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An interview with

Dennis Burks

By Miriam Breckenridge

May 1979

Transcribed by: Claudia Taylor Walsworth

Edited by: Ginger Piotter, Sandra Hofferber and Clara Spiegel

Deanne Thompson: This is an interview with Dennis Burks conducted by Miriam Breckenridge, May 1979.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: ... this is just simply this. The sheep business, it seems to me. has been an important part of the history of Idaho; and it's been an important part of the history of our country. And there is really very, very little information that has been recorded or collected about how it operates or what it amounts to. So because of the people who just have asked questions of me about the business, I decided, well, I am going to collect this from the people who know, like you. And so what I'd like is ... Let's begin at this point. How did you get into the sheep business?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, I don't think there's ever been a time in my life when I literally can't look out the window and not see a sheep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: (laugh) That's great!

DENNIS BURKS: When I was little, even before I started school we had sheep. We've always had sheep. My father catered more to the sheep industry than he did to farming. Farming is where he started out. He cleared his own land there on the north side of Jerome.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: About what year was this?

DENNIS BURKS: They came to Idaho-- There was a large-- They lived in Virginia. That's where he was born and raised. My mother and father were born and raised in Virginia ... and they moved ... he moved with his three brothers -- that would be four of them -- left the family farm because there was ten in the family and there wasn't enough room for them. Literally, they just had to get out and on their own. So four of them came to ... they landed in Gooding. And then, through the grapevine or something, they got to Jerome. It was just a new project, 1912.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: 1912?

DENNIS BURKS: I think the water came to Jerome in 1909. I think they were three years after they first had water on the Jerome project when they came. And they took up some land, whether they got it through homesteading -- I don't think it was through homesteading. I think the land had already been taken up and they had to purchase the land in the rough state, sagebrush and rocks. You know how they were, those farms. They cleared the land. Each one of them took different parcels of land in Jerome County. It was in Lincoln County at the time. I looked up through the old thing. Jerome County was Lincoln County. Shoshone was the county seat at the time, before Jerome County was broke off.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: About 1918, when Jerome County broke off, it became a separate county. But my father catered to the sheep -- and two of his brothers -- more than they did to farming. And they stayed with it for some twelve or thirteen years. But by nineteen . oh, twenty-two (1922) or twenty-three (1923), along in there , they had more interest in the sheep than they did in farming.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: So they rented out their farms and went more to the farming [sheep ranching] end. About that time is when they -- The Homestead Act was in force at that time and they went into Northern Nevada/Southern Idaho across out of the Shoshone Basin, and ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh.

DENNIS BURKS: ...and homesteaded. That's where we originally got started.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In the sheep business.

DENNIS BURKS: In the sheep business, That's where we got in the sheep business. About 1923, twenty-four(1924), they started out, quite small, as a partnership, the three of them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The three brothers?

DENNIS BURKS: The three brothers worked up into ... oh, a three thousand head outfit. And that's where we got started.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now that meant, for instance, that your home place would have been, where?

DENNIS BURKS: In Jerome. That was our ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: In Jerome.

DENNIS BURKS: Our farm was in Jerome.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Your farm was in Jerome and you ran the sheep

DENNIS BURKS: Ran the sheep in the ... on the ... We went from Jerome in the spring of the year and we'd go down across what's called the Owsley's Bridge in the Hagerman Valley, trailing down there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And at that time, Highway 30 was the main route through Idaho, you know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And I remember we used to take sheep down there and feed them hay and feed them grain on the old highway. There wouldn't be a car come along once in the morning. I went back every half a day and you'd feed grain along the highway (laughter) because we fed them this loose grain. We had to have something solid to feed them on.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: So you fed it on the highway.

DENNIS BURKS: So we fed them on the highway, the oiled highway worked fine.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, that's why .

DENNIS BURKS: There wasn't [sic] any cars along in those days and you didn't have to worry about people.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That explains-- You said to me one time-- which is what triggered my wanting to come and talk to you-- you said, "You won't believe it, but I fed sheep on the road." You know, I didn't know what that meant.

DENNIS BURKS: That's what it was. We fed them loose grain, by God! You used to have troughs. Instead of troughs, we used to use Highway 30 there, by gosh! It was perfectly all right because no cars came along.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And so .

DENNIS BURKS: Then we ran them into the Bruneau are. That's when we went... that was, of course, all open. That was before we got the Taylor Grazing ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, because all that didn't happen until about the thirties (1930).

DENNIS BURKS: Thirty-four (1934). That's when the Taylor Grazing Act was enacted. This was back in the twenties (1920). And there was many, many sheep in that country. Sheep were just every place. We ran on what they called Blue Gulch Country-- that's the Bell Rapids Country, now ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: ... and Grassy Hills, Coon Skin, House Creek, Cherry Creek-- that's all west of Rogerson-- crossed at the Salmon Dam -- that's the Salmon Falls Dam.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: ... and came into Rogerson, which was about the later part of May. And then we would ship every lamb that would possibly could [sic] go to market; which was everything up to sixty-five pounds and above. They averaged about seventy-five pounds. These May lambs were quite young lambs. We carried the balance of them into northern Nevada over on the south end of Shoshone Basin. It's just across the line ten or fifteen miles.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, when you shipped, Dennis, where did you ship to, usually, at that time?

DENNIS BURKS: From Rogerson. They all went to Omaha and then to Chicago.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Omaha and Chicago.

DENNIS BURKS: Denver had started up, but Ogden certainly was never a market at that time. They all went to Portland-- I mean Fargo, Sioux Falls-- both South Dakota-- Saint Joe, Missouri, all those river points.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now somebody, of course, went on the train?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, yes. My uncle or my father or some of the men always had to go as drovers. I went many, many times as a drover, of course, after I got old enough to go. I think-- I don't think they'd allow you on the trains 'til you were fifteen or sixteen. At that time we started going, I made many, many trips on the train as a drover.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: For instance, what was the regulation? Approximately how often did you have to get those animals off and watered?

DENNIS BURKS: There was a thirty hour -- you could release them for thirty six, but usually we ran from Green River; that was the first feed. And then, if you were lucky, you'd get by Laramie and get to North Platte, Nebraska. And then you would reload them. And if you went to Omaha, you'd make the market the next day. If you went on to East Chicago, then you had another rest. I don't recall where we did have to stop in there, some place there in between that. Just out of Omaha on the Illinois side there's some place we had to stop and feed. We had three feeds. Going to Denver we always fed at Laramie if the connections were right.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: We always-- then in those days, had a special train. It was nothing but sheep on the train; a full trainload of sixty, seventy, eighty carloads of sheep. And you get on one of those specials and they hot-shot you through. That's what they called it, by gosh! They give all the right-of-way-- even you had the same right-of-way as a passenger train!

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Really?

DENNIS BURKS: Yes, and you had the right-of-way over all other freight.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Because they were--

DENNIS BURKS: Because they were livestock--

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They were livestock, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: -- and they were perishable.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. How long would the stop and rest be, approximately?

DENNIS BURKS: We-- Usually if we got into Laramie or Green River in the evening, we'd load the next day about ten o'clock. I would imagine fifteen, eighteen hours.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: It would be a reasonable stop and rest. They'd be well watered. The first stop, they usually didn't do much. We always figured the first stop [was] just rest. But the second stop they really took to the water and the feed. And we'd give them all they could eat.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And when they arrived in Omaha, and after we got to the market, we'd always give them a twenty-four hour rest and feed.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And it was a little place out of Omaha that was quite famous for feeding. It's called Valley. Now, I don't know just exactly where that little town is any more. It was just forty, fifty miles out of Omaha and that was a better place to stop and feed. Because when I first went there, they had pastures instead of regular feed lots.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh.

