

Howard Fisk

5/89, T1, S1

JG: With that we can probably...

HF: You want me to answer your questions?

JG: Yeah, that'd be fine. With, uh... Just start with whatever you'd like to be credited for the by-line for this.

HF: Oh, no, no credit as far as I'm concerned.

JG: Identify and, you know, as far as anything that would come up information wise of just...of how...of like some people you think names are short names and others just the full names, but however if it's identified.

HF: You want me to give my name?

JG: Yeah, that'd be fine.

HF: Now? You want me to...

JG: Yeah, that'd be fine. I think we're all set.

HF: Okay. My name is Howard Fisk and I reside at 1203 'L' Avenue in La Grande, Oregon. I was born in Enterprise, Oregon 1916. And I spent considerable time in the mountains and in the area and most of Oregon. I spent nine years with Oregon State Police.

JG: When was that Howard that you were with the fleet...the State Police?

HF: '41. '41 on, yeah. I worked on... I worked on the Game Division through most of that time.

JG: When you were born in Enterprise did you grow up there as a boy that your early...?

HF: I wasn't there only a couple years and we moved to La Grande.

JG: Oh, I see. But you're still in Northeast Oregon then as you're growing up.

HF: Yes, yes. Most of my growing up time was spent around La Grande, Enterprise area and Pendleton area. And then...at that time.

JG: So it didn't... Did you get into the woods much, you know, while...before 1941 as far as ___

HF: Oh yes.

JG: So you have a lot of years previous to the Game Commission experience.

HF: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I did... I'd worked at the Boy Scouts for more years than I can remember. [laughs] And I've always had an interest, of course, in the outdoors, you know, working with the Scouts and people like that.

JG: Just from there would be to go through of any of your personal observations or information that you obtained from other people that have, you know, since gone as far as maybe starting with the individual species that are no longer either here in Northeast Oregon or are pretty rare to see of any sightings, such as the grizzly bear or the bighorn sheep that you mentioned.

HF: Mm-hmm. I think we might start with one of the largest and most feared of all the game animals and that's the grizzly bear, which Oregon at one time had a...had a population at one time. We had an experience with a grizzly bear on the Minam...on the Big Minam River where there were two that resided there. And during...during '37 and '38 the livestock commission in this area put up a bounty

- to...to get rid of them because they'd been...they took to killing stock, livestock, up in the area. There was a lot of...quite a few cattle and some sheep in that area and they were...they were getting their share of them, which I observed.
- JG: Was that on the... Was that on the lower Minam country?
- HF: No, that would be what you'd call... They ranged from the...what we called Huckleberry Trail downstream to Point Prominence area. They stayed in that area pretty much.
- JG: Okay.
- HF: But then they crossed over to the other side of the Big Minam, too. We've seen them over there, too, at that time. But we...we observed 'em. We observed them, hunting them. We never could get shots at 'em. However, I know this is a fact 'cause I talked to the sheepherder...had a bunch of sheep and he'd bedded his sheep at what they used to call Lost Lake area in there. It's a plateau...a landslip and therefore used to bed his sheep in there quite commonly. And he saw these two bear go through his sheep one night, moonlight night. He observed 'em and he shot at this one with a thirty-thirty rifle and knew that he had hit it because it had flinched and humped up a time or two after he shot. This bear by a fisherman was found in...later on, right at the junction of Little Minam and Big Minam River. It was layin' face down in the water dead that next spring...that next summer. So we know that he did...did away with that one. And then there was a gentleman here that I used to hunt and fish a lot with, name was Shorty Daniels...was an uncle of Norman Daniels here. He and I took...for two years we hunted this one grizzly. Never...never did get a shot at him. Of course, he was very...very evasive. We never did... And he stayed down on extremely steep __ slop area in there that he...just awfully hard to hunt him. And he was such a...such a game animal, too, you know. He could just about out guess you in every turn. [laughs] But anyway, finally, I think by the pressure we were putting on him, he left, he disappeared. Nobody ever knew what happened to him.
- JG: So he just pretty much left the country or died with nobody ever finding...
- HF: Evidently because... That's right. Nobody ever observed another grizzly bear after that and that was in '38, 1938.
- JG: Do you know of any other grizzlies that were sighted either previously to that or within your lifespan in Northeast Oregon at all?
- HF: Before that... Before that time the sightings were not too uncommon up in the High Lake region. And evidently it seemed to be a kind of a migration route from the Idaho area through that area up over the Imnaha...head of the Imnaha breaks, for instance, and up in that area. That's the way they seemed to come in from. That's the observation streak in there, you know, area. I talked to hunters at different times through the year that observed 'em. And of course, that ends the story on the grizzly as far as experience in Oregon. While I was working... While I was working in the Minam area another interesting thing happened on bighorn sheep on the old stock, not this new stock of bighorn sheep. This was in back in...in, oh, '36 to '38... '37... '36 and '37, the same year time, in fact. While hunting in there Daniels and myself observed six bighorn sheep, one of 'em was a nice full curl ram, on the Big Minam. And it was common practice then at that

time for... There was several bands of tame sheep using the same area and the biologists decided after investigating that they had absorbed the natural diseases of the wild...of the tame sheep, see, and they couldn't resist...didn't have the resistance and they died, it was passed on. And this is the last sighting of bighorns of the original...

JG: So about '37 then was the last of them.

HF: Yeah.

JG: What part of the Big Minam were you hunting?

HF: This was what they called the Pauch Creek area and in that area there on the breaks of the Big Minam is where these were observed. And these were... These were observed for quite some time to make sure what they were and everything. Because we...not only...we almost got up to where you could take photos. We never made it. There was just too much timber and brush. It would've been good area. But we did observe them close-in and we observed them with binoculars for quite some time.

JG: Was it pretty much up the heads of the canyon in there?

HF: Oh yes. Yeah. They were up under that cliff areas on the head of Pauch.

JG: Yeah, I've been in through there. [laughs] I took a horse through there, I got lost.

HF: Yeah, Lackey's Hole. Lackey's Hole, Pauch and in there. And to my knowledge this is one of the...just as far as I'm concerned...know, is the last sightings that anybody'd ever remember of up in that area the bighorn sheep of that time.

JG: Yeah, till they brought the new one...new branch in.

HF: Yeah. No doubt somebody have since, but... I mean, there must've some other people saw them too, but...

JG: Right.

HF: So anyway, but I remember very clearly. And that...that's real interesting.

JG: There wasn't any season on the duck hunting, was there, in the '30s?

HF: No, as far as hunting there was no season at all.

JG: That's what I thought.

HF: No.

JG: Except for those that wanted ___ [laugh]

HF: Yeah. And they seem like there was just a dwindle off, see, from stock.

JG: They had it all... I know they ran a lot of sheep back in that country.

HF: Right.

JG: And as far as, like you said, if there's a disease there they undoubtedly were...

HF: They trace back to where there's a migration route from Idaho country also across the Snake and up in through the Ural and up into the Imnaha basin, Hawkins Pass area, and where they...that seemed to be kind of a migration route for several animals in there.

JG: What type... Do you know was there a place along the Snake there where they used to cross or swim as far as comin' through?

HF: Almost...yeah... Almost down where the...where the dam is now. Almost is that same area.

JG: The Hells Canyon Dam?

HF: Right almost where the Hells Canyon Dam is right now. That's about the place. In fact, right...our sheep...our sheep that we have down in that area now cross back and forth on the dam itself right now.

JG: I'll be darned. [laughs] That was a easier way to get across.

HF: Yeah.

JG: How about as far as resident bald eagle? The ones... 'Cause right now we get a lot coming in the area here during the wintertime that evidently are wintering here or passing through. But as far as resident there don't seem to be very many that are in Northeast Oregon as far as where they breed here or raise young ones.

HF: I... The last...known it was fairly common on Wallowa Lake at one time. There was two nice big bald eagle nests up on the...the west side of the lake up in the high pondosa pine...pondosa pine. In there two nice big nests, stick nests, that they used to habited. Every year they had young ones. And the...the present officer was up there at that time __, George Rogers was him name, whom I knew real well. Who's since passed along. Told me that he made one 'rest of twenty-two plinkers shooting at 'em up in the nest and hitting them and shooting them. And from boats, mind you, from boats.

JG: Do you know about when that was?

