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Oral History Number: 086-015, 016

Interviewee: Walter "Walt" Peery and Mabel Peery

Interviewer: Jane Reed Benson

Date of Interview: August 5, 1977

Project: Nine Mile Remount Depot Oral History Project

Note: When referring to the Civilian Conservation Corps, Walt Peery says CC, while Mabel Peery and Jane Benson says CCC.

Jane Benson: I'm talking today with Mr. Walter Peery. Would you mind starting out, just telling us how you happened to go to work for the Remount Depot?

Walter Peery: Yes, well, I was up at Stevensville there, and it was during the Depression, so we lost our own place up there and we was working for a dollar-and-a-half a day. Mr. Fickes come along, and I had some saddle horses, so Mr. Fickes bought some...two saddle horses from me. Then he said, "Well, I heard that you're pretty handy at breaking saddle horses."

Well, I said, "I don't know. I've broke a few."

Well, he said, "I've heard different from that." [laughs]

He wanted to know if I wanted a job, and I said, "Yes." I said, "Well, when would you want me go to work?" I think that was on Friday or Saturday.

He said, "Monday morning."

I said, "How much is in it?"

He said, "Well, 145 dollars a month, and your board."

Well, I was working up there around the hay fields for a dollar-and-a-half a day, and I had four little youngsters and a wife to start with. So went up there, and the first thing he told me, he said, "We've got a carload of two-year-old mules, and that's going to be first job of breaking those two-year old mules."

I said, "Okay, I'll try it and see what I can do." Went up there, and they had two or three of the packers out there and they were trying to [unintelligible] break those mules. Well, you run them in the shoot, and put a halter on them, and they was out there trying to hold them, you see, and break them to lead that a-way. So Mr. Williams, he goes out, and he said, "Well," he said, "You fellows can go out there and start doing something else." Said, "We've got a fellow that's going to break the mules and saddle horses here."

JB: Meaning you?

WP: So he turned them over to me. I run in five of them then. I put the halters onto them, and then run them around this round corral. The first post I come to I just tied them up to it. Tied them all there. As soon as they got through a-pulling back, so you could kind of walk up to them, then they had these pack mules. So I got a saddle horse and a pack mule lead in there, and then taking the rope off and tied it onto the pigtails of the pack saddle and taking the mule then out. Then I'd turn the other mule around, and he'd turn a few times like that. Turn them a few times, and then I started off with him. Well, they're used following mules or horses, you see. So I'd just take them off up the road. He'd pull back, and he found out that post wouldn't give and he'd pull back just a little, and then he'd come ahead and he'd follow that mule. I had them things—whole carload—so you could lead around any place behind the other mules there in less than two weeks. A carload of them. Here they were, they'd been a-fighting with them for couple weeks, and they hadn't even made a dent on them yet. [laughs]

JB: When was this now? Was that been that first season when you were out there?

WP: That was the first season, yes.

JB: 1930?

WP: Yes.

JB: 1930?

WP: No, not '30, then. It was '31 and '32.

JB: Would have been '31, okay.

WP: Yes, I think it was '31 when it first started, wasn't it? If you got any record on that. I'm pretty sure it was now.

JB: The things I read say that by the fall of 1930, they were getting set up out there. I don't know how much went on –

WP: Well, yes, that'd right, but the next...when the fire season come on then.

JB: Now, you talk about a carload of mules. How many is in a carload, approximately.

WP: About 26, 28. [laughs] Oh, I imagine they had 28 in there, see, but a bigger horse, see, they can put a 24 in a 36-foot car, 28 in a 40.

JB: Yes. Were you living out there at the time?

WP: I was staying out there, yes. In tents. I was living in one of those tents with a bedroll.

JB: Oh, like in the photograph?

WP: There were frames out there. That's where we's all that then, in there. Well, that's the same fall then when I got through breaking them, Mr. Fickes and Mr. Williams went over on the Madison River, and they bought two carload of saddle horses over there. On the Madison, there's anywhere from four to six years old and never even had a halter on them. Just run off of the Range over there.

JB: Bought them from local ranchers over there?

WP: Ranchers, and then also, old Richter (?) and Ellinghouse (?), they had some bucking horse there, young horses that went bucking, so they bought them. [laughs] But they hadn't quit bucking, but we'd taken the buck out of them. In the meantime...I forgot that the meantime, a fellow the name of Eddie Lindblum (?) come along. So Eddie and the two of us broke those two carloads of horses out that winter, and for over three weeks, it stayed around 35 below. Mr. Williams, what he told us, said, "Boy, they're [unintelligible]," and he said, "If they don't buck then," he says, "I know they won't buck when the hot weather hits them." So we had the crane them in the cold weather and everything else, and what they told us, they said, "Well, you can't make them buck to take it out of them." He said, "You just got to ride them, take them out of that-a-way." Well—

JB: What was the purpose of the crane?

WP: Those bucking horses, you couldn't do it, you see. We just got started good, and then it come about three foot of snow. That is the winter that they had the big flood down there, and washed out the roads and everything down below.

JB: Where, in the Ninemile? [unintelligible]?

WP: Yes. Clear on down to Alberton all over and washed a lot of them roads out. The snow was up to the third wire there at the Remount—on the fences there. So that's what helped us break the horses, you see. We'd get on them, we'd slip out of the yard, and then we'd go up Stony Creek towards the CC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp there. We would go up there, and the snow was good and deep, and so then the first time they made a move and he wanted take his head, we'd just let him. Then we hit him with spurs, and he'd throw his old head down in that snow, and he'd get the snow in his nostril, and he'd bring his head up. That's only way them old bucking horses would quit, so you could knock it out of them. You just couldn't ride them where they'd take the unexpected.

JB: Yes. It's a good thing it snowed, yes?

WP: They'd really hold on to it too. They hadn't quit.

Mabel Peery (?): May I add just a little bit to this?

JB: Please do.

MP: During this winter, my husband's skin is real tender, and he can't wear wool. But during that snow on the...and that kind of weather, he got him two suits of black under...black wool underwear. He wore that to keep warm up there. [laughs]

JB: How'd it feel?

WP: Well, it feel good. Also, we had mitts on—mitts like that—and you couldn't hold your rein, or hardly anything.

JB: That must have been a job, trying to do all that in all that snow, though. Wouldn't it?

WP: Well, snow and like that, and we had five we had to ride every day. We went in there, and we'd cut out five. We started five at a time.

MP: Were you batching, or did you have a cook at that time?

WP: No, no. Part of the time we'd a-batch it, and part of the time they didn't, you see. A lot of the time it were, and a lot of time cooking for the fellows—the foremans up the CC camp. They'd come by there on Sunday. Well, I didn't go home, and the rest of the boys, like Mr. Deschamps and a lot of them, they could go home. It's too far for me to go, so I'd do...change his water for him and do the other fellows' chores and let them go home, you see.

JB: So you stayed around there?

WP: Well, I had to stay around, yes.

JB: Yes. Where was your family during this time?

WP: They was up Stevensville.

JB: Okay. You stayed down there with the children, is that it? [speaking to Mabel]

MP: Yes.

WP: Yes. That's the only thing that saved us during the Depression, see.

JB: I can imagine. Well, now, tell me—

WP: We had the farm, and we had 18 head of horses up there and put them out on the road. I thought I'd get some money out of them, and I rented them out to a fellow. They built this road, the old road that went around Bonner there. They changed that out through East Missoula. They'd taken the 18 head of horses, and I furnished grain—I got paid for the grain—but I didn't paid for all the horses. [Unintelligible] 18 head of work horses.

JB: But had you raised—

WP: I had figured on getting money out of there to feed the family. So, I was forced to have to go to work up there or someplace else, where you just couldn't—

JB: Had you raised workhorses on your place?

WP: Yes, well, I was farming up there. I had the six-horse teams up there, and the [unintelligible] putting in a lot of grain. But the grain up there that we had, you'd only get 35 cents a bushel. The ground was a farm, and the county give it to us. All we had to do is pay the water rent, and then the ground, all that sold for taxes up there at that time. All you had to do, you just pay that water rent. You got all you make, and then you couldn't make it. [laughs]

JB: That's too bad. Tell me what that ranch was like out there at the Remount Depot when you're very first one out there.

WP: Well, it's just a hay farm, is all it was. Just straight hay farm. So the first job it was, we had...they had some mules there, and they'd brought a team or two of broke mules when they first started there [unintelligible] work. So they give us the mowing machines and everything else, so we put one mule that had never been worked onto a mowing machine. Then they'd put one of the packers with a saddle horse and a long rope on him, so he could turn him when they come to the end, until we got him roped to mow that hay.

One day they was up there mowing and so we got a fire call, and we had these mules up there in another pasture up above where they had mowing. We opened the gate and we come down through there, and them mules come a-running while the boy laying in the shade under the trees. I never thought to tell him, if he'd have went ahead and wrapped the lines around the mowing machine, [unintelligible] around the spoke, when they went ahead there, it pulls them back, see. It holds them and won't let them run. But they didn't, they just let the lines lay. So we had to quit running the...mules were taken into the fire, which [unintelligible]. We had to go run with a saddle horse and we caught those mules and stopped them, with our saddle horses. Got ahold of the outside mule, when the sickle went to running. Sickle down here really going.

JB: [laughs]. They were chasing after the other mules, was that it?

WP: No, they did run away, it scared them, you see. They just run away just like a team of horses and a wagon. Boy, they really take off when they do, and the mower bouncing.

JB: How many people were around when you first went out there? Who do you remember was there?

WP: Well, I'd say there's around 35 altogether. [unintelligible] and all your different packers and truck drivers.

JB: Can you name me some names of people that were there when you were there?

WP: Yes, I got—

JB: Oh, you made a list, good.

WP: I got a list of them, and I started going through. Now, I don't know how have these [sound of pages flipping]. All right, let's see.

MP: Maybe you should turn off until he gets it.

JB: Well, no, that's okay, because people would like to know who these people are and—

WP: Well, that's right.

JB: So, you know, can you tell me, say, who the packers were?

WP: Well, yes. I imagine you've got him, you got Ern Hoyt?

JB: Yes.

WP: And you got Boyd Thompson?

JB: Yes.

WP: See, Boyd Thompson, went in after I did, kind of in charge of the horses after I quit.

JB: Yes, the breeding program.

WP: [unintelligible]. You had [coughs], I guess, Bill Longpre [unintelligible] in on him. I just ticking these off. Now—

JB: That's fine, that's fine.

WP: Henry Heber (?). He was on the plow unit with Bill. Crowley (?) was the head of the plow unit. Did they give you that?

JB: Crowley. I don't remember that name. I might have it some place.

WP: Well, he was the head...He was over Bill, and—

JB: Remember his first name?

