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Oral History Number: 149-006b
Interviewee: Clarence "Cy" Young
Interviewer: Ernest Kraft
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Project: National Bison Range Oral History Project

Ernest Kraft: When Riley was the chief of the refuges, there was probably about four then?

Clarence "Cy" Young: I would say three or four. I don't know. I'm not sure about Niobrara [Nebraska], but Sullys Hill [National Game Preserve] and the Bison Range in the Wichita [Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge]…I'm not even sure about the Wichita at that time. That used to belong to the Forest Service. I think it was after the Biological Survey started these big-game refuges where the Forest Service eventually turned the Wichita through the Fish and Wildlife Service. I think, it's when it changed from the Biological Survey to the Fish and Wildlife Service that they turned the Wichita over to the present Fish and Wildlife service.

EK: Actually, it's all under the Biological Survey at that time, and that wasn't changed until…how many years ago? Not too many years ago, they—

CY: Yeah, I couldn't say just exactly how many years, but it's been Fish and Wildlife since about 1930…early '30s.

EK: Wasn't it under the Department of Agriculture? This Biological Survey?

CY: The whole Biological Survey used to be under the Department of Agriculture. When Mr. Ickes got to be the Secretary of the Interior, he decided he wanted all these game refuges under his jurisdiction. So he had the—

EK: That's Harold Ickes, isn't it?

CY: Yeah. He had the whole Fish and Wildlife system transferred to the Department of Interior.

EK: That must have must have been under Roosevelt.

CY: Yes.

EK: Theodore Roosevelt.

CY: Yes, that was under the Roosevelt administration. They were Department of Agriculture up until that time.

EK: Cy, where were you born?

Clarence "Cy" Young Interview, OH 149-006b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.

CY: Where?

EK: Yes.

CY: Fletcher, North Carolina. Little town right in Western North Carolina right near Asheville.

EK: What date?

CY: About 1902. We migrated when I was just a pistol, come out to Montana to…I had an aunt and an uncle lived east of Montana and some cousins, so I come out on a little visit and I never went back. Never went back there until 1946.

EK: What are your parents' names?

CY: John B. Young, and Mary Widows (?).

EK: Did you know your grandparents?

CY: Yeah.

EK: What were their names, or how far back can you trace your family history?

CY: I never did trace it back any further than my great-grandparents. Granddad on my mother's side died young. He died when he was about 34 years old. My grandad on my father's side lived to be about 80. He was, I think, a captain in the Civil War. Died with a bullet in his hip. He got wounded there while he was in the war, and they never did take it out. He never did have it taken out.

EK: What part of Montana did you come to when you came out here?

CY: I come out to what was known as the little dry country near a little town called Wason Flats, 75 miles north of Miles City.

EK: What year was that approximately?

CY: Oh, about 1915, along in there, '16.

EK: You were about 14, 15 years old?

CY: Yes, along in there somewhere. This uncle was a stockman, and I thought I wanted to be a cowboy, so I stayed with him [laughs] for a long time. He had cattle, sheep, and—

EK: He taught you the cow business in other words?

CY: Yeah.

EK: What was his name?

CY: The uncle?

EK: Yes.

CY: J. Gibbs [Jerry Gibbs].

EK: J. Gibbs. How big of a family did he have?

CY: He had four boys.

EK: Any of them anywhere near your age or—

CY: Oh no, no, they were much younger.

EK: He was a young man in other words at the time you were working with him?

CY: Yeah, he was, probably, 40—30, 40, along in there.

EK: What type of operation did he have? Strictly cow?

CY: No, he run a band of sheep and then about 200 cows and 50 or 100 horses. Kept all of the horses—he had a bunch of mares—and he raised his own work-stock—his own saddle horse…Farming operation, he had a farming operation along with it. He raised a lot of crops of various kinds—dry-land farming.

EK: Was there any Indians in that country at that time to speak of? Other than—

CY: Not out in that country—

EK: —reservation Indians?

CY: Nothing, except reservation Indians. The Fort Peck Reservation is about 40 miles to the north. In fact, they's one Cheyenne reservation right in the south side of Miles City. Then, of course, the Crow…they was Indians everyplace around there. There's three or four reservations right within less than 100 miles.

EK: This time, actually, is at a time just kind of between when these Indians were being shoved on these reservations. It's about the time that this—

CY: Well, they had been put on reservations before then. But their biggest trouble then was trying to keep them on there.

EK: It was kind of a big old rugged land yet though.

CY: Oh yeah.

EK: Without any—

CY: There was lots of country there.

EK: —frills, or…What type of a home did your uncle have? Was it a sod-shanty or—

CY: He had a two-level house. There was a full basement in the side of the hill, and then this house—this one-story house—was built on top of that.

EK: Set of corrals and—

CY: Oh yeah.

EK: —bunks and…Did he hire men? Have standing crew on hand all the time?

CY: Yeah, he usually kept at least two or three hired men, and during shearing operations and stuff like that, he kept a sheep-herder and a camp-tender and—

EK: You wouldn't have any idea how many acres of land he was probably running at that time?

CY: At that time, there was a lot of free land. All the railroad land, and any homestead land that wasn't actually settled on was free—what they call free range—but in order to get good water holes and things like that, where you wanted them, you generally would lease a bunch of this railroad land, see, like a township. These townships would usually support a band of sheep and, in addition, quite a few horses or cattle.

EK: About six square miles?