HF: Yeah. This was...let's see...this would go back...this would... Yeah, this was in the early '40s. I'm not gonna pin it down exact, but it was in the early '40s, '41, '42, '43, right in that area. And then they quit coming, of course, coming in. Whether all the adults were killed or not, I don't know. But they were shot and...

JG: That ran 'em out of there.

HF: But it used to be real common to see the ospreys getting fish in the lake and then as they would start circling, getting their altitude, the eagles would make them drop it and pick it up and the way up. It used to be common observation there on the Wallowa Lake.

JG: It'd be a real sight, be a little show.

HF: In fact, we at one time had some golden eagles that used to...on Mt. Emily area. They were quite common up there. They're not so much of a fish eater as the bald eagle, of course, but they... There on the wilder regions and I have seen deer killed up there being fed on in the wintertime by bald...by American eagle. Well, American eagle.

JG: Bald or the golden?

HF: Golden.

JG: Golden ones, right.

HF: Not American. The golden eagle. But I haven't seen any of those around either. It's a long, long while.

JG: Yeah, 'cause there's quite a few over around toward, well, just up above us in Union there and of course up toward Medical. There's quite a few up, you know, that country.

HF: Goldens?

JG: Yeah, the goldens.

HF: Goldens. Oh, that's good.

JG: Yeah, 'cause there's a nest I photographed years ago and I've always been wantin' to go back that they kept goin' back to each year.

HF: That's great, yeah. I'm glad to hear that. I have an interesting little story that my father...going back to my father's time in Enterprise country before...now this was before Wallowa Lake Dam was put in, before the power dam was put in, he's talking about. He used to tell me about the...the runs of bluebacks that used to go up into the lake and they used to spear them and gaff hook 'em in the river, in Wallowa River. There used to be huge runs of them, you know, big runs of them, large runs. And they would put them away and for winter. A lot... Many of the people lived up there at that time did that. They used to put 'em away for winter, smoked 'em, dry 'em, everything like this. And...now you know the characteristic of them they go through a lake and... They go through a lake into the head waters of the lake and then spawn, you see, and then come back through. When they put the dam in they landlocked 'em. They landlocked 'em in there.

JG: How... How high was that dam or the level of the lake in comparison...'cause I know the dam's in there now, but I'm not familiar with the difference in lake depth there. Howard, do you know about how much distance that would've been that they would've raised there...because the landlock of the...what the height was roughly?

HF: They tell me that if you measure at low water time in September down in front of the dam that that's the depth it used to be, used to run out at that depth. That's what they claim, now I... So that, of course, I don't remember when the dam was put in. It was in early...way back in my father's time when it was put in there for power. But it, uh...it's just an interesting thing the bluebacks were...are a small salmon, you know, they're a small salmon, but then when they landlocked, why, they became smaller and smaller and then they started calling them Yanks and then we reverted it back into the term Cocany again.

JG: Mm-hmm. 'Cause some of the old literature or documentation, like Spalding, which was, of course, back in the 1830s, talking about the salmon runs up where the ___ were catching just all kinds of 'em up along the Wallowa River at that time.

HF: You bet. Yeah, that...that's right. And the sturgeon used to run up the river.

JG: Oh, did they?

HF: Dad told me...you mention sturgeon here...there used to be a run of...they used to...sturgeon were commonly seen in the Wallowa River. My dad said that they used to gaff 'em out of the river, put 'em up for winter.

JG: What period of time would that've been about?

HF: Oh man, about 1093 to 1911. Right about that period. They used to have quite a time there and then people putting them up for, you know, for eating purposes.

JG: Well, yeah, they...a lot survived off that.

HF: Yeah, right.

JG: Was there anything else with the, um, change or that period of time like for where you were born up there and time up in there and rememberin' what your dad had said as far as the change in the salmon runs or other fish, like you said the sturgeon, up the Wallowa River?

HF: Oh yes! It seems right after they put the dam in the runs tapered off down to zero almost, you see. But I can remember in the '30s and '40s we still used to catch

'em in Wallowa River, blueback, still running up. But then they just died off. You don't hear of them anymore at all.

JG: ___the Columbia dams went in ___

HF: Same thing. Because characteristically they have a lake that they...that's part of their...that's part of their spawning cycle. They have a lake that they spend some time in and then they go up in the headwaters of that lake and spawn. And, you see, and those...those cocany that are up there landlocked still do that, but then they can't escape back into the ocean.

JG: Can't get back to the ocean.

HF: They don't have that escapage.

JG: How 'bout as far as like otter...we talked, or mentioned...that would be in Northeast Oregon where they're pretty rare to see, aren't they anymore?

HF: Yes. At one time they were...they were very common. River otter were in the valley here. I remember when they were in the valley. I don't remember ever seeing any in what we called the Ditch, the government ditch, but I remember seeing them in the old river channel as far as the breaks where Catherine Creek goes in. I've seen 'em up that far.

JG: Where Catherine comes into the Grande Ronde?

HF: In the Grande Ronde. Where Catherine goes into Grande Ronde. I've seen 'em up that far. That's over by Gray's old dairy area, you know, over there.

JG: When you mentioned the Ditch where...what...

HF: They put a... They put a ditch... The government dug a big ditch through the valley, see, to get rid of all those crooks and turns.

JG: Yeah, all the crooks, right.

HF: They straightened that out, you see.

JG: Do you remember about when that was put in?

HF: Oh man. I'd hate to give you a date on that. I just can't recall the date...the time that was put in. It was before... It was before the '30s. It was in the '20s sometime in there.

JG: 'Cause I know flyin' I've seen it a lot, it's just a matter...I didn't realize when they'd actually done it.

HF: Yeah. It was... It was manmade.

JG: Were the river otter pretty much like through all the different rivers, tributaries in all of Northeast Oregon pretty much?

HF: Oh yes. Wallowa River had them. Minam had them, up into the Minam they'd go up...go up both forks, you know, there where they fork they'd go up both of those. And then down below they were real common down in around the ___ district to Troy, that area there. They were common down in there. Real common down in there and down into the main river. People sighted 'em all the time down...and a few trapped 'em even, at that time, you know, in the '30s. But now the only time I've seen any in the past ten, fifteen years has been over in the...below Burnt River...or Burnt River...

JG: Deep Valley.

HF: Below Deep Valley Reservoir Dam, below that dam I've seen...

JG: Powder River.

HF: Mm-hmm. And I've also seen the sign in there where they'd been working in there. So they... They were in there ___ eat on 'em, ___ on 'em...or feed on the fish. Then I've seen them...observed them also in there. And there's still some in the Snake River, of course.

JG: Yeah.

HF: Yeah.

JG: What about antelope? Again, by readin' some of the old accounts there seemed to be quite a few antelope that were north of Enterprise out along those grasslands which was...would've been way back in the old early days. Do you know anything about when they were last seen or anything about their populations at all?

HF: I sure don't. I don't...

JG: I was kind of surprised 'cause I didn't even, you know, really think of them till just the other day I heard that they were out that way, too. I never thought...

HF: I just never...never heard any of the old-timers talk about them. Sharp-tailed grouse, of course, were around Flora area, you know. They used to hunt them there quite regularly. It's an interesting... We talked about spaces of time when animals were scarce. My father run stage...he drove stagecoach from Wallowa to Elgin. And they used to on Cricket Flat up on top it was just a big mud...the road was awfully muddy in the springs, of course, after the snow would melt. He told of that a deer...the deer were so scarce at that time...I'm going...that's going back in the early 1900s again, back in the early 1900s from '03 to '11 in that area, in that space of time... He said that they were so scarce at that time that if they saw a deer track they'd stop the stage and let the people look at the tracks.

JG: Oh, for goodness sakes!

HF: There was...show 'em it was a mule deer track.

JG: Did he ever say anything of why...whatever happened to 'em?

HF: Yeah, he said that there were big bands of hunters that used to go out and commercial 'em in there real heavily and they just got 'em down to where they... And they didn't seem to, you know, when they'd gather in the winter it didn't seem to make any difference what time they marked 'em. They marked and that's what they'd get 'em...that's the worst. That's when they really hurt 'em the worst is in the...in the...

JG: What were they doing? Shipping back east?

HF: Most of it was shipped, yeah, most of it was shipped back. [pause] And of course you... We talked about the moose.

JG: Oh yeah.

