

Bud Jones

1/97, T1, S1

JG: This is an interview with Bud Jones, January 21st, 1998. [pause] Maybe start, if I could, Bud, with, you know, where you were born and how long you've been here in the valley.

BJ: Oh, yeah, I'm just a newcomer here.

JG: [laughs] But just your background of how...and then how long you've been out there in the area of the...of the State ditch, you know, and some of that background.

BJ: I came from high...high plateau area of Chanico.

JG: Oh. When were you born, Bud?

BJ: '21.

JG: 1921, okay.

BJ: On a cold day, December the 8th, '21. Then we...I lived up there...moved to Dufur in '27. My dad was workin' on the state highway. So I came up...up here to college when I graduated from high school in '40. So I've more or less been up here...my interest wasn't so much in the agricultural area when I went to college up here, but it was social education. So it wasn't till after the war...well, I married my wife that I met here at college and then the service and then I...when I graduated from __ I was sent to pilot instructor school in New Orleans so I called her up and told her this was a real interesting country. Told her if she'd come down there we'd get married and so she did. [laughs] So...but then her family...we have 160 acres there that's a century farm 'cause her grand...let's see...that'd be her great-grandfather Merrill Jasper, 1868.

JG: Was that 1868 when they first homesteaded that, would've been?

BJ: Yeah.

JG: Okay.

BJ: And he'd been...he'd been to the Willamette Valley and then came back up here. My great-grandfather went through here in 1846, but he wasn't satisfied with the school system here at that time. [laughs] Didn't want to raise his family here so he ended up down there out of Eugene at Cheshire, which I didn't even know I had a great-grandfather. But that probably with a Jones names is probably a horse thief and he was runnin' from the law. But...

JG: Bud, what was your wife's name?

BJ: Jasper.

JG: Jasper, okay.

BJ: Yeah. And then her grandfather actually took up a homestead up just east of Elgin there on the rim. But...

JG: But that 160 acre century farm that's right by the State ditch there?

BJ: Yeah. It's on... It's on the east side of the State ditch there on the...just along the lower Cove Road. And he eventually...he built up an estate that covered quite a bit of the territory over there at the lower Cove area. But with his children and whatnot...well, the Grays, which Sally Conley was a Gray. And all the Grays

were his offspring. And eventually all those parcels of ground they ended up into each one of their...

JG: Can we go over, Bud, of the history you remember or know as far as the State ditch? You mentioned before we started here about Hendershot, maybe starting there. I think that's about the earliest history, isn't it, of settlement?

BJ: Yeah, well, yeah. You'd think...yeah, because that 1870 Hendershot then was...of course all that earlier was...there were pack trains goin' from...from the river to the mine there. And then...and that basically is what created people stoppin' here then and startin' to farmin' to raise food for the...

JG: Yeah, supply the mines.

BJ: ...for the mines.

JG: 'Cause see, it was 18—I think '63 was the land survey to start splitting up, you know, the townships and survey and that. And at that time on those maps it showed that at the Walla Walla-Boise Road which would've been, you know, right past Hendershot Point there out there by...which is now Vie's Point.

BJ: Accordin' to Tex Wells, Harry Wells...and he lives right there near that 160 acres of our that is a century farm...that's part of the road...the old pioneer road. You know, it went through along through Imbler and out to the ____.

JG: Right. This what I have on the map there in orange that was what I picked up off the survey, which would've been, you know, going right through...that would... goes right through what you're talkin' about there as far as, you know, where the State ditch took off and emptied, you know, back up in the Grande Ronde. It comes right across that right up, you know, in here. 'Cause I think this is...

BJ: That's where...yeah...

JG: Here's your Market Lane right here.

BJ: Yeah. Okay.

JG: So it's that red line.

BJ: So it would be...oh, that's the house right there.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: Okay. Yeah. That...and then that's the bridge across there. And that trail went on down there. Okay. Yeah. So that's the location of where our place is is right there.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: And... And of course I read where some of the land owners that had land over here and land over here.

JG: Both sides.

BJ: Yeah. They'd have livestock and they would...but they'd have a building on both places because they had to get over on the other side of the river when it was low.

JG: Right.

BJ: So then they lived over there to take care of their livestock.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: And I understood that to be more or less down here in this lower area. But...

JG: Yeah, 'cause the years that it floods, you know, I've got photos of that showin', you know, that water hangs in there, you know, pretty deep. Whereas the old surveys, too, some of that it mentions like four and eight foot deep, you know, in the high water there where...evidence of it.

BJ: It would depend on the year you know. In a cold year, sub-zero weather that area...that ices up. What it is the ice wouldn't...doesn't go out of that crooked river.

JG: Right.

BJ: So they just build...water just piles on top of it and that's what is...we still have trouble with water, but it's, you know, the tribes like meandering streams and...of course that fish program's a lot different than...than...that doesn't enter into our life as agrarians here farmin'. You like to be able to control the water. And it can be handled if we were without the ___ to control the water. But that's in the future. Yeah, it...on our home place there on Booth Lane we got three acres across on the other side of the State ditch. And I first went there after the war you could see where the road went down the bank and then up the other bank 'cause they did raise hay or somethin' on the other side and they...that cross there, but there hasn't... I can't see where there's been a whole lot of change. Yeah, very sim...banks are droppin' off, but those banks are twenty, twenty-five feet deep. Just as you cross the Peach Lane bridge you can pretty well tell.