CY: Yeah. Six square miles. That's in addition to his ranch. He had four or five sections of land himself.

EK: Do you remember any of the names of the children in this family?

CY: In his family?

EK: Yes.

CY: I should. [laughs]

EK: Well, yes, but I mean, just for the record. If I can look them up, I'd like to—

CY: There's Clyde and Wilbur and Leo and Loren.

EK: Their last name was—

CY: Gibbs.

EK: Gibbs

CY: Yes. I have cousins still over there yet. He was a big operator, too. His brother [unintelligible] would be my uncle-in-law, and he had about five or six boys and one girl.

EK: This book here is going to tell you some of these things.

CY: He's still there now, but he's retired and he turned it over to the boys.

EK: They're still over in the big dry country though?

CY: Yes. Another uncle, he retired…he sold-out and retired, and he lives in Hamilton now.

EK: Oh, he's right here at Hamilton?

CY: Yes. The boys, three of them, are over in Seattle. The other one got killed about a year ago in a truck accident.

EK: How old is the man that's in Hamilton?

CY: He's about 80. Eighty-two, I believe.

EK: Still coherent? A guy could go down and talk to him?

CY: Oh yeah. I think he's spending the winter in Seattle now. He'll be back in—

EK: I'd like to talk to him sometime. It would be interesting to know if he'd have any recollections of you when you were a kid. [laughs]

CY: Well, he wouldn't—

EK: Maybe he couldn’t, but—

CY: He wouldn’t know anything about me until I come out here, because I don't think I knew even him until I come out to Montana.

EK: Until you were about 14 years old?

CY: Yeah, 15, along there.

EK: Fifteen or whatever it was. What kind of market did he have for his horses? Was it a remount or—

CY: They used to be a big sale-ring in Miles City, similar to the cattle-ring here in Missoula now. Any time you've got a few horses ready that you wanted to sell, whether they were broke or…didn’t make any difference. You could sell them green or hook them and drive them a few times, and call them green-broke. Same with a saddle horse. Unless somebody come along. A lot of the farmers, you could sell them right at home. Anybody that knew you, you could sell a team here and a team to this one. That was the way he sold most of his is just from guys that knew him around the country, because they were lots of homesteaders in the country then.

EK: Was there any grain operation, of any extent, at that time? Other than maybe ten acres for—

CY: There were homesteaders tried to raise—

EK: Little oats?

CY: —little oats or wheat. Most of them tried to raise wheat and a lot of beef.

EK: That was about the only fenced piece of ground there was probably?

CY: What?

EK: Was there any fencing at that time?

CY: Oh, yeah. You had to fence up your homestead. Otherwise you couldn’t prove up on it. You had to build some kind of a shack on it, and you had to farm at least a third of your land for five years in order to prove up on your homestead. So you had to plow it up and plant some kind of a crop. If it dried out, why, that wasn't your fault. You still got credit.

EK: There was a lot of fences though?

CY: Oh yes, pretty near the homestead was fenced up, but no railroad land unless you had a section or two leased right close by that you wanted fenced up to keep your own stock close to home. Like your work horses, you had to have a section for them. You wanted to keep them close enough so you could go out and run them in every morning, and that way—

EK: What was the situation on the cavalry at that time, in the U.S. Army Cavalry?

CY: Well, they were buying saddle horses all the time.

EK: Was there any posts or anything there, near that area?

CY: Fort Keogh.

EK: Keogh is right there, isn't it?

CY: It's right near Miles City. They raised a few horses of their own, but they also would go out and buy 1,000 or two horses every once in a while, just for other folks too.

EK: There wasn't a real big sale for horses there to that outfit, in particular?

CY: Not necessarily to the Army. Of course, they would buy almost any time that you had one or two or a dozen. If they could meet the specifications, why, they'd buy them any time. All you had to do was take them down there and let them try them out. If they could meet their specifications, why, they'd buy them—up to seven years old. They didn't, as a rule, didn't buy anything over seven or eight at the most.

EK: When you came there then, you just were, more or less, one of the family for a few years?

CY: Yeah.

EK: About how old were you when you took off? You started buying—

CY: When I was 18, I took off for the Army. In fact, I went down the Kansas City, and I was going to school down there—to an aviation school. After I got out of there, then I joined the Army and went to the West Coast and spent three years in the service. That was immediately after the First World War.

EK: That was in 1919 or '20 or '21?

CY: January 10 or 12 of 1921 when I entered the service.

EK: You're just like me; I got in the last month of the second war [World War Two] when they took me, and I got pretty lucky.

CY: I got credit for being a veteran of World War One for the reason that the peace wasn't signed until 1924. So, the whole three years, got credit for being in World War One. Even though I wasn't in actual combat, still got credit, because they still had soldiers that were drafted during the First World War that were still in Siberia and various places—army of occupation they called it.

EK: You say you went to aviation school. Did you try-out to be an aviator?

CY: I was training for an aviator, and I was an assistant mechanic—apprentice mechanic—in the aviation. When they decided about the middle of 1922, they cut the Army in half. So they give everybody that wanted it a discharge. That reduced everything but the Air Corps down to where they wanted it, but there was too many in the Air Corps. Everything is seniority, as you know, in the service, so they gave us—that most still wanted to stay—our choice of stations in the United States and any other branch of the service that we wanted to go into. So I went into the cavalry and went to Fort Lewis, Washington. I was over there for quite a while, and I got a chance to go over...This was at Fort Lewis. Then I got a chance to go over to Fort Lawton in Seattle. So I transferred to the Motor Transport Corps and went to Fort Lawton in Seattle. That was right on the edge of town.