DENNIS BURKS: You'd turn them out into little pastures and you had to kind of herd them, take care of them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: But later-- the latter part of the thirties (1930) they got into where they fed hay and water in barns mostly.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: By that time. But originally they were sent out-- grazed in pastures.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now then, would you have trailed them from that pasture into Omaha? Yes?

DENNIS BURKS: No, the thirty-five miles they loaded them again.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You put them back on the train, on the trains. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And they had to be reloaded on the train. But they got so, after about the second or third time it was automatic for them. (laughter) But we had a lot of help. Every commission company, every stock yard had representatives out there to help you. You remember Ray Woods? For years he worked for Ogden and Denver stock yards; Union Stock Yards in Denver, Ogden Stock Yards in Ogden. And that was part of his business, to solicit business, to help the grower to ship and load and make all their arrangements for the cars-- do the whole ball of wax.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Would you know before you left Idaho with whom you were going to deal?

DENNIS BURKS: Not always. What you would do-- you would change the routing of the lambs-- the way they would go. You'd say we want to go to Chicago, Illinois, via Denver, via Omaha or Saint Joe or some place else. And when you got to these different places, if the market was a little down-- or going down or hadn't quite leveled off and you felt like it could improve by going on another two or three days, then you would go on.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see.

DENNIS BURKS: But as far as shipping, designating the shipping, the commission company usually-- you had a firm in mind when you-designated to-- but you could leave it open; just ship them from you to you at Chicago.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hmmm. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And decide after you got there. And then when you did that then the commission men really took an interest in you because (laughs) they wanted the business.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Yes. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But that was-- I went to-- and we used to-- that used to be quite a way to get east, to get back to Virginia, you know. You'd go to Chicago, by gosh! as a drover. It didn't cost so much to go down to Virginia and by gosh .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You'd go visit your family.

DENNIS BURKS: Or we'd buy a-- Quite often we went to Detroit and bought a car; and bring back a new car.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: You'd have three-fourths of the trip paid for-

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: -- going as drover on the train. You didn't have to come back on the train. You were given a ticket back on the passenger train after you arrived back there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, really?

DENNIS BURKS: If you wanted to go. And most everybody did return. [It] just so happened to be [that] we went to Virginia because all my grandparents were down there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: A lot of uncles and aunts and cousins. And we did go down there many times.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um Hum. Your mother's people then.

DENNIS BURKS: My mother and father used to live twelve miles apart. My father came here in 1912 and he went back and married my mother in 1916.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Excuse me. 1917.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And brought her out here. It was pretty rough out here then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, I'm sure.

DENNIS BURKS: It was just terrible, by gosh! They lived in tar-paper shacks ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: ... and the wind was something terrible!

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And there wasn't much to hold the dirt down.

DENNIS BURKS: There wasn't any trees or anything. In fact we lived in a house and lived in it for two, three or four years and it didn't even have any water, by gosh. We had to go down the road a mile to the people that did have water for drinking water. We had what they called a cistern. You hauled your drinking water up when you had time to fill the cistern which held ... oh, several hundred-- several thousand gallons probably. I don't know. It was dug in the ground, so many feet long and so many feet deep and you'd store your drinking water in that. But you didn't use it for any thing except drinking. (laughs) Now, you went to the coulee or the canal and got a bucket of water to wash your clothes in ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: ... wash dishes and make your coffee and all that stuff. But the drinking water was quite precious, you see.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And even after we did get our well in ... oh, ten-- maybe ten years after-- whenever electricity got there, we got the well.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: We didn't have electricity by our house at first.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: We got the well. It was just about two hundred feet from the house, but we didn't have it piped into the house We still had to pack it-- water in.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I guess

DENNIS BURKS: I can remember yet digging to help my mother-- and I was only four or five or six years old-- digging that trench for the water line across the garden into the house. We just had one cold water spigot came up in the-- and that was just ultra, ultra! That was the very best we had then! (laugh)



MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum, um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: That's-- of course there [were] hard times way back then. People say, "Oh! It's not as good as the old times." Well. by gosh! I'll tell you, I don't want to go back! (laugh)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I just read a very interesting-

DENNIS BURKS: I'm glad I've lived this much of it. (laugh)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. I've just read a very interesting book that isn't even in publication any more. It's called *We Sagebrush Folk* by Annie Pike Greenwood, a woman who came; and they were out here on the Jerome track when it was just developing. And you know it was just about the same thing .

DENNIS BURKS: You don't recall the name ... ?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Greenwood, Charlotte [Annie] Greenwood.

DENNIS BURKS: Greenwood ... Greenwood ... Well, there is a Greenwood area. That's the Hazelton area, do you suppose?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's right.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, I wouldn't know that, that's too far east.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: She was in Jerome County but not in Jerome.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Not close to where you are, but it's at the same time. In fact, she ended up teaching the first school because her husband -- at Greenwood and that's why they named the school for her ...

DENNIS BURKS: Sure.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Because her husband said, "My wife can teach," and they had children and so she taught, you know.

DENNIS BURKS: Have you read ... There's several good books out. One of them is Only the Hills Remain-

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No ... I don't know. (overlapping)

DENNIS BURKS: -- by a Mrs. Archie Bowman.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes! I have. I didn't ... I didn't .

DENNIS BURKS: I think that's real well --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes!

DENNIS BURKS: And it tells the whole story of the Utah Construction Company which is owned by the LDS Church and they were ... our enemies over there. Of course, we were invaders into their country, when my father homesteaded in Shoshone Basin.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: That was the area where the Utah Construction Company thought they owned it. They ran from ... Three Creeks, well ... from clear ... across Southern Idaho clear to -- as far as Snowville, all over the northeast corner of Utah and eastern half of Elko County in Nevada That was their area. It was a tremendous area. And my father and his three brothers -- um -- two brothers took up homesteads over -- right in the middle of their outfit. We found -- The requirements where you had to have water for stock on a section of land and you had to fence it and build a livable house; which they did.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And we stayed there. We spent many, many summers there .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: ... in the summer with the sheep, in that country. Later they sold out to Victors -- about that time.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well now, you say Utah Construction felt they owned that, but it had never been designated, had it?

DENNIS BURKS: Well no, It was just Federal open-- open Federal land.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

DENNIS BURKS: And you had just "squatters' rights" is all.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, and they felt they were there first.

DENNIS BURKS: And they were there first. And boy! they sure were hard on us! They cut the barbed-wire fences and run our sheep off and done everything. But that's the way it was in those days.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Did they have cattle?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, they had cattle and sheep both.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And sheep both.

DENNIS BURKS: Yes, that was a large -- that was a tremendous, large outfit. I don't know how many thousands of cattle they run in that country. In fact, they fences a lot of that in and one particular mountain over there called Dollier Mountain, it's still over there. It's right east of

Jackpot. They fenced it, Dollier Mountain in. They said it was poisonous. They wouldn't let anybody else in. They kept everybody else -- But that's where they turned their fat steers into out in that field every summer. (laughter) But the story was that it was poisonous. Nobody else could go in there but their fat steers.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Their steers were allowed to get along without the poison ...