HF: That's kind of interesting. I think we might have...we may have some moose someday in this area just natural migration from the Idaho side because of the sightings that archers have observed last year up in the...up in the...the head of the Imnaha area, up in that area is where they were observed in that area. And then I found a shed moose antler on in the Big Minam.

JG: Do you remember when that was when you found that?

HF: Oh yes. Oh yes. Carl Stone was with me and it was in '71 on the lower Big Minam down what they used to call Stockman's cabin area.

JG: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm.

HF: And while waiting for him to come in to lunch...we were fishing...waiting for him to come in for lunch I saw something shining up on the hill on open...open ___ just a few scattered trees. And I kept seein' and I took the binoculars and looked at it and it was a...I could see it was an antler. So I walked up there and it was a moose antler. I turned it over to the Fish and Wildlife down here. They have it now.

JG: Did it look like it'd been...like extremely old?

HF: It was a shed antler and they shed in the spring just like your antelope...or antelope...like our elk do, of course.

JG: Right. But I meant it looked like it was shed about that time, relatively recently?

HF: It hadn't been nibbled on even by...

JG: By porcupines.

HF: ...by porcupines so it must have been that same spring. I would say that same spring that we were in there fishing. So this...this proves that a moose sometime that winter was in that area somehow. [laughs]

JG: Come from someplace anyway.

HF: And it was evidently was a young moose, but it was a palmated...palmated antler. They figured it probably a three-year old or less, two-year old maybe.

JG: As far as the...we talked about beaver...or the otter population, what about beaver and the change that you've seen over the years from way back where there...

HF: Number one, it was against the law to trap them for years and years, you know. And then in the...through the '20s, you know, the population increased. Umatilla River, where I was at that time, I used to trap over in there. I used to have a trap line when I'd go to school. And they...beaver was closed. And then they built up and built up and increased to the point to where they finally had a season on them. And the seasons, of course, were...let's see... They came in about... They come in the middle '40s when they started allowing beaver trapping again. But then they become, you know, thinned out in all the areas now have a certain population of beaver. Our Grande Ronde here has and Umatilla River has a good population of beaver. And the regulate them pretty carefully so that they don't clean them out, you know. Let so many tags...

JG: Now from what you've seen as far as like from recent years back into the '50s do you have any idea for population? 'Cause I remember when I got out here in about '55 and up the Grande Ronde there seemed to be a lot of beaver up in that area at that time and back even up in Medical Springs way. Of whether that population has increased or decreased or pretty well stayed the same?

HF: You look at the cutting signs and the signs there's...there's a lot of fresh cutting sign along the Grande Ronde River yet and up in Catherine Creek and all up through that area too where they're cutting those saplings and feeding, you know. I think it's pretty stable. It seems to be holding...holding a pretty level stable population, the way it looks to me. And observing them, also, at night and so forth. They're really an easy animal at night to observe. But I walk right up to them while they were...while they were workin', cutting with a flashlight and they'll just sit there and keep cutting. [laughs]

JG: —

HF: You probably did that.
JG: That was a really too much. I know I've ran and fell in a beaver pond or two.
[laughs]
HF: Over the years, but...
JG: Yeah, I had really a __ out in the woods too much lately so that I, you know, haven't really kept up of what's, you know, the current situation was, but I did see one up, oh, going over towards Pendleton there up the Laman Springs. Up on top there there's beaver workin' right along the road in there here last...couple years ago when I was workin' that hook project.
HF: Bingham Springs?
JG: It was right along...
HF: Up to Umatilla you mean?
JG: No, it was right up goin' up through Ukiah or towards...
HF: Camas and up in that country.
JG: Yeah, right up on that Camas Creek. It was workin' right next to the road. I was kind of surprised 'cause he...
HF: Well, yeah.
JG: ...probably about twenty feet off the road.
HF: That's interesting. Yeah, they're an interesting animal. Beaver Creek, you know, that comes in the Grande Ronde used to have a...quite a population of beaver. And I haven't been in there for years, but there used to be some beaver dams up on... That's where it got it's name. Way up on that. Of course, it comes out of the intake... That comes out of our city water intake, you know.
JG: Yeah. Now Mark __ was talking about the...used to be the caretaker there up at the intake that was...had, I guess, quite a bit of information, used to trap pine martins.
HF: Oh yes.
JG: Remember who that was or...?
HF: Oh, let's see. What was his name? Boy.
JG: I guess if I ask that question enough somebody or other [laugh] will recall because Mark was same way. He couldn't think for his life.
HF: Can't remember his name.
JG: Yeah. That's one I thought I'd try to run down maybe, see if there's... 'Cause I guess he kept quite a record there of the pine martin of...not only, I guess, doing some trapping, but a little more of the information that he actually sat down and documented, which would be kind of interesting.
HF: I've trapped 'em way back in years and years ago when we used to trap them. And they're...they colony, you know, they stay in family groups and large groups of them sometimes. They'll just move around an area and hunt it out, you know. And, of course, in the wintertime primarily their...their food chain...the main part of their food chain is pine squirrels.
JG: Pine squirrels.
HF: You bet. Yeah. And if you got a low population of pine squirrels you get a low population of pine martin. That seems to go hand in hand.
JG: Did you ever get any sighting or hear any of wolverine at all in this country?

HF: Mm-hmm. Had an actually sighting on Mt. Emily on the upper part of the face of the valley by Fred McCoy. And it was more than one of 'em together, Fred and...Fred and...Fred McCoy and...was it Ellis...Ellis McCoy was with him. They sighted this wolverine up there and first thought it was a cub bear when they first saw it and then they got a good...better look at it and looked at it with glasses and they saw it was a wolverine. And then up on top of what we call Tygh Camp area I observed...I observed 'em in there myself years ago. But I haven't seen any in there for a long, long while. And no sign... They used to see their...used to see their tracks, you know, so...

JG: Yeah, 'cause I... I haven't heard of anything, you know, in recent years at all whether there's any still around or not.

HF: The last time I followed one where he had been hunting down through a little ravine I followed one for quite a spell up in there the last time. And that's the last sign that I ever saw of them, other than their... You can't miss their sign...their tracks. You know, they make tracks different than any other.

JG: Very distinctive, yeah.

HF: Yeah. I followed one for quite some time. That's the last I've ever seen of any.

JG: About when was that, Howard? Do you remember roughly?

HF: I was hunting and it was...that was in.... That was in mid-'40s, '46, right in about there. It was about '46. Then, of course, they found them in the Sisters, you know. They know they're in there. They're... I guess they're in there yet.

JG: Oh really?

HF: Mm-hmm. We had a wolf sighting up on...up on...out of Granite, you know. We... That wolf had been sighted by that old caretaker up there at Granite, you know. He's... He's saw him every winter.

JG: I'll be darned. When was that?

HF: Oh, he saw 'em... He was observed there up till...up till about six years ago.

JG: Oh, for goodness sakes! No, I hadn't heard about that. I'll be darned.

HF: Oh yeah. I observed him. I observed him also up the head of Trail Creek. In the wintertime I observed him there. He was... He was definitely by himself, big lobo. Just a...evidently a big lobo and he was huge. He was large.

JG: What color was he?

HF: He was grey.

JG: Grey.

HF: Just... I would... Just a grizzled grey color and fully mature animal, no doubt about that. And at the times I saw him was...he never did see me the first time a saw him. Never did observe me. I watched him. I was backed up against...out of the...out of a snowstorm, in fact, when I first saw him. And he come along right below me.