JG: Yeah, get a good idea of what...

BJ: Yeah. And then right just as...south of the State ditch right there on that Peach Lane is where that McAl...or the Spring Creek slough is.

JG: Right.

BJ: Which was probably just a fork of the old Grande Ronde River. You can see how...how deep it is ___ deep. So I really can't see...haven't been able to tell that...that there's been that much change in the State ditch since I've been here.

JG: Bud, when was it when you first moved...or purchased that land? Do you remember what year that was?

BJ: The home place...the home place there actually they purchased that in 1910 which they purchased that from I. D. Smutz. Smutz got it from...in 1902 from Pennington. Pennington got it in 1872, Bank of England ___.

JG: And that... When did you first move there?

BJ: ___ I went out there started in the spring of '47.

JG: Oh, okay. After you got out of the Army.

BJ: Yeah. ___

JG: Marines, I'm sorry. [laughs] Pardon me.

BJ: Army's too broad.

JG: Right. ___ the war.

BJ: Out of the service then. And, yeah, I've been there ever since. And we...we bought it from...my wife's father passed away in '35 and I never did know him so... Her mother had the place.

JG: But what about along the ditch itself from '47 till now ___ been much change of size or vegetation along the ditch itself?

BJ: No. There really isn't much of any vegetation to speak of. There are some willows spotted here and there, but...

JG: I didn't know if that had changed. I flew it here this last, you know, spring and, you know, got aerial photographs of it, but I didn't know I, you know, had never paid any attention to it in the past decades of whether there'd been much change

of that or whether it's been pretty much the same, you know, down through the years.

BJ: ___ the Peach Lane...they replaced the Peach Lane bridge too, but the Booth Lane bridge there just east of our house that bridge has been replaced...I think Virgil Conley said three times. But yeah, it's...there's some erosion droppin' off the bank. Of course I'm right there on the curve where it changes from east to west and start makin' the curve...

JG: Goin' north.

BJ: ...to turn north. And it's...it's workin' the banks down. But it takes it straight down and there's not much, I understand, from stream corridor people there isn't much you can do with those ___. ___ it would...it would still eventually be a straight up and down bank...

JG: Oh sure.

BJ: unless you ___ through.

JG: I didn't know, you know, where that's happened whether if you can recall where there's more vegetation where that stuff has sluffed off, you know, where your bank erosion of whether that's...

BJ: We have brush on the inside of the curve and it...it stays there, but the water and the ice is workin' on the outside curve of that.

JG: On the outside. What is that? Pretty much willow that's along through there or is there other?

BJ: Yeah. Not very big...not big willows. Let's see, I think there's a box elder tree or two along in there. And of course that...that wasn't native to the old cottonwood trees so there isn't much chance that there's gonna be cottonwood trees comin' up in there.

JG: Do you remember, Bud, just kind of over all through the valley you have a heavy cottonwood, you know, down and around La Grande here, you know, along the river and then over in Catherine Creek. Of out in the valley do you recall as far as the change that, you know, what I call cottonwood communities, you know, in other words, the trees compared to the willow brush, lower vegetation?

BJ: I think you'll find some over on this other...on the...

JG: Oh, Spring slough?

BJ: On the Spring slough you'll run into some cottonwood there.

JG: Yeah. Do you remember about how far out in the valley they came?

BJ: About where they are now, I think. Did they go out as far as Delashmot, McKay?

JG: I think there's a few out in there. I think it seems like it starts petering out some. 'Cause I talked to Bill Howell he said, you know, down there around Imbler that there was a few patches along the river, but mostly it was the lower brush, you know, the willows and rose and dogwood.

BJ: I planted some poplar trees out there on the inside curve along the river, but they never did take _ watered. Even the trees that I did plant in there the beaver came...

JG: Oh, and took 'em?

BJ: Came and...[laughs] They even took some of my pine trees down and the Game Commission said, "Oh they don't...they don't go for pine. They don't utilize them," but they sure cut 'em. They said they use 'em to sharpen their teeth on.

JG: I'll take 'em back up Camas Creek and Fly Creek they're actually eating on the lodge pole up there. I mean they're takin' and usin' those for the dams.

BJ: Are they?

JG: Lodges, yeah.

BJ: They packed limbs and stuff down the river.

JG: Yeah. They kind of opportunist, you know, ___. I think they prefer the cottonwoods and willows, but out there... [laughs]

BJ: I... I've come out, you know, you'd have to drive the State...well, even...I can see in the bank there just south of the Booth Lane bridge where it crosses the ditch there the swallows...

JG: Oh yeah, workin' in the banks.

BJ: ...workin' in the bank. And then the high water comes up then it goes into those swallow holes and pretty soon the bank comes down. And I...I think they're gonna have to put some kind of a protection there or they're gonna lose the end of the bank for that bridge there.

JG: ____

BJ: Eventually.

JG: I think they're into that. They've got a program I guess on the, you know, right here in La Grande with about same thing along the bridges there where some of that's been eaten back in of tryin' to stabilize some of those abutment areas. I've seen where they got a study, I guess, this next year.

BJ: ____ That's more or less...more or less the tryin' to hold the river bed up to protect the utilities that they've got runnin' through the ____ bed over to the Riverside Park. Yeah, that's...