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. They controlled a lot of that country, but we finally made friends with them. We had a very successful operation in Nevada.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: We ran there for many, many years until my father changed over to -- and went to the Flat Top Sheep Company with John Thomas' outfit.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Ah, how long ago did your father die, Dennis?

DENNIS BURKS: He died in 1947.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: New Years' Day 1947.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I just remember his name. But see, John and I were married in the fall of thirty-nine (1939). So I do remember the name, but I don't think I ever met him.

DENNIS BURKS: Did you know Art Peavey?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: He died in forty-one (1941)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: So you didn't know him very long, did you?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, no. But you see, the Peavey family ...

DENNIS BURKS: They were in Twin Falls, of course.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The Peavey family and John's family were very close.

DENNIS BURKS: And the Breckenridges were real close. (overlapping)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And so I knew about all that. Yes, I met Art.

DENNIS BURKS: Have you ever talked to Harry La Moynes?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well ... In fact he's the first person ...

DENNIS BURKS: How -- lately?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. This has got to be five years ago. He was the first people I ever went to see.

DENNIS BURKS: I'll bet he was pretty-- I mean he was pretty sharp.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He was. He was.

DENNIS BURKS: You know Harry La Moyne owned the Flat Top Sheep Company atone time. He didn't own the ... not by that name. Him and his brother owned where Flat Top Sheep Company operates.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, really? Now, I knew -- I knew he had owned over there, but I didn't realize it was the same place.

DENNIS BURKS: I can't give you all the history of that, but of course, the Mormans came to Rup -- I mean Carey in about 1870 -- 1880 or eighty-one (1881). The first water rights are eighty-one (1881) water rights ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: ... they started to file on water. Now, I don't know exactly what happened to that land for the first eighteen or twenty years. I think, probably, it was open land and maybe a few homesteaders came up in those draws.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But a fellow by the name of Johnny Gray-- and I don't know whether you ever heard that name or not ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, I've heard that name.

DENNIS BURKS: He homesteaded up there right above Carey. It's about eight, nine miles, what they called "the Last Chance Ranch". And that was the start of ... my first knowledge of the ownership of that ground that we now own.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And he bought out a lot of the homesteaders around him and put together quite an extensive outfit; some ten or fifteen thousand acres of deeded land, probably close to another forty or fifty thousand acres of BLM and Forest [Service] land. Yes, a lot more over what -- in 1918 he died. At least ... these dates may be a day -- year or two off, but I think 1918 he died. And Harry La Moyne and his brother, Charlie, bought the outfit for seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And I don't know how what -- how much stock was included in the deal,

but quite a lot of livestock with it. And then the panic of 1920 hit and wiped them completely out.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That was a very tough time.

DENNIS BURKS: Now, I haven't any idea how tough it was. But I hear "the Panic of Twenty" (1920) --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right.

DENNIS BURKS: And I'm sure it was a panic. I mean it was a position where you couldn't -- you couldn't always operate because you couldn't borrow any money. There wasn't any facilities like the PCA [Idaho Livestock Production Credit Association which was financed by the Federal Land Bank] or ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's right.

DENNIS BURKS: ... or the Federal Land Bank or anything that established so they had to -- they just took them over.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: When they took them over, and I don't know what -- It was a Portland or Seattle loan company took them over. They sold it to a man by the name of Theo Painter. And I don't know if you ever heard of him or not ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: This name I don't know.

DENNIS BURKS: He owned it for a short time and he lost it. And John Thomas, at that time was the head of the Gooding First National Bank, Jerome First National Bank, Hailey and Shoshone First National Bank.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, I didn't realize there were so many.

DENNIS BURKS: There were four banks that John Thomas headed up.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Jerome, Shoshone, Hailey and Gooding.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And some way this loan company sold it to him. Now, how it was done, I don't know. But I remember them telling a story, by gosh! that he was up there in the spring of the year shearing. And John Thomas had no idea what he had bought. He just knew it was on paper. So he went up there and they were sitting on a wool sack and this old Theo Painter was sitting there. And John says, "Theo, just how much of this country do I have here now? How much of it was yours before?" He said, "John, just as far as you can see, just as far as you can

see." (laughter) That takes in a lot of country.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, you bet! Up there? Gosh!

DENNIS BURKS: So that was the story. And John Thomas and Billy Robinson -- a guy from Buhl, Billy Robinson -- Robinson/Thomas for years --They run it for enough years, five or six years. And they got into real serious trouble in 1929 and thirty (1930) at the crash.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, this is Robinson, not Robertson?

DENNIS BURKS: Robertson. Excuse me.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Robertson.

DENNIS BURKS: Did I say Robinson? Robertson.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I wasn't sure which you said.

DENNIS BURKS: J.W. Robertson. Robertson.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: All right. Is that the same person that finally ended up living in Twin Falls? Because if it is, I may have met him.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, he lived in Twin Falls at one time ... quite a while. And I think his home was in Twin Falls. His ranch and his son lived at Buhl.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: J.W. Robertson.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: J.W. Robertson, okay.

DENNIS BURKS: I think it's the same one.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, I think it's the same. And they called him Billy.

DENNIS BURKS: Billy Robertson.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And he had a brother named C. Robertson.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: His daughter is married to the Bradshaw boy that had the honey business.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes. Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Now, what was his first name? It wasn't Kenny. Kenny is one of them.

What's the other one? Well, anyway.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Buzz?

DENNIS BURKS: Buzz. Buzz Bradshaw. They have a place at Ketchum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hmm. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Oh yes. C. Robertson's daughter is married to -- and she would be good on this because she would be another reference you could contact.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's wonderful. I didn't realize this.

DENNIS BURKS: She was born and raised up there at Bellevue.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'll get -- I'll see her because I'll be going to Ketchum this summer.

DENNIS BURKS: What's her name ...? Marilyn?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That s not quite right.

DENNIS BURKS: Merlyn?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It's close.

DENNIS BURKS: My wife would know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, and I -- Myrle! Merle Bradshaw.

DENNIS BURKS: Well now, she'd have quite a few stories to tell about that. And she can tell you about her father, Robertson and Thomas were partners.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And they had all these blooming sheep; I think a thousand yearlings. They had a business of going to Oregon, by gum! The camp wagons would leave here along in July. And they'd walk the camp wagons all the way with a team of horses clear over in Oregon country and accumulate these yearlings -- these ewe lambs in the fall of the year and then trail them back here along in January.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But they must have come through a lot of snow, Dennis.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, they started back in September and they'd get to probably ... to Boise by December, before the snow started.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And probably worked their way up the Snake River Or if they didn't make it, maybe they stopped at Mountain Home or Grandview area and wintered in there or wherever

they could.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: They'd trail those blooming sheep all the way back. Well, anyway, they had ten thousand out there -- up there that year when the panic hit in twenty-nine (1929) or the Depression hit.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And they were just desperate what to do. They had quite a bit of money into them [the sheep] and they couldn't get their money out. And John Thomas wasn't about to (laughs) lose his money because he was a banker. He was in the Senate at the time. He called Billy and he said, "Now, you sell those yearlings and get some money regardless. We're going broke if you don't." Well, they didn't. So the spring of 1930, here, they're trying to lamb ten thousand yearlings up there and no sheds and just on the range.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, out there -- You mean ... ?

DENNIS BURKS: Up Little Wood River, on Johnny Gray's, that country in there. They had an awful time.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: So when John Thomas came back, whenever he got through -- during a recess, he said, "I'm getting out of the deal. I'm going to sell out." And he did sell out; and sold his land out, too; back to a land bank. They took it over.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'll be darned.