JG: That'd be quite a thrill. [laugh]

HF: Yeah. That was the head of Trail Creek's where that was, in there. And bow hunters observed him in that same area, almost in the same area, between there and Granite he's been observed. I know the name of one of the archers, Jimmy...Jimmy Goddard. I interviewed him on it. I asked him about it. Oh, he saw him. Got a good look at him. And he said, "Well, he looks just the wolves down there in the zoo." That's the only wolf he'd ever seen, of course, was in the

- zoo. But he said he looked just like those. The big paw, great large paw on 'em, so forth.
- JG: Do you recall anything on the wild horses of...in Northeast Oregon here or ___ wild that probably, you know, more of the Indian. I remember up Spring Creek country, of course it used to be a lot...good number up in there.
- HF: Dark Canyon. They observed... I observed some this year...last year we observed some up there at the head of Dark Canyon. You know, every year the Indians used to have round-up up in there. They used to round them up and had a big corral up there they used to put them in and then they'd have a sale. But I understand they don't do that anymore, but they used to. That used to be an annual affair.
- JG: Oh, I'll be darned! I didn't realize that.
- HF: Yeah. But, you know, those...those turned out as... Some of those animals were...were good animals. But the government when they used to have their cavalry's stallions they used to turn their stallions loose into this...areas like this, you see. And they...some of them were well bred animals.
- JG: I remember back in '55 there were some really good lookin' ones and there's real knot heads, too. [laughs]
- HF: Oh yeah.
- JG: Kind of an combination, you know.
- HF: Yeah, that's right.
- JG: Dark head ___ into the knot heads, but right up on Spring Creek there's...I don't know if it was a stallion and mare they get a colt there may not have been a stallion, but he's sure good lookin' horses that were in there at that time.
- HF: Yeah. They range all through that area and you're liable to find 'em anyplace, the head of Meadowbrook, way up on the Indian Lake, up Lost Creek. Up in there anywhere you're liable to spot 'em. Clear over as far as head of McKai and they range...they still range that whole area in there. Bear Wallow, Lick Creek...not Lick Creek...Flat Lake area and all up through there. Do you recall anything on the changes of predator control of what from growing up of the difference or change or periods of anything there related to various species as far as predator control is concerned?
- JG: It seems like your predator control isn't a problem till you get around winter sheep and that's the key. The cattlemen don't worry about predators, hardly, very rarely, except that case I told you about the grizzly up... That's about the only instance I...we ever had around this area on cattlemen. But the sheepmen they...they have a predator problem, why... In fact, in Wallowa County I remember my uncle used to raise cattle up on the Chessnimnus River and Crow Creek country up in the Chessnim country. And you want up there to hunt, why, he'd give you permission to hunt alright, but he'd always tell you, "Don't kill any coyotes" 'cause they kept his...the field mice down and he had a bunch of grass seed up there. He was really... He didn't want anybody shootin' coyotes 'cause they...they like field mice. [laughs] That's a fact, too.
- HF: What was that? Chessnim country?

JG: Yeah. So...but he was cattle, see, he had no sheep. But when you get around sheep country then that's a different...that's a horse of a different color right there.

HF: Do you remember what the...as far as what means they were using for predator control over from the early days, or, you know...

JG: The government... My uncle was a government trapper at Wallowa County for years and years. I used to go with him a lot. And he used to use hounds. If...say, for instance, bear would get in sheep or whatever he would...he would go after that particular bear. He didn't kill all the bear with poison, he didn't believe in poison at all. He would select that animal until he got it. Coyotes much the same way. He didn't... He didn't believe in usin' strychnine or anything like that. But he had... He had different ways that were very secretive to, like, most trappers. That he handled these situations, you know, his complaints that he got.

JG: Was that pretty much the...the...except for the sheepherders themselves that the government trapper would be the pretty much the primary source as far as predator control at that time, or did they have other means of going out to try to control?

HF: The government... The government had a predator control system at that time they were using. They used a poisoned bait system at that time. And I know I can remember my uncle getting in some pretty heated arguments with them. He didn't want them poisoning on his place. He wouldn't let them on his place with any poisoning.

JG: What period of time was that? Do you remember roughly?

HF: Oh, yeah. This is back... This is back in the '20s I'm talkin' about.

JG: '20s.

HF: When I was a young lad up...we used to go up there every summer and work on the ranch. And I remember him tellin' us, you know, don't shoot any coyotes. [laughs] But that's... At that time that was... In fact, they still use trappers, the state has trappers and the government has trappers. Over at Union, oh...what's his name at Union?

JG: Oh, let's see. Dell Pierre, or...

HF: Dell Pierre, yeah.

JG: Yeah, used to be. I don't know if he's still doing that or if somebody else.

HF: I don't know.

JG: 'Cause I thought he moved out of the county.

HF: I haven't heard from him for a long while. I used to see...

JG: 'Cause I know he used to be.

HF: Yeah, right. Dell Pierre, that's right. But anyway, they...they would on complaints mostly. They didn't... That's all that they operated on the last long, long while was just on complaints only.

JG: What were they usin'? Ten-four...

HF: Ten-eighties.

JG: Ten-eighty, yeah.

HF: Yeah. They...they... Those ten-eighty stations were...were quite common at one time and then they passed a ruling against that, you see.

JG: Do you remember about when that was phased out or when they quit?

HF: Let's see. Yeah, I can tell ya pretty close when they quit it because when they stopped it was in, mmm, not too long back.

JG: No, it hasn't been. I know.

HF: I was gonna say... Let's see... '76, right in that neighborhood.

JG: Do you remember when they started that, by any chance? With the ten-eighty, about when...when they actually started using it?

HF: Let's see. I was running hounds and we used to have to be careful with our hounds up in the mountains because then once...we had to know where every one of those stations was and... Because we lost a hound, why, we'd check those stations real carefully so that we wouldn't catch him there eatin' on...on those baits in there. And that was in...that was during the '70s, early '70s, late '60s and through the '60s and early '70s at that time. And they were common then. They used to have 'em stationed all around. But they...they marked them plainly with red stakes, red-painted stakes and signs, you know, so that...warned you.

JG: Right. So the dogs can read the signs. [laugh]

HF: The sign for you and I and then...but then the red was for the guy that had the dog. You better... When he see those sign he better pick his dog up.

JG: Just the dog couldn't read the signs, is all.

HF: And then they used to have what they called a game-getter. It was cyanide. At that time back in the...in the '30s and '40s was quite common. And the... The government trapper used to use those. And they were __ buried in the ground and then they'd use a tuft of wool, usually, triggered it, you see. When an animal, coyote, would pick that, why, __ right up his nose and one puff and he was gone, he was dead. And he wouldn't go very far. He was usually right there. But the only trouble with that, of course, they got...they had...they got quite a few dogs, domestic animals, that way too, including even once in a while the horses would grab and pull on it. So they...they quit those, they stopped those.

JG: Pretty hard to target the one that they want.

HF: Yeah, well, this is it, see, it's not selective at all.

JG: No.

HF: No.

JG: Talkin' about that too, was there...you ever run across as far as lynx? I know there's a lot of bobcat in the country, but as far as lynx?

HF: Once in a while. Once in a while in the Mt. Emily area there'd be a lynx cat work down from the north region. Pretty rare. And I hunted in there for years with hounds and once we had a...I've had a couple of runs on lynx in there.

JG: Do your remember about when the last as far as sightings of those that you're aware of?

HF: Oh yeah. Yeah, I harvested a couple up in there. I harvested a couple on Mt. Emily. And that...yeah, that was back in...back in early '60s, '61, '2, '3, through there. And then I...then I hadn't...but then that was it on them. Most the rest of them are bobcats, of course. But they were different...they were different animal. In fact, they were...they were... Their tails was we always went by. Their tails were bent a different than a bobcat. They were... Their tails were bent at different and they were lankier, big feet, bigger feet, more hair on the feet, this type of thing, and not so...not so compact, they were strung out more.

JG: I was sayin' probably there's...you know, they were pretty few and far between, but bobcats seem to be pretty...quite a bit...

HF: Yeah. But...well, bobcats are...they're...

JG: Are they going down?

HF: They're in trouble. You bet they are. They're in trouble. But, again, the top of their food chain in rabbits and squirrels and if those cycles are up you're gonna see a lot of bobcats because... I have seen large litters when there's lots of feed, small litters when there was no feed and this is just natural.

JG: Yeah. 'Cause I know as far as jack rabbit __ that Keeting country in North Powder or Telecaset country used to be just alive with rabbits.

HF: That's right.

JG: And it's been a lot of years since...it's rare to see 'em very much.

HF: I'll bet. That's right. And your population of your...your bobcats will go right with it, yeah. You know, this is interesting the way you names bobcats and coyotes in almost the same breath. I noticed this hunting 'em with hounds that in the timbered area where there was snowshoe...[end tape]

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HF: ...over, you know, up in the Minam. I used to go in and stay all night back up in the Minam, you know, and hunt up in there for cougar a lot with hounds. And that's when you see a lot of that stuff, you know, up in there like that. But I did notice that when the...you'd see...you went after bobcat, that's what I was primarily after, and if I'd find coyote tracks bob...bobs would be out on the end of it. They wouldn't be in those thickets.

