

Wesley Taal

5/02/02, tape 1, side 1

WT: ...Taal.

JT: And what year were you born?

WT: 1912

JT: Half month, 14th of ...

WT: 16.

JT: 16. You thought that you were born up at the ranch up on the Grande Ronde River.

WT: That's so.

JT: You said as you got four years old you moved into Hilgard, is that right?

WT: That's true.

JT: Your older brothers and sisters went to the school at Hilgard.

WT: That's true.

JT: How long did you live at Hilgard?

WT: I was pretty young, John, I just don't know.

JT: When you moved from Hilgard, did you move in La Grande?

WT: No, we moved to the ranch out there.

JT: Up to the ranch. As you were growing up at the ranch...

WT: That's Gear Taal now.

JT: That's Gear Taal up out of the canyon?

WT: Right.

JT: Gear Taal was your grandfather?

WT: No, my uncle.

JT: Your uncle. Your grandfather was? What was his name?

WT: Walanda was my grandma's name, but I don't know what the old feller's name was.

JT: He came here in the...with the Cases? Do you know about what year?

WT: It must have been in 1856 over there at the Rynerson ranch. The Rynersons and the Cases and the Taals and the Rysdams all come out here. Where it made all the relation throughout the valley. There were about thirteen women in the Rysdam family and the Cases and all them that's where they came in.

JT: And they all married these different families?

WT: Yea. Blocklins, VanBlocklins and A__.

JT: When you started to school you started to school at Greenwood School?

WT: No, I started to school at...

JT: Fruitdale?

WT: Fruitdale school. That's when I ran the pitchfork in my knee. I only got to go half a year 'cause we had to walk to school. That lane up through the Brood's was all drifted full so us kids walked down to school. Of course when I got that I couldn't hike through the deep snow so I missed the first year of school. Then I went back and went to school the next year. Then in '24 we moved down on 1906 Spruce. My dad worked and helped get that mill to going with gravel there in the yard or one thing another. In '25 I think that mill was built.

JT: Mt. Emily Mill?

WT: Yes. I'm sure that's the way it was. Then after that my dad he worked here...I probably went to the second grade. We lived there about a year, maybe a little better. Then we moved over here to 2414 Second. That's where the pool was.

JT: The Crystal Plunge swimming pool was built later.

WT: That's true. He got to working the mill and he worked in the mill. I think in '28 then we moved back to the ranch. So he didn't work anymore at the mill. Then me, I come to town and I went to school at Riveria and I stayed with my aunt on 2005 Second. That's probably where the Corner Cupboard was. I stayed there until I got out of the eighth grade. I don't think its anybody's business what __ [laugh]

JT: When you go back to the ranch you used to walk up to the ranch. Oftentimes follow the railroad?

WT: Yea, Harold Helry and I onetime we come to town and he had his horses up here on __. Him an I we decided we'd go up there and corral them and catch them and then we'd ride them up the ranch. We got up there and they run over the top of us and we couldn't corral them. So we walked back to town and then we walked to the ranch another fourteen miles. We got up there to Hilgard with a __. I said to Harold, "Which way we going? We going the track or we going the road?" He said, "Let's go on the track. I've never been up it." So I said okay. Just started up the track and there went Tony Vey up the river. We'd had a ride there. That was quite a trip walking tie to tie, every third tie or whatever.

JT: When you were a young boy to told me stories of when you fished along the Grande Ronde River and things that you did there.

WT: Yea, I used to fish the Grande Ronde in back of the ranch. Down through there we used to catch quite a few fish. Then, , oh heck, there was a lot of things happening.

JT: Was Jap camp there?

WT: No the Jap camp wasn't there until...I think that Jap camp was been put in in about '30. That's when Mt. Emily moved from up Five Point Creek. The logging in there. Then they moved and they went up McCoy Creek.

JT: And the Japanese were the track workers.

WT: They were the track workers.

JT: So that's where the word Jap Camp came from, from workers on the Mt. Emily Railroad.

WT: That's true. They worked the lower end and the Greek fellers worked the upper end.

JT: That was Gus Tsiatsos and his crew?

WT: Gus Tsiatsos and his crew. They worked that way. I used to work on Section First when I went there. I then finally got up in the woods and up on Baldy Mountain where the experimental range is. Me and... Steve Karns and I slashed the road up up the canyon clear to Baldy Tower to build a road in. That was right down to creek. It was steep, awful steep.

JT: You were about how old then?

WT: I was about seventeen.

JT: Seventeen was when you said you moved up to Mt. Emily camp?

WT: That's when I started to work up there. See, I had three brothers working there, too. I started in there when I was seventeen. I'd been eighteen in the fall.

JT: That was Winnie and Glen and...

WT: Lester.

JT: And Lester.

WT: I worked there slashed that road up and then finally, by golly, they had to have a hooker so they put me on hook man unloading rig.

JT: Tell us about the wintertime up there in the bunkhouse when the frost would freeze on the nails.

WT: We used to have a camp at the mouth of Bear Creek on Meadow Brook, where Bear Creek went into Meadow Brook. We got done logging in there and they moved us up into the experimental range where the cow camp people now. Have right up main Bear Creek and it was right in the fork where Little Bear Creek comes down. We worked there and it was about three weeks 26° below zero. That's when I had a hell of a time getting a bedmate.

JT: The frost was actually about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch on the nails.

WT: My bed was froze right to the wall. It was cold. We had them old truck...we didn't have heaters or anything like that. You had your flaps on and innerliners and mittens. We hauled logs down there to that landing and we was unloading by hand.

JT: They said that it was clear and cold that you could hear the mill whistle from La Grande up...

WT: Yea, that's after we was into the main camp down there were we lived after Ilene and I got married. You could hear it from the Roland Toms' place. To come in his lane. That was pretty cold. That winter it run up around 35°, 40°, 45°.

JT: How old were you when you and Ilene were married?

WT: I was twenty-one.

JT: Twenty-one. So you worked up there doing different jobs in the woods for that four years.

WT: When her and I got married I was hauling logs down out of Marley Creek. That comes right into the old camp. I run truck...drove truck through then. It went on and went on. They shut one...I come from Cougar camp down there. Then I went to hauling in there. They didn't have but a few trucks running so they put me hooking in Marley Creek. All the logs laying there was just like a millpond. ___ [laughs] Then we hooked that all out. Then after we got out of Marley Creek we got up on top and some of those other companies back there I started hauling logs again. Dal_ and I did.

JT: When you were bringing the logs out there they didn't have any defrosters, tell us about that.

WT: They didn't have a defroster, one, they didn't have a heater. You'd take a piece of limb on those Fords and life the hood up and put it under there and close it down. That's all you got or you'd run with your head out.

JT: Just a little spot coming off some of those logging roads.

WT: That's true. It gives a little pull like that. Always was quite a time. We worked there in Marley Creek and we got that pretty well all logged out and we went back up into what they called Cougar camp. I was at the head of Ray Creek and I

drove into Meadow Brook. Now that's in the experimental lot. We hauled lots out of there. I think the experimental plot...I've been over a bit of that. Logged in it and hauled logs out of there.

JT: You say about when you and Ilene were married when you took over her father's house up in camp.

WT: Yea, her folks lived there and when we got married the old feller said, "You stay off the radio and the washing machine." And I give him fifty bucks and away he went. We went to keep them house.

JT: You lived in that house how many years?

WT: I lived in there until '55. So that was '37 we got married. So it was up until '55 and then we moved to town. I moved in here.

JT: Then you drove truck and then as your jobs progressed what happened to you start working on the railroad?

WT: That was in the camp. The hoister left and they had kind of short on crew so they pulled me off the logging truck and I went hooking on the train. Then one year I went back driving logging truck. Then in '46...I was running a new '46, 1946 International truck without a lynch. I run that for one year then I went back on the train again. I went to hooking. Then in about '47 or '8 I landed up running the steam rig and then I run it till '55.

JT: When you working on the train you said that was "jippo." Could you explain what a gyppo is for the people that don't know?

