

HISTORY OF THE INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

The interviewee has given information to be used in connection with the history of the Intermountain Region, United States Forest Service. The purpose of this project is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of the interview has been made by the interviewer. An original verbatim typescript of the tape will then be made. The tape of the interview and the original verbatim typescript will then be filed in the historical records of the Intermountain Region, currently at Ogden, Utah. These materials will be made available for purposes of research to qualified scholars and for use in courses, scholarly publications, and other related purposes.

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I, James L. Sammons, have read the above
(Interviewee, please print name)

and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I knowingly and voluntarily permit the United States Forest Service and others researching the history of the Forest Service, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to the Intermountain Region, United States Forest Service, Ogden, Utah.

James L. Sammons
Interviewee (signature)

April 4, 1984
Date

Thomas J. Alexander
Interviewer (signature)

Sammons

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INTERVIEWEE: James L. Sammons

INTERVIEWER: Thomas G. Alexander

SUBJECT: Challis National Forest

DATE: April 4, 1984

Today is April 4, 1984. This is an interview with James L. Sammons at the Forest Supervisor's office in Challis, Idaho.

TA: Mr. Sammons why don't you tell me about your experience coming back here with the CCC's and then about how you became involved in the Forest Service.

JS: To start from the beginning I enrolled in the CCC's back in January of 1935 in Kentucky, and I was sent to Camp Hardinsburg, Kentucky. Most of the work there station on private land and planting trees and erosion control and stuff like that. I was there from January to September. They were forming two companies at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, and they needed an additional 25 people for each company to fill out the company. The company commander came around and asked for volunteers and I think the whole camp volunteered.

I volunteered to go West, we didn't care where. We left that camp and went to Ft. Knox and we were assigned to this company, which is already formed, the 2511th. They put us on trains and headed us out West. We arrived in Pocatello stayed over

night there and then the next morning, being a Sunday, they brought us up to Mackay--at that time the railroad was still running up there. We got in there, sometime say nine or ten o'clock in the morning. The day before they'd had the Mackay barbecue, and I think they were still celebrating because they all came down the train and gave us a royal welcome! We got a real welcome by getting into Macky in the morning, it was September the 15th, 1935.

Then we got off the train, and I said "Where do we go from here?" "Oh, this is it for the railroad--it's sixty-five miles back up in the hills." So they loaded us on trucks and headed us up the Challis and White Valley. The camp had already been established, in those days they had a camp run by what they call LEM, Locally Enlisted Men. They had the camp all ready, and all set up and the basic overhead was already there. We pulled in to Challis and on out to the camp and set up that day.

I was pretty handy at carpenter tools and they put me to work finishing the details on the camp. In about two weeks the Forest come along and they wanted a bunch of guys to go back and help the local carpenter on the lookout--that's what they call Fly Peak. I'd only been here two weeks, a green Kentucky kid, and shipped us on a truck, and sent us clear back to Fly Peak--it's about 30 to 35 miles back in the hills. The next three or four weeks we lived out at Mahoney creek and helped the carpenter, Bill Huntington, build the Fly Peak Lookout. I stayed with him the last two weeks and came back to White Valley Camp F-85 the last part of October 1935.

After this project was over I came back to Camp and I contacted the

Educational Advisor, a person who was hired to look after the educational needs of the CCC enrollees.

TA: Yeah...

JS: He needed an assistant about that time. I graduated from high school, which was something in those days, and I became his assistant at that time. I stayed with him quite awhile, and eventually I worked myself up to First Sergeant in the CCC camp. Later on, there was an opening came up as a forest clerk in the Forest Service. So I switched over, and the superintendent's name was Howard Tingle--I still correspond with him. He needed a forest clerk, so I joined him as a forest clerk, and from there till about 1938.

There was an opportunity came up to go out in the field as a leader, which was an increase in pay--leaders in those days got an extra twenty dollars over the twenty-five. I went out and took on a crew there. The consequence of that led to a recommendation as a foreman in the Forest Service. They had inspector came out of Ogden and he recommended me for this--they called them "junior foreman" at the time, and made the magnificent sum of a hundred dollars a month, government was paying us in those days.

