

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 086-013, 014**

**Interviewee: Johnny W. Breazeal**

**Interviewer: Jane Reed Benson**

**Date of Interview: July 13, 1977**

**Project: Ninemile Remount Depot Oral History Project**

Jane Benson: I'm talking today with Johnny Breazeal, and Mr. Breazeal, I think the most helpful thing you could do for us to start with would be to explain what your job was as fire control officer because this is one...Usually when I go out to talk to people, I have a pretty good idea of who they were and what they used to do and this sort of thing, but I don't have any handle on who you were and where you were and the whole thing.

Johnny W. Breazeal: I'll start with that time.

JB: Fine.

JWB: Okay, at that time I was a construction foreman and my purpose was working around here I was staying at Ninemile Ranger Station which is now part of the old Remount

JB: Right. When are you talking about now? What years?

JWB: 1946. Summer of 1946. My purpose was I was working with smokejumpers. At that time, the jumper camp was an old camp Bernard above or north of Ninemile in the Remount up the road there. What I was doing was supervising those jumpers on project work. This is not within their frame of job, but I sidelined on projects. Other words, I was swamping right away with them. We were resetting telephone lines and this type of construction with the jumpers. But I was boarding and associating with the not only packers at the Remount that year but also with the Ninemile district.

JB: Okay, let me stop you for just a second.

[Break in audio]

JB: Okay, we'll continue. Were you then a fire control officer?

JWB: I was not.

JB: What was your title then?

JWB: I was a construction foreman. I was a construction foreman, and that was '46. In 1946 and seven I was associated somewhat with them, but in '47 I was with the Lolo forest on four districts rather than the Ninemile alone. But periodically, I was back at Ninemile for details—for

different jobs that I was doing—so I was associated with the Remount about the time they started folding up their main operations there.

JB: So you worked alongside them but never worked directly for the Remount Depot.

JWB: Right. This is true. This is true. I was working for the Lolo forest at all times.

JB: Okay. Well, maybe you can tell me a little bit about the operations of the Remount as you saw it.

JWB: This would be good.

JB: Could you do that? It would be a good place to start anyway.

JWB: Well it was 100 percent summer, anyway, of fire packers organization. Now, these boys—and we used to help them with the evenings—they'd get fire calls all through the evening, afternoons and evenings generally, and we'd all go and help them.

JB: Oh, you would too?

JWB: Oh yes, wrangle their mules and load their trucks, and they had their own transportation and this type of thing. We were a very close-knit outfit at the time because we was just there after supper nothing to do, so consequently it was after [unintelligible].

JB: You and who else?

JWB: Oh, Clint Running. (?) He was a fire control officer, or at that time they were not called fire control officers, it was called alternate rangers. Clint was there, generally, and him and I and another little guy that was a clerk at Ninemile by the name of Cooper...I don't know if he's... I hadn't seen or heard of him in years, but he was always around so we were always there with them.

JB: So anybody on the grounds might get in on it?

JWB: Right anyone on the grounds up to a point. Now of course, a packer, they are a peculiar type of person. They're somewhat like a cook. They don't want nobody in their kitchen. If they're cooking, they want to cook, so our packers was the same way. Now, we didn't go out there and start wrangling mules and saddling mules, the packer did this. We were usually standing by to help him. If he asked for help, then we would go help, but if he didn't ask, you pretty quick learn to not fool with them unless they asked you to. So consequently this association was more of a watch and help as needed type of thing. Although before the summer's was gone then they learned that I had handled mules and this type of thing, so it wasn't long until I fell right in with them just as a helper type person.

JB: Who were the people in charge of the Remount at the time you were there? The foreman and the superintendent and all.

JWB: Okay, the superintendent is dead now. He had been an old ranger at the [unintelligible] power ranger station.

JB: That would be Ed MacKay?

JWB: Ed MacKay. His assistant at the time was a Marion Duncan. Marion is still around. In fact, we eat with him every one in a while at the retired—

JB: I intend to talk to Marion Duncan this summer.

JWB: I think Marion could give you as much or more than anybody that I know of today about to Remount because he was the assistant to Ed MacKay that year. This was about the time that you was beginning to fold it. Now, a lot of the old packers, the old famous—if you want to mention that, which I do—Bill Bell was one of them.

JB: Yes. I have heard a lot about Bill Bell.

JWB: Eldon McKee was another one of them?

JB: Did you know these people?

JWB: Oh yes. And later I worked with Eldon McKee very closely over at the sign shop in the winter—at the P and S [purchase and supply]. So I knew Eldon well.

JB: Eldon McKee.

JWB: McGee, McGee. [Eldon McKee]

JB: He was one whose wife was the sister of Bill Bell.

JWB: Right, he was a brother-in-law of Bill Bell. Another was George Tyler (?). Now, George Tyler incidentally, he is still alive.

JB: He was a packer?

JWB: He was a packer.

JB: I don't think I have his name.

JWB: Okay, in fact he just lives right over here. Before you leave we can look up his address, but he's right over here now staying with his daughter. And Coy Rice [McCoy Rice]. He's still at Ninemile or Sixmile, I believe.

JB: He lives at Heuson. I've talked with Coy Rice.

JWB: Oh have you? Okay, he was there and [pauses]...Charlie, a fellow by the name of Charlie Johnson (?), but I believe Charlie's dead. I haven't heard from him in years, and he was one of the mainstays as far as the operation of the outfit because he was the boy that broke the mules and generally the horses. It was a fellow by the name of Charlie Johnson.

JB: You think he's not around though.

JWB: I don't believe he is. I don't believe he is. Now, Marion Duncan could probably tell you more about this.

JB: Okay. Just anybody that you can remember being out there. Just out of your recollections. Who was the district ranger then while you were out there?

JWB: At that time Bob Smart (?). Robert Smart. In fact, Bob just retired a few years ago. We were at his retirement. Bob was...Oh! No, I'll take that back. He was not. Bob come in and year two later. It was...

JB: He would have been in the '50s?

JWB: Yeah, he was an old ranger. What was his name?

JB: That's all right. Maybe we'll think of it later here.

JWB: By golly! I used to have quite a lot of fun and problems with him too so I should remember. Gosh, he is my son-in-law's step-grandfather. [laughs]

JB: That's too complicated for me right now.

JWB: Yeah, it's too far back.

JB: Well, that's okay.

JWB: I'll remember it

JB: Tell me a little bit about what it was like, what kind of jobs you would do when these fire alarms would get sent.

JWB: As I say, mostly looking on at the time, but if they needed us to help them cut mules out...They had their mules in ten strings of mules and a couple of three extra strings at that time. Generally speaking, these people were on kind of a standby basis where this packer would have his string on standby or maybe three or four would be. They would keep them penned, and they would keep them penned maybe two or three strings in a pen or a short pasture out there—small pasture. If they got an alarm or a call more than one or two strings that was 100 percent ready. Then we would help them cut them out, hold them, this type of thing.

JB: How did you cut out a string of mules?