WT: A gyppo is you load by the thousand feet, so many thousand feet. Then cars we loaded twenty-one in the junction every time we went over and loaded. They'd run all the way from eight to eight and a half to the car. That's quite a bit of...you figure eight times twenty-one and there'd be 160,000, maybe 175,000 on them cords, them log cords. We loaded that up. We'd drain the jammer and one thing or another and we'd put it in the string. Then I'd go firing on the railroad. I fired with Beezy. He was the engineer.

JT: Harold Beezy.

WT: We went that way till we got up until they started pulling the steel. Then we went over the top and we started pulling that steel up from Camas Creek, back into camp and I stayed with them until we got down into Ronald Thomas's meadow and that was on McCoy and Meadow Brook.

JT: When you'd bring the logs down on the train you'd bring them down there to Hilgard where you'd park the cars and then they were taken on the Union Pacific and brought into town or shipped wherever they wanted to.

WT: Yes. Then when we'd go down there and we'd take a loads in we had three tracks so we'd run around the empties and grab onto them and we'd head back to camp.

JT: Get more logs.

WT: No. Then a lot of times we used to slip, when the train wasn't in, we'd slip down around. We'd get down there below the Red Bridge Park. We'd run down around the crew there and see if the Union Pacific was coming in. If it didn't we went right down to Five Point. We parked the engine there and walked down to the...__ ankle and catch you. [laughs]

JT: But there was a nice little service station.

WT: Yes there was. A nice little service station. We'd stay there. We had two way radio on that engine. We used to call we'd get Morehead. Now Morehead lived near Cove. Then he moved back and moved up here on 'L' about where Dr. Fredericks lived. Arnold Gerber worked in there, lived there too. So that's the way she was.

JT: During the Depression times when they weren't logging too much Bruce Morehead kind of kept the camp together, didn't he?

WT: When we was laid off in the spring we drew fifteen dollars a week in unemployment. At that time its awful slow. Sometimes you'd sign up for about three months before you got a check. See Ilene and I got married that fall. I was off when we got married in November and I was off until about May or June. I was off quite a long time. I had a sixty-five dollar store bill. Of course we had deer and elk.

JT: Now this store bill that you say, that was one to the company

WT: Promissory they called it.

JT: And then the company advanced you so much credit until you went back to work?

WT: Yea, you could go in there and do that and some of them boys went in there and they worked the whole year and just barely got out of debt. A lot of them buy clothes and stuff like that through there. We just bought food. We had...where we lived there in camp on Marley we had a root house. We got cabbage and carrots and parsnips and potatoes. We had all that stuff in there so the only thing that we really had to get was milk and Ilene made her own homemade bread. She used to make it. She can't anymore. That's the way things went.

JT: But in all it was a good life, do you feel?

WT: It was. It was a pretty darn good life. The way it was when you was a truck driver you had to drive everyday the trucks run. You couldn't be a-laying off. You just pretty near have to go to make a go of it. When they lay off Bruce we went in on a Little Dark Canyon we hand piled that a hundred percent in there. The trees that was fell, all the limbs and the tops that left we hand-piled them and that whole sale. When then went in and burned it it burned up just as clean as a pin. Cause it's just like you stacking up hay in a shock. It's just nice. For example, do you see how they cleaned up at Philip's Reservoir?

JT: Yes.

WT: It can be done.

JT: It takes a lot of hand work in order to get that done.

WT: John, if they let these timber sales out with a hundred percent clean up they would not have the mess they got in the brush now. They pile them with Cats, dozers and brush rakes and they had more dirt in there than they had brush. They okayed it. Now who's fault was it? The people who let the sale out? If they would have said you got to be a hundred percent clean up when you get done.

JT: When you were running on the train you often had a chance to shoot a buck did you ever shoot an elk from the train?

WT: I tried one time coming out of Camas Creek. We was coming out of there with a load and we wasn't traveling very fast. There was a spike bull running along the side of the road. I had the old engine set right on. She was right up to pop and I had both injectors wide open. I had my gun behind the door. I went right out the

on the head end of the engine. I thought, "By golly, I'll go get him!" He was running right along the side of me, you know. When I stepped off and got myself gathered up out there the bull crossed the track and the engine and cars was in the way. [laughs] That slowed that up.

JT: You did get several deer that way.

WT: I got a lot of deer that way. Coming down Bear Creek we'd be coming down there and the old logs was flopping back and forth. It looked like you'd jumping over one another from down that rough track. Deer would get up there and they got down like that. I'd just step off and step right up on the hill and they'd be looking down and I'd get my buck. The train crew would stop. I'd gut him out and grab a hold of him and drag him down and throw him on one of the log cars and went to camp with it.

JT: What do you think one of the most dangerous jobs in the logging was?

WT: On that there?

JT: Uh huh.

WT: Them decked logs that we had. Them was put in in the fall of the year and a lot of time it was muddy weather. Then they was put up on decks and they froze. They froze together. The snow and stuff leaked down in. We'd break them decks down. John, you couldn't see nothing. We looked like niggers when we come in at night. All that dust when that dirt dried. Then when those logs broke down and we was hooking them out the tops of them decks the logs was froze together and they'd be out just about like a porch. When them logs come down they come down kabang. They had an old Swede, Leif Erik, he was hard of hearing and he couldn't here nothing without a hearing aid. He used to slip in there. I worked in there for that whole spring. We was loading them out and he'd slip up in there with a half a stick of dynamite. Man, you tied up in a knot! You wouldn't see him. He'd pry them up in there and then stick them up in one of those places on then end of the deck. He'd jump down off there, he had a few minutes a long. Boom! Down they would come. When he wasn't up close with feet out like that the hoist would get a hold of a big log and he'd swing it across the card, throw her right up into that deck. Man, when they come down they clear over. We'd have to go in there and get our hook ropes and stuff and drag them out. Then we'd start loading again.

JT: One of the other dangerous jobs, you did a little bit of it, was hooking, wasn't it?

WT: That's a dangerous one right there. You had to run back. When those decks started breaking you wanted to get back through them. But if you'd run through the cars all them logs went "Wham, wham, wham" down there. They'd cut you right in two. That was pretty dangerous. When we logged, like I told you, that Baldy Mountain I hooked in there and I was pretty young. I was about eighteen then. It was all team logs. They didn't have Cats running. Didn't have no skidding Cats. They must have had ten, twelve, fourteen teams running. They skidded them logs and it was steep right down to the bottom. They skidded them logs in and they were all pretty much live rolls. You know what I'm talking about? They laid right there. They had chunks under them, but when you pulled that out you can image what happened when it went down into lower roll.

JT: You've told me that sometimes the barns up at the Mt. Emily camp with all the horses in there it looked like they were on fire with the steam in the wintertime.

WT: Yea, the steam in there, the heat from them.

JT: When did they quit using the horses and start using Cats?

WT: They started that in about...I would say they started that in about '34, '35. '36. After that. It must have been about '38 that they done that, maybe a little later. 'Cause Ilene and I was living there and of course her dad he drove skidding Cats. It was just about that time. About 1938 I think they started using them Cats. They had forty. That's what the number of them was, forty Caterpillars. They run them and then they finally got some sixes in. Then they kept getting a little bigger. Now they had a little RD6 and two or three 40's. That's what these skidders and logging.

JT: When did they come in with power saws?

WT: That was [pause] I was say in about '38, '39. It was more than that. It must have been more than that. I went out and cut logs and they didn't have power saws then.

JT: They did use some buck saws didn't they? What do they call those saws?

WT: Electric saws?

JT: Uh huh.

WT: We had electric saws. They had these little Caterpillars and on the running board they had a generator on it. On one side and they had a regular saddle. You could set that up in them. Then they'd go in and they'd fall them trees. That power saw, that electric saw run a gash about like that cutting in. You'd cut in above it. You'd take a polask and you'd get in there and that knocked that chip out. You couldn't put trees the opposite direction they wanted to fall. You had to fall them the way they wanted to go. You might vary a little bit right or a little bit left. You might vary like that when you'd fall them. It got to the point where you got on steep ground and you'd fall them straight up and down the hill. When they went down they broke an awful lot that was up. They run them for quite a little while and then they finally quit that and they put the power saws out. Monkey Ward and McCullin and I don't know what all that was on there. They started them...a lot of log cutters said they could took an old crosscut saw and knock the breakers off on one side and beat them all the heck. [laughs] Especially when they wouldn't start! Then when they got them going they worked for the thousand. They got so much a thousand for cutting. Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, maybe twenty thousand a day was a pretty good days work for a gang.