JG: I just read that in the paper. I didn't know what all the background was on that.

BJ: That stemmed...see, that's where the irrigation ditch comes out, the big ditch comes out...comes out across the valley out there at... Due to the mining of the sand and gravel out of below there the river bed just dropped down. Yeah, that's...that's...the Army engineers, you know, came in after the '64 floods and so they were gonna help things out so they did some...well, in fact, the county went in there... When the county raised our roads up...east to west roads up so that the wind would blow the snow off the roads. They used a lot of that river rock to build that base of that rock...road up. So between...between that and the Army engineers they've...they rechanneled that...bigger channel there. Yeah, you can talk to Pat Fitzgerald there ____.

JG: Oh yeah. Right at May Park there.

BJ: He'll tell ya. He lives right on the bank. Started workin' on that situation '70. That's when they really started causin' some trouble in there on the river bank in that stretch. Yeah, they're not gonna do much. They're gonna put some barbs in there, rock barbs to deflect the water to try to control it.

JG: But, can you give me a little background on when you started with the...on the ____...was it Soil Conservation District, wasn't it, as how it was named? Some of it's changed, I guess, over the years of names there, but...background was.

BJ: It was basically... You know, it started with first Union Soil Conservation District which was right over on Union. Gilbert Courtright was the big instigator of that. And, gee, I'll drop some names. But then finally the whole county now

is...is part of the Soil Conservation District. But their...their basic purpose was to...to handle any of the problems...farm problems. And first of all they were...they were doin' some ditching and I guess you'd call it draining. I like to call it water control rather than draining.

JG: But didn't they do like land leveling, ___, and...

BJ: Land leveling was the thing...the later part of the years... I didn't... I didn't actually become a board member. I was workin' within the district... I've got started... I was on a agricultural stabilization conservation committee, which is the government agency for...which they had ACD practices, agriculture conservation practices, which was the financial program that the Soil and Water Conservation District was actually using to carry out their...finance their p___. So I got started in that in , oh, in the '50s, which was also part of the farm program of allotments from crops and whatnot. Then I...I think I didn't really go on the board until I think it was '67. I was more interested in gettin' other fellas that were...to get 'em to be on the board 'cause I was already workin' with 'em. I didn't have to...

JG: Yeah.

BJ: I was get...gettin' other people to be interested in that.

JG: Do you remember when the Soil Conservation District started about?

BJ: '46.

JG: 1946.

BJ: You see, that...they originally started in...from the Dustbowl days in the Midwest.

JG: Yeah, Oklahoma country. Do you recall, Bud, 'cause I guess I talked to you on the phone there like Max Devour...or I talked to somebody else...and he was, you know, running the equipment, was one of the major operators.

BJ: He was really...to my way of thinkin' he was really what made the Soil Conservation District.

JG: Do you remember as far as the area that he covered of how extensive that was? I talked to Myron Ricker, I guess like up Catherine Creek there they leveled, you know, quite a bit, cleared some brush and leveled up through that area.

BJ: Yeah. I took over the management of the Soil equipment in...let's see...about '62, I think it was. Allen Courtright had it before me and he talked me into take...I put my place in the Soil back '59-'64 so I had some time. So I managed the equipment and the year that I started I went over...we were leveling a piece of ground for Ralph Titus. So Max was runnin' one Cat and Terry ___ and I was runnin' another Cat. There was that piece there where the house is and there was some blips out there in the field and what they were was actually part of the old Catherine Creek channel went out in that. And they...they stayed wet. You couldn't run your Cat ___ over 'em, but I...I backed the Cat carry-all back over the top of 'em, kept the Cat on solid ground and peeled the top off of 'em. And that's when I found out that somebody said, "you can't really change a creek channel. A creek is still gonna run where it run to begin with underground." And I believe it after...after bein' on that place and it still gonna run...some of it's gonna run out across on his field. Wherever you got rocky conditions it can run, you know.

JG: Do you recall the...that'd be of course Catherine Creek and then you got Little Creek coming through that field, too.

BJ: Let's see. Little Catherine would be farther...

JG: Not Little Catherine, Little Creek.

BJ: Little Creek. That would be a little farther over, wouldn't it?

JG: It comes right through his property. You know, that whole field that went from there to the...the road that went around the foothill road.

BJ: —

JG: You got Catherine Creek hugging the bank on the east side of it and then you've got...or the south side...

BJ: South side.

JG: ...and that's on the...through the middle of the field is where Little Creek comes through. And did you get...

BJ: I didn't get over that far.

JG: You didn't get over that far, okay.

BJ: Uh-huh.

JG: 'Cause I understood... I talked to, oh, well, both Myron Ricker, but then, oh, the one that had the fish hatchery over there...that he worked on and he said that used to be I guess beaver in there and that was...of course all that had been straightened out, you know. It used to be a lot of brush ground, but I think that was back in the '40s when that got changed over. Would've been before, you know, when you were in there.

BJ: Yeah.

JG: So they evidently had...somebody had worked in there, you know, in the...it sounded like the late '40s is about as far as I can tie it down.

BJ: They did a lot of work over in the Union area before...well, at the beginning when the district was formed.

JG: What about out in the valley? Did they work about the same way in there?