WP: ...And Milk Goldsby (?). He was driving than the horses. One of the horse...one of the horses, and Bill Longpre driving the other one, you see. Mr. Crowley was over, showing them where to plow and one thing like that—

JB: Do you remember Crowley's first name?

WP: No, I don't.

JB: That's okay. Was there also a Hugh Redding (?) on the plow unit?

WP: Yes. There's Hugh Redding. Then a Harold Brown (?). He's passed away, but his son's up Rock Creek. He was a truck driver, too. Harold Brown.

JB: Okay.

WP: Then, this Duncan (?), I think his name was George, I think. He was a truck driver. And you've got Les Wolfe, he was a packer.

JB: Was he there when you were there?

WP: Yes. He stayed a while. Les Wolf was up the Winter Range a long time in charge of the horses up there at the Irvine Flats. Then, we had...here's another fellow [unintelligible] cooking, is Tex Dedikar (?).

JB: Dedikar?

WP: Yes.

JB: That's a name I haven't run into.

WP: He's going to help break horses, and then he couldn't quite get the job done, so they put the...Jake (00:14:26), put him to cooking for us fellows. So he cooked for us. [laughs] Then, let's see—

JB: Maybe you better spell that name for me, Dedikar. I haven't run into that one.

WP: D-e-d-i-c-a-r, wasn't it?

MP: Or "k?" I think—

WP: D-e-d-i-c-e-r, yes.

MP: I think—

JB: Something like that.

MP: I think that it's "k" instead of "c," though, after I wrote that, I think it's Dedikar.

JB: Well, that's more than I knew before, because I didn't know that name at all.

WP: Is that right?

JB: Yes.

WP: Well, we'll fill you in on this Whitey Long (?) later on. That's on that pack trip from the people back East, that went into Yellow Jacket Ranger Station. We went in there with a big pack string in [unintelligible].

JB: Okay. Catch that one later, then. Who else do you know about—

WP: Have you got Neil Smith (?)? Neil Smith? He run the remount station there for quite a while after Jake Williams died.

JB: Now, nobody's mentioned him before. I thought after Williams died, that's when Cap Evans [W.C. "Cap" Evans] became superintendent.

WP: Cap Evans was out there, but Neil Smith was in there, too, I think. Well, maybe Cap Evans was and then Neil Smith, but I'm sure Neil Smith was in before Cap went in—

JB: Of maybe Smith was like a ranch foreman or something like that. I don't believe he was ever superintendent of the remount, but he might have been a ranch foreman running the place.

WP: Did you get Ed McKay?

JB: Yes.

WP: See, he [unintelligible]. He was really a ranger, that Ed McKay.

JB: Yes, I've heard lots of good stories about Ed McKay. Too bad he isn't around to talk to.

WP: Did you talk to Mrs....what's her name? It was Lockey, (?) wasn't it? Lockey Stewart? See, he was out there a long time.

JB: I've heard of Lockey Stewart.

WP: Well, he was out there.

JB: Was he a packer?

WP: No. Something to do with running the ranch out there, or something. Either that or in the Forest Service [unintelligible], I don't know.

JB: I'm not sure, either.

WP: But his wife lived down on Seventh. Down there. Let's see. Got Gladys Pearson (?), which was the secretary, who was in the house that I told you about.

JB: Okay, she was in the old ranch house, working as a secretary.

WP: Yes, secretary. Then you had one of the Grooms (?) was a packer.

JB: Haven't run into that name.

WP: From the Flathead. Up there on the Flathead. That's about the horses and the burros and stuff like that, which we'll get to later on.

JB: [laughs]. Well, that's okay. We could talk about that now, so we don't forget about it. About the burros?

WP: No. The pack string, when we sent it out, was over in the [unintelligible] over in Idaho someplace. They pulled back, and it's high water time, and they then rolled with the packs, and went down and drowned, you see.

JB: Oh, when was this? Was this a trip you went on?

WP: No, it was of the others, when they had them going.

JB: Oh. Can you tell me any more about that?

WP: Well, that's all I knew. They drowned, and they didn't save them, you see.

JB: The whole string?

WP: Yes. They just rolled around. No chance when you got 300- or 350-pounds of weight on them mules on the side, you see.

MP: Were they all fastened together?

WP: Well, they's all tied with the pigtail, and everyone had a rope. One went down, and he went down, he dragged the other down. They hit them packs and they just rolled them over on their backs.

JB: Who was the packer on that trip, do you know?

WP: I forget now, who it was this time.

JB: I've heard of this kind of thing happening, although often times they do get their mules out if they can get down and cut those ropes fast enough.

WP: [pauses] We had another fellow too. He was a packer by the name of...See, what the heck was his name. We called him Slim. Anyway, he'd been out I don't know how long. Now, you got to give them packers credit, for they'd come in on one fire and just unload and pick another one. They'd get out there, and they'd go out day or night and up them trails in the dark.

JB: That must have been rough in the dark, yes.

WP: It was, now, you've got to give them fellows credit. I don't care what they say. So we had this one fellow, and he thought the world—if he never did skin a mule or nothing—boy, he just thought the world of them mules. He told them...He was back in there, and he was coming out, and it's late at night, and he says, "The worst thing," he says, "I want some feed out there for this stock when I get out there." Well, he got out didn't get...He got out there but didn't have no feed there.

JB: Are you talking about out on the fire?

WP: Yes. Coming in off of a fire.

JB: Oh, coming in out of the Remount, you mean?

WP: Yes. He was coming in. He was trailing in down there, out where they can pick him up at the truck. They didn't pick him up, and they didn't have no feed. So there's a nice little oat field there, and he just opened the gate and pulled of the halters.

JB: [laughs] Let them go?

WP: Yes, that's right. So they didn't say anything, but he told them. They didn't can him either. They just paid the fellow for the grain, or oats, you see.

JB: Did the Forest Service pay the [unintelligible]?

WP: Yes, they paid it. You bet.

JB: [laughs] You mentioned the burros. Were you around when there was one or two seasons when they tried using burros out there on trails? Were you around at that time?

WP: I was there when they brought them in there.

JB: Oh, tell me about the burros.

WP: Well, they shipped them in. What they was going to do, they was going to pack water on them. But when they found out and they come across a little mudhole or a stream, they had to get out and they had to come back and carry it across and push it across. Wouldn't cross.

JB: The burros wouldn't cross?

WP: No, they wouldn't cross.

MP: They're desert animals?

WP: Yes. So then, when they put them in behind—they had these trucks right here—and they put them back in. The first thing they do, they lay down and the mules would tromp and step on them. So, they tried that just a little while. Then you couldn't load them easy. They wouldn't go up the chute. You had to push them in. Mr. Williams had a German Shepherd there, and he'd nip them, put them up in there for us. Outside that, you couldn't even load them. You push them up in, and they wouldn't go.

JB: Were they going to keep those burros out at the Remount Depot like they were mules?

WP: They kept them right there. They had a car load of them. They went down there in Mexico, and bought a car load. Mexico, or [unintelligible], something, but I think Mexico really—

JB: But they weren't going to send them out on a regular basis, like mule strings, were they?

WP: No, they was going to send one with each pack string.

JB: Oh, they were?

WP: Yes. Each packer was going to take a mule, you see, and then when they got in there, these firefighters could take them and instead of packing the water on taking a mule off of the job or something, they could use them and pack this water. Go down to spring some place and pack it instead of carrying it.

JB: Didn't work though, did it.

WP: No, it didn't. But we had a lot of fun with them, merit you that. Then we had chutes there and everything, and then we started roping them just like you would a calf or anything else. Then they finally put them up and they sold them, and then we got some goats to rope then.

JB: For practice?

WP: Yes, for practicing roping, one thing or another.

JB: That's funny, nobody's told me about goats.

WP: We also put on a rodeo up there at the time, too. We'd ride there, and the fellows up there would furnish the cattle and the steers and stuff like that and horses and stuff. We had a heck of a rodeo right there in the Remount Station at one time or another.

JB: Well, I didn't know that they also brought in calves for roping and that sort of thing. I thought it was just bucking out some of the horses.

WP: No, well, the neighbors—the neighbors had calves there, and they furnished them. They furnished the steers and everything.

JB: Was this during those Packers Days, or was this kind-of a separate—

WP: Yes, this is in the summer. Then...strange you brought that up. Then, certain days we...they had a packing contest. All the different packers in the region around here, they'd come there, and they'd pack. Each one had his string, and they'd put everything out here, just like when they're on a fire. Then they'd time them, and then put it on there. I forget what the time was. So this Kirt, he was a heck of a good fellow, but he was lame. So old Kurt, he got into it, and he thought he had her all won and everything else. He was way ahead of everybody, and he got on his horse and he took off, and they hollered at Kurt. They said, "Hey Kurt! What are you going to do with them two bales of hay!" [Telephone rings] He forgot his hay. [laughs]

JB: Oh, he didn't have it?

WP: He didn't have it. "Wait," he said, "I'm going to feed the mules before I take out."

JB: Was he the one named Kirkley? Or Kirtley (?)?

WP: Kirtley, yes. Kirtley, yes.

JB: You know his first name?

WP: No, I don't. Kirtley.

JB: But, so, the rodeos were not held at the same time as those packing contests?

WP: Oh, no, no.

JB: This was something else?

WP: They were different, just for entertaining. When you didn't have a fire season—

[Mabel speaking on telephone in background]

WP: See, you had those fellows and the packers, who is in charge of that, that started on the hay. Then they'd take these packers, and we'd put up the hay. But there one day, Mr. Williams, he come out, and he said, "Walt, come in here." He said, "I want to talk to you."

I said, "Okay." So I didn't know what was up.

So I went in the office, and he said, "Well," he said, "I'm a-turning this outfit over to you." He called everybody in there—all the packers and truckers and everybody—and he said, "Now, here's your boss right here." He said, "What he says goes." But he says, "When I come back, I want all that hay up."

Well, I said, "I'll try to, but I'm not going to guarantee it. For I might not have help." [laughs]. He had asthma, and that hay couldn't stick around, you see.

So what we do? We just got started the haying good, and here we got the fire call. One day I was the only one left there—bunch of hay down and everything else. Boy, you couldn't get it in. So I had to wait until they got back before you'd get that hay up and in the sheds. In the meantime, Jake had a...he had a friend out of Alberton up there. Well, I had one of these [unintelligible] we'd put in the shed, and I had four men in there to take care of it. Two could handle it. Didn't work nobody, anyway. So this one fellow, he just come over there, and he just deliberately sat out there in that one place. I told him to get in and help them fellows that went down there. They said that he wasn't doing anything. He wouldn't do it, so I told him we couldn't use him there anymore. For Mr. Williams, he told me when I first started, he says, "We can get a lot of these fellows for good fellows around here," but he said, "We've got to have a little work out of them." So I fired him, and he wouldn't quit. He just stayed right around there,

and I just let him stay. He figured he'd draw his pay. But Mr. Williams, when he come back, to his friend, he says, "I told you," he says, "That he was the boss," and he says, "That's it." He let him go. He never even kept.

