You brought all the cattle that you found because you didn't want one cattle out there making tracks. And so in fact we had very good cooperation from the people from the Chehalis. We do now from Brewster. People pick our cattle up to go up that way and let us know, and we pick theirs up so it saves them a lot of riding. It's a lot of riding and makes it more convenient for everyone involved.

NW: That's great. That still goes on, that kind of neighboring.

JS: Yes.

NW: Okay. Well here's a question for you Jay. How did you, um, what kind of queues from the land did you use to know when it was time to move the cattle? What did you look for on the range? In terms of plants and conditions?

JS: On the grass it's pretty easy. There's a certain stage of the grass that goes into the boot, and ah before you should be grazin ya know. And ah that has a lot to do with, it's just getting ready to head out and usually our bunch grass in lower elevations is starting to head pretty good by June, I mean boot pretty good, and then some of your earlier, something we call annual grass, truly annual has your bulbous blue and your cheap grass come on real, if you get a wet spring you have lush pasture early there.

NW: So what kind of changes did you see in the weeds over the years?

JS: Weeds?

NW: Yes, what kind of weeds did you see as compared to what you see now?

JS: Weeds. Thanks kind of interesting. We what we call ..[?] up there but we used knap weed. And there's been so much fuss about that over the years. I have never been concerned about it, because..cattle will eat defused knap weed before they'll eat bud scrub.

NW: When is that?

JS: The cattle are not real happy about bud scrub. They'll eat it in the fall, but they don't particularly like it in the spring and the summer. And ah, so ah, another point about that if you use knap weed, that these dry years pretty near killed it out. And you know what's happened, here, this what we all Jim Hale mustard, ah that was a kind of a fakey name it got when they hauled that hay from Montana in fifteen, sixteen, and there some seed in the hay and Jim Hale was the owner of the Great Northern. So anyway, we call it Jim Hale mustard but truly it's Tumble Mustard. Well that stuff just come back everywhere the knap weed was. It's not affected by these dry years where the knap weed. I saw that once before where I was out on the game. They sprayed a bunch of the diffused knap weed, and the next year we just had double mustard everywhere. And the cattle don't eat that, so I'm more in favor of the knap weed.

NW: Well tell me when would the cattle eat the nap weed? In the spring?

JS: No, they would eat it any time, but that's one of the things that murdered all the seeds. There's another knap weed, a Russian knap weed. They let that go all summer, and just as soon as it has seeds they just jump on it. They really like those seeds. And so they can spread em around, ya know, and it, well, I don't know, it's not as widespread as your diffused but it goes kinda, it grows, it's more solid patches. But we found it no great problem in the irrigate places because alfalfa choke it out. Of course alfalfa choke would diffused knap weed, would choke almost any weed out.

NW: Okay, I wanted to ask you about wildlife. You said you were a hunter. And, what changes in wildlife did you see over the years?

JS: There has been a considerable change. When I was a boy people came in the country hunting, and you'd hardly ever hear a gunshot. The deer were just so scarce, the winter of nineteen fifteen/sixteen practically totaled the deer herd. In fact, ah, stepson of the earliest pioneer in there. Harley Nickels was the step so of Mason Therbal. Mason Therbal was the first homesteader. Well, Harley told me there were running cattle on Lippey Creek, and he said that that that summer after that winter kill in nineteen fifteen/sixteen, he saw one deer track on Lippey Creek. And so it was a long time they came back. Well, that was before my time and bout the time I was old enough to start huntin they was starting to come back real well. And then we had actually too many deer for many years because they had protected the doe, you know, and a fairly short season. In fact for years we had a season that was too early and even the bucks were back in the high country. And nothing, you didn't have any control particularly. And then they got the season a little better, why the hunting picked up and it got real good. There was many very, very good years. And now I'm all for the type of hunting season they have. I like this three pointer or better. It makes for nicer deer. But at the same time I see the deer herd slackin off again. And I don't know what's causing it except possibly the cougar population built up, which would take a lot of deer. And the cars are getting a considerable number of them. But we have a field across from the house that every spring the deer hit pretty heavily. And, ah,

we've had as many as ninety in there at one time. And I think that last spring I think was one of the lower points. We probably got around twenty-five or thirty. They, they're just not there. And they didn't show up this fall either.

