

OH-3010, Frank Shepperson, 4-16-2014, WY In Flight

JUNGE: OK. I'm going to put that on. As long as the cat doesn't walk on it, I guess that tape recorder will work.  
OK. My name is Mark Junge. Today is the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 2014 and I'm in the home of Frank Shepperson here, north of Casper. Where are we, exactly, Frank?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, southwest of Midwest, about 16 miles and northwest of Casper, about 40 miles.

JUNGE: We're west of the interstate, I-25.

SHEPPERSON: Around 326 radial of the Casper BUR 17 DME.

JUNGE: What does that mean?

SHEPPERSON: That's the aeronautical -- (laughter)

JUNGE: OK. All right. I think you're trying to show me up.

SHEPPERSON: No.

JUNGE: What is this valley we're in here?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, this is the -- actually the Shannon Formation -- outcropping of the Shannon Formation. This particular valley used to be [00:01:00] what they called the Wolves Den. The old trappers used to have a fence across there and put wolves and coyotes in there in the summer and feed them wild horses and then, when their furs became prime in the winter, they'd trap them back out of there. It's kind of one of the world's first fur farms. (laughter)

JUNGE: So, they actually -- they actually caught them and kept them in?

SHEPPERSON: Right, because there is a big spring up here which is our house water, and so they had water and stuff and they built that big fence and kept them in there. Of course, a lot of them had babies and stuff. But, when their furs got prime, they got them back out of there.

JUNGE: Got them back out to their own country.

SHEPPERSON: No, they got them back out and turned in their hides for money.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. Well, now, I want to know what we're looking at. To my left, out the sliding glass door -- your front sliding glass door onto the porch -- I'm looking at a rimrock over there with some hoodoos on it. What am I looking at over there?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, that is the Shannon Formation that I was speaking of. [00:02:00] In places in Wyoming, that produces water down the creek that produces oil. There's Shannon Oil Field. It's one of the sand formations.

JUNGE: Then, opposite that, I'm looking here, opposite to the -- I guess this would be the southeast.

SHEPPERSON: That's correct.

JUNGE: What am I looking at over there?

SHEPPERSON: OK. That's -- those formations make up what we call the Teapot Divide. It divides Teapot Creek from Castle Creek. But -- excuse me. Go ahead. But, at any rate, there are different formations over there, like the Sussex and the Parkman, and it's where those formations --

JUNGE: What creek is this out here?

SHEPPERSON: Castle Creek.

JUNGE: Castle Creek. Which way does it run?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, right through Midwest. It goes down into the Salt Creek and into the Powder River, right straight north into Montana.

JUNGE: OK. Is there water flowing in that? Is that an intermittent stream or does it flow constantly?

SHEPPERSON: It -- there are springs in it constantly but it doesn't flow constantly. It will dry up.

JUNGE: [00:03:00] OK. Is there enough there to take care of your cattle?

SHEPPERSON: In places -- in places. In places, we use artesian wells and reservoirs. Then, there are springs along it. In places, it keeps water and in some places, it doesn't.

JUNGE: Now, I would assume that this country is just like Louisiana, coming -- driving up here today. I almost got -  
- I didn't get stuck. I got stuck just a little ways down

the road here in this thick gumbo. But, that's not normal, is it?

SHEPPERSON: For us to be wet? Yeah, this time of year it is. It is. This is our wettest time of year. This is when we get our moisture -- April and May -- and this makes our yearly grass.

JUNGE: Have you had much moisture this year?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, it's been a pretty tough winter. We've had quite a bit of snow. In fact, it's the first time in several years our reservoirs are full and things are looking good.

JUNGE: The cattle are in good shape?

SHEPPERSON: Yes. We've had to feed a lot more than usual but they're in good shape.

JUNGE: Do you raise your own hay?

SHEPPERSON: No, we don't raise any hay. [00:04:00] We just strictly range and, as a general rule, we just feed some protein. As the grasses become more mature in the summer, we take a little -- what we call "cake" -- and it's a protein pellet and feed them two or three pounds to keep their protein up. They just graze year-round.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. Otherwise, they're pretty much grass-fed?

SHEPPERSON: That's correct. They are completely.

JUNGE: What kind of -- I know people talk about a cow-calf operation and a bull operation. What is this?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, this is a cow-calf operation and we save of them over, you know, stockers or -- we keep a lot of heifers and breed some and then sell some as yearlings.

JUNGE: Well, I had to -- I had to push some of your calves off the road (laughter) coming in. I tried not to scare them, but they're ornery little things until you just practically get your bumper up on them and then they skidder over to the side. Have you always had Angus?

SHEPPERSON: [00:05:00] No, we had Herefords years ago. You know, there's been kind of a switch over the last 50 years. The Angus seem to do a little better. Also, the certified Angus beef -- they bring a little more per pound than a Hereford does. Our main thing is our grass and taking care of the range. Our main thing is to change -- you know -- the sunlight and the photosynthesis producing grass and change it in a renewable resource so people can eat good protein. So, whatever does it most efficiently because of our labor and brings the best, whether it's wildlife, sheep, cattle. Whatever does it best for us, that's what we run.

JUNGE: Lisa said you were into sheep for a while, right?

SHEPPERSON: Well, as this ranch has expanded, you know, we've leased other places and sometimes, [00:06:00] when you lease, some people kind of going out of business -- we buy their sheep, and lease their land, and run them for a while. Our main business has generally been cattle, but we have run some sheep, yes.

JUNGE: Do the sheep do better here?

SHEPPERSON: No, the predators are so bad and the labor and the predators make sheep very tough in this country.

JUNGE: What sort of predators do you have?

SHEPPERSON: Mountain lions, coyotes. Coyotes are the main one; eagles, mountain lion.

JUNGE: So, in a normal year, what percent of your flock would you lose to predators?

SHEPPERSON: Well, like, if you're lambing, anytime you lamb before the first part of May when a big part of the eagles fly back to Alaska, you lose almost every lamb. They'll just decimate them. But, I would say, you know, depending on how good a job you do in your predator control, if you do not do predator control, you lose [00:07:00] close to 50% of lambs.

JUNGE: From eagles only or --

SHEPPERSON: No, coyotes, mainly.

JUNGE: Mountain lion?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: I didn't know you -- I knew they had a problem with mountain lion in the Southern Big Horns because there is one lady that was fighting that like crazy. What was her name?

SHEPPERSON: Bonnie Smith.

JUNGE: Bonnie Smith. Right. Do you know her?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, she just lives up here a little ways.

JUNGE: Oh, really?

SHEPPERSON: We're at the south end of the Big Horns, and we summer on the Big Horns.

JUNGE: Yeah, Lisa was saying there's a -- what do they call it -- a 33-mile driveway?

SHEPPERSON: That's correct. That goes right to the -- it's right on our west edge. So, we can take out the gate right on the driveway to the Big Horns.

JUNGE: Never have to worry about the interstate or any roads?

SHEPPERSON: No, there's a county road through there, but there are no paved roads.

JUNGE: Are you going to drive again this spring?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, very definitely.

JUNGE: You're going to be a part of that?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, yes, very definitely.

JUNGE: So, when you said earlier that they're keeping you busy, is that what they -- is that what you meant?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Yeah. Oh, yeah, we trail cattle. This is what I love to do, so I'll [00:08:00] keep doing it until I can't.

JUNGE: Yeah. Well, I didn't come to talk about the ranching operation, but, you know, for somebody -- one of your grandkids, maybe, that wants to know -- it's kind of nice to familiarize yourself or familiarize the listener to where we're sitting here and a little bit about the significance of this country. Now, the significance of this country, as far as I ever knew, was oil.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, well, you know, the oil field is in the middle of our ranch, but we don't have much to do with the oil field. You know, we don't have -- where our mineral rights are is up here where my grandparents homesteaded, and there's no oil up here. So, we make our complete living with livestock. But, we deal with oil companies a lot. In fact, we run our cattle in the wintertime right down there in the oil field, and there's a symbiotic relationship. You know, they [poop?] out warm water all winter and things like that, and the people are good. They let us know if we have any problems with our cattle down there.

JUNGE: Well, why is it that the Sheppersons never became  
[00:09:00] oil barons?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) I don't know. We prefer cow manure to  
grease on our hands. (laughter)

JUNGE: But, was it by choice or just accident?

SHEPPERSON: Well, probably, both. My granddad originally  
homesteaded down there in about 1900. Then, when the oil  
boom came and the people came and, of course, there was a  
lot of trouble down there, fighting over the oil, well,  
this was better land up here and there was an old guy up  
here that left. So, he moved up here. That moved us out  
of the oil.

JUNGE: Well, what kind of troubles did he have?

SHEPPERSON: Well, they were claim jumping and arguing about  
who had what leases and stuff. You know, the oil company  
down here is one of the -- it used to be the lightest --  
largest, light oil-producing field in the world -- the Salt  
Creek Oil Field. So, when it boomed, it really, really  
boomed.

JUNGE: Well, then, did your grandfather homestead, [00:10:00]  
thinking about oil, or did he homestead --

SHEPPERSON: No. No, he was a livestock person and  
homesteaded right here on this creek.

JUNGE: Right where we're at?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. The end of his homestead is actually at those rocks. He homesteaded down the creek a little ways.

JUNGE: OK, and then he passed the ranch onto his son, your dad?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. My son bought it from --

JUNGE: Your dad was Frank, Senior?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, that's correct.

JUNGE: OK. One of the things I ask people is when and where were they born? When and where were you born?

SHEPPERSON: I was born in '42, right here in Casper. The fact is my dad and my mother, me and my siblings -- we all went to the University of Wyoming to college and were raised right here.

JUNGE: What was your birthdate?

SHEPPERSON: My birthdate? The fourth month, seventh day of '42.

JUNGE: So, you have just turned 71?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, actually, I just turned 72 last -- a couple weeks ago.

JUNGE: I'm going to turn 71 in June. So, I've got to [00:11:00] respect my elders.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, that -- don't forget that. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, tell me -- Frank, tell me a little bit about growing up in this country.

SHEPPERSON: Well, we grew up. You know, my parents went through the Depression here and my granddad, everybody went broke. Then -- so, things were very, very tough and we had to work off of the ranch quite a bit, you know, to make ends meet. Then, in '49, my dad leased some country and the '49 blizzard wiped out our cattle. We went broke again and so my biggest goal in life was being able to ranch without having to work off the ranch to make a living. So, when dad died in '69, we weren't solvent. In other words, we owed more than it was worth. But, I taught school, worked in an oil field, and then went rodeoing. When I came back from rodeoing, I put the livestock money and my money back into getting everything paid off. When I came back [00:12:00] the late '70s and built this place, I was debt-free. Then, the early '80s hit and all the ranchers had a really, really tough time and we were sitting here debt-free at that time because I had been off rodeoing instead of spending money. So, that's when we started accumulating a lot more land. Of course, my kids were born about then and they were my labor force. So, they became part of the outfit right to begin with. They were owners right to begin with.

JUNGE: So, yeah, that noise we're hearing -- that's your hearing aid, right?

SHEPPERSON: That's correct.

JUNGE: OK. Can you hear without that or not?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Does it bother you?

JUNGE: Well, I'm just thinking it will come over the -- you know, come over the tape. Can you hear me now?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Oh, good, good. That's great. OK. So, you were raised during -- your dad was raised during the Depression?

SHEPPERSON: And my mother, yeah.

JUNGE: And your mother. Those habits that they had --  
[00:13:00] saving every --

SHEPPERSON: Very frugal.

JUNGE: Yeah. They passed those onto you?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, we're pretty frugal. But, you know, you've got to be to make a living ranching this country. You know, I'll tell you, there have been tough times since. There have been ups and downs in agriculture all the way through. But, since then, I've never had to go off the ranch to get a job or anything. We've just -- you know, one of the secrets is tighten your belt. Spend less than you make. (laughter)

JUNGE: Yeah, I was reading in a book called *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, By J. Frank Dobie. Do you know who he is?

SHEPPERSON: Know of him, yeah.

JUNGE: Yeah, he was a Texas historian, and he said that -- he did this book about this cowboy named John Young, and John Young said he had a Spanish breakfast, which means you just pull your belt up a little bit and put it in a different notch.

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Yeah, that's right.

JUNGE: Is that how it was?

SHEPPERSON: That's how it was, yeah, tighten your belt, yeah.

Yeah, it was -- you know, we had some really tough times.

JUNGE: [00:14:00] Tell me what life was like as a kid. What did you do as a kid?

SHEPPERSON: This range was no fenced, and so there were no fences anywhere. So, when we'd run livestock, wherever the livestock were, we'd take the sheep wagon or if there was a line camp up there, we just moved up there where we summered our cattle and every day horse back and keep them back from the neighbors. You know, they'd have -- over this big ridge -- one neighbor over it, so we'd try to keep our cattle on that side of the ridge. So, every day, we'd just horse back and we weren't at the house very much.

(laughter)

JUNGE: So, you didn't have time for play?

SHEPPERSON: No, our main play was all of our lives, we trained and broke horses and stuff like that and, you know,

the rodeo part and stuff. So, the horses were most of our entertainment. No, we never even went to town in the summertime.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, you were breaking horses? [00:15:00]

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. The whole family has their whole life.

That's one of the things we do is train a lot of horses.

You know, with my son rodeoing -- his horses we trained,

and Amy was the national champion roper in college on a

horse we trained. So, we raise and train horses, too.

JUNGE: What sort of champion was she?

SHEPPERSON: Pardon?

JUNGE: What did she -- what event did she participate in?

SHEPPERSON: Roping -- breakaway roping.

JUNGE: Breakaway. What about Lynn?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, she went to the college finals. Lisa --

all of them have gone to the finals. Of course, Les won

the National Finals Rodeo in the steer-wrestling down in --

a couple of years -- in 2012, down to Las Vegas. But,

yeah, they've all competed.

JUNGE: Why did -- your family is famous for rodeo. Why did you guys -- more so than other people -- rise up in rodeo?

SHEPPERSON: Probably, because of our [00:16:00] lifestyle, because we're horseback -- that's how we make our living is with our horses. So, if you're going to have -- it's kind of like cows. If you're going to have horses, you'd better have the best one. My theory was always -- is to keep -- if a kid's -- if you put a kid on a plug, he's uncomfortable. He's not going to like it. So, I've tried to keep the very best horses possible to where they enjoyed it. That's -- when you live this far out, you don't play tennis. (laughter) We've got -- you saw the arena as you came by. In the evenings, we get something in and rope or train horses, yeah.

JUNGE: Are you still doing that?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you do any trapping or hunting or fishing as a kid?

SHEPPERSON: Trapped. The hunting -- (laughter) when I was young, we went broke. When we went broke in '49, '50, and then, we did our hunting to survive. (laughter) Yeah, so, yeah, we -- [00:17:00] I had to do a lot of wild game in those days. But, now that I don't have to, I don't (laughter) eat much wild game. But, there's a pretty good fishing stream on our mountain camp, and I'll take the grandkids over to the fishing stream once in a while.

JUNGE: What did -- where did you go to school? Where did you first go to school?

SHEPPERSON: Midwest.

JUNGE: At the grade school?

SHEPPERSON: Midwest; grade school through high school at Midwest, then the University of Wyoming.

JUNGE: So, there was no little country school out here anywhere?