JB: How long were you in charge of this?

WP: Well, until I got that hay up. Soon as I got that hay up, Mr. Williams come back.

JB: Oh, I see. So, he would take off always during haying?

WP: Yes, when the haying season. See I was only up there the two seasons.

JB: Two seasons.

WP: Yes. Well, no, the third. For, when I quit, we moved to Frenchtown, on the place down there. And I wasn't going to go back up there, but Mr. Williams come down one night just about dark, and he said, "For God sakes, come up there and give us a hand up there." He said, "We've got a fellow up there, and all he can do to get done, all he's a-doing is just running. He ain't getting nothing done." [unintelligible], you know, he was green. He didn't know which strings went to so-and-so. So you had all them mules, each one had its place, and each packer had his own mules. That's one thing that you got to get right. You can take the lead mule, or you can take the one back behind. If he's not in the right place, he'll try to get up in front the others, you see, and get in his right place.

JB: They always like to travel that way, do they?

WP: No, they—

JB: When they're in the string?

WP: They just in strings.

JB: But they always want to be right in the right place in the string. Is that right?

WP: The right place. He's going up there to where that right place is too. You can't keep him back there.

JB: Oh. I'm glad you told me that. I'd heard that sometimes they got particular about where they wanted to ride in the back of a truck, but I didn't realize they also were particular about how they walk on the trail.

WP: No, in that pack string, you got to keep them right there, and those packers knows where that mule's going. During that one season there, we had out over 1,000 head of horses and

everything out of there. Is that much of a season, and they had crates that they put in pickups to haul these horses with. They also went out, and they brought horses in there that wasn't even used to being shod in there. They had one in, what they call, a stall in there, that you put the horse's belt on him and you pick the feet up and you strapped him in there. Well, those green horses, they lost two of them there. They wasn't used to it, for they heart quit on them. So then, they started shoeing them the other way, and some of wasn't even...well, they wasn't even halter broke. Put the packs on them, but they had to have them when you get around eight or nine head of horses, you come and they were short of them, they couldn't get them. They had to take anything you can get.

JB: Was this a particularly bad fire season?

WP: It was awful.

JB: What summer was that?

WP: Well, that was, I believe in '33. I think that's same time this one was. They had that fire over here out of Coeur d'Alene over in there and Hell's Half Acre and all of that.

JB: Where was Hell's Half Acre fire?

WP: It's over in Idaho. You go up this other way into it.

JB: Up over Lolo Pass? Is that where you mean?

WP: No, way up on the...Oh, up through Darby and on through there out through...up in that-a-way. Way back in there.

MP: That's the one in this picture [unintelligible].

WP: They had all their strings out and everything else, but what you just couldn't...That's what I say now with your smokejumpers and they've let these trails go in, if they ever get an outbreak like that and they can't stop it, what they going to do? Like the 1910 fire up the Bitterroots—up there, Stevensville, it got so dark up there at three o'clock in the afternoon up there, and there's cinders coming off of the mountain up there. The chickens went to roost at three o'clock in the afternoon.

JB: On your place?

WP: Yes, up there. At Stevensville.

JB: Oh, for heaven's sake.

MP: All around Stevensville.

JB: What were you doing during the 1910 fire then? You must have been pretty young.

WP: Well, I was. But I was out there helping my dad shock hay out there in that field. There's cinders are coming off of Saint Mary's Peak and them down in there. Right in that field there west of the house. I remember it just as good.

JB: Was there any danger of fire in the Bitterroot during 1910?

WP: Oh, yes. They was. But not low down, for it's all irrigated, you see.

JB: When you were up at the Remount Depot, did you ever work as a packer up there?

WP: Well, I went out a time or two.

JB: Did you?

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

WP: Oh, it's out of Powell Ranger Station, back up that lake, Hoodoo Lake, back up in there. There's a bunch of, oh, they called them dude, but it's the main guys out of Washington, D.C. I went up there, and they told me to go in there and stay until they come there. Well, I stayed there, I guess, about a week before they even got there, you see.

JB: What were they doing out here on a fire?

WP: And then started from the Remount, and then went over to Lolo and up through on the trails and taking the mules in, you see. That's only time.

JB: What were these people from Washington doing out there?

WP: Well, they was looking around for everything, and seeing just what they needed and the conditions of the timber and everything. Then another time, there's a heck of a bunch of those fellows. They come, and I was supposed to go out on that. Then they got another packer then to take my place, so I had to go with them and take them into Yellow Jacket Ranger Station down in Idaho down there.

JB: Whereabouts is Yellow Jacket?

WP: It's down the right kind of northwest of Challis [Challis, Idaho], down there. So I was driving a truck in too, and taking supplies in—they had the truck. When I got in there, that one road, the other fellows they wouldn't go down, and so I had to take it. I had to take the inside dual off, to either make it so it would stay up on the road. Just that narrow.

JB: Really narrow road?

WP: Boy, it was. It's well-named, for you couldn't put nothing out, there'd be a dozen yellow jackets on it. Talk about yellow jackets, I never saw as many. We had them, and these fellows—a lot of them brought their own saddles and everything else. Well, I had to fit their saddles up for them. I take an extra saddle. One fellow, he had his saddle, but he'd never rode in the hills. I told him, I said, "Well, you're going to have to use another saddle."

Well, he said, "No, I've always used this, and I'm going to use it."

I said, "No, not on these horses, you're not." I said, "You're going ride this other saddle, for you'll just cut the legs off them on these hills." The kind he had, one of these double rigs, and he sat way up, the first rig right up [unintelligible]. Well, they'd just saw their legs off. So, he did, and then I said, "Well," I said, "You fellows are going to have to get rid of a lot of this stuff." I said, "We haven't got pack mules enough to carry it. You're going to have to leave it here, and they can take it back." That didn't set too good. [laughs]

JB: Who were these guys, anyway?

WP: What? They come out of...out of Washington back there [unintelligible], out of the main offices back there. Well, I mean, really, really up there.

JB: Okay. To inspect things?

WP: Yes. So, Mr. Williams, he wanted to know then, if we're going to get a camp cook. So I told this Whitey Long, that he lives in Stevensville. So we got him, and he went along with them. He kept going, kept going, then fell dead, and he had all the supplies with him, you see. He had the mule with the...He was cook. He had all the supplies on...When it started getting dark, he would [unintelligible], he didn't want to do it after dark [unintelligible]. So they just kept going. So Whitey, he just stopped, and made his camp and he stayed there. The next morning, they're looking around for their breakfast and wasn't nobody around there until he got there. He said, from then on when he told them, there's going to stop and pitch the tent, boy, they stopped. [laughs]

JB: [laughs] Was this out on a fire or just looking around?

WP: No, they just going through...They went over to Yellow Jacket Ranger Station, and then they're coming back through on the Divides and then come out at Lake Como. Well, I was breaking a horse at the time, for Mr. Kelley [Evan W. "Major" Kelley], at that time, so when he'd come out the end he called him Lake Como. So we always called him "Como."

JB: Oh, the horse?

WP: Yes.

JB: But you must have known Major Kelley then. What do you remember about him?

WP: Who?

JB: About Kelley? About Major Kelley? What do you remember about—

WP: Major Kelley? Well, I'll tell you. He kind of scared me once. [laughs]

JB: Oh? How's that?

WP: Well, I had a bunch of the saddle horses, and everything they had up there, when you'd go in to catch them, they'd turn their rear-end to you instead of bringing their head to them. So I had this one in there [unintelligible] awful bad at catching him, so you take them and you wrap them over their rear end with a halter rope, see. Well, every time he'd turn, I'd wrap him.

Pretty soon I looked around, and there was Major Kelley. So, he says, "That's what I've been trying to tell them fellows to do to make them horses turn their heads to you." [laughs]

JB: He must have been quite a horseman.

WP: Oh, he was. He was. He was a horseman, he was a ranger, and a prince of a fellow. Boy, you couldn't beat him, and everybody liked him. [unintelligible], they'd take his word. Oh, he was. He was A-1. And so Mr. Fickes and Mr. Noel—he was the head of the supply. He was—

JB: Yes. This would be Lloyd Noel?

WP: Yes. Lloyd.

JB: Then you must have worked with some of these...Did you work with those Morgan horses when they were raising Morgans out there? Or at least bought some?

WP: Well, I'll tell you the story of that then. Just like Mr. Fickes, see, he comes out, and he said that the...using a saddle horse, and nine mules anymore. Well, you started out when you had your eight mules, and then you had this here bell mare. You had what's called a bell mare. Then, when you'd turn them loose out in the hills and this mare had a bell on, your mules stayed right with her. If you found that mare, you had all your mules.

JB: So in the early days when they packed, that's the way they did it?

WP: That's the way they did it. Well then, when they started the Remount, they decided that they'd get rid of the bell mare. For they was going to keep the mules up, and they were going to feed them and keep them tied up [unintelligible], instead of turning them loose. For the bell mares, they'd lead them a long ways off, and they'd have to go get them. So, they decided then that they would raise colts out of these bell mares. They first got Brosnan (?), that was a Morgan stallion. Then they got him off of some station over there. He was a government horse—Morgan horse.

JB: Yes, I wonder if he didn't come out of Fort Keogh over at Miles City.

WP: Yes, yes that's right.

JB: Or is that one they got from Nebraska?

WP: No, no. That was Grand Menard. He was a saddle horse.

JB: Right, okay. This horse they got from Miles City then.

WP: Yes. Then they bought Roosevelt. They got him from Tom Adams (?).

JB: Who's Tom Adams?

WP: Well, Tom Adams, he had a ranch on Six Mile there. Then he come down, and he worked as a packer around the Remount for a long time. Tom did.

JB: Okay. Was this also another Morgan stallion?

WP: Yes. He was a Morgan—Roosevelt. They turned over the mares over to me. Seemed like it was '30 or '35. There was all anywheres from 10 to 16—15, 16 years-old—never had a colt. So they turned them over to him, and then I had this here...I got a remedy that I use on these old mares, so I've got 95 percent of the mares in foal and get that many colts. They had to turn all these colts into the governments where they had their Remounts, see. They called them Remount horses. They had them standing all over the country, standing free gratis, and that's what they was doing up here, which was hurting their horse business. Anytime you can take a mare out here and get her serviced and get a free colt, you're going to take anything. But if you've got to pay 25 dollars at that time or something like that, you're going to take a decent mare and get a decent colt. But up there, they'd come in, just anything. So—

JB: Any mares at all?

