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ARTHUR BJERKE

Deary; b. 1886

farmer; herder; carpenter; logger — 2.2 hours

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(10 minutes)

with Sam Schrager
August 20, 1973

II. Transcript

Arthur Bjerke remembers more of early life in the Deary area, including the names of the men who homesteaded the townsite. He speaks of surveying the countryside one winter with Bill Helmer for Potlatch Forests; of taming an outlaw horse; of the advantage of oxen for logging; of half wild cattle; and of sheep grazing in the area. He gives his impressions of Italian railroad workers, and of Indians, of gypsies and tramps, and also of homesteaders' poverty and serious law breaking.

SAM SCHRAGER: When we stopped talking last time, we were talking about Sam Piwash?

ARTHUR BJERKE: Yah?

SAM: How did he make a living now, once he started doing his lumber business?

A B: Well, he was in the logging business as long as he lived, and he done a little farming up there on the Hog Meadow. And generally he had a bunch of them dagos a-workin' for him. Some of them was some of his relatives. And he had one cousin there, when Sam died, he's made a will so he got $25 a month as long as he lived. Oh that Sam, he was a good American even if he was a dago. Boy, you say anything about this country and you'd have a fight on your hands with old Sam.

SAM: Did you say he got scrap lumber?

A B: Well, that is scrap timber, that is such a timber that, well, the only thing it was good for was for to make paper out of, something like that; and they wanted it cut out, see, to start a new forest. Well they'd give it to him, and he'd log it and haul it off for scrap timber, so they'd make chip out of it for paper. Of course it wasn't much, but they'd make a good living. And then he always farmed a little besides up there.

SAM: Where did you find out that those Italians were killed when they were building the railroad?

A B: Well, that was generally more say about the other lumberjacks that worked on the railroad, see. So this is more hearsay than anything else. But they claim there was one buried in that fill that goes through Deary and one up there at Cornell. But, God knows. You know, they were all dagos, and once in awhile there'd be a Serbian or something else, a different breed of 'em that'd get in with 'em, and that one breed'd kind of have it in for him, and they'd get rid of him. Well, when the World's War I started, you know, pret'near all of them fellers disappeared--they went back to Europe. There was a few that stayed here, that have been here long enough and learnt to

talk pretty good. And of course after awhile some of 'em was married and their kids was born here, see, and they become citizens so they stayed around.

SAM: Did you get to know any of them, the Italians or the Bohemians that worked on the railroad when you were working on the railroad?

A B: Oh yeah, I knew several of them. And you know, they wasn't too bad fellers to work together with. You know, they were pret'near like the Indians--if they took a liking to ya, they were a damn good friend, and if they didn't like you, they didn't like you neither. There was one bunch that had a station work up here. Well, we always sold eggs and butter and stuff like that to 'em, and once in awhile we'd butcher a beef and they'd get the beef here. Hell, I wouldn't want to be around nicer bunch than that crowd. They were damn nice fellers. And there used to be one up here in camp, his name was Sam Samowitch. He was kind of a good sort of a fella, and he was kind of a watchmaker too. He'd always sit around and monkey and patch watches for the boys in the evening. He was a darn good fella. And he got so he was a section boss on all the railroad spurs around, so there was always a bunch of them a-workin' for him. And they boarded right in with the white fellers in the camp. No they got along pretty good with them. As I say, if they liked ya, by god they were good friends.

Well it was the same way with the Indians. If you'd got to know an Indian, and by god if they got to liking ya, you didn't have a better friend than an Indian. There was some Indians that used to camp around here. Boy, I got along good with them. And they'd always come down and get water in the well here. I'd always talk to them Indians. Those days there it was so much huckleberries around here, and they'd come up here and pick huckleberries, and they'd camp all over through the woods here. Well if there was any of 'em camped close by, they'd generally come down and get water out of the well. And they'd camp just right there on the edge of the field. And there used

to be quite a little pines along the road there, so it was pretty shady. Some of 'em'd camp down there.

SAM: Would you ever go over to where they camped?

A B: Oh yeah, yeah, I got along pretty good with the Indian.

SAM: What were the camps like then?

A B: Well they had a teepee, a teepee, y'know, and then they had the beds all around inside. And then it was a campfire on the outside. And by gosh, you know, there was years afterwards the Indians quit coming in here, you could see where them teepees has been, because where they had the beds, see, it'd shut off the air, so it'd killed the grass root. So that'd be bare, and there'd be a little spot in the middle, that is that the grass'd grow on; but there'd be a round circle that'd be bare, where they've had their beds.

SAM: You told me about fixing a wagon tongue for that Indian. Did you have any other Indian friends?

A B: Oh yeah. Well I was pretty well friends with all of 'em. Pret'near every one of 'em, you know, that camped up here, they'd always come down; and I had a pond right over there across the creek, and they'd take their horses over there and water 'em, and got their drinking water out of the well. And you know them darn Indians, they could come with maybe 15, 20 horses, and y'know, they could herd them right in the trail right up to the pond through the grain, and by god they could keep them horses right in that trail! They didn't run all over like anybody else's horses would. No, the Indians was pretty good. By gosh I don't blame the Indians at all, neither, because the white just took the country away from them. It was really their country to begin with. And them Indians all come from down there on the Nez Perce Reservation and down there at Lapwai. Down from Kendrick, down through that draw there, that was pret'near all Indians in the early day. And that's where they was, because there wasn't much snow down in there. But then in the

summer they'd come up in here and pick huckleberries and pick camas and catch a few fish.