DENNIS BURKS: And two years later, he bought it back for forty cents on the dollar! So he really made money there. (laughter) You know how things went down.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, Billy stayed in and he went broke.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But when John Thomas bought the land back, he gave his former partner, Billy, what they called the Joslin Ranch. That was the local ranch right east of Bellevue running up to what they call Muldoon Summit. It was ten or twelve acres. And Billy stayed in and came back pretty well. I mean, came back quite strong and at his death he was pretty well fixed. Billy had a hard struggle but he came back. (laugh) But John Thomas came out smelling like a rose because (laugh) when he got that land back real cheap. That was about thirty-two (1932) or thirty-three (1933).

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.



DENNIS BURKS: And at that time, he was looking for somebody to run his --operate his outfit. They had a Basco outfit that was running in the Pocatello area and which lost their rights there. So John Thomas acquired their sheep and ran them north and that was called the Flat Top Sheep Company. The Flat Top Sheep Company acquires its name from a piece of country up north and east of Minidoka, and it's a big country out there called the Flat Top. And it just happened to be where they ran for years, so they called it --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The Flat Top Outfit.

DENNIS BURKS: -- like you can hear of the Wood Creek, the Jump Creek, the East Fork ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I see. (overlapping)

DENNIS BURKS: ... the Salmon Falls, all those various names; even the Busterback Ranch land. (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Yes. (laughter)

DENNIS BURKS: So that's when my father went to work for Mr. Thomas in 1934.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Split away from his two brothers. The outfit wasn't quite large enough -- the Burks Company wasn't quite large enough to keep three families going.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: It was a pretty deal (laugh) in the thirties (1930).

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And so my father split off and went to John Thomas in 1934.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I did not realize that Mr. Thomas -- Senator Thomas, had been in this so relatively briefly before the time I had got to Idaho; because see, I came here in thirty-nine (1939).

DENNIS BURKS: He was in it just five or six years in the twenties (1920).

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. And then

DENNIS BURKS: And then sold out.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And stayed out two or three years and then got back in, by gosh!

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Back in again, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: On the same piece of land.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's something. That's really something.

DENNIS BURKS: He was -- He had enough foresight to see that this thing with the Depression was going to -- well, what -- was going to wipe everybody out. So he sold his place, and turned around and bought the same-- I think it was ... Did I say forty cents? I think it was thirty cents on the dollar. It was just a minimum price he had to pay for it the second time. And that really-- that, of course, was just after the Depression. That was thirty-six (1936) or thirty-seven (1937) it started bouncing right back. And right now he had his money back very shortly.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, of course, it was -- As far as he was concerned, it was an investment because he, as a person, didn't know anything about the sheep business.

DENNIS BURKS: He ... he just ... he was acquainted with the Goodings, Frank and the Fred and the Ed Goodings, and all them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And he knew -- (laugh) He could see a future in the sheep business.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: He was a wonderful person, Mr. Thomas was.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I've met him, but that was all ... a few times.

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, I tell you right now! if everybody lived like they lived ... today ... you know, watched their money and everything, we'd all be wealthy.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Can you imagine? I've seen Mr. Thomas with a pair of these little brown jersey gloves on; I think they cost about ten or fifteen cents a pair, and Mrs. Thomas was always ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Darning them?

DENNIS BURKS: Darning. Darning the holes in them, by gosh! and they were wealthy people (laugh) in those times. But they were just thrifty.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: You have to admire them for that.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: They were really thrifty.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Well, that's fascinating. Now let's talk a little bit more just about you, Dennis. You say you can't ever remember not seeing sheep. What was your first job? Herding sheep, do you think? Can you remember what your first job was?

DENNIS BURKS: Yes.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: What?

DENNIS BURKS: It was herding the bucks.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Herding the bucks.

DENNIS BURKS: Our place at Jerome was about a mile away from the desert, right north of our place. It's on the old Highway 93. Are you acquainted with the Mountain View Ranch?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Yes

DENNIS BURKS: You know, right there on the corner? That's where we used to get our water.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh.

DENNIS BURKS: They had a well there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And we used to haul our water up that road. Three-quarters of a mile on the right-hand side, right under the canal was my father's ranch.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh my.

DENNIS BURKS: He had a hundred and sixty acres there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And just up the road about half-- three-quarters of a mile above that was the desert then, before any of the pumping deal or anything like that. And my job every morning was to take those -- oh, I'd say ... well, forty or fifty bucks and some old ewes and everything that left the ranch.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And I had a saddle horse. She was as old as I -- older than I was. (laughter) I was about six or seven years old. I don't know, but I wasn't very old. I'd take these bucks up that road and stay up there all day long; take a lunch along with me. And at night I'd bring them back down that road .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And I was getting thirty-five cents a day. And when I went to town, I had a

check for thirteen dollars and some odd cents. I cashed it in J.C. Penney's Store, I can remember well, bought me some new clothes. And I was the proudest person on earth! I'm sure I wasn't over seven or eight years old. I don't think I was that old. I don't know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's a great story.

DENNIS BURKS: Just going up that road every morning to take them up and bring them back at night and put them in the corral; then back the next day. And no one was any prouder of that thirteen dollars and sixty cents, or whatever it was that I had gotten that check. I wish I would have saved the check. My dad wrote me out a check and I was just as proud as a peacock! Then checks were scarce. (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: I'm sure the thirteen dollars meant quite a bit to my father at the time, but it was the agreement. The Burk Sheep Company was going to pay me thirty-five cents a day for herding those bucks every day.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's just great. That's just great.

DENNIS BURKS: So then, we stayed right with the sheep, every holiday, every ... normally just about every night after school. On the day the school was out -- that was spring of the year -- the pickup was sitting there, our beds had to get in and we were on our way to the sheep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: I started pulling camp when I was real young. I don't know how young I was, but I was twelve or thirteen years old. Went out with the sheep herder and we learned to cook and brand and do everything. I remember going over in the Bruneau [Desert], and I had to be just a kid, and I broke the tongue on one of the wagons, now. And get out there and Dad wouldn't come and see us for a week or ten days and no way to move the camp wagon. So I rode to an old man's place by the name of Mr. Acres. Now he was a dry land farmer on Grassy Hill but he-- And asked him what -- (tape off and on again) I asked him what could I do. And he said, "Well, I could fix you up, but you've got to give me a lamb to eat." And so I went over there and he made me a new tongue for that wagon. And I carried it back. And he came over with his saddle horse and shot the best lamb in the herd and put it across his saddle and went home. (laughter) So I traded the best lamb in the herd for a wagon tongue. And the herder was quite upset because he did take the best lamb in the herd, he said. I didn't know it was the best lamb, but it was a good lamb, I'm sure.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: But I traded the wagon tongue for a lamb, a lamb for a wagon tongue.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, you were strapped.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, yes. It was a case of necessity, then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: So many things like that happened in those days, you know. I mean, you didn't have any facilities of getting back to town or getting back or any other way. (pause) Story-- one of the best stories I ever heard in my life was on the Clyde Bacon outfit. (laugh) They had lots of sheep scattered up and down the Wood River there. And at Richfield there was a store there. And it was more convenient for them to -- the camp tenders -- to go to that store. And they said, " Now you just go to that store and get what groceries you need and sign for them; get whatever you need and sign for them." Well, one day one of the camp tenders drove in there in an old rickety wagon, by gosh! and they had a brand new wagon sitting there. So he just took out a brand new wagon.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Signed for it?