JWB: How we did? Just like cutting cattle. He knew this mule is old Babe and this one was old Sambo and this one was old Jenny. The packers knew their stock and they just cut them right out. Of course, all those packers knew one another's stock. They could go out there almost in the dark.

JB: Did you help do that?

JWB: Oh, yes.

JB: Did you go out on horseback? Where you walking?

JWB: No, it was usually by foot. Usually foot.

JB: Right because you were in these close pastures.

JWB: Right, in these small areas—small pastures. They usually had...Well, the packers all were wranglers, of course, but they usually had a couple like Charlie Johnson that was one of his—if I recall right—that was one of his big job to keep the stock segregated or keep them in place. Of course, he also had the help with the packers, but Charlie Johnson was more of a trainer and horses breaker...I guess you I don't...He was training and break them. He was actually a horse breaker is what he was. I used to go out and watch him a lot and also get close to him. Of course, they wouldn't let you to close if they didn't know, but they had sacking mules and they'd tie them up and break them and gentle them and various type...They had their own ways and methods of doing it, which was a real education within itself. You can imagine that a young man, particularly one from Arkansas, I was raised up with mules anyway.

JB: Is that where you were from?

JWB: I was raised up with mules anyway so it was right...I suspect if that Remount had went on, I would have probably preferred to work with the fellows. But at that time, this was their late careers of the operation so just a few years from that then it they started to disband.

JB: Had you grown up with a farming kind of background?

JWB: Hundred percent. Hundred percent farming, and we raised mules at home.

JB: Oh, did you?

JWB: Oh yes, we raised mule. So a mule was nothing new to me, or a horse either. In fact, I knew a lot more about mules than horses.

JB: Well, since you know a lot about mules then, maybe you can tell us some things. I've been curious about the breeding of the mules. What kind of stock they used and where they got these jacks. Do you know anything about them? Did you ever see their breeding stock?

JWB: I did see their breeding stock, and they had some famous jacks. I couldn't be sure of this, but I think that they were some of the Missouri string of jacks.

JB: This is what I can't find out for sure is where they got them. I've been told that at least early on they deliberately went out and bought some large ones. They were mammoth and Spanish cross.

JWB: Right. Mammoth and Spanish cross. They also had got into a string of what they call a hot-blood mare, and this was right down to the racehorses and this type of thing. See, they had a stallion, if I recall right, right from for some of the famous racehorses—crossbreeds.

JB: You might be thinking of those American Saddlers.

JWB: Right well there's American Saddler, but also they had some hot-bloods too.

JB: You mean Thoroughbreds?

JWB: Yeah.

JB: As I understand it, those horses were not...Well, no, we might be talking about two different things. At one time about 1950 or so when the U.S. government...or I mean the U.S. Army were closing up their own remount stations—

JWB: They gave them mules, and I was there [unintelligible].

JB: They brought up a small string of Thoroughbred horses that...I think they were sentimental about them. They just didn't want to get rid of them.

JWB: I think that this was probably what I was talking about.

JB: Okay. Are you suggesting that there were Thoroughbred horses that were bred out there because that part I'm not sure about.

JWB: Well now, I'm not sure of it either. I don't think I ever heard. What I heard them talking about was this hot-blood bunch of mares after they were breeding the mules and they got some of the some of these mules that were really catty. They said that—some of them at least—their opinion was that they had the wrong type of mare for the mule they needed because they was quite a few renegades and this type of thing. Just lively mules.

JB: Who could tell me most about the actual breeding of the mules, do you think, in that time that you knew about?

JWB: Marion Duncan. Marion Duncan can tell you more about that than anybody that I know.

JB: Okay, I'll ask him about that.

JWB: He'll know that whole system because, actually I was just looking on of Marion's operation, but he was...As today, I suspect that Marion would tell you more about that and know more than anybody I know of.

JB: What about that do you know most about? About what went on out there?

JWB: Well, that's about a summary of it really. Now, as far as their daily operations—what they were paid and what kind of appointments they have—I couldn't tell you. I just don't remember a thing about it at that time. They was none of us was getting paid a heck of a lot. [laughs]

JB: No, there are people I can get to I think that could answer those kinds of things.

JWB: Right. I know there were some of the fellows that was, like all people, dissatisfied with their conditions and all. On the other hand, some of us stuck it out and retired with the job.

JB: Did you ever get involved in any construction at the Ninemile?

JWB: Yes...Oh no, not building-wise and this type of thing.

JB: What sort of thing were you doing then?

JWB: It was always projects either out from the station. That station was all completed when I was there. Yeah, the whole Remount was all set up. As I say, I was there at in the weaning end of the operation. It was all in full bloom. I was fortunate to have seen the whole main operations, but then just a year or two, it started to disappear.



JB: Maybe you can tell me a little bit about Ed MacKay then. You must have known him. Since he's not around, I can't talk to you him.

JWB: You know I don't know a lot about him. Now Ed, we used to call him Sitting Bull, and the reason—

JB: Why is that?

JWB: That was his nickname. Well simply, Ed was a old ranger, and he'd come up the hard way. He was a man that ran his operation, and regardless of what influence or anything was happened or what, he run his operation. So for that reason...Now, you may go to him with a suggestion one day and it'd work—the next day wouldn't. So the packers used to say that they could tell from the way Ed wore his hat every morning whether to ask him anything or not. So from this type of thing this is where that he got the nickname Sitting Bull. In other words, he was the chief, and there was no exceptions. Although he was one of the best hearted people that I believe that ever walked, but on the other hand he would have had a terrible time today having to fool with unions and this because if he had a job to did, he did it.

JB: And all the regulations.

JWB: Right, and with all the regulations of today I suspect Ed would have really went nuts. But at that time whether you stuck a man out in the head of a creek or a drainage someplace and you didn't bother with him no more until that fall, he was really type of man to...typical old forest ranger. Then of course when he had come in there, he run that the same way. As far as I know, everybody liked him. The guys all stood by him 100 percent. Of course, they had too. [laughs]

JB: I have a feeling that the Remount Depot though was not a typical Forest Service operation at all. Just different kinds of people were employed there, and it had to be run like a ranch, didn't it?

JWB: Right. This is true, but on the other hand...You're right, it was more of a ranch, but the people that was involved was very dedicated. Now they might get out Saturday night and feud and fight among one another, but when that old bell rung—fire call come boy—everybody was just as loyal as a bunch of guys as you was ever around.

JB: Why was that do you think?

JWB: I think principally, when they had something to do, they did it. If there's nothing to do, then this is where problems set in is the thing. Used to kid one another, and some of them you could kid and some of them you couldn't kid and all the various [unintelligible]. They were just like any thorny crew. That's all. To me they was all, even the truck drivers, though there was some little difference between packers and truck drivers.

JB: Why would that be?