WP: They done more harm—the government...with them government horses than they did good.

JB: Oh, because they weren't choosy about their mares? Is that what you mean?

WP: Well, that's right, you see. You just go out there and you get a free colt or something like that, and then stand them round. Then, what they did, they loaded them up, and then the Army, they figured the Army would buy it. Everybody figured, well, they'd get rich. But how you going to get rich? You take ten mares, maybe you'll get five geldings out of the works. They don't buy the mares. Then they've got to be a certain height and certain weight. You get one cut and if he's got any blemishes, they don't take it. Then you wind up, the rate of ten colts, maybe they'll take two or three out of the whole works.

JB: Are you telling me that the idea to start with was, they were going to raise half-bred Morgan colts to sell to the government? They weren't going to keep them up at the Remount?

WP: No, they was going to keep them, but this was the other...the United States government had these others standing around. But the Forest Service used their own on their own mares there, you see, [unintelligible] mares.

JB: Okay, but you're saying that ordinarily, that's what would have happened?

WP: Yes. But I just tell them, and they had theirs standing there and then these others.

JB: But these horses—

WP: They was around, I think it was 60 head of stallions, were standing around just round here, [unintelligible] at that time with these up here.

JB: Okay, but, so these are all around western Montana?

WP: Yes—

JB: They didn't belong to the Forest Service?

WP: No, they just had the...to start with. Now, we'll get back on that, the Forest Service out at the Remount, you see. They had those, and then...then what use...the Morgan, those two Morgan stallions on them. Then the mares that didn't settle, them I used my own little stallion here. This little Laddie horse that Jake's on here, you see.

JB: Oh. What kind was he?

WP: Well, he was Saddlebred, you see. He was Saddlebred, and when they taking him up there, Jake said, "I wouldn't ride one of them [unintelligible] horses. Them gated horses are no good." So old Jake got on him and went up there north of the Remount up there, and we brought some mules in. Soon them mules started breaking away, he just taking over that, and he went over them logs just like that and he headed them. After he come back down, you couldn't get Jake on another horse besides that. They had the colts...that's where they made a mistake, then. They got these colts, and they's so much better out of this little stallion here than they was out the others, you see.

JB: Than from the Morgans, you mean?

WP: They'd grown out, and...Yes. And they were good walkers. Well then—

JB: What was the name of your stallion again?

WP: Laddie.

JB: Laddie, okay.

WP: Little Laddie, yes. The Pony Express, when they would run that Pony Express, he made the fastest time of any horse out of the five strings. On the Pony Express we had there one Fourth of July.

JB: Oh, oh. Okay. How long did you keep him up there? Both of those seasons when you were there?

WP: Yes. He was up there. And then—

JB: How many colts did they get from him, do you think?

WP: Oh, I say there was...must have been 20 all told, both years.

JB: I'm glad I'm talking to you. Nobody else ever mentioned that.

WP: Did what?

JB: Nobody else ever mentioned that. I'm glad I'm talking to you.

WP: Well, I know they didn't. Mr. Fickes didn't either.

JB: Well, Mr. Fickes is very partial to his Morgan horses.

WP: Well, I know he was. It's all right. I don't blame him. And just like he could have forgot it, you see. For he said, Mr. Thompson was in charge of these horses, so it was all right with me. I didn't [unintelligible]. I don't hold it against him. Just like I am now, they can find some stuff, maybe, they wouldn't agree with what I'm telling you. But they can tell you straight.

JB: Well that's why it's nice to talk to people, because other people just plain forget things. It's not like anybody's telling lies. It's just you forget.

WP: Well, you take 45 years, it's a long time.

JB: Yes, it is.

WP: Boy, you try to...back then, try to come up with these names, and especially the other thing.

JB: No, I was interested in your discussion about your American Saddler stallion and the good results, because later when Cap Evans came and they made the switch to American Saddlers, I get the impression a lot of people criticized that.

WP: Yes.

JB: But it sounds like, that there were some American Saddlers there long before Mr. Evans came.

WP: Yes.

JB: It wasn't all his idea.

WP: No, it wasn't. But then after we did that, see, then they went down the Grand Menard. They got him out of Nebraska. I don't know whether you know Howard Raser (?)?

JB: I've heard of him, yes. I know who you mean.

WP: Well, he used to be running Missoula Auction. He's still around. Well, he was down there in Nebraska, he's the one that sold him to him.

JB: Oh, what was he doing in Nebraska?

WP: He was an auctioneer down there.

JB: Oh, is that right?

WP: He run that Grant Island Auction down there for a long time and sold a lot of horses, mules down there and stuff. He was dealing horses and stuff. Oh, he's really something that Howard Raser.

JB: Oh. Well then, did you—

WP: An auctioneer, you couldn't beat.

JB: Did you see these new stallions that they got, then?

WP: Oh, yes. I was up there when they come. Grand Menard.

JB: What did you think of them?

WP: They was all right, but if they...but I wouldn't go for a pack string...For leading pack strings, I would have taken the American Saddle, and used the same mare—the bell mares or some other. I wouldn't have got the registered mares to go with them. They just haven't got what it takes for a pack string like that. They found that out too. If it had crossed them, you can take an American Saddler and cross him with a Morgan mare, and it's the best horse you can get. I don't care any of them. For I had bought an American Saddler, and then they was a fellow up there had registered mares. He died and they sold them, and I picked them up and I put this American Saddler on it. You're sure [unintelligible] seeing a lot of them, because two-thirds of them is out of him and every one of them was a walker—active and everything. Boy, they were...you just can't beat the Morgan-Saddle cross.

JB: Sounds good. Did you say that you'd also worked with the plow units, or not?

WP: No.

JB: But you watched them, I'm sure.

WP: Well, yes. Well, I worked with horses and stuff. I didn't go out and...See, all that time I was there, I made about two or three trips off that place for Jake wouldn't let me go.

JB: Why is that?

WP: Well, he kept me on, for I knew my stock and everything else. See, you had to keep track of all that rigging and the mules and everything else. If you come back with one string short or an axe or anything else like that, you had to account for it. Everything was checked in and out.

JB: Now, I'm getting the impression that during these first two or three seasons here, they used for pack stock, they used horses just as much as mules. Is that right or not?

WP: No. No, they didn't. See, when they run out of mules, they had rent horses, for there were mighty few strings of mules that they could pick up, you see. So, they had to rent horses to do it.

JB: Who's that? [speaking to Mabel]

MP: That's his gated American Saddler—Country Gentleman.

WP: Called him Nugget.

MP: Nugget for because he just looked like a gold nugget.

JB: Who painted the picture for you?

WP: An old friend, Jerry McKinley (?).

JB: Oh.

MP: Sure a pretty horse.

JB: I was thinking that Bill Longpre had told me that you had sold those draft horses to the Forest Service. Is he mistaken about that?

WP: Yes, he's mistaken, yes.

JB: Okay, okay. I wonder where they got—

WP: Seemed to me like they bought them through the fellow that run the...It's right in there, where KGBO is, where that bridge goes across, Mr. Bidell (?), I'm pretty sure.

JB: I don't know him.

WP: He run a livery stable there, and I'm pretty sure they got them off of him.

JB: I've also had this Deschamps fellow mentioned—that he might have sold a draft horse or two to the Remount.

WP: Well, they could have got some off Art Deschamps too. Art. That's—

JB: Yes, that would be the one.

WP: Yes. Seemed to me like they did—

MP: This is Cousin Fritz.

JB: Okay. There's quite a few Deshamps out there. I get them mixed up.

WP: You say you haven't talked to Fred?

JB: No.

WP: If you want to talk to him. See, he was up there, irrigator, and he knew just exactly what went on too. And he can give you some of those names too.

JB: My list of people to talk to is getting out of hand. [laughs]

WP: Oh, is it?

JB: Yes, really is.

MP: Especially if they talk this long.

WP: I'll tell you, the main ones that was right there at the time, you see. Then, let's see. What else, [unintelligible] while we're on those horses.

JB: Yes, anything else about the horses.

WP: Then after I left there, see, they turn them over and Mr. Thompson—Boyd Thompson. Just like Clyde says, he turned them over to him. Then I went up on the Irvine Flats, which is north of Camas Hot Springs up there—over there.

JB: Oh, this, okay. The winter range started up farther north, didn't it? Way up north.

WP: Well, when I was first there. Well, that's right, see. You kind of getting ahead of yourself. When I was up there, we took them up to what they call the Big Draw.

JB: Yes, that's what I was thinking. The Big Draw.

WP: The Dig Draw. In the hog heaven country. That's the Winter Range—Hog Heaven country. [laughs] Mr. Bud Bruens (?) is the fellow that owned it. He had a big log cabin, a bunkhouse for us, and he had this other house. A cookhouse and everything. In the meantime, when all these strings come in, they come at the Remount up there. In the fall of the year, they come up there, and then we'd trail them from here up the Big Draw.

JB: Did you go on some of those trail drives?

WP: Yes.

JB: Tell me about those.

WP: Well, I'll tell you for one that's that we tried to take them over the hill out at the Remount, and then we had mules scattered everywhere. [unintelligible] everything. Then after that and then we'd come down, and we'd taken the roads. Then we'd make it to up around Butte the first day. Then we'd go on from there down the Irvine Flats and on down to there.

JB: How'd you get across the river?

WP: Well, we went this other way, you see. We crossed it on the bridge down there.

JB: Oh, okay, which bridge?

WP: We'd go out by St. Ignatius.

JB: Okay, going on the highway bridge?

WP: Yes. So you go right down through Arlee and then on out. Then we'd go down to St. Ignatius, and then we would go over...We'd go down that creek there, and then we'd head north right out by Round Butte. Keep going through there. We'd make it and go on out by—Ern Hoyt, he lived down there then—and through there.

JB: How many [unintelligible] the trail?

WP: Then a second trip, we went, we had this... [unintelligible] Stone. I think we had a...maybe, I heard it always bothered him in [unintelligible] he would.

JB: Herb Stone?

WP: Yes. So he couldn't hardly get around. We got over on the Arlee side, [unintelligible] have them going, and he told me, he said, "Well, get me another horse." His horse was getting tired.

I said, "Okay." So I caught him a horse. Had a lariat, roped. I just tossed a rope on it, and I saddled him up, you see. Then put him on it, and that horse never did buck. It's kind of cold, and seeing as though he had this mitt and when he put his hand down, he goosed him on the neck. He told him, he threw his head down and bucked him off. That knee there just popped like a shot gun. I thought it'd broke his leg. Way it turned out, it'd been that away all the time, and it just pulled them tendons loose. Everybody [unintelligible] best thing that ever happened.