DENNIS BURKS: Signed for it. I'm sure that really upset Mr. Bacon. (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, shoot!

DENNIS BURKS: But we used to work over there for ... well, it was a dollar a day. And we didn't come in 'til the fall of the year. There wasn't a kid in Jerome, by gosh! that went to school that had more money than we did. Because we had all our money, our summer's wages: ninety to a hundred dollars and all in one big check. And it looked like a million dollars for all of us.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You never saved any of the checks, of course. You wouldn't think of it, would you?

DENNIS BURKS: I looked through my stuff and everything, and I found some old papers but I don't -- whether -- I don't recall any checks. But we were pretty careful, pretty thrifty in those days. Done pretty well with it. Bought all our clothes. Had to spend the money. And of course, like I say, every weekend, every night after school, we'd go out and work. But that was usually free, gratis. If we didn't work a full day, we didn't get paid. (laughter) Half days.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, when you would do that, for instance after school, you-Did you lamb there at the place at Jerome?

DENNIS BURKS: At Jerome, yes. Every weekend that was part of your job to go out and work on the lambs.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Go out and work the lambs.

DENNIS BURKS: We lambed at various places. The first place we ever lambed that I remember is at Barrymore. The Swift Packing company had an enormous lambing shed there at Barrymore. I don't know how many thousands of sheep they lambed there. They went out of business. They had a big feed there in Barrymore. Do you know where Barrymore is?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, I don't.

DENNIS BURKS: It's just a mile west of Mountain View Ranch, on the railroad siding there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh. Oh, okay.

DENNIS BURKS: And they had this -- these big lambing sheds. They leased sections of it, you know. And they were so big that you could lamb tens of thousands of sheep there. And we could lease a section there and lamb two thousand sheep. That's the first place we lambled. My dad would ride a saddle horse over there and work all day and ride back at night. And of course, as little kids -- I can remember helping him put the canvas over there. That had to be -- well, we moved to town in twenty-eight (1928) and so I had to be eight or nine years old, less than ten years old, anyway.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: When you were doing that?

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. Yes, start-- like I say, it's always been sheep in our family.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And that's the first place we lambled. And we always lambled around Jerome until we moved to Flat Top or we came to Rupert, or my father came to Rupert to live.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Now, you say you helped -- you pulled camp for a herder. You didn't have enough of the family to do all this, so what nationality were those herders and where did those men come from?

DENNIS BURKS: They were Irishmen, in those days, and Tennessee-ans.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Really?

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. We didn't have any Basque -- or very little ... we had a few Mexicans years ago.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But you'd be surprised, my father and his two brothers herded ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: ...and with the kids

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You did-- (overlapping)

DENNIS BURKS: We just about made up a crew.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: It wasn't complete. I think we did hire a minimum amount of labor, but it wasn't very much. We done most all the work ourselves.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: My father usually ran the outfit. He'd take the groceries out and buy the patching, and both uncles herded sheep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Can you imagine? By gosh! we had very little range, too, at that time, you know; just scarce. Everything was hard. And my uncle, by God! had the tail-end of the sheep. And instead of going to his range, he'd just patch it up and down the roads around Hollister and Amsterdam, and all up and down the canal bank all summer long. (laugh) He'd go down the road a mile and let them eat along the ditch banks and stuff, and then go back the next morning -- day and back and forth. Of course, there wasn't too many people out there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: There's a lot of ditch banks. Oh, and the sweet clover grew up and stuff. And he made a band of lambs just going up and down the roads. (laugh) Of course, that was extremely -- just a hardship. You won't have much about patching -- well, maybe. There wasn't any money, that's all.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And you -- gosh! I remember my father, in 1931, his mother came up from Virginia for her first visit west. And he was trying to impress her, so he bought a new car, a Chevrolet car. It was quite a nice car. But he was drawing out of the company -- each one of the brothers was drawing eighty dollars a month. And the car payments were fifty-five.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh boy!

DENNIS BURKS: So my mother was living on twenty-five dollars and making fifty-five dollar a month car payments. The second year after we got it, my grandmother had gone back -- we couldn't afford to buy a license for the car. I think a license cost seventeen dollars. We couldn't buy a license for the car so it sat in the garage for two years jacked up, a brand new car. (laughter) Still paying for -- that's what -- it's like paying for a dead horse, isn't it? (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I wonder if your grandmother was duly impressed.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, I hope she was. But my mother kept the family of four children -- there was six of us -- on twenty-five dollars a month for those two years; thirty (1930) and thirty-one (1931) Thirty-two (1932), thirty-three (1933)-- um, thirty-one (1931) wasn't quite so bad. We just got into the panic, then; the Depression. But it was terrible .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That was tough. I ... I ...

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, it was too bad.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Our family was not in this, but I still remember during those years ...

DENNIS BURKS: Well, it was tough in the west here (overlapping)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I remember my own (overlapping) ... I remember the people who committed suicide .

DENNIS BURKS: Well, I know they jumped out of the windows.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: ... out of the windows. (overlapping)

DENNIS BURKS: There weren't any windows high enough to jump out of.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I remember my father walking around the house saying, "I don't know where the money is going to come from. But you know ...

DENNIS BURKS: (inaudible)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But no, that's a ... I'm sure this is why all of us that were little -- we weren't all little then, but at an age where it made a very deep impression -- I'm sure this is why we are much more conscious about -- you have to have a job and you have to know where you're going -- than the present generation.

DENNIS BURKS: As you say, it's done much as any -- it made us realize that it is awful essential to keep your credit good.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And I think that's something ... I know even at the worst of times, by gosh! my father could always go to the bank and get a few dollars when he needed it real bad.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: He didn't -- he didn't want to and he wouldn't do it [often], but he always kept his credit good. He kept the word and he kept the credit good. I've always followed that rule. When I went to college, by gosh! I didn't have very much money. I borrowed five hundred dollars off my dad. Went to college, came back, worked for a year or two, got married and I still owed that five hundred dollars. But I paid my dad every cent of it. And by gosh! I think it makes you appreciate the money a lot more.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Yes. I'm going back a minute for something I heard before and I don't understand exactly why -- I've heard other people say there were people from Tennessee here. Now, how did that happen?

DENNIS BURKS: I don't know, but there was a lot.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Single people? There were ...

DENNIS BURKS: Well, yes. I think a lot of those people ... it was probably like my father, large families ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And they just ...



DENNIS BURKS: ... no way of surviving. I mean, no way of making it ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: So they just came west.

DENNIS BURKS: And they came west. Tennesseans were quite fond of this country, years ago.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, see .

DENNIS BURKS: A lot of them.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I've heard this and ...

DENNIS BURKS: And they were good sheep herders.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Good men. Now, Tennessee ... and it's one of the few places you hear sheep herders come from in the United States; Tennessee.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: You don't hear very many Virginians or ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Nope.

DENNIS BURKS: Nobody from the northeast ever come out west to herd sheep. Mostly, if they wasn't from Tennessee, in most cases it was from people from overseas, like Irishmen, Scotchmen [sic] .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: A lot of Mexicans.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. And especially Basque.