JWB: Oh. I don't know. I think it's a normal thing at that time. This is my mule and you're going to drive, but if you don't drive like I want you to drive I'm going to get down your neck, see, and this type of thing. You had two different operations. I can't recall the truck drivers. One of them was a young boy by the name of Zimmerman (?). I believe his name was Zimmerman. In fact, he later got kills for the Fish and Game as a game warden over in the eastern part of the state. Then you had older truck drivers and...But now, as long as everything's going fine, everything was fine, but if they didn't...If something happened now, they got to going a little too fast or too crooked roads or something, both of them...them old packers...In other words, they took care of their mules. They took care of their job, and this is the thing that I would like to point out more anything else, that those people were dedicated to their job. As I say, they may fight like a bunch of wild cats among themselves and argue, but once that fire bell rung they were all very cohesive. Boy, they was a welded bunch. Still, each man kind of looked after himself, and I think this refers right back to Ed MacKay. If Ed give you a job or detail, that was yours, and all the he expected you to do is to get it done. If it wasn't done then, of course, it was something else, but if I remember right, this was one of the big things that I remembered about that whole organization.

JB: It's nice to see, isn't it?

JWB: Right. I say it was 100 percent. You just couldn't imagine today how that thing operated then if you hadn't been around them. It's just something else. Five o'clock work time. You don't dare let this guy work. You don't dare let that one and all this kind of stuff. It just wasn't [unintelligible].

JB: They didn't keep very regular hours out there?

JWB: No, no, no. They didn't take at that time...If I remember right, they was...overtime was just like pulling teeth. In fact, I'm not sure that they even got any overtime. I think they just had so much a month.

JB: Well I've had various...I think it depends on precisely what time we're talking about and whether there was plenty of money.

JWB: It started coming in about that time.

JB: Yes, or there were certain fiscal years where they had to cut it out again too because the funds were low. They went back and forth. So there were times, I know. I've heard of guys driving for 20 hours a truck or not getting any overtime.

JWB: I think this was about the year that I am speaking of because I knew they used to. I think that in just a few years after that the overtime probably come into being.

JB: About the time there was no more Remount Depot.

JWB: Right. But my honest opinion is this is when problems started, because up until then it was a job regardless. It was 12 a.m. or p.m.—it didn't make no difference. They was one thing that was very...I have been talking to the plus side of this thing. There's lots of times—not only them, but we in the Forest Service as a whole—we may go out for six weeks or two months, and if they needed you there, well, you stayed there regardless. I think it was one of the bad things about it was your family relation. You just didn't have any kind of life.

JB: I imagine it would be hard on people.

JWB: You're right and particularly the families. I can see now where we were having somewhat of a...Of course, I wasn't married at the time, but we were probably having a pretty good time ourselves associating with one another and the things we're speaking of. But now I can see where their families was...when their wives had to raise the children, slop the hogs, and milk the cows, so it wasn't all that good either at the time for part of it. But the operation itself—

JB: There were some families actually living out there.

JWB: Oh, yes.

JB: The superintendent.

JWB: Marion Duncan's family was out there. Ed MacKay's family was there, and you see there was someone that lived up in a little house. I believe it was Charlie Johnson lived up the road there in that...They used to have a little old house up there.

JB: The one up in the trees.

JWB: Right, right. They was room for about, I think if I remember right, three families.

JB: I think that's all.

JWB: But at that time, they were no trailers like today. You go out there, and my gosh even the guys at Ninemile, anybody, they usually have a place or close there that they have a trailer. It wasn't that way then. They hired the man. They didn't ask you about your family. They didn't ask you nothing.

JB: Just whether you could do the job.

JWB: As long as you wa there. As long as you was there. This is some of the disagreeable...Looking back now. At that time I didn't pay attention to it because we were all used to it. We didn't know any better. We didn't know any better, and a job was a job and very precious. We liked the outdoors and followed this type of work I think was the reason that we were there. Of course, they's a lot of it disagreeable and then another thing, it was very seasonal. As far as I remember, Marion Duncan, Ed MacKay, and probably Les Wolfe—he's dead and gone—but he used to run the operation at Perma.

JB: Yes, he was up at the Winter Range.

JWB: Right. He run the winner range himself, so I guess they were permanent people, and maybe a couple more and that's all the permanent people they had. Then when they got through just as soon as frost come and there's snow coming, they pulled the shoes off of those mules and took them up there, and that was the end of the packers and most of the truck drivers. Consequently, I suppose they had quite a turnover. Although, I wasn't around that many years to really know what turnover they had, but I suspect they had quite a turnover with packers. Maybe four or five regular packers like Bill Bell and El McKee and them, but I think that they had quite a few—

JB: Well I thought that by the '40s these people were working year-round in the sign shop or the leather shop.

JWB: Right, and now this is what Eldon McKee did and Bill Bell. They was working for P and S. Well in fact that whole operation was under P and S, which is purchase and supply. That was a regional operation, and so a few of those guys did come in like Bill. Bill run the leather shop, and later Eldon McKee was apprenticed under him. Later, Eldon, even at the time of his death, he was working regular out at the P and S warehouse. The fire warehouse where it's located today.

JB: Eldon McKee is no longer living?

JWB: Oh, no. Oh, no. No, Eldon died. Incidentally, we always called him "Fibber" McKee. He came up about the same time that [unintelligible]. I think Eldon died probably 12, 15 years ago.

JB: Well you're saying then that there was some winter work for some of these people, but not for everybody. Is it right?

JWB: Right, right. Oh, a lot of them—about 80 percent of them—I'm sure was laid off in the fall and come back to the spring.

JB: You were talking a while ago about this—about the packers and their pride in their job, and how they wanted to run their jobs and so on. Was it the same way with the truck drivers, do you think?

JWB: Yes, the truck drivers with their truck. This was their truck. [laughs]

JB: Keep your hands off my truck.

JWB: This is where the controversies would sometimes be. There's really more to that [unintelligible]. Now, these big fires, which as I say I was...Later in 1948 I was made a fire control officer or an alternate ranger, and then from then on I was fire control officers. Now, what they would do would be to come over on the Clearwater over in [unintelligible] Cobel (?) and any place in the region. They would order from one to maybe ten strings, and they would order them, "We want them here at three o'clock in the morning." Maybe this is five o'clock in the evening—the evening before. Well, you can see there were these truck drivers...They probably had the responsibility. I don't recall this, but that they probably had the responsibility of delivering them mules on time at a certain point, see. So then you can see here now that they might get up and get over the speed and this type of thing in order to make it.

JB: Right. Trying to do their job.

JWB: Right, they were doing their job, so consequently, we did have some controversy between the packer and the truck drivers. All in all, it was mostly through. They was several truckloads of mules turned over and this type thing. There's times...I can't recall the particulars about them, but I do know that it happened.

JB: Did you ever go along on any of those trips?

JWB: No, I didn't. No, I didn't. At that time, I didn't go on any...I went to fires where they were at later. At that time, I was a fire foreman, so I would usually pull a crew in. I would know them, but I wouldn't be associated with them.

JB: When was that then that you would be fire foreman?