ES: That was during the migration... [unable to understand the rest of comment]

NW: So, are you talkin mule deer or white tail?

JS: Well these are mule deer that I'm referring to. Now the white tail deer are increasing. Because up until, oh I couldn't say what year, it was probably in the fifties before I even saw a white tail. And now there are getting to be quite a number of them in the creek bogs. They're, they're quite plentiful. I think eventually they will just take over for the mule deer. Because they just seem to be survivors. They take care of themselves.

NW: I've heard other people say that. Well what about, you live on Beaver Creek. So, what changes did you see in beavers over the years? Or what did you hear stories about beavers when you were a kid growing up from your elders?

JS: I'm not getting this, nope

ES: She wants to talk about beaver.

JS: Beaver? Beaver. Well, when I was a child I think there were very few beaver in the creek. There were some meadows, South Fork Beaver Creek Meadows, had beaver for quite a number of years. And I think there were quite a few on the Middle Fork of Beaver [Creek]. Down low they didn't show up, but then again, probly in the nineteen fifties, they started showin pretty heavily down in our area. And then they opened a season of trapping, and they really cleaned them out. They're easy to trap and, and they kind of practically exterminated the things and, and then they kind of backed, and I think the pelts got to where they weren't worth a great deal, and so they backed off. And now there are getting to be quite a few beaver again. We have one property that they're right up the creek from where we live, that it gets a solid mass of beaver dam, ya know. But again, beaver are victims of predators to a large extent. They stop and fight when they should probly run. They can't run either, so.. Anyway, I know that this fall there was a bear moved in there, in those beaver dams. I think he was probly hunting beaver, because I remember a game protector told me one time that everybody works on the beaver. But again, the South Fork Meadows have beaver again. There's quite a large population of beaver up there. So I would say the beavers are in good shape.

NW: Good, good. So, how about ducks? What could you tell me about changes you saw in ducks as you were growing up in your years in the Methow?

JS: There what?

NW: Different ducks? Did you have different ducks in more recent years than when you were a kid?

ES: She said ducks?

JS: Ducks?

ES: Ducks, yeah.

JS: Wild ducks?

NW: Yeah.

JS: Oh, okay, yeah. \_\_\_\_\_wild ducks, \_\_\_\_\_other ducks.

NW: Ducks.

JS: When we first lived out on the river, the first farm we had was down along the highway, southeast of Twisp more east. And we had thirty-eight acres there. And at that time everybody flood irrigated. And our place was primarily a duck pond. Our pasture land particularly, pond just everywhere. And the neighbor was about the same. And I would bet that we raised a thousand ducks in a year. There were just clouds of them. And now, of course, with just sprinklers and all, those are all dried up, and the ducks are gone. And I can remember ducks comin in on the creek where we were. And quite large flocks, and there doesn't seem to be near as many as there were. Now whether, I don't really know that much about ducks, maybe they adopt a different flyway or something. I remember one drought year my oldest son and I were running cattle on the school section out towards Betson Creek.

NW: Oh, you were just starting to tell me a story about ducks.

JS: Okay. We were running cattle on the section, this school section down near Bedson Creek and it was an extremely dry year. And bunch grass just got about eight, ten inches high, and started to burn. And we got a way up there on the ridge, were taking the cattle off and found a duck nest where one, a bunch of ducks had hatched. Well, they were a mile and a half from water. And I'll bet those little rascals were sure sore footed by the time they got there. Probly thirsty too, ya know.

NW: I think that's what they call natural selection.

JS: Oh, this is off the record though.

NW: I did want to ask you a couple more things. Okay, one of the things I did want to ask you about has to do with how you and your parents learned about managing the land. Did you learn, did you learn things from your neighbors, did you learn things from tribal people?

