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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 149-005c
Interviewee: Frank H. Rose and Clarence “Cy” Young
Interviewer: Ernest Kraft
Date of Interview: circa 1965
Project: National Bison Range Oral History Project

Note: Two women can be heard talking in the background, but their conversation isn't included in this transcript because it is unrelated to the topic of the National Bison Range.

Cy Young: —they was on Wild Horse.

Frank Rose: That range—the headquarters are on top of that high hill over beyond that lower gate.

CY: That was Wild Horse Mesa, that's what we call it now. I think you named it then, because it's been Wild Horse Mesa ever since I've been there. When you got up there, why, they was over on Elk Pass someplace.

FR: Yeah, you never got close to them.

CY: They just kept about two or three miles ahead of you all the time.

FR: Never got close to them without making a devil of an effort to do so.

CY: Yeah, you had to do a lot of detouring around to get close enough to them. They were just plenty foxy.

Ernest Kraft: [referring to a map] This is the headquarters area. Can you do that? [speaking to one of the interviewees]

This is Moiese right here.

FR: Yeah, yeah. This was the headquarters here, and—

EK: Mission Creek.

FR: —Mission Creek there, yeah.

EK: Right. Here's this Wild Horse Mesa right here that we were talking about.

FR: Yeah, yeah, that's the place. That's where, right in here, is where you'd see the wild horses. You'd generally see them see them from another point, long ways away.

EK: These are the two corrals that you built.

FR: Yeah, yeah.

EK: Would this be right in '29? Or when were these constructed? In '24? The first year they were there?

FR: The corrals was constructed that winter—the first winter I was there—these two corrals, because they wanted to know if the Range would carry the buffalo. We had to reduce. That's the reason I was up there, because the Range was over-grazed and they had to do something about it. So Smith Riley was the—

CY: That's the guy that was kind of paralyzed, wasn't he?

FR: Yeah.

CY: Yeah, that's one that I was telling you about that Hodges had a run-in with.

FR: He's the fellow that picked me to come up there. I never heard of the Bison Range when he wanted me to come up there and take charge of it. I was down on the Hayden Forest in Wyoming, I was in the Forest Service, not in the Biological Survey at all. He talked me into going up there. As I said, after I'd been there two days, I got a wire wanting to know if the buffalo would starve to death if they were left over winter, and I told them they wouldn't. Buffalo are pretty good winter feeders, as far as that goes. They [unintelligible] in the wintertime pretty well. So, they found some money for me it to feed the buffalo. These corrals were built then to feed the buffalo in. We couldn't feed them without a place to feed. That was the first winter I was there. If you've got a date on these corrals' construction, we built those at—

EK: You came in the fall of the year? The first fall? Or do you remember time that—

FR: I can't remember what time of year I got up there.

CY: I think you told me once that you got there in September.

FR: September, it might have been. Seems to me it was in the fall of the year, because they asked me if the Range would carry the buffalo over winter. I remember that telegram came just after I got there.

CY: Yeah, I think you told me once that—

FR: I think Hodges must have been there up until the time I come.

EK: Would you have any recollections of the numbers or anything? The numbers of animals?

FR: No.

EK: Only what we could locate through the—

FR: I remember my estimate of the carrying capacity of the Range at that first time I reported it to Washington to be 600 buffalo, or the equivalent of other animals, is what I recommended the Range to carry.

EK: The present recommendation is about 380.

FR: Three hundred and eight animals altogether?

EK: Three hundred and eighty.

FR: Oh, 380.

EK: That is from a survey that was made last summer, so—

FR: A Range survey?

EK: Yes.

FR: The Range hasn't come back much then, has it?

EK: Well, [laughs] that's what I'd like to talk to you about. Let's go back to this here map just a little bit. When was this next section of the lane built?

FR: That was for catching the elk.

EK: That was in '26?

FR: I don't know when it was.

EK: That was Custer's. Was that Custer's?

FR: [unintelligible]

CY: Jones'.

EK: Jones?

FR: Custer built the slaughterhouse for buffalo. We traded buffalo for the slaughterhouse.

EK: I see. That's real important, I think we've got that little bit different.

CY: Jones traded—

EK: Elk?

CY: —elk from—

FR: What was the name of that supervisor of the Biological Survey, the head of the Biological Survey, at the time I was there? The fellow I saw in Washington?

CY: That must have been Goldman.

FR: No, Goldman was the one who come out there on the inspection trips one summer. The head man in Washington back in the old days [unintelligible], but I can't recall the name.

CY: Wasn't Redington [Paul G. Redington]?

FR: No, Redington was the fellow I tangled with.

CY: Morrison (?)?

FR: No, before their time. An older man. [pauses] Anyway, that old fellow in Washington, he's the fellow that signed the letter giving me my authority to feed, kill, and dispose of the buffalo.

CY: I should know him, but I just don't think of the name.

Unidentified Speaker: Hornaday [William T. Hornaday]?

EK: Hornaday?

FR: No, Hornaday is the guy that was the—

EK: The Bison Society.

FR: What?

EK: The Bison Society, wasn't he? The head of the Bison Society?

FR: I think he was...I don't think Bison Society. I think he might have been the head of the Fish and Game department in Washington at that time. They were separate departments anyway. Hornaday was out there one day. I've got a picture of him where he's leaning over and holding

his hat, looking in a [unintelligible] nest we found out on the Range one day. He's the fellow that did a good deal like old Babbington that used to be here in Missoula—clerk and recorder. He said that he had made the habit of whenever anybody come up and spoke to him, why, he'd shake hands with him and while he's shaking their hands he'd say, "What might your honorable name be?" He asked their name right in the beginning, because he never could remember name well enough, but he got around with a cripple with a cane or something of that sort, when he was out on the Range.