SAM: Did you ever see any gypsies around here?

A B: Oh there used to be a few of them too that'd come through, but not many. Oh them gypsies, goddurn, when them come along by god you better not get out of the house, they'd steal everything there was. And by god they'd get around and want a feel of ya, and by god if you wasn't careful they'd pick your pockets too. There was quite a few of 'em that they've picked the pockets on. I guess they even picked the pockets on old Nigger Joe up here. No, when you'd see them damn gypsies come, about the best way is just to take a gun and go out and meet 'em and tell them to get the hell on up the road. And if they didn't get, start in dropping a few balls pretty close to their heels. That was about the only way to take care of them. I don't think there is any more gypsies around now.

SAM: Would guys come through who were just poor or beggars looking for a place to stay, or a handout?

A B: Oh yeah, there used to be quite a few of them old fellers come along and ask for a handout once in awhile. But a big lot of them, you know, they were just kind of the lumberjacks. Well they'd get a meal, and some of 'em would want to split a little wood for a meal, and some of 'em wouldn't. But they'd generally hike on. No I never had any trouble with them. They were a pretty good sort of a bunch of fellers, a big lot of 'em. Just been up in the woods trying to get work and couldn't get work, and they'd be a-tryin' to get out and they were broke. Some of 'em, they might have a gun or something, and they'd want to borrow a few dollars on that, or something like that, to get out. Maybe a jackknife or something, they'd try to borrow four bits or something on it. No as a rule they were pretty good. They didn't steal nothing. But they were just down and out, y'know.

A lot of them fellas, they'd be up in here and work, well then they'd work and get a little money, and they'd go into Spokane. Well they'd spend their money and they'd come back, well maybe the camps was laid off and they couldn't get a job, well then they'd have to kind of bum their way out. And those days, you know, if you were broke and you went to Spokane, if you had a few pennies, say, you could go to a saloon and buy a schooner of beer, and pret'near all of them saloons had lunch counter. Well you buy a schooner of beer and then you'd go to the lunch counter and eat all what you want over there. That was free. By god there was lots of them old lumberjacks that'd put in the winter maybe for about 15, 20 cents a day--a schooner of beer, and go from one of them saloons to the other and get a free lunch. And along Christmas, y'know, they'd put up a hell of lunch around them saloons. Yes, and around them Scandinavian saloons, they'd put up that stockfish, a lutefisk, and a lot of them Scandinavian lumberjacks, y'know, they went for that to beat heck.. The stockfish and then what they call the flatbrau. Well, we called it shinglebread--that was thin, y'know, baked on top of the stove, just like a cracker, but it'd be thin and crisp. Well, they'd like that and stockfish. Well, they'd put in their meal, the next meal maybe they'd go to another saloon and eat. Maybe they'd get along with two bits or so a day, so they didn't have to have much money 'til the camps'd start in opening, so they could go to camp and work again.

SAM: I always hear that there was a lot of drinking in the camps too. What was that like?

A B: Oh they'd drink some, not too much though. Mostly on holidays, on weekends. During the week there wouldn't be much drinking, but there'd be quite a lot of poker played. There used to be one fella that was up here at Helmer and then there was some fellas from Bovill, they used to gamble like hell. By god there was one stump over across Corrall Creek, they got a-gamblin' over

that one day, and about $2500 changed hands over that yellow pine stump over there one day. Well then some goddarn geek, y'know, that was a smart aleck, he'd come down and hit them camps about weekend, and by god he'd take 'em all, and he'd get the hell on out. Oh yes, there was quite a lot of gambling around the places. And by god they gambled quite a lot right here in Deary too, in the early days. And then over there on the Palouse River, when they were a-loggin' that before the Potlatch started in, I guess that was quite a gambling place, what they said.

SAM: Do you know any stories about guys gambling, or about fights over gambling, or any funny stories about gambling?

A B: No, not much, because I always stayed away from that. I didn't have no use for that gambling. I always stayed away from where they were a-doin' that. And I never did drink whiskey. I'd drink a glass of beer once in awhile. One time we thrashed, and I had to go to Moscow. Well we'd been thrashing peas and they were all mildewed, and there was quite a lot that had to be cleaned up around and under the feeder, and a lot of peas'd fall off. Well I worked around the feeder quite a lot, and of course I got quite a lot of that mildew. Well we got through with the last job, and it'd be nothing dry anymore, so we'd have to lay off a few days, and I had a little repairs to get for the machine. So I drove over to Moscow and got them repairs, and come back and got to Deary. Well we stopped and had lunch there, and the sack sewer was with me. "Well," I says, "what do you want to drink?"

"Oh," he says, "let's take a beer today." Well we took a beer with our lunch, and boy I never got so damn sick of anything as I got from them mildewed peas and that beer, and you know, I think it was 20 years before you could get me to touch a beer. And I don't like beer now neither. I can take a drink of beer, but that's plenty.

SAM: I guess there was a lot of moonshining too, when Prohibition came in.

A B: Oh yeah, there was quite a lot of moonshine. Yes, there was lots of moonshining going on. I seen one hack go by one time that it was 16 gallon jugs of moonshine in it.