I got an appointment as a foreman in the CCC camps in January in 1939. So then from January 1939 till, well all through '39, '40 and '41, we would winter at White Valley and then move our camps up to Bonanza for the summer work, then to go back to White Valley for the winter. I got transferred one winter, I spent down to Mackay as a foreman. Then we moved from Bonanza down to Indianola on the Salmon for

winter work. That would of been the winter of '40 and '41, and then in '41 we moved back up to Bonanza. Then our camp was shipped from there somewhere over 'round, I don't know, Yellowstone Park or somewhere in 1941, near Victor, Idaho..

TA: Well what kind of work were you doing...?

JS: I was engaged mostly in recreation work. I was a young member of the Forest, and during the summer we were on call 24-hours a day, and they kept us on the type of work and close by--we were in radio contact all the time. I dealt with a lot of early-day campgrounds, and at that time there was a lot of sheep being grazed on the Challis up in the Stanley Basin, the Clayton area. We built a lot of sheep corrals--did you ever see these corrals when they bring the herd in and separate the lambs from the ewes? I built several of those for the ranger up there on the Clayton District. The Ranger's name was Art Cusick, this was duringg 1939, 1940, 1941.

Then I built campgrounds on the river there in those days. In the winter we'd come out to White Valley and we'd do timber stand work, and we would salvage poles, posts and telephone poles.

TA: Was this timber stand improvement work?

JS: Timber stand improvement work, yes...and that included cutting and taking out salvagable poles and posts. There was a post-treatment plant out at White Valley that we treated our own fence posts and telephone poles. We were building a lot of fence and a lot of telephone lines.

In the latter part of about '40, '41, I got into telephone work and I did quite a little bit of telephone construction and maintainance. I had a crew down on the Salmon Forest and we put up several miles of telephone line.

TA: Typically when you built a campground, what kinds of facilities would you put in it?

JS: We were putting in just the regular pit type toilets, built barriers: rock barriers, log barriers; and put up tables, and put in, old-style stoves--we had the old-style stoves that we put in, and build the rocks mounds and put stoves, tables and toilets, and do the barrier work and build the roads. We'd have an architect come up and lay it out for us, and we called 'em "landscape architects".

TA: Did you put in water systems there?

JS: Yes, complete water systems where the systems were available. And in some cases we put in pumps.

TA: Did you ever put in sewage systems, or were these open-vault...?

JS: Open-vault toilets. In later years, when I came back here, why we went to the vault-system where we'd pump it out--but those days you just dug a hole directly into the ground, and let nature take care of it.

TA: Just regular privies?

JS: Right.

TA: Yeah, go ahead.

JS: Well after they decided to move the camps off of the Forest, that meant the overhead couldn't go along. They'd furnish their own over there, I don't remember exactly where it went. So the Forest, this would have been about August, and the Forest provided us enough work to keep us busy till about October 1941. Then my boss went up to Seattle. At that time the aircraft business was going, just before the war, and he went up there to go to work. I told him, I said "Well, if you go on up and you get a place to stay, I'll come up and move up there later." So eventually he did, and he got him a job, and so sent for me. I moved the family and I went up there and worked for Boeing, in the aircraft factory from about late fall till about somewhere in May 1942.

I was working in Seattle when the war started--in fact I had an amusing incident. That Sunday morning I had taken it on myself to go down to Ft. Lewis and visit some of the boys who had volunteered and were stationed at Ft. Lewis, and Bill Ebberts was one of them.

TA: This was on December 7th...?

JS: On December the 7th, 1941. And here I was stuck out in the middle of Ft. Lewis when they got the news about Pearl Harbor, and I liked to never got out of the place--I'm telling you, to be out in the middle of the Fort in wartime conditions! So I got a real start with December the 7th.

I put up with pretty dull, assembly-line work. We were building B-17's out of Boeing--most of 'em were for Britain at that time--well later on we started building our own. Then I took it as much as I could and on about May 13 I went down and enlisted in the Marine Corps. And I put my four years in the Marine Corps.