EK: He was crippled? It's not the fellow that was paralyzed, though?

CY: No, I think it was a different guy.

FR: Old Smith Riley was the cripple, one that had fall down going from the office to the house, and we'd go on and pay no attention to him and leave him out there—

US: Frank, it wasn't Joe Dixon, was it?

FR: What? No, it wasn't Joe Dixon.

EK: Talbot and [unintelligible] and Mead (??)?

FR: No, no.

CY: I should know who it was, but I just can't.

FR: I should know who it too.

EK: Donahue (??)?

FR: No. I'll know the name when you come to it, but he didn't sign much of the mail, I don't think, then.

EK: A type of thing like this, Mr. Rose, is about all we have that's left of—

[long pause]

FR: I could go back some book or something. They used to put in bulletins the whole government administration back in the old days. In the first part of a book—

EK: Sheldon [Colonel Sheldon]?

FR: No, it wasn't Sheldon?

CY: He was a newcomer.

EK: Here's a report you wrote in 1928, Mr. Rose.

FR: Well, then I must have been there at that time. I don't—

EK: Oh, you were. I just thought it might be of interest to you.

FR: I don't think I ever wrote any reports before I got there.

EK: No, you were there a long while after this was written, but I thought they might be of interest to you if you'd want to look at them again. See, here's for '26.

FR: These are the first reports you've got from me—June 30, 1928.

EK: Well here's '26.

FR: I've got a '26?

EK: That's your earliest, you see?

FR: This was spring of '26, so I must have come there in '25.

EK: You came there in '23.

FR: Oh, in '23.

EK: You see, there's some missing, that's the thing—

FR: There's some that aren't in there.

EK: They burned up or something's happened to them. [long pause] If you'd like to keep these and read them, you're more than welcome to read them, if you'd like to look them over. I just brought them along, because I thought they might be of interest to you.

FR: I don't know as I kept—

EK: Well, if you don't, why, I'll just take them back, but I just... [pauses] I think they're very good. I think they're very important.

[long pause; papers rustling]

CY: Something I got to get one of these days is a reading glass. Most stuff I can read. I'd like to have something I can just grab it up and read some little thing without having to put on my glasses.

EK: Something else I wanted to ask him about when he gets done looking at those is if he can tell us anything about that squeeze. Remember that big squeeze?

FR: Between Mason Creek and Sabine Creek. Where is Sabine Creek?

CY: It's the little creek that comes through the corner, way out in Alexander Basin there.

EK: East corner.

CY: Just barely cuts the corner there.

[long pause]

EK: This here map isn't right either. Where this road comes to the slaughterhouse now, this road runs right straight east here, jogs down to Sabine Creek like that. They show that old fence line there.

CY: Yeah, that's the old fence across there.

EK: Just goes right straight down.

CY: Goes on down and crosses, and then comes back.

EK: Yeah, this goes right straight out here now.

FR: I think I'll keep these down and look them over a little [unintelligible]—

EK: That's what I brought them for. There's a quite a few of them here for just about every year that we have, if you'd be interested in looking at them. Twenty years—

FR: There's that one letter out there that I'd kind of like to have a copy of in your files, whether you remember seeing it or not. It's a letter of instructions from Redington on how to handle the Bison Range—that he sent after he took over.

EK: Redington.

FR: I suspect they pulled it out of there.

EK: I'll make a note of it, and I'll try to locate it for you. I

FR: It's a letter of instructions for the handling of the Bison Range. In the beginning—I can't remember how first starts or it's worded there to start with—but about the first paragraph he tells about buffalo. That the bull is the most imposing animal in the buffalo herd—the one that they're most interested in—and insofar as possible, without excess fighting, the number of bulls will be increased on the Range until the natural increase will balance the loss from natural purposes and eliminate this disposal problem. Anyhow, he's going to get rid of this disposal problem by having the losses balance with the birthrate by having all bulls instead of cows.

EK: My! What did you say his name...Redington?

CY: Redington. He was chief at that time.

FR: That I tangled with, the new chief.

EK: Well, I can tell you that's not in the files—

FR: That's not in the files.

EK: —because if it had been, I'd have never missed it. I've been through everything we've had.

FR: You've been through those old files.

EK: See, we don't have anything to speak of, except what the regional office would—

FR: If I'd had any sense, I'd of had Miss Kinney (?) make me a copy of that when I first come. I got my orders to leave up there, to leave within two days. It was unreasonable, but I went ahead and did it. So what I should have done in those two days was spend my time going through the files and collecting some evidence in there from that to have in my possession after I was gone.

EK: Well, that's what I said all along. I've read everything that you written.

FR: Well, I didn't write this.

EK: You wrote some of these.

FR: Yeah, I wrote these, but—

EK: These make sense! These make sense.

FR: At the time that this letter came within a week before I...No, it was some time before I left, but it was after Redington took over. It's one of his first official letters that he sent out—this

letter telling how to manage the Bison Range. I showed it to Glen Smith [Glen A. Smith], and he read it through—set there. He didn't say anything. He started over at the first again and read it through a second time, and shook his head and handed it back to me, and said, "It's too deep for me." [laughs]

EK: That's real important.

FR: Yeah?

EK: That's real important. It's something that's never even been mentioned, no word of.

FR: Somebody's been smart enough to take it out of the files.

EK: Well, it wasn't—

FR: It's out of the files in Washington too. You can't find any record of it, I don't suppose.

EK: There's supposed to be a bunch of stuff in Denver. See, it was under the Biological Survey in the beginning, and all those files were sent to the Denver filing deal, and I've written to Denver on this trying to get a copy of these early records but I haven't had an answer yet.

