

ARTHUR BJERKE  
Fourth Interview

Interviewed by:  
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Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

ARTHUR BJERKE

Brush Creek, Deary; b. 1886

farmer, herder, carpenter, logger

2.2. hours

minute page

## Side A

01 1 A cat caught in an oven. Spring flooding - this caused the Bjerkes to move their house from the flat to the hill. Neighborliness. Heavy snows. Knitting.

10 2 Joe Wells family. Chuck played a harmonica at dances; Joe liked to jig. Schoolhouse built on Joe Wells' land, with his horse. Lou Wells, a fine cook, cooked as a slave in Carolina. Closeness of Joe's family with Frank and Crom Wells. Popularity of their halfway house. Joe gave drinks to the teamsters. Joe beats up Marshall Hays, with Andrew Olson's help. Joe was a hardworking gyppo logger - several Irishmen would work only for him. Lou's big spinning wheel. Joe contributed to Lutheran Church.

29 6 Building the Lutheran Church. A Californian who tried to fence in the road. (continued)

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06 8 God gives people conscience.

08 8 Big Anderson called the devil "the wild animal", and God "the man above." Like some other farmers, he rented his good land and went gold prospecting, never finding anything. Pete Jackson, a Genesee farmer, prospected by Jackson Butte. Bears hibernate in a long tunnel a few miles south of Arthur's, by Potlatch River.

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(11 minutes)

with Sam Schrager  
May 30, 1975

## II. Transcript

SS: Oh, there was a story about Lou and Perry from Colorado, about a cat in the stove. Would you tell me that story?

ARTHUR BERNER:

AB: I don't know. The snow had been pretty deep and the cold, you know, <sup>and</sup> finally it got so they could get outside there, they'd sat there for three days in the bed, because the water was so deep in the house that they couldn't get out. And they left the cat in there and man, she jumped off and over on the oven door and laid down in the oven. Well, when they come in, they shut the oven door and never thought about it and build up a fire and then they roasted the cat in it. So that burnt the feet off from and they had to kill the cat.

SS: How did they find out the cat was in there?

AB: Because she started stinking bad in there in the cabin. And they were going to look all over and she was burning up, and it was the cat. It roasted the hair off him.

SS: Did it flood here much?

AB: Hell, in our house, the house stood down there in the flat, by god, the water come in the house til it went right up agin the <sup>t</sup>matress in the bed. Hell, I've seen lots flood in there after it was cleared up, a regular skating rink. Hell, you could skate all over that meadow.

SS: How long would it flood for?

AB: Oh, several days.

SS: What month would be the high month?

AB: Well, generally be along in March, when the snow started going bad, it start in raining and the snow up here is six feet deep, when that got full of water and start in breaking through, by god, there'd be water all over.

SS: How high above the creek was your place?

AB: Well, it was just pretnear right down level with the bank. It was high for three years and then moved up on ~~the~~ hillside here.

SS: Why did you move it?

AB: Because it was too wet down there. All the neighbors got together and they tore the house down and moved it and set it up again in one day.

SS: Everybody just pitched in and helped like that?



AB: You're damn right. And by god, they were neighbors those days. It ain't like it is now. And by god, pretnear every Saturday night they'd all get together and they'd have a good time. And when they'd meet on the road they'd always stop and talk. Now, when you meet a neighbor they just drive past ya and look the other way. They ain't neighbors atall anymore.

SS: Did you exchange work a lot with your neighbors?

AB: Yes, quite a little. Of course it was mostly dad because I was too young to begin with. But well, I've had this place since 1911, so I've been here quite awhile too. And of course, the folks moved on the place, 1891.

SS: Were there heavy snow winters that you remember?

AB: Yes, hell, there was nothing to see six and seven feet of snow here. By god, Bovill had nine, Elk River had thirtean feet of snow.

SS: How did you get by when the snow was so deep?

AB: Well, mostly stay home. And if you wanted to go anywhere, it was mostly skis, or web shoes. Well, pretnear always got a few sheeps and they cut the wool off from them and spin and make yarn and the women, they'd never go to a neighbor unless they'd be knitting socks or something. When they'd knit there were five needles in those knitting needles, <sup>four</sup> to knit on and then it was one extra that they thread the loops on and over on the main needle. And the Americans, they generally used a crochet hook and crocheted sweaters for their kids. Now I've seen good many hard times and I hope some of these kids now will never see anything like it. But I've lived through it.

SS: Do you remember the cabin that Joe Wells had?

AB: Yeah it was just a little log cabin with the bark on the outside with the windows off of it and the inside. The Indian kids, I wasn't a bit afraid of them, but them nigger kids, they were too damn black. I was a little spooky of them. But they were damn good friends of mine.

SS: Did Roy and Chuck used to play pranks a lot?

AB: Oh yeah, Chuck you know, he used to play the mouth harp. And boy he liked to dance too. And that waltz prommanade. Well, the white girls around here, they wasn't a bit of bashful, they'd dance with them nigger boys just as well as

anybody else. And boy we just as soon dance with a nigger girl as any other.

SS: What kind of music did he play with his mouth harp?

AB: Yeah, it was waltzes and cadrills and stuff like that.

SS: He played at the dances?

AB: Oh yeah. And then the Lawrences come in and they all, there was four boys of them and they all played the fiddle a little and the girls they played the banjo and guitar. Heck, I'll tell you it was lots of fun too, <sup>and</sup> by god, they were all our neighbors.

SS: Would you dance in the schoolhouse?

AB: Oh yeah, there was a good many dance <sup>rs</sup> in the old nigger schoolhouse. And old Joe Wells, he couldn't dance, but boy, he'd get up and dance a jig. 'Specially when they'd start in playing 'Old Black Joe'!

SS: Oh is that true? Was Joe a pretty strong man?

AB: Oh yeah, he was a pretty husky nigger.

SS: Why do they call that his schoolhouse?

AB: Well it was built on his place, on the corner of his place, so they called it the Wells schoolhouse.