EK: What happened during the cavalry bit? Was it all just training with horses or—

CY: Yes. Mostly with horses. Just like you'd go to the infantry and drill. We drilled on horses just like you drill…Of course, you had to know the nomenclature of a horse, just as well as your rifle or a machine gun.

EK: Did you get the bareback bit? Did they start you out bareback? Is that still—

CY: Oh yeah. They had a lot of that of bareback. In fact, you didn't get a saddle until you got to where you could ride pretty doggone good bareback.

EK: Jumping and everything?

CY: Yeah, jumping and everything. We jumped logs over there that was, oh, six, seven feet high. We take out exercising, and those big trees over in that country, during a windstorm they was thousands of them that would blow down. We had trails all around through the reservation there, and we'd go out exercising these horses or just on maneuvers. We started to get going down through the brush mile a minute, and all of a sudden here was one of these six-foot logs in front of you. [laughs] So every horse in the outfit [unintelligible] jump. We had lots of fun.

EK: It would have been a lot of fun, I bet.

CY: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. They'd lope maybe for eight or ten, miles—just a short lope—bare back, and I'm telling you, your old butt [laughs] was pretty doggone tender by the time you got home that night.

EK: When you went into this Army—

CY: Motor Transport.

EK: —Motor Transport, then you got your experience with your…mechanical experience, more or less, is what you went into that for.

CY: Yeah, I went into that, and I was in the shop most of the time. I drove for the post commander who was a colonel, I drove his private car plus…Not his private, his a private official car for about a year. I was driving that for a year, and when I wasn't driving for him, I was working in the shop. That's where we kept his car, and if I wasn't busy out tooling around with him, I was working in the shop, so I got a lot of good shop experience.

EK: How long did that last?

CY: It lasted a year-and-a-half through your enlistment. At the time I finished the three-year enlistment, I could have got back in the Air Corps, but I was getting a little itchy for Montana, so I just—

EK: You come back to your uncles?

CY: I just packed my suitcase and come back, yeah. I worked one summer for him then. Then another fellow and I, we kind of went on our own.

EK: Was that Harry?

CY: Harry Ross. I was him then, until—

EK: Is this the time, I understand, when you guys, more or less, made your living by just—

CY: Trading horses.

EK: —trading and selling horses?

CY: Trading and buying and selling horses. We raised a few, too.

EK: Kind of gypsied the deal with a wagon and a string of horses?

CY: We would mostly buying and shipping. We'd buy a bunch, and we'd pick out the best of them. People kind of let their horses run-down and deteriorate there for a few years, when they wasn't worth much.

EK: Right after the war, in other words.

CY: Yeah.

EK: Indian wars, more or less.

CY: So we'd buy up these bunch of horses. They never even looked at them. They never even bothered to brand them or anything, so we'd buy a bunch from a rancher and then we'd take them home and halter-break anything that was worth shipping—that you could get enough for him to pay to ship him. Then rest—they'd be probably 60 percent of the bunch of horses that it wasn't worth shipping, so we'd cut them out and sell them for chicken feed. This is about the time that they started killing horses for meat. Shipping horses to France. They were butcher horses, they called them, and you could get five, ten dollars a head for them for butcher. The rest of them, we'd halter break them and ship them back east—Minnesota, southern Minnesota, Indiana, some as far east as Ohio—for selling for work horses.

EK: Cy, remember that story you told me about the woman that you…I'd like to hear it again about the woman that you didn't figure you'd ever sell her a horse, because she was up on the ladder—

CY: Oh yeah. We sold a team of horses to an old farmer, and he said he'd buy them if I would bring them out to the ranch and hook them up for him. I took them out to the ranch, and it's dark when I got there, so I put them in the barn. The next morning I was hooking them up. It'd been raining, and of course, they had big piles of manure—cow manure—around the dairy. Instead of taking it out now, like they should, they just, at that time, just piled it up in big piles. There was a ladder standing close to one of these piles and leaning against the barn, and I hooked up this team and she was standing right in front of the team a-watching the operation. I hadn't any more than got in the wagon until the team started and took off, and they straddled this ladder. She seen them a-coming. She had time to get up the ladder about ten feet, and the team straddled the ladder. Of course, the [unintelligible] took out the bottom of the ladder, and down she come right in the pile of manure. So you could imagine what she looked like, when she fished herself out of that cow stuff there—after it had rained on it for about a week.

EK: [laughs] You still sold the team of horses?

CY: [laughs] Yeah, I still sold the team of horses.

EK: [laughs] You must have been a pretty good salesman. You had another gimmick. I remember you telling me about a big wheel.

CY: That was for hooking up big old snorty broncs. Took one wheel off of an axle on a wagon, and we just buried the other axle—stuck it down in the ground about four feet down, or three feet, and leave this wheel above ground so high. Then, the other axle, we took a log about 15, 18 feet long, laid it on top of this wheel, bolted it to the wheel, and bolted it to the other axle. The wheel was standing upright, except that we just laid this log right on top of the axle and bolted it right to the front axle. Then, we took another log and run it out on another wheel, similar to a header. You've seen these old headers, how the team comes behind. So we anchored him to this log in front of him and hooked him to the log in back of him, and he took these wheels with him whether he was going front or backwards. [laughs]

EK: He couldn't go anyplace but around in circles.