(End of Side A)

SAM: I was wondering about the trails in this country, like around here. Can you remember how the trails got put in in the first place?

A B: Well, there has been quite a few cattle in here, and sheep, and there was cattle trails all over in the woods. Yeah, when I cleared that field over there, over in the farthest end, I found a round bell in there, and that bell was marked in 1876. And I picked that up and brought it home.

(My sister got to see it, and boy, she'd like to have that bell. Well, I says, "You can have it." And then my nephew's wife, that'd be my niece by marriage, she seen it, and oh she'd like to have a bell, or a bell of some kind. And went several years, and by gosh, I plowed one out over in the field there. It was full of mud, but I happened to see it was something, so I stopped and got off from the tractor, went back to see what it was. Begosh that was a bell and that was marked 1876. So I dug the dirt out of it, so she's got that.)

SAM: Take this road that comes in here up Brush Creek. How did that start becoming a trail, and then was that the way the trail came in to the homestead?

A B: Yeah, but of course it was just crooked all over, back and forth. The first trail that come in come down over that field there, and went out the other way. This road you come in now from the highway, that's a road I've made. Oh there was just up and down hills, just an Indian trail. And that trail come up the meadow there, and boy how wet that'd be in the spring. Muddy.

Oh they holler about hard times nowadays, hell they ain't seen nothing.

By god, you could buy all the butter you wanted to for five cents a pound, eggs five cents a dozen, a sack of flour 49 cents, but you didn't have the money to buy it with. That was during the Cleveland time. And then the wet years come, well about the best a man could get in the harvest field was 75 and a dollar a day. And then that wet year, the grain all sprouted in the field. Well about the only thing you could get was a little sprouted grain. Well here there was some of them, they'd get home, and they had a little money coming but couldn't get it, unless a little sprouted grain. If you had any hogs or any cattle, you could take that and feed them. I know Andersons up here, he's worked all summer, and when fall come they had 50 cents. Well they put that away, hid it good, maybe somebody has been in and stold it or something. They never did find that 50 cents to start the winter out. That was hard times too.

SAM: How did they get through the winter?

A B: Well, they got through. They had a cow or two, and got ahold of a little flour, and a few spuds they raised. And that was just about all they had to eat, was a little milk and butter and bread and spuds.

SAM: What year was this? Was this 1893, or later?

A B: Well about '92, along in '91 and '92.

SAM: Did it drive a lot of people out of here, a lot of the homesteaders?

A B: No, by gosh, y'know, they all stayed pretty well. But then they couldn't file on the place, they were just squatting on the place. But there had been one survey over it that was surveyed during the 80's. But then it had to be resurveyed, and they couldn't file on the place before it was resurveyed. And of course it changed it quite a little. Like over where Camp 4 down there was, there is two section corners over there close together, and a lot of short 40's. And of course the same way, well now this homestead here was four acres. Well that is, two acres to the 40, and the same over there, and the

same 40 down below here.

SAM: Did a locator find this homestead for your father?

A B: No, he just located himself. The first place he put in a cabin was over across the creek here, but then they found out that was a school section, so he come over here and took this. And you know those days, if you didn't live on the place, if you moved off from the place and was off 30 days, hell somebody else could move into your cabin. So they got the cabin built, and they moved up here the 17th day of March, and been here all the time since.

SAM: Did you know of any troubles that homesteaders had around here with their claims getting jumped or anything like that?

A B: Oh, a little further east here, well some of 'em, they'd go away, and others had filed homestead on it. See, if they didn't get the money so they could file on the homestead, somebody else, that last day it was open, they could go in and file on your homestead. So there was quite a few that lost their claim that way, they didn't have money enough to file on it. And now there's two, three places up here, fellas didn't have money to file on their place, and that went back to the state land, and it still is state land.

SAM: You mean there was no place they could borrow the money?

A B: Hell, there was nobody that had any money to borrow. They were all broke. Dad, y'know, didn't have any money to file on this place, but my sister, she'd been working over there at McConnell, and she had a few dollars, so she let dad have so he could file on the place. That's how he got the place here. And he filed preemption on this place, and you could live on it for three years, and you could prove up on it, and then you could go somewheres else and homestead. But dad never got the money to prove up, so dad turned it over to homestead instead of preemption. If he'd had them couple hundred dollars to file preemption, he could have homesteaded preemption on this, and then went and took another homestead up there on the meadows, because that

was later that was opened. But he didn't have the money to prove up on it.

SAM: Do you know why he picked right around here? Is it because it was open around here and it wasn't open other places?

A B: Well, it wasn't open here. But there's been bedding ground on that meadow there. Goddarn, y'know, got the trees cut down, and the logs skidded up into piles, and work it over, and seeded the grain and that grain'd grow higher than your head. Well, there was no other way to cut it, and used a scythe, but it made lots of hay. Well dad, he'd cut with the scythe, and then my younger sister and mother, they'd rake with the hand rakes and shock it. Used a kind of a long sled with a basket rack on it to haul it in. Well after a few years I got big enough, and dad fixed up a scythe for me. So I cut a lot of hay with scythe. He made a scythe handle, and he made it just the right length for ya. Instead of a crooked like they use them here, they were straight, and the end of the scythe handle'd lay on your arm, and then a handle hold out here, and a hand hold down here on top. I wished lots of time I had one of them scythe handles. But they burnt up when the old buildings burnt up, because they was upstairs in the old woodshed. And they were a whole lot easier to cut with then the scythe handles they've got now. Then after awhile they used to seed a little rye, and they'd cut that and make bundles out of it and thrash it. And Albert would fix up a kind of a grinder down there, so he'd grind it, and make a kind of a fine flour of it, so that it'd make rye bread, to eat. Well, that rye bread was pretty good. I wouldn't mind having a loaf of that coarse rye bread now.