JS: Well now that is really a good question. I suppose ah, I really, really couldn't say how my parents learned. I don't think it really managed, managed the grazing land well because they had to be off all the home property all summer long then let, then bring them in in the fall. But as far as the farmland was concerned I think in those days people just kind of wore it out. You know they didn't believe in fertilizer. I know my dad didn't believe in using barn like fertilizer on the fields because he thought it made them burn. And one time my brother and I cleaned out a whole bunch of sheds there, cow sheds and what-have-you and hauled down and put it on the field and he was just sick about it. And that had the best crop we had, so he became kind of convinced. Maybe he was makin a mistake, so we started feeding on the fields in the winter, because we're usually raising grains for hay, ya know. And it made tremendous amount of difference. And so I learned a little bit from that. You get, now a days you get so many farm publications and you, have the county conservation service to help you out. And so there's a lot of places you can get this information.

ES: My Uncle Bert helped you out.

JS: Huh?

ES: Uncle Bert helped you out.

JS: Yeah, he, ah. Her uncle there. I remember Dad had told me that you... Well, when we got this place he ah, we bout it after they lost it, went back and got it fifteen years later or so. And he said, I'll tell you one thing, you can't get alfalfa started on that thing." Well, I talked to her Uncle Bert in 80, and he growing lot of alfalfa, and I got some of the clues from him. And the secret was he said in havin a thoroughly packed seed bed, and get that seed in there not too deep and tight. And I never had any trouble with alfalfa.

NW: So how would you pack it down? What'd you use, a roller?

J.S: That was the thing. In those days you just get a buckskin log, we call it, a pine log with no bark on it, ya know, a sort that you thought would be adequate for two horses to pull, normally, and then you'd build a framework around it, and you just packed it with that. But that, it was a roller, but it had its weak points. It got to be so smooth that wind would tend to blow badly on it. But now we use, ah, what we all bridgins, cedar packer. And it seeds it and packs it too, and leaves it in ridges, packs ridges and ah that is really a sweetheart way to do it. It does a good job on it on alfalfa or grass.

NW: So the ridges kind of break up the wind so the seed doesn't blow away?

JS: It kind of breaks the sweep of the wind. I used to just be horrified. You'd just get a field planted; a gust of wind headed down the dust would just fly. Well, normally alfalfa doesn't do too much exposed to the air, however, one year we did plant alfalfa in 1948, and you've probably heard about that anyway. But, ah, we planted alfalfa and we used what they call a wheelbarrow cedar, and had the ground all prepared and we pushed the cedar on at twelve feet. We had to keep track of where we were, so she walked on one side and our oldest son walked on the other, and I'd follow their tracks. And ah, they ah, anyway we got [unintelligible] twenty some acres were seeded. And that night the big rain hit, triggered a flood, and we couldn't get back there. And here that seed was all laying on top of the ground and I thought, "oh boy, that's it". And so it was probly two or three weeks before the creek went down enough that I could get up there. And alfalfa was up like that. It had rained so much that it didn't need any cover at all. It was really a stand of alfalfa.

NW: What year was that?

JS: What

NW: What year was that?

JS: Nineteen forty-eight. That was one of those freak years, ya know, when we just had water everywhere.

[Background voice]

JS: Well we had what we normally, you know. It was just a small field. I just cleaned it up that spring and seeded it to rye, it was right across the creek from the house, and that turned into a river bed.

[background voice]

JS: Now it's just cottonwoods. [?] that creek out around there, just took it all out.

NW: So, did you know any Indians, or did your parents know any Indians in the area?

JS: Did you what?

I: Did you know any Indians? Did Indians visit your land?

JS: [unable to hear]

NW: Did they tell you any stories about...

JS: ? Stories about the Indians? I can remember the Indians comin by in droves, see we had that Chlliwith Trail, and incidentally I've tried my darnedest to get somebody to help me get to find that thing, and no one seems to remember anything about it. I'm the only one left, I guess. Even my sister who is older than I am can't remember that.

NW: [?] do you remember Geraldine Fitzgerald?