SS: Do you know who built it?

AB: Well all the neighbors got together and cut the logs and built it and Joe had a single hoist, and they used that one hoist to roll the logs up.

SS: So he gave them the land.

AB: Yeah, he gave them a chance to build on the land. When we got the Deary school house, then Joe's daughter lived in the old schoolhouse for years. And there's one thing I'm mad about, it's them goddamn bastards had to tear that school house down and burn it up. They should've left it. So people could have seen what went down in the olden days.

SS: That's where you went to school, right?

AB: Yeah.

SS: Did you spend much time with Joe?

AB: Oh yeah, you know, he had three kids, was together with the kids. They had one dog out there that got the rabies, and they didn't get out . And I was

over at Anderson's, I was pretty well grown up and Nigger Mary come over there and the dog had the rabies, she sneaked out through the backdoor and they had the gun down there. Well I went down, I killed the dog alright.

SS: Was Lou Wells, was she a good cook?

AB: None better. She has been the cook for the Wells boys while she was a young girl, while she was a slave girl. By god now, she could just as good as any woman in the country.

SS: She'd been a slave in Carolina just like Joe?

AB: You bet. Well she was Joe's wife. So when the Wells boys come out they brought her and the Wells boys, you know on this side of Moscow there's a deep cut there? And there is some buildings right across, they cut there. There's where the Wells boys died.

SS: Did the Wells boys treat Joe like a brother?

AB: You're damned right they did. And they even helped Joe build the cabin up here. Joe's kids, hell, they were down at the Wells boys have of the time. Frank Wells was a good blacksmith. He done the blacksmith for all the people up in here, and Crom was a good cook. And boy, you never could come down there, it was around meal time or, you had to come in and have dinner with 'em. Frank had a little black moustache and Crom was always smooth shaved. But he was lighter colored.

SS: Did you ever heard that old man Wells in Caroline gave Joe money just like he gave Frank and Crom money to come out here?

AB: You betcha. Well they took Joe right along with 'em. So they all come in the same bunch.

SS: Did many people stop and eat at the Wells' place?

AB: By god, pretty near everybody that went up and down the road stopped and even Bovill ate a good many meals at Joe Wells'.

SS: Would there be a lot of people there for a meal?

AB: Oh hell, sometimes they'd have that house full. And Joe you know, he liked to drink. Well, they'd stop and feed their horses and he'd always have a bottle down to the barn and he'd give them teamsters a drink and boy, they was always

willing to stop there. And hell, whiskey you know, you could buy it for three dollars a gallon in those days. And now, by god, five, six dollars for a fifth.

SS: Did you ever hear of Joe getting into trouble with Marshall Hays in Troy?

AB: Oh, he got in trouble every once in a while. And, but you know, with Hays you mean?

SS: Yeah.

AB: Yes, and by god, Andrew Olson was there and he took Joe Wells' part. And by god Hays went out <sup>through the</sup> door head first. And Andrew Olson happened to be married to my oldest sister.

SS: I heard Joe used to go to Troy with some of the boys around here and they'd have a good time.

AB: You're damned right; they'd have a good time. Joe wasn't a damn bit stingy neither. By god, he'd treat just as fast as any of 'em. And Chuck was the same way. But Roy, he wasn't much to drink. He kept pretty sober all the time.

SS: How did Joe make a living?

AB: Oh, hell, as quick as they start in logging, <sup>kill</sup> he had some of the best horses in the country and he logged by god, now, he took in some real logs. Boy they were good loggers and by god they had a couple of Irishmen that was a working for him, <sup>and</sup> by god, they wouldn't work fer nobody else but Joe Wells.

SS: Are you saying that Joe was a real hard worker?

AB: You're damned right, <sup>old</sup> Joe would work. Chuck wasn't, he'd work, but you know, he had diabetical ulcer. So he had to be, that is, one leg, and he had to keep that packed with cotton all of the time.

SS: Where did Joe log, did he have an operation?

AB: Well, you know, anybody that had logs to sell to the company, he'd take the job and haul the log in. And he'd get so much <sup>a</sup> thousand for logging and that owned the log'd get so much. No, old Joe was all right.

SS: I've heard that Lou used to have sheep.

AB: Oh yeah, yeah, they had sheep. And she had a great big high spinning wheel, I think it must have been damn close to seven feet tall. And she'd turn that with her hand and spin yarn and then she'd knit german socks for the men.

SS: German socks?

AB: They were big high socks that would go clean up to the knee. Hell, you ain't seen german socks or feltboots neither one.

SS: What boots?

AB: Felt boots. They were heavy felt and by god they were about an inch thick. And they'd reach right up to the knee. I've seen 'em and I've wore 'em too.

SS: So you're saying that nobody cared if Joe was black or not. Everybody liked him anyway.

AB: You're damned right. No, <sup>and</sup> when they built the new Lutheran church, by god, old Joe put in his share to build that too. Well the first Christmas, they had a Christmas tree down there and the nigger <sup>kids</sup> all of us there and Joe and we all got a bag of candy and boy, them nigger kids were tickled. I guess maybe they never had a bag of candy. No <sup>when a</sup> fellow sitting thinks back, it pretnear makes a fella cry.

SS: Did your father have something to do with the first church being built?

AB: He was the one that got the plot for the church and he bagged quite a lot of money for it. And by god, the fella that had the place that the church was built on, he give 'em the timber and they logged the timber down to the mill, and Pete Jellaburg sawed it out for lumber and if they'd furnished the men he furnished a mill to saw out the lumber. Well, they got short of money and I and <sup>this</sup> old Martin Olson, we split the shingles for the north side of the church. Martin split 'em and I shaved 'em. For the north side of the church. And it was all volunteer work. And now, it's all being volunteer work, well there's a bunch of Californians coming in, by god, they even try to show us how to walk on the road.

SS: You don't think they're doing much for the country?