CY: All he could do was go in this about a…it would be a 40-foot circle. The log was 18, 20 feet long. Just all he could do was go round and round in this circle.

EK: That's the way you took a lot of the snort out of him?

CY: That took a lot of the buck and snort out of him when you'd hook him up.

[Break in audio]

EK: Princippaly, though, instead of thinking as we probably would about Montana as a riding horse, you actually probably made more money off of breaking plow horses—the horses for men to use in their farming operations—than you did off of a good saddle-horse, because—

CY: Oh yeah, yeah. We made much more off of a good work horse than a good farm horse, because there were no tractors in the country and everything was horses—buckboard the horses and plow horses, any kind of horses. By hooking him to this thingamajig, you could sell him for a green-broke horse, where if he'd never had a set or harness on, you couldn't. He would be halter broke as well as—

EK: You could probably get him hooked up at least.

CY: Hell, yes. You could hook him up. You didn't have no trouble after you left him on that thing. You'd hook him up maybe for two hours in the morning, and then let him rest and cool off and then take him out and hook him up again that day.

EK: He got smart enough so he didn't fight it after a while.

CY: After about two days of that, he was smart enough, so you could harness him up and take him out and hook him up and you didn't have no trouble. This is if you understood anything at all about a horse.

EK: Well, those horses though, in those days, are a lot different than the horse that people think of today.

CY: Oh, yeah. They're entirely different. They were just wild, spooky horses. You never thought about breaking a horse until he was five or six years old, at the least, because you generally waited until he got a full mouth, because you didn't feed the horse in them days. When you got through with him, you turned him loose, and he had to go out and make his own living. If you had the same horses up, could afford to feed them, you could break them a little younger, but otherwise you had to wait until he got a full mouth so he could go out and do his grazing. Because a horse was shedding his teeth, he couldn't go out and graze with two or three teeth out in front. They didn't get the full mouth until they were six years old.

EK: It was also, more or less, a practice, too.

CY: It was a general practice. Because every rancher had enough horses, so he didn’t have to work with the same horse twice, two days in a row. That's why each cowboy generally had a string of about 12 saddle horses, because he could ride him hard one day and give him a week’s rest, and he was recuperated. [coughs]

EK: On your uncle’s spread over there, did you ever get any early cow experience? Is that when you were just a kid over there—

CY: Early what?

EK: Oh, riding experience and learning how to handle stock and stuff. That's principally what you did.

CY: Oh, yeah. First day I got there, he set me on a horse and told me to go out and run in the cows, so I went galloping up out to the cows. Of course, we had horses at home, too. I knew how to ride long before I got to Montana. I was riding along the time I wasn’t as big as Debbie there, until I was riding at home. But this horse—I'd never been on a cutting horse before, and this old pony, he was just an awful good cutting horse. I went to head the first cow, and he went one way and I went the other. He just turned out from under me. That was what happened. [laughs] At home, all we knew how to do is get on a horse and gallop up and down the road or go out and get behind the cows. Of course, they’d usually come right on in. This cutting horse, the minute that old cow [unintelligible] some direction that he knew she wasn’t supposed to go, he just left me in the air. I come down and landed some cactus on my back, and I’m telling you—

EK: You got your first experience right there.

CY: I got my first cutting horse experience right then and there. He never done that the second time, I can tell you that. [laughs]

EK: Generally, now, just looking at the modern-day horse and the horse of that day, for size and…Well, let's say for size first. Were they similar sized, or were they bigger, smaller, or what would you say?

CY: The well-bred horses—they was a lot of well-bred horses in the country, as well as mustangs. They was a lot of just typical Indian ponies around.

EK: Cayuse?

CY: Cayuses, but there were also some good-blooded horses in the country.

EK: In other words, there was…It's just like today. There was some good cayuses and—

CY: Yes. There was cayuses and—

EK: —good-blooded horses.

CY: —Good, well-blooded horses. Old man Gilmore (?), he was a big horse rancher. He was strictly horses, and he run 100 percent Hamiltonians. He kept the population of the blooded horses around the country. His stud would breed a lot of these cayuse mares, and there's a lot of half-breeds around the country too.

EK: That's principally a buggy horse, a trotting horse, isn't it?

CY: That's mostly a trot-horse. They used them on the buck-boards and stuff like that. There were a lot of Standardbred horses in the country—Morgans. Of course, a Morgan and a Standardbred is practically the same thing. There was more Morgan in the stagecoach days, and they were 100 percent standard Standard and Morgan.

EK: You didn't ever see too many gated horses at that time?

CY: No. There was no gated horses around except the guys that had them for show and pleasure.

EK: American Saddleer.

CY: Yeah. [pauses] Best little horse I ever had over in that country was a little horse they called Runt. He weighed about, oh, 800, 900 pounds, but he could go further and come in a-feeling better in a day than a lot of 1,200-, 1,300-pound horses. We used to have the idea that you want to have a big horse to make a long circle on and a hard circle on, but you take some of

those blooded-horses—the smaller horses they could go just as far as a big one and sometimes a lot further.

Unidentified Speaker: [unintelligible].

EK: I don't. He told me I could handle it.

US: [unintelligible]

CY: It's quite a sight there, some of those big combines with about 25 to 30 horses on them, depending on the size.

EK: That was the header days too, then.

CY: Yes. The big operators, they had the combines, and the smaller operators, they had just the regular header and worked four horses on them.