JWB: That was '46 at the same time. 1946. Really where I came in was...I came out here in the CCs [Civilian Conservation Corps]—the old CCs in 1939, 1938.

JB: Were you part of that camp out there?

JWB: No. I was at Fenn Ranger Station. Camp O'Hara.

JB: Where's that?

JWB: That's up the river from Fenn Ranger Station just about maybe six or seven miles on the Selway River. Between Fenn and the fault. In fact, I was in that camp from '39 or '38 to '41. Then I went into the Forest [U.S. Forest Service]. I was going to quit and go into a dozer

operating for a man outfitted at Coeur d'Alene, but then the forest supervisor gave me an appointment at the time. It wasn't a permanent appointment. It was just an appointment for that summer, and then I went into the Army that following year. Then in '46 I came back. [unintelligible] over here I was on the Nez Perce before the war, and then after I found out I being discharged I wrote and told him that I would be available and asked what the job situation was so they said you could go back to...Part of the people that I'd known on the Nez Pierce before the war was on in Lolo. Particularly, Fred Stillings (?). He was the forest engineer, and I wrote the Fred and told him that I'd be available. He wrote back and said, "Well, you can come over there, or you come to Lolo. We would be happy to have you at either place." I'd been in that country so I thought I'd come to the Lolo.

JB: You must have liked it here.

JWB: Oh yes, I did.

JB: I mean you're still here.

JWB: I retired here. I came here in May of '46, and I worked...exception of a few details. I was detailed out several times for short periods of time, but generally speaking I was here all of this time.

JB: Well, then if you were out sometimes on these fires—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

JB: —in your capacity as a foreman on the fire crew or something like that, could you tell us what it was like when a truckload of mules would arrive? What would happen then?

JWB: Generally speaking we prepared ourselves for it. If we knew they was coming in, and then one of the camp bosses and the people that was in charge of the camp sleeping areas and this type of thing, they had somebody and had the crews back where the mules would come in without any disturbance. But, once in a while, once in a while, they would come in...In fact, for instance, I helped pull two CC crews in to a fire on the Nez Perce one time, and we fought fire until way in the morning. So we bedded the kids down to get a few hours rest. Well in doing so, we didn't pay too much attention to where we was bedding them. Well, that...Oh, I don't know, we'd just been done about an hour so until this packer brought these mules in. I can't remember what packer. I kind of think that was one of the forest packers on the Nez Perce at the time. It wasn't a Remount.

JB: That's okay.

JWB: But anyway, it showed you what happens. My god, he pulled them mules right into the dark, bringing in equipment. He brought them right in over that bunch of people a-laying. These mules—

JB: Stepping right over them?

JWB: Stepping on them, and it was all right. The kids got scared, and they started jumping up and then they jumped up and they scared the mules. I never will forget what the packer said.

JB: Could you repeat it?

JWB: [laughs]. Well, if you cut it out. He said, "Hey, you S.O.Bs lay still. Don't get up and jump around." He said, "You guys just be down, or you're going to get killed." Everybody just quieted down and laid down, and those little old mules went right around them and he pulled them right through there and nobody was hurt. If everybody would have started running out of them sleeping bags and trying to get out of them, them mules would have killed somebody sure as the world or got seriously hurt. I think that this goes back to show you how much that those packers really knew these mules. He knew them mules would take care of themselves if you'd let them, but if you didn't...This I think is pretty much general with a mule too. If you let him take care of himself, he ain't going to hurt himself. It's the man is what cause the problems. [unintelligible]. Of course, there's a few other times that I remember they had come in unprepared you might say.

JB: Who was unprepared? The crew was?

JWB: The whole organization. I mean, the fire crew. You know, the first 24 hours of a fire is chaos anyway. Trying to get organized, trying to get people at places, and this type of thing. You'd have a green camp boss and this type of thing that didn't really know how to set up a camp for mules. See now, this is a different story that you wouldn't be interested in. This in later years become very important as to laying out a camp and this type of thing where you'd have your areas for trucks and you'd have areas for stock and keep them apart all this type of things. This was part of our job as fire control people.

JB: Oh, I see. Well no, I would be interested in that if it has to do with how you handled that stock. How did this get figured out?

JWB: Okay, well, visualize then just a creek bottom. A creek bottom or ridge or generally on the creek if we could get to it on account of the water. Okay, then you had a few principles that you had to think about. Number one is cooking and drinking water. At that time, we didn't run around testing water to see if it was pure and this type of thing. If it was wet, we used it. Okay. Then you had to set up your kitchen and stuff where they had the first shot at the water for drinking water and cooking water. Secondly, then of course, you had to be where people could bathe and wash and this type of thing. Third, then you're down below. Your stock had to be watered and this types of use, so you had to arrange fire camp to where these things could take place without crossing or interrupting one another, see.

JB: So the cook and his crew would be upstream and the stock would be down?

JWB: Right, they would be up there, and you wouldn't be running the mules through the kitchen or vice versa. You wouldn't be running them cooks back through the mules. Consequently, it was somewhat of a different type of a fire camp setup then than it is today. Right now, you just drive right in. All you have to watch is the vehicles and stuff. At those days, we couldn't. Now, they usually haul water, but then—

JB: So then you generally planned on mules being part of the operation?

JWB: Oh, yes. Mules at that time was a big part of your fire organization because this was your transportation. Just like your helicopter, your airplanes, and your trucks and stuff are today. At that time, that old four-legged mule was...he was what brought your grub in. He was what brought your tools in.

JB: Will see nobody's ever talked about how that camp was arranged before. This is new to me so I am glad to hear about that.

JWB: Well, even sleeping areas. At that time, why, you would have a place to unload—your cargo area they used to call it—and this is as far as your mules would come. You would unload your mules here, and then get them stock back down out of the way. Then nobody, I mean nobody, was down there with that stock but the packers. Unless they was someone designated.



I was designated a couple of time as a cargo man. At that time, we had one position that we called cargo man, and this is what he did was to take care of the areas and the cargo. Then after the packers brought it in and unloaded it, he took care of it and made sure that everything was organized for the mules, for the stock—feed and whatnot.

JB: During a fire, did those mules stay there in that camp, or did they go back to their home base?

JWB: No, they were generally on the road. Those mules...They went backwards and forward. They'd sometimes make 30 or 40 miles a day, and maybe one or two trips. It's just according...No, they were busy as bees. They were busy getting it in. When your fire was out, then they were busy getting it out. So see, at that time, packing was quite a job. It was quite a part of our fire organization.

JB: Well, let's take a theoretical situation here. Say there was a fire and the mules brought the stuff in on the first day, and it took three days to get that fire under control and start taking this stuff out again. Where were those meals during those three days?

JWB: Well okay, a three-day fire, and we're speaking now of a project fire, because once in a while you would have a small two- or three-acre fire where maybe ten men would take care of it and you would send a packer and six mules in and he would just stay there and help them put it out. In other words, that was all the supplies they needed to suppress this fire.

JB: And they would take stuff out?