JB: You fixed it, you mean?

WP: It fixed. Just getting bucked off. [laughs] Right this side of Arlee. Right on a road, mind. Boy, I felt about it...bad about it. I said, "Well, did it hurt your knee?"

He said, "No, it's a lot better than it was!" So that [unintelligible] really just pulled them loose, ever what it was or... Just popped like it—

JB: How many head of stock did you trail over those times?

WP: It seemed to me like there's 600, 700 head, something like that. That's what you had around there. I think at one time they went as high as 900 up there. That's all the different breeds.

JB: Yes, from the other forests.

WP: For everything. Everything they had. Then they'd taking them up there, and then in the spring of year, we went up there and we'd round up so many. Then they'd shoe them.

JB: Did you help with the shoeing?

WP: Yes. Also they'd float their teeth and everything.

JB: They'd what?

WP: They'd float their teeth.

JB: What does that mean?

WP: Well, they're eating their teeth up. A lot of them, when their teeth started getting old and them they don't [unintelligible], and they can't chew their grain or grass good.

JB: So how do you do that?

WP: Well, they've got what they call a speculum, and they put it in their mouth and they hold her mouths open. Then you got a big long rasp, and then you've got a pair of cutters at their high point there, they just snip them off and then file them down. Then right along here, on the outside of their teeth, it's always sharp in there. You can run your hand back there, and then it'll cut strips along the side of their jaw inside. So you rasp them down too.

JB: Is this on both horses and mules?

WP: Yes. So we had this one veterinarian. He was doing this for two dollars a head. So they got to running through, and he's going pretty fast. He put this one through. "Oh," he said, "Boy, he's okay. All right, okay." So I just let him go right on [unintelligible] around.

I brought him back in, I says, "Hey doc," I says, "This horse here, he don't seem to be doing good. I think his teeth pretty bad."

He opened his mouth, he said, "Boy, they sure are."

Well, I said, "You just turned him out." I said, "You better start on him." [laughs].

JB: [laughs] And did he?

WP: He did, you bet. Then, oh boy, we got a job down here. Because he was getting two dollars a head there. He was just moving them right on through.

JB: Who was the veterinarian?

WP: Oh, he's passed away now. I wouldn't want to say [unintelligible], some of their folks are around.

JB: Oh, that's all right. I'm sure he had his good qualities, too.

WP: Well, he was—

JB: Nobody has ever mentioned, now, the name of a veterinarian that's worked with the Forest Service. So—

WP: They didn't?

JB: No. So, I'd like to know his name.

WP: Well, we've had several of them. Doc Schultz (?), and we had Doc Stephens (?). He was an old time veterinarian.

JB: See, I sort of have the impression that most of the time, over there at the Remount Depot, or the Winter Range, you people did your own horse doctoring. Is that right?

WP: Well, I did the horse doctoring all together.

JB: Yes. That's what I thought.

WP: That's another thing. They got the state veterinary out of Helena, and he come over there and he give everybody a lecture on doctoring these horses. So we had two mules that had been kicked back here on the hip and just laid them wide open. Boy, they had an awful hip bone back there. This state veterinary told them not to put anything with any kind of water on it, and he had this kind of purple stuff, which he put on there. So when he got through then, my boss here, Mr. Williams come over, he said, "Now you heard, didn't you, what the veterinary said." He said, "We're going to have to do what he says. Not to use any water or anything. He should know."

Well, I said, "Now, listen, Jake. I'll tell you what I'll do." [laughs]. "I'll take that mule in here." I says, "That one that's really tore up in here, I'll take him and doctor him, and I'll doctor the other one with that stuff the state fellow give you and we'll see how we come out." Well, the one that I doctored, he healed up long before, and never left no scar. They other one had a great big scar, and they had a heck of a time. They just [unintelligible] doubled the time to heal it with that other stuff. So, I asked Jake then, says, "Go ahead and doctor them horses," he says. [laughs] Well, then, Major Kelley's horse got sick. So—

JB: Which horse was this?

WP: What?

JB: Which horse was this?

WP: Lake Como...Como. Called him Como, just Como. So he got sick, and they told him they just well, they shoot them, you see. Jake told me, I said, "I wouldn't shoot him yet for a while."

He said, "Well, what would you do?"

Well, I said, "Just go to town, get some medicine, start doctoring him." So he did then. He had water in his bones and stuff. Major Kelley rode that horse for years after that before he died of old age. But they was going to shoot him, and he wanted to take him out and shoot him up there. They'd just take them up above there and shoot them.

JB: I bet the Major was glad they didn't.

WP: Yes, that's right. He thought the world of that horse, and he was a heck of a good horse too. Another thing: When there was a break in those horses like him and everybody else, see, we had to...those green horses, we always had to tie a raincoat and stuff on behind, for they'd always getting caught out—the rangers and everybody else. They'd tie this slicker on it, and they'd [unintelligible] in the flanks, so you had to do all of that. We broke every horse so you'd get on and off either side. If he's on the uphill side up here and if he's down here on the lower side of the trail, we couldn't go on. So we broke good horses so you could get on either side. If you was coming out, you'd use the uphill side and the other ways.

JB: Oh, I'm glad to know that, yes. What was your method of breaking a horse?

WP: Well, since you asked me, this one horse they got in that carload out of Miles City. Say, that is one in the pictures out in [unintelligible] boy, that was a real horse. He was a bald-faced horse and they brought him in there, and we had a whole bunch of people out there one Sunday. This bald-faced horse, we was getting ready to break him and run him in the corral. They's all scared to death of him. He'd just go up there around the corral, and he'd just take poles like that with his teeth, and he'd just bite them.

JB: He really would bite? He really would—

WP: [unintelligible] went up there. And any time he'd come around, that's all he'd do. I'd run him in there, and they wanted to watch me break that horse. So I went in there, and I could work with him for a while. In about three hours, I had him following me every place I went. And around, and I had my saddle on him, and I rode him around that afternoon. He never even made a jump. But the secret of is [unintelligible] followed me. When I was a breaking a horse, I always had an old jacket like I got over there, and you leave it in the horse barn.

JB: Leave the jacket in there?

WP: Yes. Soon as that horse come up, see, he was scared of everybody. He come up and he smelled my jacket, and he could smell that horse scent on there. As soon as I'd turn, he'd follow me. He'd come right up there, and he'd stand right up alongside of me.

JB: Oh, just because of the smell?

WP: Monkeyed with him, slipped a halter on him, and then I finally worked the saddle—tied him on—got the saddle. Then you take a [unintelligible] bit. It had a big, wide strap. Put it on the side of their mouth like that. Then you run the rope back to the [unintelligible] and up through that brown ring. Come back behind him. Then you got the round corral, and you drive him this way. Then you drive him this way, and you holler “Whoa!” like that and pull on it, and he’ll turn. The first thing you know, all you got to just holler “Whoa!” like that, and he’ll stop and turn. Well, when you get on to him, if he wants to buck, see, you can pull his head up like that, and you hold his head up on the side and you can pull it sideways, you see.

JB: He can't buck if you do that?

WP: No, he can't buck. See, you can pull him up that way. But most people, they hold both reins. Well, that's just holding his head nice and solid so he can buck good. But if you pull his head—

JB: To one side?

WP: One side. And then when he starts to buck, he's going to buck his chin on his knee when he goes down. Then you bring his head back up.

JB: I'm learning a lot of valuable information today. [laughs]

WP: No, I kind of got ahead, you see. First, before you put the saddle on, you put a rope around and then you go under, and you take [unintelligible] foot on the other side. Then you pull that foot up, just so it can barely touch the ground. Then you can pet him on the rump back there, and you take ahold of his tail and you can pull him around.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

WP: So that's the way to break them if you do that. Just same as breaking them dry, that a-way. Well, you go with [unintelligible], come back to the [unintelligible], see, it gives you more power and then run it into the stirrups, you see.

JB: Did you talk to your horses? When you were breaking them?

WP: Oh, yes. You holler "Whoa!" and everything. That's the main thing with a horse is talk to him. A stranger comes around or anything and you say something to him, he'll do it. So I got him and I go on, and then I went out there and I made the...had a trick course. He'd lay down, and he'd teeter-totter with me and everything else. He'd sit up like a dog and everything. I'd rope goats with him and everything else.

JB: Did you have him out the Remount?

WP: Yes, the Remount.

JB: Was this one of your horses, do you mean?

WP: No, this is theirs.

JB: One of theirs, okay.

WP: I thought they'd keep him around there and show him, or I wouldn't...See, I'd done it on my own time all that. I thought maybe they'd keep him round and show them what they could do, for they had pictures of that horse, for he's so wild and just taking chunks out of the corral. [laughs]

JB: That same one?

WP: Yes. The other fellow, Lindblum, wouldn't even go in with him. He wouldn't even tackle him.

JB: Did they not keep that horse around?

WP: No, they sold him. Right here...Too bad. Fred Deschamps, he'll have a picture. He's on him. I don't care who you put on him. You look out there, and he just stood up there and his feet up and just look like a statue every time you take his picture. Oh, yes beautiful. Bald-faced Bay and stockings. Just the right size, and he could really run. You could pick up them goats or birds or anything with him, but he was just...He was a wonderful horse. Boy, he just—

MP: But they wouldn't sell him to [unintelligible].

WP: You only get one out of a thousand like that. We had big gray horses out of that bucking string over there. [unintelligible] that they got us to quit bucking. He'd go out there, and he'd go clear down. You couldn't keep him from bucking. He'd go clear down, like he's going to fall, and then he'd come back up. Well, you'd loosen, you see, and he'd figure that he'd get the guy when you loosened when he come back up. It was getting slick, and I told Jake, well, I said, "I think we'd better turn him out, for I don't think you're ever going to break him."

Well, he said, "If you're not man enough to break him," he says.

Well, I says, "Okay, if that's what you want," I said, "I'll either break him, or I'll kill him." [laughs] One of the two. So I taking him off up above there, and I had a lot of room and I really poured it onto him him when he'd start to go down. Well, he finally come out of it then. He knew what he's going to get, for I really worked him over long as I was around the Remount. Just like when Jake wasn't around, or Helen was there, you see, he said, "Pour it onto him, pour it on." [laughs]. But they never [unintelligible]. You couldn't ease them around like this other one that'd never been monkeyed with. You can do that. But them old bucking horses, they'd quit. You just had to knock it out of them. You couldn't—

JB: So one of those that had been bucking horses, they were able to use them?

WP: Yes. That's was. They bought them, and they'd quit bucking and they turned out good. Well, I went ahead then, I got him so I could do anything with him, and what the heck happened? Right north of the barn there, they had a slick there...It was the wintertime and it was slick. They all was bucking and running down there and getting warm. His feet went out from under him, and he slid down there and went into the ditch and broke his neck. After all that work. Yes, just right down there, and he hit that and just snapped your neck like that.

