

Forest Salmon

INTERVIEWER: When did you first come in there?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: We moved to a place near Forney in 1907. We lived at the mouth of Blackbird and at the mouth of Naples Creek before then... I was born in '97, up here where Herb Aldous lives in that old log house. My brother and I were born in that log house.

SALMON NATIONAL FOREST HISTORY

WAYNE O'CONNOR INTERVIEW

OCTOBER 23, 1969

Wayne O'Connor is a native of Salmon, born in 1897. He was one of twelve children born to Frank and Belle O'Connor, who had come from Iowa in the 1890s. The family moved to the Forney area on Panther Creek in 1907. Wayne worked for the Salmon National Forest for many years, in many capacities: roads, airstrips, trails, lookout, firefighting, and fire dispatcher. With his many years in the Panther Creek, Yellowjacket, Meyers Cove, and Middle Fork areas, he is a source of much local history of that back-country area.

This interview took place in Salmon, Idaho, at the home of Wayne and Velma O'Connor. Interviewers are Don Ian Smith and Elizabeth M. Smith.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes. My father helped him put up those log buildings. Worked there one whole summer. Then they moved to the south of Blackbird. Then about 1903, or close, my father freighted up to the old Blackbird Camp, until 1905. Then they discontinued the mail route. In the fall of 1905 we moved to Salmon. Us kids went to school here in Salmon the year of 1905-07. About the 25 of June, 1907, we moved to Forney and reached. My father drove the mail to the old Yellowjacket, Meyers Cove, and on into Yellowjacket. (In 1911 he got killed -- a horse bucked him off. My brother took over the mail route. After he [my father] died, my mother finished proving up the homestead....)

INTERVIEWER: We are glad to have that straight. What we had heard sounded like the family had come right from Iowa into that back country.

VELMA O'CONNOR: He came into the country with the railroad.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: My father and mother came up through Wyoming, and he worked on the railroad -- it was building up

INTERVIEWER: When did you first come in there?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: We moved to a place near Forney in 1907. We lived at the mouth of Blackbird and at the mouth of Napias Creek before then....I was born in '97, up here where Herb Aldous lives in that old log house. My brother and I were born in that log house.

INTERVIEWER: That house used to be the court house, with a dance hall upstairs?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes, at the mouth of Geertson Creek. I was born there in '97, and my brother Tom was born there in '99. The family lived there just after they came in from Iowa, about '95 or '96. My father drove freight team from Red Rock [Montana], to Salmon, for about six months. Then he worked with the Dunlap boys...they were placer mining, up here on Geertson Creek. We lived in that house. I guess Geertson built it.

INTERVIEWER: It is supposed to be just about the oldest house in this area.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: It is. Then about 1900, or 1901, my father moved over to the mouth of Napias Creek. Mr. Leacock's place.

INTERVIEWER: I know where the old Leacock stage station was.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes. My father helped him put up those log buildings. Worked there one whole summer. Then they moved to the mouth of Blackbird. Then about 1903, or close, my father freighted up to the old Blackbird Camp, until 1906. Then they discontinued the mail route. In the fall of 1906 we moved to Salmon. Us kids went to school here in Salmon the year of 1906-07. About the 25 of June, 1907, we moved to Forney and ranched. My father drove the mail to the old Singiser mine, Meyers Cove, and on into Yellowjacket. [In 1912] he got killed --a horse bucked him off. My brother took over the mail route. After he [my father] died, my mother finished proving up the homestead....

INTERVIEWER: We are glad to have that straight. What we had heard sounded like the family had come right from Iowa into that back country.

VELMA O'CONNOR: He came into the country with the railroad.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: My father and mother came up through Wyoming, and he worked on the railroad, --it was building up

through Wyoming. When the railroad work was through, my dad and my Uncle Tom came into Salmon together. My Uncle Tom didn't stay here very long. He went over to Montana, to Philipsburg, built a hotel and ran it until he died.... My mother was postmaster [at Forney] for 38 years.

INTERVIEWER: When did she become postmaster, do you remember?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I can get pretty close to it. It was just before World War I started. The post office was right above our place, the adjoining ranch above. Milk Merritt had it. He wasn't the original owner. A fellow named Ed Treloar had it. He had a little store and saloon when we moved over there, in 1907.

INTERVIEWER: Did they call him Milk or Milt?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Milc. His name was Malcomb. Milc Benjamin Merritt. Malcomb Benjamin Merritt was his right name. He got killed there later, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Apparently somebody shot him....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: He was a character. He was a quarter-breed nigger. A little, short, heavy-set fellow, and just as crooked as could be. He was in horse stealing for a long time, and the government finally got after him. He and another fellow came in here --we checked him out --a fellow by the name of Ed [___?___], worked together. The first year or two he had that place over there, after he bought out this Treloar. His wife came over here from Twin Bridges, Montana. Quick as he married her he brought her in, she put up the money and they bought the place. \$1,500 to buy out the original owner, Ed Treloar. For a summer or two when this fellow moved in, you wouldn't see him very much. He stayed hid. They'd go over to the Flathead Reservation in Montana. Some morning you'd wake up, and I'd go up on the range, and there would be 30 to 40 new horses. He sold them to the cavalry. Sold a lot of horses. After he picked out the good ones, you know. They'd take them down to Mackay and sell them. Finally some government investigators came in. They were going all over the country to see who was stealing Indian horses. They set up an awful yowl about it. That stopped the horse stealing. He kept a bunch of about 30 that summer, hid out, way back in the hills, back of our ranch, about 15 miles. Over toward the Yellowjacket where there wasn't anybody. He rounded them up after the government men left that summer. His partner left with them and he never did come back. He started over to the Middle Fork and toward Lewiston....

INTERVIEWER: Somebody sort of evened up the score with him, I guess.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: He'd been into so much trouble, and been up in the courts and everything, over shooting at people and stealing cattle and so on.

INTERVIEWER: Nobody felt too bad about it then?

VELMA O'CONNOR: No, they didn't, even the sheriff.

INTERVIEWER: I heard that it happened the night of Willard and Beulah Rood's wedding dance.

VELMA O'CONNOR: It seemed like everyone was accounted for.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: They were all at the schoolhouse [where the dance was]. What the deal was over, you see, was, he [Milc Merritt] had mortgaged his place to the bank. The bank was going to foreclose. This fellow from Pocatello came in, and went to the bank [to buy the mortgage]. He got gypped, in a way, because Merritt's...first wife had put up the money for the ranch. They had divorced, and she had gone back to Montana. Then he married another woman. And, when he mortgaged it, instead of putting Lucinda A. Merritt on it, which was his first wife's name, he put Martha Merritt, his second wife's name, on the mortgage. The bank found out, and couldn't foreclose the mortgage. Because it was his first wife that had put up the money.

This guy [Shankle] came in and bought the mortgage, and was going to foreclose on it, but he couldn't. He was out \$2,500. That's what we all figured out, because we all knew about the mortgage, because the bank had tried to sell it to me. I looked at it, and I told him I couldn't do nothing with it anyway. I says, "That's the wrong name on there...The first Mrs. Merritt put up the money to buy it. She'd have to sign the mortgage or anything before you could foreclose."