JT: How much, when you first started working, did they pay you about?

WT: I went to work there for thirty-four cents and hour to start with. Then I went to hooking...when I went to hooking on the loading rig I think I got fifty cents. The truck drivers were two-and-a-half cents over that. Where I got to learn to drive truck...I was working right in a bowl where you piped that Camel Springs up to the experimental range, right down in that horse pasture and all along Meadow Brook. I went to work in there and I was hooking. The truck drivers would come up. They'd hook one end and I hooked the other and I stayed there. Them guys got to feeling sorry for me, I was just a young punk, so they'd say, "Hop up around and take my truck and go to town with it." So I'd take a load down and

unload it and come back up. That would make a complete round, see. Maybe Winnie would probably trade off with me. I'd take his truck and I'd go down and it went on like that.

JT: Winnie was your oldest brother? No, he was the middle brother?

WT: He was the next to the oldest.

JT: Lester was the oldest, then Winnie.

WT: He was running bulldozer. [bell ring...tape stopped...end tape]

5/02/02, tape 1, side 2

WT: ...started them power saws. The boys started the power. And they cooked through a log one. In the meantime, when I told you they had to fall them the way they wanted to go with them electric saws. Genre of the gap about like that.

JT: About an inch.

WT: Okay. If you put a wedge in there you couldn't put a long one. A thin one. You put one in there. You'd hit it and the sucker would bounce right back out. You know what I'm talking about?

JT: I understand that.

WT: That's why they couldn't wedge them. Anyway, they finally got them power saws to going. Hell, them guys would go out there and run in thirty, thirty-five, forty thousand by noon with them saws, see. Finally they started cutting them. They had to. Hell, they'd go out there and work until I would say about noon and come in. Had their money made.

JT: A day's work.

WT: So they just run themselves out of a job by doing it.

JT: At Mt. Emily camp it was at a different location there for a while, wasn't it? And then they moved it?

WT: The headquarters' camp?

JT: Uh huh.

WT: It was over above Roland Thomas' meadow on McCoy. They moved it in there. Then they moved it out of there and they moved it around on Meadowbrook where it is...Campbell County is.

JT: Yea, Campbell County is. And you lived in the same house all those years?

WT: I got married in '37 and I lived there until '55. Then I started running bulldozer.

JT: The reason that that's when they quit running the railroad, wasn't it?

WT: Yea, they pulled the steel.

JT: Ilene and your son Jerry came into La Grande and you came in.

WT: They came in and they stayed up there...I can't think of that guys name. A little short feller...Hughes? Hughes ring a bell?

JT: I can't remember, Wesley.

WT: Anyway, we moved into his apartment. It was up on the hill up there where Arnold Gerber lives. Up in there. I couldn't tell you the street number. Ilene stayed there and I was running the loader. I would go up and I'd eat in the cookhouse in the evening. I'd go back and I'd make my lunch and one thing or another and then I'd go on the train the next morning. On weekends she'd come

up to camp. So that's the way it went for a while. It went all the time I was running the loader until we got her all buttoned up by '55 and then they pulled the steel. I worked on that I imagine about a month because it was quite a bit of steel over the hill and a lot of spurs in there, you know. This old guy, he was from...I don't know where he was...anyway, he kept a-worrying about those spurs in camp. Little short spurs here and there for a water tank. Then there was one in for the shop and a runaround track and kind of a Y and all that stuff there in camp. He got to worrying about that. I said, "Hell, don't worry about it. We'll get in there one of these evenings after work. We'll just take an engine and a car and that old steam rig and I'll through all that stuff, rails and the whole cockeyed business to get the rails pulled, and I'll just throw the bobs and the switch stands and all that stuff and I'll just throw it in with the...because they couldn't go in with the...they'd have to go in with the lone engine to pull that steel. It would have made quite a mess for them. So I told him, you get the steel pulled and the spikes out of her and we'll just load her out with that steam rig." "My gosh," he said, "We'll do that!" So one evening we loaded the whole cockeyed thing out in the afternoon, or when we got in. He started to...go down to...load them down there at Hilgard on the gondolas and I said no thank you. That's when I went to start running tack.

JT: After they quit running the railroad then they took that engine and they kept it down in here in La Grande yards for two years, I understand.

WT: Yea, that was the old one-spot. That's the one that__.

JT: Then they went to Portland and they loaned it to a place in West Virginia for about twenty years. When they brought it back it needed some work on it and Prineville got in touch with you...

WT: No, he didn't get in touch with me. They got in touch with Morehead, probably. They got it and then they hauled it in and took it over there at Prineville and they put it together over there. They brought it...

JT: But they were asking you some of the questions about how it worked and who did the work on it, didn't they?

WT: They kind of wanted me to do that over there and I told them I wasn't interested in it.

JT: They wanted you to go to Prineville?

WT: They wanted me to explain to them one thing or another. Before we got done over there at Camas they decided to get a diesel, an hundred ton diesel, to come in and get rid of them old shays. The guys on selling the diesel and one thing or another they made a trip with us. We went over and we come out with our loads, come out of there and that old shay was drug right down. We loaded it clear to the hilt. Got up on top. That guy said, "They'll never put an engine up here, not on this hill." Curves, on thing or another, too sharp. They wouldn't run it at all. So they gave the diesel thing up. This big engine that was over there we didn't run it much. We run it when they worked on the other engine. The other little engine it was quite a bit lighter engine, but it was a powerful little thing. It would run on half the fuel and the water that the big engine run on. That's whey they didn't run it. That's why I told them. I said, "We only run it as a spare engine." But I worked on it quite a little bit.

JT: Then you started with the dozers then?

WT: I builded roads. Running Cats and blades and carry-alls, everything name it that was on the road crew. All the equipment around.

JT: You built roads in most every place around the county and out of the county.

WT: Been on quite a few of them around here.

JT: What happened when the Anthony Lake fire, when you got you up there...

WT: They run me just about two nights and two days steady. The only light I had on was just a flashlight along the side of my leg in the seat. That's all the light I had, but they had a guy out in front of me going out in front of me so if I'd get in danger they'd let me know.

JT: And the food was a little scarce?

WT: Huh?

JT: And the food was a little scarce?

WT: It was poor. Plum rotten! [laughs] They'd tell me they send me out of Porcupine up there. They'd send me out real early to go on a job and they'd bring my breakfast out to me. I never did see it. About all I got was orange juice and I got a lot of that. It wasn't like this last go around they had with fires. They had steaks and showers and toilets and all of that stuff. We didn't have that.

JT: Kind of working the hard way.

WT: They had one place...At Anthony's they had a big steak feed there one night. Old Glen Parson...I'd been sick...old Glen and I went up there to eat and they was just started to fold up. They said, "You guys have been through once." Say that Parson, that's all he...he told that sucker off. He said, "We want some steaks!" We went in to eat our steaks. Then after that we had two Cats down. One of them got a hole in the air cleaner on it and took a piston on it. So it was only hitting on not all the pistons. The other Cat had a final drive out on it. Them big granite boulders and one thing or another clipped on of them off. We decided we'd take them out. The Forest Service said, "You can't take them out." Just like you was in the army. Parson, Glen, he wanted me to go up with him, up to the state building there at Anthony Lake. We went in there and he was talking there. Glen said, "We're moving them two Cats out in the morning." He said, "You can't move them out." Glen said, "They're both broke down. You better get on the phone and call Salem. They're going out in the morning." The old guy started backing up...Glen worked for the Forest Service for a good many years. He told them, "You better get on that phone because they were going out. They're not worth anything to you. You can't operate them." We tied them black...one of them was in the lead and we hooked onto the back end back to back and towed them out. We had cables that we pulled on and before we got them out of there...we had a pretty lengthy cable, but when we got done we was tied right up like that [laugh] to get them out. They had finals out. One track won't pull. It made it kind of bad. I could pull as long as we was going on flat ground. If we got on steep ground and had to turn this other Cat had to turn yet. If you didn't you'd have to pull ahead in front, back up and pull ahead the truck and that's where'd you have to come out.