SAM: How long did your father go on using the scythe?

A B: Oh, 'tils he got biggest part of the stumps out of the way. There was so much small stumps. Well, he got ahold of a stump puller, and we pulled a lot of the stumps and got it so that we could get room enough to get between the stumps. And then the first mower he got, it was a hind-cut. It was be-

hind, instead of afterwards, the mower was a front-cut. They were a pretty good mower, but they were awful heavy and were slow. They wasn't geared very high. You pret'near had to trot the team to get up enough motion to cut. Yeah, I run one of them mowers quite a lot. And then I run one of them other horse mowers, a front-cut, quite a lot. They were a better mower though. Them hind-cuts, you know, you couldn't hardly raise the sickle on them, they were so damned heavy to raise the sickle. But the front-cut, you could raise them 18, 20 inches right off from the seat with the pedal. Well then, along in '28, '30, when started in getting a tractor, I got a tractor mower, and of course that went a whole lot faster. Well the International mower wasn't fast, but then I got a John Deere, that tractor mower, and hell, I could raise the sickle bar up four feet or better. Heck, I could cut 30, 35 acres a day with that.

SAM: Did you tell me that you got a thrashing machine in those days too?

A B: Oh yah, yeah I got the thrashing machine in 1930. And I used that for quite a few years. (Well, here a week ago, after you was down the other time, one of the boys was down, he lives down in around Eugene, Oregon. He worked for me six years. He was down one evening and visited with me. He was out to see his siter, she lives down here at Deary.)

SAM: I wanted to know more about some of the other homesteaders that were your neighbors around here, and how they made out and different things that happened to them in the early days.

A B: Well Martin Magnuson, y'know after I quit herding cattle for Hooker about 1905, well when they started in building the railroad, Magnuson, he got a contract to furnish the company with beef for all the railroad camps. And god you know, some days they'd take two, three, four beefs a day. So I got kind of in it, bringing in beef for him. So heck, I knew pret'near every farmer from Bovill to Troy, and way down below Troy, picking up beefs and

bring 'em in. Those day it was lots of beef that was pretty wild. Oh we'd get some wild son-of-a-bitches. Mrs. Magnuson's brother, he was generally with me. Lots of times he'd start in the morning and never get in before after midnight with beef, if we'd strike outlaws. By god we'd have some real outlaws sometimes. Boy, they'd fight horses and everything else. But we never had any trouble, unless we brought 'em in, but some of them had quite a lot of trouble with 'em. Well then after he quit, he started a butcher shop in Deary, that is after Potlatch quit beefing, he started a butcher shop in Deary. I still brought in quite a few cattle for him, but not very many.

Then dad sold the timber here, he bought a 40 down on the ridge. And we had quite a little hay here. And we'd bale that, baled the hay here, and bring our cattle down on the ridge and winter 'em down there. We had enough so we had enough so we could live here, and enough down there so all about we had to do is bring the beds and some of the eats down there, to live down there. And dad would bring that down in the wagon, and I'd bring the cattle down. The first year I'd have to have help to drive 'em down because the cattle wouldn't go down, but made it fine and dandy. After we'd been there over the winter we fed the hay down there. Well when they'd start in getting green grass, we'd bring 'em up here and keep 'em up here during the summer, because you could run 'em on the range anywheres you wanted to. And we'd live up here in the summer. And you know, after we'd been down there one year and the cattle got used to it, have to watch 'em like the dickens in fall because when it come that time they'd want to pull out for down on the ridge. After that I'd have to watch 'em to keep 'em here 'til it was ready to move. Well after that about the only thing I'd have to do is turn them out and start 'em, and boy they'd travel like...

(End of Side B)

SAM: Did your mother stay up here in the winter when you took the cattle down?

A B: No, she was down there too. No, when dad would take the bedding and that stuff down, she went right along, so she stayed there. But I'd come up and stay the night once in awhile, specially during the hunting season. I'd come up and hunt, maybe I'd kill a deer and bring back down.

SAM: Was there much trouble with cattle of different people getting mixed up together on the range?

A B: No, not too much. Well, I kept a pretty good eye on our cattle here, so I kept them pretty well in this part down below here, because there was nobody else that had any cattle in there. Up that way there was a few that had cattle, but I'd keep our cattle out of that country and keep 'em down below.

SAM: When you went out to get cattle for the lumber camps, did you have hard time tracking them down sometimes?

A B: Oh, not too bad. Well generally, the farmers--he'd buy the cattle, y'know, and they'd try have 'em in the corral, so biggest part of the time they'd be in the corral. Once in awhile there'd be some that'd in the canyon, we'd have to get out of the canyon, but then we'd have a little time.

SAM: How would you go about doing it?