DENNIS BURKS: Not too many of the Mexicans ever acquired sheep outfits. The Basques were quite thrifty and they did. And the Irishmen, there's quite a few Irishmen in Oregon today that's in the sheep industry.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: The Tennesseans ... there were a lot of those then. They were tough, hard people.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They didn't seem to own anything. They came and worked for other people.

DENNIS BURKS: No, but they were tough. Oh boy! they were tough. You had to respect

them. Boy! I know I told you about the greatest thing ever happened to the Burk Sheep Company was the rim-to-rim bridge, by gosh! We used to have to go clear up to Owsley's Bridge and across to the Bruneau, by gosh, or come down to Hanson and cross there and go south into the South Hills. When they built the rim-to-rim bridge that was right down our alley. We would just trail right down there, cross the rim -to rim bridge go down Blue Lakes Avenue, stop at the stock yards overnight and go on out south on East Five Point there. And it worked fine! That was a wonderful sheep trail for us.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right through the middle of town!

DENNIS BURKS: Both fall and spring. We used that trail quite regularly.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'll be darned.

DENNIS BURKS: It worked real good. And the first house you hit -- well, just a few farm houses -- but the first house you'd hit would be Washington School House. You know where that is?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes

DENNIS BURKS: Everything beyond that was all farms.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Farms.

DENNIS BURKS: And it was no problem trailing sheep down through there. You get down through there and you can scoot right down to East Five Point and never hardly get out of the yard.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, yes because again, then the main bulk of the buildings would be to the east.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, they were all to the east -- no, the west.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, to the west. You were on the east side of the town.

DENNIS BURKS: East side of town.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'll be darned.

DENNIS BURKS: And it worked real good. That was a wonderful thing, the rim-to-rim bridge for the Burk Sheep Company ... (laughter) . because we went to Shoshone Basin.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And we trailed in many, many sheep down through there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, as I recall, because we used to do this too, it was a penny a head to cross.

DENNIS BURKS: I don't remember what the charges were, but they ... but we were definitely charged there after -- there was a fare.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, this was very clear in my mind because when they dedicated the ...

DENNIS BURKS: Bridge.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: ... the new bridge, I don't know whether you recall or not, but --

DENNIS BURKS: 1928. Yes, I was there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well no, the new -- the one they just built.

DENNIS BURKS: Oh. Oh, excuse me! I'm talking about the first one. Well. when they just dedicated the second one, the four lane --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: The first one, no.

DENNIS BURKS: John Breckenridge (laugh)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: He came up, and he and Paul Solon [sp], they led the sheep across there and they gave their penny to the Master of Ceremony for taking the sheep across.

DENNIS BURKS: Is that right?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's how I knew that's what they used to pay, is a penny.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, that was good. That's a good one. (overlapping)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: (laughter) Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: That's got to be like me taking the -- (laugh) I don't know whether you saw it or not there a few years ago, by gosh. Went down to the bank -- this was about three or four years ago when cattle price was terrible. And I had an old pet wether and I lead it in there to the bank -- I've got the picture of it someplace. I led it (laugh) into the bank and I said, "I'd like to borrow a little money on this sheep, by gosh, (laugh) so I can go to the Cattlemen's Convention " (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Was this in the paper, Dennis?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh yes, it was in the paper. It made --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh gosh.

DENNIS BURKS: It made the...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Made the news.

DENNIS BURKS: It made the Idaho First National Newspaper, the weekly they put out.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh yes.

DENNIS BURKS: I had a photographer down there from my own local paper. He got quite a kick out of it. Everybody did.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh.

DENNIS BURKS: We had a good time that day.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: What part of the sheep business do you like the best?

DENNIS BURKS: What part of the work, do you mean?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, there isn't any that I dread or hate; the lambing and the weather is the biggest obstacle. The weather bothers old people. It doesn't bother you when you're young; you don't notice it. But the weather gets to me now, you know, in the winter time, like last winter.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, well. This last winter , Dennis, was just awful.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, this last winter out there ... One day we ... we don't have the good help like we used to have. We have plenty of help, but it's not ... they don't have the experience or take the interest, probably. And so we actually get out and do a lot of the work ourselves. I'm a working boss, not one that rides around and tells people what to do.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And out there once this ... the latter part of January this year, it was twenty-three below zero and we had a twenty-mile east wind, the chill factor was fifty-five below zero. Now, that's too much for a man like ... I can't hardly take that anymore.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Did you lose quite a lot of lambs this winter?

DENNIS BURKS: We ... we had ... we lost ... through those two weeks of that severe weather, we were lambing the very heaviest and the conditions were just impossible and we did lose some lambs.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'd understood that because of the weather, that it was just impossible .

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. Yes, there was just no way to save them. They were coming so fast that we couldn't take care of them properly. And we couldn't leave them under the shelter properly or long enough because we had to take and move them out so the next could have a place.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Right. The lambs.

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. And they were coming just ...(tape off and on again) ... well, I was just saying that my first recollection -- and I don't know really how old I was, probably about four -- standing at the window -- my nose pressed against the window up on a chair, and watching my mother drive the team of horses for my dad to throw the hay off for the sheep. So they go back a long time, sheep do in our family.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's got to be one of your very earliest recollections.

DENNIS BURKS: Recollections. Yes. We lived on the ranch, right there southeast of Jerome.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And that has to be one of my earliest recollection. I can remember very well we used -- the place where we fed them, right today.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's great.

DENNIS BURKS: The old house, the whole deal now, what have you .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Is the house still there, Dennis?

DENNIS BURKS: No. They -- of course -- the original house I was born in, it was just a tar-paper shack and I think we finally made a greenery out of it or something. And we built another house there. And then since, another house was built. My mother sold the house, here, after my father died, along with the ranch here ... oh six or eight, ten years, fifteen years ... I don't know how long. It was just too much of a job for her to worry about and I was gone up here.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: We sold the ranch since then, but he was one of the original first owners on it. Kept it some forty or fifty years.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But we lived in Jerome and the city of Jerome twenty-eight .... she lived in there ... oh, she died in fifty -- just right at fifty years before she ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Died last year.

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. Um hum. The old place that we lived out at this ranch.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: I don't know what else ... I was looking at here, maybe nothing else. (pause) I do recall one thing that is kind of interesting to me anyway. I was just about ten years old and you have to-- can get the figures and check if you'd like -- but I was over, I was over in Nevada

on this homestead herding a bunch of dry [?] sheep. My father had to go to Jerome and get groceries or on business or something. The morning after he left, it was extremely hazy. It wasn't fog and it couldn't -- it wasn't clouds, but the sun was blocked out, and I couldn't for the world figure out what it was. I knew it was different and I wasn't acquainted with smoke at the time. I later found out it was smoke and it lasted for two or three days, quite gloomy and quite depressing. And years later, I happened to be in Portland; and we were going out of Portland towards Astoria. And here was a big sign up "Tillamook Fire in 1928". And it was the smoke from that darned fire. And I just happened to put two and two together. I was little at the time; I probably didn't question it. Maybe I forgot it. The next day the smoke blew away. But that Tillamook fire was one of the biggest fires in the west, I guess, at the time. They tell me it was one of the largest.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And it drifted that far?

DENNIS BURKS: And it drifted clear over here and it was extremely hazy. It was just a weird feeling, by gosh. It was more like an eclipse, you know, where ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: ... everything kind of blacked out and you couldn't see the sun and you knew it wasn't ... It wasn't the right color for clouds; it had a brownish-red tint to it. It was quite weird and I remember that well, by gosh.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You must have had a slight sense of uneasiness.