AB: No, you're damned right. This neighbor over here, he tried to fence in the road too, and just leave a little, the street ten feet wide. But by god, I seen to that the sheriff come out and had a pretty good long talk with him. So he had to move back his fences.

End of side A

Side B

SS: Do you remember Nils Lund? The miner. That foolish miner? Over on Boulder Creek.

AB: <sup>Yeah</sup> You betcha I remember him. Nils and his brother Martin.

SS: What was he like?

AB: Oh they were pretty heavy fellers. They were Swedes.

SS: I thought Nils was sort of a crazy guy.

AB: Yeah, that one of them was. Nils was kind of crazy. He wanted to go back to Sweden and he died at sea. And I guess he was buried right in the ocean. Because you know it took seventeen days to cross the ocean.

SS: What was it about Nils that was funny?

AB: Yeah, he wasn't all there. He always said there's <sup>bad nose</sup> North America.

SS: What?

AB: He meant there's crazy north America. This country here. No he didn't like it here at all. He was going back to Sweden.

SS: He said this country was crazy?

AB: Yeah.

SS: Did he ever tell you why?

AB: No. But he'd get out and work every summer, so he always had a little money so he could get along. He had a homestead over there, by the time they monkeyed with him, you know, over in Moscow and tried to put him in the asylum, and he never would <sup>want to</sup> go back to Moscow and prove up on it. So he sold the homestead for fifty dollars. And then he was going back to Sweden. You know, some of these people, the worst thing you can do is monkey with half crazy people. Because if you leave 'em alone, you can get along pretty good with 'em. But if you monkey with 'em you'll just make 'em that much worse.

SS: What was it about him that made people think he wasn't all there?

AB: Well, you know he wouldn't associate with anybody, about the only damned place would be he'd stop here once in a while. Because dad was one of these fellers you know, he could get along with anybody. If they wanted to say something, by god, dad would help 'em along.

SS: If they wanted to say something?

AB: Yeah, if they were talking, by god, dad would help 'em right along. And dad would have 'em a<sup>laughin'</sup> after a little bit.

SS: Your dad liked people?

AB: Oh yeah, dad could get along with anybody. And mother was the same way.

SS: I heard a story about this man that he said that he would mine where a tree pointed. He thought God was showing him where he should dig his holes in the ground.

AB: Oh yeah. Yeah, he believed in God alright. And that's a whole lot more than a lot of 'em do. And if you stop and think about it, there's some great power that handles this world too. It isn't the people.

SS: Why do you think that?

AB: Well, the people thinks they know it all, but you take and go out and you do something wrong. Well, you get kind of scared, don't ya? "So nobody don't catch me." Wel<sup>l</sup> by gosh, it's your heart that told you that you have done something wrong and it kind of scares you a little, don't it? No, by George, I fully believe there's some great overpower from somewhere. But there's a lot of people that don't think that.

SS: I was going to ask you if you remember Big Anderson. He was an old hermit. He lived by Anderson Crossing. Remember him?

AB: Yeah. We called him Big Anderson.

SS: What was he like?

AB: He was a pretty heavy sort of a man. And God, he called him the wild animal. That is, the devil, that was the wild animal and the man above.

SS: That was God?

AB: That was supposed to be God.

SS: Did he talk about religion?

AB: Oh, not too much. A little. But you know he<sup>had</sup> one of the homesteads, one of the nicest farms on Bear Ridge. And then he laid down<sup>there</sup> by the side of the creek and prospected and they dug holes in his side to find gold. And rented the place. That's something you know, them prospectors, by gosh, it seemed like it got to be digging in the ground all the time and don't make any difference how

good a place they go, got, they'll leave that lay alone and rent it to somebody else. It's just a kind of a damn fever.

SS: He didn't do very good at prospecting.

AB: No. Heck, them old prospectors, there was none of them that done anything. Now there was an old fellow ~~up~~ here <sup>his</sup> name was Pete Jackson, he laid up there and prospected for years and he had two of the best farms in the Genesee country and had them rented away. And he spent all the money he got down there on up there on those prospect holes.

SS: Where did he prospect?

AB: Up on Boulder Creek. Outside lots of time, if my eye <sup>s</sup> was so I could see I'd like to go up there and see what that old prospect looks like today where he was.

SS: Did you see it in the old days?

AB: Damned right I did. And it's right where they call it the JACKSON Butte right now.

SS: He didn't do very good either?

AB: Hell, I don't think he ever made a dollar out of that prospect. I think he spent every dollar he got off from the farm. Sometimes he had a little fellow by the name of Joe Emang to come up there and help him and that Joe Emang, he went back to the old country.

SS: Was he just placer mining or more than that?

AB: Hell, Christ, there was tunnels there hundred feet long. There's one tunnel right over across the creek here that was put in over eighty years ago, that tunnel is 127 feet long. And I've been to the bottom of it several times. Bears generally go in there and hibernate and mate during the winter.

SS: Do you know who dug the tunnel here?

AB: His name was Day. There was three, four of them Days. They was a Jay Day and a Ira Day and Mark Day.

SS: They live around here?

AB: Yeah, one of them had a farm right down here, and 'bout, Ira Day, he had a cabin out there and it wouldn't surprise me unless cabin still stands there and there's a logging road right over the tunnel now.



SS: Where is that tunnel from here?

AB: Just about straight south of here.

SS: How far?

AB: About three, four miles. But of course, there's no road across there, just wild country. Hell, the river is right down below it. Hell, I've caught lots of fish in there.

SS: Big ones?

AB: Well I've caught some pretty good. Hell, I've got some in there fourteen fifteen pounders. There was one spring I caught eleven salmon down there. And the smallest one was three pounds. From that to fifteen.

SS: Henry Benson told me he used to go fishing down there with you.

AB: Henry? yeah. Is Henry still alive?

SS: He sure is. He lives in Onaway.

AB: He's pretty fat isn't he?