A B: Just go in and chase 'em out until we got 'em out in the open, and then rope 'em, and maybe tie 'em together, two and two. Then of course when they'd try to run out of the road, they'd hang up, so they wouldn't get away very far. One time we got two young bulls that we had to take out of the canyon. Boy, we had a time with them, but we brought 'em. And they were pretty tame when we got in with 'em. But I don't believe there was a whole fence between Bear Creek and Magnuson's place left, because them sonofaguns, they'd go right through the fences. Then we'd have to drive 'em out through the fence somewheres else again, and into the raad. But we brought 'em. And those days I didn't give a damn what kind of a horse it was neither, I could ride any horse.

I didn't give a damn how wild or bucky it was.

SAM: You told me about that horse you traded with the Indian for. Are there any other horses that you had that you can remember, that stand out?

A B: Well, that's the only one I traded with the Indians. I traded once in awhile with other people, but that'd generally be tame horses. Well, I bought one outlaw down on the ridge. They told me that nobody could ride that horse, and it always got away everytime they'd had it hooked up. Anyway I bought the horse. I snubbed it to my saddle horse, and I got it home, and I got it in the barn up there on the ridge. I fooled around with it every day. I got along pretty good with it. But it was hell to get it down to the water to water it. I'd pret'near have to take the saddle horse to lead her out there. One day I went down there and I put the saddle on her, and I fooled around, and finally I got her out. I says, "I'm going to try and ride her and see what happens." I got onto her and y'know, she just froze, she just stood there, she wouldn't move a leg. I thought to myself, "Well I can fix that all right." Because I always had a set of spurs in the barn, bacause they come awful handy when you're after wild cattle. Once in awhile you'd get one of them that'd laid down, and you could get off and spur them around the neck and they'd get up. I got off and put the spur on. I got on the saddle, back into the saddle, and she still didn't move. Well I raked her along the shoulder and the back, and boy she went into the air then! Well that was all right, she bucked three, four times, and boy she bucked hard! And she took off running. Well, I started her up towards Deary, and it was nine miles to Deary. I rode her into Deary, and I got off from her in Deary, and I went into the restaurant and got a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. I come out and I thought, "Maybe I'll have a little trouble when I get on her. Well I got on her, and by god, y'know, she went off just like an old horse. Well I rode her home, I didn't hurt her at all. Rode her easy so she'd cool off.

After the time I come up here. I put her in the barn, and I gave her a kind of rubbing down, and one thing another.

This was along before Thanksgiving. I kept a-takin' her out every day, and ride her a couple miles, and take her in and rub her down and curry her, and she got pretty nice and gentle. And Thanksgiving Day I thought it'd be fun to ride down, because I figured all of them oldtimers'd be down there at the Lutheran Church, it was service. I rode down there, but I waited long enough 'til just about the services start. I rode down there and I got off, I tied her up and I went in, and I sit down in the back end of the church. Quite a few of the boys that I knew in there, said hello to the boys that I sit down by. I didn't say nothing. We sit there 'til the service was out. Of course they all come out, and they see I had the saddle on that outlaw horse. Well, there wasn't a one of them that'd leave there. They was wanting to see me ride that horse, they thought that would be kind of fun to see. Well I stopped and talked to a lot of them, and finally--it was cold out there--I says, "I better go home." So I went down and I unloosened her, and I kinda scratched her a little. I stepped into the stirrup and got into the saddle, and I rode off just like I was a-ridin' an old horse. Well they couldn't figure out how I broke that horse in that short a time. Well I didn't have no trouble with her. She was a kind of a slender horse, and by god you know, I broke her to jump, and I used her after cattle quite a lot. I had her so that I could drive up to any of them old rail fences, and if she could put her head over it, she'd hop over it just like that. I could ride over any damn fence in the country. Well, she got so I couldn't turn her loose out in the pasture at all, because she'd go and jump into the field--that was better feeding in there. So I kept her pretty well in the barn, the time when I wasn't a-usin' her. But I broke her to drive, and I could drive her from here to Troy and back in three hours easy. That'd make about a 30 mile drive,

and I would make that in three hours. Ten miles an hour.

SAM: What kind of a horse was she?

A B: She was a kind of a roan. But I think she was kind of part hamilton (Hambletonian).

SAM: What's the secret of being good with a horse, of handling a horse right?

A B: Well, you take a horse that's funny, I could pret'near always get along with an outlaw horse. And the same way, I could go to anyplace that they had a mad dog that'd bite; and I could go to that place and the dog wouldn't bother me. And the same way with yellowjackets and bees, they'd bite other people; but by god bees'd crawl all over me, but they wouldn't sting me. There's something about that. We used to cut quite a few bee trees, generally got the bee trees down, I'd generally have to take the honey out, because the other fella that'd be with me, the bees'd be after. I seen fellers try to come out there, and by god the bees'd drive 'em right out of the country, sting hell out of 'em. And they'd walk all over me and wouldn't bother me. It's something about it. I could get along good with 'em, other people couldn't.

SAM: Do you think it's because you weren't afraid? Could that have been it?

A B: That's one thing, was a hell of a lot. You take a bee, if you are afraid of him and start in striking at him, they get mad. And the yellowjacket the same way, if you start in fighting 'em you got trouble on your hands. And you take if a yellowjacket come fast and light on ya like he's going to sting, you know what you can do that he can't sting ya? You just hold your breath and that yellowjacket can't sting through your hide! You can brush him off. No sir, he can't put a stinger through your hide if you hold your breath. There's a lot of 'em that don't know that. And them big bald-faced hornets was the same way. Them big bald-faced hornets, when they'd hit by god they'd hit hard! I had one of them hit me from behind that I didn't see him a-comin'. Boy, he damnnear knocked me over. There's been one a-monkeyin' around out

here. But out here on the porch, sitting out there, he'd walk all over on my hand, arm. He wouldn't bite me, but he'd suck the moisture off from the pores.