So this other fellow, his wife was kind of a crazy. She must have been crazy because she poisoned three husbands. She was a nice woman, though queer. The funny part of it was, this Shankle had been married before, and had some children. He had a boy, Bobby Shankle was about 18, and he had a girl 17, and the girl had come down to our place -- early mail days they had to come down a mile for their mail -- she came down the next day after the shooting when Merritt was killed. My mother got to talking to her, and asking her about the shooting, and did it scare her mother, and she

said, "Oh, my mother wasn't in the house." They could hear it up at their place --these two shots, from a shotgun you know. My mother said to her, "Where was your mother?" And the girl says, "Well, I looked out the window, and she was coming up from down at the other house...and had this shotgun in her hand."

Well, Shankles found out she'd told that, and they took her out to Pocatello that night and put her on a train clear into Texas, so the law shouldn't reach her. Everybody knew, because she figured her husband got hooked on the \$2,000. on the ranch, and they couldn't get the ranch as long as Merritt was alive.

And not only that, the sheriff, Tommy Stroud, was on the right track. Shankle had a lot of guns and ammunition there. And he found this shotgun on the floor, and they traced them right to Pocatello, where Shankle had bought the shells. They never sold that brand of shells in Lemhi County, at all. The only place you could buy them was in Pocatello. Shankle had bought all this ammunition in Pocatello and brought it in here.

INTERVIEWER: No one was ever prosecuted?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: No, the county commissioner told Stroud not to put the county to any expense. "He [Merritt] caused us enough trouble the last ten years. Just let it go." Nobody in the country was fond of Merritt. We got along with him - we had to. You had to watch him like a hawk, at every turn in the road. Any way in the world, or any chance, and he'd get you some way or another, through money, or something.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when this all happened?

VELMA O'CONNOR: About 19 and 34, I think.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: That's when Maybelle was born. [Wayne and Velma's daughter] We were married in '32. About '34, yes. Willard and Beulah were married when? 1934, that's when it was....The sheriff and his deputy Vaughn Clark came over, we were working roads for the Forest, up there, [___?] Creek, and they came over that day, investigating, wanting to know if anybody had come in, you know. Strangers, or anything....

VELMA O'CONNOR: [It was] about May the 27th, I think, because Willard and Beulah [Rood] were married in Challis the 26th. It was either the 27th or 28th they had the party. Willard was working for the Forest, so they got married in Challis and came on over to Forney....Merritt had

two potential enemies that were at the dance that could have done it.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: They had an alibi for sure. One fellow in particular, named Mathison, was working for me on the road. He and Merritt had had trouble in the Yellowjacket. He'd lived over there for a year. This Mathison, crusty old man, they had a fight, and Merritt went and got a gun. He told Mathison he was going to kill him. Mathison said, "You'll have to beat me to it, because one of these days I'll kill you." So he was working with me, and that night we went down the two miles in the car. He was with me, and he never left the school house during the hour or two when this happened. That was the first thing Stroud wanted to check on him because he had made this threat....Stroud asked me, "Are you sure he never left the school house." It was a half-mile from there to the house. He had stayed right there. I was playing for the dance, and he sat there on a bench, waiting to go home, to the road camp....So that left him out....

They [Shankles] left a year or so, or awhile, afterwards, and went to Pocatello. Her husband died. They buried him. He had a \$10,000. life insurance, in her favor. The next year she married a fellow who had worked for her husband when he had a coal business. He took out a \$10,000. policy in her name. In three months he died. She married another man who had worked for Shankle, and he died. Then they got to thinking, and performed an autopsy, and all three men were plumb full of arsenic. So they put her in jail, and that night she died --she had enough arsenic on her to kill herself....

INTERVIEWER: What years did you work for the Forest in there?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, I worked, altogether, about 28 or 29 years. Not all the time --sometimes in the winter I was off. I started in there, pretty steady, in 1925. When they were building that road, up Morgan Creek over into Challis. I worked on that, all the way from the bottom clear over, for three years, with my teams. Then worked on Lookouts, and built trails and roads, and telephone lines.

INTERVIEWER: What year did they first use your mother's place there, for telephone connections? Apparently they had a switchboard in there. She handled calls coming in from Lookouts....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: It was about 1914 or '15 when they first started using her place for all the lines coming in from four or five different directions.

INTERVIEWER: Was Merritt postmaster before your mother?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Oh yes. We had trouble with him there for about six months after he took over, when old Treloar left. Merritt trouble reading or writing his own name....Taking care of the post office, he never kept up his books...he'd take in money for a C.O.D., and when the inspector would come in they'd be short \$50. or \$100. of post office money. One day the inspector came in from Pocatello --a fellow named [Dobbs?] was inspector for 30 years in Salmon and this country around here --he found they were short \$90. of post office money, and just gathered up the office and brought it down for my mother if she would take it. She didn't really want it. He said, "Either you take it, or we'll discontinue the route. He's always short of money, and there's no books, no account. We can't find out what's going on or nothing." He never sent in a report, because he couldn't make it out. So that's when mother started. I don't just remember the year, but it was just before World War I.

I was down at Meyers Cove, haying, when that broke out in 1914. Old Kaiser Bill. And then we got in later....Along in the fall of '14 a bunch of us from around the country went down --we'd always go down and help Andy Lee and Fred Pratt in haying. Took about 30 days to hay in there then. Just pitching the hay in, two-pole derricks. There was no such thing as balers or buckrakes....Andy Lee had a ranch, --there were two homesteads there that joined...Andy Lee had the one on the north side, and at that time a fellow by the name of Fred Pratt, --he and Jess [___?___] had one on the other side. Then Earl Kingsbury, a New Englander, bought the [Plum?] ranch from Pratt. He had one and Andy Lee had the other. Andy Lee got killed. A horse killed him. He roped a horse, and got tangled up in the rope and the horse drug him. My brother Tom was there and saw it. After he got killed, Bill Wilson's dad bought both places....

INTERVIEWER:: We had a good visit with Bill not long ago... and we got a lot of good information on that Middle Fork country, and Meyers Cove, from him.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, he worked there for about 15 --18 years, until he sold it.

INTERVIEWER: He was telling me about the job of trying to trail a bunch of cattle down Camas Creek. It took three

days to trail those cattle...and he decided that wasn't very good cattle country.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I know just what he had to do; I've packed hunters out a million times, before the Forest Service built a trail right down the Camas 14 miles to the river. Before they built the trail, you'd have to go out, clear over the tops of the mountains, above the cliffs, to get in there. Three or four days trip from Meyers Cove with the cattle....

INTERVIEWER: *There were several of you [O'Connor] boys. Did quite a few of you work for the Forest?*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, there was always about three of us, pretty near every summer, during the summer months, from spring to fall. For years we were laid off through the winter. There weren't so many on the Forest in those days. It wasn't like it is now. The Ranger didn't have anybody. There was nothing but the Ranger at the Station, and in the summer he'd have one smoke chaser. Now they have a pile of them at every Station.