JG: Did you ever either observe or know any of the background as far as the Indian grouts going back in to fish?

HF: Oh yeah.

JG: What areas those were that they were...?

HF: Back in the...

JG: And periods of time?

HF: Yeah. I can remember in '30s, in the early '30s the Indians used to come down to...when that flat where the State Park is now on the Wallowa River, where call Salmon Hatchery Hole...

JG: Yeah.

HF: I've seen that full of teepees in there. I can remember that myself. And they'd go in there to fish. They'd come in every year.

JG: What were those? Were those like the Umatilla, Cayuse?

HF: Mm-hmm. Umatilla, Cayuse, yeah. Chinook would sometime...of course, there's a lot of those intermarried. Nez Perce, too. They'd mix in there. Of course the Nez Perce and they'd all mix...intermarry. Yeah, I've seem 'em down there many times down there fishin'. Mostly the fishing was mostly all done by the squaws and the kids. And they had their dryin' racks out there that they used to... I sure wished I'd a...wished you'd been around and take some photos of that.

JG: Oh, yeah. There's a real...

HF: And then it just...the Indian...the Indian usage just dropped clear off to nothing until they began gaffing and so forth up Catherine and up Grande Ronde here the last, oh, what, the last fifteen years they started doin' that.

JG: It seemed they came bagging 'cause I remember some stories where the Indians like up Catherine Creek way back early in the century they used to go up there all the time.

HF: I've seem them up there, yeah. Oh yeah. They used... You'd see the teepees along there once in a while up there around the State Park, you know where the...what they call the State property up in there?

JG: Right.

HF: We've seen 'em up in there. And...you bet. They... And they go up and then you'd see the drying racks. They were taking 'em for food.

JG: Now where else was the other place there you're talk...was there something up the Grande Ronde or were they...

HF: These...yeah, these Indians were... I talked to a chief about why they were doing that and he said they're not supposed to according to tribal rules, but he said, "We can't control them anymore. They're out of our control."

JG: These are the recent ones?

HF: Yeah, these last ones, these last ones. He says they're takin' 'em and sellin' 'em. They were very much against that. And he said, "They're not supposed to be...according to our tribal rules they're not supposed to be up in the spawning areas. They're not supp... They're supposed to stay out of those." He said, "That's been a rule forever." They just didn't go up in the spawning areas and bother the salmon because they knew that was the propagation for next year and the years to come, you know.

JG: I remember wasn't Phil telling me about like the water fowl whether you got or aware or made observation of that, the bird populations like in the Grande Ronde Valley the variance or the difference over the years for like the numbers of ducks and geese that were...compared to today of how many there were years ago.

HF: It's...again, habitat's a key. We're lost... We've lost our habitat. You've gotta have that first. You've gotta have something to hold 'em and we don't have it except for the areas that the Fish and Wildlife have kept for us.

JG: Yeah, designated.

HF: Yeah. We've lost our places like the Grande Ronde River one time was timber strip from Island City clear through. There was a solid timber strip clear through and down into what we call...used to call the Pierce property, which is the next bridge down on. That used to be clear through the valley that way, but then that's all been cut out. It's all been cut and burned.

JG: Was that mostly cottonwoods that were in there?

HF: Oh, a lot of willow, a lot of willow, cottonwood. Primarily willow, oh, and alder. Those'd deciduous. There was no...no evergreen. And...yeah, like you said, cottonwood.

JG: Was that pretty much just a...like a narrow band or did it actually creep out quite a ways from the river?

HF: At one time it did. One time it was quite a ways out and then it...as the need for more land to farm, why, they just kept narrowing, narrowing till where they finally took bulldozers and just dozed 'em out.

JG: Right to the water's edge.

HF: Mm-hmm. Burnt them, yeah, to where it is now ___. At one time when Pierce owned that, you know, that used to be a game...game...game preserve.

JG: I didn't know that.

HF: Down from the second bridge...from the second bridge... You know the road that goes through right behind the Terry Trailers that goes clear through the valley there?

JG: Yeah. That bridge there?

HF: From that bridge down used to be a game refuge when Mr. Pierce owned that...when Senator Pierce owned that. And then...in fact, being a...being in politics is the way he got this set aside as a game refuge. And then...then they pulled it off, you know, they pulled it back off, the refuge designation and opened it to hunting. And that was choice hunting for years and years in there because of that. It was just choice hunting in there.

JG: What period of time was that, do you remember when that was made a game refuge or the period that it was?

HF: Yes. I remember it was in about 19...1930 when it was still a game refuge and it was about...pulled off about...the game refuge was pulled off about...oh, '36, '37, right in that area, opened up to hunting. And the Pierce boys owned that...of course after...after Mr. Pierce died, their father...old Senator Pierce after he passed on, of course, then it was handed down, of course, in the family. And then they used to farm that over there against Hot Lake there. They used to have that area in there. That was the home place, in fact, there. Where the Game Commission now owns it there. In fact, all that area in there that the Game Commission has for bird sanctuary used to be Pierce property at one time.

JG: I didn't know that.

HF: Yeah, it's...

JG: Do you remember about when the actual big change started occurring of, like you said, clearing out the...the __ habitat of taking the trees out and where the population then started changing rapidly?

HF: Yeah, the advent of...the advent of...you might say the advent of large expensive machinery is what started. They had to have more land to farm in order to make...pay for this machinery and so forth, you see, and taxes and everything went along with it. And this...this was just repetitive over and over and this is what...what created this problem. And then I noticed out there, like the Pierce land, that every time it was resold, why, there'd be some more timber __, you know, investment...this investment situation, you know, you need...to clear more land. And it wasn't that hard to clear, you know, really. It was just a matter of getting there and...

JG: Oh yeah, with the big machinery.

HF: ...scrubbin' that out...deciduous stuff out of there and burning it.

JG: A little different from the turn-of-the-century did it by hand.

HF: Yes, that's right.

JG:

HF: There's a... There's another interesting thing that you haven't talked about and that's the advent...the moving...the slow migration of the whitetail deer into this area right around La Grande...and south of La Grande even. I happen to know that...that nine out of ten bucks that were killed on the Rankin property were whitetail...these bucks last season.

JG: Oh, I didn't know that. I'll be darned.

HF: I remember the time when that was unheard of. But they're coming in and they're coming in... They're moving down from the Washington...state of Washington country. Up in the Troy area they could move steadily south until now they're quite common around here.

JG: I'll be darned.

HF: They're quite common. You see them quite regularly.

JG: We're feedin' now about...oh, __ this year I think we counted 128 head there around the house there feedin' during the wintertime there. There's one way off that it looked like a whitetail. Surprised to see it.

HF: Yeah. They're there. There're a lot of 'em there. You bet. That's...that'... But the last we kept track of the one that were killed in Rankin's that actual fact, nine out of ten of 'em were whitetail bucks.

JG: I'll be darned!

HF: And I observed several in there during elk season, whitetails. Nice whitetail bucks and does with fawns with 'em, so forth. And they're so easy to keep track of.

JG: Oh yeah. They're easy to see.

HF: That's quite interesting migration, really.

JG: Oh yeah.

HF: Yeah.

JG: That's a real significant...

HF: Sure is.

JG: Do you know anything about...know...like they brought the elk into the Billy Meadows area out from Jackson Hole.

HF: My dad drove one of the elk sleds.

JG: Oh, did he? [laughs] I suppose to hold the...

HF: Yeah. I have... I have a photo someplace of Dad up on the...

JG: I'll be darned.

HF: ...on the sled, yeah, one of the sled. They took 'em by wagon, you know, as far as they could and then when the snow got too deep they put 'em...moved 'em into sleds.

JG: Do you remember what year that was or about what year?

HF: Yeah, they took 'em twice, 1910 and 1913 I believe is right. Something like that. I believe that's right if I remember right. But I observed 'em when I was a kid growin' up...little kid growin' up. We used to ride... I used to ride... In fact, they used to ride the Snake River breaks because...in the summer. All summer that was my job. I run... I rode from Cherry Creek to what they used to call Coal Springs Cabin and had stop-offs, you know, along the way, different places to stop and stay over night. When I was only eleven years old I did that. And

the...the point that we's tryin' to make there is... And I remember the elk fence, see, there at the elk pasture at Billy Meadows, that's where it was. And when we'd ride cattle around that and, why, we'd see the elk all the time and, in fact, we begin to see more and more outside. And the old caretaker I talked to him one day why. He said, well, he said, "There are fences breaking down all around and they're getting' out." They're getting out.