JB: One thing I'd be especially interested in, since they use mules so much out there, would be how do you work a mule differently than a horse? There must be some differences? Or are there?

WP: Well, the mule...The first thing, the difference in a mule, he'll never step off of the trail. You can take them and go right up, and one mule is put his foot in the same place. You take a horse, he's pushing the trail off and everything else. If there's a tree, he's bumping against it. But a mule, you can put a pack on her, put an axe, and if you ever hit a time or two, he'll will go around the tree and won't even hit it. Like over where the yellow jackets was, and a lot of these places where you've got yellow jackets, I don't care how long it is if one of them yellow jackets comes out there and they sting them mules or anything, you can go by there, and I don't care if it could be a year or two and them mules will remember that. There's exactly where it's at. I don't know how they can do that. I couldn't do it myself.

JB: Must be very smart.

WP: Well, they are.

JB: Do you break them differently than you do a horse?

WP: Well, yes, you do. Now, I mean, you got to breaking them. [laughs] Major Kelley called Jake Williams that day, and he says, "Jake," he says, "Those boys that's on these fires just well be riding them mules out on them pack saddles." He said, "You get Peery and Len Boone (?) to break them mules to ride." There's where we didn't get no work out of the packers and stuff. We had that round corrals, and the mules you could saddle them. You'd saddle them up, and they'd stand there. As soon as you got on top of that thing, it'd just boy howdy. They'd just uncork, and they spin. They'd just spin like that. Well, all the packers and everybody else...f you talk to Joe Boyer down there, they said they didn't get no work out of them. He's one of these boys, he's had his picture in there, Joe Boyer. They's all their watching us ride those mules. And they'd go up, and they'd try to jump out of that high corral there. That was the dangerous part if they'd fall back onto you. I think we tried about 30, 35 head of them, and we got about four or five that anybody could ride out the whole works. For every time you'd saddle them up, they'd just uncork right now. You'd think they'd be easy. A mule, you just as well pull on a log or a house with them, for you just cannot turn him. You can't pull his head up, and you can't do nothing.

JB: So the idea was to bring the firefighters back out down the trail?

WP: Ride them pack saddles out. Well, I wouldn't want to ride one of them packsaddles. But they said they'd just [unintelligible] way or riding. Well, you know if you take a pack string and you put a fellow onto them and they get to bucking, all you do is tear up a lot of pack strings.

JB: Too bad it didn't work. [laughs]

WP: Well, it would—

JB: Would have been a good idea.

WP: It would. It was worth a try.

JB: Yes. Just didn't work.

WP: Out of that bunch—that first carload that we had—they had a little sorrel mule in there, and it had kind of a silver tail and a right white mane. The mane grew down long like that. So Clyde figured, he said, "Well, why don't you break that mule for me the ride?"

So I said, "Okay." So I broke the mule to ride and everything, and he would want that mane on it. So one day, it is out there, and they're roaching mules. I said, "Run this mule in," and darn near roached him.

JB: They didn't? They did?

WP: Boy, cut that mane off. Some of them did, yes. I didn't tell them. I didn't do it, but one of the other fellows did. Boy, Clyde he saw that mule, and he... [laughs]

JB: Did he ever ride him?

WP: What?

JB: Did he ever ride him?

WP: Oh, yes, yes, he did.

JB: In his book, Mr. Fickes mentions a Simpson who helped him buy stock. Do you have any idea who that Simpson was? Did you ever know him?

WP: No, I don't. I think it's one of the fellows over there on the other side, when he went over to Richters (?). I don't know.

JB: I don't know who that was.

WP: A friend or something, I think, or something.

JB: Yes. Or might have been somebody downtown in the regional office from that supply part. I don't know.

WP: Well, Ern Hoyt, up there, he sold him a lot of horses and also mules, you see. Hoyt up there.

JB: Yes. Is there anything else that you used to do around the Remount Depot? Any other jobs that you did regularly?

WP: No, just the haying, and—

MP: Yes, you did.

WP: What?

MP: Fed the cat for Helen when she was gone, and [laughs] had the care of all the chores—

JB: That reminds me. Nobody's ever talked about any pets up there.

WP: Not what?

JB: About any pets up there. Did people keep pets?

WP: Yes, well, Helen...Williams.

JB: This is Helen Williams?

WP: Yes. She had a cat there. [laughs] At first, they thought it was a female, and then it was a male. So, they wanted it taken care of so Jake asked me if I'd take care of that cat for them. I said, "Yes, I'll take care of it." Then what did Jake do, he turned around and sent her a bill from Dr. Peery. He said for altering her cat. [laughs]

JB: Did people keep dogs up there, anybody?

WP: Oh, yes.

JB: I wonder if they ever got in the way?

WP: No, they didn't. Jake had this Airedale, and he got below those mules. Not Airedale, but German Shepherd. Yes, he's the one that [unintelligible]. Nice dog.

JB: Yes. At that time, then, when the packers went out on fire calls, they would have been using, what, these trucks like this that carried about five head?

WP: Yes, they did. Five head. You see, you got five head, and then on the side here—side of the truck here—he had another partition there for their saddles and stuff—pack saddles.

JB: Oh, did stuff get stuffed down in there?

WP: Down inside, see. That just about offset the weight of the mule on that side in your trucks. I did drive truck a few times with some of them, taking mules, [unintelligible] truck driver, and then they'd [unintelligible] the mules to go out, you see.

JB: Oh, did you? What's the farthest you ever drove, do you think, on a fire?

WP: [unintelligible]. Well, went over the border and down the hill over into Thompson Falls and over in there. It was a steep hill, too.

JB: How was it to drive those trucks?

WP: Fine. Most of them, practically all of them is Reos.

JB: Oh, those are the speed wagons?

WP: No.

JB: Those ones are called speed wagons?

WP: No, no.

JB: Somebody mentioned Reo speed wagons—

WP: They was slow. No, they was a slow truck. But they were geared down. They had to be geared down for these hills where you go up these roads with a load a mule. That's one thing. You'd hire those truck drivers, a lot of them. Then mighty few of them can haul stock. They're used to holding dead weight, you see. They'd go around, they'd throw their brakes too quick, and go up against the cab. Then it'd knocking them around. There's a lot of difference. In that same way, when we had so many mules, and they kept sending packers out here, they...At that time, see, you couldn't get work, and they'd tell them anything. So they'd send these fellows out there as packers, and they say they was packers. Well, I had this gentle string of mules, so I told them, "Okay," I said, "There's a saddle horse. You get on there, and you take them up to that upper gate up around Stony Creek. Take them up there, and come back." About half of them got off and tied them up to the fence, and I had to go get them. [laughs]. Some of them couldn't even get out. They didn't know how to get on a horse, but how they going to pack them then? So we'd send them back in. That was the same way with these boys they've got there. They'd send a bunch of them...and Jake said, "Well if they don't suit, send them back up to the camp up there."

MP: The CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] boys.

WP: Those boys, CC camp. Well, they was out of the city, and they were scared of the mules and they're scared of the horses and everything else. So I just kept calling them out, and then I got practically all of the boys from around here and out of the Bitterroot. They was raised on farms, and they've been around stock. I'll tell you, they was the best bunch of fellows I ever saw. By god, to come out, and they'd do anything for them or anything that asked them to do and help. Practically every one of them turned out good. You've got the—

JB: Do you remember any of their names?

WP: Yes. This Bob Estes (?), he's still down here

JB: Oh yes, I've heard of him.

WP: Well, Bob, he's shoeing horses. He learnt the trade up there—

JB: At the CCC camp?

WP: Yes...No, at the Remount.

JB: But he was in the CCC?

WP: He was at the CC camp. Then I got him down there. He was another boy that kept out of that bunch, that was from right around here. And then you had Joe Boyer. He's another one down there. Let's see there. [rustling sound] Right in here.

JB: The ones in that photograph? This one?

WP: No. [rustling sound] No, this is Parker. He was up above Victor. This fellow here, I forget what his name was. He was their flunky around there. You could give him a job, and just soon as he got it done, he'd go sit down, which I didn't care anyway. But he could never see anything due, and he couldn't keep going, for any time you told him do anything, he'd do it. But there was plenty of things he could see without telling him. [laughs] But he turned out good. Then finally, he wound up he was cook over at the golf course and every place else. This is Joe Boyer, and he's still out there by Frenchtown. He's a farmer now out there. He ranches out there. And this is Bob Estes right there, it's the guy who's smoking.

JB: So these people all started out in the CCC?

WP: Yes.

MP: [unintelligible]

WP: We had ten of them. We had ten of them, you see, come out of there. We kept ten to do the ranch work and the haying and cleaning corrals and building rail fences and everything. Also, your CC camp built practically all of them—way back up in there—rail fences that fenced that.

JB: Yes, I guess they did a lot of that.

WP: Yes, they did.

MP: Walter, tell her how you got them up in the morning. [laughs]

WP: Oh, well there's a certain time the boys supposed to get up. So I'd call them, and they wouldn't get up. They didn't...The cook, when everything's ready, the cook wants you there. So,

I know what they do in the tents out there, and they had these cots and had these sleeping bags. So I just went in and upended them cots on them.

JB: Dumped them over?

WP: You bet. So, from then on, you'd hear them holler, "Here comes old Peery! Just start rolling, boys!"

JB: So they stayed down at the Remount, then?

WP: Yes. They set up right in these tents. Their tent frames there. You see, they had tents. They was all in there, and they had two—one on one side and one on the other see.

JB: Even in the wintertime?

WP: Oh, yes.

JB: Did they stay out there?

WP: Oh, yes. But they didn't have these in there in the wintertime. But they...Lindblum and Dedikar and them, when we was breaking horses, we had this tent out there right west of the shower house. We had a shower house there.

JB: Were you around during that...when they first started building the new buildings out there?

WP: Yes.

JB: Did you help on any of that?

WP: I helped on the barn and stuff. I got into that on this...that was the time that the big bunch come out there, and they wanted to...getting everything in shape. So they had this fellow painting in there in the barn. They wanted it all in tip-top shape. It was on Saturday and Sunday, so they wanted it done and Jake tell me to go out there and paint it. Well, I went out there to paint it, but there's part...the oil is part linseed oil and stuff. If you put it on there, it wouldn't dry, you see. But they didn't tell me. So I loused it up, and the fellow they canned him for not coming back. I guess, for finishing the painting.

JB: Well, did they get it painted in time for what they wanted?

WP: Well, they just left it on there. But if it's touched or anything you could tell. It didn't look too bad. It'd just taken longer to dry. So you see, you had to put so much of that in.