INTERVIEWER: *What were the names of the Stations when you were over there?*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: They had the Copper Creek Ranger Station, and Yellowjacket Ranger Station, and one up above our place at Cabin Creek....Cabin Creek is two miles above our old place there at Forney. There was a ranch there, the old Morris Christianson ranch, at the mouth of Cabin Creek. Right up from his house, up in Cabin Creek about 200 yards, they had a big old log building, a barn, and had a big pasture fenced in. They abandoned that and put it in with the Copper Creek Station.

INTERVIEWER: *Who was Ranger?*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Morris Christianson was the first Ranger. "Swede," we called him. After him was Ross Tobias. He was the second Ranger at Cabin Creek. They canned Christianson after three or four years. He got too officious, and they dropped him, because he was having trouble with ranchers and everybody. Ross Tobias stayed there two or three years. Then he left and Joe Gautier came. He stayed about two years and then they discontinued it. Then they built that one at Copper Creek. I think Al Wheeler was about the first Ranger to take over the Copper Creek District....

INTERVIEWER: *Do you have any idea how early there was a school at Forney?*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes, I know for sure. The year we moved from Salmon, 1907, that winter then, all the old prospectors and people in that country got together in October and built a schoolhouse in three days.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the first teacher?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Lottie McGowan. Her original name was Lottie McKinney. That was the fall and winter of 1907-08.

INTERVIEWER: There was a McGowan at Challis. He was a county assessor there.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: The assessor was Vern McGowan. Lottie was married to a brother, Joe McGowan....

INTERVIEWER: There's a real nice piece been written about your mother. It is down in the museum here, but there are no dates....When did your mother move into town here to stay?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: ...About 1949....

VELMA O'CONNOR: She died in June, 1955....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: About the time of World War I, there was a fellow worked over there at Meyers Cove, for Andy Lee and Kingsbury, haying. He had a little ranch down on the Middle Fork, at the mouth of Sheep Creek. He got mixed up with this Charles Ernst. Well, Ernst went down and shot him. I was in on the whole deal. Emerson Frazier was sheriff here. He came over to our place at Forney. He stayed that night and the next day I took him down to Meyers Cove. They got to quizzing the woman as to what became of this Reberg. Ernst had been seen coming in, and going out again. His wife had quit him and was living with this Reberg, staying with him at his cabin. So Ernst sneaked in in the night, and when Reberg came out of his cabin the next morning, he shot him.

They drug him up in the meadow and buried him, and covered everything over. It was 18 days after that before the woman finally...the neighbors had got to quizzing her, because they knew something had happened. She wouldn't tell them. She said when she got up to it, she'd write to the sheriff and tell him what happened. She wrote Emerson Frazier, the sheriff, there had been a killing. So he went over--I took him over to the Cove, and the next day we went down. Doebler was the undertaker then, --the coroner, --he went down and dug up the body.

INTERVIEWER: Did she show you where it was?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Oh, yes. We could never have found it. He had a little meadow, three or four acres. There was no snow on it. I don't know the exact date that he killed him, but it was the 18th day of December when we dug him up. But there was no snow on....He had put the sod back, where he had dug this hole, enough to cover him. He had stuck a little clump of sagebrush there. She went out, 147 yards I think from the house, dug down a little bit, and there they had dug a little hole, wadded him in --shoved the man in there.

On the 22nd day of January, this fellow Reberg's brother and brother-in-law came in from Missouri to Salmon. They contacted me and wanted me to go in and pack the body out. Well, I went in and packed the body out. It had been buried just a month.

INTERVIEWER: Everything had to be done by packstring?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Oh, there was no roads, no nothing. There's still no roads. Today, they would use planes or helicopters.

INTERVIEWER: You'd have to go down the Camas Creek trail. It that about where the old Mormon Ranch is?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Not quite. Just before you get to the Mormon Ranch, this is on the other side of the river. You could see it, at the mouth of Sheep Creek. It was really in Idaho [Valley?] County. They took Ernst and his wife over to McCall or Cascade to have the trial. They gave him 10 or 15 years and her five years. She got out and came back. Then he got out, and married another woman, and came back into this country....Mrs. Kimball [Ethel] got all the dope from me and she wrote the story....I told her she would have to change all the names.

VELMA O'CONNOR: Its all true. So far it hasn't been published....

INTERVIEWER: Where did the Mormon Ranch get its name?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, according to the old timers, there was an old fellow lived in there when I was a kid, named [__?__] Sherman, an old prospector and trapper, and he told me that in the early days, in the Thunder Mountain boom days, about in 1888 and 1890 to 1900, (Bill Hanmer was born in Thunder Mountain, the first white child, in 1900), these two Mormon guys came in there and settled on it.

INTERVIEWER: They were actually Mormons, then.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: They were Mormon people. People going through would call it the Mormon Ranch, and the name stuck. It is still called that, on maps and everything.

INTERVIEWER: I think now the Game Department owns it....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I built that airport at Bernards, just below the Flying B. I built that in 1932. The fall of '32, the fall that we were married. I built that for the Forest Service.

INTERVIEWER: When did that pack bridge first go in there?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: That was, oh, five or six years after I built the landing field, they put that in.

INTERVIEWER: That's the bridge you would use if you were going to go from Camas Creek down there and then cross and go up to the Big Creek country?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes, to Sheep Creek, Brush Creek or any of that country. I plowed that [landing field] up. I packed a plow in there. We had to pack in everything. There wasn't very good trails then. To make the field. There was a scraper, and one of those fresnoes....The Forest Service took over an abandoned homestead of three old prospectors.

INTERVIEWER: Then Bennett's place is just upstream.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes, just up above, about a quarter of a mile.

INTERVIEWER: Is that deeded ground?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: That's a homestead easement. It has changed hands three or four times after the Beagle boys had it --the original owners. Three brothers, and one died over there....Beagle boys sold it to Henry Kurry and his brother Albert. Then he sold to George Crandall, and Crandall sold to Bennett. It has changed hands several times since. A banker from Boise had it for several years. I haven't been over there since Bennett had it....

INTERVIEWER: That landing field, you don't have much room taking off from it. You come along, and there's the river and then a mountain, and you've got to come right out or you've had it.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Something funny happened when [__?__] and I was building that. We just about had it leveled off and finished --it was along in September --and we had it smoothed out in good shape to land in. Hadn't got the markers in. One morning it come a rain and fogged in there. The canyon was thick fog, up to about 50 feet. Couldn't see out. I was working there...and I heard this motor running. Sounded like a plane. Right close! Sounded like it was just over our heads. We couldn't see it though. It circled a time or two, then here it came right down in front of us and lit on the field. A little plane --about a little 190....I believe I'd rather go a little slower and take a saddle horse.

INTERVIEWER: One trip in there was the first and last for me. We came in over that cliff and looked down there. You say that strip is 1,400 feet? Well, it looks like 200 from there. [Interviewer Don Ian Smith had flown in to the Middle Fork on a game count for Idaho Fish and Game in early spring, about 1952].

WAYNE O'CONNOR: That's all you can get there, too. You couldn't go out the same way you came in --there's that big bluff there...That's the only way you could get out except for that big Ford. For five or six years I worked for the Forest salvaging --by then we were using planes. Johnson Flying Service from Missoula had that big old 300 Ford. I guess they were the safest mountain plane there ever was.