JWB: Then perhaps he would, but you're speaking of the type of fires that this Remount was designed from.

JB: The big ones?

JWB: Right. Then they would bring that stuff in, generally start with—to our disappointed—they used to bring the equipment in, and then they'd bring the grub into camp. Then they'd bring the horse feed if there was going to be any around. Then they'd start supplying it from day to day. They might make up one or two trips a day. A lot of times they'd have to pack water, and you'd maybe keep one string in to pack water. Oh, there's just so many different situations where those mules was used, but they were really used.

JB: Would it be the same string going up and down the trail?

JWB: Sometimes it might, and sometimes it might not.

JB: Might bring more in too?

JWB: You might have two or three long strings that you's coming in on the trail, and you may have a short string or may have one string in camp to pack water. The situation dictated, of course, to what you did. It was a planning phase affair that to me was a very enjoyable one. Sometimes it wasn't as...I shouldn't say...I was going to say it might not be so efficient, but if I recall right, once you got things set up and started in there, we didn't have too much problems because you didn't worry about this guy running out of gas, you didn't worry about that helicopter coming down, you didn't worry about this. Those things was ordered, and they would come right in by mule and they were there. If I recall right, we never did have too much of a shortage or anything like this. What you did do now...Here again, so many of our fires now we have work out of central camps. It may be 1,000 men to a camp. At that time we didn't. You couldn't do it because you just couldn't get supplies there, so what we would do is to maybe put a 50-man or maybe outside 100 or once in a while a 200-man if you could get a vehicle to it. But generally, small crews scattered around over the fire, and then where the one pack string could get them started and get them going and supply them and this type of thing. It was a different type of organization in other words. I'd like to think of it is a mule organization.

JB: Were there times when you were out on these when also planes were used too?

JWB: Oh yes, in later years. I think that I was—

JB: But I mean at the same time. There at the same time.

JWB: Yes, at later years we were. They would pack stuff in, and for years we used them to pack stuff out even when we got to dropping camps and this type thing from airplanes. We had no way of getting them out so these same strings, for several years, that was their big job is to have to pack that stuff out, see.

JB: How long did that period last, would you say?

JWB: Oh, I'd say ten years. Eight or ten years.

JB: Was that all through the '40s?

JWB: Well, the '50s. Yeah, the lat '40s and early '50s—middle '50s. See, we didn't have too much...Well, what dictated that was the roads in the area. See now, you have roads up in most areas where at that time you didn't. At that time we didn't have helicopters, so when the helicopter came in—although even today helicopters don't pack too much stuff out, they might pack emergency stuff like jumper gear and this type of stuff out—even then we used to have to have mules to pack it from the fire maybe to where the copters could get it. Where now they just go cut a copter spot.

In later years, we just didn't have the situations that we had to have isolated camps very often either. Our planning and our fire—whole fire suppression and organization has changed.

Jumpers, here suddenly we was jumpers. Earlier years, when we first started with the jumpers, you may jump jumpers 20 miles back...20 miles in. Even 25 sometimes or 10 or 12. Too far for them to pack their gear, which is I think is...what, 120 pounds or 130 pounds to the man. So we used to drop jumpers, and then we would designate a spot on the trail or some place for them to do their gear up, and set it along the trail, and make it waterproof as he could. Then we'd send a packer and mules in to get it. Now, this is on a smaller packer base and more of a district operation than the Remount was. When it got to the stage that this type of packing could take care of this things—such as packing out the jumper gear...Then our lookouts, we started to get rid of the lookouts and this type thing. You didn't have to supply them by pack string. Your trails crews, if they could go from road to road rather than to spend a week on the trail, so our use of mules just...it just changed, that's all. It just changed the need for them.

JB: When did you retire?

JWB: Two years ago, '55...or '75.

JB: 75. Oh, okay. Well, then you would know pretty much how things are even now because I was wondering if... What do mules get used for now in the Forest Service? Right now?

JWB: Okay, about the only thing they get used for is trail maintenance. Trail maintenance and then...I might drop back here a little bit. Our trail use or even designations on our trails is completely different now from what it was back in them days. We had trails 100 percent for fire trails, and all trails had a certain percent and this was even where the monies come from for construction and maintenance and stuff.

JB: You are talking about percent [unintelligible]?

JWB: Right. Recreation in in later years and today has just about all the use, but at that time recreation had very little use of our trails—a very small percentage. It was once in a while you might have a through like in a wilderness area where there was 100 percent going into hunt and this type of thing, you would have some recreation designation. But generally speaking it was fire and some wildlife, but generally speaking, most of the trailers was fire. This was for telephone lines. At that time, we had telephone lines along trails to the lookouts and our summer primary lookouts and also the supplemental lookouts, which was rag camps and an open spot. Packers taking care of all this at that time, but then as the roads come in and we got rid of the lookouts. Patrol planes airplane patrolling and this type of stuff come in, you can see they just went down. Now today, some of your back countries like Powell ranger station, Superior has still got some, Seeley Lake's got a pretty good string, where they have a lot of primitive areas and—

JB: IS that still for trail maintenance?

JWB: Right. Trail and...Mostly for trail and recreational maintenance today though. Oh, in my career we had all the lookouts with the helispot on them. We cut a helispot to service all lookouts with the helicopter simply because it was just cheaper and quicker and better than it was with mules.

JB: So now mules aren't even supplying lookouts?

JWB: No they're not even...Well yeah, I guess a few of them they are in the primitive areas and this type of thing. They probably are on rare occasions, but not...Powell may have a couple, Bear Mountain, McConnell Peak. I don't know if they are even up or not, but I was over in 1948 as an alternate ranger on Powell and we were still supplying most of the lookouts. We had a couple at [unintelligible] too, but we were supplying most of them.

JB: That's right. Now there aren't even many lookouts maintained, are they?

JWN: No, no, no, there's not. Most of the lookouts now has roads to them other than maybe one or two in the primitive areas some place, and here again I suspect that they probably have a copter. Although now, Powell does have a string and a half I guess, or maybe...Now when I say string and a half, I'm speaking of ten mules as a string, so I'm speaking 12, 15 head of mules. Consequently what happened to our packers itself, and I think I could almost cried at the time, those old characters as I'm talking about—and a packer was, he was an individual, Okay, we didn't have use for them so we got them into other jobs.

JB: Such as?

JWB: Well, as equipment operation, maintenance—road maintenance—and engineering of various types, and this type of thing. Anything, technician-type jobs. So consequently now, you can go into a district, and you won't set around very long until you'll hear them talking about snowmobiles or you'll hear them talking about scooters, motorcycles, helicopters and this type of thing. But you never hear of a mule so you don't even have people that can handle mules. This is just like putting a green person out to catch rattle snakes. I mean, to put a green person out with a mule.

JB: Of course, if they're not using the mules they don't need to know anything about them.

JWB: They don't need them. So our use for the mule has just about disappeared.

JB: Are you saying then that most of the packers still found jobs in the Forest Service?