CY: When they set up these regional offices around the country, Denver was our first regional office, and they sent a lot of that stuff from Washington office out to Denver—

FR: Sent back there for storage.

CY: —for storage.

FR: Well, if you can get a copy that letter from Redington, why, try and get a hold of it.

EK: I sure will.

FR: You'll find is very interesting, or anybody else...any Westerner will find it interesting. Don't even have to know game to find it interesting. You can ask Clarence whether we ought to make the Bison Range half bulls and half cows, and maybe he can define what "excess fighting" is. I don't know where to answer that one.

CY: What did we have that squeeze for to start with? Wasn't we trying to milk a cow or something for the University [University of Montana]? Remember, we made a hell of a big squeeze there?

FR: We made that big squeeze to vaccinate—

CY: For brucellosis? Bang's, wasn't it?

FR: —for Bang's disease. They had Bang's disease on the Bison Range. That was the calves that we're losing, because of my carelessness. The Bang's disease was helping.

CY: Then we had to vaccinate all of those that we sent to Alaska that time you remember? And to California.

FR: I intended to grow a new herd. If I could have gone ahead and used my rotation grazing with those pastures, I'd put a few in the pasture ahead of the herd and let them grow up that way. I don't know whether it would work or not, but they claimed that you could grow animals separate, and they'd be free of the disease—that they didn't get infected when they're young.

EK: I'm going to leave you this stuff. You don't have to read it. Now, this is the type of a history that they have so far. It just covers everything and it's very general, and I think you'll find it interesting if you care to—

FR: [unintelligible], but I never remember these things. I notice you have a report from me in this, when I was looking at, on the forage up there at that time. I'm interested to know how many of those are 42 different grasses that they had on the Bison Range when I was there are still there, and which ones have increased and which ones have decreased.

EK: I can get you the information. I can get you the information.

FR: Are you a Range man?

EK: No, no, I'm not. That's one of the problems I figured I was going to have talking to you, because I figured you'd be talking way up here, see, and I'm just an uneducated dummy. [laughs] But I can still get you the information.

FR: I notice that my report on the ones that was there, I had no recollection of what was in that collection. I had a good collection of plants there, when the office burned.

EK: That's what Clarence said.

FR: I had my own collection in...They were all my own collection that was in there. I may had [unintelligible] collection too, I don't remember. But I had a mounted collection there that was all Bureau of Plant Industry of better determination for that [unintelligible] from Colorado and various other places. They're a thing of the past now.

EK: Well, I can sure get you the information.

FR: I swore then that I was never going to build another collection, but went right ahead building it after I started collecting. But I tried to stay off of collecting everything and just collect a few things that was interesting [unintelligible]. Now, I got stuck with a job that I've just cleaned up the day before yesterday. God, I was making a list of the trees and shrubs native to Montana for a guy over in Billings that's done some work for the Fish and Game, and for the University out here.

EK: I think, although in the general sense, from what I...I mean, I don't know any of the real technical things, but in the beginning the Range was considered 15 acres per animal. Am I right? Do you remember?

FR: I asked them. I said, well, there's was 18,500 acres, and I asked them, I said, it should carry 600 buffalo, and I'll divide 600 by 18,500—

EK: Well, that's about 30 acres.

FR: What?

EK: That's about 30 acres.

FR: About 30 acres. Well, in the beginning it was estimated to carry 16?.

EK: Fifteen. Fifteen acres per animals.

FR: Well, they should have known in the beginning, that if you build a fence—I don't care how big you make them—putting a herd of animals in there—I don't care how small you make your herd—and let them alone, they're going to over-graze the range.

EK: Yes, sir, I agree with you.

FR: It's just a matter of time. So it should have been a simple matter all the way from the beginning, that the disposal problem was coming up as long as they...and they accused me of being careless of the animals and losing a lot of them by accident and one thing another. The sheep man that I showed a report to said two percent loss was less than they expected for an annual loss in a sheep herd. They'd be happy if they could keep their loss as low we were keeping the loss on the Bison Range there. That loss out there was due to Bang's disease, not to the handling.

EK: That's another thing, now, that I'd like to question you about. Did they have a vaccine that they could vaccinate these animals for at time?

FR: Not at that time.

EK: It wasn't developed yet?

FR: What?

EK: It wasn't developed yet?

FR: They were developing it, coming up. That was after we'd been there number of years before this came up. I don't think, at this time—at the time that we were corralling our buffalo, and things of that sort—we didn't know anything about Bang's disease. I guess they were starting to [unintelligible] free Montana about that time then. Least, I didn't know anything about it.

They made me an expert on buffalo when they was butchering out there, because they sold them under a contract and specified in their contract that I would be the judge as to the condition and they sell buffalo in good condition. If the fellow that bought it didn't agree, why, then it was referred to me, and my decision was final on it. That's where I got in bad. I turned down a buffalo that the fellow that was buying the meat—I don't remember who we sold to then—didn't like it very well. The butcher took his knife and cut a gash there and opened up a pus pocket in there that showed pus in this butchered animal there. Well, all animals may shot it, I don't know, but as far as I was concerned—he said it's tuberculosis—and I didn't know what caused it. I know I didn't want to eat it, and when we put up the meat as to being good-quality, saleable meat I wasn't going to force you to take it and sell it to the public as good-quality meat when it showed pus in the pocket in there, whatever caused it. So I condemned the animal and sent it down to dump. Well, this Warner (?) took a quarter of a home and ate it, apparently, and was still living send to the [unintelligible] so I expected it wouldn't have hurt anybody if he'd eaten it. Since they'd specified that I was to be the final authority on the quality, why, I used my authority and said it wasn't good quality. They charged me later for not being an expert on it, but they made me an expert. They'd written it into the contract.