SHEPPERSON: No, no. No, we had to drive back from here in every day to go to school. Then, in the wintertime, sometimes we'd get lessons and not go for a week or so, you know, if the weather gets bad.

JUNGE: If it blocked the road? Did your dad drive you into town?

SHEPPERSON: Dad or Mom, yeah.

JUNGE: No school bus came out?

SHEPPERSON: No, no.

JUNGE: Well, how many miles is it to the school from here?

SHEPPERSON: Sixteen.

JUNGE: Sixteen?

SHEPPERSON: The interstate wasn't here then. (laughter)

JUNGE: No? [00:18:00] (laughter) This was still the same road, unpaved?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Maybe, with a little less gravel on it.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, there was no gravel. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did you -- Did you guys ride wagons, too? Did you have -- you had horses but did you have wagons?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, the little wagon, sitting over there. We drive a few teams and stuff like that. My granddad, of course -- that's all he used was wagons. But, we still hook up some horses to the wagon.

JUNGE: Frank, do you have any stories about your grandfather? Did you know him at all?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, very well, yeah. Yeah, he was a -- he was a good man. You know, things were different then, and the reason this place ended up so small is he believed -- in those days, it was cheaper to run on government land than it was on private land because of the taxes and stuff. So, a lot of these homesteaders that left offered them to my granddad for less than a dollar an acre, and he said, "No, it's cheaper for the government to own [00:19:00] them." That's one reason why there's quite a bit of government land around here. You know, he didn't foresee that someday that that would really make a difference.

JUNGE: Yeah, I think it's kind of interesting that when people -- remember the Sagebrush Rebellion?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: James Watt was secretary of the Interior at the time and people were saying, "Well, we ought to get this land into private hands." Well, the government offered them the private land for a long time and they didn't want it for the very reason that you listed or gave which was why should you pay for anything when you can get it for free? Did your grandfather have to pay grazing fees?

SHEPPERSON: No. No, there were no grazing fees then.

JUNGE: There was no --

SHEPPERSON: Well, there wouldn't even be the land then.

JUNGE: Right, and your dad --

SHEPPERSON: I think the grazing fees came in when Dad was around, yeah.

JUNGE: But, it wasn't -- you didn't have to pay a huge fee?

SHEPPERSON: The grazing fee, truthfully, isn't very high.

Our problem is they hire somebody out [00:20:00] of Iowa that goes into range management and he comes out here at 23 years old and tries to tell us we're doing everything wrong. We've been here 100 and some years. (laughter) About the time we get him educated and they realize that we're doing things right, they move on up the ladder and they bring in another one. (laughter)

JUNGE: What do you remember about your granddad?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, he lived right on the other side of that rock there. You know, he was -- he was a very good horseman and stuff and just -- you know, he wasn't -- didn't have any big incentive to -- you know, he'd been through -- he went broke during the Depression like everybody else. All the kids had to leave and go get jobs and -- you know -- so things were tough for him.

JUNGE: What about your dad? What do you remember about your dad?

SHEPPERSON: My dad was one of those guys that was probably one of the biggest, [00:21:00] toughest, hard-working guys you ever met in your life, you know. He really, really worked hard, and that's what killed him at a young age. He died at 53. But, you know, he went through that '49 blizzard and got paralyzed from over-exhaustion. But, he had rodeoed and stuff, too; a good horseman, a good cowboy.

JUNGE: He got overworked during that winter of '49?

SHEPPERSON: He went two weeks without sleeping and trying to get his cattle fed, yeah, and then had to go back to [Mills?]. He thought it was from taking those pills, but in Mills they said it was just over-exhaustion. So, he was pretty much paralyzed for about a year.

JUNGE: Did he pull out of it?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, but probably not 100%, but, yeah, he pulled out of it.

JUNGE: So, let's see. How long ago did he die?

SHEPPERSON: Sixty-nine -- 1969, yeah.

JUNGE: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

SHEPPERSON: [00:22:00] One brother and one sister.

JUNGE: So, your family really is bigger than the one you grew up in --

SHEPPERSON: Yes, that's correct.

JUNGE: -- your immediate family.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Where are your brother and sister?

SHEPPERSON: My sister and her husband ranch up by Buffalo.

They own that horn on the Big Horn. Their land goes across the interstate. They live right up under the mountain there. They have a nice ranch. My brother ranches down on Twenty Mile Creek by West Lance Creek -- yeah, West Lance Creek.

JUNGE: In the eastern part of the state?

SHEPPERSON: Right, yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, your -- the other one -- your sister, you say? She lives at the southern end of the Big Horns.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: In what -- Crazy Woman Creek -- the Powder River?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, Crazy Woman Creek. Their house is right on  
-- south of Crazy Woman Creek.

JUNGE: That's close to the Bozeman Trail, isn't it -- the  
Bozeman Trail?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, the Bozeman Trail goes -- part of it goes  
through our place.

JUNGE: Oh, really?

SHEPPERSON: The Bozeman Trail split, you know. It's up where  
we call the [Oglala?] Divide [00:23:00] on the way to  
Gillette. It's about 25 miles out there. But, then, one  
fork of it -- I can show you on maps -- went down Salt  
Creek here. So, there's a historic trail that went right  
down Salt Creek through our place and --

JUNGE: Are there any historic sites along the --

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, I went to the Trail Center in  
there and they showed me the map that it went through  
there, but no -- there are not historic sites up there.

JUNGE: Can you still see the ruts?

SHEPPERSON: Well, yeah, the old road and stuff is still  
there, yeah.

JUNGE: Have you ever found any old horseshoes or mule shoes?

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, we -- (laughter) one of the  
things in this country is, you know, if a kid's on  
horseback and comes home with an arrowhead or a horseshoe

or a mule shoe or anything and misses some cattle, he catches quite a bit of ribbing. So, (laughter) if they find one, they kind of keep it hidden for a month or two. (laughter) Our main thing is our livestock [00:24:00] business.

JUNGE: Keeping your mind on the job.

SHEPPERSON: Right.

JUNGE: Yeah, my dad used to tell me that all the time. "Pay attention to what you're doing. Keep your mind focused on one thing." Well, it was hard because I was ADD. (laughter) You know, it was hard to concentrate, and I don't think I realized that until much later. But, yeah, he was always big for -- you know, don't send out two men when one man will do the job, keep your nose to the grindstone. Your dad was like that?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. My dad was one of those kinds of guys -- you know, my stepdad was completely different. My father-in-law was completely different. But, my dad -- when we'd start on a job, I mean, it was daylight to dark or before daylight to after dark every day until we got that job done, you know, if it took a week or a month or two or three days. But, then, when you got your job done, he'd take a week off. You could read western books and go loop around for a while and then start another project.

But, yeah, if he got after something, you know --

[00:25:00] and, of course, a lot of this country, we didn't have horse trailers and stuff like that. So, even riding to our work, you'd have to leave at 3:00 in the morning to get where you're going to be by daylight. Then, you'd have to walk your horse all day, do your work, and then you'd have to ride home that night after dark, you know. So --

JUNGE: How did you do it?

SHEPPERSON: We didn't know there was any other way.

(laughter)

JUNGE: Man! Do you have any stories about your dad and some of his hardships?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I guess I told you one of his main hardships, you know, when he went through that -- being paralyzed and stuff. I think we had 60 head of cows left after that blizzard. Mom took care of them. My sister kind of did the cooking, and I produced the rabbits and whatever else to eat. I'd get two or three [shells?]. But, he was one of those guys that -- you know, like I said, he [00:26:00] worked hard. When I was a senior in high school, we built this fence over here and a coach came and wanted to recruit me -- you know -- into athletics. Mom told him where we were camped over here, and it was about 110 in the shade. Of course, we were doing

everything by hand. He couldn't drive all the way. He had to walk part-way because the car wouldn't cross the creek. He walked over there, and dad wouldn't let us stop working. He had to visit and go along with us. (laughter) Pretty soon, he says, "Well, you're too tough to be at my college," and turned around and left. (laughter)

JUNGE: Where was he from?

SHEPPERSON: Powell.

JUNGE: Northwest --

SHEPPERSON: Harold Farmer was his name. Yeah, you might have known him. (laughter)

JUNGE: No.

SHEPPERSON: Wanted me to play basketball up there, yeah.

JUNGE: You were -- were you always a big kid?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, pretty good-sized. I was recruited at the university to play football when Devaney was there, but he wouldn't let me ride horses or do anything, so I declined [00:27:00] and rodeoed instead.

JUNGE: Bob Devaney -- the guy who went to Nebraska?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: He recruited you?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: How tall are you?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, about 6'3 ½".

JUNGE: How much do you weigh?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, about 235.

JUNGE: When you were being recruited, how big were you?

SHEPPERSON: I was about 6'2 ½" and 210.

JUNGE: A little leaner and meaner? (laughter) Well, I won't say not -- maybe, I should be careful when I say that.

SHEPPERSON: That's true. I've gotten meaner but not leaner. (laughter)

JUNGE: Funny -- that's what your daughter said. But, she says you'd better listen to him when he wants you to do something. Did you get that from your dad?

SHEPPERSON: Yes. Well, you know, when my dad was around here -- all the ranchers still help each other. You know, we don't have a big, hired crew. So, branding, we go to ranch and ranch and ranch and take our crew and our family. But, everywhere my dad went, everybody called him Dad.

[00:28:00] Even at the other ranches, they'd say, "Frank, take the crew and go do this or do that." He was kind of -- always the boss, you know. Everybody -- you know, he knew how to divide people up horseback, you know, which is an art. You put somebody that knows the country with somebody that doesn't know the country and somebody that's on a green horse that's not very good with somebody that's

on a really good horse. So, you'd pair people up so somebody isn't in a jam and not knowing what they're doing.

JUNGE: He was a good organizer.

SHEPPERSON: Yes, yes, very good.

JUNGE: Were you the same way?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, pretty much. I -- yeah, we -- you know, our -- my father-in-law was a very good organizer. But, yeah, you know, when we gather, brand, or anything, everybody just knows their job, you know. We've done it so many years and stuff, and it's pretty organized. I'm not the organizer today. Lisa and Lynn are the organizers today, but --

JUNGE: Well, do you think that that [00:29:00] character trait you're talking about -- the organization person -- is that inherited or do you, because of the environment that you're in -- it just leads to that or what?

SHEPPERSON: You know, probably, a little bit of both, but in the environment we're in, it's very necessary. We're always short-handed, a big job, and, you know, like, gathering the Teapot; you know, 30,000 acres. You have four or five riders. You've got to be organized and know where you're going to go, and you only gather a portion of it per ride. So, you'd better be organized, yeah.

JUNGE: You only can gather a portion of it?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, if it's 30,000 acres and you only have four or five riders and the cattle are all over it and it's that rough country you're looking at right over there with the trees and stuff and, you know, like in the summertime, we gather off the Big Horns. There are 10,000 acres in there, but it's where the middle fork of the canyon is, and if you take four or five riders, it takes about four [00:30:00] trips through there. Then, you still don't quite have them all.

JUNGE: Did you go right up through Outlaw Cave, through that area?

SHEPPERSON: We're way above Outlaw Cave. You know where the Big Horn Mountain Road crosses the middle fork there? They call it the culverts -- at that little cave.

JUNGE: I've been up there past the [Bar BC?]. Is that what you mean?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, actually, we're plumb on top. We go past this, over the top.

JUNGE: Towards Hazelton?

SHEPPERSON: No. No -- right up that same creek -- the middle fork of Powder River but where it's on top of the mountain. The camp we use is on both sides of the mountain, right there on top, kind of the head of the middle fork of the Powder River.

JUNGE: Of course, you guys just -- you know -- put your -- you put your horses to pasture, and then you've got your fishing rods out and you fish the middle fork, right?

SHEPPERSON: Right. (laughter) I wish it was that easy, but that sounds good. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did you know Norris Graves?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, very well, yeah. He's kind of one of my heroes, yeah. [00:31:00]

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. His boy and I rodeoed together. I was with his boy when he broke his back over at -- it wasn't [Belle Fourche?]. I think it was Belle Fourche, yeah.

JUNGE: Kenny?

SHEPPERSON: Kenny, yeah.

JUNGE: He broke his back?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, a horse tipped over in the chute and broke his back. He was riding with me in my airplane and we were going to Dickenson. As soon as I got done competing and was waiting for him when he got hurt --

JUNGE: Now, what did your dad have to say about you being in rodeo?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, he didn't care one way or another. The first rodeo I entered was Gillette in high school. I entered everything but the bull ride, and then my mother said, "If

we're going plumb to Gillette, you'd better get into bull-riding, too." (laughter)

JUNGE: So, she was for it?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. They --

JUNGE: What year was that? Do you remember?

SHEPPERSON: It would have been in the '50s.

JUNGE: When you were still -- let's see. You were just a  
[00:32:00] young teenager then.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. I rode bulls through college and with the  
[nights?] through college I was riding bulls.

JUNGE: So, you've done them all -- all these events. What  
events have you done?

SHEPPERSON: All of them, yeah.

JUNGE: Go ahead. Tick them off. What are they?

SHEPPERSON: Well, saddle, bronc, bareback, bull-riding calf-roping, team-roping and steer-wrestling.

JUNGE: Which is the one you enjoyed the most?

SHEPPERSON: You know, I really loved the bronc-riding. I was the national champion in high school and I won the region in college, but because of my size and stuff, you know, the horses -- a big guy like me covers them up. You can't win as much, so I switched to the bull-riding.

JUNGE: A big guy covers them up?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. You know, big guys can ride them and stuff, but a horse can't jump as high, and, you know, they just don't look as good. You get a little jockey -- just like a racehorse. I couldn't ride a racehorse and outrun a little guy. It's kind of the same way in the bronc-riding. You know, they jump higher and they kick higher and --

JUNGE: So, when you were out here in this [00:33:00] country gathering up cattle, did you have to do a lot of roping?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah. We still do.

JUNGE: So, give me an example of this because I'm trying to picture what you did. Say, you found a cow in this rough country up here and you wanted to bring him in. Would you just push him with the horse or what -- rope him?

SHEPPERSON: Well, if she's just got a problem you can fix while you're out there, you'd just rope her and fix it while you're out there, yeah. You know, like if we miss branding some calves or anything, we'll rope them on the trail. That's my wife coming.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. I hope she doesn't mind us just chatting.

SHEPPERSON: No.

JUNGE: OK. So, you started out when you were what -- about 15 in high school?

SHEPPERSON: Rodeoing?

JUNGE: Yeah.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, actually, yeah, we practiced around here before then.

JUNGE: Were you a high school champion?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, national champion.

JUNGE: A national high school champion. Where did you have your championship?

SHEPPERSON: In bronc-riding. [00:34:00]

JUNGE: But, I mean, what --

SHEPPERSON: Oh, it was in -- the championship rodeo was in South Dakota -- Hot Springs, South Dakota.

JUNGE: Do you remember that?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: What do you remember about that?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Oh, I just -- I drew the really good horses until we got down to the end and I think they issued the horses. They gave me the toughest national finals horse. (laughter)

JUNGE: You still won it.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, I still won it, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you steer wrestle, too?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: How did you do in that?

SHEPPERSON: My horse went lame just before that. I placed but I didn't win it.

JUNGE: So, you have to train that horse to do steer-wrestling?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, very definitely.