EK: When did the thrashing-machine, this bundling, that come in after that?

CY: No. that was about the same time.

EK: The big steam-driven—

CY: If your ground was a little rough for a header or something, you usually used the old binder and cut it and shocked it and then hauled it in to pull the separator out in the middle of the field.

EK: Big steam separators most of them.

CY: Yeah, usually a big old steam—

EK: Coal-burner or something?

CY: Yeah.

EK: That's what my dad did. Dad had one of those big steam deals.

CY: My uncle he had one too—great big son-of-a-gun. Had one of them big old Red River Special separators that you could—

EK: I couldn't tell you the name of it.

CY: —you could thresh 4,000 or 5,000 bushels a day with it.

EK: The horses was always sticking their nose on the belt and getting their nose burnt and having to run away. I remember that, and I wasn't very big. I've heard them tell about—

CY: The biggest trouble about that thing, you had to have about a whole crew waiting on you. Had to have about two men hauling water, and two or three…You either had to get your coal out in advance, and it took a lot of it too. I mean, it kept a man busy hauling it from your coal pile after you go get it in a mine. There's mines all around, but even so, we'd have to go about five miles to dig it out from under a bank and haul it home and pile it up. Then when threshing time come, it took a band of at least one man busy hauling coal from the pile to the thresher. Got rid of a lot of coal and a lot of water, but they could do a lot of work, too. The old gas engines, they were just coming into being, but most of them didn't have power enough to run one of them big separators. Didn't even have power enough to pull it. That old steamer though, that would take that anything, anyplace, except sand. It couldn't go no place in sand. It would just dig itself down, and you had to have about 150-foot of cable, go out and bring a dead-man out here ahead of you and tie it up that cable to the wheel and walk it out on the cable.

EK: I remember that had about four-inch spiked teeth in it, the one Dad had.

CY: Ours just had about two-inch growser (?) on the angle, right across the angle, just right across the wheel on an angle.

EK: I remember playing on when I was just a kid. It had a three- or four-inch v-shaped spike on the wheels about every ten inches.

CY: That was true on the gas, but was this on the steamer?

EK: Well I thought it was a steamer. I was just a kid when I first remember playing on it.

CY: I've seen a lot of them old steamers, and I've never seen nothing but a growser on the steamer but all the old gas tractors that come out had those v-shaped lugs on them.

EK: I can remember a big coal…There was a big door you opened up. It looked to me like it was for shoveling coal.

CY: That was a steamer.

EK: What it was, I just really don't know. I was just a kid when that thing was—

CY: Well, they was only two makes of them, and one was a big old…Case put out a big one, and—

Gladys Young: [sings] "Cy to the table."

CY: —old Reeves, they put out a two-cylinder steamer, great big bugger.

EK: I don't know what it was, but—

[break in audio]

EK: I was born in 1927. So it's been hard for me to imagine.

CY: You just have to imagine then. They were getting quite a few cars along about '14, '15, along in there. Especially Model…Well, they was a little of everything. Depended on how much money you had as to what kind of car you drove. Same, pretty near then as it is today. You just drove whatever you could afford. It was easy to get around back then. We rode horses and buggies mostly—that was the main mode of travel—because the roads in the winter time, they was no such thing as a paved road and damn few gravel roads. Very few gravel roads. You couldn't get around then in the winter time. You couldn't get around with a car at all even if you owned one.

EK: What did your dad do?

CY: He was farmer.

EK: Farmer.

CY: Yes. He had a few cattle and sheep. He was a farmer.

EK: You told me that [unintelligible].

CY: I had an uncle who had a wholesale fruit house, about 15 miles away, and I spent a lot of time with him. He had a couple of boys about my age, and we were back and forth. I spent about as much time with them as I did at home. Of course, if there was something to do at home, we had to be home helping. After we got as big as Mark, why, we had to go to work.

EK: Then your uncle lived in town and your dad was on the farm, and you were at both places, pretty much.

CY: Yeah, just back and forth. I remember one time…They're were banana rooms, and you get those bananas in there by the car load and they were green—plumb green. He had what they call the ripening rooms. They were insulated rooms that would hold a carload of bananas. You put them in there, and you'd lift these gas furnaces and you can ripen them as fast as you wanted too. Quite a few of them would fall off. When I first looked in that banana room, here was the ground covered with bananas [laughs], just like apples had fallen from an over-ripe

tree. I asked one of the house men there. I said, "What do you do with those bananas that falled off on the ground.

He says, "We eat them."

I said, "Well, brother, you're a long way behind your work as far as I can see." [laughs]

He says, "If you want any of them, you pick up an armful and fill your pockets and go to work."

We always liked to go to Uncle Tom's after that—me and my brother. I had a brother two years younger than I was.

EK: Which one is this now?

CY: Herb. We each had a bicycle. After we got big enough to ride these bicycles, when the roads permitted and wasn't too busy, especially on Sundays, we'd take off for Uncle Tom's. We never went over there day or night that he didn't load us up with fruit if we had to hurry home. Especially at Christmas, they'd come over with a great big bushel baskets loaded with oranges, bananas, and all kinds of fruit for Christmas.

EK: How close was that to the sea or how was that stuff shipped or where did it come from or don't you remember?

CY: The fruit? I just don't know. It come from all over.

EK: It would have been shipped in?