EK: Well, just how did this contract work in the beginning?

FR: What?

EK: How did the contract work for the buffalo? Were they selling on a bid? Did people bid on so many head of buffalo to buy them, or did you have to go out and contact people, or were they—

FR: Well the first one we sold is—

[pauses]

EK: Didn't you, at one time have two or three men that went on the road, and tried to—

FR: I went on the road and sold one and three-fourths buffalo a day for a whole fall and winter one day. I went every considerable town in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Montana, and sold [unintelligible] on the buffalo and showed them some pictures and showed them to the butchers, and sold them buffalo. I sold as high as two to a man. I guess I didn't sell any less than...I guess we quartered a bunch. I guess we sold parts of ones back in that day, because I know we skinned out the buffalo there and had a lot of the hides, and we shipped a lot of them with hides on—whole buffaloes. Anyways, I spent, I guess, three months one winter, traveling and selling buffalo.

EK: Was that the first year you were there, Frank, do you remember?

FR: That may have been our first year sales. I thought the 40 head that we sold to Custer was the first to be sold out there, and that he bought the buffalo every year after that for a while. But this was before Custer took over.

EK: You're right.

CY: Yeah, I think there was a year or two there—

FR: A year or two there that we butchered, I know we got Heiney [Heiney Helgerson] out there as a butcher, because he was a country butcher. A city butcher just tell us he couldn't butcher them right away and that'd be the only way [unintelligible], but we had our own system of butchering buffalo out there. The first year, we went out and shot them on the Range and come out with a team and a stone boat. I think old—

CY: Jess [Jess Evans]?

FR: [unintelligible] could probably tell you about that. I think he drove a stone boat—

CY: Him and old Rude Nesse. You remember him? They were the two main ones.

EK: Ness—he had a big team of grays.

CY: Rude, he's up there somewhere.

EK: He lives in Ronan. He's got a trailer house, Rude Ness. He lives in Ronan.

CY: Used to live out there by the schoolhouse.

FR: I remember Jess Evans.

EK: Do you remember the first buffalo you ever—

FR: First buffalo killed on the Bison Range, I shot. I rode out there...I got a picture of him upstairs.

You might bring down my picture book up there. [speaking to unidentified speaker]

US: Okay.

FR: They might be interested in looking at that. I might have some pictures to take home.

EK: You bet.

Just little details now. Were you on a horse, or did you just get off your horse and shoot him?

FR: I always got off my horse to shoot. If I didn't, I'd get off afterwards.

CY: You didn't hold your gun behind you and look back over your shoulder and shoot? [laughs]

EK: That's what I wanted to ask you about—

FR: I used to have a horse when I was a kid down in Oklahoma that I could take a shot gun and sight between his ears on a quail or something and shoot, and get away with it, but not on Spooks. He didn't take to that. I tried that on a horse that I was riding in Oklahoma when I was a ranger down there in Colorado, and I shot at a jackrabbit just for practice while I was on the horse. Then I gripped my pistol too hard and shot him through the top of the neck there with it while I was going off. [laughs] I learned then not to shoot a gun before saddling these wild horses.

But I got off, and I walked up about to where the buffalo would stand—little bunch out there. They didn't know what a buffalo would do when you shot a gun. I hadn't read as much Western history as I have now. Anyhow, I picked out this bull, and I shot him. He dropped there, and that was our first buffalo in our butchering. That may have been the first of that 200-and-some head. I think we butchered around a couple of hundred head those first two years, because I know I was out for about three months and I figured up my average—my average was one-and-three-quarters buffalo a day that I sold.

EK: That's real good. That's quite important. Those little details about that first hunting and stuff. No, do you remember the one that Ike Milton shot through the hump? [laughs] Ike shot his first buffalo off of a running horse.

FR: Off of a running horse?

EK: He was coming around from that ridge that goes toward the slaughterhouse where the...he was coming around that Ridge, and...who was the assistant the assistant then? Van Noss (?)?

EK: A guy—

CY: No. Nowlin. Bryon Nowlin.

EK: Bryon Nowlin? You remember Bryon Nowlin?

CY: Not off-hand.

FR: Yeah. Bryon, he was assistant out there, wasn't he?

CY: Yeah, and after him was that Hoyt, Harrison Hoyt (?).

FR: Yeah, Frank Holt (?).

CY: No, no, Hoyt. Hoyt. Holt, he was a rider.

FR: Holt was a rider.

CY: But Hoyt had the big tall redheaded woman, Ruthie. You remember Ruthie? She told him what to do and when to do it. You told him to go fix fence, she'd tell Harrison to say that he didn't have to fix fence and all that stuff. [laughs]

FR: I don't remember him off-hand, I guess.

CY: Well, he come there—

FR: I can remember the first day I had Holt on to ride. He come up from...he lived over there—

CY: In Ravalli.

FR: —Ravalli. He come in over that way up on the hill, and on the top of the hill, I met him there. There was a timbered hill that runs from that High Point there down to the fence there that's kind of steep. Well—

CY: Right at the mouth of Trisky Creek.

FR: I told him to drop down the hill a ways—we could hear something down there—and spook the elk out if they were in there. He just rode his horse up to a rim of rock that was on the hillside and jumped him over the rim of rock and went galloping down the hill. So I decided that there was a man that would make rider for me. He wasn't experienced rider though, that some of the other fellows were when he started in, I don't think.

EK: This other story...now, when I interviewed Ike the other day, he was telling about how—

[Break in audio]

EK: He hollered at him to come, and that he needed a three-year-old. He was herding them up toward the slaughterhouse area where they were putting them in the pens to butcher. He and Neil, his brother Neil—

FR: Milton?

CY: Yeah, Ike and Neil. That was the two Milton brothers.