JUNGE: What are you riding -- a quarter horse?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, running quarter horses.

JUNGE: OK. I'm a little interested in your steer-wrestling because I can almost picture your face and your hat flying off as you're grabbing the steer's horns. What was the fastest time you ever put in on a steer?

SHEPPERSON: [00:35:00] Oh, you know, the times on steer-wrestling really vary with the score, you know; like a seven is really good in Cheyenne because it's a [30-foot?] score. But, when you start at the same time the steer does, a three isn't too great. So -- and I was 2.8 over there and 2.7 or 2.8 over there in Fargo.

JUNGE: Two point eight seconds?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: In other words, you break the trip wire, whatever you call that.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, the barrier.

JUNGE: You break the barrier, and in 2.8 seconds later, you've got the steer turned over.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: You've got to be awfully strong to do that, don't you?

(laughter)

Have you ever had a problem steer-wrestling and been injured?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, not bad. One year, I was leading through the world championship and I banged my knee up in Cheyenne. That put me out for most of the rest of the year. I ended up third in the nation that year, and that was '74. The next year, I won it. But, [00:36:00] not real bad; the fact is I'm in good health.

JUNGE: It looks like you have all your fingers.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. I cut one of them open but --

JUNGE: Oh, the middle finger on the right hand?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: How did you do that?

SHEPPERSON: I was roping and tied on hard and fast and when I grabbed -- I got a coil on it and nipped it off.

JUNGE: It nipped it right off. Did you know what you did?

(laughter)

Man! So, how come -- how come you can avoid the horns on a steer? How do you do that?

SHEPPERSON: Well, there's a method. You get down on their back and you get down with this hand to protect your face if they sit up and throw a horn at you and end up behind the horns. It takes a little training but --

JUNGE: Where did you train?

SHEPPERSON: Where did I train? Well, I started out right out here in the sagebrush. (laughter)

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Is that [00:37:00] how -- I mean, because you had to do it or because you just wanted to try it?

SHEPPERSON: Wanted to, yeah.

JUNGE: You didn't have to do it?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, no, no, no. Nobody ever pushed me to --

JUNGE: Well, where did that -- where did that come in? I mean, did people have to? You didn't have to wrestle.

SHEPPERSON: You know, to a degree it does. Anybody that has ever lost a rope on a cow out here and that's the only rope you've got -- if you've got to jump off to catch it (laughter) to get your rope back, there is a case to having to. (laughter)

JUNGE: That's where the tradition comes from.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: I've always thought that was the toughest thing to do, even more so than bulls because you have to be -- well, what does it take to be a good steer wrestler?

SHEPPERSON: The good news is it still takes a good cowboy; good horsemanship, a good horse but you've got to ride him

correctly and stuff like that. Then, you've got to be -- you don't have to be huge but you need to be strong for your size, you know; [00:38:00] athletic and strong for your size.

JUNGE: You've got a pretty good grip. Are you still pretty strong? You don't lose that, do you?

(laughter)

Well, is that because you're working out or because that's just the way --

SHEPPERSON: You know, I don't know.

JUNGE: Maybe, your wife knows that. What's your wife's name?

SHEPPERSON: Susan.

JUNGE: Susan, I'm Mark.

SUSAN: Hi. How are you?

JUNGE: Good. Do you know what we're doing?

SUSAN: No.

JUNGE: We're just doing an interview with your husband about his career in rodeo and also we will be getting into aviation.

SUSAN: Oh, OK.

JUNGE: OK. So, you were -- tell me about your championships now. How many years, where, when --

SHEPPERSON: About my championships? Well, I had a championship in high school, and in college, I was the national champion bull-rider.

JUNGE: From UW?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, and when I was a freshman, we had the national championship rodeo team. I worked five events at the college finals. [00:39:00] Then, in professional, I came back to the ranch and I taught school, worked in the oil fields, saved my money up, and when I went professional rodeo, I went to the finals -- oh, what -- six, seven times, Sue? I ended up second a time or two and third. But, one of the times I was third, like I said, when I hurt my knee. I won the championship. Then, things were paid for here at the ranch, and that was my number one goal forever - to build a ranch and not have to work off of the ranch.

JUNGE: What year was it you won the championship?

SHEPPERSON: Seventy-five.

JUNGE: That was steer-wrestling?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, sir.

JUNGE: Wow -- a guy from Midwest, Wyoming wins the world championship! I'll bet you were pretty proud.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, except it's very, very important for -- when you reach a goal, to set a new one immediately, you

know, because you don't want to try to live on your past laurels. I see that happen too many times and people, you know, [00:40:00] try to live in the past and turn to alcohol and stuff like that. It's better to just keep moving.

JUNGE: Did you pick that up from your dad?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, quite a bit, I guess. I don't know. I guess it was mainly from my goals, what I wanted to do, and I guess my main goal was to build a ranch out here and not have to work off this place to --

JUNGE: Did you really think that you could pay off a ranch by rodeoing?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, actually, you pay off a ranch by rodeoing in the fact that you cut all the expenses off of the ranch. I'd come home in the spring and fall, and that's probably why I didn't win more championships is every summer I was here to do the brand and get the cattle to the summer pasture, and that fall I'd come in and work the cattle and ship them. But, there was no expense for the ranch. All the cattle money went back into the ranch. But, also, at that time, we made pretty good money rodeoing.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, you know, like Winston cigarettes gave me -  
- the year I won it -- I think they gave me \$10,000 for  
each half [00:41:00] and --

JUNGE: For each half?

SHEPPERSON: Pardon?

JUNGE: For each half?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, for each, so I got about \$20,000 from  
Winston cigarettes. You know, in 1975, that was quite a  
bit of money.

JUNGE: When you say each half, what do you mean?

SHEPPERSON: Well, half a season.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. So, \$20,000 was pretty good money?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: How did you get to rodeos?

SHEPPERSON: How did I what?

JUNGE: How did you get to them?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I had a pickup and trailer, and we'd haul  
four or five guys that were bronc, bareback riders; Joe  
Alexander. A lot of these guys travelled with me; like I  
said, Kenny. I had my horses. In later years, the fact is  
I even had two rigs because I had good horses and people --  
other people riding your horses -- they pay you a fourth of  
what they win. So, that was paying for my horses going.

So, I got my airplane out and went to quite a few of them on airplanes.

JUNGE: Now, tell me about that. How did you get started in flying? [00:42:00]

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I had a neighbor that was a World War II pilot over here, and he taught me how to fly when I was in college. He said, "Come on over. I'll teach you to fly. I have a little Super Cub," and so I said, "OK. When do you want me to come over?" He said, "Well, early in the morning or late in the evenings is the best time." So, one evening, I went over there and he was drunk and the chewing tobacco is running out of his mouth. He says -- so I just sat down on the couch and he said, "You came over to fly." I said, "No, I just came over to visit with you about it and kind of set up a schedule." "Oh, no," he said, "You're here." He said, "We'll head over there." So, we got in his [power?] wagon and headed over there. He rode it off a cliff and wrecked it and bloodied up his head on the way to the hangar. I said, "I'll go get that [D4?] CAT and we'll pull it out of there." "No, the hangar's right there." So, on the way over there, he says, "It's real noisy in there. So, I'm going to tell you now." He says, "Cowboys and Caterpillar drivers -- they can just [00:43:00] fly airplanes. They just don't know it. Somebody's got to

tell them." He says, "You've got to have that bubble in your rear end. He says, "Cowboys and Caterpillar drivers have got that." (laughter)

JUNGE: Bubble in your rear-end?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, bubble in your rear-end, yeah. (laughter)

At any rate, he was telling me, "You know, get it up to 60 and push [the four?] and pull back." So, we got in it and the wind was kind of blowing. He had me take it off. We went over there -- that pine ridge. You can barely see it over there now on top of that. "See that cabin down there," he says, "Fly around it and keep the same distance." You know, that wind would take me way down one way and then I wouldn't quite get around it. So, we were headed back and he said, "Now, you get it lined up with the runway." He says, "Then, hand me that stick." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, it just pulls right out. You just pull it out and hand it to me." So, when I got lined up, "Oh, no," he says, "Get closer," and I put it back -- the skinny little thing. You put it back in. [00:44:00] He says, "OK, now, I'll take it," and he led it. He says, "I apologize but Heddy, my dog, rides in the backseat, and if I leave that back stick in there, it hits him when I'm flying, so I took it out and forgot to put it

back in." (laughter) That was my first -- my first lesson.

I was pretty much on my own.

JUNGE: Oh, man! So, after that -- after that, did he teach you -- did he take you up again?

SHEPPERSON: Now, the third time I was going over there, he was going to solo me and I didn't think I was ready to solo, but he thought I was. At any rate, he wrecked his airplane. He was flying out of a draw and the wind caught him and he wrecked his airplane. So, I went into Casper and drew another guy that -- and he was pretty wild, too. He said, "Well, Bob says you're ready to solo." He said, "I'm going to have you solo," but he kind of got a wife problem and pulled a gun on somebody. They sent him to jail. So, I got my [00:45:00] third instructor. He was so darned safe he wouldn't even let me touch the stick for another six hours. (laughter)

JUNGE: Who was the guy that you originally learned to fly with over here?

SHEPPERSON: Bob Parsons. They owned this big Parsons Ranch over here.

JUNGE: I'm surprised you got up on the plane with him when he -- because he was loaded.

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Oh, he could fly better drunk than most people could sober. He was a good pilot.

JUNGE: Did he have a landing strip over there?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: Do you have a landing strip?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. You see my hangar here?

JUNGE: Oh, I saw it, yeah.

SHEPPERSON: Well, there are two strips. This is the north to south one. It comes right here to the barn. Then, there's one -- [two one?].

JUNGE: So, you took your lessons and got your license in Casper?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Your official license?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, did you buy a plane right away?

SHEPPERSON: [00:46:00] No, that was in the '60s, and then when I was rodeoing and stuff, I was looking for an airplane and, you know, they were just expensive and I wasn't too flush. Finally, a guy named Bill Barber down by Glen Rock had one for sale. It had 180 hours on a 182, and he sold it to me for \$10,000. I went to the bank and they said, "We don't loan on airplanes, but do you have any debt on your pickup or trailer?" I said, "No," so they mortgaged my pickup and trailer and I bought the airplane.

That's the one I've still got down here. It's a '62. I bought it in '73.

JUNGE: What model is it?

SHEPPERSON: A Cessna 182B.

JUNGE: It's a '63?

SHEPPERSON: Two.

JUNGE: Sixty-two, and you got it in '73?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: What's that thing worth now?

SHEPPERSON: Forty or fifty thousand.

JUNGE: So, it's appreciated.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, it's really appreciated. Well, I've kept it up. [00:47:00] You know, I've got new paint and new upholstery and, you know, I've got 5000 hours in that airplane.

JUNGE: Is that quite a bit for a rancher?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Yeah, it is. You know, I fly other airplanes. I've got two airplanes down here. I've got Lisa's also, you know.

JUNGE: Oh, that's -- what's it -- Cita--

SHEPPERSON: Citabria.

JUNGE: Citabria.

SHEPPERSON: That's acrobatic spelled backwards.

JUNGE: Yeah, OK. Have you had any rough times in that plane?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I haven't wrecked it, if that's what you mean. (laughter) Yeah, I've had a lot of fun in it. I've got lost over Los Angeles in the smog and -- (laughter) my radios didn't reach everybody. I had to switch off the radio frequency. They couldn't find me and so I've had some exciting experiences. You know, I've had it all over Canada. I left [00:48:00] Calgary one morning with another bull-rider. We flew to Wyoming, Michigan, crossed Lake Michigan, and worked that rodeo. I was back at Laramie, Wyoming that night. (laughter)

JUNGE: God! Well, what happened in Los Angeles?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, when I bought it, it had what they call a [Mark V?] with a little coffee grinder radio, and you could put it on the VOR -- Vision Omni Range -- you know, that would direct you where you're going. But, then, when you call them, you had to take it off of that. Well, I got down in that smog and I called them, but then I didn't know where I was at. They asked me, "What's under you?" and I said, "A 7/11 Store," and they said, "Well, there are 10,000 of them here, and if you can read that, you're too low." (laughter) When I got over the ocean, I knew I'd gone too far.

JUNGE: So, what did you do then?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I -- they kept talking to me and trying to figure out where I was at and some other stuff and then they had me make some turns and stuff and put me on the radar. Then, I had crossed a couple other airports and, anyway, when I came in to land, they said, "Thirty-three-Aggie. Wiggle your wings. We want to make sure it's you this time." I told them ahead of time I'm just a cowboy from Wyoming. I don't know about these places, you know. They were good to me. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did you have a rodeo there?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah, Los Angeles Coliseum.

JUNGE: How was that?

SHEPPERSON: Good -- really good, yeah.

JUNGE: You know, you had to take a plane because you were in more than one rodeo in a day. Can you give me an example of that -- I mean, besides the one you just mentioned?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, one -- I was up on the Fourth of July in Cody, Red Lodge, and Livingston, and then -- but I made the finals in Greeley. So, I had four rodeos that day. So, I had Cody that morning, [00:50:00] Red Lodge at -- it was fairly early. Then, I flew to Greeley -- in the finals there, and then I had to go back to Livingston for that night, and I had my wife up there to pick me up at the airport. I was up after the rodeo in the slack. Anyway,

it thundered, lightning, rained, and hailed. Suzy is at the airport. There's one guy there. He says, "You might as well go someplace else." He says, "Nobody is going to fly in this weather." Pretty soon, I come putting down the interstate. (laughter) I made the rodeo. (laughter)

JUNGE: You were flying or you were driving?

SHEPPERSON: Flying.

JUNGE: You were flying?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Using the interstate as your guide?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, that's call eyeball or eyeball roads when the weather gets bad.

JUNGE: Holy cow! How many miles do you suppose you travelled in that day from here to Cody to Red Lodge to Greeley --

SHEPPERSON: [00:51:00] Back up to Livingston.

JUNGE: Back up to Livingston.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, was it worth it?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. Yeah, the fact is I won second in Red Lodge, placed in Livingston, and I placed at Cody, too. I placed -- (laughter)

JUNGE: But, did it pay financially?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: Paid for your gas?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: I'll bet some of those other cowboys had some hairy experiences with you, too.

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Yeah.

JUNGE: Did they?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we -- the fact is, I lost some of my friends that flew also, you know. There was a kid from Canada. They lost him for about three years. He was down by Oregon. But --

JUNGE: Oregon Buttes or Oregon?

SHEPPERSON: Oregon. They lost him in one of those forests down there -- him and some of his buddies, yeah.

JUNGE: Well how is it that you're now [00:52:00] 72 -- will be 72. How is it that you've survived this long after spending 5,000 hours in the air?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Oh, those are pretty forgiving airplanes because, you know, I tried one of them. Another partner and I were going to buy one of those Skymaster 335s; their push-pull Cessna that's got an engine on the back. You know, it's supposed to be a lot safer, and I tried it out in Omaha. You can shut off one engine and still fly. But, the surface ceiling with one engine was 5000 ft., and I told him, "That's 200 ft. below the ground where I live." So, I didn't buy it. But, these single-

engine airplanes -- you know, if you really pay attention, you can set them down and walk away from them, even in the mountains or something, you know. If you just stall it in and get your wings between a couple trees, use your head and just fly it, palms to the ground, just like riding a bucking horse, ride it plumb to the ground. (laughter)

JUNGE: You've [00:53:00] done that?