JT: Then you operated Cats for how long?

WT: I started in '55 and I got off in '79. I quit running in '79. About twenty-five, twenty-four years. Something like that.

JT: You worked in the Tollgate area over on the ...

WT: Over out of Tollgate?

JT: Yea.

WT: I was out on that brakes going into the Walla Walla River down in that big canyon down in there building road. That's about the time...the last road I built, I think was the last one I built, it come down off the top up there by Glass Hill, before you got to Glass Hill. I come down through and put a road in to where they got that power outfit out there on Dick Smoots onto Foothill Road. You know where the viewpoint is?

JT: Yes.

WT: I come down off that hill and I put in, I don't know, I think four of five switchbacks I had to put in. Come down and I'd come in right there where that house is being put up.

JT: When you put a road grade in there, what's about the steepest road grade that they can put?

WT: They hauled out of?

JT: Uh huh.

WT: Seven percent, seven, eight percent is pretty steep. I put on in off of Cabbage Hill up there and down onto...what's that that goes into Pendleton...Umatilla.

JT: Yea, Umatilla River.

WT: I put a road down in there. It run down a good seven percent down in there. It was a pretty good haul up out of there. Then we had one over here at Billy Himan. We went over and over onto the banks of the Minam River. They had one down in there that darn few of the trucks could pull out. Two or three of them would pull. Some of them they'd have to push them out. Take a skidding Cat behind them and push them out. That's kind of dangerous, too, you know. If they had a long line in there they might just be pushing them right into cabs. [tape stopped]

Wes Taal

11/15/03, T1, S1

JT: This is November the 15th, 2003 and I'm talking with Wesley Taal to clear up some of the things on his interview. Wesley, could you tell us about Crystal Plunge and how it was built and why it failed?

WT: And what happened to 'em when the boys got electrocuted?

JT: Yes.

WT: They was a-cleanin' the pond out... They was cleanin' that pond out and there was a wire loose in there and there were three men in there. One of 'em got out – now I think it might've been...I just don't know for sure...but Dall was gonna marry Bill Conley's daughter, Marjorie, and they were practically engaged to be married. He got killed there. But there were three in there and there was one of 'em got out of there and he didn't get electrocuted, but the other two did.

JT: The other two did. Now the Crystal Plunge was built on your grandmother's property?

WT: Yeah. That was the homestead.

JT: By Garrett Taal?

WT: That'd been Wynonda Taal, the mother. Now you look, you look on your internet at the Taals back and you'll see Wynonda's name in there.

JT: And they built it as a private enterprise?

WT: Right.

JT: And then after the two fellows were electrocuted it just closed.

WT: The reason they closed it because they didn't have no way of gettin' the water out. When they washed the pond out they run it out there and it sunk in the ground. Then, you see, then they got that artesian well over there. Both of them was pretty... And I think with the two of 'em...

JT: That was at the city shops across from the overpass.

WT: Right. That's right. We lived there. We lived there in the old house, oh, heck, that was '26, '27 and then we moved back to the ranch in '28. That was the deal when built the thing. It was a goin' thing at the time, but then everything just seemed to fall to pieces. When they got electrocuted it went out. Then they couldn't run it anymore 'cause ___ to the sewer. It was drainin'...drainin' that pond out. So that's the reason that I knew of that they got... And I couldn't tell you what date he moved in there.

JT: But that was the reasons.

WT: Right.

JT: There was another question here. You mentioned the experimental range. Could you tell us what the experimental range was and what they intended to do there?

WT: What they intended to do, that was supposed to 've been a ten-year job. They went in and fenced that out and they had allotments in there when the cattle used to run in there. And we used to haul from over in the other side and them cattle would all get right there on Bear Creek and we had an awful time gettin' through. That was... Their idea was to get them cattle and the deer and the elk and they wanted to see how they got along together as animals, is all I could ever... And they had that for ten years. You'd probably seen in the paper here not long ago that mentioned the fact about that they might have to tear up all that fencing and one thing or another. I've never heard anymore about it.

JT: But it was to learn about the habitat and getting along and grazing.

WT: Yeah. And now they...they too also they figure they got...what do you call this stand of timber...old-growth. John, I hauled off every damn bit of it. [laugh]

JT: So it had been cut before.

WT: Yes, it'd been cut before.

JT: You mentioned Camel Springs and I had worked putting the pipeline up to the experimental, well, that was water for the cabins and things that were up there for the experimental station.

WT: Okay. Now about that time I was workin' in right in what they called the horse pasture below Camel Springs, all that down along by Meadowbrook. We logged that in there. I was only about seventeen years old when they logged that out. I was a-workin' there and hookin' and that's where I started drivin' truck. The

boys felt sorry for me, I was just a young punk, you know, and the sweat was just a-rollin' off me, and it was in July. The truck drivers come up and they had, I think, five trucks a-runnin'. One of 'em would say, "Take my truck down and I'll hook ground." Pretty soon another one'd come and he'd say, "Take my truck down and I'll hook ground." Then pretty soon it got to the point where one of the boys was gonna leave, Lawrence Matheen was the guy's name. He told Tybo, he said, "If you'll promise that you'll give Wes my truck I will stay two weeks longer," he said, "If you'll guarantee to give him that truck." And I got it. So that's...from then on I started haulin' logs. But they was not union so whenever we'd come to headquarters they had a job the married men drove the trucks and I hooked on the loadin' rig. That's when we went up Marley and they fell all them trees across on Marley Creek and they just laid in there and what we could reach with the hooks hookin' we loaded it out.

JT: And that's when you said it looked like a millpond.

WT: Yeah. [laugh]

JT: You mentioned that the trucks not havin' the defrosters and you put a limb underneath the back of the hood.

WT: Right.

JT: That was to let the heat melt the frost that accumulated on the windshield so that you could see coming out of there. And sometimes it was a very small area that you could see and made it very difficult in driving the trucks during the winter.

WT: It's like these rear-view mirrors. You know damn well, John, we couldn't see them now anyway and they had 'em on there...on them trucks. They only stuck out about that far on each side. We only had one. You take a nine-foot bunk...

JT: That stuck out farther than the mirrors.

WT: Yeah. That was...eight foot was what was normal, you know, and they went on out to a nine-foot bunk. That's what we had on them. So there was no way of you lookin' back. You might get the mirror to see how your load looked, but if you had 'em way out there you sure as hell couldn't back up to the loadin' rigs that way. When the trailer was loaded up on you turned around and you looked in between the trailer and that's where you backed to the down loader. Once in a while Elmer Faulk would put his car out there and I told him one time, "You're kind of foolish, boy, parkin' that out there 'cause when we back in we might wipe 'er right off the road."

JT: You mentioned here that a gypo loaded by a thousand feet and you figured... I'm not sure how you figured the footage on here. That was the number of board feet in a log?

WT: In each log. In each log. And that was scaled and put onto the car and then it come to the mill.

JT: When you say scaled, somebody had a measurement there...

WT: A regular scalin' rule.

JT: A scaling rule you were able to determine how many board feet that log would produce.

WT: That's right. And they had that...they had every log scaled onto them cars and that's what we got paid by, the scale, and they gypoed that. There was the brakeman and the conductor with the hookers on that outfit. The fireman and the

engineer, the engineer took care of the train when we's spottin' to load these cars. He stayed right on the engine. He had him a marker. So you put him throttle on the end. And when we was workin' on them decks we wanted to work them decks out as far...as fast as we could on the backend. In other words, when we started loadin' we didn't just go right along down through the whole thing. We started concentratin' on that deck out on the end, all we could get to get them out, you know, them logs out, you know. Then you didn't have much problem. You'd spot back and forth and...

JT: You mentioned about the mud and the ice when the deck was frozen.

WT: What had happened, in the fall of the year when they was a-skiddin' and lots of rain, you know, and mud would go on them logs. Then they'd load 'em on the trucks and they go down and unload 'em and they'd deck 'em. Then when we went in and broke them decks a lot of that there was the rain would go down in there. Some of these decks would have just like a __ way out at the top. We's up and down there off the bottom. So what we'd do was...