BJ: I can't recall... I think they did some levee work, but they didn't do much of it. Red Stat was in a lot of the levee work. The big thing that the latter part of our time as we were workin' and the Soil Conservation District was...was building stock ponds down Elgin up...up on the hills. We...let's see... One of the... I was up... Max Devore...oh, if I could just think of names! Up...oh...oh well, it doesn't make any difference. But if I can't think of the name I can't very well describe it. It was up Medical Springs area. Took Max up there and he resealed a ditch that came around the hill ___ of farm...Fisk? A lady had a ranch there. I think her name was Fisk, yeah. I'll be blessed...he could...he could put that Cat equipment anyplace.

JG: That's what I heard. What about on the upper Grande Ronde? Did they do any work going up above La Grande going up those meadows toward Starkey?

BJ: They were... They were in the meadows and ran a ditch across the...the big meadow there above...let's see, is that above or below the gun club?

JG: About where I think it was the Jordan Creek comes in there?

BJ: Where the big house is on the left-hand side.

JG: Mm-hmm.

BJ: They ran a drainage ditch out across that meadow. I don't know what it is now. The last time I ran up that road it seemed like it was a lot different than it was before. That's the only...let's see. That's the only thing I know of that...

JG: Up the Grande Ronde.

BJ: ...happened up there. Now, okay, I've gotta take that back because after I...I turned the... Walt Overdoor...Ovendorf took over...and he's still in town here...took over the management of the farm equipment...or the district equipment after I did. Now they were up there... One of the carry-alls is still up there on that...that ground that Timberman's got.

JG: Oh.

BJ: And what they did I don't know.

JG: That gives me a lead to...

BJ: Yeah.

JG: ...to get on that. 'Cause I think in, oh, after that '64 flood they were in McCoy Creek there, you know, straighten some of that out.

BJ: That's what I understand.

JG: You know, and that's where they went back this summer and, you know, tried to put it back.

BJ: Now that's the only two things that I know of that's happened up there. Well...yeah, they put this drainage ditch in that...oh, let's see, it went across Smutz, this big ditch...

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: ...goes across the...went up across ___ Uncle Frank Jasper place there. He was still here when that went across there. They put that in... That was... They did that before I was involved with it. Charlie Smutz was involved. We seem to be a generation or two just a little bit behind all the...

JG: Yeah. [laughs] That's what I said, for all this tryin' to derive the history of somethin' that should've been done about twenty-five or fifty years ago while you still have a lot of people still alive that had that first-hand knowledge.

BJ: Yeah.

JG: What about, Bud, as far as beaver out along your area there? Do you recall the...

BJ: The beaver was in there gettin' my trees and the Game Commission indicted that "that only happens in high water when the beaver kind of locate...relocated themselves, they wouldn't stay in there." They trapped them out of there. Let's see. You know, Claude Anson is about as...might be a good resource.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: You know where he lives?

JG: I think he's in the retirement center now.

BJ: Yeah, right.

JG: But he lived... Wasn't he downriver from Willie Hamann?

BJ: Actually, he's still got his place there just outside of Island City?

JG: Okay. I couldn't recall just exactly his location. I know he was down in there.

BJ: His folks' place.

JG: Oh, okay.

BJ: Back in the field there after you make the double turn right goin' out of east of Island City.

JG: Oh, okay.

BJ: And, say, he...quite often in the summertime he eats lunch there at the café at Island City. Let's see. Glen Heryford's...he's always got a story.

JG: Oh yeah. I talked to Glen here a while...a couple weeks ago. [laugh]

BJ: Did ya?

JG: Yeah.

BJ: I guess that's enough said. [laughs] Yeah. Did he tell you about his grandfather sellin' the Vay's place up there?

JG: Yeah, up the Vay Meadows.

BJ: Yeah, that's interestin'. All the pasture's a terrible shape, but there's been a lot of horses raised on it. Even the Indians run their horses over there. So it's... We don't really have much trouble with Mother Nature until people appear.

JG: ___ that's it. You get a few ___ you know. [laughs] Mother Nature did, you know, did it's own thing there.

BJ: And the Indians, you know, there was a lot of territory. They knew when to be a certain place at a certain time.

JG: Yeah. No, they ___ that was their lifestyle.

BJ: [telephone ringing] Excuse me a second. [tape pause]

JG: You mentioned, Bud, on the beaver there, do you remember about when that was when they're eating out of the trees at your place?

BJ: I planted those trees in '56 so I'd say they were gettin' to...some of 'em had a six-inch diameter there, pine trees, so it was in '64 or so in that.

JG: '64 was the big flood, '64-'65 was, you know, that year that the snow melted in December and then we had the floods, you know, from then on into the spring.

BJ: Of course that...let's see... I put the irrigation in on there on that place in '65. [phone ringing] [tape paused]

JG: I was wondering mostly, Bud, with the beaver there since that time of whether they've been any change as far as population, or, you know...

BJ: They didn't have any material to do what's changin' the population.

JG: It just kind of ___ much out there.

BJ: The beaver has effected that Wright slough that comes across there. I always thought it was the Conley slough, but it's the Wright...it's the Wright slough that comes across there where the fertilizer plant is on Booth Lane.

JG: Yeah, Booth Lane there.

BJ: Okay. Then the beaver...that's pretty well brush along that slough there. And...yeah, they... Case's have had trouble with the beaver building dams down there backin' that water up.

JG: Have they just pretty much tried to live with it or have they trapped 'em...tried trappin' 'em out, do you know?