JWB: A lot of them did. I won't say...Yeah, I think most of them. I would say that. I think most of them was in later years where they had 15, 20 years of packing. I know the...Charley Harrington's our later packer at the Remount. Okay now, I don't even know if Charley even packs any more or not. He may—

JB: I think he works at the equipment shops on [unintelligible] Street.

JWB: Right. Okay, he was there, and he also is equipment operator—grader. He grades roads and this type of thing. They did convert those that could.

JB: Yeah, and his brother Don, now, I've talked to him. He used to drive a truck out for the Remount.

JWB: Don was another truck driver at the time that I was talking about. Don started about the same time area that I was out there.

JB: Yeah, that sounds right because I have talked with him some.

JWB: Right. Don was just a young boy at the time that I was—of course I wasn't too old myself—but Don was one of the, I guess, one of the last of these main truck drivers. I think Don was one of the last of the truck drivers. Now, Don could probably tell you a lot about who's out there too.

JB: Yes, yeah. Well, now I've run into...It seems that some of the outfitters and guides around are people that used to pack for the Forest Service. They've since gone into businesses as outfitters, or they pack for private parties.

JWB: I suspected that this would happen just about automatically because the man that's really into the mules, it's kind of hard to get away from. Particularly the people that were raised up with them. Now Charley Harrington and those boys, they come in—it was a job to them. They weren't really they old packer that we were talking about. They was a different type of thing. I had several packers since then that I won't even mention because they're just young fellows packed one year, and they was probably more problems and then about as [unintelligible] and this type of thing. We have a lot of...As the mules went, so did the packer naturally. But it would be...I've often thought if I was a good writer I would like to—me and a million others I guess—but I did come right out of the, I was one of the few that spent my career from the old to the new.

JB: Yeah, that's why it's nice to talk to somebody like you because you can see how it changed.

JWB: I spent my career that way. Now, I'll tell you another fellow that you may want to talk to. I don't know if he has been...He wasn't directly concerned with the Remount but he was concerned with Ed MacKay, and that's Bud Moore [William R. "Bud" Moore] up here.

JB: Oh yeah, he is on my list someplace—

JWB: Right because now Bud would be...Old Sitting Bull just about raised Bud. He got him back, and I'm referring to Ed MacKay now when I speak of that because this is what we always called him. He just about got Bud started around just from a 16-year-old kid. So Bud was—

JB: Did Bud ever work at the Remount Depot?

JWB: No, I don't believe he did. He probably hauled...was in there several times and knew a lot of the people, but I don't believe, I don't recall Bud ever being directly connected or around it like I was.

JB: Then you were around at the time that they were closing down the Remount Depot, right?

JWB: Right.

JB: How did people feel about it?

JWB: Well they have different opinions and different feelings. I'm sure they was a lot that was like me that hated to see the old days go, but on the other hand they could see the light and they could get the same job done with a lot less effort and this type of thing. A lot of the old packers I'm sure that won't see their...Now this could even now I think in some cases from a personal standpoint too. In other words, eliminating my job and this type of thing.

Although, in fire planning overall and the forest management is a complete different bowl of fish now all together than what it was in them days. This has been brought on by regulations. It's not the people. I think we still have some of the best of the best people in the world right in the Forest Service, but they have to work under such regulations now, particularly in labor relations and this type of thing. It's just about a different ballgame all together. I think right now it probably takes five times the amount of people to do the same job as it did in those days.

JB: Probably does to fill out the papers.

JWB: Right. Well, yes, and just generally the organization itself. This is from...you've got to have more...of course, then you had packers as experts, we have cargo people experts. Now, you've got airplane people, you've got air boss, you've got various types of expertise.

JB: That you never knew even existed.

JWB: Right, that even existed then. I think each one now from a regulation standpoint has brought on more. Where one man then could do three, four, five different phases of the job.

JB: When they were shutting down the operation out there, were you around...did you see how they actually dispersed the equipment and where the mules went and when they sold stock and this kind of stuff?

JWB: Yes, I was; although I wasn't too closely associated, I was very familiar with it.

JB: Well I'm just wondering how it looked stand there watching it.

JWB: Okay, what first went out of business was raising mules. Now, they could buy mules or supply...They could supply their needs from other sources rather than to breed and raise their own mules.

JB: By the late '40s?

JWB: Right, by the late '40s and early '50s. The early '50s, they quite breeding stock.

JB: I think it was '48 they quit breeding mules.

JWB: Right, right. When they quit breeding them. So they had to drop a phase of it including people, including range, including everything. Simply because it didn't take so much range and people to operate it as without that phase. Then pretty quick the forests, include the districts, they didn't need as many mules, so they dropped off mules. Now in doing so, they didn't sell...Well, they did have one sale.

JB: Of mules?

JWB: Of mules and of surplus stock. Yeah, they was some mules I think was sold, but they did sell this brood stock.

JB: The mares.

JWB: Yes. The mares and stuff that they sold them, but the rest of it they kind of grew out of. Other words, as a mule would be condemned, we just wouldn't replace it, or a horse vice versa. So we just kind of let it grow out of it just like we grew into it. For instance, at Bonita back in the early '40s, we used to have...they was two full strings there. Then I came there in '46 and there was one string. Well by 1956 or '57, we had five mules. We dropped a couple of the lookouts and the trailers and stuff so we just grew out of it. I guess now, they don't have any.

JB: This is at Bonita?

JWB: Yeah, at Bonita.

JB: Is that the one down by—

JWB: Clinton. Yeah, by Rock Creek. So here again, as I say, in Powell, Seeley Lake and Superior, they's about the only ones that's got any stock at all.

JB: Now this is interesting. I hadn't thought about this before, but you're talking about how as the stock declined then there would be fewer jobs to do. I suppose like the first spring when there no longer was a colt crop of mules then somebody's job was eliminated too.

JWB: A couple of people's job was eliminated so they just they just kind of grew out of it. Here is where that I was speaking of them replacing—putting these people into other jobs and stuff. Several of them went that way in forest districts and regional too. Then eventually it got to the point where the upkeep itself, you finally get down...They got rid of the stock and stuff, and then the upkeep of the buildings started to be in there. That's quite an expense itself—of the facilities.

JB: At the Remount Depot?

JWB: At the Remount and the Winter Range and this type of thing. As the stock decreased and then so did the maintenance, they had to eliminate a lot of the equipment and buildings and this type of thing, so they just grew out of it. Eventually it got where they just turned it over to the Lolo forest and that's where it's at today. It's not even the Remount. It's part of the part of the Ninemile, but for several years they kept...Well, I don't know. I remember it must have been about '60—1960 or '62 or '63 when they actually gave that back to the Lolo because I remember Don...the last operator, the foreman out there was Don...Gosh, [unintelligible] years ago when the Nez Perce got in the [unintelligible].

JB: Oh, Chamberlin.

JWB: Yeah, Don Chamberlin, Don Chamberlin [Donald L. Chamberlin]. He was the last...As far as I know he was the last—

JB: The last superintendent.