INTERVIEWER: They sold the last one last year, to a museum I think. They used them for about thirty years.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I had a fire right up from the Mormon Ranch, up on that hill. It was during World War II, the last end of it. I gathered up --there was no good men around to hire, --you had kids and Rangers and everything. Sent a bunch in, and called Missoula, and the plane came right in. I told them, "You got a real trip over there. You can go in the old Ford, and look at the trails below you, and won't have to walk to that fire." Usually men going to fires had to walk. There were two firefighters over in the Yellowjacket, --which is the same distance -- Earl Nichols was one of them. When they came back a day or two later, after they put the fire out, I asked Earl, "How did that Ford take off that airport?" The pilot was Penn Stohr. He used to fly for the Fire Service for years. He was a good pilot, too. A mountain pilot and a good one. Earl said, "He never even come out the way we come in. He went out down the stream there. By that cliff." I said, "How did he get over it?" Earl said, "That old [#], he

just pointed the nose up in the air, and climbed right over the top of it. Scared me to death."

INTERVIEWER: I think when I came out of there it was the same thing, because he was wanting to fly into the wind. Smith Stoddard was the pilot. We came out that way. That's what scared me so, right there at that crazy cliff. But what he did, it was the way the wind was, and he wanted to go against the wind. The wind was coming upstream, so we went right toward that cliff. And right then I said the next time I come in here it is going to be on saddle horse. We went right toward the cliff, --he had a pretty good little plane --it was just like going off the end of a carrier. Right there is the river, and right there is the cliff. So we come right down there and he banked. He couldn't climb above it that fast, so he banked, made a U-turn and went up the river.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, this little Ford had so much power, and big wingspread, Nichols said he just pointed, and went up over the top of it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the Wilson Creek fire?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I should, --I put in nine weeks on it.

INTERVIEWER: Several people did. I guess that was a big one.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Biggest fire this Forest ever had. I had a road job, working roads for the Forest, on the Yellowjacket road that summer. That was in '29. They called me at noon, on the 14th day of July, to take my three men and go to this fire, and get a bunch of horses I had along for saddle and pack horses then. About 15 or 20 of them. I went to my mother's places and went out and rounded up a bunch of horses. We got to Yellowjacket that night about 11 o'clock. Here came a truck from Salmon with a bunch of men, about two o'clock in the morning. Brought in horseshoes. My brother Tom and Matt Yakovac and I, we shod 17 head of horses that morning, between about three in the morning and seven. Just put shoes on them, --no fancy job,--we had to shoe them to go over into that country. Otherwise we'd cripple them in one day. The truck brought the shoes in for me, --I had to phone to get the shoes on the Forest truck.

We left my road camp on the 14th day of July, and got back to it the 22nd day of September. We were on that fire for nine weeks.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do? Did you pack, or --?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I was foreman with 50 men; 50, to 75, or 100, whatever there happened to be, with crews coming and going. We were the same outfit as Kinney and Herb Coles, those three fellows that pretty nearly burned up that day, you know....That Wilson Creek is almost like the Camas canyon: steep, away down. The fire was going up the right hand side, the whole mountain, from the creekbed to the top. We couldn't get an outfit in behind it. Because there were no trails. You couldn't get out around it: the trail was down the creek [bottom]. The fire had that cut off, and we had to keep our camp above all the time, the way the fire was coming.

We camped up near where old Snowshoe Johnson's cabin was, and went around the hill. Some days the fire would break loose, fire crowning and start going. Other days it would be quiet for a day. I took the crew that morning, and went around, and Kinney was the Supervisor then, he was in there looking it over. He went in with us. That night he had come in with the truck and went over with us.

About four or five days after we got to it, the fire started making the big runs on us. We had climbed way up around in the cliffs to get up to the fire line that morning. We had left camp about four o'clock and got up there about eight or nine. Kinney, and Herb Coles, and a young fellow named Wendell Wilson. When we got up to the line I put the men to working around the line. Kinney and Wendell and Herb Coles went off around the other way. Of course, [Kinney] being the supervisor of the Forest and all, I didn't think nothing but he knew what to do in case the fire made a run at us.

We went on working til about two o'clock. I happened to look way down the canyon, a mile or so from us, and I saw black smoke boiling up and a breeze come up. Pretty soon I could hear it roaring and coming. The way they roar when they're crowning, sounds like a waterfall. I took my men, -I had a place picked out, where to go. Down across Wilson Creek and out on the other side there's about a ten acre slide rock patch --no timber. I had spotted that because I had seen what the fire had been doing. Kinney and the other two had gone up around the hill somewhere, looking it over.

When I saw it coming I yelled at the men. Matt Yakovac was with me, and a lot of men from Salmon that I knew. I told Matt, "You take the lead. Right straight for the creek and that slide rock there. I'll stay behind to see that nobody drops out. Throw your tools down. Don't try to bother with your tools." We knew we had to get out in a hurry because the fire was coming round the hill to cut us off.

They got down about halfway to the creek and out on a ledge, and here it was about 50 feet, straight down to the bottom. Cliffs on both sides, you couldn't go around. There was a big fir tree, growing [from the bottom] out about six feet from the ledge. Old Matt, he just took one look and he backed up and jumped, and hit the tree. Down he went, and everybody right behind him. No words spoken or nothing. Nobody had to be told what to do. They knew to get out of there in a hurry.

We got down to the creek and over on the slide rock. In about two minutes the old fire just came right up the canyon. Then we had to wait until two o'clock in the morning, til the ash and stuff was burnt off. We had a mile and a half or so to get up to our camp. The fire hadn't burned there. It had gone off up the other way. We waited til the logs and stuff had cooled so we could go up the trail.

Lester [Gutzman] the Ranger was there. Lester asked me where Kinney and Wendell and Herb was. I said they were over in that other canyon going that way when I last saw them. Lester said, "I was up on that high point up above, and that whole thing crowned up. It went up in ten minutes, going through there just like a cyclone. They couldn't be alive."

That next morning, when it got light enough to see, my brother Johnny and Lester and I went up to see what we could find. I just figured we'd never find them alive. Because Lester had been at a lookout spot way above and could see what had happened. We went up there about where I figured they'd be, and looked all around. That had all burned out and was cool then. Ashes that deep, around over the ground. There was a big cliff right where this little canyon went up, and it forked, and right in between the forks was a big cliff set out. Shaped kind of like the roof of a house, sloping each way. I went up and around above it, and here I see these tracks, in the ashes, after the fire had gone through.

So we tracked them off around the hill about a quarter of a mile, and found them lying under a tree. Boy, were they a pitiful sight. Their clothes were burned off. They were all blind, --that is, they couldn't see enough to move or anything.

What saved them, they got up on this cliff, and each man had a water sack. They had a couple gallons of water. And they had their lunch with them. They wrapped the sack over their

faces, and kept pouring water on them. They lay down on this cliff and when it would get too hot on one side, they'd keep turning. Herb said the boy kept them all from dying. They all but passed out two or three times, when the flames would come up. They'd start to pass out, and roll or fall off, but he never did go unconscious. He was a husky kid about 19 or 20, and he'd hold them there. Pretty soon the wind would change and they'd cool off a little. But their clothes, burned most of them off, or just burned, without flame.