FR: Ike and Neil were the two Melton boys.

EK: So, he got up there toward the slaughterhouse, and he hadn't got a good shot at one yet, so he stood on his horse there and he took a shot at this bull and he knocked him down. Well then, the bull took off from the slaughterhouse area and headed right for the creek downhill—down the draw toward the creek there. Ike took in after him, and he was riding on the left side of him...see, he was riding on the right side of him...no, the left side of him. The bull was going down the creek, and he was trying to keep him from going down to the creek. He was shooting at him left-handed and he was coming at him, and he kept pumping lead into him and he shot a big hole in the hump. [laughs] He says that that night, why, they got up there, and you come in with an inspector from Washington. You went along this line of buffalo hanging up there and here was this big hole hanging in the neck, and he thought, oh boy, here's where I go down the road. He said they just got a crosscut saw and sawed that bullet hole out, and that was all there was to it. Never said a word to him. [laughs]

FR: I don't remember that. I remember shooting one...They was two of us went up on the hill to kill a couple that was just out on the hillside just above the corrals then. I don't remember who that was with me. We would shoot to pick out our animals and shoot at the same time, so we were both killing two animals up there. Well, I shot mine, and he shot his but missed it or crippled it or something. His didn't come down, but it started to run and he didn't get it. So I got on my horse and took after it, and we run down below the corrals there—headed off toward the east side of the Range there. I run alongside the buffalo for a ways, saw that he wasn't interested me and got a little lead, and I dropped off my horse and let him run by me on foot there and dropped him there. But I never tried shooting them from horseback.

EK: I don't think they ever really did too much of it.

Do you recall a Trisky?

FR: What?

EK: Do you recall a Trisky. Now, this is another thing we can't get straightened out. There was a man imported from South Dakota.

FR: Oh, over there, to help with the buffalo expert from South Dakota. Yeah, I can remember, he was in on the roundup out there when we started corralling. [laughs] I remember he was riding there, and a buffalo cow dropping back and taking after him. He retreated and was kicking that horse with both feet, and finally [unintelligible] trying to those feet out of his horse [unintelligible] that buffalo. That's about all I remember about his inspection-ship.

EK: Didn't he shoot some—

FR: If he was there one when we was butchering, why, we probably gave him the privilege of shooting some. But I have no recollection of the fellow except he's running from this cow, that they used to come out from the herd and take some jumps out you a ways. I got some training on that. She'll come to me in here with a picture of the buffalo just about the catch a fellow, that taken down on the Wichita Forest in Oklahoma where I come up there.

EK: Yeah, it's right here in the beginning.

CY: This Trisky story. Somebody told me that either you or Hodges sent old Trisky out—

FR: Yeah, now what we did there, this ranger—I went down there...The Wichita Forest in Oklahoma is the only forest that has cattle grazing on it to amount to anything District 7. That's the eastern district, and they don't do much of that stuff. So this ranger down there...the supervisor down there got the notion that he wanted somebody, a grazing man, to come down there, and make them a grazing management plan or something. Well, it happened that Denver was just out of good grazing men at that time apparently. Anyhow, they sent me down there to make this grazing management plan for him. I went down there, and he was an old Army man and so he believed in the Army styles. If you get a man of any rating in the Army that comes to see you, why, there's an orderly assigned to him that follows him around and holds his hat he takes it off or anything else, as they used to do. He give me his top show horse to ride while I was down, and he assigned top ranger to me is my orderly, who was to go along and answer any of me questions and open the gates for me and tell me anything I wanted to know and so forth. So we spent a month riding and mapping that range down there and collecting the data for a report. Well, in the pasture of buffalo down there, why, we had this old cow. She was 20-some years old when I was down there at this time. She was an old snort, and they'd trained her that way. You go in anywhere around the Range, and she'd moved from wherever she was over the side you was going to be on. You come up to a certain closeness, then she took out and took after you. So he'd let her start chasing him, and then he'd ride out in front of me. I'd sit there on my horse and take a picture of it as they went by. That's where I got the pictures of the buffalo cow chasing a follow on horseback. He was running from her, just to get her to run by him.

EK: I used to have two or three pets out here that I'd do that with. [laughs]

FR: What?

EK: I used to have a few pets out here that I'd tease them a little bit and ride around.

FR: Well, I learned after I got up here pretty soon, that if you didn't run, why a buffalo won't chase you. I learned that when we was putting the herd down for making a motion picture, I think, one time and wanted them to go across Mission Creek and they didn't want to go across Mission Creek. We had them down there in the brush, milling around or some of the sort, and I was riding Spooks then and he wasn't too well trained. So the old cows took a notion to chase me, and they come dashing out there, just like this one does here—like they always do. I sat there on my horse, until my horse got ready to go. He'd made up his mind he didn't want to stand there any longer, and I made up my mind I didn't want to stand any longer. So I tried to turn him one way and he tried to turn the other way, and he backed up and put his front feet on his hind ones or something and couldn't get going. The cows stopped and went back to the herd.

CY: I remember that time.

EK: Are these the locked horns that you found out over in the Firehole?

FR: Yeah.

EK: You can look at this, Cy.

CY: Yeah, I've seen it.

FR: They called them into Washington.

EK: Well, Cy was going to try to tell you this story about this Trisky. The way Cy has heard the story that he [Trisky] was sent out here to shoot the buffalo and that's how Trisky [Creek] got its name. Where he killed a bunch of them up there in the head of Trisky.

CY: Either you or Hodges was supposed to have sent him out to kill two bulls, and he went out two or three time, and come back and claimed he couldn't find them. Then the next day, you told him to go out and get these bulls and no alibis. So he got up at the head of Trisky and got into a bunch and got excited and started shooting, and when the smoke cleared away, why, here's a dozen buffalo down up in the head of Trisky country there. That's how comes Trisky [Creek] got its name.