JB: Was that the summer when they had some important visitors coming, like the Secretary of Agriculture?

WP: Well, yes. That was same time.

JB: That was the time? That was the time?

WP: Yes, same time. Boy, you had to have everything.

JB: Wouldn't that have been about 1935?

WP: Well, I guess it was—'33, '34, '35, yes.

JB: Now, I'm getting confused on my arithmetic here. I thought—

WP: Well, either—

JB: Now, how far back do you go?

WP: Well, either that, or there's another bunch after. They has always had a bunch of them coming out there, you see. [unintelligible].

JB: Well, what I mean is, if you started out there in 1930 or '31, whichever it was, and you stayed only—

WP: Well, no, I know it was later than '31.

MP: Yes, because it was after the twins were born. They were born in February of '31.

WP: Yes. See, they didn't operate out of there in '30, I know.

JB: Okay, so it was '31?

WP: I think it kind of got set up in '31.

JB: '31. Okay, but if you stayed there two years—

WP: Well, then I went back the third year.

JB: Oh, you did? Okay. Okay.

WP: See, we'd moved to Frenchtown. Then Jake went down there, and he said the fellow wasn't getting nothing done and all he could do was run. He wasn't getting nothing done.

JB: Okay. I'm just trying to keep track of all this time.

WP: So I went up there, and Jake said, "You've come up here." He said, "You're going to take charge of them. You won't even have to go out."

So we got a fire call there, and so this other foreman was doing the run around. He's coming out, and he said, "Well, Peery," he says, "This your string. Go get your bedroll."

Well, I said, "You just well get yours," and go with them. So what'd he do? He flied down to Jake there, and told him I refused to go, and Jake said, "Well, just go get your bedroll, and get in there." He said, "That's your string of mules." [laughs]

JB: Anybody else that you can remember?

WP: Oh yes, yes.

JB: You've got all these neat little lists here. We don't want to forget anything.

WP: Well, let's see. We just well get back on the shoeing up there and [unintelligible].

JB: Well sure.

WP: Sure, you had—

MP: You never mentioned Jack Blake (?).

WP: Well no, I was going to right now.

JB: Okay, who's Jack Blake?

WP: Jake wanted to know if I could get a blacksmith, and I said, "Yes, I think I know one fellow that I can get." So I got a hold of my friend. He's an old blacksmith up Stevensville. He could make anything. Take a round ball and make a hammer or anything out of it. We come down, and this...I know they told you about David Pronovost.

JB: Yes.

WP: The flying blacksmith.

JB: Yes.

WP: Well, so, Dave said, "Well," they told him, he said, "I won't ask nobody to shoe any more than I do or anything else." But he says, "You've got to shoe as many as I did." So the first day, Pronovost, Dave, he shod 16 head, and old Jack went through 18 head, and then he quit and went and sat down. He could shoe more horses than Dave could. So Dave come out there one day, and we was shoeing there. We had this buckskin mule, and he's pretty salty. So I told the boys, I said, "Just leave him there for Dave." Dave had been out on a drunk. He was always, he'd come back drunk. So he went in there, and boy, that old mule, he turned loose. He had an awful time shoeing him, for he was weak.

JB: What did he do? Did he ever tie them up and lay them down?

WP: Oh, yes. No...there was two or three there you really had to tie. But you see, the most of them, you had a helper with a [unintelligible]. You pull your hind leg up, or you'd pull the front, and then you'd put a rope around and then you hold the foot out so the shoer could get a hold of it, see. You'd hold it out there for him. So that was a day's work, your 16 head on there.

JB: Was that average?

WP: Every day, average. Yes, that's a day's work. Sixteen head. When you got them done, you could quit. So. Then, while they was doing that, Eddie Lindblum and I, we was taking the rough off them horses. You turn all them old saddle horses out, and then if you didn't get them in the first time or two you'd ride them, they'd want to buck. So, Eddie and I always were taking, what you call the "rough" off of them and get them into going. For the other fellows actually got them shod, and then they'd come and get them and take them out on a different ranges. See, we didn't deliver them. From up there they'd [unintelligible] the Remount, and then we'd go up there with them in the fall and then they'd come and get them. Well, we was out there riding them. Then Eddie got on this one horse, and we had a bunch of mules tied up that they was re-shoeing at the hitch rack. This one horse bucked in under the rope, and then the mule pulled back and it crippled him. So that ended his riding there.

JB: Crippled who?

WP: Eddie Lindblum. The fellow that was helping me break horses.

JB: Yes. Did you ever get hurt doing that?

WP: No. I got kind of ruptured breaking horses. Then I was up riding horses at the Remount, and it was that slick winter that I was telling you about. I was riding this colt along there, and he slipped and he fell on the ground. Well, I knew I had my leg would end up underneath, so I grabbed him by the bridle and pulled his head around until I got my foot out of there. In the meantime, the saddle horn kind of ruptured in there and I had a hernia there then. I had it taken care of when I left up there. Now, that's the only time I got it with a horse. I got it with this brindle bull down there.

JB: That's a different story sounds like. [laughs]

WP: It wasn't a mule.

JB: Mrs. Peery, did you live up there at all?

MP: No.

JB: You stayed down at Stevensville the whole time.

MP: I lived here. We went up there to visit one time when the twins were just small.

JB: I was going ask if you ever went up to visit.

MP: Yes, we went up and visited this one time. We had a picture of the twins—

WP: The twins, yes.

MP: —up there on the bed that he slept on.

WP: [unintelligible]

MP: But they were just little shavers at the time. You see, our oldest girl was just three years, three months, and three days when I had the little one and the twins. So there was four children there, and the oldest one just over three years.

JB: Holy smokes! [laughs]

MP: So I didn't have time to break horses. [laughs]

JB: I can see that. [laughs] Right, right. So you didn't have a place to live up there, did you?

WP: Let's see here now. Better get back onto these, then. Did they give you this Kirt?

JB: Well, there was somebody named Kirkley.

WP: Kirtley. Yes, we got—

JB: But maybe this is somebody else.

WP: There we got...See, I guess we went through them. Bill Longpre—

JB: Yes.

WP: Mel Colesby (?).

JB: Yes, we read this list.

WP: Yes. That's the one, yes. I'll get over here, see how far we went on it. I told you about the bell mares and the Morgan stallions and Grand Menard. You know the Ralph Scheffer place, that's the name of it they bought.

JB: Yes, Bill Longpre, of course, knew all about that, because he lived up there.

WP: Oh yes, and after that, after they got Grand Menard and them, see, they shipped these Nonius horses in. From—

JB: I heard about them. From Hungary?

WP: Yes.

JB: What can you tell me about them?

WP: They finally turned a bunch of the mares over to Lee Cahoon (?)—Clearwater Junction, up there. He lived up in there. They was going to see what they do and let him raise the colts there. The meantime, when he got them then, about that time your war had come on and the [unintelligible] got so bad, he couldn't raise no colts. He lost practically all the colts, and that's kind of the end of the Nonius horses.

JB: I wondered what happened to them. Because I knew—

WP: Well that was it, you see.

JB: —they got sent up to Clearwater Junction.

WP: Yes. Lee Cahoon.

JB: Lee Cahoon?

WP: Yes. [unintelligible]

JB: You don't happen to have a picture of those horses, do you?

WP: No, I don't.

JB: Know anybody who does?

WP: See, Elmer, he died, but there's another brother. I know he will have, and I think Mr. Cahoon might be still alive. I know they would have. Well, I don't know whether you told them or not, but when they first started up there what they had, all they had was crosscut saws. Like sawing out your trails and stuff and fires and going back in. Then the first chainsaw come out, they had a chain saw, but it take two men to carry the darn things. So that's the time you can figure then that your chainsaws come in was when the Remount started out there.

JB: You mean, they worked on them out at the Remount?

WP: What?

JB: You mean they worked on them out at the Remount, developing chainsaws?

WP: No, no, they didn't have no chains. They had crosscut saws. The men sawed them. Then they got this other one—the big heavy—and then finally the lighter chains come on, and the loggers and everybody else used them to saw. But up to that time, you used a crosscut saw. But the other one, the first one that they come out, was a big long thing, kind-of a drag saw thing. Like that, and it had edging on it. You'd set it up on the log, and it would saw down through like that, and then you'd have to take a hold of both ends and move it over. It'd take two men to move the thing.

JB: Good heavens. Well, I was wondering what connection that had with the Remount.

WP: Well, that's on account of the chains that went to it. These chainsaws, they could do so much more falling down old snags and dead trees along the fire line.

MP: That was just a year that that's when the chainsaws began to be coming in use.

JB: Just at the same time? Is that all you mean?

WP: Yes, you see that's...Before, you had to take a crosscut saw, and you had two men. You'd have to saw—

JB: Those really big ones?

WP: Well, no, it's a little flat. Got handles on it. It's a little flat, thin saw. Did you ever see one of them?

JB: Well, when you said crosscuts, I thought you meant those really long things. Seven or eight feet long that loggers used to use.

WP: Well, the...crosscut, yes. That's what they call a crosscut—a man on each end. Like they have these log saws. That's what they had. Then they got this other big long one with a big long drag saw on it as long as this and then right thick.

JB: But that was a power...a power saw.

WP: Yes, they'd run like this by power with a gasoline engine—a little gasoline engine. But the darn thing was sure heavy.

JB: Did you ever use one?

WP: Yes. They used to use them to saw wood with, until they got these other little light one. Let's see. Chainsaws. Then we had...We covered that, about our hay crews. CC camp. Stony Creek. And your—

JB: You must have been around that first winter then, when the CCCs first moved in. Wasn't it along about '33?

WP: Oh, it was, yes. I was in there before they moved in there.

JB: Yes, sounds like it.

WP: The winter before, too. The boys down there, they'd go up to...They'd have movies, see, up there. Then they'd go up there and watch the movies, and they'd come back.

JB: Oh, the guys from the Remount?

MP: It was the winter of '31 that he was there. Because the twins were just babies, you see.

WP: Yep.

MP: Couldn't walk yet. And—

WP: Well, it was the first year I started, you see.

MP: He brought us some venison, and it hung out there all winter. That was the coldest old winter. It just never did thaw out—the venison—and I figured it would be spoiled, hanging out [unintelligible]. But we just trimmed off the outside part, and the inside was just as red and nice as could be. I had to wait until Walter came home in order to saw it. I couldn't get the [unintelligible] sawed up.

JB: It was '33, wasn't it, when they organized that CCC camp up there? Seems like it was around '33.

WP: Yes. I think it was. Pretty early.

JB: Were you around when they were installing that up there? When they were building the buildings and everything?