We had to take them way around --pretty near dark before we led them into camp. Their faces were all just great big blisters when we found them, and their hands. The water saved their lives. The fire didn't last too long at a time. It varied from one side to the other. They'd change sides on the rock, to keep the main heat from hitting them. There was timber on both sides of the rock, putting plenty of heat on them, but they lived. The kid [Wendell Wilson] left the country, and never came back here after that.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't lose any men on that fire?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Never lost a man!

INTERVIEWER: How many were there in your crew, that had to jump, and go down the tree?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: About 35 of them.

INTERVIEWER:: That would make a pretty good motion picture.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: It would have. But we weren't thinking of that, we was thinking of getting burned up....There was no place in the world to go but that place. I had spotted that when we were going up. I always looked for a place on a fire with a crew of men. Before I put them anywhere, I'd see where we could go, in case we have to go.

Kinney and them...had a good escape, if they'd only known it. Up the hill about three or four hundred yards was a place where it had burnt off three days before, and was all cooled ashes. Instead of that, they tried to go around the hill ahead of it. When it caught up to them, there happened to be this big rock, and they crawled out on it....They laid there about four hours before it got cool enough that they could go on up to this old burn.

John Kinney laid in camp for about eight or nine days before he could get out and walk. His back, and everything was just blistered all over. He got the worst burn of any of

them. Herb was in pretty bad shape. But that Wilson boy, -
-we got up to camp, and he laid there that day, and the next
morning he took off up the trail and got to Yellowjacket and
caught the truck to Salmon, and went clear to Salt Lake.
He'd had all of Wilson Creek that he wanted....

INTERVIEWER: Did you work at all on the Middle Fork fire?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I was fire dispatcher down here when that
burned...in the tail end of the forties, I believe. I was
dispatching crews to it, sending men and everything. I'd
have the plane drop meals....

*INTERVIEWER: I guess the Salmon has been pretty lucky not
to lose men on fires.*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, they have, and a lot of times they've
been just lucky that there was somebody in the crew that
knew what to do. Down here on that Corn Creek fire, there
was several times that the boys that were on it came back
and told me that if it hadn't been for experienced men
they'd have burned up a lot of crews....Some foremen on the
crews didn't know about fires, --they didn't know what a
fire would do. Don Wilson said there was about a dozen of
them would have been burned if it hadn't been for an Indian
that was there. They were pretty near surrounded, the fire
a'comin, and the Indian told them...and they left. He said
if they had stayed five minutes the fire would have run over
a ridge and down the other side and they would all have been
burned up. The Indian was one of the Sho-Bans they had
brought in, that was trained.

*INTERVIEWER: Wally Mueller was Ranger there, and I remember
hearing that he was awfully scared he was going to lose some
men.*

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I'd have lost a whole crew over there on
that Wilson Creek fire if it hadn't been for an old
Dutchman. He had worked with me for years, for the Forest,
on roads....The Wilson Creek fire had burned off up into the
cliffs and quit, and then it was coming over into the
Yellowjacket, this side of Middle Fork Peak, and down toward
the Yellowjacket side. We were camped under the Middle Fork
Peak, --there was a spring there. I went out one morning
and could see the fire about two miles from us, down in
Jacks Creek.

They had sent in guys from all over the West, pretty near;
Rangers and all, for experience, to see these big fires.
There was two of them, from down in...Nevada, I guess, went
up with me. They were supposed to be in there just to see

how fires were handled....I told the crew, "Now you fellows all stay here. I'll go round the ridge where I can look and spot it, and see what's going on, before we go down." We'd had to go right down towards it, ahead of it, with a big basin of timber and a big mountain right up towards us. I never did want to go down ahead of a fire. Get behind it if you can, always, and then you're safe.

I had to go a mile or two, and was looking it over. I wouldn't take a crew down there. Usually about eleven o'clock the wind would raise, and I knew [the fire] would come up that canyon and then widen out into a big, heavy timbered basin. Thick spruce and lodgepole. It could go ten miles an hour when it got started, --you can't outrun those fires, especially going up hill.

This old Joe Simers...a little short, heavy set Dutchman, he'd been with me on fires before, and he knew a lot about it himself. Well, one of these two Supervisors, from the outside, said, "What are you fellows sitting here for? You're getting paid to fight fire. Let's go down there and go after it." They all jumped up; they figured these two were Supervisors, and I was just a boss....They all started and old Joe Simers said, "No. The boss told me to stay here til he came back. Not to go down in there."....The other guys [on the crew] decided they'd better not take chances....The Supervisors started down and got to thinking maybe it wasn't just right, so they came back and sat down with the men.

When I got back, about 10:30 or 11:00, I saw the wind was coming up, and said "We'd better get out of here." The Supervisors said, "What for? That fire's two miles away." Then the fire broke loose, started crowning up through this basin, and ROAR, --it was the prettiest sight I ever saw in my life. It got into that heavy timber, and there was flames just like a big corkscrew, and a mile high, it looked like. It scares you, --a roar just like a big waterfall. And the deer and all kinds of animals came out of there, going round the mountain. Of course, a deer can outrun a fire. One bear, I think he got burned up. He came out a ways, and the last I saw of him, he was going back, towards the fire. We ran over the ridge and were safe.

We got into camp that night, and [Supervisor] John Kinney was there. Joe Simers, the Dutchman, was still mad about the deal. He told me what had happened, and he told Kinney. The next morning, when we were going out with the crew, Kinney called those two guys out...and he told them, "You just come almost to losing 50 men. You're not in here to

boss our men, you're in here to learn something about firefighting....Just look, and that's it."

INTERVIEWER: From what we have gathered, this Kinney was a pretty good fellow. A good common sense man.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: He was a nice man. A good square, honest guy. A man with good common sense.

INTERVIEWER: We've read some of the reports, working on this history, and sometimes Ogden would be kind of crossways with Kinney, but Kinney was usually right. Kinney would realize that you had to work with what you had.

WAYNE O'CONNOR:Kinney got transferred to Ogden, as Assistant Regional Forest. Floyd Godden was here [as Supervisor]. During the war he went into the service, -- came back, --and then he went to Ogden...Art Buckingham was here. They transferred him over into Jackson. Then Charlie Dougherty came....That first summer I was fire dispatcher when he was Supervisor, and he got me in trouble. He...always wanted to keep the expense down. In the Fire Manual, it says that the dispatcher is responsible for knowing how many men to send. The Supervisor isn't supposed to do anything unless he is called upon. The dispatcher is supposed to know the country, and know what the fire potential is....

Well, Lester Gutzman had a fire over on Quartz Creek, below Leacock's place at the mouth of Napias. Lester called in and said, "That fire is starting, and building, --send me all the men you can get." Of course, there wasn't any then. [During World War II there were no standby fire crews]. We did have some signed up as potential fire fighters. Lester was on the radio, and I told him, "I'll send you forty men." Lester said, "That'll probably handle it. We should have more, --it is spreading on me pretty fast." I told Smithy [Clarence Smith] at the warehouse to send forty men if you can get them. All you can get, as quick as you can, because that fire is in a bad place. Heavy timber, and chance of a big fire, --try to get it when it's young. Just as Smithy was loading them out there, Dougherty comes out and said, "That's too many men for that little half-acre fire. Cut them in two. Send twenty."