BJ: No, they just put some dynamite in there and give 'em a headache. [laughs] As far as I know...yeah, there could've been some trappers go in there and trap 'em. I don't think they tried to... I think they gave anybody permission to go in and trap 'em if they wanted to.

JG: 'Cause the old-time trappers, of course, used to do quite a bit, but they've...they're kind of diein' out where...the same way with the prices, you know, beaver has changed, I guess, over the years.

BJ: They've been wantin' to rechannel that slough there, but, you know, there's...a fellow likes...there's a lot of things a fellow like's to do but unless he's got some money, why... And that's...that's probably one of the big reason that more things haven't been done was because of the financial condition. There wasn't a whole lot done until after the war when the...lot of surplus equipment and the equipment to do things with. Then you had new generations of fellas comin' in and farmin' and the shortage of funds. It was just through the ACP payments that would cover those projects that...actually the Soil Conservation District operated on. There's not so much of that bein' done anymore.

JG: No.

BJ: They got so many regulations now it'd kind of hard to do anything.

JG: Yeah. [laughs] When they were doing that, though, did they...do you remember much as far as the brush along the river where that was taken back compared to, you know, back in the '50s and '60s compared to nowadays?

BJ: The story I...and that happened about the time right after the war...was just east of Island City there the Grande Ronde River there was a lot of cottonwoods along there between Island City and the Pierce bridge. And Jack Bore farmed in there and I guess he set the place on fire. He took care of 'em, the brush along the river.

JG: Do you remember as far as the cottonwoods did they use them for anything or were they just piled up and burned or buried?

BJ: I think they were just burned.

JG: Just burned?

BJ: Yeah. It's... In this Clean Water Act, you know, it...clean pure water and then you get to thinkin' about the first thing you learn when you're a kid and playin' in the dirt and you're parents say, well, "cleanliness is next to godliness." So you get up in the mornin' the first thing you do is wash. Everything you got to do you can't do anything but what you got to wash. So we're really related to water to a great deal. Anything you don't want you'd throw it...if there's a stream you'd throw it in the stream. It carries it away, it's gone. So what do we expect? That more or less is how come we got the water that we do have, what the condition it's in because we've been taught that way.

JG: Oh yeah. It's been worked on ever since, you know, the mining days, you know, up in the upper Grande Ronde where they dredged everything and, you know, of course the sluice in it.

BJ: Out of sight, out of mind.

JG: Yeah. They're lookin' for gold up there, you know, ___ started with and, you know, to extract it they have to wash the soil with it.

BJ: But you end up you've got sediment. It has to end up someplace.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: Now we're gonna try and change those ways. [laughs]

JG: Plus just natural, too, that you have...that happens where you have the flood areas and then ___ you know ___ watershed or, you know, the rivers. Bud, going back to the cottonwoods along Island City, do you remember about when that was? I didn't catch the guy's name that was farming out there.

BJ: Jake Bore.

JG: Jake Bore, oh. Do you remember about what time that...
BJ: Willie Hamann would probably... I thought it was just about the time I started right after the war. Willie Hamann can probably...
JG: Yeah.
BJ: ...give you a lot of history.
JG: 'Cause he... Has he owned that place for a lot of years where he's...where he's farmin' now?
BJ: Not that particular place. His dad had a place just this side of it.
JG: Oh, okay.
BJ: No, that was the Beezing brothers.
JG: Oh.
BJ: And they were... They had a lot of livestock and farm...they had farmin' and they owned a lot of grange ground, too. I can't... Willie was raised there at Island City and so he's...
JG: I knew he and Claude, you know, from the skiin' days, but I didn't know just when he got the farm out there, you know, as far as that background on that. [end tape]

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BJ: ...Soil Conservation District has done as far as river. And of course there's quite a bit a to-do about cuttin' off bends of the river. Russell Elmer has cut, but he's done it himself, cut off some of the bends over there on Catherine.
JG: Yeah. Big... Big loops and that.
BJ: Yeah.
JG: Yeah, mm-hmm.
BJ: But they've... They end up usin' the loops for storage. They culvert 'em and put water in for storage.
JG: Oh yeah.
BJ: Irrigate out of 'em now.
JG: On a fly you could see there's a lot of water, you know, held in some of those back in there.
BJ: I don't know if there's a map that shows how many of those things have been done.
JG: Kind of what I did I took the old, you know, aerial photographs because 1937 was the first aerial photograph and then got on the maps and try to, you know, redraw all those 'cause they do show up real good, you know, on the photos there. And then you can kind of pick out where the old channel was and, you know, where the new, you know, modern-day channel is.
BJ: The ASCS office had a Mesker map that was put out in '35. Had all the land ownerships on it. And then... And they kept it up. When a landowners would change they'd put a different name on there.
JG: Oh yeah.
BJ: When we moved then... When the Soil District built the new building out there at Island City it houses the agency. Then when the manager changed one of the managers threw that book away into the dumpster. And for some... I just opened

that dumpster up and there was that Mesker map. Holy cow! I just grabbed... I got that out.

JG: Oh, you got it, okay. I was gonna say it was a good thing somebody salvaged it 'cause a lot of that stuff got thrown that way.

BJ: Oh yeah.