JT: It was pretty dangerous. If one of those logs would break loose...

WT: You didn't want to run towards the god damn car, the loader. You wanted to go back through because if you didn't you'd get cut in two. What happened when that mud was in there and then a rain and the snow come on 'em and that snow was up on 'em when we was loadin' 'em, what we'd do we'd pick out and pick out and they wouldn't break down. They had an old powder monkey, Dee Ferrick. He'd come along and he'd have half a stick of dynamite and he'd crawl up in there where they was hangin' over like that with a fuse and he'd shoot...

JT: Jar 'em loose.

WT: Shake them logs and they'd come down. If he couldn't get 'em we'd get a hold of a pretty good sized log, we'd pick it up with the loader and we'd bring 'er over here like this and we'd...

JT: Swing it in there.

WT: ...swing it right up in there. And then, oh god, when they come down we'd hook ropes was down into it and the hooks and it was quite a job gettin' 'em out, but we had the logs down where we wanted 'em. And then when we's on a long haul like that on the backend of them decks, you know that was a long chore back to hook them logs. They wasn't right up to the track. So when we'd hook one we'd hook...we'd look back in and we'd hook a fair-sized one. We had some little ones __ liftin' them suckers towards the...toward the car, you know, so they'd be a little shorter to hook. And sometimes we'd load over a thousand logs in a trainload. One time I think it was 1,034 logs we loaded. That's a lot of logs, isn't it?

JT: A lot of logs. You mentioned here that it was a pretty good life. What did you mean by that? That you had a good job and you felt...

WT: We got paid real good for it. We got paid so much a thousand and it was split four ways, the engineer, the fireman, the conductor...I mean the brakeman and the conductor. And when they started loadin' the engineer he took care of the engine. I goes back and fires up the loader and the two, brakeman and conductor, done the hookin'. And then we had a whistle on that. We'd have two ahead, three back. That's the way we worked our decks out. We got out on the ends and

we just kept a-gettin' all the logs we could get. And the loads kept a-buildin' up between you and the engine. Sometimes we'd go in there and load fourteen out by noon. And so, what I'd say, when we was back to loadin' these deck logs we'd loaded...we loaded out, of course the jammer just kept a-slippin' back over 'em. When we...they was all between us and when we got done...

JT: The jammer...

WT: The jammer's right on the end of the god dang car.

JT: What was the jammer?

WT: It was an upright boiler steam outfit. I can't exactly tell you what the name of it is. But one of them old loaders are right down there around where the railroad track goes up to Lostine and Joseph. It goes out of Elgin and goes down across the river and right there's where Wallowa and the Grande Ronde come together. And just up along that track, that they never ever went in and got it, one of those old loaders set there. I don't... I think they called it a Clyde, I'm not sure. So I wouldn't want you to say that that was what it was. But what it was is it had steel runners under it, on the backend we had regular wraps up like because when you ___ back through your cars these chains is laid out like that on them runners hit it, the chains and the bump. When you run over them with the...your bottom part of it, the sled, just like a sled, is what it was...and when you pulled back you'd go back over there and of course them...they'd come up. And we had 'em laid out about forty-five degrees. Then when you loaded you had what they called a thaith and it was about that wide and about that long and it had a hook on it and it had a T on this end of it. You slipped that in there and went over the pin of the stake, you could throw your stakes in and your stakes never went clear down so that held it. So when you went to load you put a log over...

JT: It kind of had an arm that went out there that helped lift it?

WT: Lift what?

JT: The logs?

WT: Oh, they had the loader, it had a boom on it.

JT: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

WT: Yeah, they had a big long boom on it. We'd get centered and we'd whistle ahead, you know, to a deck and stop when we's in line to load and that way you picked them right up and you put 'em on.

JT: And the hooker hooked them and then...

WT: You didn't reach way over here and pull one back like that. 'Cause when you stop 'er down... And that's why they always whistled ahead or back. This engineer would mark when we'd put him right on the end with the ___. Go right out to the end of the track. He'd get him a big limb or a rock and he'd put right down by the step of the engine where he'd come up and down. And he sat there okay. We'd load out and then maybe two or three cars. We'd spot him down and if he was right on 'er he'd give us three whistles and he'd go the other way. But he didn't want to push 'em out over the end of the track, that's what the deal was.

JT: Okay. That explains...

WT: And then what we had to do, John, we had to keep a-workin' them decks out 'cause if you didn't you'd have to go under one car at a time to load them. Do you know what I'm talkin' about?

JT: Yeah.

WT: Had all these empties. And we went back...the loaders send right back over 'em. You'd load it in and send back and load another in. And then we had a tail line and we went out and we put it over the end, haul back line, and on the side we had a deal there 'cause if we loaded on a curve you wouldn't want the line over the end of the god damn deals when you pull that loader back. You had to guide it on. So they'd just throw that over and it's what they call a sidewash, your line run through that. And I kept our loader goin' clearin' back over the car. If you's in a circle and the loader is here and your line is out there it'd cut right across the corner. See what I'm talkin' about? So they take that sidewash and throw over it and put the line in the middle of a car so the loader when you send back you'd stay on the car.

JT: But you mentioned one time that you were going to shoot a spike elk and here you said that, "I had the old engine set right and she was right up to the top and I had both injectors wide open." What did you mean by that?

WT: Them injectors, see, when you's usin' so much steam of pullin' out of there with them loads you had to keep...put more water in it for that steam...when it goes out it's got moisture in it...and you had to keep them boilers up. So we had to have both of 'em a-runnin' in order to get... Out on the main line down to Hilgard, why, we'd just use the one injector, but comin' out of there you was usin' so much steam. And that's what we always done, too, when we started out of there we had fourteen loads. That's the most that old one had ever bothered with, and that was a load.

JT: And that was... The one spot that you're talking about that was the engine.

WT: And then we'd...what we'd do we'd take seven...we'd run around and put seven ahead of us and we had seven behind us. And when we was a-pullin' out of there on them hard pulls if we couldn't haul 'er, if she'd stall out – we never had to – but we could shove a seven up to a little flatter and back down and get the other seven and go on out. If we didn't we wouldn't have water enough. I don't know how many thousand gallons...there's quite a bit of water on that thing.

JT: You said that "we had electric saws and they were...had these little Caterpillars on a running board and they had a generator on them. And on one side it had a regular saddle." What do you mean?

WT: The saddle is where you put your...you can put your saw up on there and haul it.

JT: And haul it on the...

WT: Yeah. You could load another tree. You see, we didn't pack them. They was a two-man saw. You had to have two men on it. One man couldn't handle 'em. You went along the one end and one on the electric end. Say, when that was rainy weather you used to get some pretty good little bites out of that, too.
[laughs]

JT: It said that here with the electric saw that it cut a wide gash and you had to knock it out with a polaski. A polaski was a tool that had a sharp end on it that you could...

WT: It was flat on one end and an axe. It was just like a chisel and then you had your axe. When they'd go in with that saw they'd cut in three notches like that on the

side you was a-fallin' it to, the undercut. Then they took a polaski and you chopped them right out with that chisel and they just come out in chunks.

JT: And then what it would do that would help form a hinge so that the tree fell in the direction that you wanted it to fall in.

WT: Yes. And the reason for that is is the safety. If you don't the tree would go over, John, and the sucker would split up about six to eight, ten feet and probably come right back at you when it went off the stump. So when you put that undercut in there when the tree starts to fall it ain't ridin' on that stump. If you didn't put the undercut in it it'd split up your tree.

JT: And that was called a what?

WT: The undercut's what it done.

JT: I mean when that piece was left sometimes they have a name for that?

WT: Oh, the stump side?

JT: Yeah.

WT: When they fall it sometimes it would be about that much difference, it might be a little bit higher than where your undercut was. A lot of times they'd whack that off and they'd leave a leg. You've probably seen them legs. That's what they'd do. They threw up the end of it. And, see, when they put them logs out they was thirty-one feet...no, I it was thirty-three feet is what the logs was. A long log was thirty-two. That made two sixteen-foot timbers or whatever you wanted. They were thirty-three feet long, give about six inches or maybe better on account of where your hooks went in and picked 'em up and one thing or another.