SHEPPERSON: No, I haven't. I haven't wrecked it. But, you know, you've got to keep all that stuff in your mind. I left Edmonton, Alberta one time, going to Spokane, and the clouds over the Rockies were 9500 tops when I left. But, by the time I got down into southern British Columbia, there were about 15,000 and I was kind of flying through the valleys about 15.5 and everybody with me was asleep because there's no oxygen, you know. (laughter) But, when we got to Spokane, it was clear. But, you've got to -- when you're up there, you know, you don't know where you're going to come down. You've just got to put it on 55, 60 miles an hour and when you come into the side of something, figure out where you're going to bounce her in.

JUNGE: How did you happen to stay awake if everybody else was asleep?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I come from a higher elevation, you know, and people that come from a higher elevation can get by with a little less oxygen.

JUNGE: What do you think they would have thought of it [00:54:00] if they had been awake?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Oh, you know, I've had that happen to me several times, and most of the young cowboys -- you know, we're all dumb. But, most of them, you know, don't even realize why they went to sleep. (laughter)

JUNGE: What's the furthest you've had to fly?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I left -- I don't know -- that trip from Calgary to Wyoming, Michigan, back to Laramie is one of the furthest, but one time I left Washington, headed for Nebraska, and I was up by [Coeur d'Alene?] and going up through that valley and the clouds came in; trying to get over there, you know, by Missoula and stuff. The clouds came in and I was by myself, and I finally ended up in the clouds, got her turned around and climbed just - climbed until I got out of them. I had to go all the way back to Spokane [00:55:00] and then go down through southern Idaho. By the time I got to Nebraska to that rodeo, I was pretty wrung out. I wasn't worth much. (laughter)

JUNGE: You didn't do very well?

SHEPPERSON: I didn't do very well. That's true.

JUNGE: Oh, man, man! Well, when you're in the clouds and you don't know there are mountains around you --

SHEPPERSON: That's true. That's true. One time -- oh, I'd get the other guys that could take the stick for a while, a lot of times, you know, but at that time, I knew there were mountains on both sides of me. I just had to turn around and climb as fast as I could. But, yeah, my father-in-law said it best. You know, I was flying with him one day, and there was a little cloud there. I said, "Should we go through it or go around it?" He said, "There might be some damn fool in there." (laughter) So, we went around it.

JUNGE: Well, he might have been right, too.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, that's true.

JUNGE: You've had to land on some pretty rough [00:56:00] places. Can you give me some examples of that?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I'll try, I guess. In Oklahoma, I'd been down there with [Shaun?] Davis and I'm trying to remember the little town. We'd flown in there to a rodeo. About two or three years later, Barry Burke and I were in Indiana and coming into there, and we stopped after the rodeo. I told him I knew where the airport was because I'd been there a couple years earlier. I flew around. I couldn't find it, and I had my lights on and flying lower and lower. I finally found it and I lit, bounced her in and this cop

came out. He said, "Oh, it's good to have somebody land here." He said, "You know, this airport has been closed for three years. There are big ruts in it." (laughter) But, the other thing is my old house down there had a little short runway. Oh, we've got these -- landing at night in these [00:57:00] places -- I've lit here at night quite a bit and one year when Suzy was -- I think she was going to have Lisa -- I came back from Dickenson in thunder. I told her to shine the lights down the runway, you know, if I came in. About midnight, she came out. There's a mountain -- the Tisdale Mountain -- on one end. It's about six or seven feet and the river over there is about 5,000 feet. So, I go over the river. I knew where I was at and did a circle. When she lit, I was going to come -- you land right over the headlights, you know. But, just when I got there, she took off driving. So, I climbed as fast as I could and went back over the river. I had big Casper [Schaefer?] with me, another rodeo guy who went to the finals with me that year. But, at any rate, it just happened a couple times. He swore that she was trying to kill us but at night, you know, with her headlights, she couldn't see where the runway was. The grass was pretty high and it hadn't been mowed. She had seen me coming and took off [00:58:00] driving. Finally, her dad came out. I

waited and they lined up on each end and I lit over them, you know. Casper got in with Tom and said, "Tom, what do you do in those kinds of situations?" Tom said, "I don't get in those kinds of situations." (laughter)

JUNGE: Oh, man, man! Well, when you got to a rodeo at the town where you were going to do the rodeo and get involved, you had to have transportation to get from the airport to the rodeo grounds.

SHEPPERSON: Right. A lot of times -- a lot of airports have a car they'll let you use or something. Sometimes, we made arrangements with one of our friends and used to say, "If you see us fly over, just send somebody to the airport to pick us up." But, you've got to be careful. I had a buddy that flew over that Red Lodge Airport and the FAA got him sitting in there; turned him in for flying too close to a crowd, you know. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did you ever buzz anybody?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. [00:59:00] Sometimes, I'd -- oh, about four or five years ago, we -- I had my yearlings up here in this pasture before you turn off the interstate, and there's a big spring on the very north edge and it joins my neighbor, the Tobins. Those yearlings get to rubbing on the fences; you know, itching in the spring. I didn't want them to get on the neighbors. So, about every other day,

I'd go fly that fence line, you know, to make sure that they hadn't got out. I see a pickup parked over there, you know, pretty close. At any rate, the FAA called up and said I'd been buzzing some bow-hunter, you know, and they said, "You were turned in." They said, "We didn't get your numbers, but you were turned in." I said, "Well, that was me." I said, "I never did see him." He was in camouflage, hidden someplace evidently. I saw his pickup but I was checking that fence line, you know.

JUNGE: He thought you were getting too close to him?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, he thought I was keeping an eye on him, you know. So, at any rate, the FAA guy was real nice. He says, "Well, there's [01:00:00] not a lot of you guys that still fly, and that's our business and that's your business." He says, "You're completely legal." He says, "I get these calls. I've got to follow up on them. But, you're just fine." So, at any rate, I called the neighbor rancher. I said, "I apologize but I got turned into the FAA. I guess I'm buzzing one of your hunters." They said, "Well, that's not our hunter. He doesn't have permission to be there." (laughter)

JUNGE: You know, when I worked -- I worked for Bob Eisele one summer.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, did you?

JUNGE: At Big Horn Airways. I was a flagger. I'm sure I got pretty well doused with 2,4-D. But, those planes would come over so low -- those Snow Commanders would come down so quick and so low that they'd -- I could hear the squeak of the wheels on the top wire of the barbed wire fence.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you ever get that low?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Well, when you were landing or just --

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I've made the antenna on a [01:01:00]

(laughter) car go like that.

JUNGE: Waving back and forth?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah, that Bob Parsons that taught me to fly -- he'd catch me on a bronc out here, you know, and he'd be flying. He'd see me on a bronc and he'd come give me a buzz. I was down here on the flat and there's a fence there. He always -- you know -- spooks the heck out of a horse. So, this one day, I thought, oh, he isn't as low as it seems like. You know, it just seems like they're lower. So, I watched him. He didn't clear that fence that high. I knew he was low then. I took my horse and I was headed for a draw. (laughter)

JUNGE: I'll bet he was laughing the whole time.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you give him hell afterwards?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. Old Bob Eisele, though -- he was a particularly good pilot. He used my runway right here to spray off. But, those spray planes -- they're a lot more powerful than -- you know -- horsepower than -- and they're noisier than what I fly on.

JUNGE: Yeah. I'm going to go talk to Bob this afternoon [01:02:00] or this evening, I hope.

SHEPPERSON: Good.

JUNGE: So, do you have any stories about him?

SHEPPERSON: Well, he used this runway, here because it was -- the weather was like this, and my runway is kind of sandy. Where he was flying and the runway is gumbo -- but, you know, instead of putting it off, he just came over here and he said, "How's your runway?" I said, "I think it's OK." He's a good pilot. He's --

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah, he's a good pilot.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, Robbie Duncan --

JUNGE: I remember him.

SHEPPERSON: Do you? Well, anyway, that's --

JUNGE: I remember him because he buzzed me.

SHEPPERSON: OK, that was the number two pilot that got in trouble that I took lessons from. (laughter)

JUNGE: You mean, got involved with a gun or something?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, with his ex-wife.

JUNGE: Yeah, he was a wild character.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, but what a good pilot. Yeah, he's a good pilot.

JUNGE: I don't think he liked to -- what was it he said? He didn't mind flying low but he didn't like to [01:03:00] fly high?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: He flew the transports to Alaska or something, and he didn't like flying high.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: Most guys aren't -- isn't it the other way around?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Yeah, the first time I went with him, I said, "What's one of these spins?" He said, "I'm so glad you asked." Boy -- *whoo*. I never asked him again!  
(laughter)

JUNGE: Did that put a few g's on you -- the spin-like wave?

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, I don't know if you -- do you know what an airplane spin is? It's when one wing stalls and the other doesn't. So, it's an uncontrolled spin. They did the spin and you've got to -- to get them out of

it, you've got to push your stick and your pointer straight to the ground. You've got to push your stick forward and use opposite rudder. Your rudder is the only thing getting -- and everybody panics. That's what kills them is they pull back. It just keeps it stalled, see?

JUNGE: So, he did that?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: That scare you a little bit?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: Robbie Duncan -- I remember him because we were -- the -- Eisele [01:04:00] and the crew -- we were all supposed to spray somewhere in the Rawlins area. So, we stayed at Marv [Harshman's] Travelodge. Do you remember that? There's a big rock opposite, on the other side of the street. Robbie Duncan says, "I'm going to climb that. So, do you want to come with me?" We went, "Sure." So, we climbed it. A little -- you know, he got a little close to the edge. Then, I remember I went up one time up in Montana. He had us climbing to the top of a long, long climb up to the top of a mountain. This guy was just crazy. Then, that last -- the last day we worked for Eisele or at least on this one job, he came low to me and I didn't know what he was doing. I didn't know what buzzing was. I hit the deck, and I guess I went down, and my nose

must have been in that sagebrush roots -- the roots of the sagebrush. Then, he went across the way and buzzed the other flagger, Jay Bridger, and Jay hit the deck pretty hard. Boy, when we got back to town, he was cussing Robbie out, [01:05:00] you know, "You son of a -- you-know-what." He had hit the ground so quick that Jay split the back of his jeans open. Robbie Duncan said, "Come on, come on. That's just the way it is. Come on. I was just happy. I'm happy to get home, to see my wife," or something like that.

SHEPPERSON: He started flying for Eisele on my father-in-law's place, right over here. He just came out and he said, "Bob, I want to fly a spray plane." So, Bob says, "OK." He said, "I'm going to give you half a load to begin with, you know." He took the plane up, flew it. He said, "I'll give you half a load." He went and sprayed the half load and then he came back in and said, "Fill her up," you know. Rob -- he had no fear.

JUNGE: Yeah, good pilot, though.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, a very good pilot, yeah.

JUNGE: He wasn't in the military, though, was he?

SHEPPERSON: Not to my knowledge.

JUNGE: A lot of these pilots, I think, were in the military, weren't they, at one time?

SHEPPERSON: [01:06:00] Yeah.

JUNGE: Were you in the military?

SHEPPERSON: No.

JUNGE: How did you get out of that?

SHEPPERSON: I was in college at the time and college deferment and then, on the ranch here, I was kind of the manager of the ranch, and I just told them. I said, "I'm managing a ranch." They said, "Well, where's your dad?" I said, "Well, he started a little oil field contract and deal with Midwest, you know, to kind of make ends meet. He expects me to be at the ranch." They said, "Oh, that's fine." They called it agricultural deferment.

JUNGE: Yeah, that was back in the late '60s?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: Yeah, I was -- you know, I'll tell you. I was also deferred. I had a -- what did they call them in those days -- 2S or 2A -- student deferment? Then, before too long, that wasn't good enough. You had to be in graduate school. Well, I was just about to enter graduate school. Then, that wasn't good enough. You had to be married and have a kid or else [01:07:00] be married, and I was married with a kid. Then, after that, I didn't have to worry about it anymore. But, it was just dumb luck. It kept me out of Vietnam. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't be talking to you.

SHEPPERSON: You know, the same thing happened to me because I took that Air Force or ROTC down there and was going to come out a second lieutenant. I just figured I had to go. Anyway, there was a colonel down there, and I went through the whole thing. I explained to him, you know. I said, "Well, it really kind of puts me in a jam because they do need me at home because my younger brother is still in school. My sister is married and up there and my dad doesn't have anybody on the ranch." Colonel Hodges, kind of a big, old, heavy, nice guy -- anyway, he says, "Come see me tomorrow morning." So, anyway, I went to see him the next morning. He says, "Here are your papers." He says, "You signed them in purple and that's not a legal color. You've got to resign them in black, [01:08:00] blue or blue/black." You know, the dumb old college kid -- I say, "Well, I don't have a pen that's that color." He says, "Well, you kind of talk like you might not want to resign them for [it?], you know." (laughter) I said, "OK," and I did sign them. Oh, their little sergeant down there where you had to turn in all your clothes and stuff -- you know, he'd make you hang them up and oh, he was a grouchy little bugger, you know. I took my stuff in and I put them on the desk, you know. Oh, he came undone and then he looked at me. He said, "You got out, didn't you?"

(laughter) "That's fine. I'll take them." He was nice as heck then, but if I was a soldier, he was going to give me hell.

JUNGE: Yeah, well, as it turned out, you have to feel pretty lucky --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- because we both would have been over there, probably.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: We would have been cannon fodder, basically.

[01:09:00] That's exactly right. I've got a friend the same age. He is in the hospital in Casper now, and he was over there. Oh, he's been going through cancer and everything. He's really had -- he was just a medic, but, you know, you've got to spray that Agent Orange and stuff, and they can't get him cured up. He's lost the whole side of this face.

JUNGE: So, what do you think about -- looking back on that war, what do you think about it?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I know we -- you know, I just don't know enough to say a lot. I know we made a lot of mistakes. You know, I guess, my total answer would be we didn't fight it to win. You know, we should have gone and beat the hell out of them or left, (laughter) you know. So, it would

have been OK if we fought it to win, but the way they did it, it was not quite right, yeah.

JUNGE: Are you a Republican?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Your daughter is a Republican as well. Is everybody in the family [01:10:00] Republican?

SHEPPERSON: Well, we're all conservative, yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, you're not a Republican. You're a conservative.

SHEPPERSON: Right.

JUNGE: I think she even said she had a little bit of libertarianism there.

SHEPPERSON: Sure, yeah. Yeah, she was at Lesley, you know, for --

JUNGE: I know, yeah. Was she with Bonnie Smith on that mountain lion --

SHEPPERSON: No, no. You know, Bonnie's our friend and Bonnie's dad was the one that started that mountain lion crusade. But, it's worked. There is no limit on the mountain lion. My boy has dogs, and he hunts mountain lions on the Big Horns. Heck, he can get seven or eight in the fall --

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: -- guiding people, yeah; you know, not for himself, but he guides people and gets seven or eight of them and --

JUNGE: Is there a limit on them or --

SHEPPERSON: No, there are so many mountain lions up here. You know, each area has their limit, and there's a limit, like when they're having cubs in the spring, you can't go on them and stuff, but [01:11:00] up here, I don't think they have a limit, and that is because of Bonnie Smith. You know, they're trying to get them cut down for the sheep people. They're everywhere. Just a year ago, there was one right over here. You know, the deer --

JUNGE: You've seen them, then?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Have you ever shot one?