When I joined the Marine Corps I was sent to San Diego, Cal. Marine training base where I took my boot training. Then I was assigned to go to a communication school there in San Diego later to Quantico, Va., later to Camp LeJeune, N.C. After the schools, I was assigned to the H & S Batter 1st Battalion, 13th Marines, the Fifth Marine Division. We finished our training in California and was shipped to our base on the Big Island off Hawaii where we took some more training. On Feb. 19, 1945, our Division participated in the assault of the Japanese Island of Iwo Jima which resulted in its capture some six weeks later. I was down at the bottom of Mt. Suribachi when the famous flag raising picture was taken. The picture taken turned out to be the most famous picture of World War II.

TA: You were?

JS: After the war I finished my hitch. Before I had gotten out I'd written back here to the Forest, and the Forest was very glad to have me back here. I didn't really have any standing as to leave a job and come back to it.

They were just tickled to death. Supervisor E. E. McKee says he would just love to have me with my fire experience--I chased fires all over this forest, and they offered me the dispatcher's job here. And gosh, that just tickled me to death. I came right back in 1946.

I was dispatcher, and I stayed with that job for, oh, let me see, for about eleven years I was dispatcher. Then it was getting to where my medical bills was about equalling my salary, so I decided it wasn't worth it--it was a high-pressured job, you know what a dispatcher's job is. This fire control unit back here knows what it's all about. So I put up with that about as much as I could, and I decided there was better ways of doing things.

I give 'em notice ahead of time, and then I went from that job and I went into recreation again. They gave me a job heading up the recreation program. And in those days--no wait a minute, let me back up here--I left the dispatcher's job and then went into--remember they had a program on of checking mining claims...

TA: Oh yeah, that was after the Multiple Use Mining Act...

JS: Right. I inherited that job. And of course that was the best job I ever had in the Forest Service. Heck, they give me this job and laid it out for me in geographic areas, took all this--used airplanes and helicopters and, boy that was a job...terminated the job oh at the end of two and a half years, why we wound it up. Then they offered me the job as recreation foreman.

At that time we were getting a lot of money for recreation.

TA: So that would have been during the Operation Outdoors...

JS: Right, and started about '59. I took over the recreation program. Then I

stayed with that till, oh clear up till--I got ready to retire--I stayed with that twelve or thirteen years, what ever came down on the forest I had a hand in doing or redoing. Some of the districts, we had part of theirs, but I had a hand in, we would build the materials here in the winter, prefab everything, and then go out-- I'd average a crew from one guy up to about ten. When we had a lot of money we had a big crew--so from about '59 up to about '72 I headed the recreation program here and built all the campgrounds up and down the river, and all over the forest.

In the summertime, of course we'd do our share of firefighting and whatever else was necessary. Then in the winter why we had our own shop down here and prefab everything, and have it all ready for the next summer.

TA: Why don't we spend a little time on each of these three functions--that is as fire dispatcher, the work on the mining claims and recreation. Tell me, in each case, essentially what your duties were and how the thing worked out...

JS: I was dispatcher here in the forest, and dispatcher, as you know, has control of locating the fires and getting information to the right people. And when they happen, if something happens big, why his duties to initiate the initial, control the functions and handling supplies, and handling all the radio work and see that the area is furnished with all the necessary equipment crew, tools. And I'd handle the transportation of the firefighters to and from the fires, and usually, on the average, I'd have at least two more people under me that worked with me...

But a little later on, after I'd went in to the mining business, I still had to fight the fires. In the mining business the program was to, they passed the...what

you'd call this...?

TA: The Multiple Use Mining Act.

JS: The Multiple Use Mining Act--and it gave all the present holders of mining claims--it gave them the right to file and reclaim the surface rights. They had done away with surface rights on the mining claim. In other words, when you filed a mining claim under the new act you didn't acquire the surface rights to the timber unless you needed it in your mining. So our goal was to locate all these peoples' claims as much as we could, and the notify them by register letter that they had the right, within a certain amount of time, to file and claim these surface rights if they so desired. That was a most interesting type of work, and that it involved most of the summer of '59, '60--about two and a half years.

And of course that was a one-time deal, and when we got through with that program--it had a definite end to it. We tried to locate all the definite claims we could get and all the people we could notify, and after that, why it was up the claim holders themselves.