JG: What'd they have? Just like a big pasture then that they kept 'em in there?

HF: It was an eight-foot fence. An eight-foot hog-tied fence. Yeah, I remember that old fence just plain as can be. And he stayed in a little cabin on the inside. And then we used to begin then and we'd gather up cattle we'd have some elk in there every once in a while. You had to be careful it was in the ___ season. Those bulls get pretty cranky you get move 'em around.

JG: Do you know anything else about any other elk that were from other areas or where the other elk came from? Because like all of Northeast Oregon, of course ___...

HF: Those are Yellowstone there.

JG: Right.

HF: Those... There was a natural grouping of elk still hung up around the...they had...what would you call it...Trail Creek area, Anthony Lake area there was a...there was a group of elk in there and they were Roosevelt.

JG: But they were natural...

HF: Oh yeah, they were here. They were here. There wasn't very many, but they was...there was a couple little bands of 'em up in there. And they... In fact, over on the...even up far this way as the Beaver Creek drainage there was in there too, a few.

JG: 'Cause I'd heard from one fellow that he's mentioned somebody up...I think right in that southeast corner of Washington had some elk about the time they brought the Billy Meadows bunch in that... I don't know if it was a private herd or he had some over in there and they evidently, you know, got mixed together, you know, probably.

HF: Yeah. But the first... They opened the season in 1933 and I hunted in that season up there at Billy Meadows because I knew the area and I went in there with a group of people, we went in there hunting...elk hunting in 1933. They had deer season and elk hunting at the same time at that time...that year, 1933. We went in there and camped at Hollow Log Springs, that's where we hunted out of.

JG: What about the deer population and compared like in the '30s there when you were hunting there compared to recent times? And the elk population? Have any feel there of the...just population densities or distribution?

HF: Of course we didn't have the hunters that we have now, of course. Now where as near the hunters. But it was hard hunting then in the early '30s. It was really hard. You had to go out and really hunt to...to find a deer...buck. And at that time was bucks only for years. 'Couldn't hunt does till later on in the...let's see...the late '30s the herds began to grow to where they were eating themselves out of house and home. They were dying. They was dying in the spring so the Fish and Wildlife, "Hey, this is no good. Why not let the hunters harvest 'em, see?" And that's when we started having the either sex seasons.

JG: Was that in pretty general ___ over?
HF: In the late '30s. In the late '30 and early '40s.
JG: Yeah. But that pretty general all over Northeast Oregon, or just certain areas?
HF: Pretty general.
JG: Pretty general.
HF: Yeah, pretty general. We had some tremendous kills...winter kills areas like Murders Creek up out of the John Day and up on Catherine Creek...oh man, it was terrific the kills...winter kill in there on Catherine. It wasn't anything for the...for the maintenance man...highway man there to pick up a couple of dump loads a day, you know, and haul those carcasses out of there that were died...had died along the road...the highway there.
JG: What was that? Kind of just weather or combination of weather and feed?
HF: Just nothin' to eat.
JG: Just nothin' to eat, yeah.
HF: Just too many...too many animals for the amount of food. It...well, see because before that bucks only and those does, you see, were building up and building up and building up and to where they just ate themselves out of house and home.
JG: Over the years have you seen any difference in the patterns of like the elk herds of building up in areas where they didn't used to be?
HF: Oh yes, sure. Yeah, they've... They're everywhere now where I remember...I remember in...like we used to hunt up in there at Ruckles country. We used to hunt in there for deer. And I remember we never saw an elk track in there. That was back in...let's see...what time was that...it was in the middle '40s. We never saw an elk track in there. It was all deer. Now there's as many elk or more elk than there is deer in that area now. They're all over now up in this where at one time they wasn't. Back in the early '40s there wasn't any.
JG: All that country you're talkn' about that's pretty well roaded now isn't it? Or is it still pretty wild?
HF: No, it's pretty roaded and logged. Yeah.
JG: That's what I meant.
HF: Yeah. And then they logged the...they logged the Umatilla break side, too, you see. That used to be what they used to call the old Mail Pouch road where they...they used to go over down into the Umatilla and through Bingham Springs and on in to Umatilla...into Pendleton country and through that way. There used to be a road through there, an old wagon road, and that's what they used to call the Mail Pouch road at one time.
JG: There's been a lot of controversy saying, well, if the area's heavily roaded or opened up to...to man, you might say, that the elk aren't gonna survive. And yet I've seen down in the Keeting country...and that's why I was ask...just wondering about what you observed there in this Ruckles country. If that's kind of adverse to that where there never used to be elk or any sign of elk and yet after here it is roaded and yet there's all kinds of them in there now.
HF: I think mainly what the main effect of that would be would be the hunter himself. He would become a wheels hunter. He's hunting off of wheels instead of horseback and afoot like they used to at that time. And consequently the need for more roads has came about, you see. But...

JG: I was thinkin' a lot of roads have been built because of the logging. Mostly industry the roads have come in there, but I've heard at times there's been the controversy, well, if it's roaded or you need to block these roads because the elk can't survive and yet there never used to be elk in those countries...that type of country...but then after it was roaded there was all kind of elk in there, which is kind of...against, you know, what, you know...

HF: It's a long... It's a long reach...proposition. Those older herds weren't used to roads, of course, and a road would disturb them. But our elk that we're seeing today them guys...those calves, in fact, grow up around roads now. We got a different elk now than we used to have forty years ago...thirty years ago. Much different elk.

JG: Just like man. [laugh]

HF: Yeah. They've... They've altered and they've changed. They use these...

JG: They've adapted to what...what's there.

HF: They've learned how to use these little islands between the roads for refuge and things. At that time the old herds couldn't have taken it. They woulda left. They would just moved out because they couldn't stand the roads situation. But we gotta...we gotta different...we gotta different animal now.

JG: The reason I said that is...

HF: And it's just a matter of evolving, it's just evolving, see.

JG: 'Cause I remember that back in the '50s there down in the Keeting country you never would see an elk at all.

HF: That's right.

JG: And then the whole country was roaded from the timber and yet the elk really moved in there and basically took over for a lot of the deer.

HF: Yeah. The forbs are there for 'em so they...they followed those forbs, you see, a lot and learned to...learned to accept the roads. But the main thing that I have against the roads is the wheels hunter.

JG: Oh yeah.

HF: That's what is affecting our...a lot of the problems right there more than anything and erosion ____.

JG: Oh, there's tremendous erosion.

HF: Tremendous erosion.

JG: Oh yeah.

HF: So those things are what I personally would have against all roading. But the Forest Service is taking a...have taken a new look. We have...in past years we went to task with 'em on too many roads. So now they're...what they're doing a lot of times now is they're not letting 'em road up creek bottoms. They're making 'em stay up on the sides and where they used to let 'em go right up the creek bottom.

JG: Oh, I know it, yeah. I think we're the first ones on the __ to have the old __ jammers over skidding, you know, putting roads up high.

HF: You bet. Down and across.

JG: And pulling 'em up away from the creek bottoms.

HF: You bet. That's right.

JG: You know __ in there.

HF: So operations... They're takin' a new look...they took a new look at those things and now they go in a loggin' area... You'll notice up here at the head...head...the trail...or the road head they'll have blocks. And they figure at a later date if they want to relog the area they can open it up, let 'em use it and lock it back up again.

JG: Do you have any feel there of just...this gets off the subject a little bit...but more policy wise of if the block is in the road...of course, then you have a fire or you got a bug kill or something then you can't get in. In other words, it costs money to go in or you can't have easy access compared to putting up a gate and then really hanging people if they go in there, you know, go past the gate or through the gate that... But, in other words, a gate would give you easy access for fire, it'd give you easy access for...

HF: Vehicular, you mean?

JG: Yeah.

HF: With vehicles, yeah.

JG: For like bug kill timber or windblown timber where generally on a salvage you don't have enough money to go in and do a lot of work. But with a gate you just could open the gate up and go in. Of any, you know, the goods or bads, you might say, of that or any policy along those lines.

HF: I talked before about this very question about what would happen in case of fire or operational problems in the area and they said there's no problem. They send a little rig up there the first thing there would be a little blade they'll open it temporarily, close it back up after.