SAM: I wanted to ask you, did many of the farmers around here have cattle? Did they have many head of cattle back when the lumber camps were going and you were getting cattle for the camps?

A B: Not too many cows. There wasn't none of 'em that had too many cows. Generally two, three for home use, that was just about all they had.

SAM: But there's a lot more pasture in this country than there is like say around Genesee or down around in there, isn't there?

A B: Oh there was quite a little more pasture, you know. There was some years them fellas from down below'd bring cattle up, and then generally the sheepmen'd come in with big herds of sheep. And of course they'd raise hell with the pasture, because when the sheep had went over it, cattle wouldn't pasture where the sheep had been.

SAM: Did many people around here have sheep?

A B: No, not too many. Oh we used to have a few. Where there'd be a brushy piece of ground we'd generally fence it in and put sheep in there. Well the sheep'd gnaw the bark off from the brush, and pick the leaves off from the brush, and in a couple, three years they'd kill the brush, so it'd die. So it was easier to clear.

SAM: Where did these sheep herds come from that pastured up here then?

A B: They come from down in the Big Bend country. One outfit was the MacGregors, and then the Cammow (?) outfit. But they wouldn't stay but a couple, three days, and then they'd keep a-movin' on. Well they could move 'em along the county road, see. But then after years, when the cars started in going, they couldn't move 'em so much, they'd have to truck 'em more. Then they'd have to go further back in the woods.

SAM: Did that make the guys that had cattle mad, that the sheep would come through and graze it out?

A B: Oh, well y'know there was one law: you had a piece of ground, and you could keep the sheep two miles away from your piece of ground. They couldn't come in any closer than two miles of your place, unless you let 'em. Like them fellers that had cattle up in here, y'know, they'd lease places. Well, they'd bring the cattle in, and they could keep the sheep away two miles. Well then they'd go over here a-ways, maybe three, four miles, and lease another place. Well they could keep the sheep away there. So they'd have quite a piece to pasture.

SAM: You mean they wouldn't leave enough room for the sheep to get in.

A B: No. Well finally they made a kind of a law, there'd be one streak of country that the sheep could use, and the cattle could the other part. Then of course it didn't bother, we didn't get any more trouble with the sheep over on this side of the hill. They always come back on the other side of the hills, further towards the Palouse.

SAM: Can you remember some more about some of the other homesteaders that were around in this area?

A B: Well Halseths, y'know, they homesteaded up here, and they were four boys. Old man Halseth was just sort of blind on one side, and he couldn't see much on the other. They homesteaded up there, and they had four boys. And the first kids that went up there on the nigger schoolhouse was them four boys and I and my sister and Hawkin Peterson and the three nigger kids. There was ten of us in all told, the first year. And the next year it was the two Thompson kids and the Blailock kid.

SAM: How did some of these other families do? Did they have any troubles that you can remember?

A B: No, no, they got along pretty good. Like Halseths up here, he generally stayed home because he couldn't see very good, and Mrs. Halseth she worked down on the sawmill, cooked down there for the mill crew. And the oldest one of the boys was along, and he was kind of a flunky down there. And those days, y'know, pret'near everything they skidded logs with was bulls. There was no horses, no horse skidding, all big bulls to skid logs.

(End of Side C)

SAM: Can you tell me what these oxen or the cattle used to be like to use on the team?

A B: The cattle was quite a little wilder in those days than they are now. They were more of a wild breed. They ain't tamed down like they do now. Every once in awhile, god you'd find one that'd fight just like a damn tiger when you'd get after to chase him. Now pret'near all the cattle is pretty tame.

SAM: Well what did they used to be like to pull the wagons to do the farm work? You said they used oxen before they had horses.

A B: Well you know they had a yoke over their neck, and a lot of 'em, they had a big staple in the yoke and just a chain by it to pull the wagon. And when they used the wagon, they had a slit in the yoke that they put the tongue into, so it couldn't run ahead. And now like plowing, they'd just hook that cable onto the plow, and the same thing when they were skidding logs with 'em, they just had a skidding tong in the end of the chain that they'd hook on the end of the log. Hell, a bull was a whole lot better to skid log with than horses. You could go in the damnedest brushiest patch with them, that damn big yoke, and a span of bulls, bend over trees as big as your arm. And you just had the damn chain and that tong to hook on the log, and then start 'em out with it. All you had was a switch, you didn't have a line or

nothing. It was just "gee" and "haw," to guide them. "Gee" and "haw" was for right and left. And them bulls got so they'd understand that good. Maybe if there was a big log, they'd put on four, maybe six bulls to pull them out. Then they'd haul out big logs.