JS: Well I, there's the south Chiliwist Trail and the north. It's the north one they can't seem to remember. But I can remember the Indians comin out there, and the Indian women with their little kids and they'd, ah, graduated from saddle horses with packs to buggies. And they were coming over the north Chliwist Trail very carefully, with their buggy, ya know, and all the little ones packed in there and their supplies. And they'd come over to, I would assume, probably to fish for salmon that were very plentiful in the river at that time, and pick huckleberries. So, ah, ah, we saw a lot of Indians. There was one Indian woman, well she and her sister, I don't remember what her sister's name was, but I can remember Lucy particularly. And, ah, so, ah she'd stop at the house and say Lucy hungry. And, ah, she had a dress on that was just volumous, like sayin you could have hidden a calf in their almost. And she'd show up and my mother would give her a loaf of bread or somethin', and she'd tuck it away someplace and she'd say, "Lucy still go hungry, eat meat," she said. So give her some meat, and then she'd go right down the road and do it to somebody else. [?] right on through, and then it got to be quite a joke in that country cause Lucy was always hungry, ya know. But she was takin the white man for all he was worth. [laughter] But ...

NW: Did you, did you ever notice any Indians harvesting along the river?

JS: No I

NW: Like willows and dogwood?

JS: The only thing I've ever found was two of these, what they call em passels? Is that what they call it? [?] they beat the corn? It was two of those that we found.

NW: Oh.

JS: I, I couldn't say that I found 'em. I think somebody found them and gave them to us possibly. We have two of them. Somebody will probably pick them up someday. We have them [??] sitting yard under a tree. We leave them there, and somebody's liable to come by and see them, ya know.

[background voices]

JS: But I've never found an arrowhead.

[background voices]

NW: Maybe, maybe it wasn't a place where they made them.

JS: Well, I would assume they probably used them for hunting. Now, there was only one Indian fracas I'd ever heard of in that country, and that was between two parties of Indians and they met up there on what is known as the Big Valley Ranch west of Winthrop and had a little war there, and I don't know that I ever heard how it came out. Apparently nobody got injured too severely. They just, ah, kind of established boundaries, I think.

NW: I want to talk about fire.

JS: What?

NW: I want to talk about fire.

JS: Oh

NW: Yes, I wanted to ask you about fire. Um, when your family first came to the Methow, how did it look compared to how it looks now? Was there evidence of fire?

JS: Well yes, there was certainly was very certainly evidence of fire because you can see even yet on trees that I have never seen where there were fires. And so, ah, there were apparently this country just burned off every so often, ya know, but it was interesting, ah that the folks, my folks had a situation pretty similar, the homesteaders you read about in the western stories. They ah, they got established up there in the, a kind of a nice little spot and a lot of this wild Russian rye grass grows up quite high around the place. And they woke up about two o'clock one morning and it was all on fire. Somebody was trying to burn 'em out, see. And they got to save the buildings and they had quite a tussel doin' that. Oh, I guess some of the buildings probably had corals around them, and they would have been gone, beat down. So anyway they had that problem. But, ya know, strange enough I fought fire for many years, and we never had a great number of fires right in that region, ah well, not until oh about the sixties we had a couple of really good ones in there. But ah nothing when I was really actively fighting them.

NW: But, ah, there was that huge fire in nineteen sixteen or something. Big fire in nineteen-sixteen that burned across the Methow, up into the Okanagan. Is that when that was? Before your family came maybe?

JS: Oh yes, there was a fire, I don't know what year that was, but I remember reading about this. A fellow came over from Okanagan to Twisp and he said that all the way over to what we call [?] was on fire. And he said it was burning from Brewster to Bear Creek. And ah, I don't know what year that was, it could have even be back when the trappers were coming through or the prospectors. But it was certainly before my folk's time. But those trees up there, those old trees,



the tamerack and the pine show the marks of it yet, cat faces ya know. So, but without a doubt there were many, many fires went through that area over period of time.

NW: So how have you managed the timber on your ranch? Have you thinned it over the years or..? How have you managed the trees? Have you cut timber?

JS: [Laughter]

NW: Are there no trees?

ES: No. We don't have any...

NW: You don't have any timber?

JS: We have one small patch of marketable timber, what we call the red shirt patch. [?] seventy thousand feet, or something [?]. We haven't had any great amount of marketable timber.

NW: That's why I [unintelligible], 'cause I don't really know what it's like.

NW: Well, maybe let's end there today. And call that a..then I can see how I did.

JS: Okay