TA: Did you do research in the various county courthouses to find...

JS: Now most of that--I was quite lucky--there had been another feller, he later was ranger here. That work had already been done for me before I took over. I came in and took over from another guy--they brought a young kid in here from Boston, he stayed about six months. But the prior work had already been done. And I picked it up where it was already handed to me on a silver platter, and the prior research had

been done for the forest, and I picked it up as an ongoing program, and run it on through.

TA: So what you did then was to go out and locate the people...

JS: Right. I'd go out--they'd laid it out in geographic areas for me, they'd say, you take this one here, and of course we had to work with the seasons. I'd go out actually on the ground, research it, check the, oh, talk to old-timers, anybody that knew anything about the country and, oh, there was all kinds of, many ways that you'd find to locate these different claims. And if you actually did it right on the ground--we'd make aerial surveys before, and so on to cover the area that way.

I think they were quite well satisfied with it, that we'd gotten in--we'd write up a legal description, and that was the hardest part, getting them past the lawyers in Ogden and Washington. It had to be so precise--the boundaries had to be exactly like it was on the map. And to sit down and they'd run into a little mistake and back it would come to you. We were talking legal terms then, they'd check it over very thoroughly in Ogden, and if they approved it they'd sent it on up to Washington, and sometimes it would take quite a while to get one through! So that was a most interesting program, in fact I enjoyed that very much. I got to see an awful lot of the forest I'd always wanted to see. I'd been dispatcher eleven years, made it so much easier for me to get out and identify the grounds with what I wanted to know.

TA: What percentage of the claims on the forest, in your experience, or approximately, were able to retain surface rights?

JS: I can't hardly say...I quit the program at the final end of it, so I couldn't tell you any percentages because they were coming in very slow, and Norm Hack was in charge of it at the time, and I never did check with him to see if anybody even came...but while I was working there I can't remember anyone, in the given amount of time, coming in and making claims of the surface rights. Most of them at that time were old and inactive, and most of them didn't care, about the surface rights. And a big share of them, there was nothing much there to obtain in the first place.

TA: They just let the surface rights lapse...

JS: They let it lapse, and that of course, you know that gave the authority to the Forest Service to use whatever it uses on there. But one little thing in it that satisfied most of them--if there was timber on there and the Forest Service sold it, and that later on that miner needed timber, they had to furnish him a like amount of timber for his mining business. But most of the claims that we were doing, the surface rights didn't amount to all that much.

TA: I know on some forests they've found places where mining claims have been made where there really wasn't an intent to do mining, some people wanted...did you find that...

JS: In fact up at Stanley Lake, the Catholic Church up there was going to build a boys camp on a mining claim. We found that all over, yes--mining claims that had summer cabins on them and no intention of any mining. There was one incident up the

river here, there was a mining claim there, and this guy had been living on it for years and years; and I'd go with a mining inspector, and he says where's test hole at? And he says down at the bottom of my well. But it was, there was a hole down there in the ground, and it met with specifications! So what more could the guy say?

TA: Did they ever go to patent--have they ever gone to patent?

JS: Well, they overcome most of them by giving them, a what do you call it--a leasing permit, or yearly, or what do you call that...

TA: Special Use Permit?

JS: Special Use Permit, yes! He could pay this annual fee, and use it as Special Use Permit. And they overcame those kind of cases--that was the easy way out. He'd pay his yearly fee, whatever the Special Use Permit charged for that. That covered that situation pretty thoroughly that way.

TA: Were there any people who were evicted?

JS: Not while I was in the program. Most of them were pretty cooperative. The Challis has never had any summer home areas, so that eased our burden here and considerable, like a lot of other forests. We didn't have an established home area.

TA: In a sense what you were doing was creating summer home areas, though...

JS: Eventually that's what it amounted to, right? And for these boys, heck they got it for a small sum of what, \$25 for a year permit or something like that. Set right there, and it made it legal for him and it go the Forest off of the hook to, by making this as--well, it made it legal for both parties, in other words.

TA: And you continued that for about two years?

JS: About two and a half years. Then in about 1960 I took over the recreation program.