I didn't know about this at the time. They trucked them out there to the fire, and pretty soon Lester called and said, "I thought you sent forty. Only twenty came."....Later, Smithy told me Dougherty cut them in half. So we sent some more....We had a hard time with that. Every fall, when the

season is over, the big shots come in and rehash every fire they've had, to see if we could of done better.

The next year they had Charlie Kane as dispatcher, after I quit. They had this big fire down at the mouth of the Middle Fork, the Lake Creek fire....They sent down plenty of men, --forty or fifty men. That night Irvin Robertson and Dougherty went down. Irvin was the fire chief then. They went along the fire. There was just logs burning and a few things. The firefighters had covered the outside of it. They said, "That's too many men. Send in half of them." Clint Quesnel was the Ranger down there. He said, "If the wind comes up tomorrow, I'll lose this fire. I have only half enough men to hold it." Dougherty said, "Send in half of them, you're over-manned." They did. Cut it down to 18 I think, from 44.

Well, the next day the wind came up, and boy, the fire took off. Before they got through, they had about a hundred jumpers from Spokane or [__?__] come in.

INTERVIEWER: This was the one right there at the mouth of the Middle Fork? Across the river from Long Tom camp. We went down there, and saw it.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Yes, it was across the river. Eventually they put 350 men on it for pretty near six weeks. Two days after the fire was over, Clint [Ranger Quesnel] came in and resigned.... I was working in Tom Benedict's furniture store. That fall, after it was all over, John Kinney came in. He was a big shot then, in Ogden, over fire control. He came into the store and we visited awhile, and he asked me why I quit the Forest. I told him it was because I wanted to. I decided to go into the store business....[Kinney kept asking] and finally I told him, "I quit because last summer [a year ago], when I was dispatcher, every time I sent a crew of men anywhere, Dougherty cut it in half." He [Kinney] said, "Just as I thought. If he had kept that bunch of men there, they wouldn't have had that big fire. It cost the government a million dollars." Those 40 men would have had it in two days.... When I went home [after the conversation with Kinney] I told Velma, "There's going to be a shakeup in the Forest." Because John Kinney had come in to investigate, and see what went wrong. Well,...that fall Irvin got his resignation sent to him to sign. Dougherty got transferred out someplace....maybe to a Forest that didn't have fires!

INTERVIEWER: You were talking about the animals that fled the fires. Did you ever have any grizzlies in this country?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: No. There's never been any grizzlies in here that I know of. I've heard rumors from time to time of a track or two being seen in North Fork country. Elmer Keith said something about seeing a track....I've seen some BIG black bears.

INTERVIEWER: We were talking with Earl Nichols, and his dad used to be a government trapper, and he said that the only grizzly he got was across in Bloody Dick Creek, over the top, in Montana.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: There have been some just over in Montana, but I've never personally known for sure there was any grizzly in this area....A long time ago there was supposed to have been a grizzly up here around the Leadore country for two or three summers, that killed an awful lot of cattle. Some hunter killed him finally. I never saw it, or anybody that did see the bear. But I've heard that for years....I'll tell you what I think, though. Some of these brown and black bears get awful big.

I killed a brown bear over there in Moyer Creek, across from our ranch. Mike Hogan had cattle in there, --had a homestead up there from ours. I'd say that bear weighed 400 pounds. Howard Edson [?], used to work for Mahaffeys --a sheep foreman for years --he skinned him. The bear was killed in the summer. He had his hide sent away and had it tanned into leather. Then he braided it into bridal reins, and hackamores and things. He was quite a hand to work with leather. This brown bear killed a steer of Mike Hogan's that morning. He had killed two or three. Mike had seen him, and he come over for us. He was scared to death of that bear. Wanted me to go over with him and see if we could get the bear. Because it was staying right around his camp....I went over with him that day. We were seeing if it was down in the creek bottom, --the kill was right up there. Usually a bear will come out after sundown. He hadn't eaten only a little bit of the steer...I told Mike he'd come back after sundown and finish eating on it.

We sat there about two hours before dark, and the bear came up out of the creek bottom brush and started eating on this steer and I shot him. Scared old Mike pretty near to death....I had an old 30-40 Winchester...Mike didn't want me to shoot at him for fear he would get us. We had tied our horses just over, out of sight. When I shot, he went Woof, and started across the creek, --he didn't see us, --to run to get away. Mike ran for the horses, and scared them, and they broke loose. When the bear crossed the creek I shot him again, right in the forehead, and dropped him. Mike had to go and catch the horses....When we got down a hundred

feet from the bear, Mike wanted me to keep shooting him. I said the bear was lying there dead. The bear was as big as a yearling steer. He was just a cinnamon brown....

I've seen, --I don't know how many, --dozens of bears in my life. They pretty near always have a black and a brown cub. When they have two cubs, there's pretty near always a black and a brown. Once in awhile two blacks, but usually a black and a brown....Just like a fox...pretty nearly every litter of a red fox has one cross in it.

INTERVIEWER: When you were growing up over there, did you have wolves in that country?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Just three in there. I walked down and got the last one. When Ross Tobias was there, he killed one, that fall, when he was Ranger over there. Up here in Hat Creek country there was a lot of wolves, and they were killing stock awful bad. The people put on a big drive, -- all the ranchers and cowboys in the country. About a hundred of them went up there, and thought they could wipe them out, and get them. They killed several of them. But three of them came over into the Forney country. They were around there that winter, and up to the next one. They killed an awful lot of stock over in there. We saw them a lot of times, way off. That next fall, Ross Tobias was coming out from Meyers Cove and he met them right in the road, along in December. He was an awful good man with a six-shooter, just a crack shot. He shot one of them right off of his saddle horse. The others got in the brush.

When anybody over there got to seeing them, they got to chasing them and shooting at them long distance. They crippled one, and he crawled off and died. The other one, a big old fellow, stayed around there til about the fifteenth or twentieth of December, when there was snow on. He killed all of our colts, --five or six, --come right into the field at night, and kill a colt....They were crazy about colts. They'd hamstring them and then eat them. Everybody around: Merritt, and Kingsbury and all of them put up a bounty on him. Money then was scarce, and they got a bounty of about two hundred dollars put up on him.

I was a pretty husky kid at that time, and I decided that if I could ever get a fresh track, --start on a fresh track, I'd try to walk him down, and get him. One morning I went down in the field to feed. I had a pack all fixed up. Here he came up through the field. We only had one colt left by then, and we had it up in the barn. It had snowed in the night and the track was right fresh, so I beat it back to the house and got my gun. A Luger six-shooter that I

packed. A rifle was too much to carry. And I took after him. Had a good tracking snow.

