

KENNETH WILKINS

Avon; b. 1902

farmer

2.5 hours

(with Dorothy McIntyre Wilkins -Avon;b. 1906)

minute page

Side A

- 01 Sam Samovitch. He kills a man who nearly severs his arm. Working on Sam's section crew. Playing a regular joke on Sam. Hunting bee trees on the job. Sam was a kind man, and easy on his crew. He pretended his arm wouldn't work, and his job was insured. Methods of locating bee trees and getting the honey.
- 13 Working in lumber camps, 1918. Early conditions - bedbugs. Sharing hot lunch with the yellowjackets. A man with lice. Walking home on the weekend from camp. The IWWs began to improve conditions; all men had to join the 4-Ls, the company union.
- 26 How grandfather homesteaded in the Avon area - the first settler, 1884. Openness of the land, because Indians kept it burnt off; not much game because there was little brush.

Side B

- 02 First years of homesteading. Harvesting at Colfax.
- 07 Billie Bowers rides over 125 miles to help his sick daughter. Canning wild strawberries. Grandfather didn't know what to do with money when he earned it. (A joke on Mrs. Wilkins.) Billie Bowers waited on deertrail till daylight so he could resume tracking deer. School arranged around field work. Living on "fried snowballs and boiled rabbit tracks."
- 16 Hauling wood to Troy - two days' work for \$1.50. Everyone wanted to haul hay to Troy for 50¢ a ton. Importance of Troy once railroad came. Building up farms - cattle and hay main crops, sold to Potlatch once their railroad came.

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Side B (continued)

23 Town of Avon was major town in the area. It moved northwest one mile when railroad came through. The station was named Vassar. Avon school.

Side C

00 Lack of time for teacher to spend with children; but big girls helped. Scandinavians were especially hard working. Joke about farming around stumps. Flailing grain on the barn floor, to feed to the stock.

05 Joe Wells said the Swedes were blacks inside out, and that banker Harsh and he were the only white men around. Joe and Cougar Jack take over Troy on a binge; he says Marshall Hays should know better then try to shoot him in the dark. Their acceptance. Mary Wells shows kids her "white" skin. Cougar Jack was a huge man; how he got his name.

14 Mining Mica on Mica Mountain. Muscovite was the only successful mine, employing 25 men. The first mining was open pit, and yielded the best mica. Market for isinglass and axle grease.

21 Get-togethers in the schoolhouse, dances in the homes. Depression brought back pioneer time - no money, need to furnish own amusement. Nowadays you go to town if you want to see your neighbor. Everyone had plenty to eat in the depression, but prices for produce were extremely low. Trading beans for pigs. Travelling in winter; snow lasted because the timber meant no wind. People moved into the country then because it was cheaper to live.

Side D

01 Coming of Potlatch meant big change in the country. Need for many men meant jobs for local people. Taking the train. Potlatch bought timber almost for nothing, and hired men to "homestead" for them.

minute page

Side D (continued)

- 06 Cattle business for small farmers. Open summer range was free for everyone. Rail fences.
- 11 Lumberjacks blew their money, but local men saved it. People knew they were being taken by Potlatch.
- 17 Arthur Bjerke was the best shot in the country. Once he shot a cow, thinking it was an elk.
- 20 He began to farm in 1928 as a result of his health problem near Spokane. How he and his wife met. Their shivaree had dynamite.
- 27 Continuity of Avon community today. Thanksgiving and Decoration Day celebrations of today.

Side E

- 00 A fatal accident - a truck overturns in the Wilkins' pond. Quick action by Ken saves two of the three men. Near accident the following day. The accident probably caused by exhaust fumes.
- 14 Grandfather and neighbor debate where survey line will be. Preference for open meadow land among first settlers.
- 18 Mary Wells cooked for father when he logged.
- 20 Uncle and friend dress up as women to fool Troy's ladies' man.
- 22 Killing of woman by her husband at Avon, and his suicide. Earlier he had threatened to kill her friends who came to stay and protect her.

(27 minutes)

with Sam Schrager
June 23, 1975