SHEPPERSON: No, I haven't, no.

JUNGE: What about coyotes?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Did you shoot them from the air?

SHEPPERSON: No. No, I --

JUNGE: Some guys did.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. They just came in here with an airplane and got seven of them right on our -- (inaudible) our cows here, oh, a week or two ago. But, no, I haven't done that.

JUNGE: You mean they got them with the airplane? They wouldn't travel out?

SHEPPERSON: No. They got them with the airplane. But, no, I don't do that. I fly a lot on the ranch, just checking. You know, we -- [01:12:00] my neighbor, Randy, over here and I -- we run on -- oh, we each have about 250,000 acres to run cattle on. So, you know, with a short crew, you've got to fly and see where they're at and see what's happening. We dropped part -- we had a lease over there by Garfield Peak, about 95,000 acres. We just dropped it this year. But, it had us spread too thin, you know; just everybody going too hard.

JUNGE: How often do you fly now, Frank?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I -- this year, I've flown less than ever. Les, my son, flew last week when he was home, and, oh, it's been about -- close to a month since I've flown, I guess, yeah.

JUNGE: So, do you keep Avfuel right here -- right next to the hangar?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. Does that lose its octane power if you don't use it?

SHEPPERSON: No. [01:13:00] No, I don't think it does.

JUNGE: Isn't it about 110-, 120-octane?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, and our -- both my planes are made for 80-octane, but you can't buy 80-octane now, so you've got to buy 100, which is more expensive. So, if we lose a little octane, we don't worry about it. (laughter)

JUNGE: OK. Well, do you still like flying?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. I don't like it like I used to, but I still enjoy flying, yeah.

JUNGE: You don't like it like you used to? Why?

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, the rules have -- Amy -- I made all the kids work off the ranch for a while before they came back and Amy was a range con in northwest Nevada, and Suzy went out and helped her go out there. I flew out there to get Suzy. I used to fly that all the time to -- you know -- going to California. When you leave Ogden, there's an MOA on each side, you know.

JUNGE: MOA?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, Military Operating Area.

JUNGE: Oh, OK.

SHEPPERSON: So, there's a little, narrow place where us private [01:14:00] people fly through. So, you've really got to stay at your levels. Going west for VFR, it's an even number plus 500 ft. because there are so many people in that little area. Well, I got over there close and a friend of mine had given me one of those GPSs. Anyway, it

started blinking and telling me what - and it was on a Sunday. I thought, oh, I'll radio them up. So, anyway, this lady says, "Yes, we see you. You are three seconds from entering into controlled airspace," you know. She says, "Would you like tracking?" You know, they track you through there. I said, "No. I don't want anybody to know where I'm at." (laughter) She laughs. "That's fine," she says. "You know, there's not another airplane within 100 miles of you." Anyway, when I got out there to Cedarville, California, that guy hadn't sold [01:15:00] 200 gallons of Avgas. But, anyway, I stopped. I always stop at [Elko?]. That's one of the places -- you know, they've got a good place to eat and a good airport.

JUNGE: A Scotsman -- a [Stockman?], right?

SHEPPERSON: Well, the star kept a bay down there -- you know, (laughter) the [bass?] place? But, at any rate, at the airport, is usually a good place to eat, too, you know, if you're just getting breakfast, going through. Anyway, I pulled in there and they came out, brought guns and said, "You can't stop here. This is an air terminal." I said, "Well, goddamn, I'm in an airplane, you know. I ought to be able to stop here." They got pretty aggressive with me. They said, "No." After 9/11 if you don't have clearance and go through some kind of -- you know, you can't leave a

ranch and go to an air terminal. I had a little place down there. I said, "Well, do they serve breakfast?" "No."  
"How can I get up here?" "We don't care. You -- get that airplane out of [01:16:00] here!" But, you know, I used to fly in the mornings and stop in at Casper. They have a nice place to eat in there. I can't do that anymore. I've got to stop way down there someplace and borrow a car to get up there. But, you know, the 9/11 rules have changed so many things, and that's -- so, you know, you've got to be -- they're a lot stickier about things than --  
(laughter)

JUNGE: Did you ever know a guy named Clyde Ice -- Clyde [Icefield?] in Spearfish?

SHEPPERSON: I know of him, yeah.

JUNGE: I interviewed him about 20, 25 years ago. He was 102, and he was sharp. He said, when he was 100, the governor of Wyoming gave him a moose permit.

SHEPPERSON: My God!

JUNGE: He said, "What do you think of a 100-year old man shooting a moose?" I said, "Did you get your moose?" He said, "Damn right!" One hundred -- one hundred and two years old and he had a mind that was still really sharp. But, he told me all sorts of [01:17:00] stories. One of them had to do with crossing the border and Mexicans with

bandoleros across their chests, shooting at him. I said, "In your plane?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "They didn't - - thank God, they didn't know how to shoot an airplane." But, have you ever been in situations like that?

SHEPPERSON: Well, going to Canada one time, I was -- you know, you've got to check in, and you've got to have a -- you know, a flight plan. They've got to know when you're going to land and stuff like that. They check you well. At Lethbridge, I was -- had a flight plan that landed at Lethbridge. I heard her talking to an airplane ahead of me, you know, and -- that was checking in there, also. So, big Casper Schaefer, a big touch bulldogger, and I lit there. When we got there, they had that other airplane took apart, the tires turned inside out, everything -- all the [01:18:00] luggage in there, everything, everything off of it. I lit there and they said, "You go in that room and wait." So, Casper and I were sitting there, and they were doing body searches on these people that had flown in, and Big [Casp?]: "By God, they ain't going to get no body search on me." (laughter) You know, they said they strip-searched and (laughter) I was -- "Well, just don't say anything. Just see what happens, you know." Finally, one of the guys came by. "Where are you headed?" I said, "Calgary at the rodeo." "Go on," he said, and that was --

that was the end of it. Boy, I'll tell you. I sure hated -- but when they do that, they -- you've got to hire a mechanic to put it all back together. They won't put it back together and you can't put it back together.

JUNGE: So, if there wasn't a mechanic at the Lethbridge Airport, you were out of luck.

SHEPPERSON: That's exactly right.

JUNGE: Now, who was this guy you rode with -- Casper -- what's his name?

SHEPPERSON: Schaefer.

JUNGE: Casper Schaefer?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, but --

JUNGE: You got any stories about him?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, but you don't want to hear them.

[01:19:00] But --

JUNGE: Sure.

SHEPPERSON: -- I've got to tell you about Spearfish. We were working in Deadwood and I had a couple guys with me. Tom Ferguson -- he was a world champion all-around cowboy -- and Rickie Bradley. At any rate, they wanted to -- we were up in Helena in the finals that night and they wanted to ride in my airplane, you know. For Deadwood, the best place to land is at Spearfish. Well, I'd left there, and, you know, when I was going, I'd have filled up with gas.

Well, my airplane holds long-range fuel tanks. You know, it's -- so a lot of weight of gas. So, anyway, these guys want to ride. So, I didn't want to be overweight. It's about 110 in the summer, you know, so I said, "I'll go over there and get the airplane out and ready. As soon as you guys get done -- because it's a -- you know, we've got to sure get moving." Well, anyway, I asked them. I said, "Can you guys take some of this gas off -- pump it off?" They said, "No, we don't have any way to do that." So, [01:20:00] I -- you know, it's got a fuel strainer there. So, I just pulled that fuel strainer and, all the time waiting for those guys, you know, to try to get it down, to get some weight off of there because if I was overloaded -- so, anyway, when they got there, we took off. We got over to Billings. Barry Burke was one of them and they went to sleep. Everybody goes to sleep in there, anyway, but I said, "Barry, you know, my fuel gauges say they're empty." I said, "I've been trained. I've got to trust them. I'm going to land here at Billings, you know." I said, "They can't be because --" you know. Anyway, I lit at Billings. Just before I got to the terminal, it shut off on me. That fuel strainer had stayed open. It hadn't shut, and so I drained fuel all the way across there, you know. (laughter) Tom Ferguson says -- when we got out, we had to push it the

last 100 yards up there. Tom Ferguson [01:21:00] says, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" I said, "Well, you've been sleeping. What's the hurry?" He said, "When one of those Indians on the reservation lights a match, it's going to catch up with us." He said, "We've got to get it past us - - into this fuel." (laughter) We fueled her up. We made it to Helena.

JUNGE: What kind of guy was he -- Tom Ferguson?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, a good travelling guy; kind of laid-back. You know, he was one of those rodeo guys that practiced, practiced, practiced, but it's just to him. You know, he never -- wasn't a guy that got excited. He practiced just the way he competed. He's a good cowboy and a good hand, and --

JUNGE: Was he a good hand, actually?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Yeah, he was.

JUNGE: Some of these guys that you competed against weren't hands at all.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, but, you know, most of them are pretty good hands. You know, I brought a lot of them -- heck, that house up there -- those rodeo guys helped me build it -- that log house.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, when it was rodeo (inaudible). There would be five or six of them come in, and we'd stay here [01:22:00] for a week and I'd make them help me build that house. (laughter)

JUNGE: They were captive, right?

SHEPPERSON: They were captive, yeah.

JUNGE: They didn't drive in or did they?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, sometimes, we'd fly.

JUNGE: Yeah, so they were going to be walking out unless they worked.

(laughter)

OK. So, you were going to be this Casper --

SHEPPERSON: Schaefer.

JUNGE: Schaefer. You said you had a couple stories about him?

SHEPPERSON: Well, he's a -- he's one of the bigger, tougher people you'd ever know. He was the champion heavyweight boxer of the Seventh Fleet and --

JUNGE: How big was he?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, he was about my height and probably 260 when he was slim. (laughter) But, he was raised where he didn't pay income taxes. When he got out of the Navy, he went to Billings and went into places and said I'd like -- you know -- to work for cash and [01:23:00] they said -- be your

bouncer -- and they said, "Well, I've got the toughest guy in the state right here." Casper says, "Nothing personal, but let's go out and see who's toughest." Then, Casper went back in and he says, "Now, would you like to hire the --," and he worked there for years before he went rodeoing, you know.

JUNGE: So, he beat the other guy?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah; not much match, yeah. (laughter)  
But, while he was up there in Billings, it's interesting. I met him. I was rodeoing and we were over in Bismarck, and he went over there. I was winning it; these little, bitty steers, you know. They'd crumple on everybody. But, they had -- he came. "How come those steers are crumpling with everybody?" "Well," I said, "You've really got to keep their nose straight and their back straight and stuff to get a flat fall out of them, but if you really mash back into them, they'll crumple." So, anyway, he won something the next go around. He said, "Well, I'm going with you," and he stayed [01:24:00] with me for 10 years, worked here at the ranch and rodeoed and --

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: What's his name?

SHEPPERSON: Casper Schaefer.

JUNGE: Oh, that guy. I thought you mentioned somebody else.

So, he worked for you for 10 years?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: What kind of hand was he?

SHEPPERSON: A good hand. He could -- oh, he's -- he was a good hand; different. He was kind of a different guy, but he's a good hand. He could work. Well, like I was down the old house and I had to go check the heifers and I told him, you know, "Put this post in the ground." I had a post about 2 ft. by 2 ft. and we used it for the bottom on a gate that had a little plate there, you know, where it pivoted on it. The other one had rotted out. I said, you know, "We'll dig that one out." I said, "There's a cross-cut saw there. That post is about eight feet long. We'll cut it down to about three feet or four feet and bury that for the base." At any rate, I was quite a while checking the heifers and stuff. (laughter) When I got back, [01:25:00] you know, if he pooped off, he'd get a cup of coffee and go to the outhouse or read a western book or something. I looked. I couldn't find him. So, finally, I went and looked at this hole, and there he was down in there. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Easier dig this eight feet deep than it is to cut that post in two,

you know, with that cross-cut saw." (laughter) But -- oh, he could dig.

JUNGE: That's hilarious. Whatever happened to him?

SHEPPERSON: He had a license for dealing up there at the Bison Bar; you know, to deal the cards. He'd been there. He sent his kids down. They go on the trail with me and stuff sometimes. At any rate, last fall, he had a heart attack and died. You know, a big, healthy guy -- he was a really good athlete. He had the record, you know -- they had those Senior Olympics, and he won the shot put, the high jump, the foot race [01:26:00] and everything just last year.

JUNGE: How old was he -- about your age?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah, but he worked out and stayed in shape.

JUNGE: Who was the best hand you ever had on this ranch?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I think my kids probably are.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Yeah, they are. They're the most conscientious hands. Anything that can be done, they can do it. You know, Justin, my son-in-law -- he's been here for 10, 12 years. He has turned into a really good hand. But, those girls -- oh, they're workers, you know.

JUNGE: The girls are just as hard workers as the guys?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, gosh, yeah. You know, we -- like, you know, over there, we -- I'd lease the big place and was running some other cattle when, oh, Les and Amy were pretty little and was trailing them across some rough country and two other [01:27:00] cattle and hot. Anyway, Les got sunstroke and passed out, and we set him under a bank. Amy was getting sick. We were a long way from nowhere. So, anyway, I gathered up the kids and I said, "You know, we can drop these right here and come back tomorrow." I said, "You know, that might be the healthiest for the kids and stuff. But, we're going to have to work the cattle, and to gather a lot of country, it's going to be a big job tomorrow." Lisa said, "And if we go on, what?" I said, "Well, we could tomorrow off." She said, "We're going on." (laughter)

JUNGE: She's a pretty big gal. She's pretty big. Is everybody that -- is everybody in your family big -- big people?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, she's -- Amy's as tall as she is or taller. She's probably the heaviest. Amy's slimmer. Les is [01:28:00] 6'2" or 6'3".

JUNGE: Lynn?

SHEPPERSON: Lynn -- she's shorter -- 5'9 ½" or so.

JUNGE: So, they -- just the fact that they were bigger kids meant that, in a way, they had more output.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, they're -- yeah.

JUNGE: So, you're pretty proud of these kids?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, they've -- yeah, yeah, I am. They've done very well. You know, when we were doing some - oh, some work on the ranch, you know, on passing it on down and stuff, the lawyer said, "You know, you should put this in a trust and you should do this and that." I said, "Oh, no." I said, "That means no trust." I said, "They're my partners." I said, "They own as much as I do." I said -- "You know, instead of -- they've known from day one what they were working for, and they've been my partners from day one."

JUNGE: [01:29:00] In other words, they have wanted to be (telephone rings) on the ranch --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- and work the ranch.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, well, and I've made them all go and do something else. (telephone rings)

JUNGE: Go ahead.

SHEPPERSON: That's Les.

F1: Call from --

SHEPPERSON: Hello. Hello. Hello. Must have lost him. He's  
in California at Red Bluff at the rodeo.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. Where's that? Is that near San Francisco?

SHEPPERSON: Northern -- Northern California, north of there,  
about 200 or 300 miles.