No, pret'near all the sawmills around here, they used bulls. And then they'd just log for the mills in the winter, and they'd skid out to the skid-road with the bulls; and then a lot of 'em, they'd use horses and haul the logs from there on into the mill, haul 'em on sleighs. That went pretty good. And the mills, they generally had big ponds. Well they'd empty them in the fall, and they'd drive right in the pond and unload. And god they'd deck them logs up higher than the ceiling in there, and then in the spring, when the water'd come, that'd kind of float them logs. And they'd float 'em down, and the mill was right down at the end of the pond. Why they'd drag 'em up a tramway and right up next to the carriage and saw 'em, see. And the water'd take the frost out of the logs so they'd saw pretty easy. And them larger sawmills generally had about 20, 25 men to saw 'em. And then they'd have tracks up, and a feller'd run the lumber out on dump cars, and then they'd pile the lumber along the tracks to let it dry. And then when it was dry, they'd haul it back on them dump cars and into the mill and run it through the planer and plane it. Hell, you know a lot of that lumber, eight dollars a thousand, six, eight dollars a thousand. Maybe you'd have to take out the logs for lumber, and then maybe haul it to Moscow, and sell the damned lumber for about ten dollars a thousand. So you see it was damn fast in making money.

SAM: Do you know how the town of Deary got started?

A B: You know how it got started? Well there was a fella by the name Bill Deary. And there was some stores right in down below where Deary is now. And Bill Deary, he had a brother, he was kind of a foreman for the crew when they were surveying the railroad and one thing another. And I don't know,

but this guy bought that place from Blailock, and then they decided to make a town out of it. And finally they got it surveyed out, town lots. Hugh Henry and McGowan, of course they were Potlatch men. They come up there to kind of run things and sell lots, and they got to selling lots. And main town of Deary is on the Blailock place. Well part of Deary is on three homesteads: it's on the Blailock place, and on the Roundtree place, and the Bert Crooks place. The schoolhouse and that up there is on the Bert Crooks place. And this (the southeast) end of Deary is on the Roundtree place.

Bert Crooks' girls, he had two girls, they went to school the second year of the school down there. Their names were Della and May. Well that Crooks, he was quite a booze fighter, and finally he sold the place to some fella; he had it, and he sold it the Potlatch Lumber Company, and Potlatch Lumber Company started a town there. Well Blailock he went down and he started a store down there by Joel, this side of Joel, and they call that, what in hell was...

SAM: Cornwall? Howell?

A B: Cornwall, Howell was further this way. Cornwall is where Blailock started. (And they had one boy that growed up there, he got to be a kind of a tough one like the old man, drunkard, and he died, and old man died, and the oldest girl died. I think the next to the oldest girl, I think she lives down there around Howell somewheres now. She got married down there, and I know she was there for a good many years. I can't think of their name. But I know she was there a few years ago, because she was up to Deary and I happened to meet her in there.)

SAM: Did Deary get to be a regular town overnight, or did it take quite a while for it to grow up?

A B: Oh it growed pretty fast. Oh yeah, yes there was quite a few stores that got started, and got a saloon up there, and drugstore, and finally we got

a doctor there. Oh yes, we had both a doctor and dentist, and shoemaker shop, oh it was quite a place at one time. And y'know when they were building roads there was lots of the lumberjacks that built shacks there, and lived there, that was a-workin' on the railroad. And of course when they were through with building the railroad, they went other places. And Helmer had quite a lot of fellers up there. Camp 6 was kind of a headquarter for Potlatch up there. They had quite a lot of people up there at Helmer that worked over at Camp 6, Potlatch. Hell there was always 75 or a hundred men over there working up them canyons.

SAM: What did you do after you got done working on the railroad?

A B: Me? Oh I mostly, mother was getting pretty old, and I mostly stayed at home and kinda looked after cattle--we always had ten, twelve cows--and then I done quite a little carpenter work around. I built quite a few houses. There's several houses in Deary I've built, and there's several houses in Helmer, some in Bovill, some down on the ridge. After mother died I got rid of 'em, so I only had one cow. But she was an awful good cow. I could turn her loose, her and the calf, and go out and watch, and she'd pret'near always stay right around the place. When I'd come home, she was pret'near close enough so I could call her, and she'd come in. I'd put the calf out, and milk maybe a quart or two. Get a little milk and turn her out. (She'd always work around home, and just about just time to milk her I'd call her in. Milk maybe a quart or two of milk, turn the calf on, and let him take the rest of it, then turn him in his pasture, and she'd just walk out and keep around close to home.) I had that cow for years. Christ she must have been 18, 19 years old when I sold her. And the butcher in Bovill, he'd always come down and wanted to know if I'd have a calf from that cow. He bought that calf pret'near every year. Because that calf would hogdress about 4, 450 pounds in the fall. Fat as a damn pig. He said that's the

only place you could get any good beef, when he'd get that calf from me.

SAM: Will you tell me about the work that you did with Bill Helmer?

A B: Well, he come in here, that was before mother died. And he was a-runnin' out the lines. And he come to the house and he wondered if he could stay here some. "Well" I says, "mother is getting pretty old, so it's kind of hard for her to do much cooking. But," I says, "we'll ask mother and see what she's got to say." So we come over to the house and talked to her. Mother says, "Well," she said, "all right, he can stay if he'll eat what we eat." Well, it was all right, he'd just stay about five days a week. So he come down early in the fall. And he was just alone. He said, "Say, I need somebody," because he was a runnin' out kind of the section lines and getting the section corners. He says, "Would ya want to work with me?"

"Yah," I says, "but I can't put in a right long day."