TA: Had there been much work done on recreation size, campgrounds or anything since the CCC days by the time you took over?

JS: Practically none. The year before the program had started--a year before I took over, and they started getting the money. And they had done some work at Stanly Lake. We went in and we did what the CCC's had done.

TA: So in a sense you were redoing work that had been done before.

JS: We went right back on campgrounds I'd worked on that I did in 1939's and 41's, and we did some of the same campgrounds. In fact I redid quite a few of them. The work that was there is what I had done several years before.!

TA: What kind of shape were those recreation facilities in...?

JS: Very poor shape. Most of the water systems were broken or non-existent. Nearly all the grills or stoves were rusted or gone. The majority of the tables were either destroyed or broken down, and you might say in very sad shape, and they really needed redoing. A big lot of the tables--we had a sawmill out here at White Valley CCC Camp--and we sawed the logs and made the tables out of split-half logs. You might remember seeing some of the old-style tables.

But it had been neglected so long that it--that's why we went in. We would go in and do a complete renovation. The chief architect would come up and he would redraw it, and expand...we incorporated what we had there and expanded, considerable.

TA: In what ways were the campgrounds different in this project that you were undertaking after 1960, than the ones you did in the...

JS: The big improvement was the design of the tables, and we went to vault-type toilets, where they had to be pumped out. We went to pumps and we improved the water system. If we had a water system, we had to put in chlorination--before it was just take what you got. Tables were vastly improved. We had to improve the wooden tables, and then they came up with a redesign of a concrete, solid tables--and when they were put in they would stay in the same spots--that was a big improvement. If you made a camp, well it stayed right where it was.

New type of grill and box for the fireplaces with considerable improvement over the old styles. And most of the barriers--oh, we did some log work--but the biggest majority of our barriers up in this country were rock because we have lots of them.

That's the major improvements.

We had a good program and a good shop where we made all of our signs in the winter time. When the first charge areas were started, I made all the numbered posts and installed the collection boxes. That was a big change over the free use as before.

TA: Did that create any problems for you?

JS: Not for us, it did for the people who were using it. Our biggest problem there was quite a bit of vandalism--the first collection boxes we put out weren't very strong, so they'd get kicked over about two or three times during the summer. It didn't create any problem--maybe a little more work when we put the campground in place. But then they eventually overcome that with a practically full-proof system that they use nowadays, which I understand works pretty good.

TA: For collecting the campground fees.

JS: The money from the campers was deposited in the new type of collection boxes, and they worked very well.

TA: Was there any policing--checking up on the people and that sort of thing...

JS: Oh yes, they had a patrolman that made periodic visits to the campgrounds and check for compliants and talk to the people, the ranger district handled that.

They'd have a regular man--every district had one--and we'd call him a policeman.

He had the authority to cite violations, but no authority to arrest. He could write up a citation which would mean an automatic appearance before a United States magistrate.

TA: fine?

JS: You had to see a regular magistrate--but he had that authority to assess fines. Oh, the biggest problem up there was the motorbikes, motorcycles.

TA: What kind of problems did you have with them?

JS: The people were supposed to use them only in and out of the camp, to come and go. But they'd get in the camp at 10:00 at night get on their old motorbikes and raise kane, and act up and chew up your campground and cut across from one to another, and things like that--mostly young folks. We would be working to redo a campground we had to work right during the season, or the very end of the season. Of course setting out there with a U.S.F.S. truck, why all the complaints came to you. We heard 'em first.

But the biggest problem is the motorbikes. Of course the patrolman he'd maybe hit it, oh, once or twice or week or something like--and of course some of the folks were really reluctant about telling on somebody else. Of course it didn't bother me any, working there. I got to where I would just hand them out the literature and "here's the regulations, now it's up to you, follow them!" That's as far as I would let it go, because I was up there to do improvement work, not to police the campground.

TA: Did you find much destruction in other areas by motorbikes, or 4-wheel drives...

JS: Not at that time. That's been through the period of about '60 to '72 or 3--oh there was some, sure, on the trails, and cutting across--but it was just getting into the program good then--that was the period they began developing 'em--about '60 up to '71, '72.