JUNGE: Frank, have you been everywhere in this country? He's  
just -- with total blasé --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Right. So, your kids -- are you saying your kids have  
always wanted to be in the ranch business?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. You know, I said -- I told them all they  
had to work somewhere else. Lisa worked for [01:30:00]  
Farm Credit and she moved up so fast, they tried to move  
her to Omaha, and she didn't want to go to Omaha. Then,  
Lynn -- she went down to Texas -- road -- cutting horses  
for a while. She came back and said, "I want to ranch."  
Amy -- she's a range con and worked in Nevada and then for  
the oil and gas up in Buffalo for a little while. But, I  
made them all go somewhere else and work somewhere else  
before they came back. I said, "You really won't know  
unless you've tried something else." Les -- he went  
rodeoing, you know.

JUNGE: It was a pretty smart thing to do. Was that your  
idea?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's very important that they go somewhere else and work somewhere else. Then, they really know in their own mind. If they never leave the place, they think maybe they missed something, you know.

JUNGE: Yeah. Now, you said your -- one daughter is in Nevada in con -- something con? [01:31:00]

SHEPPERSON: A range conservationist for the BLM.

JUNGE: Oh, OK.

SHEPPERSON: But, now, she's the one at the Teapot Ranch.

JUNGE: OK. I got you. So, all four of them -- you have four kids. All four of them want to stay here now.

SHEPPERSON: They've got to now. They each own a place.

(laughter)

JUNGE: Well, when Les gets through -- how old is Les?

SHEPPERSON: Thirty-five. He just got married a year ago, and so did Amy. I got the last two married off last year, yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: Does that mean you have no more responsibilities?

SHEPPERSON: No more responsibilities. They've got -- I'm their responsibility. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, fair is fair, right?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: So, Les is getting -- is he getting on up in years for rodeo hand?

SHEPPERSON: Not steer-wrestling. Steer-wrestling -- your prime is from 32 to 38 in the steer-wrestling. That's when you're the [01:32:00] strongest, and that's when your mind is the best.

JUNGE: I feel like I was the strongest -- it doesn't look like it, but I was the strongest I'll probably ever be when I was 32 and I was lifting weights, and I was running, and I was in great shape. If somebody were to ever ask me, well, what year or how old were you when you were in the best shape of your life, I'd have to say 32, overall. There were times when I was quicker or, you know, maybe could do something different, but 32 is prime. Is he built like you -- Les?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: How tall is he?

SHEPPERSON: A little over 6'2", weighs about 220.

JUNGE: Is he a national champion as well?

SHEPPERSON: Well, he won the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.

JUNGE: Oh, in 2012 or was it last year? So, how's he been doing since then?

SHEPPERSON: Well, he got married. Actually, he's going to be [01:33:00] more busy ranching. His rodeoing days are

numbered. He just bought -- we just bought another ranch over here.

JUNGE: Where at?

SHEPPERSON: West of us, over towards the Big Horns here.

JUNGE: On the other side of the interstate or -- oh, no, the interstate is here.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Yeah, that's right. So, he's going to have his own place?

SHEPPERSON: Well, this is his place now. I don't own an acre anymore. I turned it all over. At the end of 2012, you know, was the last year you could give away stuff before the tax thing changed. I told him to go get the papers made up, and I just quick-claimed to put it, and they were all full partners before-hand, but I quick-claimed the rest of what Suzy and I had. So, I -- they've just got to run cattle for me, but they own the land.

SHEPPERSON: How does it feel to have all four of your kids on this land?

JUNGE: Well, you know, truthfully, that was up to them. I guess, what makes me happiest is they're all really, really good hands and [01:34:00] enjoy doing it, and that's what they love to do. But, if they didn't want to do this, that would have been fine with me, too, you know.

JUNGE: This is isn't the kind of job for a guy that's in his seventies, is it, or is it?

SHEPPERSON: No, no, no. No, there are a lot of things that, when you get in your seventies, you just don't do as good as you could before-hand.

JUNGE: But, yet, I know that there were guys like Norris Graves who would get on a horse and stay on it until he fell off the horse, probably.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: I mean, you could still ride a horse.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I still ride. I trail the cows, the mountain hikes. I still go, just like I did. I just -- but if there is something in these badlands that needs roped, I can't beat the kids to it. (laughter)

JUNGE: But, you can still rope?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: Do you still enjoy doing stuff like that?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

JUNGE: You don't have arthritis or anything? Frank, have you ever been hurt steer-wrestling?

SHEPPERSON: You know, [01:35:00] not bad. But, you know, one of the main things is -- two main things -- stay in shape all the time and quit when it's time to quit, you know, before you start getting stiff and hurting.

JUNGE: When did you quit?

SHEPPERSON: I quite in '77, '78. When I quit, I never went to an old-timer's rodeo. I never went to anything. I quit and came back to the ranch and never entered another rodeo.

JUNGE: You could have been a roper.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, I know it. I know it. But, you know, I came home and team-roped but, having been a professional, I go around with these -- you know -- ranchers and stuff around here, and they go beat the hell out of the -- you know, they don't appreciate somebody that's made a living at it coming roping, getting their four dollars. So, you know, it's just --

JUNGE: Getting their [01:36:00] four dollars?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, you know, your little jackpot. Everybody puts in 10 dollars and stuff. But -- (laughter) so, anyway, you know, it's -- it's just better if I just quit, you know.

JUNGE: So, how do you feel, looking back on your rodeo career?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, it was -- rodeo was good to me. You know, it's -- it's the best sport in the world and the sorriest profession in the world, you know. You just can't make a living at it the rest of your life, you know. (laughter)

JUNGE: Which is the best rodeo, in your estimation?

SHEPPERSON: Well, Cheyenne is one of my favorites.

JUNGE: What about Calgary?

SHEPPERSON: Calgary used to be but they quit being PRCA and they have an invited thing there. It was fun when I was going there, but they've changed it so much now, and times have changed a little up there. But, it used to be a good one, yeah.

JUNGE: Oklahoma City?

SHEPPERSON: Well, there are two Oklahoma City rodeos.

[01:37:00] Oklahoma City used to have the national finals. That's where it was when I rode, and that was a good rodeo. Then, they have their state fair in Oklahoma City, also. But, it was one of the better ones, you know, when I was rodeoing. But, I'm so tickled that they moved it to Las Vegas. The first year I went to national finals, I won the first two or three go-arounds, and it paid \$880 a go-around. Today, it pays \$14,700 a go-around, you know.

JUNGE: What do you think about that?

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, there's the -- one of the -- a couple of things. One of the things that rodeos pay a little more but they aren't doing quite as good as we did because they tripled or quadrupled their entry fees. A lot of them are running against their own money. Then, the

other part of it is, you know, gas was 25 cents a gallon, and, you know, motel rooms were \$18. [01:38:00] (laughter)

JUNGE: That's when the Super 8 and Motel 6 were \$6 and \$8.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, and then, you know -- and then we'd get six or eight guys and go in a pickup. Well, you know, it didn't cost you anything to travel, hardly. So, truthfully, it's tougher now, you know. You know that big rodeo that RFD put on, and it was the world's richest rodeo?

JUNGE: Where at?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I think it was down in Dallas. That's where they ended up having it, but they had all these qualifying deals, and a lot of these things have become scams to a degree. Are we still on?

JUNGE: Yeah, go ahead.

SHEPPERSON: I shouldn't be talking about it. I'd better --

JUNGE: Well, we can take any of this off that you don't want.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, anyway -- anyway, so what's the scam?

SHEPPERSON: Well, to qualify, they go to three different little rodeos to qualify, and it costs \$500, entry fees. So, if you figure how many people in each event tried to qualify for this, they got the million dollars from the

[01:39:00] cowboys before the rodeo ever happened.

(laughter)

JUNGE: These guys aren't stupid.

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Yeah.

JUNGE: Yeah, well, you rodeoed then with the biggest rodeo people of your time. Did you know Larry Mann?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, very well. I still know him.

JUNGE: Do you? He's still around?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. The fact is I gave a talk at CWC a couple weeks ago -- Central Wyoming College because, you know, they have the Booster Club. Larry Mann was the one that talked the year before and stuff. But, I knew him when I was rodeoing, yeah. I think he was quitting about the time I started, but --

JUNGE: What about Jim Shoulders?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, he was a stock contractor, and -- when I was rodeoing. He rodeoed when my dad rodeoed.

JUNGE: Quite a bit older?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Is he still around?

SHEPPERSON: No, he died.

JUNGE: Who are some of the other champs that you knew?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, Dean Oliver, you know. He was the --

JUNGE: In what event? [01:40:00]

SHEPPERSON: Calf roping.

JUNGE: Yeah, OK. I remember that name.

SHEPPERSON: Phil Lyne, all-around cowboy -- he used to travel with me some. Roy Cooper -- he's been in my airplane.

JUNGE: Roy Cooper?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Where was he from?

SHEPPERSON: Oklahoma -- Texas now but Texas, yeah. That's where he's from.

JUNGE: What about Chris LeDoux?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. He -- you know, he just lived right here. Yeah, we were roommates at the Oklahoma City finals a lot of times.

JUNGE: Well, would he be about your age or a little younger?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, just a little bit younger.

JUNGE: What kind of guy was Chris?

SHEPPERSON: Chris was a good guy -- a really good guy; a good family guy. You know, he -- when he was trying to learn to play the guitar and stuff, he'd lock himself in the bathroom when we were travelling together and shut the door where it would reverberate back. He worked hard at being a musician -- worked very hard at it and a really good guy to be around. He wasn't [01:41:00] -- I shouldn't even say this -- probably wasn't the best bareback rider, but the

year he won it was whoever won the national finals, and he's the only guy that rode 10 horses that year. But, you know, he wasn't in the top five or anything like that when --

JUNGE: He rode 10 horses?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, whoever won that average at the national finals was the world champion. That was 1976, and he's -- when it came down to the eighth or ninth horse, everybody had fallen off but him, so he made sure he stayed on.  
(laughter)

JUNGE: He died of cancer, didn't he?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. You know, he'd had his liver replaced, and he had that same liver problem that that football player -- that great football player -- remember, he had a liver problem? I can't think of his name right now. But, yeah, he had a bad liver and not from drinking or anything. He was a good guy. [01:42:00]

JUNGE: Yeah, some people have got cirrhosis. I have a -- I had a good friend who died of cirrhosis of the liver. He didn't drink. He was a doctor, and somehow or other, he picked up that problem. I don't know whether it was genetic or he was around something. But, I told Lisa that I knew Chris LeDoux but just by sight because I taught up

at Sheridan College for a couple years, and Patsy Hamilton was the rodeo coach up there. Did you know her?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, I remember that name but I can't place her right now.

JUNGE: Pat Hamilton? She was rodeo coach and she just loved Chris LeDoux, and who wouldn't? The guy was a good rodeo hand. He could play the guitar, and he wore a cowboy hat and was good-looking. What else did you need in life?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) A good guy, too; always a gentleman.

JUNGE: Yeah, but must have been a heck of a competitor.

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, he really worked at his music. He just wasn't quite -- [01:43:00] like the year he won it, Joe Alexander had won way more money than he did that year. You know, he -- Chris wasn't quite built right to be the top bareback rider.

JUNGE: Too heavy or what?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, pretty big and heavy and it's hard -- awful hard on his arm. He had -- he's the one that kind of invented that, where they take the arm, where it can't straighten your elbow out and stuff and --

JUNGE: Oh, really? Is that why they do that?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, because that jerk -- if it jerks your arm straight, pretty soon, your elbow gets bad, you know. So, he got -- he's the one that kind of taped it so it jerks it

but it doesn't straighten your arm out and really pull your ligaments.

JUNGE: Was your dad athletic?

SHEPPERSON: Mine?

JUNGE: Yeah.

SHEPPERSON: Very, very.

JUNGE: Your grandpa?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, very.

JUNGE: So, you inherited that.

SHEPPERSON: Right. My dad's -- [01:44:00] it would be granddad -- came up the Chisholm Trail and Bax Taylor and his brother, Buck Taylor -- Buck Taylor was the world champion bronc rider and King of the Cowboys in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. That was my dad's kind of great-uncle -- a big guy.

JUNGE: Interesting stuff. Did you ever find out about them driving up the Chisholm Trail? They probably came right through Pine Bluffs, didn't they -- or is that the Texas Trail?

SHEPPERSON: That was the Texas Trail. You know, I -- they probably did come through Pine Bluffs. You know, they kind of came and hit the Platte. But, he came up here in 1867 or 1868.

JUNGE: Well, Frank, did either one -- your dad or your grandpa or anyone in the family leave any journal or diary or --

SHEPPERSON: No.

JUNGE: Because that would be fun -- that would be fun to follow up [01:45:00] their activities.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, my great-granddad, that Bax Taylor -- he came up here. He was a -- there's a letter, and I don't know where it's at. My sister has it or my mother had it -- from a guy named Colonel North in Texas. It said that Bax and Buck Taylor were the best two hands that he -- he sent a lot of cattle up -- best two hands that had ever come up the Chisholm Trail, and there's a big, long letter that -- and it says in there they could outrun, outshoot, and outride everybody, you know. I don't know, but --

JUNGE: (laughter) Well, you've been around a lot of -- let's just say bullshitters, right?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, you probably know how to judge bullshit, right --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- which is not and which is, so you think that's true or --

SHEPPERSON: Oh, very definitely. Buck Taylor became the world champion bronc rider and King of the Cowboys in Buffalo

Bill's Wild West Show. Bax Taylor was about -- you know -- 6'4". He got killed [01:46:00] by a runaway team, and then, anyway, he had twin daughters, and they're the twins that are written about in *The Virginian* -- that book. The Taylor Twins, it talks about, at the Goose Egg where they changed their clothes. Well, that was my grandmother and aunt.

JUNGE: That was your grandmother and aunt -- those two kids?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Are you serious?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah, yes, Ruth and Aunt Francis.

JUNGE: How do you know that?

SHEPPERSON: Because Aunt Francis -- I can take you up there and show you her piano -- the old roller piano that came in on a team wagon -- sitting up there at the house. But, Aunt Francis just died about 15, 20 years ago. I've got the pistol that Bax Taylor brought up the Chisholm Trail over there at the house.

JUNGE: God! Is this your -- on your mother's side or your dad's?

SHEPPERSON: Dad's. On my mother's side, her granddad came up the [01:47:00] Chisholm Trail about the same time and settled and started the 4J's Ranch by Guernsey, and he was -- had an alias because he was a gunfighter in Texas. But,

he ended up being one of the first sheriffs over there.

His stuff is in the museum, and his pistol, and saddle, and stuff is in the museum in Cheyenne.

JUNGE: At that old west museum?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: What was his name again?

SHEPPERSON: Covington -- Ed Covington. They called -- Ed [Moseley?] was his -- he changed his name because he was -- left Texas probably under (laughter) -- I don't know what, but --

JUNGE: You know, in all your travels, you must have known characters like this, right?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you meet a few characters like this?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah. You know, this Casper Schaefer I was telling you about -- when he came to work down here, he always wanted to get the paper. He was raised [01:48:00] by the main bank robbers -- you remember in the late '60s and early '70s all the banks getting robbed in Chicago and back east and everything? Well, those bank robbers all lived in Billings, and they kind of supported him, and they taught Casper about playing cards and this and that. But, he'd get that paper. They ended up catching most of them, but --

JUNGE: Did they wind up in jail?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: These were friends of his?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, they kind of raised him. To Casper, you know, they're just old, ordinary people and they didn't rob banks around here. They went back east to rob the banks.  
Yeah --

JUNGE: Did you know any renegade cowboys?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: Can you think of any off-hand?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. I think a lot of my -- a lot of the guys that rode -- you know, they'd get into those drug deals and stuff, you know, and they'd get in trouble. When you're rodeoing, [01:49:00] a lot of scam artists come around, you know, that try to get you in on this or that.