JWB: —superintendent of the Remount. Right.

JB: I was thinking it was '54.

JWB: It could have been.

JB: Fiscal year '54 was the official end of the Remount Depot.

JWB: Well, that's that sounds just about right.

JB: The winter range kept going. They still had that land up there administered until the '60s.

JWB: that's what I thought. At the Winter Range, it went until even the early '60s.



JB: I think it was '62.

JWB: You're right. That's when I was referring to. I don't believe that they officially...Lolo used the Remount, but I don't believe that it was actually transferred to them until about then.

JB: I don't know about that.

JWB: But the Ninemile was using it. They had a good kitchen set up and facilities. They had a couple houses at the Ninemile. Yeah, Don Chamberlin, I'm sure, was the last superintendent.

JB: That would have been in the '50s then? He was after Ed MacKay?

JWB: Oh yes, oh yes. Oh, yes. I think Ed left there, or maybe Ed retired about in the early '50s.

JB: Oh, I know. I was talking to Hank Viche [Henry "Hank" Viche] the other day. You must know Hank.

JWB: Yeah, Hank would know about it.

JB: Okay, as I recall now, MacKay went to the rubber project. He'd been superintendent to the Remount Depot for a year or two then went to the rubber project, and so Hank Viche took over as a kind of temporary interim sort of superintendent of the Remount Depot and the Winter Range all at the same time for a while. I don't know how long that lasted. So then, Don Chamberlin must have—

JWB: No. Now on that...See, I was here in 1946. Ed MacKay had come back from the rubber project.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

JWB: —while I was in the Army.

JB: Would have had to been earlier.

JWB: Right. So I'm sure that Ed...that Hank might have been there. See, I didn't even know Hank had been there, so he had to be there before '46.

JB: Okay. I'll get those dates straight before—

JWB: Hank was there before 1946 because Hank, at the time about that time, he was over at Powell Ranger Station as a ranger over there.

JB: And then he'd come in as the superintendent of the Winter Range.

JWB: Right. Right, about that early '40s I would say. Or middle '40s. Maybe '44, '43, '45. Because Ed was at the Remount in '46, and if I recall...Well in fact, I know the rubber project was over, because the reason I know in 1951 or 1949 Bill Samsell (?) come to Bonita as a ranger and he had worked under Ed MacKay on the rubber project.

JB: Bill Samsell?

JWB: Bill Samsell.

JB: I have a Samsell down here and I thought it was Jack, and everybody says they don't know Jack Samsell, but it's supposed to be Bill.

JWB: No, Bill. It is William R. Samsell. I can tell you.

JB: Did he have any association with the Remount Depot?

JWB: Yes. Well, he was in and out of there a lot. I mean he knew everybody and all this type of thing. Bill could probably give you some real good pointers on that. Now were Bill lives up...I believe, they sold their place for some time, and he lives up on the lake here in the summer.

JB: But he was not actually part of the Remount Depot?

JWB: No.

JB: This is really changing the subject, but all of the sudden I happen to think of it. Did you know [Major] Evan Kelley? Were you around when he was around?

JWB: I knew him, and I didn't know him. Now he probably didn't know me from Adam's old fox. But I knew him yes. I spent my whole CC career under his regional reign, and when we come here in '46 [unintelligible]. I think he was...P.D. Hanson, I believe, come here about maybe '49 or '50, but yeah, P.D. Hanson was...I knew him. He used to come out to Fenn. In fact, he was the one that was pushing Fenn Ranger Station. We were building that up as a show.

JB: over in the Selway?

JWB: Right. A show station. This was one of his pet projects. He used to come out over there. Of course, I was just a CC leader at the time. He wouldn't know me from Adam's old fox, but I did know him. He was a wonderful man too. I remember one time I drove him. I don't even know how I come to be driving the damn bus, but I did, and we was talking about going up a mountain road. I know that we were going into a spike camp—[unintelligible]. He come up and met us up off of the Lochsa. I will never forget some of the remarks that he made such as right of way clearing. He says, "Never cut a tree that you can put a road around."

JB: Lots of people would agree with him I'm sure.

JWB: Now, you can just point them out every time I go up [unintelligible]. In fact, a lot of our later engineers straightened a lot of them out, but a lot of them was [unintelligible]. It was one of those old CC roads that they built. I didn't build it, but CCs built it. The most beautiful drive you've ever seen. Trees right in the shoulder. They were slow roads. That was old Evan Kelley. If it's anything I remember about his administration was that. Never cut a tree that you could put a road around. Of course, now we just go through. Here again, Evan Kelley was a lot like old Ed MacKay.

JB: How's that?

JWB: Of this temperament. Of this responsibility, I should say. In other words, he run the damn thing. Boy, once he got an idea, he didn't veer it. This whole administration was right now.

JB: Really got things done.

JWB: Right. He got things done, and he got things done the best way, the cheapest way, and what not. But the principal thing, he got it done, and he got it done with people. I can only speak highly of Evan Kelley because it's just typical. This Bill Samsell I'm telling about, he was a ranger right down in the...Well in fact, he was a ranger with Ed MacKay a lot too. They were all those type of people. You just give them this district out here job, why, that was theirs. Boy, they considered that, and they just about fight you to...if there was any controversies, anything over it. Not only with the officials, but people on the ground too. The people, the neighbors, they had the highest respect for those people you ever run into.

JB: Didn't the people working under people like Evan Kelley sometimes resent it though?

JWB: I suppose somebody did that was trying to climb a ladder if you know what I mean—a career ladder. But I don't think so. I don't think so. I think that we took it for granted. We took it for granted that this was the job. I know I didn't personally. Of course, I didn't really know him that intimate, but from the CCs and all and thinking back now, I think that I got a lot of my ideas right from those people. Right from those people who didn't sit around. When something went wrong, why, you fixed it or went around it. But you went on and got your job done. Where now you just don't do that. People set on their can and wait for somebody to come fix it and this type thing, but then, why, you didn't because there's nobody to do it. You did it yourself. Heck, I went on fires time and time again in that area where we just had a three-day ration and maybe we was out there eight days.

JB: What'd you do about that?

JWB: You made out. You made out. You just didn't eat so much. I remember another old ranger by the name of Higgin. It was over on the Little Dixie district on the Nez Perce one time. We took a crew of CC boys down over on Red River way down. Old Higgin was a ranger there. We were down there four days, and I mean we had 30 acres or 40 acres of fire too. We never seen a supply or nothing so finally one of the old CC foremans—I was assistance foreman—one of the CC foremans sent one of the kids out and told him to get some grub or something in there. Old Higgins says, "Okay, I'll have a string in here before daylight." Well what happened, he brought one mule himself. [laughs] A bunch of beans and a slab of bacon [laughs] and that was the supply. But it was good. We made out, and we got the fire out. These is the type of things I am talking about. You just can't [unintelligible]. Of course, we could have cut his throat and buried him alive too. On the other hand, you get to thinking about it, the man is doing his job.