JG: I went out there, well, it was this summer, you know, I was lookin' 'cause it used to have all the old aerial photographs on file and all they got now is a big, you know, two-by-twos foot and modern day and of course they've got everything drawn on their hard...of course you can't use teriscope, you know, where...you need the old nine-by-nines. But they had one set, I think it's '64, back in the storage and I got a hold of those, you know, after...

BJ: They turned... They turned some earlier flights to the library up here at the college.

JG: Yeah. I know they got a lot of stuff there. They don't have the, oh, the maps...flight maps on everything. What they got flight maps for they don't have the photos or the proofs. [laughs] But I know, you know, __ where I sorted through that so I went back in to that '37 flight and the '56 and '64 and '70 so that gives you a pretty good record, you know, that change like that. Real valuable.

BJ: You've been busy, haven't you?

JG: Oh yeah! [laughs] Lot of hours put in, lot more than ever, you know, __. But it's...it's like you said, big jigsaw puzzle tryin' to put it all together.

BJ: Yeah.

JG: But it starts fittin', you know, when you start...have enough hours to spend on it. But it's, you know, tells a lot of stories there, you know, tryin' to get that base of changes and what happened and like that.

BJ: It's... I wish I could... I've got the minutes of the Soil Conservation District and I have...I've gone through the back from the earlier minutes and I've kind of hit the high points. So I've gotta convince writing on 'em and...

JG: I've picked up some that...Duane West had done some. I think...I don't know if he got it from you or got if from someone else of some of that history, you know, of that district, you know, that you'd done...I don't know when that was, but it was some of that, you know, I gleaned, you know, and got that in the record on that so that was real...real helpful on showin' that chronological history and then, of course, I try to expand on that with a lot of other sources and kind of put 'em all together.

BJ: I'd got back in and find out who the district directors were all the way through there. It kind of like when I started farmin' out there I went to my neighbors to kind of...'cause I wasn't raised on a farm so I'd kind of get a line out on what comes next, what to do next, so I decided, "Well, I can't do this the rest of my life." So I started keepin' a diary on operations. So I've got a...I've got diaries then since I started farmin' there in '46. You carry one of these little things around so you keep track of the weather and the temperature and I've been keepin' track of the temperature...high-low temperature and the rainfall so that...

JG: Do you remember the floods out there, Bud, out in your area of what years that there's, you know, the problems or where you had the heavy flooding?

BJ: Do I have a history of it?

JG: If you recall when, you know, in your area there where you're living of what years those were that there's probably of, you know, real heavy backwater or floods?

BJ: Generally...I haven't gone back to really put the years out. I've got a running scale sheet since '66 of rainfall and in that I have noted when the floods were and ice where there's ice flow or whatnot.

JG: I just wondered if those floods...how much they impacted you out there or if there dealing with, you know, like the ice flows if that had a variance of what problems there were like the time of year the floods were.

BJ: It...I think...what was it here...was it '91 the flood in May?

JG: Yeah. Mm-hmm. I think it was '91.

BJ: It was all due just to rainfall. Yeah, our place there where the State ditch starts we've got a triangle field back there that we don't have a levee on and it'll flood up on it. But when the water goes down it'll drain off from it. But...yeah, in fact, one year before they built the...got the county road built up the water flooded up enough so that it came out and just came to the point of the road. It was built up just a little bit, just enough so it didn't go on farther north. That was probably the...let's see...that would've been...maybe that was the '48 flood.

JG: Yeah, 'cause '48 was when Catherine Creek, you know, flooded Union, downtown Union there.

BJ: I think that must've been '48. We didn't have that piece out in back, that triangle forty back there at that time. I didn't... I didn't get that till about '66. That's when Beezings sold out there and Willie Hamann bought some Beezing ground, Claude Anson bought some Beezing ground and it happened to be this forty acre triangle that was across the river...State ditch from them. I don't know whether to call it the Grande Ronde River or the State ditch. They call it...it's the State ditch in the Grande Ronde River's still in the old channel. I don't know when they ever change that. Probably never changes.

JG: Yeah, I don't know.

BJ: Geological department won't recognize it. [laughs]

JG: That's who's doin' it, I think.

BJ: Yeah. We get...and then, our other place part of the century farm over there, why, we get it off of Catherine Creek. We don't... We're not on Catherine Creek, there's land in between us, but if they're levees leak or anything, why...

JG: It comes over.

BJ: ...comes over on us, yeah. So it...yeah, it flooded last year.

JG: The Corp of Engineers they had that aerial flight...what was that, February, I think, of '96...that they flew that when, you know, that water came down and flooded along the river, you know, the ditch there in there.

BJ: Okay. It breaks out over on...on Willie's side. That's when it really floods that country. It really tries to go the old way.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: And of course there's a lot of old slough area...

JG: I was gonna say, you know, that old channel...their aerial photographs I got a hold of those and looked at 'em and all the old route of the Grande Ronde there

down where...over where Pierce slough and Wright slough come in, all those are filled full of water where it was in that old channel__ back water.

BJ: The flood waters will break out over the bank just above Pierce Lane bridge and come out into the fields and then it'll come across country clear down to our place and go back into the...into the State ditch.

JG: __ back in again. [laughs]

BJ: Yeah, that...

JG: __ a new channel see what that... [laughs]

BJ: So you can imagine what this valley used to do.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: It probably had very little channeling for...