DENNIS BURKS: Well, I was. I was quite young, alone and young. I was only ten years old and really I was quite ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Scared.

DENNIS BURKS: I was frightened, by God!

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And why I -- if I did ask anyone what happened, they didn't recall it anyway.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No. Hmmm.

DENNIS BURKS: And I did, when I visited in Portland here. Many years later, I realized then, "Nineteen twenty-eight (1928) was the year I was herding sheep over there and that was the year of the "Tillamook Fire". Now, I hope I'm right on those dates. You can look that up and find out. But ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It sounds good to me.

DENNIS BURKS: I think it's right. I think it's right.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes, sounds good to me.

DENNIS BURKS: And I'm sure that's right. And that's one of the queer things that happened in my day. (laugh)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Well, I think that I have been close a couple of times in the mountains to where there's been severe fires and ...

DENNIS BURKS: Um hum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: ... and it is that kind of thing when you're way out alone.

DENNIS BURKS: It's different. It's different than clouds or a gloomy day or something. It's kind of eerie. You just kind of worry about it.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And was just one -- I remember when the old town of Rogerson was a boom town when I was a little kid. There was an old lady there by the name of Mrs. Diener [sp]. I don't know what ever happened to her. But the Utah Construction Company had a lot of cowboys in it. Utah Construction company had lots of cowboys and lots of sheep outfits in there. And she had a hotel. And she had a beautiful daughter, by gosh! and they always had dances there. I was just a little kid. Looked in the window, but I never got to go in. (laughter) And there was an old crippled fellow there who run the general store by the name of Mr. Moss. I'll never forget him, he had a paralyzed hand. And there was a Negro family there, a woman by the name of Mrs. White and she had a son and I don't recall his name. But she run the stray herd there, about the same job Tommy Fica used to have.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum, up in Ketchum.

DENNIS BURKS: And she'd be at the stockyard every time they shipped and any little bummie lamb that nobody wanted, she'd take home. And she'd take care of your strays. If she saw some of your sheep, she'd cut them out. And she run a little goat herd there. I don't know how in the world they ever lived. It was a (laugh) I suppose she was probably the only colored in Southern Idaho. (laugh) I don't think there were very many then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I don't think there were either.

DENNIS BURKS: I don't know how they got dropped off there. Probably when the railroad was built maybe or something ... they ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, yes.

DENNIS BURKS: ... they landed here or .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: I don't know what the story is behind it. But if you ever talk to any Rogerson people and Harry Noh ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, John's brother?

DENNIS BURKS: John's brother.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: He might know the story on Mrs. White. (laugh) He was our neighbor up there in Shoshone Basin. He might know the story. But he will remember Mrs. White, I'm sure (laugh) because Mrs. White was as black as black could be.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And all by herself.

DENNIS BURKS: And all by herself and her son. She had a great over-grown son.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Isn't that something?

DENNIS BURKS: It really is, really something. That little Rogerson was a booming town then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Why?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, big shipping point then and --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, for livestock?

DENNIS BURKS: Yes, mostly for livestock. Very little farming around Rogerson. There wasn't any water there much. But you see, there wasn't any Jackpot or anything. Wells was the closest town. And going north, Amsterdam and Hollister were very small stopping places. But you had to be within a wagon's driving distance of the town then

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: ... to service people. And there was a lot of cattle and lots of sheep around there. And everything west of there, you see, why, it was quite an area from there to Jarbidge, you know. There wasn't anything between there. Everybody came to Rogerson for their groceries; and there was a lumber yard there. There was a drug store there. There was quite a main street there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Really?

DENNIS BURKS: I remember Main Street two or three blocks long. It isn't a main street you know, now.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No, it's off to the side.

DENNIS BURKS: It ran, east and west along the railroad track.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Quite a humming place. The train came in there quite regular oh, daily trains,



and shipped livestock out of there.

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MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hmm.

DENNIS BURKS: It was a big stock yard there; shipped a lot of stock there.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'll be darned.

DENNIS BURKS: Dan Cavanaugh was one of the old timers in that country. He used to-- He had a sheep outfit in there. The Nohs, all of them were there. And I can't remember all the people who used to run out of there. There was a lot of livestock in that country then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hmm.

DENNIS BURKS: Railroad hauled a lot of stuff out of there. One of the Basco outfits further west, Morris Guerry's father, Baranoga[Sp]

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Hmm.

DENNIS BURKS: All that area near there. I don't know any of the ... I didn't have anything else ... Over in those hills years ago(laugh) every place there was a stream or any water, there was a moonshiner. (laugh) I remember that. And some of the prominent families around Buhl and them had relations up there was making moonshine. I won't mention any names because it might ... some of them is still alive, I'm sure.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They just had their stills out there in the wide open spaces?

DENNIS BURKS: . . . just make the whiskey all summer, by gosh, and then haul it down in the fall of the year. And live off...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: What did they make it out of?

DENNIS BURKS: I suppose they used barley or corn-mash or ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh.

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DENNIS BURKS: I don't know what kind . . . . But they were pretty well isolated up in that, up in that country.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: It was quite ... You'd go down there and stand on the road all day and never see a car go by down there, by gosh. You couldn't mail a letter or anything. (laughter) You'd be lucky to see somebody go by once in a while.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: (this passage inaudible) It was quite-- and we had... oh, six or eight there pretty in those days, what the , of course anything today over here. The Flat

Top's better up there, I'll tell you for sure. (laughter)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now. How-- how long have you been with the Flat Top, Dennis?  
SHEEP RANCHING WHILE GOING TO COLLEGE

DENNIS BURKS: My father went there in the fall of 1934; and like I say, I worked every weekend, every time I could, all the summers. I graduated in thirty-six (1936) from school, high school. I stayed out a year and worked with the sheep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: I went to Pocatello in thirty-seven (1937), fall of thirty-seven (1937). And even when I was at Pocatello-- it's only seventy-five miles from here to Pocatello-- on Friday afternoon, I hitchhiked down to Rupert, here, and walked to Highway 30, just within a mile of the lambing sheds and walked up that mile. I started to work on Friday afternoon just as soon as I got there, by gosh. I'd work Saturday and Sunday and my dad would take me  
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DENNIS BURKS: (cont.) up to Minidoka and I'd get on the train Sunday night and ride back to Pocatello. And that's the way I made all my spending money, by gosh.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And I worked through the winter like that. And of course later on, in the fall and the spring of the year, they were gone then.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: But as long as there were sheep or anything to do here at the lambing shed in Rupert, I hitchhiked that far.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You came down and helped.

DENNIS BURKS: It was pretty simple to get that far in those days. Somebody would always pick up a college kid, you know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Now and then, and that's what ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's what you did.

DENNIS BURKS: Come back up.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And then when you got out of school, you went right into the business with your dad?

DENNIS BURKS: When I was in school-- I went right back into business. I was gone about a year and a half. There was about a year and a half, there. I thought I wasn't getting quite

enough money. I went to Mr. Thomas and told him that I thought I should be paid a little higher. I didn't want to work for wages and be a sheep herder all my life. And Art Peavey was here then, of course. And my father and the two of them were very capable of taking

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DENNIS BURKS: (cont.) care of all the better operation and I was inclined to look for a little something a little better. So I applied for other work.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: But then you found --

DENNIS BURKS: And I did find quite a good job. I was working for the parts man at McVey's in Twin Falls. I worked about a year.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And then Art Peavey drowned.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Drowned. (overlapping)

DENNIS BURKS: Drowned in forty-one (1941). And they needed someone else and they approached me. And I came back in the fall of forty-one (1941) and of course I've remained ever since.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum. Oh.