JT: Then you had to be careful the way you fell them so that they didn't break.

WT: What was a-happenin' too, with this power saw, this big power saw, when you put the undercut in it you had to go around the backside and a gash into it about that far, John. If you put a wedge in there the wedge'd have to be awful thick 'cause the size of the tree. You put the undercut in and you start cuttin' in and you put your wedge in with that big of crack it'd have to have an awful thick wedge to lift the tree. And besides that, you go runnin' on your chain. If you had a long thin one it'd be right into your chain. You see what I mean there, don't ya?

JT: Yeah. It was a matter of...

WT: That's what I told Wayne.

JT: ...falling the trees.

WT: That's what I told Wayne one time. Him and I was out there cuttin' wood and I told him, I said, "Wayne," I said, "on them undercuts when you put 'em in," I said, "if you want to pull a tree to swing it," I said, "don't go so awful deep on your undercut then you can get in with your saw then you can put a wedge in and you can lift it..."

JT: Lift it up and fall it the direction you want.

WT: See what I mean?

JT: Yes.

WT: But with that power saw it had such a big gash that a big thick wedge...you'd know what'd happen there. He'd hit it and the son of a gun would bounce out like...it wouldn't go in. You couldn't have a thin one 'cause you go up against your chain and tear your chain off. That was the reason for that. And what I told you, too, that they got to the point whichever way the tree was a-leanin'. If it was

leaning downhill, that's where she went and that's what stopped it. 'Cause a lot of them logs fell down that hill, you know they hit with an awful pressure and it'd break 'em, they'd break to pieces, you know.

JT: And you'd lose a lot of...

WT: You'd lose your...lose your amount of ___ ... I mean scale.

JT: Your scale.

WT: And they always scaled... When they scaled they always scaled the little end of the log.

JT: You mentioned, too, about the spurs.

WT: The spur tracks?

JT: I worked on... There was quite a lot of steel over the hill and a lot of spurs. Were you talking about train track?

WT: Right.

JT: Okay. Excuse me...

WT: When this... When they's a-haulin' the track out, tearin' it up, that's what I meant.

JT: You went into areas sometimes and they put track down so that the train could go in there and then when that was logged out you pulled up the track so they could put it into another area?

WT: What we done... We never did do that because we had all this track and, I don't know, we had about fifty-someodd miles of track. We had one a-runnin' up into the river camp and we had one goin' clear over the hill. And what happened there when they loaded 'em out they had a big loadin' ramp and you put it right at the end of one of them empty cars and you chained it. You took the knuckle out, took the pin out, and tied them right tight together. This ramp that run out like that just like you was gonna load a Caterpillar, the ramp road on the outside of the rail, both sides. The bottom of that ramp where it went down on the track was up about that high and when they go out to the end they took them rails...rails and they pulled 'em with spike ___ and they put it up over this roll. So when we started we just moved this...the engine down seven rail lengths and when we's a-pullin' that these rails was goin' up over and the ties were down and those nails were just a-poppin' out of them. You didn't have to pull it. Then I mentioned about spurs, they was so short they couldn't go in there and do that, get a car in there except for say the rail was about a hundred yards or fifty yards long. Just a little old shoefly rail in there and that's what I told you about. When we got into camp that old guy from Chicago when they picked up that steel he told me one time...he's comin' off the hill and he said, "boy," he said, "I hate to get into them camp." He said, "All them little tracks runnin' out." See, one was where the cookhouse was and you've seen them a-runnin' out. And then we had a place where we went in with the engine and we had the tank sittin' in there to get crude oil in it. And we had passing tracks or run-around tracks. One out here like that one like that. You'd go in and switch and you'd run around and hook onto the other end and that's the way you had to do it. So that's probably what you was kind of mistaken on.

JT: Then... I wasn't really sure what you were talking about, but now...

WT: Then this old guy from Chicago he kept a-talkin' and I said, "hell, don't worry about that." I said them short spurs in there...in the main camp and then they had another camp up Bear Creek that had the same thing." I said when we get down to them, I said...[end tape]

11/15/03, T1, S2

JT: And you told the gentleman from Chicago that you could handle that by...

WT: With the loader.

JT: Uh-huh.

WT: I told him, I said, "I can load all of that stuff out in one evening." When we got it loaded out that old boy he was tickled. He said, I don't know, we'd just take them rails and we had a pair of tongs that went right down over and we picked 'em right in the center. I'd just pick 'em up and slap 'em up onto the car.

JT: So they were able to pull rails.

WT: Yeah. You'd slip 'em up and put 'em on there and then you'd get the rest. You'd work down through off the main line and load them rails out, see, to the main line 'cause you have your loader and one thing on the railroad car.

JT: Yeah. You mentioned one time that they come up and demonstrated some diesels, but...

WT: They did bring the diesel.

JT: Oh.

WT: They came up...these boys come up and they wanted to check the track out and so they went over the hill with it. Then they asked us when we was gonna get in the hard haul. It'd be comin' out and goin' around the curve. Some of that, boy, it'd just pull you right down and we'd have all the power we had to get up around there. Hell, that old guy he just step off of her and walk right along side of the engine, lookin' at his watch and one thing another – that's what I was tellin' ya. And then when they got up on top he said they can't run a diesel on that track. That light steel and the curves that we went around. Of course that old engine all them u-joints along the side of 'em – you know what I'm talkin' about – you know you have the u-joints on your driveline and the car.

JT: Yeah.

WT: That front truck there was a u-joint and you come on down and them...

JT: It has to flank.

WT: They'd been ____, see. So that's why that old engine they'd go around them curves like that, why...

JT: It had the flanks so that it'd go around the curves.

WT: Yeah. You're driveline is clear through.

JT: I better... Now I better understand it.

WT: So that was the reason before.

JT: Now there was one thing we were talkin' about up at Anthony Lake and the way they treated you up there. They told you to go out on the job, that they would bring your food, but they didn't.

WT: Oh, on the fire.

JT: On the fire at Anthony Lake.

WT: Yes.

JT: You mentioned that after you'd been up there two days you lost the final drive...

WT: Steerin' friction.

JT: And that... What is final drive?

WT: The final drive is the one that runs all the gears. But this was the steering friction. That throws you out on one track or you pull this one and it throws it out. So when you want to turn...

JT: So you can turn.

WT: You turn you're off one track and this track'll pull around it. You pull this one and the track will run the other way, this track'll run around that one.

JT: Yeah.

WT: That's the way...the only way you had steerin'.

JT: And when you lost that there was...you went around in a circle. There wasn't any way of...

WT: The only way I could do is back up and use one track and get straight and then go. When it's goin' the wrong way for me I'd have to turn it around and get it straight again to have both of 'em pullin'.

JT: And you mentioned that a piston was out on the other and that was in the engine so you couldn't run the engine...

WT: That was on the other...the other eight, there was two eights. We both in there and the final drive went out – that's where you got your idea – the final drive broke on that so one side wouldn't pull, on that side, that sprocket where your track run up over, that's your final drive, and that broke. It only pulled one track.

JT: So actually the piece of equipment was useless.

WT: Yes. And then the other one they had these here on your...like you have on your carburetors, you got a deal there for dust.

JT: Air cleaner.

WT: Air cleaner, there we go. And the air cleaners on this one had a hole in it and when he was a-workin' up there on that fire pushin' stumps and stuff out of the way and makin' a fire trail, fire guard, it's suckin' this stuff through and this air cleaner had a hole in it, it went in and knocked out one piston. That's what happened to that one.

JT: When dust gets in there it's very abrasive.

WT: Yeah. And that was odd, too. When we come out I had a big tow strap on the back and I was...we was back to back. That engine could pull...I could pull two with one track. So we was tied together, I come out backwards and he went out forward with his Cat. And around the side hill I couldn't...I couldn't keep him, he'd have to pull me. On flat ground I could pull a little bit with one track. So when we got out there I think we had just...we had 'em right up tight together. We'd broke that strap so many times us comin' out, pullin', you know, [laugh] that I didn't have much of a tow strap when I got out.