SS: No, no, I wouldn't say he's fat. He's pretty old, he's in his eight<sup>y</sup> ies.

AB: Yes, he was born right up here.

SS: He told me he used to pal around with you.

AB: Oh yeah, oh yeah, we have hunted quite a little together too. I think the last time I and Henry hunted together, he jumped out a big buck that hogged us 256 pounds. And I sent Henry home with half of that deer. His brother was bronky on the railroads up here. George is dead, George Benson, and Nina, his oldest sister, she, I think she lives in Palouse.

SS: That's right. I saw her too. She was there with his house when I stopped by.

AB: Yeah.

SS: Didn't you haul logs for the Bovill Hotel when they were building it?

AB: Yes I hauled the logs up to the Benson sawmill, up to the Dallburg sawmill and then <sup>when</sup> we sawed the lumber up, we hauled the lumber to Bovill. And by god, mud came to the hubs of the wagons.

SS: What did Bovill look like then?

AB: He was a pretty...

SS: No, I mean the town.

<sup>Hell</sup>  
 AB: There was only one house out there. The old Warren house. And that old Warren cabin still stands there and that's over a hundred years old. There was three brother, <sup>living</sup> ~~Warren, the~~ <sup>sons,</sup> Frank and Ellis, oh, I can't think of the third one's name. I knew all of 'em.

SS: They were the first ones in that country.

AB: Yeah. They homesteaded up there then when Warren's come, he bought 'em out and he come from Texas. And he was a cowboy, and they shipped the cattle in from Texas to stock their ranch up there.

SS: Is this Bovill? Are you talking about Bovill? Or Warren?

AB: Bovill.

SS: Oh yeah.

AB: And he married a widow, she was the one that had the money and then when they get up here, they had twin girls. And I think one of 'em is living here down on the coast somewhere, maybe both of 'em.

SS: What kind of guy was Bovill, was he an aristocrat?

AB: Oh he was a pretty good sized man, dark complected, kind of long moustache. Yes, I've et many a dinner at Bovill's. I've hauled lumber up there. It was <sup>always</sup> the hired men that unload the lumber and we'd go to dinner.

SS: What was the hotel like?

AB: To begin with it was just a little log cabin, then they built a hotel up there and that got pretty good, butcher shop and hauled many a beef up there and sold to the fellow that run the butcher shop.

SS: He built the hotel out of the lumber that you brought up there?

AB: You bet we hauled the lumber up to that hotel. If I could see, and one thing I would like to see them girls again now. One of 'em was up here <sup>at</sup> Bovill four or five years ago visiting. I think she had a car wreck and had her leg hurt pretty bad. So I guess she's kind of a cripple.

SS: I think you're right.

AB: I know damn well I am.

SS: What was the place like before the lumber company came in?

AB: Oh it was timber all around it. And by god, it was a good fishing stream too. Hell, it was nothing to catch trouts that long. And the same way all the way up the river here. Shoot, the biggest catch on the creek down here, one hundred and eighty-six trout in one day.

SS: What did you think of Bovill?

AB: What did I think of him? By god, old Bovill was a damn nice man. And by god, when you brought a load of lumber up there, by god, you got the cash right now! You didn't have to wait for it. He paid for the hauling.

SS: Did you hear about the Agnes L<sup>in</sup>er killing?

AB: Yes I do and by god I can put my fingers on her graveyard too, on her grave too.

SS: What happened there?

AB: Oh that damned <sup>Jess Dillman</sup> I have an idea he got her into the tunnel and raped her and I suppose she put up a fight and then he just took and killed her. She's buried in the same lot that my neighbor, ~~Marta~~ Olson is buried on down here at the Lusson cemetery. Yes, I knew Agnes well enough, swung her quite a few times on the dancefloor.

SS: Was she a pretty girl?

AB: Yes, she was a nice girl.

SS: I wonder why he bothered her. Did he know her for a long time?

AB: Well, that goddamn Dillman outfit which was kind of an outlaw outfit anyway.

SS: After he killed her did he shoot himself too or what happened?

AB: Yeah he shot himself, and it wasn't his gun, neither, it was her brother's gun he used and there was only one shot left in the gun and he'd thought he'd kill himself and he didn't make it so he didn't die before next day.

SS: Did they drag him out of there?

AB: Yeah, they took him out and I guess they took him into Bovill to the hospital and he died there. And he's buried on Mt., Poor Man's graveyard in Moscow, right back of the main graveyard.

SS: He used five bullets before he got to himself?

AB: No there was only couple, three bullets in the gun, see. And he didn't have

anymore.

SS: I wonder if he thought he was going to get away with it?

AB: Well, see, he shot her and then he shot one, shot at the, at her brother but he missed him and then used the last one on himself and the gun was empty.

SS: I heard that when people got him they dragged him out of there, they didn't care if they killed him or not anymore.

AB: Well they didn't! Old man Dillman said, oh he get away with everything, he'll get out of that too, but he didn't. I knew his dad well. He was road boss here a good many years. I worked good many days for his dad.

SS: I hope he was a better guy than the son was.

AB: Oh yes.

SS: Did old man Dillman have a bear that he took around the country?

AB: Oh yeah, he used to trap bear all over. And then he'd get out and sell bear meat and if he could trade bear meat to some of the people around <sup>the country</sup> and get a dozen eggs, he wanted the soft boiled eggs, he'd sit down and eat a dozen of eggs 'stead of the meat. And he lived right down by...

Side C

AB: And I think I knew the girl too. Because we used to have a place right next to that schoolhouse, <sup>and</sup> pretnear all the schoolmams, they'd ride horseback coming to school in the morning and they'd leave the horse in our barn. Well this fellow, you know, the commissioner over at Moscow<sup>?</sup>

SS: Ingle. I think Jerry Ingle.

AB: Yeah, hell, I knew his mother well before she was married. Yes, I've swung her in a waltz a time or two, too.

SS: What did you hear about this teacher getting killed?