I never seen him the first day at all. He went over into Moyer Creek, to the forks. He'd try to get back over to the Salmon River, but he got up into too deep of snow and couldn't wade it. Got into about two feet of snow. Then he circled around me, and come back around....He knew by now that I was trailing him....He cut off to the side, around and come back into the forks of Moyer Creek, in heavy timber. I never saw him that day, and that night, real late, I found a bunch of windfalls and built me a big fire. I had some jerked venison, and a pan of rice, and a package of raisins: something to eat that didn't weigh much. And I had a couple of all wool government blankets. My pack only weighed about seven or eight pounds. So I just built a fire in those logs that night.

The next day I seen him a lot of times, but not in close enough to get a good shot at him. I see he is playing out some because he is wearying. The first night he didn't go 300 yards from where I was camped and he laid down under a tree. When I started the next morning he came right back down to within three miles of our place. To the forks of Moyer, where old Hank Smith had a homestead afterwards. He stayed right in that lodgepole all day. I crossed my tracks a hundred times that day, just keeping out of the sight. I stayed out that night in Moyer Creek in the creek bottom. There was a bunch of old dry logs there, and I built a fire.

I had the best of him: I was eating all the time, and he wasn't. He was worried too, and he got to balling up pretty badly, --snow in his hair, and I got to seeing where he was stopping to chew off snowballs. That day was hard traveling for him. But the third day, about 11 o'clock, (I could see him all the time, ahead of me), he came out of the heavy timber, and got down where the snow was only that deep then. About two o'clock that afternoon he just walked out onto a flat, in open country. He just lay down and faced me and I walked up within thirty feet of him. I shot him between the eyes.

They claim that a man can walk down any animal if he stays with him. You have the best of it. You can take nourishment. I was eating good....

INTERVIEWER: Was that the first time you ever walked something down, like that?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: It was the only time and the last time I ever walked anything down, that wasn't hurt or anything.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember about what year that was?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, it was the next year after Ross Tobias came in.

INTERVIEWER: Ross Tobias started working for the Forest in 1907, until about 1912. It was probably between those years sometime....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: No, it was more than that. I think that I was either eighteen or nineteen years old, and I was born in '97. [It was probably] about 1917 or '18.

INTERVIEWER: Ross must have been out, and back in. He ran a meat market, and then came back.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: He was out, and then came back. Maybe it was around 1914, '15, somewhere in there. That was a big old timer wolf. The biggest one everybody saw. I'd never seen one before. A lot of his teeth were broke out, and he had scars all over him. I just skinned him right there. Took his head and his hide and took it in.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get your bounty?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I did, from all but old Milc Merritt. He put up fifty dollars, but he wouldn't pay it. That was the last wolf seen over in that prairie basin.

INTERVIEWER: They had a lot of them in the Leadore country.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Used to have, but they're all gone.

INTERVIEWER: We had a figure on that. Earls Nichols' dad, George Nichols, from about 1908 to the '20s, (about fifteen years)-got 108 wolves. He said they weighed from 90 to 120 pounds.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I figured this one weighed at least 150, because I could hardly lift him when I got him killed.

VELMA O'CONNOR: You were probably a little tired by then.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I never did get tired. 'Course I was eating three times a day. And that jerked venison was like eating a pound of meat.

INTERVIEWER: You probably had quite a few cougars over there, too, didn't you?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Velma's brothers and all of us, we chased cougars all our lives. Velma's brother killed more cougars over there than anybody.

INTERVIEWER: Did you [Velma] grow up in that country?

VELMA O'CONNOR: Down below there, on Panther Creek, on the Rood ranch...Willard Rood's sister.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, I guess Velma's dad killed more cougar than any man in this country, up to the time he died....He told me one time that he had killed over 300 that he knew about.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the fellow they called Cougar Dave?

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Old Dave Lewis, over on the Middle Fork. He spent his life over in there. I never knew him well. I was to his place. He had a little ranch over on Big Creek, up from the mouth, up to Soldier Bar....A prominent movie actor, --was it Wallace Beery? --bought out old Dave, and built a landing field on his place there....The government has a strip there now. He [Dave Lewis] was an old Indian fighter in the early days. A scout for the soldiers coming through from Boise, that drove the Sheepeaters out of the Middle Fork country. Uncle Dave, we all called him....

See those pictures on the wall? A fellow come in from Cincinnati, name of Augustine Davis. That's the first goat he ever killed. I'm in one picture and he's in the other. The pictures were taken in 1917. We killed those goats right up Warm Spring Creek, up from the Mormon Ranch. He came in every year for eight years, and I'd take him out for thirty days, in the Middle Fork and around. We went up to Uncle Dave's (as we called him), and he got to telling us stories about the Indian battles in the early days, and the like. We sat there until three o'clock in the morning, it was the most interesting thing.

A good writer went in and got his story. It was all true....He had three bullet holes...he showed us the scars where the bullets had hit him. He told us about when the soldiers came in there up at the head of the Middle Fork, and down....Just below Wilson Creek about five miles, just below there is Rattlesnake. There are big cliffs there, and a big cave back under, and Indian writing on the cliff. One place that Dutch Morrison told me, showed a bunch of Indians running or traveling, and a bunch of guys behind them on horses. You see, the soldiers stole all the Indians' horses right down there at the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek. They sneaked in on them in the night and stole their horses....We

figure this picture had something to do with that. It's in the writing, --the history that Oliver Davis wrote. He taught school around here. He lives in Boise now. He's had a history book that I read once, that give all of that story....

There was two fellows I knew, out from Thunder Mountain, that knew this Dave Lewis, and had been around him alot, and they told me something I'll never forget. In those early days, before the Thunder Mountain boom, there were a lot of horse thieves in the country, going through, and the like. These fellows, --a fellow named Frank Bacon, and, what was the other fellow? I only knew them that one summer. They were there with old Milc Merritt. You see, old Merritt was an old Thunder Mountain man too. In fact, when we come into the country, he was at Thunder Mountain, during the boom. But anyway, they said that after old Dave Lewis, or Cougar Dave, --we always called him Uncle Dave, --had this little ranch up on Big Creek, and he got up one morning and his horses were gone. All but one that he had somewhere else. These thieves had gone through in the night and took these horses. He had three head of horses. He had one in the barn, and the other two out in the pasture. He had a little place fenced in. These two were gone. He got to looking around [for tracks] and saw some people had come through in the night, and took his horses. He went back and saddled up his horse, got his rifle, and took their trail. This Bacon said three days afterward he came, leading his horses back, with saddles on them! One saddle had two bullet marks in the cantle behind. But he never told nothing. Never told them a word what happened, or where he found them, or nothing. He just got his horses back. And he had their saddles on his horses....

Oliver Davis told me, "You know, it would be worth a fortune to have some good writer come in and spend a week with Uncle Dave, and get all his history." He was a funny guy. Lester Gutzman had been over, around him a lot. But he said just once in a great while you could get him to talk. He said if you go ask him questions, he's through. He just clams up and won't talk about it. We [Augustine Davis and I] just got to visiting that night. He hardly ever had anyone come visiting. This Davis, being an easterner, come from Cincinnati, --he was a rich man, a millionaire, but out in the hills he was just a common, ordinary guy. After supper we got to talking, and Dave started talking. We just closed up and let him talk. He just kind of wanted to talk, and tell what had happened during his life.