JUNGE: You mean, like a business proposition?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, but most of them were scams, you know, where you'd make some money if you do this, do that, pack this here or that. You had to really be careful.

JUNGE: Who was the best all-around cowboy you ever saw?

SHEPPERSON: I guess Phil Lyne.

JUNGE: Where was he from -- Texas?

SHEPPERSON: But, you know, he went to the national finals in bull-riding and the calf-roping. You know, he worked both

ends of the arena. Most of the all-around cowboys are one end or the other end, but Phil Lyne -- he rode broncs and bulls. I think he was world champion calf-roper several times.

JUNGE: You've got to have a lot of athletic ability to do that, don't you? I mean, to work both ends of the arena?

SHEPPERSON: Right. But, old Benny Reynolds was also right up there. He was an all-around cowboy that worked both ends of [01:50:00] the arena. He just died a month or two ago from --

JUNGE: Where was he from?

SHEPPERSON: Montana, up there; a good guy. In fact, he rodeoed until he was 70-some years old. He just died of a heart attack about a month or two ago, but a big, tough guy.

JUNGE: Do you know any Latino or Indian cowboys?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Mexican cowboys or --

SHEPPERSON: Indians.

JUNGE: Indians?

SHEPPERSON: You know, the Smalls and some of them from up here in Montana there.

JUNGE: Pretty good?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, they're good hands. Then, Larry McKane [sic?] from Okanagan Falls. He was a good -- he never won the all-around, but he was a good calf-roper and a good bronc-rider -- Kenny McLean.

JUNGE: Now, you got as far as --

SHEPPERSON: He was an Indian, also.

JUNGE: Oh, was he?

SHEPPERSON: But, he was -- I think he was a world champion bronc-rider, and he went to the national finals in the calf-roping. He was --

JUNGE: [01:51:00] So, he worked both ends of the arena?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, not really, but --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, he did. He did bronc-riding and calf-roping. But, he never won the all-around, see? He wasn't the all-around champion, but he was a good hand -- a good guy.

JUNGE: You've been out to the west coast. Have you been in Madison Square Garden?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. I won it.

JUNGE: What did you win?

SHEPPERSON: I won it in '74 or '75. We rodeoed on the fifth floor of the Madison Square Garden, yeah; took a horse right up that ramp.

JUNGE: (laughter) This was in steer-wrestling?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: What was that like?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, it was really different. They had big, old Hereford steers. There was a guy back there from Cowtown that knew those people, and those people rooted for the livestock. You know, if you threw one good, they'd boo you. But, if something just -- you know -- trumped you, oh, that just made those people back there happy. They'd -- (laughter)

JUNGE: [01:52:00] Different point of view, isn't it?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, it really is. We went. You know, a bunch of us cowboys got together and went around to Greenwich Village. Well, we didn't know hardly anybody back there, you know.

JUNGE: What did you think of it?

SHEPPERSON: Well, it was different. You know, I got -- we were around there -- had to be around there quite a while and they had these little pigeonholes of -- you know -- somebody would mail you something, anyway, by your back number. Hell, I had mail one day, and all those guys stand around there. "Goddamn," I said, "I've got a letter." You know, I opened it up and I started reading it to them. It said, "I watched at the rodeo," you know, "You're sure

strong and athletic and good-looking," and went on and on.  
Got down to the bottom and it's signed Charles. (laughter)  
I got down to the bottom and I stopped, and I looked around  
at everybody. They snatched that from me. They gave me  
(laughter) (telephone rings) -- I'll try him again. Hello.

LES: What's going on?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, muddy and wet and [01:53:00] rainy.

LES: Oh, really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. What's going on with you?

LES: Oh, nothing.

SHEPPERSON: Still in Red Bluff?

LES: Yeah, I roped earlier this morning but sure didn't leave  
very good.

SHEPPERSON: I see. Well, there isn't much going on here.  
I've got a guy here. I'm bullshitting a little bit or  
quite a bit.

LES: No?

SHEPPERSON: He wanted to talk about flying, but all we've  
talked about is rodeoing.

LES: So? (laughter)

SHEPPERSON: So, when do you get your second one?

LES: Tomorrow morning.

SHEPPERSON: Tomorrow morning?

LES: Yes.

SHEPPERSON: Then, where do you go?

LES: Clovis, next week. (inaudible) [01:54:00]

SHEPPERSON: Well, I appreciate your calling.

LES: Yeah. Allen Keller says hello.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, did he? Good. Good. (laughter) Tell him  
hello if you see him again.

LES: Yeah, I will.

SHEPPERSON: Okey doke.

LES: He's a lot better today but --

SHEPPERSON: Oh, is that right?

LES: Yeah, like last time I talked to him, he was crazier than  
shit up your ass, you know. He couldn't even hold a  
conversation. But, then, today -- he was pretty good  
today.

SHEPPERSON: Good, good.

LES: All righty --

SHEPPERSON: OK. Thanks, Les.

LES: (inaudible)

SHEPPERSON: This Allen Keller -- he's one of the bullies. He  
was a national champion wrestler heavyweight. But, anyway,  
he'd just pick people out [01:55:00] and decide he's going  
to whip them and chase them for a month or two and then  
beat up on them and stuff.

JUNGE: How old is he?

SHEPPERSON: How old is he? He's my age.

JUNGE: Where'd he go to school?

SHEPPERSON: He went to school at CSU, so I've known him since college.

JUNGE: Because there was an Allen Keller at Western State College.

SHEPPERSON: I think that was him. He was -- he went to some school down there -- Lamar.

JUNGE: Junior college?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. He was the national champion from Lamar -- heavyweight wrestler.

JUNGE: I think he wrestled at Western State.

SHEPPERSON: That could be.

JUNGE: He didn't go to CSU, though, did he?

SHEPPERSON: Junior or senior year, he did.

JUNGE: OK, because I knew an Allen Keller when we played. I think I was a freshman in college in '61, and he was on the football team. Was he on the football team?

SHEPPERSON: Could have been. He was a big, huge guy.

JUNGE: Well, maybe, this isn't even the same guy, but there was an Allen Keller who was on the football team at Western State, and he was in rodeo, too, and [01:56:00] he -- we were playing flag football that day. It was an intramural thing, and he came down the field and put a block on me. I

thought every bone in my body was broken, and he just -- I think he just loved doing that.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, that was probably him.

JUNGE: In fact, I was paralyzed momentarily. I couldn't move my arms. That's how hard he hit me.

SHEPPERSON: When he wrestled for CSU, after he got through the junior colleges, he was the -- they had the semi-finals in Laramie, and us cowboys -- anyway, he drew Curly Cope, and old Curly Cope just beat the hell out of him, you know. All of us cowboys were around the ring, and we were rooting for Curly Cope. (laughter) When Allen got done, "Who were you guys rooting for, anyway?" "Oh, we were rooting for you, Allen." (laughter) [01:57:00]

JUNGE: You know, I have to tell -- say this -- but Curly Cope was as black guy at Arizona State and national NCAA heavyweight wrestling champion. Curly Cope -- I don't think anybody could have beat him.

SHEPPERSON: No, but Allen gave him a pretty good tussle there, for a little while there.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Could you wrestle?

SHEPPERSON: No. I'd run around with the wrestlers and stuff, but no, I didn't wrestle. They didn't ever wrestle at Midwest.

JUNGE: But, at UW, they had wrestling.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, but, you know, you almost have to go through high school wrestling to get into the college wrestling. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, you know what? It seems like some of the principles would be the same; like on a steer, don't you have to knock it off its balance?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. Oh, they're the same. I've wrestled with a lot of wrestlers, you know. (laughter) In fact, we roomed with them down there. But, at any rate, this same Allen Keller -- that's who just said to tell me 'hi.' When he was rodeoing, he -- there were three or four people who were going to kill him. So, he put word out that he'd got [01:58:00] killed, and he was -- oh, running a little dope, I think, for some of the people in Vegas and doing some of those bad things. He, anyway, put it out that he'd been killed, but he hadn't, you know. He hid for a year or two. He's from Olathe, Colorado. That's where he's from.

JUNGE: Yeah. Did you know the [Irvines]?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, which ones?

JUNGE: Frank and --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: When I was at Sheridan College, they had a hell of a bad reputation.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, still does. (laughter)

JUNGE: They were hell-raisers.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah. You know, he's got arthritis so bad now, he can't even --

JUNGE: Frank?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. He can't even move his hands or anything. His little sister just ran out of gas over here a month or two ago by the Teapot and called me up, and I went and she was with Heidi [Merritt?] -- Linda and Heidi. Anyway, I went and took them over to Amy's and got them gassed up. But, yeah --

JUNGE: [01:59:00] He told me -- I saw him at Spotted Horse a year or two ago.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, he's still up there.

JUNGE: Yeah, and I saw him -- met him at a bar -- at the bar. Well, there's only one place at the Spotted Horse, I guess -- the bar. It used to be a filling station, I think. But, anyway, I got to talking to him and I said, "What's your name?" He said, "Frank Irvine." I said, "I knew a Frank Irvine at Sheridan College," and he just laughed. He said, "Yeah, that was me." "[Paxon?] was your brother?"

"Yeah, that's a cousin." I think it was his cousin. I'm not sure.

SHEPPERSON: Pax is his cousin.

JUNGE: Yeah, and so --

SHEPPERSON: Frank's dad is Billy and Pax's dad is Van.

JUNGE: Which was the one in the Johnson County War?

SHEPPERSON: Their granddad, William C. Irvine. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did you know any of these guys?

SHEPPERSON: All of them. They're my neighbors. I bought -- part of this land came from Van Irvine.

JUNGE: Really?

SHEPPERSON: Yes. Yeah, Van -- [02:00:00] they write letters, back and forth. Van -- you know, he -- I was one of the few people that went to his thing, you know, when he died. But, hell, the last time he got married, I went up there. Billy still lives in -- Frank's dad still lives in Buffalo.

JUNGE: How old is he?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, he's in his late eighties. But, he got hurt real bad steer-roping. He cut his head and he just -- some things, old times he can remember, but he can't remember much.

JUNGE: Well, that's typical. That could be just dementia, too, don't you think?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. But, Frank's mother died. She got Alzheimer's. She died about two years ago -- Sally. I was raised around them. Yeah, they -- the fact is, Van and my dad rodeoed together.

JUNGE: Well, how did -- what -- did they live -- did they really have -- were they really the type of people who could live up that reputation they had?

SHEPPERSON: [02:01:00] I'll tell you what -- Van Irvine -- his place -- you know, when you leave Edgerton and go over the hill? It's the Flying Diamonds where he was born and raised.

JUNGE: East of Edgerton or --

SHEPPERSON: Northeast. Hell, I've known him, but he and Dad rodeoed together and stuff. But, truthfully, he put together probably -- he owned more land than anybody in the state of Wyoming for a while. But, he kind of leveraged it, and then when the interest rates came high, Metropolitan Life ended up having to buy him out. But, when he leveraged -- he's kind of a funny -- you know, he's sharp in ways. He leveraged it. You know, he'd buy this land, like these old wheat fields up here. He bought it and then plowed it up because he knew the interstate was coming through and got more money. Then, when he got more money per acre, then he mortgaged [02:02:00] it for higher.

He mortgaged it just as high as it would go. Then, he took that cash and sometimes he'd buy other places. But, anyway, when he sold out to Metropolitan, he moved to Arizona, and he had a safe in the floor of his house that was plumb full of cash that he took all these places. You know, everybody said he went broke and he kind of did, except he had a safe full of cash. Well, he was up here for a year. He went back down, and he'd had those floods down there, and that damn safe had gotten water in it and sat there for about a year and was just almost green jelly-like. He got part of it back, where if they could read the numbers on it, you know, they took care of it. But, he lost a lot of money that way. God!

JUNGE: In a way, kind of like cosmic justice, wasn't it?

SHEPPERSON: What's that?

JUNGE: Cosmic justice. Don't they call it cosmic justice?

SHEPPERSON: But, yeah, I'm just [02:03:00] going to show you.

I stay in touch with him. This is -- Lee Irvine wrote me that.

JUNGE: Should I read this?

SHEPPERSON: That's Pax's brother.

JUNGE: "Dear Frank, hope all is well with your family and its expanding empire. (laughter) A few of us know that wisely-invested capital plus a lot of hard work (and some

luck)," in parenthesis, "will result in success. Comments like, 'You must own half of Wyoming by now,' come along, mostly from jealous people, but from a few friends. I wish you all the luck in the world, and if Van was still here, he would, too. My kids are all out of the ranching business and don't have any interest in the business, so I thought, since you are president of the Stock Growers and have to give speeches and write articles, you might like to have this book that Van gave me. You were one of his heroes, college RCA, Rodeo Cowboy Association, and now, large rancher. [02:04:00] Take care and don't take too much debt. Sincerely, Lee. September 30, 2010."

SHEPPERSON: He sent me -- his dad was president of the Stock Growers and kept every speech and stuff, you know, that he had to write for the cattle country and all that. Anyway, his dad had put that together in a real nice book, and Lee had sent it to me. It was really interesting because a lot of the same problems that I had as president - you know, very thoughtful of Lee to send that to me. But, anyway, when -- I put it in the Stock Growers' archives. They've got one of those big archives deal and kind of museum-type deal. That's where the book is now.

JUNGE: I didn't know you're president of the Stock Growers. How long -- when was this?

SHEPPERSON: Oh, probably, let's see. There's been --  
probably four years ago.

JUNGE: Four years ago?

SHEPPERSON: Four or five years ago, yeah.

JUNGE: [02:05:00] How long were you president?

SHEPPERSON: For two years. I was first vice-president for  
two years, president for two years, yeah.

JUNGE: Which meant you had to go to meetings down in  
Cheyenne? How did you like that job?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I didn't get everything done I wanted to,  
but, you know, I liked it. I -- you know, the stock  
growers' people are the best people in the whole world,  
but, you know, they're -- too often, the Cheyenne people  
become too involved in the NCBA and some of these big,  
bureaucratic deals that don't represent the ranchers quite  
as good as they should.

JUNGE: What's the NCBA?

SHEPPERSON: National Cattlemen's Beef Association. That's  
the national organization.

JUNGE: So, what did you want to get done?

SHEPPERSON: Well, several things but one of the things was  
this country of origin labeling. I really believe in it.

JUNGE: You don't?

SHEPPERSON: I do. [02:06:00] I really do believe in it. I believe the consumers deserve it, and I think us producers deserve it. You know, if we don't raise something good, people won't buy it. If we raise something good, they want it, and I just think it's good for the United States. But, the NCBA and some of the higher-ups that are in somewhat with the packers and stuff -- they don't want it because they can bring Brazil beef, Australian beef in and put the USDA stamp on it and the consumer doesn't know what they're eating, and it cheapens beef up.