TA: But by the time you left, you retired in...

JS: In '73, yes.

TA: There really wasn't a big problem with that.

JS: It wasn't all that big. We had our small problems on the trails and so on. But it has grown tremendously since that time.

TA: Did you do any trail work or was it all campground work that you were doing.

JS: Oh, very little trail work, if any. Most of ours concentrated right there inside the campground boundaries. I can't say that I was ever really on a trail job--I did see some work when I was dispatcher I would go out on one of the off-season jobs and do some trail work then--but as such, with the crew, no. We concentrated on it getting it done, getting it finished--we'd start right in--the road crew would come in and we'd work in conjunction with them. They'd come in and

build the roads, and then we would come in behind them and put in the facilities.

We had a very interesting deal up at Highway 21 that goes from Stanley over to Lowman. The ranger up there at that time he told them that the road crew, the contract should include making the campgrounds--and told him he couldn't do it. So he got busy and approached about half a dozen other states, and they said sure, we contract that all the time. If it's in conjunction to the highway, if it's a lead-off--they said sure, and you've got it written into the contract, so when the contractor came through he made the campground roads, surfaced it, and furnished us some money to put the fixtures in.

We came along and installed the fixtures on a campground that was already built. Everything between, say Stanley and Lowman that's on the forest, that's how we got that done up there.

TA: Was that road surfaced during the time...?

JS: Absolutely, yes. It was surfaced and they surfaced our campgrounds at the same time.

TA: What year was that, that that road was surfaced, do you remember?

JS: Boy, I'm not sure.

TA: Would it have been the late sixties?

JS: I'd say between '69 and '72, or something in that frame; when we built all the campgrounds, we put all the fixtures in along about that period--'71, '72, along that time frame.

TA: When you were working as a fire dispatcher during the fire season, were you on duty 24 hours a day?

JS: No, we had very definite hours. We would split the shift, and we would try to get coverage say from six in the morning to six at night there in the heavy weather--what we call burning period. So, no...you were on call 24 hours a day, but not on duty. We didn't keep 24-hour watch here. Now during a storm and lightning we'd have coverage then. Very rarely, in fact I can't remember but more than once or twice. With a big bust you might say, a lot of you call a bust, why we would man 24 hours a day.

TA: Right when you had a big fire going?

JS: Right, we would have to man 24 hours a day, of course. But, now, on the regular schedule we had definite hours, say coverage from 6:00 in the morning till say 6:00 in the evening, and then what extra time we did, whatever the occasion required. Some of the bigger forests, they might man 24 hours a day. Now the people at Ogden in fire control centers would man 24 hours a day, but we weren't required to.

TA: Now your forest here, the Challis, wasn't really a big heavy fire forest...?

JS: No, we were down near the bottom of Boise Payette and Salmon, and there was others over there ahead of us. We were down in the lower bottom part of it, and our biggest problem was you'd have three very poor years, and then all of a sudden--whammo, we'd have one hell of a big one. We were so unpredictable, but we were down in the lower part.

TA: Were most of your fires then caused by lightening strikes?

JS: The biggest share, yes...I'd say about probably 80% anyway, lightening. We got such high rugged country back there. When I was a dispatcher I saw several the firsts. I saw the first smoke jumpers used, lived through that--and the first helicopter we ever had on the forest, and we could hardly fly over Morgan creek, which is only about 7,000 feet.

TA: Well I guess there aren't any lookouts on the forest now?

JS: I believe they have two or three--principally, mostly for communication benefit, I think. Some of our country is hard to cover with direct links. But I believe there are few lookouts on the Forest.

TA: When did those smoke jumpers first begin working on this forest?

JS: Well they were organized in 1939 out in Missoula, Montana. I was offered the job of being in the first group to be smoke jumpers but I wanted to keep my feet on the ground so I declined the offer.

TA: Yeah, but you said you were here when the smoke jumpers were used...

JS: I was a foreman running a crew in '39...

TA: Oh, I see, okay. I thought you meant that they were used then.

JS: No, I was here when they first jumped in the Forest.

TA: What about the helicopters, when did start using those?