FR: That must be all wrong, because I got no recollection of any such incident that coulda hardly got away without me knowing about it.

CY: Yeah, you could have heard it, all right. I think old Charlie McLaughlin told me that story, if I'm not mistaken. We'll go down and see him.

EK: Well, it would have had to been Hodges then.

FR: It might have been Hodges, before I come.

CY: Was Trisky there before you come?

FR: I wouldn't know anything about that, but I know a fellow come from North Dakota over there, one time on the roundup, lending help and advice for a while.

CY: He was supposed to be a buffalo-shooter, this Trisky.

FR: He was supposed to be a shooter. I didn't remember anything about him being a marksman. All I remember was on this drive out there, and when the cows turned back from a herd and took after him, why, he turned and tried to keep ahead of the cow. [laughs]

EK: I wonder if that couldn't have been Frank Treska. That he's talking of.

CY: Well, I don't know.

EK: See, there was a Frank Treska—

FR: I've got no recollection of what this fellow's name was, but I got a picture of him trying to get away from this buffalo, trying to go faster than the buffalo did. The buffalo was like the bear I heard about that chased a woman across a camp down in the Yellowstone Park one day. She come running to the porch with a bear at her heels all the way across the quite considerable distance there and made it to the porch without getting caught. They was all standing around laughing at her. Anytime you run from a bear and the bear don't catch you, it's because of the same reason the buffalo didn't catch him. [laughs]

EK: [laughs] Too much luggage.

FR: No, didn't want him.

EK: You've got a picture of one with a ring in his nose.

FR: That was sent to me from over in Washington. That's a bull we shipped as a calf and they put a—

EK: They cut his horns cut off.

FR: —this is a year or two later they sent me this picture of the bull that they got from the Bison Range. We disposed of a number. Every once in a while, we'd ship a buffalo here or there.

CY: Yeah, all the time. Once or twice a week we'd ship one here, and then two there.

FR: Whenever we'd get—

CY: Just whenever you got the order form, we would get them.

EK: Here it shows hay and feeding them.

FR: That's part of our first year's feeding, I guess. This is South Dakota...or North Dakota somewhere. They got a bunch at a drive over there, and they sent me a picture of that. That was their early, buffalo butchering out there.

EK: They got them all quartered there.

CY: Yeah, some of them we'd send them whichever, whatever way they want them, most of them.

EK: This must be taken down there around the headquarters. See this here brush here, that must be down around the headquarters, or isn't it? See, this here has got a bunch of brush behind it.

FR: Yes, I think we did have one of our butcher racks down there.

EK: I don't see any racks here, but there's nothing like that up there around the slaughterhouse.

FR: Well there's nothing like that anywhere. Oh, you mean the country like that?

EK: Yeah, the background.

FR: Yeah, the background. I think we had one just beyond that pasture there. That was when we were shooting them on the Range, and we had to go to where the buffalo were. We put racks to save stone boating them too far.

EK: A real good picture. [pauses] Yeah, there's some real good pictures there.

I understand you were quite a skier.

FR: Well, it used to be the way to get from here to there when I was in Colorado. I spent five winters where we were above 9,000 feet. Our headquarters in the basin at 9,000 feet, and all the country was up from there.

Here's your first buffalo.

EK: Right here?

FR: Yeah.

EK: Oh! This must be old Spook then?

FR: I don't remember.

CY: The sorrel with a blazed face.

FR: I don't think so. I don't remember what horse I rode. No, that's a different picture.

EK: Yeah, but just looking at the horse.

FR: Is that a Bison Range picture?

EK: Well, it looks like it in the background.

FR: Yeah, this is Clarence...no, this is Franklin, I guess, there. That I think—

EK: Bill? Is that what they called that old elk?

FR: This is Clarence, I think. That's Franklin there.

EK: Yeah, that looks [unintelligible], Cy.

FR: He's talking of coming out there this summer for a little visit.

EK: This horse right here is the one I was wondering if that was Spooks.

FR: Yeah, that is Spooks. That's a Bison Range picture, I guess.

EK: It sure looks like it—the background. Taken up on the headquarters ridge there, probably.

FR: Yeah, that's Spooks.

EK: Boy, look at the grass there.

FR: That's in that...No, that's in Oklahoma. No, wait a minute, now—

EK: It looks like that pen just east of the headquarters there.

FR: I think...We never had that many antelope on the Bison Range. See, there's antelope behind here. I don't know whether they had any down there. I don't locate that. [pauses] It's a Forest Service photograph.

EK: Oh, I see. These must have been taken at Wichita with that set of pens there. I don't recognize that type of...or where was it the other buffalo were?

FR: Over in one of the Dakotas. No, this must be down in Oklahoma. Wichita Forest in Oklahoma from the looks of the...It's either there or over in Dakota. I've never been over at that range over in Dakota, and I don't remember that buffalo corral and water tank down in Oklahoma. They wouldn't have been any water tank there, because they had permanent streams all around headquarters there. That must be in the Dakotas.

EK: These are all up in the feed-pasture. There's bunch of elk in the [unintelligible]

FR: This dates the time if you know your automobiles. That's elk in the—

EK: The east side of that pasture there—in the feed pasture. This one's upside-down, but that's Bison Range too.

FR: Well, here's part of our elk transportation.

EK: Boy, this is real good. I've never seen this...any of this. You had quite a few men working together there, building those racks like this.

FR: Yeah. There's one that didn't stay right-side up.

EK: Look at the elk.

CY: Everybody that ever lived in the south of Charlo in Moiese Valley worked there at one time or another for a little while.