JG: The only trouble is I've seen...

HF: .___

JG: Yeah, they say that, but then you got another Yellowstone where you burn up half the... See, 'cause I fought more fire than I care to even think about and to me... It's like the bug kill. If you can get a camp our size you don't have any money put out and you catch it. Compared to...it seems like they're geared up for a million dollar fire.

HF: I'll say, right. Of course, we both...we all know that it's the speed that they get on a fire that counts.

JG: That's the whole feat. They aren't doing that, unfortunately.

HF: You know, that's the whole trick.

JG: I used to fight fire at night and now they don't do that. You know, policy's dangerous, but that's what you use to catch 'em. But that's another subject. I guess maybe just one other thing would be anything with the, oh, more the upland bird population as far as the history of the pheasant or any of the other upland bird populations that you can think of, anything significant?

HF: They had Fish and Wildlife throughout the whole valley, you know, and they used to have the game farms before that they...

JG: When was that that they had that, Howard, 'cause I...I remember...I think I got towards the tail-end, but then those were actually established? Do you remember?

HF: We used to plant them. I went out on many a planting to help them. Oh, let's see...during the '40s. yeah, mostly during the '40s and '50s they...it was

extensive. And good bird hunting all through the valley areas and the foothill areas, of course, the pheasants, of course, mostly, and Hungarians. And they used to raise 'em and release them. They used to have release trucks and go out and spot release them, you see, where there was water and feed. Of course, they don't do that anymore hardly any, very little 'cause they're not raisin' the birds they used to. So now you have areas like they have up here at Ladd Creek...Marsh hunting areas and things like that and that's it.

JG: That's pretty sparse compared to previous.

HF: Oh yeah. Very...very overpopulated with hunters and not too many birds per hunter, you know.

JG: Do you remember when they actually brought the pheasants in to the country? Wasn't that an import?

HF: Oh yeah. It was an import. Oh golly, they go way back...they go way back on the first... The first ones weren't successful. They brought the old Mongolians in from the higher...higher highland areas that were a little different bird than you're lowland China bird...Chinese pheasant. But they...they tried both of those plantings through the years. And the Mongolian was a much darker bird, darker color, and he had different tail bandings on his tail. You could tell him from the others. And they said it'd a little hardier than the lowland Chinese pheasant, see. But they...they worked with those...planting those for years and years off and on. I would hesitate to say when they started, but early 1900s, you know, they started working with 'em.

JG: Do you know anything or...

HF: And the Hungarian partridge is an import, too. That's an import.

JG: Some of the old...when I say old I'm talkin' about back in the...I can't remember now whether it was during like Spaulding's time, which would be the 1830s, or in the 1860s, some of the different observations. You talked about pheasant at that time of whether they're talkin' about the same species or whether they're... Do you know if that would've been something else that they talked...related to?

HF: They're the same bird, yeah. They brought 'em in from first way back.

JG: Did they that early? That's what I'm confused on the writings of whether that was something that they called that...

HF: I'm not too sure Oregon was involved in those real early ones, but I know in the Dakotas and some of the central states they worked with 'em before we did here.

JG: That's kind of interest...sometimes in some of the writings it's a little hard to pick out what they're sometimes talking about or ___

HF: That's right.

JG: That's great. I guess one other thing would be of any the old fish hatcheries that you're aware of that don't...that no longer exist of any of the locations of where they might have been?

HF: Oh yes. Yeah, I'll say. There was a... There was a very, very active fish hatchery on Catherine Creek just above the town of Union where the present maintenance...state highway shops are. Those used to be build...those buildings...there isn't a building there were hatchery buildings. This is interesting because they trace that back and the early...the early biologist...oh

gosh, their names...what was his name...they... And anyway, they closed the hatchery up. The water got too warm and got too disease ridden. And they traced why. They wondered why and they traced it back to the logging practices on the...on the drainage flows. And they had siltation...too much siltation all this type of thing so they closed up the hatchery. But at one time that was a...quite an ongoing hatchery at one time.

JG: Do you have any idea when that was started and when it was closed?

HF: Oh wow! They hatched in there...they put...they started in there...let's see...around '30. And they went through the '30s and...see...in the '40s up till...let's see...up till Buck Eddy was the maintenance foreman. I knew him real well.

JG: Now it had to be in the '50s there because I got out here in '55 and...

HF: When they moved there, you mean? Yeah, but see, they had closed it for quite a while before that's what I mean, as a hatchery. Then the buildings set there and then finally the...then the state moved their...

JG: I was tryin' to think whether that was still...when that was running.

HF: But it was through the '40s.

JG: Oh, okay.

HF: It was through the '40s that they...they were active hatchery. Yeah, we used to stop there and watch the little guys in there and in the holding ponds and everything there. And then they claimed that the water became so full of fungi and everything they had problems and the water temperature...they couldn't keep the water temperature cool, see.

JG: Up Catherine Creek, see, some of the old logging sales, some of the early ones there, were in the early '40s back up on...

HF: Yeah, Mr. Shelton and...

JG: Yeah.

HF: They used to log all up in that area.

JG: Right, yeah.

HF: Shelton himself I remember one time said we're logging too close. I remember hearing himself said that. I knew him well, old Bert, Bert Shelton.

JG: I remember the name, I just was...remember the records. I was...you know...can remember some of the dates, you know.

HF: Remember his boy, yeah. A great athlete. Old Bert himself was a great athlete when he was a young man. But anyway, this is what Bert himself told me, he says, well, he said, "We logged it too close." He says, "That water's too warm."

JG: Plus there's a tremendous amount of siltation coming down Catherine Creek.

HF: Oh yeah, there was. There really was.

JG: What all was raised in that hatchery, do you remember?

HF: As I remember it they was...there was Eastern Brook and Rainbow. But I don't think the Eastern Brook...mostly Rainbow. I meant mostly Rainbow. I know...I remember a holding pond or two of Eastern Brook that they had there, but I...I seem like they were...they was a high lake plant on those. They were taken over up into the high lakes.

JG: Do you remember when they first started stockin' the high lakes by any chance?

HF: Well, let's see. I went up with... I helped go up...we took cream cans of Eastern Brook up into...up into Swamp Lake and Minam Lake and all those lakes there from the head of...from the head of the Lostine River where they used to...trailheads where they packed in from. They used to take 'em in cream cans on mules...on horses...pack 'em up in there and planted 'em up in there. Then they went to aerial.

JG: Yeah, I remember...

HF: Later.

JG: Got to aerial later on that.

HF: But those first plantings was made horseback. [laughs] Shaffer.

JG: Do you remember about what that...

HF: Shaffer was a old boy that planted a lot of 'em. Boy, he planted a lot of those lakes up in there.

JG: Remember about when that was when they were plantin' horseback?

HF: Oh yeah. Yeah, I went in with him several times. That was back in...let's see... '34 to...see, '34 and through '34... '38. And the last time I went in with Carl was in '42. I went in with Shaffer '42. My knowledge that's the last trip that went in and then they started working...experimenting with plane planting and experimenting with 'em.

JG: What was that where there be hardly anything before that...before they actually stocked 'em?

HF: Oh yeah. They'd been stocking... They'd been stocking before that. Oh of course, yeah. Shaffer, in fact, had stocked before that. They hired him to do stocking. But I can't... I just don't...the names, I just can't remember the names anymore.

JG: Yeah, I think more of the periods of time or when they...

HF: Some of the Hawkins boys were involved in it and then Shaffer, that bunch up in there. I remember the Hawkins boys and then Shaffer. In fact, Shaffer used to run the...used to have a dude ranch right there at the head of the Lostine at the trailhead. Used to...you know, he'd commercial...commercial pack, hunters and so forth. And then the Hawkins went in there and they did a lot of that, Hawkins brothers.

JG: Were there any other stocking ponds at all that you can think of around the whole Northeast Oregon area besides Catherine Creek...or hatcheries ___ hatcheries.

HF: I have an interesting by-light on that, if you'd like to hear it?

JG: Sure.