JT: And you mentioned one of the last roads that you built was up Glass Hill.

WT: Yeah, comin' down off of Glass Hill and it come out right where Smutz's barn is. You know where that power outfit moved in there?

JT: Glass Hill is off of Ladd Canyon here south of La Grande. I don't think they knew exactly where Glass Hill was.

WT: Wait a minute, it wasn't in Ladd Canyon.
JT: Not...but it...
WT: It was up by Morgan Lake and you went out and you got clear out on top and then we come down through – I think there was about three switchbacks had to build in – and we come out at the viewpoint out there at the marsh.
JT: Above Dick Smutz's farm.
WT: Right.
JT: Which is the...Game Commission has now.
WT: They did. They finally got that, I think. I believe they did, anyway. But they didn't have that then. We come down that one...that one ranch there, you know, you drive right by that's got the emus.
JT: That's Dee Smutz's that's got the emus birds up there.
WT: Okay.
JT: And then Dick's was beyond that.
WT: Simonis is that ditch.
JT: Well...
WT: I thought.
JT: There was part of that that the Game Commission has. You know where the barn was there?
WT: Right.
JT: Simonis is just beyond that.
WT: Right. But we come down and then we made a switchback just before we went into the Game then we come back along where Smutz done the feedin', all that in there. Then I come out over there when they put that big – I don't know what it is – I guess it's a fuel line, ain't it? An oil line?
JT: It's the natural gas pipeline, isn't it? El Paso Natural Gas.
WT: That could be. But then they went in and they put another line through and that's when they built all of that. Remember, where the pipeline is you go up here on Twelfth Street and go right on out, there's where their setup is on that. Have you ever been up there?
JT: Yeah.
WT: It's on the right before you come to the end of the road. It ain't the road that you can get through the gate, though, you can go out on those roads.
JT: Yeah. Another story that you told me was that I thought was quite interesting was when the bootlegger stopped by the ranch 'cause he had a broken tire.
WT: [laugh] Flat tire.
JT: Can you tell us... And your brother Don, what happened to him?
WT: It was Ivory Stiles is who it was. He come down and they was bootleggin' up there and he had a Chevrolet coupe. He had these drums in the backend of it full of liquor. So he got down there and he had a flat tire so he pulled into the grove – you know you go on up to where Talbott lives and he just pulled in there. Poor little Don and I we knew Ivory well and of course we's just kids. So, by gosh, we finally took an old...we had a Nash, a '30 Nash, and it had...it was a wooden wheel and then the rim went on and had lug bolts to hold it on. His Chevrolet was the same thing so we gave him a tire off of that so he could go on into La Grande. So Don he told 'em, "would you give a man a drink?" Ivory said, "Yeah," he

said, "Just grab right at 'er." I've seen people drunk... I thought he was gonna die sure as heck. His face broke out, ___ all over his face.

JT: Don took a real big drink then.

WT: Yeah. He got all that fusel oil. See that keg when he... You do gasoline the same way. If you're stiflin' gas and you take it down there and ___ into the gas and you take a big swig of that and you get it in your lungs, man, you've got the cheapest drunk you ever crawled on.

JT: Oh boy.

WT: So that's what happened there. He got all that fusel oil in there and, boy, he was drunk, I'll tell you. He was terrible.

JT: You also told me that when you were kids that you used to go down on the river that run by your farm there and over toward Condet's place and used to use powder to blow the fish out of the holes.

WT: What is was, John, they had an awful, awful big run of suckers. That's why we went and so when we come back we had lots of powder there anyway. We was shootin' stumps and one thing another. So we goes down and we gets them holes like that and we put the...about a half-stick. Two or three of us get down there on the river down on the big wide bar, you know, where the ripple went across. Them fish come down and we'd throw 'em out on the bank. Talk about a stinky mess. And you know, we only got one good trout out of that whole business.

JT: Is that right?

WT: We got one real nice trout. But we... What we was tryin' to do was get rid of the suckers.

JT: Oh.

WT: And they used to run up in by camp. Them kids up there at camp – Norm'll probably tell you – that those kids go out there with three-prong hooks and a heavy weight and they'd throw it out and they'd reef it into them fish and catch 'em that way.

JT: And these were the suckers?

WT: Right. It was nothin' but suckers, yeah. They's runnin'...they farmin'... I think they's ___ the steelhead...eatin' them steelhead eggs.

JT: Or the salmon.

WT: I imagine. I never seen too much salmon, only jack salmon up there. I never did see any Chinooks or anything like that. It was always what's called a jack salmon.

JT: When you...you farmed up there at the ranch, just above the Conden place, your dad would go down and help...Mr. Conden was his brother-in-law. Mr. Rankin would help and...

WT: George Rankin.

JT: Your sister Frederica gave me some pictures of them working out there in the meadow there where that Kuna place is.

WT: Yeah. We helped...we'd trade work back and forth. We only had one separator, trash machine. And what they'd do when we worked on that we'd go help – Bartons lived there then – we'd help them do thrashin'. My dad had a pretty good patch of oats, they'd come up and they'd trash that. Old George Rankin he was over the hill and he had...he was over on Jordon Creek...and they'd go over, pull

that up over there and do his trashin' for him. And that's what kind of tickled me one time. Don and I... What they did...they didn't have the deal that goes out and you can throw your bundles on and carry it up and into the trasher. All they had was just a couple of platforms...a platform out like that and right here is where you went right into the conveyor where they put the wheat in. Old Don and I we used to get powder boxes and we'd stand on each side and when they'd throw the bundles off we had a handle about that long that had a clip back in and sickle on the mowin' machine. We had that and when they'd throw that bundle on we'd slash the band. Then the guy that was a-feedin' he'd reach over and he'd grab that and he'd roll it in and roll that 'ne and us kids'd stay right on that sucker and slash them bands. When we went over to old Rankin's over there he paid us the same as the...well, we was entitled to it. By golly, he said...when he paid us kids off my dad said, "you don't have to do that." He said, "I don't have to do that, but," he said, "them boys done just as hard a work as the rest of 'em." So he paid us off, by golly.

JT: He was a very fair man.

WT: Yes, he was. I used to like old George. I'd go over and visit with him quite a bit. Besides, he give me a fishin' pole and an old reel and a basket. I used to go over there and I'd get his outfit and I'd go up the creek and catch a bunch of fish. We went there... We went there one time and he wanted me to stay for dinner. And up on top of his warming oven – you know them old wood stoves – it was a regular tea pot it was it was and had a lid on it. I looked at that sucker and that's where he had his sourdough. You didn't... You didn't know what you wanted to do there. [laughs]

JT: You said you accidentally cut your dog's leg off out there, you were haying?

WT: That was out at Garrett's.

JT: Oh, that was when you were workin' Garrett Taal's?

WT: We was out there... My dad went out there and run that. See, we left the ranch, we moved into Hilgard and the kids went to school there. I wasn't old enough. We went out there and we had that in there where Shaw's got up on the upper end. That was all Garrett Taal place. That was a ____... You go out by the old Fruitdale School, go out Spruce, and you can look up and see them rock bluffs there right up on top. I was a-mowin' up there in this alfalfa and I was a-mowin' along, mowin' around and I had old...the old shepard dog was with me and a bunch of little young chinks.

JT: Pheasants.

WT: Pheasants. They all loomed up and that dog run in and I had a stallion for one horse and then a mare with him and that's what my team was. I hollered whoa and that damn stallion he'd always when you say whoa and try to stop him he's always have to take three, four more steps. And then that dog baled in front of that sickle bar and it whacked his leg right off. I felt bad about that.

JT: I'm sure you did.

WT: Yeah. He'd seem them pheasants, see, and I was a-mowin', cuttin' the hay down. He just baled right in front of that sickle and... I tried to get 'em to stop, but...

JT: Which leg did he cut off?

WT: Hind leg.

JT: Hind leg.

WT: Just between... Just up above the foot a ways cut off, about that far up.

JT: About six inches up.

WT: Yeah. That old dog, you know, there wasn't a saddle horse on our ranch and we had some pretty damn fast stuff. We used to go up to Starkey, you know, and they had them rodeos.

JT: Uh-huh.