JB: It was better than nothing.

JWB: Of course now, what the funny part was probably nobody in the world ever knew that above him. It stopped there. So you didn't have the controversies, or internal controversies, that you have today. What that ranger did, that was it.

JB: You sound like you feel pretty good about your days in the Forest Service.

JWB: I would have been in living...I don't believe, if I could have picked my life, the only thing I could have done, I would have gone and got a better education. But other than that, I wouldn't have been in nothing else. I think I was fortunate coming up through the Forest Service, and I have known some of the whitest men that God ever made and the hardest working and the most honest. Integrity was a...It was common rather than the exception. Boy...Well, the integrity of those guys was there. I don't care whether it was ranger, the forest supervisor, or Evan Kelley. This is taken for granted that this was...Integrity was there. By golly, you didn't walk around the bush, you didn't lay it on to somebody else, you didn't do anything. Every man

was [unintelligible]. No, to answer your question, I wouldn't have lived a life...If I could have picked a life knowing now what I know, I could have never picked one...

Of course, now there was a lot of sighing and weeping and here and there and the other from a personal gain and this type of thing. But to me, I just couldn't have picked a better career than the U.S. Forest Service. I mean, this is from the top, and I have known them in later years. I knew some of the top people from Washington all the way down. Oh, once in a while you would get somebody that was stepping on somebody's shoulders to catch the next ring, but generally speaking they were just...they are a group of people...

I don't want to make it sound like that that was the end of this either because right today you've got some people that goes with the Forest Service. You have still got some just as higher integrity people that they'd rather give you their arm than tell you a lie or anything. As far as stealing or back pay or kickbacks and that, I just don't believe that it's ever happened, and I don't think it will happen just simply because of people. That's just like cooks is drunkards [laughs]—90 percent of them. The people that go through the Forest Service or that takes to this life...That percentage may drop a little now because you do get people that's in there for the dollars, but back in them days it was a job. If you got enough dollars to live on you're happy.

JB: It is nice to know that you feel that way about what you did with yourself. It really is.

JWB: I don't have any regrets. I was always treated very fairly. In fact, I just don't have anything but praise for them. I think one of the biggest things that I have enjoyed is dealing with the public. I didn't care how many dollars he had in his pocket or what kind of a car he was driving, how the standard was met. I think that I was always happy that I didn't have pressures and this type of thing.

JB: Well, an outfit like the Forest Service really has to deal all the time with the public now.

JWB: Right, right. All the time. Here again, they have had less problems, I think to do this is getting...They have a little more now than they used to, but they have had less problems with people than I think any organization and this is simply from this integrity thing. People know it, and they still depend on it. Even the year I retired. If I went up and talked to people about burning something, it wasn't from...because I wanted to make them do something, it was simply that that was wrong and if you're going to do it, you're going to get in trouble. So consequently, people accept it. That's all. No, to answer your question, I think I spent for the happiest...Hard work for god only knows. We worked day and night and didn't think anything about and accepted responsibility this was yours. This was yours. Until somebody changed it, well, you didn't expect somebody to put in a mud hole. Boy, you just walked around those places.

JB: I imagine people have a lot of respect for what the Forest Service is trying to do. This idea of taking care of the land and that sort of thing. I think more and more people realize the value of this, don't you?

JWB: Yes. Of course, this kind of...in my own belief, this is kind of a different story altogether. You know when I first come into the Service, there was vast acres, vast miles of nothing other than resources. If you didn't have a job, you could pick up a saw and an axe and go out there and cut you some logs. Then now, we're getting into the shape like they are in Western Europe or in Europe, all of our resources has been developed so we are going from an area of developing resources to an area of maintenance of resources. So this is where that problems are coming because then you take your lumber industry and all the mining industries and all this. All they had to do is send people out here and prospect, or you go out here and you buy timber and this type of thing. Well, that timber's been...all of it went through the mill.

JB: Or belongs to somebody.

JWB: Right, right. There's no more, and the Forest Service now, of course, is beginning to play a greater part...Well, I won't say a greater part, a different part to what they did then. So consequently your administration and your whole thing—your whole ball of wax—has a lot more people to deal with number one, and number two is a limited amount of resources. This, of course, brings up problems that we didn't have in the earlier part of my career. Back then there was thousands of acres of timber and stuff that...You knew what timber was out there, but there's no way of getting it. Nobody wanted it so—

JB: Well, you aren't going to have to worry about it now, are you?

JWB: No so I don't have to now...Well yes, I do sometimes. On one hand, I do see things that...Although I do try to rationalize and try to figure why it's being done like it is, and generally speaking—and here again is this is a plus for the Forest Service—generally speaking you always come up with a plus for them because they're out there for that country and for the resource. Not for some individual or pressures.

JB: Well, it is a matter of trying to solve the problem for the benefit of everybody involved.

JWB: Right, right. So you've got to still giving them a plus. They have to go about it, and their tools is even a little different to what they were.

JB: In a way the Remount Depot was the same thing, wasn't it? Something had to get done, and they had to figure out a way to solve a problem.

JWB: Right. That's exactly right. It was a means to a ways or a ways to a means at that time—whatever way you want to put it. At that time, as I was saying a little ago, all of our fires and camps and stuff was organized around the mule because the mule was the thing. Where now

it's the airplane, a helicopter, and the trucks and this type of thing. So really your big problem...That was the big problem then, was getting people into a fire. Where now it's not.

JB: Is there anything else about the Remount Depot that you recall that you think is important that people ought to know that we haven't discussed already? Any sort of parting words I guess we could say?

JWB: No, but the only thing that I can say, and I think it's right along like I've been talking about some of their other [unintelligible], that it was just like a grandfather and a parent and a child. That was the grandfather. So consequently from what's there today is all we have rolled out from that into another period of history, so for this reason there's not—

[Telephone rings; break in audio]

No, I don't really have any...Partly, it's a fond memory. I think it's a picture in my mind that they won't many people won't ever have again.

JB: It will never happen again.

JWB: Right, it'll never happen again. Not even in your later ranges or anything. I think it should be more written about it. I think that this phase is just as important to our children from now on to have an idea how they did things and what they did as today's pictures.

JB: That's why we're doing this project I think, Mr. Breazeal. I think a lot of people felt that this ought to get written down and recorded before it gets lost.

JWB: Well, I think it is a wonderful idea because I think that it's memories and I just hope that we could do it in a way that we could get the feeling. I'm sure of myself and these other people you talk to, I'm sure everyone of them has it. If we could just get the feeling that we have for that period and pass it on to the generations to come.

JB: Well, that's what we're trying to do, and people like you were helping to do it.

JWB: Because it was an area that...Well, it's just no more. That's about all that I can say. It's just a sun... setting of a Sun. It's the same thing. It's just a day gone, and that's the way I think. But you think about it, and it was a beautiful day while it was here. I was just very happy to have been a part of it. Of course, I guess in the next hundred years they'll look back on today and say the same thing.

JB: Could be.

[End of Interview]