JG: That's like down there at Ladd Creek you can't really see a channel. It looked like, you know, all that was probably just marshland where, you know, it just...unless it was covered up it just...you lose the channel in some of that __ flat ground. That's what's nice the aerial photographs you can see, you know, a lot of that of just where that stuff has gone all over...changed, you know, __. Tryin' to trace that on ground's impossible. [laughs]

BJ: Yeah, and a fella can obliterate a lot of things that...where it wasn't too great in the first place, why, they really blend it out of there. But it's amazing... I flew in the service and whenever I'd change stations I could hardly wait to get up in the air 'cause once I was up in the air I could locate __ transfer from the east coast to the west coast down at Los Angeles there we were. Got up in the air and flew over that country. I could pick out the roads where they go to the museum over here and whatnot, get in the car and I can just drive right to it.

JG: Takes out a whole new perspective when you get up and look out on it.

BJ: Oh yeah. Yeah. I wouldn't mind if somebody'd finance it I'd go fly it. [laughs]

JG: Yeah, it just gets a little pricey is all.

BJ: But, yeah, it... I can't think of any major project, you know. They just kind of did little projects here and there. I was out there on Davis' ground. They had patches of brush out there. __ clear...make a clearing through the middle of it for the cattle to get in there out of the weather. I was over... I was down in the... I know I almost got that Cat dozer...I got down over the bank in one of those sloughs and I...I got out, but I don't know __. I don't remember what I was doin', whether I was pushin' some brush down into a slough or...

JG: You know, Bud, on the...that lower Davis dam of when that was built? Was that when you were around or is that before?

BJ: No, I really don't know. I suppose Sherman Hawkins knows.

JG: Yeah. 'Cause there's the two dams there, you know, I...you used to read about the upper dam then later on the lower dam which was up there until they put the fish ladder in.

BJ: __ refer to one that'd be in the Woodruff dam?

JG: I don't know. I never picked that up. I always just heard it as the Davis, upper and lower Davis dam. I don't know.

BJ: I don't know either. In fact, I only... I know...only know of the one dam there at...

JG: The one...the upper dam, of course, backs the water up, you know, over the...or under the highway there where Hot Lake to Union, you know. It's that pond that's right in there. And then it's...I'm guessing, but maybe a mile downstream or something there's another dam in there that they call the lower Davis dam, but I never saw anything, you know, like when that was constructed. But it's...it doesn't look like...just from the aerial photographs...like it's a backwater pond, but it is backin' up. It's probably maybe for irrigation ditch, you know, where they back it up where they take off.

BJ: It seems to me like they did some...rebuilt a dam or something and I think Cooper was doin' that...instigated and is workin' on it. So that would've had to been... Or maybe they were just modifying it, I don't know.

JG: I knew it had some problem with gettin' fish up through there and I guess, from what I've heard talkin' to people, you know, work that fish ladder where...so it wasn't much of a barrier, you know, for the fish to get out there.

BJ: Yeah. Sherman is...I know got...is involved in that. And then...it may have been earlier. I think they modified it recently, too.

JG: What about fish out your way, Bud, as far as the salmon or steelhead or anything else population?

BJ: The fisherman... My neighbors were all fisherman and I was never a fisherman, but they indicated to me that...they never spoke of salmon, steelhead, they said, when they...when they hit that mud bottom channel said the fish just swims right through.

JG: Go right straight through.

BJ: But it was great carp country. I haven't seen any carp, of course I haven't been out in the field there along the river like I used to when I was irrigatin' it myself, hand pack and runnin' the pump. But if Sherman says...over there he said that you don't...he didn't see the carp that they used to see. He thinks it's waste water from the sewer in Union takin' care of...maybe. We've got some... We've got some ___ holes out in the river out there. I don't know whether they're...whether they're at the spring source because Ron my neighbor says he can pump water off there and it won't change the level below. There's evidently some feeders...

JG: Yeah. It's...like, I think Bill Howell or someone I was talkin' to, you know, you about drain it dry up here in La Grande and then...but down below, you know, it'll pick back up again so there's gotta be some feeders comin' someplace to fill it back up again.

BJ: We got some more... We got some river gauges in there now. We got a good one up the river now, good location. And they got one out...let's see...out at Imbler. They had one...got down to one second foot this year. And they got a gauge down at Rinehart now too on the new bridge, which if it is...the channel itself isn't really a good location for a gauge, but at least we got one. So we...we're gonna have better recorded...

JG: Have some records of it, you know.

BJ: ...what we've had in the past. I used to call up and get the recording on this old one that they got up there, but I can't do it on the new one they got. It types it out, but you have to find out later. I used... I like to correlate the weather, you know,

the temperature along with the river flow and that's...you cant' just take one thing and gauge everything else by that.

JG: It's a massive, you know, when you start lookin' at all the cause and effects there's a lot of things that...to consider there.

BJ: It's kind of fun to be sittin' in on a conversation...listenin' to some of these fellows talkin' about... I had a neighbor that could... Virgil Wallsinger could tell you what conditions were such-and-such a time.

JG: You know, kind of keyed in a little bit. Like you said, like a massive jigsaw puzzle tryin' to fit all the parts...pieces together.

BJ: I get to thinkin' about it, they had...the district had a couple of six-foot rows. Maybe ___ they did more levee work than I've indicated. I know when I was goin' through the records sometime ago and pullin' out the high points there's a lot of difference in how people keep records.

JG: Oh yeah.