HF: Okay. Clear back we used to have...we used to have what we call the Grande Ronde Sportsman Club here. It in one of the old, old, old time it's been defunct for years. But anyway, Catherine Creek the fishing got, we thought, bad, you know. So we knew that Baum Creek Reservoir every year lost lots of fish because the water level'd drop so low that the water...they would just die. So we thought, hey, why not save those fish? So we talked to the Game Commission people and they says, "Sure, do anything you want." Because they...they're gonna turn belly-up anyway. So we got a flatbed truck...guy that had a flatbed truck...his name was Peterson, lived here...we used to use his truck then we'd stop at Ponderosa and pick up their rain...their fire barrels...they had fire barrels

there. We just emptied the water out and put 'em on empty. And we would go up to Collins Road and would...they had...they used to be a big spout up there where they filled the trucks with water from that spring. And we would fill those barrels up half-full and they had a wooden ring...wooden float that set on top, you see. And then we'd go on up to the lake, park the truck...up to Baum Creek Reservoir, excuse me...and then all of us guys was armed with just a little hand-dip net and there'd be about twenty of us. And this was on...the truck was on an incline so we had to have a ___ there and then the rest of us get out in there and we would herd them...the fish...up into as small a pocket as possible then we'd dip them out of there. And those were beautiful Rainbow. Oh man, beautiful Rainbow from twelve to eighteen inches. Nice ones. We'd dip one, send it up and they'd put it in the barrel. That's the way we...the way we did it. And then we...when we got all the fish that we could we'd get out of there as quickly as possible. Turn around and get down the hill. 'Cause see, this was always when the weather was pretty warm usually it was the...usually in fall, usually September, early October sometime, depended on the weather, of course. We'd head for Catherine Creek. Get down the hill we'd fill the barrels back up with more fresh water, put the float lids back on top and take off for Catherine Creek and then we'd dump those barrels of fish in Catherine Creek. And boy, we had some of the finest...[laughs]...Catherine Creek provided some of the finest Rainbow fishin' for years in there. We did it every year. A lot of people don't know that happened, but we did.

JG: Yeah, that's a real significant... I got... I think I got the tail end of that at Baum Creek when they were still pullin' some out.

HF: Did you? But now the irrigators...the owners of the irrigation project, which that is, you know, was irrigation, they decided, hey, you know, we don't want to...gotta do somethin' about it. So they raised their exit.

JG: Yeah, I knew they...yeah.

HF: Then sealed up the old exit and raise the new pipe exit and that solved their problem. Now we got ample water. That was a gracious thing they did.

JG: Yeah, 'cause it seemed to me that was probably in the '60s, I think, when that happened if I remember.

HF: Yeah, it was in the '60s. But we tried for a year before that...

JG: Try to get 'em to do it.

HF: No. But they did in the '60s. I think it was '64 if I remember.

JG: Something like that, yeah.

HF: Pretty close.

JG: 'Cause I got out of the army in '59 and it seemed to me that a few years after that they...

HF: Yeah. You remember that then. Actually, that was...we used to have a lot of...

JG: Were there any other hatcheries around that you can think of that no longer exist?

HF: Yeah. The old salmon hatchery there at the...where the state park is on the Wallowa there was a salmon hatchery there. They used to catch salmon, they wiered 'em and caught salmon, stripped their eggs there experimenting with hatcheries. And then they'd transport the eggs to different hatcheries. As I remember right, those eggs went back down to the coast area for hatching, that

LC hatchery...where those salmon hatcheries...the old hatcheries are down there in that area.

JG: But they picked 'em up there at the old state park.

HF: Yeah, they would strip the fish there.

JG: Do you remember what the period of time was when they were doing that or what years, roughly, that that was goin' on?

HF: Oh yeah. That was right after the turn of the century, not very far, in the early 1900s. I remember Dad tellin' me about it where they...people used to work there. He used to know some of the people that worked there. In fact, one of this brothers did, one of my uncles, Fred Fisk, worked there at the hatchery at that time. It was... It was kind of... It wasn't steady work, of course, you know. It was strip season work, through strip season.

JG: Do you know...remember when that quit or when they stopped?

HF: They had... They used to have a spring run of salmon and a fall run. They had two runs of salmon.

JG: But I meant what...the year, you know, coming forward...

HF: When it stopped?

JG: Yeah, when it actually...they closed everything down.

HF: Let's see. Golly. No, I don't. I sure don't. I just don't know when that tapered off to zero on that.

JG: I think that's...

HF: I know where there's a nice grouping of nesting pairs of prairie falcons below the ___ Valley Dam down in the canyon below in there. And I watched those in there several years and I finally...I told...not Mark Henjam, but...he electrocuted himself...you know who I mean?

JG: Yeah, I know.

HF: He was... He was on the non-game...

JG: Right.

HF: And he went down and checked several pair of 'em down there of prairie falcon in there. But there was no paraguins in there. He said there was no paraguins. But that'd be kind of interesting. Do you know if there's any in there now? Any prairies even?

JG: Oh, I haven't... I don't know. I haven't been down in there at all.

HF: Last year I went down. This year I didn't open troutin' season down there. Usually I used to open season down there every year. Last year I went down and didn't see a pair nesting up in those cliffs. But before that I used to see...oh, I saw several pair down in there. And I'm...I'm kind of interested in that myself.

JG: No, one of these days I may get some time and get back out again.

HF: I used to know right where there was a nest area. Boy, it was a...it was a well-whitewashed area. They'd used it several years. Last year...or...yeah, last year I didn't see a pair on that...on that rookery there. Not a pair. So I'm kind of wonderin' what's happened to them. It was quite common, they... There was a pair on one side of the canyon and another pair up at this rookery. And I'd watch 'em and they had a almost invisible eye. And they would circle that, that was their...their line.

JG: Territory there.

HF: Yeah. That was real funny.
JG: I'll be darned.
HF: Those old... They were real...
JG: Cross over the waters.
HF: But the paraguin he's... I don't know around here where they... I couldn't even tell you where there is one around here anymore. We used to have... We used to have ospreys come in to Morgan Lake, you know.
JG: Oh did they?
HF: Years ago used to... Every year we'd see one up there fishin' and I haven't seen one up there the last several years. I don't know what's happened. ___ Reservoir boy they had some nice nesting areas there. And Philips Reservoir there's...there's a...there's a big snag out here where there's...there's a pair up in there every year. Up till the... I didn't go up there last year and look, but there had been.
JG: Yeah, I knew there had been.
HF: Yeah. Sure nice to see 'em. You bet.
JG: Well, I think that's...gives a real good start here of a lot of information.
HF: Yeah, well, a guy gets started yackin' and... [tape interruption]
JG: Yeah, we still got some tape.
HF: Shorty Daniels and I went back the next weekend after we'd been in there at one time after this big grizzly and we had seen him. We knew the area it was working. We went back as we's walkin' down the trail...what we used to call Rock Creek Trail, still there...as we walkin' down the trail here's a dead white-faced cow layin' right in the middle of the trail. And her neck had been broken. We looked her all over real well. She was layin' there with her insides in and everything, but she was dead, her neck had been broken. We saw claw marks on the side of her face. We knew it was a bear kill and there's only one bear that can handle a full-grown cow like that. Okay, so we went on hunting, saw nothing. We came back... The next weekend we went back again, the next Saturday we went back, the cow was gone. We looked down the trail, no cow. We found the drag mark went uphill, steep, and there was a little bench right above it and there was the remains, the hide and bone...they coyotes, of course, had been working on it since. The bear...and here's...here's teeth marks on the horns...on that cow's horns. This animal was large enough, strong enough, to drag that full-grown cow entrails and all up on that hill before it started feedin', where there was some timber, some protection, up there. And it made the hair crawl up on the back of your neck. [laughs] And here's a fresh mole hill and here's a print in there that was a hand-and-a-half across, the heel print...what we call a hand-and-a-half. And then here's those claw marks way out here. We knew it was a grizzly by the claw marks 'cause black bear don't leave that kind of claw marks.
JG: For size, too.
HF: Oh, heaven's sake, yeah. [laughs] You could put two bear...black bear tracks inside of this print.
JG: Yeah, plus try to drag a cow uphill.
HF: Yeah, the thing is his toilets were right on the other side of an old log there and...[laughs]

JG: Yeah, like you said, the hair crawls up once in a while.

HF: I bet. Anyway, that...we got to see him that day and got pretty close to him that day, but he got our wind and got out of there. And that's, as far as I know, the last time anytime anybody ever saw him. That was an interesting by-play that I'd almost forgot about.

JG: Oh yeah. [laughs] That's great. [tape stopped}