"Well," he says, "I got quite a little book work to do, and one thing another," and he says, "we wouldn't put in too long a day." Well I'd get up and do the chores pretty early in the morning, and turn the cows out for water, and feed 'em in the manger so they could go out and in. We'd go out in the woods and we'd run lines 'tils about 2:30, 3:00 in the afternoon. "Well," Bill says, "we'll go in now." Well we'd go in and I could do the chores and milking, and he'd work on his books a little. By that time mother'd have supper ready. We'd always carry a sandwich with us out in the woods.

Well we'd just mark out the old section corners. You could still see 'em, that'd been run in early days. So we'd work them out, and marked the corner trees up high, so we could see 'em before the snow got too deep. And then when the snow got big, then he started running the railroad track, because the snow got high, so we didn't have to bend down the biggest part of the brush, so we could look over the biggest part of the brush. Well then cut stakes, and put down a stake about every 50 feet where you wanted

the railroad tracks, and run out the crooks and curves. So we worked on that all winter. So I done pretty good that winter.

SAM: What was Bill Helmer like?

A B: He was pretty dark, skinny, he wasn't a too heavy a man. By god that fella could travel in the woods too. They all told me "You'll never be able to keep up with Bill Helmer," but I was pretty good myself. After the snow got deep we used snowshoes, and of course we'd have our trail broke, and coming to or going out in the morning, we generally had the snowshoe trails to work on. So we'd get along pretty good. No, I got along pretty good with Bill Helmer. And that spring when he had the surveying done right in the neighborhood all around here, so he they had to move, he said to me, "I wish," he says, "you coulda went with me. I got along with you just about as good as anybody." Because I never had lost(?) anything, and I was pretty handy with the compass myself. When he'd get tired of using it, by god I'd use it. So we kinda changed off.

SAM: You say that most of the work you did was a resurvey?

A B: Yeah we had to go over them see, because there was pieces of timber see, that they bought from the farmers and others from state land. So they had to keep track of that. So they had to keep the state land and what they had bought from farmers separate. And some of it they hadn't even bought. So it had to be kept apart.

SAM: What were the woods like where you were surveying them? What was the timber like there before it was cut?

A B: Oh it was pretty open timber, because the Indians used to burn it, but it started in growing up again before the Potlatch got a-loggin'. So it got quite a lot of brush. But when I first come in, remember, you could drive pret'near anywheres with a team and wagon.

SAM: Where were you working from here, the two of you?

A B: When we was...

SAM: Surveying.

A B: Well we worked all over on this township, and clean up there on the Cherry Butte and all over clean into Deary. We pret'near laid out all these railroad tracks here that winter. Clean over on Corral Creek and over around where Camp 4 is. On this side of Camp 4, there is a bunch of short forties in there. They're wide enough one way but they're too short the other way. And at Camp 4 there's two sections...

(End of Side D)

SAM: Would you say that again?

A B: Oh, I said it was terrible that they kind of figured that maybe killed fellers in here that had places. Of course they sold out and moved out, but they never could prove nothing on them. The Shea Meadow, they always figured there was a man killed up there, but nobody could prove nothing. So there you are. No, I say I have an idea there was several men killed up in this country in the early days that nobody knew anything about. If somebody come along they thought they had any money, somebody hit him in the head and buried him somewheres and be done with it.

SAM: And you would hear rumors about it when you were young?

A B: Oh there was lots of rumors going around about several people, but nobody could say anything. About the only thing that everybody could do was to keep their mouth shut, to keep out of trouble.

SAM: You mean there were suspicions that people that lived around here had done it?

A B: Oh yes, quite a lot of them, back up in through there, homesteaders that was suspicioned of killing some fella that'd come through that prospected, that might have a little money. Well they'd disappear, and nobody'd ever see

anything anymore of 'em. Well what become of 'em?

SAM: Would homesteaders disappear too?

A B: No...You know there was a few of them homesteaders that was kind of suspicioned of doing that.

SAM: Would people still be as friendly as ever to them?

A B: Well, they'd talk when they'd meet 'em. Well, they couldn't prove nothing. They didn't know more whether they'd killed a man than I knew whether you have killed one. So they couldn't say nothing. And about the only thing that you could do'd be friendly when you'd meet 'em. But they might kind of have a suspicion of it. Like them fellas that had the Shea Meadow. There was a fella that come along and stayed with them. He'd been prospecting, and he seemed to have a little money right along. Well, finally he disappeared. Well they said he left the country. Well that's all they know. The Sheas still stayed up there. But awhile after he died, they tore down a big log fence they had there, and they had a big fire in there, and they figured that they had him buried in there and burnt over it. A lot of them kind of thought the Sheas has killed him, but they couldn't say nothing because nobody knew anything.

SAM: Were there any people around that were known to be crooks or thieves, that let's say would steal from another homesteader?

A B: Oh. There was one outfit that I don't think was too damn straight. A fella got crazy and he went and hung himself, and of course he had folks in the old country and around. I know they sold everything out of his house and other places too that picked up things. But I ain't going to say who they were because there's some of the same outfit right in the country today, but they seem to get along pretty good now. And they were kind of a bunch that'd fight in among themselves. They had some awful fights in among themselves.

But they got along pretty good with other people. But there was two brothers there, by damn they'd get a few drinks, one would try to kill the other one, all the time.

Transcribed and typed by Sherrie Fields