AB: Well, that's hard to say. You know there was, well, on that grave down there shoot, there were several girls that was killed down there. And there was one from California that disappeared that they never did find. Hell, them girls get killed and their throat cut. And they claimed it was some of them university students from Pullman that done it.

SS: That's over on the Big Bear grade going down towards Kendrick,

AB: No, it's on that other grade down there. Going down to the Clearwater. Hell, I've been down that grade too, two, three times.

SS: Where does the road go from to get to the Clearwater?

AB: Start on the other side of Pullman, and instead of coming to Moscow, we go the other way. Yes, I've been over that grade a couple, three times too.

SS: Didn't Sam Samovitch shoot a guy?

AB: Yes, and the other fellow tried to kill him with an axe first and he cut Sam's shoulder so it just hung and Sam had his gun loaded out and T.P. Jones had it and T.P. Jones brought the gun back. And Sam got the gun out and <sup>he</sup> says, "I'll shoot him once and he still keep a comin' I'll shoot him twice and he still keep a comin' I shoot him three times," but then he says, "he go sit down like a sober man." Hell, I knew Sam Samovitch just about as well as I knew my brother. The camp was right over here and he was over here and after he got so he could get around, he'd kick around in the evening and tie swatches for the boy and when <sup>they'd stop</sup> <sub>^</sub>. Hell, Sam Samovitch was a damn nice fella.

SS: How did that fight start?

AB: Well, Sam was the section foreman and he fired this fella, well, this fella says <sup>if</sup> <sub>^</sub> he can't do work, you can't neither and he was going to kill him with an axe. And that's how it started and that started right in the country road, where the railroad crossed the county road down here at Backer.

SS: Did Sam have the gun on him at the time?

AB: No. T.P. Jones had just brought the gun back and handed it to him.

SS: Did T.P. hand him the gun after he got axed or before?

AB: Before he killed him, well, you know, T.P. brought back the gun that morning after he went back to work, because it was quite a lot of Bohunk trouble at that time and pretnear all the bosses carried a gun. And T.P. didn't have one so he borrowed Sam's til he could get one of his own. And when he got one of his own he brought Sam's <sup>gun</sup> <sub>^</sub> back.

SS: Did Sam kill this guy?

AB: Oh yeah, Sam killed him alright. And I think that <sup>right</sup> <sub>^</sub> fella is buried up there in the Bowill cemetery.

SS: Why were they having trouble, why were the foremen carrying guns?

AB: Well hell, there was always some of them fellers coming around causing trouble in camp. And when they'd catch one of them fellows coming down and making trouble they'd run 'em out of the country. The camp was right over here and I've seen lot of that.

SS: Was <sup>that</sup> the IWW?

AB: Yeah, Iw and they called it 'I Want Work'. And others said 'I Won't Work'. They all spelled Iw's, see, it all spelt the same.

SS: Was it the IWW's that was causing the trouble?

AB: They were causing trouble. One of them bastards come along, you know and just head in the bunkhouse, <sup>and</sup> trouble on boys and damn they'd <sup>SEEK</sup> like every damn strike on boys and next morning there wouldn't be a man to go to work. That's the way it went.

SS: Did you ever hear that the IWW's were the ones that got better conditions? In the camp?

AB: Well, oh they got, I don't think they got any better food, <sup>but</sup> they got maybe a little better pay.

SS: Did the Potlatch lumber company start the town at Deary? Or did McGowan and Henry do it by themselves?

AB: Well, McGowan, Hugh McGowan I think bought that land from \_\_\_\_\_ and then of course, he got permission from the railroad company and the railroad company put in a depot and they surveyed the town.

SS: Did McGowan work for Potlatch?

AB: No, they kind of worked for themselves. Oh yeah, they had offices right here in Potlatch, in Deary. <sup>Yes</sup> I pointed out some of the government's corners for them too. I knew pretnear every government corner in this country. Because I done a lot of huntin' and every damn time I'd find a government corner, I'd pay a attention to it. And by god it was one thing, if I <sup>EVER</sup> went to a government corner, I could always go back. And I wouldn't need no compass, neither. You take the timber just as good as a compass. You look at a tree and by god, you can tell where north and south is.

SS: How?

AB: Well sir, you know, all the big limbs is on the south side of <sup>the</sup> tree and the bark is darker on the north side, or lighter on the north side of the tree than it is on the south side. And twelve o'clock at any time, the sun, <sup>if</sup> you can see it is straight south. There's a lot of people that don't know that. Hell if I ever was to a place, I could go back to it.

SS: Would you ever get lost in these woods?

AB: Not for very long. Unless it was a hell of a snow storm, that was a twisting the trees around so you couldn't see, and snow was blowing so you couldn't open your eyes, then I've been turned around, but if you sit down, if you get turned around and just pull your coat over your head and sit down awhile, by god, pretty soon the weather will turn right around and you'll come straight again. There's a lot of people that don't know that. By god, some people when they get good and lost, by god even if they get into their own house, they don't know their own home.

SS: Is that true?

AB: Damned right it's true, because I've seen it happen to my mother. When I brought her in she said, "What place is this?" And she was right at home.

SS: How had she gotten lost?

AB: Out picking huckleberries and got turned around, and a cloudy day, of course.

SS: She just didn't know which way she was going?

AB: No, she didn't have no idea where she was going. Yes and dad got lost one night, Saturday night right in the woods <sup>hed</sup> and he couldn't find his way out of the woodshed. Lots of things will happen.

SS: Did you find your mother when she was lost?

AB: You bet I did. I could track pretnear as good as a dog. And I had a dog that was a damn sight better, I put him on the track and by god, he found her. And I was right behind of him, too.

SS: How long was she lost for?

AB: Oh, just a couple hours.

SS: Did you give the dog some of her clothes to smell?

AB: Yes, I told the dog to go find her, and by god, he took right off. And by god,

I was right behind of him too. And those days I could travel pretty much like a racehorse. It was no trouble with me to take a thirty five <sup>pound</sup> blanket roll and after working all day and start from Genesee and walk in here next morning. A thirty mile hike.