WT: Us kids'd go in and we'd race our horses, you know, and get in there and we had some pretty fast stuff. And I've seen the time that little old white mare we had I'd be a-runnin' her just as fast as she could go and that god damn old dog was right out here in the tall grass. And lots of times he'd go up like that, he'd come up with a red squirrel. That's no kiddin'. He'd pick up a squirrel runnin'. But, boy, I'll tell you, he could run right as fast as a horse. And, you know, they always told me a coyote could run awful fast and I went up...out of school I went up to get the...round up the horses and I went back there and here was a pup coyote. He just kept followin' along behind me and finally I just turned around and I took out after him. That old horse's hooves just a-slappin' right on his tail. [laugh] He just runnin' just as hard as he could go. No, that was out here.

JT: Uh-huh. When you were in town.

WT: Yeah. ___ we'd farm...we plowed that one time...and I couldn't go to school 'cause I'd...what the heck was it...oh, I'd jumped off of a high wagon seat and the fork was down at the bottom and I jumped off and went through and jabbed one right into my kneecap. I couldn't go to school in the wintertime. There I was only about seven, eight years old. We'd go out there and my dad and we'd be a-plowin'. He'd be plowin' lead and I'd be plowin' with three horses behind. They come to this...the end of the line to turn, they'd turn I'd have to watch myself or I'd fall off. That's the way we done our plowin'. Now, you know, they got...what do they got, ten, twelve plows on there when they go around. They'd take a stretch around here the widest one of the property, they roll that all over one time.

JT: Your first year you went to school at Fruitdale and then after that you went to Greenwood.

WT: What I'd done I'd started at Fruitdale and I went half a year and that's when the snow come in just about like this and out there where Bruce lives, that lane was drifted plum full.

JT: That's what I hear.

WT: They finally got it high enough that the snow goes across. But right in there where Bruce lived, yeah, it was terrible. The drifts got in there, hell, you'd go up over with a sleigh like that comin' out of there. That's they only way we'd come out is a sleigh.

JT: Clear over the fence posts.

WT: Yes. Pretty high. My dad, when he bought that ranch up there... See, they bought the one that Condet had and then, you know, two families livin' together, you know, didn't work too good.

JT: Not too good.

WT: So he bought the old place above. My dad told me that he said in May he said you couldn't see a fence post. We sure don't get that snow anymore, do we?

JT: Yeah. That was on the Grande Ronde River up there.

WT: Yeah. One time that...there was an ice jam come right there where that motorcycle...you know, that run by...

JT: On that turn there by Jab Kemp?

WT: Okay, that bridge in there...

JT: And Bird Track Springs.

WT: Yeah. The ice jam come in against that bridge and it went right down through by the...by the house there by my dad's place clear down to the Condet place. All of that and some places out there that water was out there deep enough you could swim a horse in it. It just took the whole deal and right there just before you get to the Conden ranch from my dad's place a-goin' down, they used to have ties in there in the road it's so soft. You can imagine what that'd be goin' up over like that. [laughs]

JT: Like drivin' down where the railroad tracks on...in your car.

WT: Same way in that Marley Creek country up on Fickle. They had a road in there and they had a tie mill, they went in and cut ties out of a lot of tamarack. They had a portable tie mill and they had a belt run off an old '60 Caterpillar. They used to take them tie slab – and it was eight foot see – it lay in there and maybe that wasn't a ride. And I used to ride...drive up to there and I had this foot right back under the seat to hold me in. [laugh] That and all the time keepin' your trailer on 'cause you whangity, whangity, whang. [laugh]

JT: Now one of the things that you did for entertainment was you started goin' with a travel trailer goin' fishing on the coast and...

WT: You know about that.

JT: I do, but...that was the thing you did for entertainment.

WT: Yeah. We went fishin' an awful lot, Eileen and I did. I'd come in from work, I'd have the trailer right out here and she'd have it all loaded up and there we go.

JT: How many years do you figure you trailered?

WT: How many years old is it?

JT: How many times...years have you been going out with your trailer?

WT: I'd... Oh gee whiz.

ET: '57.

WT: That's a '73 trailer.

ET: '67.

WT: That's a '73 trailer.

JT: How many years before that? You had another trailer before that.

WT: We had another trailer and we traded it on this one. We didn't go much with that did we, Eileen? Huh?

ET: It was the year Shannon was born so it was '67.

JT: '67.

WT: So we went trailerin' quite a long time.

JT: Been a lot of different places, Canada...

WT: Oh yeah. We went down on the coast...

JT: Oxbow.

WT: Over to ___ and down on the Snake River.
JT: Philip's Reservoir.
WT: That was... That was somethin'.
ET: Wallowa Lake.
WT: We caught... Yeah, Wallowa Lake. We used to go up to Wallowa Lake. I went up there when I bought old Leaky.
JT: Old Leaky was your boat.
WT: [laugh] Anyway, when I bought it I had it loaded on. Tuffy Prince had a fifth-wheeler they picked up. I don't know where they got it. We was up there and so him and I went over to that – I can't remember the lake, it's over on Sheep Creek. Just come out of Wallowa Lake and it was... Huh?
ET: Kenny Lake.
WT: Kenny Lake. So we goes over there fishin' and I had the boat loaded up on my rig and it just kept goin' ahead, goin' ahead. That's when I put the ropes on it and tied 'er back. She don't go ahead no more. That's what always bugged me, too, when a bunch get around and if you's a little bit downhill wouldn't that've been a hell of a mess if that boat'd run out over the hood.
JT: It'd been a heck of a crash, wouldn't it?
WT: Yes, it would've. You know when you take your chains...take your tie-downs loose and you pull it back and you unhook them ___ thing for it to go right out over. That's what always kind of bugged me, be damn sure that you didn't go out over that direction.
JT: And you spent a lot of years elk and deer hunting.
WT: Oh yes. A lot of that. That was quite a bunch. One time we went I think it was four or five bulls we had loaded on a flat rack and went into camp whole. We had the guts out of 'em and cleaned 'em, you know, and laid 'em head one way and head the next way and across on that flat rack and went into camp.
JT: A lot of time that was your meals.
WT: Yes. And we did not have no refrigeration.
JT: So Eileen canned a lot of elk and deer meat.
WT: She canned...can any elk. She ___ canned deer meat.
ET: Yeah. Lots of it.
JT: You canned a lot of fish, too.
WT: We used to take a canner and put under the bed and you had the jars... Hell, we'd go to Diamond Lake and we'd catch a mess and I'd go out and I'd clean 'em all up and she'd put the canner on. It was early enough in the spring that we could take the canner off and set it right in the snow bank and that cooled 'er down.
[laugh]
JT: I've eaten a lot of that fish that she canned and it was just like eatin' salmon it was so good.
ET: That's cause it didn't have any skin on it.
WT: We'd skinned 'em. I'd skinned 'em, you know, that way.
JT: You're the one that taught me that it tastes a lot better with the skin off.
WT: Now Betty likes 'em with skin off.
JT: Is that right?

WT: [laugh] She said she liked 'em skin on. Well, you know, you could scrape and scrape and scrape and scrape on a fish and if you got all that off you was damn lucky, wasn't you?

JT: True.

WT: Now with the... We used to scale our fish...salmon. We used to take a hose with a real good nozzle on 'er and you lay them babies down and work from the tail up.

JT: Lift just like shingles on a roof.

WT: Boy, I'll tell you, it'd just knock them cockeyed scales right off of them. Did you ever do that?

JT: No.

WT: Be done.

JT: I don't like the skin that well so I still skin 'em like you told us to.

WT: Then we used to take, too, when I'd catch crab we'd break 'em and break one, take the shells off and clean 'em and put 'em in the pot and they'd be alive. Get 'em around there and get a hold of 'em and bang 'em like that and crack that shell, pull it off. Them was the good old days.

JT: Those good old days.

WT: But these golden years are sure lovely, ain't they? [laughs] You know about the golden years, don't you?

JT: I think so.

WT: That old loader when we had it on the car and was a-loadin' and we had about that much snow...

JT: About an inch and a half.

WT: ...on them rails. And them was rail bunked across, then they had pins in 'em and your...[end tape]