EK: Boy, look at them old little ones.

FR: Yeah. Line them up, take a picture of them.

CY: Used to have a crew coming, crew working, crew going. [laughs]

EK: You had a squeeze there that you used to put these elk into to dehorn them, is that right? A big squeeze?

FR: Yeah, they dehorned most of them just in the corral. I stood up on the fence and reached over and sawed an elk's horns off standing perfectly loose in the corral. They kind of paralyze some that way. Don't get in with them and do it, just stand up on the fence and do it.

CY: We used to do a lot of it in the chute, too, just fill the chute full of them. Pack it full.

FR: I think we dehorned all of our elk before we had the squeeze. I think the squeeze was for vaccinations—things of that sort.

CY: We were doing it there when I first come here.

FR: [unintelligible] ranger down there that was my orderly for a month.

EK: That's a big snake.

FR: There was two of them there. I got both of them [unintelligible] together. They were together, but we didn't see the first one until after I'd taken the picture. That's a bull snake down there. The supervisor on the Forest used to carry one. He had a pickup truck that he drove with a toolbox on the back, and one year he got one of those bull snakes and put it in his toolbox in the back there. Then he'd stop on the road somewhere and get into a little trouble there until he got an audience picked up around him, see what he's doing. He'd tell some green-horn to get him that wrench out of the toolbox on the back there. He'd go back there and raise that tool box, [laughs] and stick his face over that bull snake.

These are—

EK: Ptarmigan?

FR: Yeah, that's from the high country. Those pictures of rattlesnakes back there were down in Oklahoma. This is in Colorado there.

EK: These are both you then?

FR: Yeah. That's ptarmigan, again. These are some boys that are on that...they was a bunch us on range reconnaissance for two or three years down there. This is ranger on the district north of me.

EK: Where were you born?

FR: I was born in Kansas. Scammon, southeast corner of Kansas.

EK: What year?

FR: In 1886. That's one date that I can remember. A month from today.

EK: 1886.

FR: I'll be 79 come 18th of next month.

EK: I see. Seen a lot of time.

FR: I may have to begin acting my age and quit. I haven't done a thing in the last year. Didn't get so I could go out. I hope to getting back to collecting this year.

EK: We have herbarium up there that I'd like to have you see. I can't tell you just offhand how many plants we've got in it, but we must have a couple hundred. They're all mounted on plastic sheets, and they have the scientific name and the common name and the specie and all that. You just lift it up, and there's an index there. You can just reach in there and pick out a certain number, and that's this plant for anybody that come in there that's looking for. We're adding to it all the time. I believe there's about 440 species that we are shooting for, and we have about half of them.

FR: Are you bringing the things in for your herbarium or are you taking them all off the Range, aren't you?

EK: No, we're taking them all off the Range, but they're all species: grasses—

FR: Yeah, but they're all collected on the Bison Range.

EK: That's right.

FR: You're not bringing in anything—

EK: No.

FR: —from outside?

EK: Another thing I'd like to ask you about. Did you have a goat-weed or this Dalmatian toadflax? Could you tell me anything—

FR: I think that the spurge or something. There was a patch come in over there in the southeast corner, just—

CY: Right at the gate—

EK: Just inside the gate.

FR: Just inside the gate there, wasn't there, on the southeast corner?

EK: Still there.

FR: There's a patch that come I there, and it was a half-acre or so, that I recommended it be—

US: What is this plant you're talking about?

FR: —exterminated.

EK: Dalmatian toadflax. It's commonly called goat-weed.

CY: St. John's-wort.

EK: St. John's-wort.

FR: St. John's-wort, I think, I called it.

EK: It's our problem weed at the moment.

US: Well, I think Dalmatian toadflax is not the same thing as St. John-wort.

EK: Well that might be, I'm not—

CY: I think they're all the same thing.

US: Frank?

FR: What?

US: Dalmatian toadflax is that big butter-and-eggs down here by the Bonner turn-off.

EK: Well, that could be. I could be wrong.

Unidentified woman: This is not a butter-and-eggs, is it?

FR: No, that isn't what's up there.

US: St. Johns-wort is—

FR: What?

US: St. Johns-wort is what you're talking about.

FR: That's what they call toadflax down here.

US: Yeah, that's toadflax down here at the Bonner turn-off.

FR: The one up here is a spurge.

US: It looks like a—

FR: No, it don't grow half that high.

US: Dalmatian toadflax does.

EK: Well goat-weed is tall.

US: Yeah, but goat-weed is a different family. It's a St. John's-wort.

EK: Yeah, I think that's right. Like I say, I can't argue the technical stuff, because I just don't know it. I never had the education.

US: I think you have two weeds there—

EK: Probably have.

US: —because toadflax is. A toadflax has to be...and I know [unintelligible].

FR: You're undoubtedly getting new weeds all the time up there.

EK: Yeah, oh, I don't know. Our Canadian thistle, and our...In the last, oh, I don't know just when...It was never a problem, I don't think, at the time you were there, but over a period of years after you left, they sprayed that weed continuously. They did all types of spraying. Then they introduced this here crystalline beetle—probably familiar with this—and then they tried to control it with the larva eating the roots and the plant in the summer—living off of these roots. Well, it just didn't do the job.

CY: There's your last three wild horses. Right there. That's on top of Wild Horse there, see.

FR: I didn't remember that I had a picture.

CY: Yeah, that's right on top of Wild-Horse.

EK: It's over on the west side of it looking east. We got a road right out to here now.

FR: That so? Here's a sick elk up there that I run on to one day, and out taking the pictures and she come to life enough to just slap at me as I went by. Didn't hit me.

EK: That a calf? Yearling calf?