WP: Oh, yes, yes. That's another thing. Putting in a cattle guard where it was going up. Jake told me where to put it, and I told Jake, I said, "Well," I said, "That's an awful poor place for it, Jake."

He said, "We've got to do what the boss tells us to do."

I said, "Okay, we'll put her in."

JB: Which boss do you mean now?

WP: What?

JB: Which boss do you mean?

WP: Come out of the office, [laughs] So we put it in, and about...oh, it was in there about a couple months, and then they changed it. But we put it...He said, "Put her in. It don't make any difference." Then, another thing then, they had some mules they'd condemned. Well, they was a-shooting them. When Jake went up there, they were shooting those mules. I had a couple of saddle horses—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

WP: —he says, “I’ll give you two for one.”

Well, I said, “Okay.” So I traded them to him, and Mr. Fic...Mr. Kelley come out, he said, “Jake, you can’t do that.”

Well, then Jake said, “Hell, I can,” he said, “I’ve already done.”

“Well, you can’t do it.”

Well, he said, “If you fellows going to run this place, you come out here and run it,” and he said, “I’ll leave.” But he said, “If I’m going to run it, I’m going to run it.” [laughs] He kept trading mules, too. You bet. Well, they just well get something out of it, you see.

JB: So, instead of shooting them, he would trade them off for something else?

WP: Yes, trade them for something they could use. But there was a lot of that stuff that they sent out ther, that they hauled up Stony Creek, there, that was good stuff that they could sell, just [unintelligible] break it up—saws and a lot of the other stuff. You know, just to get rid of it.

JB: What stuff do you mean now?

WP: Well, saws and everything. Axes. Just name it. Pretty near anything. Then they finally quit that too.

MP: Oh, tell her about your having to keep track of every minute what you was doing every time—you and Jake.

WP: Oh, yes. [laughs]

MP: [unintelligible]

JB: I was thinking that the government—

WP: I was riding around with Jake when we done, like that [unintelligible] work, you got a lot of travelling to do and running things like that. You’d be here maybe with 20 minutes or half hour like that. Well, it’s already explained just what you’re doing. So we’d just put down miscellaneous. They wrote back and told us that, “Very annoyed. This miscellaneous don’t spell nothing to us.” [laughs]

JB: Downtown they had to know exactly what you’re doing? Is that what you mean?

WP: Yes, you bet. Downtown. We started filling them in a little on that.

JB: I have a hunch that the Remount Depot, though, was an awful lot different than most Forest Service operations. They probably just weren't used to the way you did things out there.

WP: Well, they wasn't, and that's...when they built the new one, everybody was more happy with their tents than they was that new layout. For everybody had out there, where they was working, they had hobnailed shoes and everything else. They had to pull the shoes off before you could even go in there at that place. All hardwooded and polished and everything else. See, that was it, and if you're not there, you're mucking the mules and every time you went in and out, you had to pull your shoes off. Boy, it was a mess.

JB: Oh, I see. Tell me some more about that barn. What did it get used for, that big barn? Just happened to think about it. What'd they use it for?

WP: Well, they kept the saddle horses in there.

JB: Oh did they?

WP: Yes. The saddle horses and the equipment. Say, there's another thing, too. They got him, that's...Homer McClean (?). Did they tell you about him?

MP: [talking on telephone in background]

JB: No.

WP: He's one of their packers, and—

JB: Yes, I've heard the name.

WP: He was really the main packer, and then he repaired all your packsaddles with the leatherwork, too, besides, you see. [unintelligible] when he's not on a fire, he was in charge of those. Taking them over.

JB: He must have been the one who did that before Bill Bell did.

WP: And Bill Bell was another...both of them.

JB: Well, did McClain come before Bill?

WP: [unintelligible]. There was both up there at the same time.

JB: Oh, were they?

WP: Yes. Bill Bell. Glad you mentioned Bill.

MP: I've got Miriam (?) on the line now. She's going to find out the name [unintelligible].

JB: Oh, all right, thank you...Did you know Marion Duncan?

WP: Oh, yes.

JB: I talked with him a week or two ago.

WP: Oh, did you?

JB: Yes.

WP: Let's see. Dan Rose (?), he passed away of cancer a while back.

JB: Dan Rose? Now, who's he?

WP: He was one of those boys at the CC camp, too.

JB: Oh, yes. Did he stay around here?

WP: Yes. He lived down there. He was raised there at Huson. Had a ranch, and then he worked for the railroad. Then he died of cancer. Heck of a nice fellow.

MP: [On the phone] Oh, yes. How would you spell that last name?

WP: Clare Arthur (?), he was one of the boys, too. CC boys.

MP: You said the name was Bencina (?)? Bencina. Mabel Bencina.

WP: Mabel?

MP: Mabel Bencina was one of the cooks. Was she chief cook, or the...Oh, she's the only cook.

JB: When was that?

MP: [On the phone] What year was this, dear?

WP: '37 or '38 I think.

JB: We've got us a phone conversation here, and we've got—

MP: About '51. [laughs]

JB: '51. Okay. That's more than we knew before.

MP: [On the phone] That's the only cook, then, that...Well, were there other helpers like you?

JB: Maybe I should shut this off for a minute.

[Break in audio]

JB: What did you want to tell me about George Case (?)?

[Mabel on telephone in background]

WP: Well, he was a packer, and he was up there across, up there by Perma. So he was out, and he was kind of on a party. He come back down to Perma there, and there's a little store. So he rapped on the door and one thing and another, and it was storming and he was a friend. He wanted to stay overnight—he'd stay there. The fellow that asked him who he was and like that, and I guess the wind was blowing of something, and he didn't hear them. They'd been robbing him, so he shot out the door and he hit him and killed him. Shot him and killed him.

JB: Oh, heavens! Well, when was that?

WP: Well, that was...I believe either the last year I was up there or the next year. Right close to in there.

JB: About '35?

WP: I'd say. Pretty close to it, yes. And—

JB: Anything else about the Winter Range? Oh, excuse me.

WP: About what?

JB: I was going to ask if there was anything else special about the Winter Range that you could think of.

WP: Well, the Winter Range, you see, they moved down there out of Perma, and then they moved from there back up to the Irvine Flats, you see. Back up in there and built the buildings, and moved all the horses, and stock like...bring stock back up there. That's where Les Wolf was in charge of that, you see, there.

JB: Did you ever ride that ferry across the river?

WP: Oh, yes. Many a time.

JB: What was it like riding the ferry?

WP: I was up there with Doc Shultz, you see.

JB: Oh, the veterinarian.

WP: I forgot that, too. Doc Schultz, and—

JB: Was he from Missoula?

WP: No, he was out of Missoula. That was the second season, wasn't it? The fire season really going and everything, and they had an outbreak of sleeping sickness in all the horses.

JB: At the Remount?

WP: Yes. All over the whole country. Boy, just everybody. So, they got Doc Schultz, and they had to vaccinate all of them. He was up there, and he told Jake Williams and me, he says, "I've got to have some help." Well, Doc told him, there's only one fellow does one.

JB: Only what?

WP: Only one fellow, he says, that I want, he said. Out of the bunch.

JB: Meaning you?

WP: He said, "Well, who's that?"

He says, "Walt Peery," [laughs]

Jake told me, he said, "Well, you go with Doc then," there then. So I'd rather stayed there, but...look after stock, like that. But I went with him. I stayed with him, so we was out of serum at the time. So I'd be home here, and then Doc would call me to come and then we'd go again. We had to go to every ranger station, pack in every place, and vaccinate every mule there was.

JB: In the whole region?

WP: Yes, the whole region around here.

JB: Oh my. Mules, horses, everything?

WP: Mules and horses and everything.

JB: Did much of the stock get sick? Forest Service stock?

WP: No, there wasn't very many. There was a few of them. Then there's...going up by Thompson Falls up there—to Ranger Station up there—just going right up a road along the stream there, we run across a horse there had it. It was all he could do to just go, so we stopped and we caught that horse, and we give him a double shot of it, too. So I never did hear about it, horse come out of it or not. But we stopped and give him. We figured that maybe stop it or something. Keep him from giving some of the rest of them or something.

JB: Did they lose many stock to it?

WP: Oh, they did around here. Yes, they did.

JB: I meant out at the Remount.

WP: No, no we didn't.

MP: You know, the technical name of that sleeping sickness? Encephalitis.

JB: Encephalitis.

WP: Yes, encephalitis.

JB: Right, right. But they didn't actually lose any?

WP: No, we didn't.

JB: Oh, that's good.

WP: We was sure lucky though.

JB: I imagine. Which reminds me. Were there other problems like that? Any other kinds of vaccinations that you had to give to the stock?

WP: No, there wasn't. Outside of taking care of their teeth and stuff like that. That's all there was.

JB: Were they wormed regularly?

WP: Oh, yes. We would always use them bot capsules they called them. That gets worms and the bots too, you see. I imagine there's a lot more if I could just think of it [unintelligible]. I think I pretty well filled you in on what I know.

JB: Well that's the thing, you know. If you can tell me the things that you remember best and that were most important to you, then that's what I want. Because that's what everybody's doing that I'm talking to, and then that way we get the whole story.

WP: That's right. But I enjoyed it up there, and if I'd had a house for my family, I'd still been with it—the Forest Service and them—for I like it and the outside.

JB: That's too bad.

WP: On account of the family, see.

JB: Too bad you couldn't have all moved up there.

WP: Yes, too bad.

JB: What did you do, go back to Stevensville?

WP: No, we moved down to Frenchtown there, and then up there. Then from there, I went up then, and I wrangled dudes for about three years up there. At the Bar L up there.

JB: Whereabouts was that.

WP: It's up the Blackfoot, up there. They had it filled up all the time. When I went up there, I had 65 head of saddle horses saddled up, and I done all the shoeing and everything up there for them.

MP: He had a wooden horse called "Howdy" that he kept all the dudes' saddles on.

WP: Their stirrups.

MP: He put the saddles on the wooden horses.

JB: Oh, is that right? [laughs].

MP: Same way up there, breaking horses and kept all the shoes on them, and then you had to get up at 4:30 and wrangle the horses. Each morning, you'd get some of the dude...they called them dudes then. They're guests, in a way, but they'd go out with you to help wrangle. They had a bunch that'd ride early. They'd go out early, and then you had another bunch of go out.

We had ones that'd go with them. Every time they'd take a bunch in, they'd bring a bunch back of new ones, you see.

JB: Sounds like your years with the Forest Service were pretty much like how you've spent your whole life in a way with—

WP: Well, with horses.

JB: Yes, right.

WP: That's all I ever did do.

MP: The time he was about 15, I think, he bought his first horse.

JB: I'll snap this off.

WP: Yes.

JB: Thank you.

[End of interview]