SS: You'd just go all night?

AB: Yes.

SS: That must have been hard.

AB: It was and generally no service road and the dust always shod horses, the dust that deep in the road, every four or five miles you'd have to stop and take your shoes off and shake the dirt out of your shoes to be able to walk.

SS: So you'd go on foot all the way?

AB: You're damned right I'd <sup>walk...</sup> I know one time I started from down there at Genesee about five o'clock in the evening and I walked in here when the folks was <sup>~</sup> sittin' down to breakfast.

SS: When Potlatch came in here and started buying the timber, I heard they bought it very cheap.

AB: Well, hell, only timber they bought was the pine and they bought that for a dollar a thousand. And when they just counted the trees and them trees had to be sixteen inches through or bigger at the stump. Well all the fir and tamarack, they didn't survey that at all, and when they got the timber deed they got a deed for the timber, such and such a section, and fir and tamarack and white fir and spruce and tamarack, that was all a gift. They got that for nothing.

SS: So what kinds of trees did they count in the survey?

AB: Just yellow pine and white pine, black pine and all the rest of it wasn't counted at all. And then when they bought it, the state give 'em the timber deed, the state give 'em the rest of the timber and of course the farmers that had homesteads, just the same damn thing. The Potlatch, the Weyhausers, what it was called then, didn't buy, I don't think a more of the tenth of the timber then pay for it, <sup>the rest of</sup> it was all a gift.

SS: So when you were out with Bill Helmer, the only timber he cruised was the



white and yellow pine?

AB: Sure.

SS: That's all he counted.

AB: That's all they counted because, well, he was more to open up the lines and stake out the railroads for us to log, he wasn't cruising much, unless it was somebody that wanted to sell a piece of land, then he'd cruise it for him. And the Milwaukee the same way. And by god, the Milwaukee cruisers, they'd cruise it, and by god you could sell your timber right at home, and you'd get a check right at home and then, they do the rest of it.

SS: Was it a pretty good deal for the homesteaders, or did they get rooked?

AB: Oh hell, the homesteaders didn't get much out of it. Hell, it was the company getting all the drag out of it.

SS: All the what?

AB: It was the company that was gettin' all of the profit.

SS: Did you sell timber to them, your father?

AB: Yeah, father sold the timber on the place here, and then by god, it was ten years that it stood here that we couldn't do a damn thing ~~all this~~ on this forty he saved the black pine on that so he could cut out the black pine out and make wood.

SS: So that Potlatch didn't help the people so much as they helped themselves.

AB: They helped themselves a whole lot more than they helped the people. Of course they got so the people could get work alright in camps.

SS: Do you remember what it was like snowshoeing with Bill Helmer or snowshoeing in the winter?

AB: You're damn right I remember what it was like. And I walked a good many hundred miles on snowshoes.

SS: How did you do it?

AB: Well them snowshoes, well there was long ones, them was the trampers, but the bear paws, they were just kind of a three corner'd, you could walk and turn around on them, and that's what we always used in the woods. Hell, I had a set of snowshoes since those buildings went up and they burnt up. Hell, I

snowshoed a lot of 'em.

SS: Could you use the same trail over again?

AB: Oh yeah. Yes, used the same trail over and over. And then we had to ski, I used to ski a lot. Shit, it was nothing for me to make fifty and sixty foot jumps on a steep hillside. You see that mountain up there?

SS: Which direction?

AB: Cherry Butte. I've come down <sup>clean</sup> from the top of that, clean to the bottom on skis in early days. In early days, by god, when the snow got deep, we'd ski down here on the banks and kill a deer every once in awhile when we run short of something to eat.

SS: You mean you'd just camp out in the winter?

AB: No, we'd go down in the morning and come back at night.

SS: And kill a deer for dinner?

AB: Well, we'd generally <sup>kill a deer</sup> and then make a packsack out of the deer, come back at night, come home at night, I've carried quite a few deer on my back.

SS: Where was your lower place, where you wintered? ON the ridge.

AB: You know where the Steele schoolhouse used to be?

SS: I don't think so.

AB: Well, that Steele schoolhouse was on our place.

SS: Whereabouts would that be now?

AB: You know where Waha Lake is?

SS: Yes.

AB: Well, it'd be north and east of Waha Lake. You know where the Four Corners is down there and you know where that church is down there?

SS: I think I do, I'm not sure. That's where in there?

AB: Yeah, well there was two churches down there, the Lutheran and then there was the American church and it wasn't too, well you know where Ed Halsey lived?

SS: Yeah.

AB: Hell the Lutheran church I think was right at the corner of the place where Ed Halsey lived.

SS: So you weren't too far from his place?

AB: Yeah, but further north, a couple, three miles further north.

SS: Are you thinking of Atwater Lake?

AB: Yeah.

SS: Do you remember what instruments you used to survey with Bill Helmer?

AB: Just a compass.

Side D

SS: How long did you go to school, what grade did you go up to?

AB: Well sir, to tell the truth, the way that it is now, I don't think it'd be more than <sup>about</sup> the third grade now. Because, hell, a fella go to school, the best was two and three months. Well, what you learned one time you forgot to the next one. So what little I know, I've studied that myself.

SS: How old were you when you stopped going to school?

AB: OH, about fourteen, fifteen.

SS: What was the grass like that the cattle grazed on?

AB: Oh, it was just common pine grass, the same kind of a grass that it is now.

But those days, it wasn't wore to death, that damn grass would get that high.

SS: Maybe two feet.

AB: By god, those Indians kept it burnt off, there were places down here between the big timber that you could take a mowing machine and a team of horsees and mow grass in among the big timber. And rake it up. Now, by god, you can't walk in among the big timber.

SS: Are you sure the Indians burnt the grass here?

AB: Well, either the Indians or the lighting. It was nothing those days to have several lightening storms during the summer.