BJ: They didn't always say what they put the hours into so... It's like Dunham Wright's book, short on dates.

JG: Oh, is it? 'Cause I haven't seen it. I knew they got it out, but I haven't seen the book there.

BJ: I've got their...the original book that Frank Jasper when up and took records from and then they used...they made this other book out of that.

JG: Oh, I'll be darned.

BJ: It's interestin', but it...you have to have another resource to actually come up with dates, put it in line.

JG: 'Cause that's what I've been tryin' to do is go back, you know, through for what time permits, you know, and get those dates and cross check 'em to try and get 'em as accurate as we can. You know, and of course that's never ending, I mean, to really get into you should go back to all the county records and that, but just for the project there's not enough hours in the day to go that deep into it, but there's probably a lot of that.

BJ: Have you looked at the history book in the library? The big history book...

JG: Union County...

BJ: ...in the back room?

JG: Was that the Union County history you're talkin' about?

BJ: 'Could be. It's been a long time since I was back in there.

JG: 'Cause there's the Union/Wallowa County, you know, history that they've done. That was...

BJ: It won't ___ check the ___ thing out.

JG: No, no. You gotta be able to just look at it there in the library.

BJ: I think they got more than one copy there.

JG: Yeah.

BJ: And I didn't... I don't know, I was just lookin' for evidently one thing and...oh, I guess it was the State ditch and I haven't been able to get back to see what all was in there.

JG: 'Cause that...a lot of those, of course, they were more oriented to the families, you know, and personal history like there and not so much about what went on, you know, activities, unfortunately.

BJ: That's what it was?

JG: A lot of it. They don't get in real in-depth, you know, and that's real unfortunate because that's...would be a wonderful place to put that. They were more interested... And I think with those ___, you know, to finance 'em they went around basically sold people, you know, say, 'hey, for this much money we'll include you into the book', you know, type of thing.

BJ: Oh, I see. Is that what...

JG: Yeah, I think that's how they paid for those...those books compared to puttin' out a book just a history that, you know, try to finance it that way, but they're kind of self-paid for before they get 'em.

BJ: What kind of source do you have for upstream?

JG: There's, of course, with the mining up there in the...in Baker the Geological Department they've got the whole record of all the mines up there and there's combination between letters and people's remembrances, they've got some of that in there, newspaper articles in there and some, you know, the records forms and things like that. That tied together, you know, pretty good on there. And then, oh, during the logging years you have the upper Grande Ronde was all...well, from Stumptown up here at Perry went from there to the Grande Ronde Lumber Company, their records where they were logging, you know, running logs down the river, then Mt. Emily took over, you know, and they...they bought them out and then the ___ that's Boise Cascade. So some of that goes from '55 I, you know, been stayin' here...been here all that time so I can verify some of that that I've kept track of and then kind of go back in the records.

BJ: Seth Thomas was raised there at Starkey on that McCoy Creek. The house is still there, a little old cabin thing. So he was raised in there. He lives out there at Island City. He's on the City Council. It was Harry Thomas. I call him Seth.

JG: That's where the Dealy Road came through, you know, the old wagon stagecoach route came right through there. And so, again, by picking up the old maps and, you know, start puttin' all that together it starts pullin' together a little bit.

BJ: So I've just kind of relyin' on him as far as the river up there 'cause he used to ride horse up the channel before they put the river up...or the road up the river. Probably have a pretty good...and he's a fisherman, Jerry. He has a pretty good remembrance. In fact, there's another fella there, Ed Robertson, was raised up there too. So they're about...they're my age.

JG: Oh yeah. They'd be some good sources.

BJ: At least they're alive.

JG: Yeah, well, that's it.

BJ: They were this mornin'. [laughs]

JG: Kind of few and far between anymore we've lost so many, you know, that have that firsthand knowledge. Like I said, unfortunately, it wasn't done like twenty-five, fifty years ago would've been the ideal time to, you know, try...

BJ: As a kid he used to... Vays bring their horses over and put 'em up there. They came by his place, the old stock trail there. You could jump on a horse and go on help 'em up the...on up to the meadows. I don't know what all history he's had.

JG: That'd be some other sources to try and... 'Cause like I said, a lot of times you get little bits and pieces, you know, it starts fillin' in some holes.

BJ: Yeah.
JG: It's real helpful.
BJ: In fact, another fellow a good source is this Winnie...who was it...Winnie Taal.
JG: Oh, Winnie, yeah. He just passed away here.
BJ: Just died.
JG: Yeah, this past week here, yeah, this last week.
BJ: Good source of material.
JG: Oh yeah. 'Cause there with the old...
BJ: It's too late now.
JG: Yeah...real Mt. Emily Lumber Company.
BJ: Yeah.
JG: Yeah, 'cause they were up there. Of course all those land exchanges with...where they took over, you know, all that. I think it was over 100,000 acres went to La Grande Ranger District that used to be private land that they traded off. Of course logged in there and both the exchanged land plus the other land exchanged ___. They ___ a lot of...a lot of ground out there.
BJ: Yeah. That's about the only source I know of that is available and there's undoubtedly some others still available.
JG: The unfortunate part with computers these days, it's a wonderful source if you use it right, but like you said, like when you salvaged the stuff that got thrown in the trash can, you know. [laughs]
BJ: Yeah.
JG: 'Cause there at the...[recording stopped]