FR: Yeah. I'd forgotten that I had a picture of the wild horses in there.

CY: Remember the big bull elk one time we were riding up in the high country, and it was in about August and hot, and we run onto a big old bull elk there in the upper end of that timber. He had a horn broke in half, and it was hanging by the velvet there. I rode up along beside of him and reach over my jack knife, and cut that off and you asked me if I was tired living. [laughs] You told me, "Boy, don't ever do that again."

FR: I don't remember that.

CY: That's was my first experience with—

FR: I had a buffalo do like the elk do one day there in the corral, stand up on their hind feet and slap at me with their front feet. I had one of the elk do that way with me one time in the chute. I don't know whether you remember that or not. The elk turned around in the chute and going up and high driving up backwards, slapping on the nose of my gloves. I was trying to get her up there and put her in the crate, and all of a sudden, why, she went up and begun slapping at me. I bored into her instead of backing off and she backed off trying to get me in range. Backed her into the chute, and they dropped the lid on her and separated us that way. Those elk—I was black and blue all up and down the sides the next day, from just rubbing my knees to my shoulders along the sides there with her arms. That's the first time an elk ever had me in her arms. But if she gets you range with those hooves, she'll cut you to ribbons.

CY: I remember one time, one, you shoved the gate open on her. She was in that round corral next to the chute—not the one at the shoot but the next one back. She was standing there, gritting her teeth, and you shoved the gate and started to step inside. She caught you up here and cut your shirt just as clean as you could cut it with a pair of scissors right down to about your belt. Remember that?

FR: I don't remember that, but I remember one time there was a bull standing and I was looking through the cracks at him and arguing with him there. He was gritting his teeth the way they do there. Finally, he dropped his horns down and made a lunge at the fence down there, and his spike horn...He had a point that stuck out about that far. I looked at it about like this, in front

of my eyes there—the point of these horns there. But the boards were big and heavy enough to stop him anyway.

CY: I think I remember that same—

FR: Horns wasn't quite long enough to reach me.

CY: —same incident.

EK: Another thing there. When you first started, did you build wooden corrals down there at the headquarters...or where you started to handle the elk? Were they wooden panels, or didn't you have some wire fences in there before you handled them in the board fences?

EK: The chute part was wood.

FR: It was all wire, except at the corrals there.

EK: Right at the very loading part.

FR: Well, I guess we did put a board around the fence.

CY: To start with it had a couple of boards—

FR: —on the drop-off—

CY: —on the hooks out there.

FR: —but we held the buffalo that first time down there. You can't let a buffalo hit that wire fence, carrying his weight at his highest speed. That fence out there don't hold buffalo, because it's a fence. It's just simply buffalo don't know enough not to go through. They could go through that fence any time they want to. Ike and I watched one go through that braced fence, where we had the posts set there eight feet apart to brace and wires coming down both ways there, twisted. This bull that we put in the pens there and he started to come out, and we stopped him from coming out. That's one time in front of a buffalo when I didn't care much about it. We were trying to persuade him not to come. So then he backed back and went up to this cross piece there, took a rake with his horns, and opened up a hole and went through the hole in that fence at that place where there's a double number-nine wire there. There's three stretches of that fencing wire in there stretched on that corral. These cross-wires are bracing those posts on a straight level cross-ways between. He had trouble after getting through dragging his hind feet up over that cross-rail in there, but he had no trouble at all going through the fence.

EK: I seen them hit it on the run, and they just go right through. They may stand still when they get on the other side. They're just standing there, but they go right through.

FR: We built those feeding pens. We built those pens, and right way they began to get spooked and run down this hill. They'd hit that wire going down the hill, and the fence popped open like mosquito netting. Then they got a bright idea and they plowed a furrow. Get back here, turned up a double furrow of black earth there, back like from here to the desk here, from the fence. They'd stop at this ditch there and jump it, and caught them off guard when they hit the fence, why the fence would throw them back. We stopped the buffalo, not with a fence, but with a ditch.

EK: With your head.

FR: What?

EK: With your head. That's good thinking. That's real interesting.

CY: These three guys here with the two buffalo hooked to the cart, their brother-in-law used to live there at the agency. He was a forester. These three guys here they used to come up once in a while with a team. I met them two or three times. They finally had to get a steering wheel to put on this cart, just like the...You've seen these fire wagons that's got a long [unintelligible] to steer the rear wheels on it, to get around corners? Well that's the way they've finally done on that cart. When these bulls got up three or four years old, then they went wherever they damn-well pleased. They had little [unintelligible] on each side, had lines made out of the one-inch rope—big heavy bits in their mouths. When they'd want to turn this way, why, they just had to crank up that winch on that side to turn them around. After they got this steering wheel then, on the wheels, so they could...just like the front end of an automobile. Hell, they'd just turn them around any old place they wanted to do.

FR: Who were these fellows? They were from South Dakota, wasn't they?

CY: Yeah. Phillips is their name.

FR: Phillips was the name of—

CY: Fort Pierre, South Dakota. Their brother-in-law Bruce Summerwald (?), you remember him?

FR: No.

CY: He was a forester there at the agency. With old, you remember old Charlie Fonce (?).

FR: I remember Charlie Fonce a little. Cole and I used to fish together—

CY: Yeah, I remember that.

FR: —back in those days.

[Break in audio]

FR: —I had there was Walt Allen (?), grazing man there.

CY: This Summerwald, he lived there, and he married one of the Phillips' girls. The Phillips boys, they used to once in a while would come up to see them, and they'd come out to the Range every once in a while. That's how I got acquainted with him. Scotty Phillips was the old man's name.

FR: I never saw that team. They sent me the picture over there.

EK: Well, we better close this up, so you folks can have your dinner.

[End of Interview]