SS: But you think the Indians did it?

AB: Well, when they was up here, when they'd leave in the fall, they wasn't particular about the fire. Hell, I know they used to camp up here, when they'd leave, hell there'd always be smoke behind <sup>o.k.</sup> 'em.

SS: Do you think they burnt the country to make better grazing for their horses?

AB: Yes, and easier huntin'. Gettin' around. And you know, the Indians, the bucks, they didn't do anything, they'd go out and hunt. But the damn squaws, they'd

be the ones ~~that~~ have to pack in the meat and take care of the hides and make the mocasins and all of that, and dry the meat. That was just squaws work. The bucks wouldn't do that. And by god, when the whites started in coming in here, there's <sup>o</sup> damn good many half breeds and quarter breeds right around here now. Even some of my neighbors is <sup>got</sup> quite a lot of Indian blood in 'em.

Because, when she'd move in with a white man, she didn't have to work so hard because he'd bring the meat in and dress that. She wouldn't have to do that.

SS: So you say it was <sup>s</sup> easier for her to live with a white man.

AB: Yeah, hell, they, and mostly frenchmen that married squaws.

SS: I didn't know there were frenchmen in here.

AB: Oh yes, there were quite a few frenchmen in here. There's <sup>several</sup> of the neighbor women right here that's got Indian blood in 'em and quite a little too. And one of my friends is married to a full-blooded squaw. She's right around <sup>e</sup> ninty years old.

SS: Did those marriages work out pretty good? With an Indian and white?

AB: By god, they got along good. They got along a damn sight better than a lot of the whites did.

SS: So marriages didn't always work out in the old days either?

AB: Oh hell, well now you know Nina Benson? Her mother and father was always a fightin'. And whuppin' the kids. Oh it would be kind of fun to if a fellow could hear and see to see Nina again.

SS: How come you never got married?

AB: Too damn many people had too many things to say.

SS: What do you mean?

AB: To damn many people <sup>that</sup> had too damn many lies to tell. They knew a lot of things that they didn't know a damn thing about. And you know how that is? A lot people's got to tell something about somebody that they don't know a damn thing about and it be just a great big long lie.

SS: I'm not sure I know why that means you didn't get married. Did <sup>you into it?</sup> people try to push,

AB: No, they just told the girls I went with too damn many lies. I don't think I would have had very much trouble to get Nina Benson to stay right here neither.

SS: Well there's lots of old timers that are bachelors.

AB: Oh, there was quite a few.

SS: When you say the whites ruined the country and the Indians took good care of it, what do you mean?

AB: Well, the whites come in here and they ruined all of the timber and all the berries and all the fishing. And if that ain't ruinin', I'd like to know what was. And you know, as far as that go, this country, all of the United States, there isn't a country at all, just all kinds of a nation moved in, all kinds of people, there isn't one nation at all. Just a mixed up bunch. And you know that.

SS: Did you ever think about leaving this area? And going someplace else?

AB: No, because there has been too damn many that want to get me out of here and they're still bothering their heads about me staying here.

SS: I was thinking about when you were a young man. When you were twenty or thirty.

AB: Well, mother was alive and I agreed with dad that I'd see mother through and I did. I didn't do like a lot of the other fellows, go and marry a young girl and bring her into live with your mother. That's entirely wrong. But there were lots of 'em that done that and they always got a little trouble in the family too.

SS: Why? Because the girl and mother don't get along?

AB: Maybe a lot of the times they don't. Now the mother, be living on what was the mother's farm, see. Well she thinks she's got more right than the young woman. Well, they kind of get in an argument over it. And you know, that isn't fair. That isn't fair to bring a young woman in to live <sup>with</sup> <sub>A</sub> an old mother-in-law. I wouldn't think about it. And that's why I stayed single too.

SS: What year did your mother die?

AB: 1928. Dad died in 1911.

SS: When you had the cattle on the range, did they have brands then?

AB: No it was just a farmers brand.

SS: Did they have a brand on them?

AB: Yeah. Hooker's cattle was AH. And Ivor Bjerke's was B. And I headed the cattle

for 'em three years and I lost only one head, he might have fell into a prospects hole, so I could prove for that one.

SS: Did some people have trouble with rustlers in those days?

AB: Oh, I guess there was some cattle butchers alright but I didn't have any trouble. Because a lot of 'em, you know wouldn't have herders with 'em ~~but~~ I was right with the cattle all of the time. And all knew I had a damn good dog that could track.

SS: And they probably knew you had a good gun too.

AB: Yeah, and a good many of 'em knew I could use it. I was good enough to stand up sixty, seventy feet and shoot flash when they'd land on the biggest .

SS: That's awful good, Arthur. How old did the cattle get before you would ship them to market?

AB: Well they'd take 'em down on the place, see, they had home places and keep 'em there and then they'd sell 'em at home there, Hooker, and Weeden, they shipped in a bunch from Montana and there was two cattle loads in that bunch. I got the promise to kill them. So I shot them down there on the ridge.

SS: <sup>t</sup>Butchered 'em too?

AB: Yeah. When they was going to butcher 'em, they had me go up and shoot 'em. I had a damn good horse, I could ride pretty close to 'em I'd ride out horseback and then I'd slide off'n the horse and lean my gun over the saddle and kill the cattle that was out in the field.

SS: How close would you get to them?

AB: Oh, 100,150 feet. That was nothing for me.

SS: Where did you aim for?

AB: Generally right side of the head, of the forehead. Whichever come the handiest. Oh hell, I wouldn't shoot through the body. That would ruin too much meat. Those days you had to be kind of careful too. Ingles down there, they were going to butcher a wild one they had, by god, I guess they shot about thirty times, they shot at that damn thing and they couldn't get it and finally I killed it for 'em. I was a pretty good shot on the run, it didn't make much difference whether a deer stood or run, I could generally stop him.

SS: Would they cut the throat right away?