CY: Yes, it was usually shipped in. Then they was an awful lot of apples raised right in that country. There were all varieties. Of course, Delicious wasn't even developed at that time. The main apples at that time were Limbertwigs, and they were a winter apple. Then, a big, yellow apple we called a horse-apple, and they was a big apple that looks just like the Delicious today except it had a more of a frosty nose and pinstripes all the way around. That was called a Ben Davis. The McIntosh, they all had to come in from New York. That was about 600 miles away.

EK: Is that close to a seagoing port there? Your home town?

CY: No, it's about 300 miles. We was right in the western part of the state, and the closest port would be about Charleston, South Carolina. That'd be about 225 miles away.

EK: That was what I was trying to get in my head, just how far—

CY: Bananas, they would come into the port on a ship, and then they were reloaded into boxcars and they were shipped up.

EK: When you were a kid did you ever do any traveling throughout the state or to other states with your family?

CY: Not much, just down to Columbia, South Carolina. I had an uncle down there that also had a fruit house, and we'd go down and see him once in a while. That was 150 miles, and that was about as far as I ever got from home until—

EK: That was a horse-trip?

CY: What?

EK: Was that a horse-trip, or did you go by train?

CY: No, it was car or train. Both of these uncles had cars. With a [unintelligible] you didn't go very far from home, except when it was absolutely necessary for the simple reason that come up a big rain storm, why, you had to tie up. If it come up late in the evening, you was there until the next morning. You didn't going no place.

EK: When I think about this car bit, maybe because it was a different section of the country or so forth, but I can remember…Even when I was born in 1927, I can remember going by horse to these community dances and stuff. We had an old sled fixed up out of car body, and they drove the horses through a slot in the front of it and—

CY: Out in this western country, we were still traveling by horses even up to almost to the time I come here.

EK: Yes, that's why I say it. To me, it's kind of a different era.

CY: The roads didn't permit a car, even if you had one.

EK: I can remember in the summertime, we always usually went to some of the relatives' place on Sunday and all had a big feast. Well, you all take turns with maybe a half-a-dozen relatives. Then everybody'd get together at one of these houses, and you'd go there by car in the summertime.

CY: Pretty much what we used to do.

EK: But that was how many years before, practically? That era there was, in that country, was about 20 or 30 years ahead of the area that I'm talking about in North Dakota, you might say. I mean, comparatively.

CY: All that country, when they opened it up for anyplace that there was any homesteading took place…I don't know about North and South—

EK: My dad was a homesteader.

CY: —Dakota, but all that land was homesteaded. They didn't open it all at the same time, but Montana was opened in 1910. Then, of course, they really flocked in there then. Up until that time, you could ride all day and never have to get off to open a gate. There was very few fences, just a drift fence once a while. Some of the big cattle outfits had drift fence. The homesteaders, they fenced up the country pretty tight. You was opening gates all the time, before they got the public roads opened up. Then we didn't have so many. Usually, we travelling horseback or buckboard, we'd just cut across-country on the shortest route. That was the main, quickest way to get there. After the homesteaders settled that all up, then you had to go follow the section line. You'd go so far east, before you could turn south or north or east. There was no such thing as cutting across.

EK: After you got back out of the Army and you started dickering horses, Harry—you and Harry—kind of formed somewhat of a partnership, or was that just a—

CY: Yes, we were in it together. He and I, to start out with, we worked for a horse and cattle outfit. We both worked for this outfit.

EK: You don't remember the name or their brand?

CY: It was the Gibbs brothers.

EK: Gibbs brothers?

CY: Yes. After we worked for them for a while, then we kind of went in cahoots.

EK: Got on the ropes?

CY: [laughs] Got on the ropes, and got on our own there, pretty much. I worked for him before I got started. He had a few horses long before I ever owned one. He was kind of on his own when we kind of went together. I worked for him there for a while, and kind of buy one now and then sell him on my own until I kind of got started.

EK: Just offhand, during those years now after you got started, what kind of income did you make?

CY: We didn't get rich or anything. We made expenses and pretty fair salary as far as trading goes.

EK: Would you say something like 2,500 dollars a year, or would you have any idea to guess that way?

CY: We made a lot better than…See, the average going wage at that time for a farm hands was about 40 dollars, 50 dollars a month and room and board. We done better than that, quite a lot.

EK: That'd be 600 dollars a year income.

CY: Then their own expenses and [unintelligible].

EK: That's part of living.

CY: That's part of living anyway. We were pretty much our own boss, and—

EK: Did you trade in saddles and bridles?

CY: Oh yeah, anything. Didn't make a difference. If a guy had a couple of horses or a dozen horses we wanted, and he wanted our saddle. "I'll buy them horses if you throw in the saddle." Maybe a saddle horse. Especially Ross, he was trading all of it. He was a regular machine when it come to trade. He'd trade anything, anytime. He'd trade off his old lady [laughs] if you could offer him a right price.

EK: Harry wasn't married at that time. Isn't that his name, Harry?

CY: Yes. No, he never got married until I come here. I just happened to be at the Bison Range by chance. I was on my way to Seattle to spend the winter. We pretty well cleaned up on horses, and wintertime wasn't a very good time to be a-shipping anyway, especially after the horses begin to lose weight. I was just going out to Seattle, kind of renew old acquaintances after I'd been out there in the Army all this time. I was going out to kind of get out of some cold weather and horse around a little bit. I happened to stopped off in Dixon to see an old boy that used to be in the Army, and I used to be in the Army with him. In fact, he was a cook in my outfit, and he happened to be working here at that time.