JS: Well Merle Markle was here then, and it was before 1955...he died in 1956...I'd say in the early fifties, somewhere in the early fifties our first helicopter...

TA: What about tanker-drops, did you use those?

JS: Yes, as soon as they developed that program, we used it very extensively. In fact one time we had a refill station here at Challis in Challis airport. We mixed it and filled the tankers here for one or two seasons.

TA: When was that that they started using tankers here on this forest?

JS: They were used when I came back here in '46, and shortly after we started using them.

TA: So it was shortly after the second world war...

JS: Yes, when all those planes became available, and they were later converted to tankers--especially the old torpedo bombers that could carry several hundred gallons.

TA: By the time you left that job in '57 were they already beginning to use helicopters to take people into fires?

JS: The first use of helicopters we used in the early fifties was just for scouting. When I came back and started in '56, no '46, we started into the program a little later--we didn't start till after '46 the helicopter by having heliattack crews. The middle fifties it really got going good to have heliattack crews, and we've had one stationed here--Lord only knows, I don't know how many years now that we've had one.

TA: At the Challis Airport?

JS: Here the Forest has one stationed here.

TA: Do you have a heliattack crew stationed here during fire season?

JS: Yes, the program of Heliattack has been here for several years.

TA: I assume that those helicopters are under contract...

JS: That's right. They hire 'em for so many hours for the season, that's the

only way they'll work, and then their paid--I think, a rate if they exceed those hours, or something like that. They work at a certain set rate, and then the boys are stationed here--I don't know, I think they've expanded it now to where they'll have some extra stationed off over here somewhere, and around the country.

TA: Well, are there any other things I ought to know about your career here on this forest?

JS: Well, things that might have happened, I don't know. I was lucky enough to work through the period of the CCC's, clear through to see all these different developments. I was here, I think, when one of the first consolidation in Region 4 happened. There used to be a Lemhi Forest around Mackay, and in 1938 they combined the Challis and the Lemhi Forest and made it all in the Challis. I think that was one of the first, if not the first, consolidation in all of Region 4. Of course since that time, we went from what, something like 25, 28 or 30 down to about, I don't know where...

TA: There's sixteen forests now.

JS: Sixteen now? We used to have upwards of close to 30 or something like that? Since that time I fought fire oh, all over the Salmon and the Boise and the Payette; and I got sent to California once to fill in with the CCC crews. Sometimes our season here would end early, then the other boys would go down to California--they burn till Christmas down there. So sometimes they'd ship our people off down there to help those folks out.

It's been a very rewarding career for me, by golly. And I married a local girl here, and had three daughters, and they were all raised and went to school here. All are close by--two of them live in Idaho Falls and one of them in Boise-- I got a daughter that teaches in Borah High School over there, her husband is a pharmacist.

I haven't regretted a minute of it. In fact the local paper, he wrote a article--we call it "Profile", like a story about you, and I wish I would have brought a copy of it down. It pretty much parallels my history about going West. I got picked to go West, and I didn't hesitate a minute about it. It's been very rewarding...so I haven't regretted a minute of it out here. Of course it separated me from my own family back East. I had six brothers and three sisters, and I wouldn't have made that choice if...they realized that too, that you gotta go your own separate way, you know in this life.

And I've had the greatest experience with working from the old-timers right on through up to the modern forest. That covers quite a long span, from about '35 till now.

I served under such oldtimers as Richard H. Rutledge, Clarence N. Woods, William B. Rice, Chester J. Olsen, Floyd Iverson Vern Hamre--all Regional Foresters.

E. E. McKee, Andy Bunch, Jack Dienma, Wesley Carlson, Richard Benjamin, also Floyd Godden--Forest Supervisors. I served and worked with dozens of rangers and other people on the Forest and from the Regional Headquarters. Most, if not all, have since retired and a good many have died. Those years with those kind of

people had to be the best years of my life.

TA: Yeah, that sure does.

JS: And I've seen it all. I came down and helped them with their 75th celebration last year. I brought a trunk full of stuff and helped them with their souvenirs and things, and I helped them out considerably.

TA: Why don't we take a look at that stuff...Thank you for the interview, and I'll turn this off.