When he was 100 years old, he sold his place, and walked out to Cascade. The next morning they went up to his room in

the hotel, and he was dead. When I saw him last, he was up at Meyers Cove. He was 97, and just as husky! He had come up and packed some groceries. He just packed up his pack horses and went back....He's been gone, probably thirty years.

INTERVIEWER: Who was it that Emmet Reese used to see on the Middle Fork? Was it Parrott?....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Parrott. Lived in the cliffs down there...spent 35 or 40 years in there alone....This Earl Parrott's brother came in and tried to talk to him. He had lost track of him for years. These men went through on this National Geographic trip, --floated the river. They wrote up the story afterward in the magazine, and mentioned this Parrott. Parrott's brother, back east, read the article and came out. He was out of a well-to-do family. He came out and got Earl Poynor, Neal's brother, that packed, he got him to take him in. His house, --I was never right to it, but saw it from across the river, --it was up on a shelf. You had to go on ladders to get up to it. Earl [Poynor] told me afterwards that when he brought his brother in, they come down below there, about a hundred feet I guess, from where Parrott's cabin was up on this shelf. They tried to get him to come down. He wouldn't come down, and this brother tried to talk to him...told him who he was, and all, and [Parrott] said, "I ain't got no brother." The brother...started to mention things that happened when they were kids, you know. I guess the old fellow's mind started coming back a little...Finally he did decide this was his brother, and he let them go up to his cabin. But he wouldn't let them stay that night. They stayed a couple of hours, Earl said, then he told them to go. The brother tried to talk him into going out with him, but he said, "I'm staying here," and made them go.

Later he got sick, and Earl Poynor went in and packed him out. He stayed here in town with Guleke, and later died. I don't know how some of those fellows done that, you know, drifted in [and became hermits].

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of any cemeteries or graves over there....

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Well, there's quite a few people that I know are buried over in that country.

VELMA O'CONNOR: There's a graveyard at Leesburg.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Some people around here are interested [in the old graves], like Howard Sims' wife. I know pretty near

all the graves over in that country, whose buried, but there's no markers any more. I'm about the last one to know them. Now, at Middle Fork Peak, right down there by the spring, just over against the hill, there's a fellow named Armstrong is buried there. He died from mountain fever during the Thunder Mountain boom. But I don't know anything about him. When I first was in there, with this Davis, in 1917, the name was on the board. Then later, when we were on the '29 fire, --the big fire, --this Dutchman whittled out a board, out of a tree, and we put his name on. I don't remember the first name. But that wooden board would last only twenty or thirty years....At the Mormon Ranch there's two graves up on that bar.

INTERVIEWER Don: When I was over at the Mormon Ranch there were two or three graves, and there was a board still there, but we couldn't read it.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: Ben Beagle was buried there, and Mrs. Lee Wyatt, a big husky woman. I knew her. She was over around Yellowjacket for years. Her husband went over there and bought the Mormon Ranch...at Yellowjacket she had a place where people could stop in and eat. She only had a one-room log cabin. She was there three or four years [before she went to the Middle Fork]....There's a big bar by the house at the Mormon Ranch. The graves were up there. Ben Beagle was one of them. Doc Hanmer helped bury that fellow. Doc went in there on snow shoes when he [Ben] was sick, and tried to keep him alive, and stayed there with him sixteen or eighteen days, til he died. Doc Hanmer and Ben's two brothers took him over there and buried him where Mrs. Lee Wyatt had been buried before then.

INTERVIEWER: Bill Wilson told us of a man whose wife died and he packed her out.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: That was Albert Kurry's wife. I knew her well. She was a little hunchback woman.

INTERVIEWER: Her relatives were in Boise and she didn't want to be buried back on the Middle Fork. He said he had a hard time, --he'd never packed a body. He didn't want to tie it down so hard....He took a mattress or something and put it over his horse, and laid her over it, but he just couldn't bring himself to cinch it down. Then it started to slip and had to. That would be hard.

WAYNE O'CONNOR: I had a similar time when this Reberg was killed. But I didn't have that much trouble. He'd been dead too long. This Swede, Axel Bjornson [?], used to live over at Meyers Cove, --I got him to go down with me and help

get him out. His [Reberg's] brother-in-law hired me. It seemed like an awful big piece of money for two days work, but I wouldn't do it again for \$2,500. He told me he'd give me \$350. if I would bring the body to Salmon. Money was always scarce for a young fellow in those days. So I got this Swede to go with me, down from Meyers Cove. He was staying there, working for Andy Lee at the time. We went down and went to dig him up. We had dug him up once before, when the coroner was in there. He had been just wadded in the dirt.... He still had the rope on, where they drug him. He had this rope around his neck and they tied it to the horse and drug him, face down, right over the frozen ground, 140 yards. When they rolled him into the hole, they just cut the rope off about that far from his neck.

When we went back to dig him up, the Swede and I, he was all decomposed. That was the worst thing! I had to get down under him. We dug down on the sides, and put a tarp under the body to get it out. The stench was awful....I finally got the tarp under him, then we put two or three ropes around the tarp, and we lifted him up to the top of the ground, and packed him down to the cabin. We had to stay overnight at the cabin, because it was a long day from Meyers Cove down there, just time enough to dig him up. It was January then, along about the 20th or 25th. It was a good thing it was a cold night. I had taken this big tarp, a heavy, awful heavy bed tarp, six feet wide and twelve feet long. He was so badly decomposed that I told the Swede, the only thing we could do was to wrap him as solid as we could in that. Down at the cabin, this Reberg happened to have an old sack needle and some twine there. So I just sewed him in solid, as tight as I could sew him up. Out in front of the cabin was an old sawhorse, like they sawed wood with a bucksaw. I arranged him over that, to fit a horse's back.

The next day he was frozen solid. We put him on the packhorse, with his head on one side and feet on the other, and started out. I was leading the packhorse, with Axel coming along behind. We had to cross the river. Something knocked my horse off his feet, but I hung onto the horse. It wasn't swimming water, but he grounded me wringing wet. We come out on the other side. Just as luck would have it, that cliff there, where the river goes in under Aparejo Point, there was a big bunch of driftwood. It was dry. Axel had some dry matches (I was wringing wet). He started a big fire. We had to wait a couple of hours, til I took off most of my clothes, and wrung them out and dried them. But I never got on my horse from there to Meyers Cove. I had to walk to keep from freezing. When we got up about Yellowjacket Creek, halfway from the mouth up to Meyers Cove, the body thawed out from the horse's heat. It was

the
just like grain. It just went to each end of /canvas bag it
was in.

We got up to the Cove, and I had to bring it on to Salmon.
I had a team and sleigh there. Old Frank Allison and old
Charlie Sherman was there, and they had some lumber there.
So we just made a box, and put the sack in. We stayed at
the Cove the first night. The next night I stayed at home,
and the next day I came on in to Salmon, and took it in to
Doebler down here. They had left word with Doebler to fix
him up so as they could see him when he got back. Well,
Doebler just looked in the end of the canvas (the end of the
rope was still there), put it in a casket and soldered it
up. And then put it in another casket, and shipped it....

End of Interview.