AB: They? Hell, I did. They were a couple of miles behind and that poor damn beef was just bleedin' all over.

SS: You say that Green saved the bank in Troy during the depression? Frank Green.

AB: Well he happened to have enough money on hand, you know, and in other banks. So he could take over. So he really took over the bank in Troy. And it wouldn't surprise me <sup>any</sup> if there was some of Green's money in that bank now.

SS: Was that depression anywhere near as bad as the one in 1893?

AB: Yeah, and later you know, there's been a couple depressions. There was <sup>one</sup> in 1908 too.

SS: How much money did it take to file on a homestead?

AB: I think it was six dollars. And about ten to prove up.

SS: And the people couldn't afford that much money?

AB: Hell, there wasn't that much, hardly that much money in the county. What in hell would you do if you had to go out and work for a livin' and only get fifty and seventy five cents a day, and then work fifteen and sixteen hours a day to get that fifty cents? I've worked many a day for less than a dollar a day. And worked damned hard too.

SS: I don't see how people could get by on that little money.

AB: <sup>Well</sup> If they happened to have a cow or two and a few chickens, they would. That was generally their <sup>life</sup>hood. Eggs and bread. And maybe after they got a cow, a little milk to drink. And then they'd cook mush. Milk and water together and a little salt, and use flour in it and cook it and make a stiff mush out of it. That was generally their supper. No, I wish some of these smart alecks that <sup>have</sup> come in here now, trying to show the old timers how to walk the trails and have to put in a winter and <sup>the</sup> out of <sup>a</sup> summer, same condition and maybe they wouldn't be so goddamned <sup>fast</sup>.

SS: Do you think this county <sup>has</sup> changed a lot when Potlatch came in?

AB: Oh yeah, it changed so it got a little work for the people and they could get out and work and get a little work and then it got so they could cut a little wood and ship out because the Genesee country didn't have any timber you know

and Moscow and that way, they'd buy wood.

SS: Has it changed more now than it did when Potlatch came in? Is this more of a change than that was?

AB: Oh yeah. Well it got so, that it wasn't so much of a starvation. Because all those fellows that was able to work could get out and work in the camps like I have, when the camp was over here. Hell, I sawed logs and the snow was deep, and the boss over there said, "Oh hell," he says, "you can't saw logs alone." I said, "By god, I can try." And after a few days he found out that I made more money than any two men in camp. Because they'd have to shovel that deep snow while <sup>I</sup> <sub>^</sub> <sup>cut</sup> right up on the log and sawed down and saw the logs up.

End of side D

Side E

AB: ...sawed and never paid much attention to it. Just let him go <sup>in</sup> <sub>^</sub> through one ear and out through the other one. And mostly all of 'em were Swedish story, because there was more Swedes than anything else in this country.

SS: Do you remember the kinds of stories they used to tell, these lies?

AB: Oh, I can't say that I paid too much attention to 'em.

SS: Do you have any ways of predicting the weather? Any signs that you use?

AB: No, not anything else <sup>then when</sup> <sub>^</sub> the stars would fall and one thing another, ... then you could pretnear guess, and then, sun. dogs, you could pretnear tell it was a change in the weather, alright.

SS: What's a sundog?

AB: Well, it'd be a long streak on the side of the sun. You could see them every once in a while. When it was bad weather. And you could tell <sup>pretty well</sup> <sub>^</sub> when the geese and the ducks would go over too, whether it was going to be a hard or light winter. If they'd come early in the fall, and go south, you could bet on a hard winter. But if they'd wait late, you'd have a light winter.

SS: Did you have anyway of knowing when spring was going to come?

AB: Well, you know, a fellow kind of looked quite a little, <sup>it was</sup> <sub>^</sub> whether <sub>^</sub> light or the dark of the moon, too. Went by the moon quite a little. And the same way with planting grain. Plant your grain in the light of the moon, while the sign is



way up in the body. And if you want to cut a hog or a pig, wait til the sign get down to <sup>where it's</sup> the bottom of the foot and they wouldn't bleed. And like wheat and oats, plant that in the light of the moon and spuds, plant them in the dark of the moon. Spuds and rutabagas and turnips and carrots and stuff like that, plant them in the dark of the moon.

SS: Why is that?

AB: Well, it seems like the signs and the weather has got a whole lot to do. There's a lot of people that don't believe in the signs, but those two brothers down here, I've thrashed for them for years and by god, you couldn't change them and they always had the best grain of any of the people in the country. So it had something to do with it. And by god, the knew it!

SS: Did your father plant by signs too?

AB: No, father didn't go much by signs.

SS: These fellas did everything by signs?

AB: Oh, yeah. Some of 'em do. Not like Tom up here, just, "No," he says, "the moon ain't got nothing to do with it." By George, the moon and the sun has got the whole thing to do with it. And by gosh, you know, even raisin' cattle and makes a hell of a little difference what time of the day you breed that cow, too. Whether you want a bull calf or a heifer calf. People don't believe that, but by gosh, that's truth because I've tried that several times.

SS: Which time of the day do you use?

AB: Morning for a heifer and evening for a bull calf.

SS: Are there harvest signs too?

AB: Yeah. ~~Now~~ here, the McKinleys, they all of them, they wanted a girl in the family. And by god, every child that's been born has been a boy. By god, I think it's just the time they top them women up. Whether it was in the morning or in the evening.

SS: Have you heard about ghosts?

AB: No.

SS: I thought maybe there might be signs for death too.

AB: Well, it could be. But I don't know. Well, you know, late years, I paid any

attention to anything, so I've forgot pretnear everything I paid attention to when I was young.

SS: Well, it seems to me you still remember a lot.

AB: ...was able to do any good for the kids, I'm glad of that, because the kids has always been my friends. Now Ronnie Halsey, he's got a little girl and a boy, they come down and visit with me about every other day. And boy, that little boy is a real talking machine. And I pretnear always manage to have a piece of candy or something for him.

End of tape.