EK: What was his name?

CY: Dick Beller.

EK: Oh. That's the guy you and I stopped to see that year.

CY: Yes. That's the guy. He said, "Hell, were you going?"

"Seattle, but I thought I'd stop off and see what you was doing and fool around."

He owned a little ranch over across the river from Dixon there. He had about 40, 50 head of cattle and a few horses. He said, “We're just getting ready to run some elk there and need some experienced wranglers. You’re in no hurry, why, don’t you come out and help us wrangle the ones.” It wasn’t over 15 months until Rose [Frank H. Rose] come along, who was superintendent there at the time. Dick told him, “Here’s an old wild-horse chaser from Eastern Montana. You better talk him into coming out and help chase those elk.”

He says, “Bring him out. Bring him out and put him to work.”

I said, “What the hell am I going to do for horses? I haven’t got no horses.”

“Oh,” he says, “I’ve got enough to start on. You can rough out a bronc or two now and then. We’ll find you something to ride.”

I come out here, and we gathered a trainload of elk and got them on the road back to Massachusetts—that’s where they were going. Then the guy that bought the elk wanted me to go back...He wanted I and Ike Melton, who was riding here at that time, wanted us to go back and help him get rid of the elk or take care of them and get them of the train and so forth. I’d had just about all the East I wanted by that time, so I said, “No, I don’t want to go back there, but I’ll stick around and help you gather the next trainload.” They were supposed to just take these back and get them unloaded and get them out to the ranch.

EK: Where did they go back there?

EK: A place called Middleborough, Massachusetts.

EK: Was it a private ranch?

CY: It was a private ranch. The outfit—the Jones brothers—had a dream that they were going to break these elk to work and drive them as reindeer. Around Christmastime, they was some big department stores back there had offered them 1,000 dollars a night for a four-horse team, or a six-horse tem of elk, just to drive down the street or even stand around in front of the big department store.

EK: They didn't know elk very well, did they?

CY: They didn’t know elk very well, and they wanted us to go back and break out a few teams of them. Well, they got a few teams, so they'd work around the ranch all right, but when they took them to town they’d get around those traffic and confusion and lights and stuff, they’d just stand there and tremble and they couldn't get them to go.

EK: It's the same way when you're working them in the corrals.

CY: Yeah, same thing. That's about the same thing. They just stand there and shake and tremble. They didn't have a very good success, so they finally ended up by selling the meat—butchering them and selling the meat.

EK: I'll bet that was a hairy operation.

CY: They spent a lot of money. They old boy that kind of backed them, he lost a lot of money. He just lost a lot of money. Then they were going to try reindeer. They were going to go north and bring reindeer down there then and try to break them after the elk fizzled out. But they stayed with the elk, I guess, for a couple years, trying to do something with them, but they didn't after they—

EK: You don't remember how many head they took?

CY: Well, they took 487 the first trainload. They were supposed to come back and get the next trainload which was about that many more, but after they didn't come back for a couple of years while they were trying to break out these others, their option run out. So then they sold them to a guy over here at Martinsdale—promoted the big-game farm over there. He got young Teddy Roosevelt and Ellis Reinhardt (?) and the whole bunch of the big New York big-shots interested, and they all put up about a half-a-million dollars and they built a big game farm over here in Martinsdale similar to the Bison Range. They were going tocome out and kill their own the elk and their own buffalo every fall and just have a private hunting preserve. That went on for quite a while and then first one, then the other, died off of that bunch that was interested in it. They kind of turned it into a kind of a dude ranch.

EK: Is that still the area over there that they call Teddy Roosevelt State Park? Is that the same place?

CY: No that's down in the Badlands there in Western North Dakota that Roosevelt—

EK: Medora

CY: Medora, yeah.

[break in audio]

CY: No, this is the Durand (?), that I think they call it…Well, old Durand's dead now, so I don't know what they call it, but anyway, they called it the game farm for a while. Now, after Durand died, I don't know even if it's still an operation or not. They had a diving elk and a diving buffalo. They'd take them up in an elevator and get them up so high. They had this reservoir right under there, and then they would drop a platform that they were standing on and kind of shoot them out into the water and they'd just leap out into space. That's what it amounted to. [laughs]

EK: For a show.

CY: For a show, yeah. Just for a show. He bought…Along with those elk. He got about 25, 30 buffalo and started a heard of their own. Same with the deer—he got a lot of deer over there. They really had a lot of animals all right.

EK: You talk about this elk round-up—getting back to that—just how did that proceed?

CY: Well, we went out there about like you do after the buffalo.

EK: What did you have for corrals at that time? That would have been the first time you worked—

CY: The elk corral right on top of the mountain. That's where we corralled them.

EK: What we call the elk pen?

CY: The first big pen that you come into on top. Where your wing comes up from Elk Creek.

EK: Yeah, that's what we call the elk pens now.

CY: We'd corral them right there.

EK: You had the High Point?

CY: There was no fences at that time. See, we just had this one wing running out the top of the ridge to the first gate east and down the Elk Creek to where the Elk Creek fence takes off and goes down Elk Creek.