DENNIS BURKS: But I've been connected at all times since thirty-four (1934) with the Flat Top in some capacity or other. Even when I worked for McVey's, I used to help my father whenever he needed me to.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: Sundays, or if I'd be off a day, I'd run out to sheep camps. I've always been real close to the Flat Top and .

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: You've been a sheep man, really, all your life.

DENNIS BURKS: Yes, that's my --

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Beginning with your first recollection out the window. (laugh)

DENNIS BURKS: Yes. Well, I guess ...(pause)

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Do you see a future in the business?

DENNIS BURKS: Well, it's a real tough deal for an individual to break into. That's one reason why I've never gone on my own in this business. It's an awful hard business to get into. There've been some outfits together. Some people have got into it. These Basco boys have broke into it the last few years and they've been able to build up an outfit. But it's a tough business to break into. It takes so blooming much money. If you've got that much money to

start, you better think twice before you ask yourself all that hard work.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: The return's economical. The sheep business can't be beat. I do believe it's very gratifying to get that check -- two checks every year, that wool and lamb check every year. And they do really pay off well, much better than cattle, way ahead of cattle. Everybody -- I mean, practically every cattle outfit in this country originally started out as a sheep outfit.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And then they're just inclined to ... take it a little easier; So they sold their sheep and bought the cattle. It's easy to operate a cattle outfit. And I'm sure John will tell you the same thing from his own experience.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: You don't have the headaches. But it's awfully gratifying to work with sheep. Like I say in our own outfit, we have the cattle to be respectable, but the sheep make the money.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I don't think I know of any of the sheepmen that I've talked to ... They all have this feeling about it.

DENNIS BURKS: Um hum.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Oh, you know, John Breckenridge hopes to get back into it someday, if he can. We can't .

DENNIS BURKS: I don't recommend it to anyone because of the work and the worry, the pressure and the constant ... three hundred and sixty-five days a year is a little bit too much. I tell everybody, " I just love what I'm doing, but I wish there wasn't quite so much of it."

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And I mean it, too.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Gosh, when I first came here, I worked for twenty years and I don't ever remember taking two days off in a row.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And Sunday. Just the same as Monday in this business, you know.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's right.

DENNIS BURKS: If you just have ... I don't want a five-day week, I'd like to have a six-day

week, make sure I have one day. Like I was telling somebody the other day, they said, " Oh gosh, you get a month's vacation a year!" I said, "My gosh! You get fifty-two days vacation in any other job." And that's the truth, by gosh! If I get thirty days off a year I'm lucky. But most people get at least fifty-two days off because they get Sundays off every [week] and I don't.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: So it's ... it's really a tough life. I wouldn't encourage anyone again. If they enjoy the work and want to live that way . And it's hard on your family. You're gone so much ... But I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. I think they can do better and live a lot better ... live a lot easier ... live a lot longer, probably. I don't know about living long, because look at old Harry La Moyne. You can't live any longer than that.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: No

DENNIS BURKS: Bill Newman and a few of them, they lived long enough, didn't they?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: That's right. That's right, and Jack Lane.

DENNIS BURKS: Yep.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, they did.

DENNIS BURKS: I think it's a healthy life, all right. I never spent a day in the hospital that I can remember. (laugh) But ...

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: And of course, then there's the question of the return on it now, certainly is good now.

DENNIS BURKS: It's ... return on the sheep ... Sheep recover so much faster than most. You know, you're in -- maybe down today, but six months from now, by gosh. The sheep business can recover real fast. It isn't true of the cattle or so many of the other businesses. They're longer -- they may stay up a little longer, but when they go down, they stay down longer. This cattle ... the last few years or so of these cattle deals have just about wrecked most of the cattle men in this country. At the same time, the sheep were enjoying a fairly good return.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And our sheep -- our books on the sheep will show you that, gosh, out of the past forty years there's only been three or four years, four or five years we lost money on. There may be two or three years we broke even. But on the whole our sheep business had showed a profit seventy-five, eighty per cent of the time over the past forty years. I'm sure that we've got the books to prove it. The returns on it are very good. We got the coyote problem. It isn't nothing we can't handle, by gosh. We're handling it very well with those helicopters. We do have the infringement, by gosh! of too many danged people. And I don't know what they're going to do about that.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Now, would you elaborate? What do you mean there?

DENNIS BURKS: I'm talking about RARE II [Roadless Area Review and Evaluation 1978].

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: Setting aside all this wilderness area, like the Salmon River area. They state that there be multiple use, but you and I know that won't ever be the same. You don't back up very easily. Those things are all a hindrance to the sheep industry. The way we've been used to running them anyway. I don't say it's going to completely wipe it out. But I have said in the past, there may be a time come when the only place you'll see a sheep is in a zoo! That's kidding, but I think the days of the range operators are certainly getting fewer than they were. I mean, they are getting fewer every year. And that really concerns me. I feel sorry because it's been a hell-of-a business, good business.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: You don't see too many big outfits anymore. So many outfits have gone. These farm flocks have held up pretty well, in most cases, because they've been good return. But range operations ... labor is ... always a problem. But it's not a thing we haven't been able to whip. I don't know of any problem we can't whip except the problem with the government and people. And those problems are pretty big.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes. (pause) Where are you getting your herders now, Dennis?

DENNIS BURKS: Oh, in our outfit we are still fortunate enough to have a main nucleus of Basques. We still have six or seven good Basques that know the business pretty well.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And have stayed with us quite -- many years. We've tried the Peruvians with fairly good success here. They aren't big, strong, go-ahead people like the Basques. But you can work with them. Many people-- we haven't tried, but many people use wetbacks. And they also can get Mexican Nationalists on the same contract as we did the Basques and the Peruvians.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: I haven't used it with them, but we're still ... the labor situation hasn't gotten impossible yet.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: It isn't as good as it used to be, I'll say that much. But it still isn't impossible.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Um hum.

DENNIS BURKS: And probably another thing that's awfully important -- we've changed our way of thinking about a lot in the last few years ...in the way you take care of your labor. My gosh! you've got to provide the best conditions and feed the best and make them as comfortable as

possible and then pay them everything that you can utterly afford. Don't -- Good labor isn't cheap. Don't ever underrate ... And that's where so many people made a mistake.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: They wouldn't pay any ...

DENNIS BURKS: If I made mine the hard way, why can't they work it the same way.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Yes.

DENNIS BURKS: And you don't do that anymore.

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I think that's right.

DENNIS BURKS: (inaudible)WOOL

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: Do you see a future in the wool business, too? Do you think it's going to hold up?

DENNIS BURKS: Well, wool is certainly ... it's certainly rebounded here in the last year or two. And it's awfully good. And gosh! That's the most wonderful fiber on earth. There's no better fiber than wool. I don't give a darn just what quality, I'll stick up for it. I don't think there'll ever be a substitute, even working man's clothes. Maybe you can substitute with other things, but for quality merchandise it's like diamond rings, wool is ... (laugh). it's certainly rebounded here

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: It kind of seems as though there is going to be a place for natural fibers, you know, after these years.

DENNIS BURKS: How about a cup of tea or something?

MIRIAM BRECKENRIDGE: I'd love a cup of coffee. (tape off)

END OF INTERVIEW