EK: The wing that runs back on the south side of—

CY: That wasn't there then. It was just the two wings. We had to work them around in the head of Elk Creek until we got them so that when they would come out of those last two patches of timber above it, they were headed towards the corrals. Then they were riders a-peeping over the hill all the way around there, so that after the elk would—the bulk of them would pass one rider—then he would come out and fall in behind. That would keep on until you got them in the corrals. We almost got the whole herd the first drive we made, if one guy would've stayed where he belonged, but he come a-riding out over the hill, or looking around to see where the elk were. Of course, he rode right into them, and they just spooked them and they just went every direction then. We got a few, but—

EK: That's on that blind hill there where it's real round hill, and you can't see very far.

CY: Yes, that's right.

EK: That's probably why it happened.

CY: That's why it happened.

EK: That's what happened to me the first time I rode on an elk ride in here. That's the first time I went to work here [unintelligible]. Remember up there? We were trying to round up some elk at High Point, and Grover sat down there in the brush with me. I was riding old Ike, and he had that big old brown plow horse.

CY: Yeah, I think I remember [unintelligible].

EK: You, and—I don't know—I suppose you and Grant and May [Babe May] brought them over top there and got them just north of the tower.

CY: Well, that part of it was all right, except you got to have enough riders to kind of beat that brush. Lots of times they'd go clear into the head of Elk Creek or go on across Elk Pass, when you'd spook them out of the agency country here. They'd go down and up Trisky and sometimes even around that Trisky and the Turkey Woman and around. But if you kept following them around and keep them on the north side, lots of times they'd come around and never go through the timber. But you come right on around above the Six Gates and up in there, then we caught more elk on that side than we ever caught from the Elk Creek side.

EK: You had all the lane yet, clear to the slaughterhouse. That was in there yet, at that time?

CY: Yes, the lane, we just got that done, but we didn't try to corral anything north of the Six Gates. We always tried to—

EK: But you did use Six Gates?

CY: What?

EK: You did use the bottom of Six Gates, though, didn't you?

CY: Down in the pocket.

EK: Yes, in the pocket.

CY: Pocket, then up at the edge of the timber where the upper aluminum gate is, but the bulk of them, we always caught them on the top up there. Somebody had to be on the ball and get in there and close the gates going out south, or they'd just go in one gate and out the other,

which they did once in a while, because lots of times you didn't know where you're going to get in there with him and the guy on top, he had to be right on the ball to get in there and close that.

EK: What shape were those elk in at that time?

CY: They were good as they are now.

EK: Did you catch a lot of deer at the same time usually? Or did they usually break out of it?

CY: Not too many. Not too many. They usually would separate.

EK: Were the buffalo any problem?

CY: At times, yeah, they did interfere all right. Sometimes, one or two, or three or four, or maybe a dozen, would go in with a bunch of elk. Then you'd just have to work around until you got them separated from the elk. Then you'd get them on down and spook them out again.

GY: I want to let you know that this is my bookmark.

JK: [unintelligible]

CY: They didn't cause too much trouble, because you could usually bypass them.

EK: About how many men was on the first one that you remember, would you say?

CY: On the drive?

EK: Ten?

CY: About ten. Ten could work there after you got to working together and knew what you were doing. Ten could do better than 50.

EK: That's the same way it is right now.

GY: Oh, you got the tape thing going?

EK: Sure.

GY: What in the world are we doing over here?

EK: It don't hurt anything. It don't make any difference.

CY: Shut it off, and then we can start it again.

[break in audio]

CY: [papers rustle] Too bad, I mean, she thought a lot of that thing, too.

EK: Well, you know, I said she was going to give it to Cordie (?). That was the thing that was—

Well, let's see, if we've got this figure figured out right, possibly that house that was moved out of here that Harold Stite (?) got, sat about where it was, only it faced straight east. And the cow barn sits—

CY: No, no, wait a minute. Yeah, it originally faced straight east. Then they overhauled it, they put a porch on the south side of it and made a door there, so it first faced east and then, later, south.

EK: Then, the old cow barn sits—

CY: —right exactly where the office is.

EK: Right where the office is, and there was a little water tower that sits where the present well-house is. That was about, if I remember right, that was about 20, 25 feet high. Wasn't it?

CY: Yeah.

EK: It had a tank in the top—

CY: Had a 500 gallon tank in the top. We had a shallow well then. We pumped water. That's how come we had the tower up there, was on account of the—

EK: Then right between that building, which is the present day well-house, in the barn in—which we call a cow barn now—at that time was a horse barn. There was a little building that they used as an office. Is that right?

CY: Yeah.

EK: How big was it?

CY: Well, it had two rooms in it. It was as long as from here to over there. It was probably—

EK: It was probably 30 [feet] then.

CY: —probably 10 feet wide and 24 long.

EK: Ten by thirty-four about.

CY: Twenty.

EK: Twenty-four you mean?

CY: About 24 long, and probably ten wide.

EK: That's the building that burned?

CY: That's the building that burned.

EK: All the early-day records were lost in?

CY: Yes, everything up until 1930 was lost.

EK: Just how'd that come about while we're talking about it? Do you remember anything about it, or what—

CY: Well, we were all gone, but Rose, superintendent's two kids were there. He took a party out on the range, and I'd gone to a dance in Dixon.

EK: It was in the night then, in other words?

CY: Yeah, it happened at night, and his kids discovered the fire. When they discovered it, they started to run out to…well, they didn't know what to run out for. They just run out and thought they might throw a bucket of water on it or something, but it was about that time we had in a couple of cases of army ammunition in there and that started going off then. The kids run back and crawled under the bed in the house. [laughs] Nobody showed up then to help put it out. There was no fire prevention of any kind at that time.

[End of Interview]