JUNGE: Yeah, it competes too much with you guys.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, do you think you -- if a person were to taste the Brazilian or Argentinian beef or Australian beef and taste US beef that they would notice a difference?

SHEPPERSON: Very definitely. Most [02:07:00] of the beef that comes in here isn't corn-fed. The fact is, all of it isn't. What they're really importing is bulls and old cows and cutting meat to put in hamburger. We've got the best beef in the world. You know, they can cheapen it up -- the hamburger and everything else -- by bringing in this other meat and mixing it. So, anyway, you know, there were a lot of political issues and, truthfully, it has passed and it is the law and Canada and Mexico and the NCBA are still

fighting it, and the World Trade Organization is going to look at it again and see if we can comply with all of our trade agreements.

JUNGE: Now, do you -- as ranchers, do they still get subsidies?

SHEPPERSON: No. [02:08:00] No, we never did.

JUNGE: Oh, I thought the beef cattle industry did get subsidies. No?

SHEPPERSON: Well, the grain-growers do. We get it -- if we buy insurance, for disaster insurance, we get paid for that but no subsidy whatsoever. The fact is, you know, the beef cattle industry doesn't have any subsidies. The farmers -- you know, they've got minimums and stuff that they don't meet them, they --

JUNGE: Oil people have subsidies.

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know -- and I guess it depends on how you look at it. They get a tax break, but their tax break is to put that money into more exploration. You know, I don't know if a tax break is a subsidy or not.

JUNGE: Oh, I suppose it is. I mean, I would imagine you could call it anything you want to call it, but it's an encouragement.

SHEPPERSON: [02:09:00] Yeah, it's an encouragement.

JUNGE: Yeah. Well, do you ever get into any problems -- do cattlemen and the oil industry people get along generally or do they have problems?

SHEPPERSON: Generally, we get along very good. Like I said, we run cattle in the oil field and the people that work for the oil companies are really good. The problem that we have is some of the little scab oil people on the outside, on our private land, the oil -- the minerals -- are rated higher than the private land ownership. But, they're supposed to pay damages; you know, make an agreement and pay damages for the surface damage that they do.

JUNGE: I've got oil under my property in Cheyenne, and I own it. I own the mineral rights.

SHEPPERSON: Good.

JUNGE: Well, I'm not the only one. I'm just the little landowner and we're surrounded by people who have - one guy has 20 acres right next to me. I've got a little eight-and-a-half-acre [02:10:00] plot on an intersection. But, everybody -- there's oil under everybody and they're fracking down there; you know, near the Hereford Ranch, as you know, they're fracking down there. So, one of my neighbors, Bob Williams, said that they -- his wife got three letters from some company in Canada. It wanted to know if they wanted to sell that land or lease it. I would

suppose it was an oil company. I think that's what he told me. But, I -- we sold it. Well, let's see, they paid us \$3,000 or \$5,000 for -- I think it was trespass rights or something. But, we had to sign a contract. We all got together as neighbors and we signed a contract because some lawyer said, "Look, I'll do you guys all together and it will be cheaper that way." I found out after I read the contract -- (laughter) after I signed the contract -- I read it.

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) You must have been working for the Obama Administration. (laughter)

JUNGE: [02:11:00] Ouch! Come on, Frank. I'm a Democrat. Give me a break! All right, all right. So, anyway, I read this thing afterwards, thinking that I trust my neighbors. They think it's OK. I think it's OK. My wife and I sign, and then I read it. It said, "You will help -- if we do drill for oil near your property or on your property," and of course, they have to stay 350 feet away. But, we -- "you have to help pay for the transportation of the oil, and you have to help pay for the marketing of the oil." I went, "What?" So, in other words, if the secretary of that oil company is in New York and they want me to pay her salary, I'm paying her salary. Some other lawyer told me, "Oh, you never should have signed."

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. See -- that's the same problem -- same type of problems we have and, you know, we've [02:12:00] got some mineral rights on some land I just bought up by [Leach?]. Lisa owns it now, so it's her problem. But, at any rate, I got 10% of the minerals, and they came and wanted to lease my minerals. Well, we bought this place because it's good water and good grass, and it's just a pretty little place on both sides of the highway. But, as soon as they put an oil well on it, it diminishes the value a bunch. But, it's -- we bought it too much for livestock but knowing that we could get our money out of it because it's such a pretty little place that people would want. But, if they put an oil well on it, then it isn't that pretty little place that everybody is going to want. So, anyway, they came in to lease our minerals and I told them, no, I didn't want to lease the minerals with them. The 90%-owner leased their minerals, and they told me, "Well, they can come in there [02:13:00] and drill anyway," which they can. Then, I got to reading, and I've got the laws right in this little thing here that if they hit oil, I have to pay double my share for the drilling, triple my share for all the equipment -- tanks, pump jacks and all that stuff on it. This is state law. That's state law. It isn't anything I've signed. That is state law. Then,

after all that is paid, then I can start getting my royalty.

JUNGE: Holy cow! You have to pay double what?

SHEPPERSON: I have to pay double of my share of the cost of drilling and triple of all of the infrastructure they put on there -- the tanks, the pump jacks, the pipelines, and all that.

JUNGE: Triple your share? Why?

SHEPPERSON: That's the state law.

JUNGE: [02:14:00] Is that right?

SHEPPERSON: No, it isn't right, but it's the way it is.

(laughter) But, at any rate, you know, you wonder why people get into the politics and stuff. Well, they -- the oil industry has had a lot to do with running our little legislature down there and, you know, the eminent domain laws are so set against us landowners and stuff. We just -- we've gained a little bit at a time, but, boy, I'll tell you what -- we're a long ways away from being where we should be.

JUNGE: Do you think that the laws -- this trespass law -- is because the oil industry got it set up that way?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, and, you know, let me give you another example. The XL Pipeline -- the -- all they need to do is tell those people, "We're going to pay you an annual on

that [02:15:00] pipeline going through there. You know, we're going to pay you the damages. We're going to pay you so much, you know; \$20, \$20 a rod, to go through your farm. But, then, every year, we're going to pay you a little bit." The reason they need to do that is because they'll come -- for the rest of the length of that pipeline, people coming in, you know, and they'll be driving it. They'll be checking it. They'll be sending probes down to it, you know, and digging up to see if it has corrosion and all that stuff and none of that stuff is in there. We can't get the oil. We've got pipelines sitting here, and we can't get the oil industry to -- and the oil industry -- we just had a fight with Pacific Power and Light. They came in and just tore the heck out of the country, and it's in the contract that if they do damages, you know, under reconstruction or maintenance, that they're supposed to pay for it.

JUNGE: So, what you're trying to get them to do on the pipeline is pay for damages --

SHEPPERSON: Right.

JUNGE: [02:16:00] -- or pay you some compensation?

SHEPPERSON: Yes, compensation, and annual compensation because they're going to be going through there every year and stuff. When it gets 15 or 20 years old, then they'll

be going through there 10 times a year; you know, when it really needs maintenance. The first few years, they won't be back a lot but after that. But, the land -- the taxpayer, the landowner should be getting -- the other part is, is your thing on or off?

JUNGE: It's on, but like I say, we can take all this off. I won't -- we're not going to use this. I'm just talking to you, and I'm just interested in this. If you don't want it on, we don't have to keep it on.

SHEPPERSON: Well, you know, I've got to be careful on using names and stuff, but -- because it's on.

JUNGE: Sure.

SHEPPERSON: But, I know I have some people here -- a prominent family that ranches and oil business and pipelines and stuff --

JUNGE: This couldn't be the [Troop?] family --

SHEPPERSON: It could be, but --

JUNGE: It could be?

SHEPPERSON: Anyway, I was talking to one of their main accountants the other day. They make more money off their pipelines [02:17:00] than they do the trucking, oil fields, and stuff because those pipelines pay. Every day, the stuff is going up and down there, and they put other people in there. Yet, the landowner doesn't get anything. But,

once they get a pipeline in -- they are one of the most lucrative things there is is a pipeline.

JUNGE: They're not dumb people, you know.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, no, and I'm not blaming that family or anything.

JUNGE: No, I --

SHEPPERSON: I'm just letting you know how I found that out.

JUNGE: You know, I'm going to raise your hackles here a little bit. Is that OK?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. I don't think the trespassing law, as it was written by the oil and gas industry, if that's who wrote it or representatives who lobbied for it -- I don't think it's much different from the fence out law that the stock growers got established years ago.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. The trespass laws -- if you're speaking of the trespass laws, there are two types of trespass. Civil -- Civil trespass -- and that's like if you came in here, [02:18:00] I would have to say, "You get out of here," and I couldn't do anything to you. You could come in here anytime you wanted to. In the civil trespass law, I've got to give you a chance to get out. The hunting trespass law is written into law that if you come in here hunting that

you have to have permission. I can get you charged, but on the civil trespass, there's not a thing I can do to you.

JUNGE: Because this is a county road or what?

SHEPPERSON: No, that is the trespass law. I'm just poking a hole in your thing because, if somebody -- if I see somebody walking over that hill right now, I can go down there and there's not a thing I can do about it except tell him to get off. If he doesn't get off, I can call the law. But, as far as charging him with anything, I can't charge him with anything. You brought up the trespass laws. I'm just telling you what they are.

JUNGE: Yeah, but the example that I was always given was, OK, let's say [02:19:00] somebody's got this nice -- and I told this to Lisa -- they've got this nice, little garden and their neighbor's cattle come in and tramp it all to bits and --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, OK, but that's not the trespass law. Now, you're talking about the fence out law.

JUNGE: OK. I'm sorry.

(laughter)

Never mind. Never mind. No -- but, OK. So, the fence out law is what I was trying to explain that the stock growers got passed that seemed to me -- and maybe I've just got the little ranchers' point of view -- it seemed to me to be

unfair because, if his cattle or my neighbor's cattle comes over and ruin's my wife's garden, why should I have to build a fence to keep his cattle off of my garden?

SHEPPERSON: You're kind of right, and truthfully the fence out law -- the owner's got to pay for -- supposed to -- he's supposed to pay for half of it.

JUNGE: Oh, is that what it is?

SHEPPERSON: There is such a thing in law of what a legal fence is, and so if an animal breaks [02:20:00] into a legal fence, he has some responsibility. But, if your fence doesn't fit the --

JUNGE: The guidelines --

SHEPPERSON: -- the guidelines, then that's completely your problem. But, let me tell you a little bit about the other side of that -- how they're developing north of Cheyenne, how they're developing up here, north of Casper. If you have a ranch there, and somebody has something, and then all these people come in, and I've ranched there for 100 years, is it my responsibility to go fence each one of them and make sure my cows stay out of each one of them? So, (laughter) they're going to try to change. They're looking at changing the rules on a legal fence, and a legal fence between my neighbor who has 100,000 acres and I have 100,000 acres over here is a little different than somebody

that has five acres and a garden and the cows are hungry outside of [02:21:00] it. (laughter)

JUNGE: All right, Frank. OK. All right, but I would assume that you could fence your property in such a way that you didn't have your cows going over and eating somebody's grass on their own front yard. I mean, wouldn't you normally have that fence, anyway?

SHEPPERSON: No, this country was never fenced, like I told you when I was a kid. But, when the ranchers -- they started to fence it, I didn't know our ranch was so little. (laughter) But, at any rate, they get together. Each one of them pays for half of it, and then each one of them was responsible for the maintenance of half of it. But, as the ranches have changed hands, some of them four or five or six times, a new rancher comes in, and if a rancher goes over and he's from Arkansas and a rancher goes over and says, "Now, you maintain this part of your fence as yours." He says, "What the hell makes you think so?" you know. [02:22:00] He says, "I want this part," because it's been maintained better, see? There's no -- when that new guy comes in, there's no legal way for me to say, "No, that's not your part." So --

JUNGE: Oh, so I'm looking at it from the little guy's point of view but -- and kind of a slanted point of view because

what you're saying is the assumption is that both parties will have to share the load. OK. But, what if one of those parties is a huge landowner with lots of cattle and the other guy is just a little guy?

SHEPPERSON: Well, what happens is just exactly like I said. When 30 people come in and buy 40 acres each, does the poor old landowner have to share in every one of their fences? He didn't sell them the land.

JUNGE: The poor old landowner?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: What if he's got 250,000 acres?

SHEPPERSON: Well, it doesn't matter. He doesn't have a crew that's going to be fencing everybody that moves in on 40 acres and maintaining their fences. Do you want him to come down and maintain it [00:23:00] also? You know, an old Mom and Dad go out and go for a little walk across the land. They'd push the top wire down, climb over it and go. You know, are they the ones that are supposed to tighten the wire back up and put the staples back in, you know? I understand it's a problem, and I don't know the answer to the problem, but I just let you know both sides of it. You know, like up here, this is -- these poor ranchers in this area up here -- there's one rancher over there, all of a sudden, had no neighbors for a lifetime. All of a sudden,

he's got 40 neighbors, and each one of them has three dogs and they're running all over, and they give him hell if the cows get in there. You know, he -- it's changed his life completely. I don't know. I know the problem, but I don't know the whole answer [02:24:00] to that. But, I know that the whole answer isn't -- if you go buy 40 acres, that he's got to maintain your fence or build your fence or --

JUNGE: Well, it would seem to me like he'd already have his fence that would keep his property apart from all these other people. But, I could see where they might say, well, you -- you know, this part of your fence broke down, Mr. Shepperson, and I'll go in with you and work with you on getting this part of it done, but you've already got that fence there, right, before these other guys move in?

SHEPPERSON: No, no. What happens is -- and it happens a lot in our country -- just north of Edgerton, there are 640 acres that have belonged to a family. Oh, they live in California. They're granddad homesteaded it. You know, they just kept it kind of in the family and paid the taxes and we send up a little bit of lease money. Right in the middle of our pasture -- what if they decide to [02:25:00] break it up in 40-acre plots and sell it?

JUNGE: Then, who has to build the fences, right?

SHEPPERSON: Right, right, you know, and --

JUNGE: Well, I'd say they --

SHEPPERSON: But, it's right in the middle of our pasture, so there are no fences.

JUNGE: You know what my solution is to that? Don't let them build houses in the middle of --

SHEPPERSON: I know, but you can't stop them. You know, that's their private property. They can sell that to whoever they want to.

JUNGE: You don't have any -- as a lessee, you don't have any rights to --

SHEPPERSON: I don't have any rights. The fact is, if they've got to cross my deeded land to get there, I've got to give them access, and they can get there, and they can build the thing and --

JUNGE: You've seen -- this country wasn't fenced when you were a kid. So, you've seen a lot of change.

SHEPPERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: You think, for the better or for the worse or just change, period?

SHEPPERSON: You know, there are good parts and there are bad parts. There are good -- just like the interstate. It came here in 1981. Oh, I didn't [02:26:00] want that interstate in the worst way. They condemned me. (laughter) I went to court without a lawyer and they condemned me.

(laughter) But, there have been a few good things in this state. But, oh, there have been a pile of bad things, too, you know, because of the trash, and the people, and the fires and, you know, there are just -- there are all the different things. You know, every winter, people run through the fence and get their car out of there and go on. That's a controlled access highway. Somebody run through the fence up there and I had to (inaudible) it out there one night when it was slick. A guy from Ohio -- he had hit it, and it didn't hurt him, but it ruined his car. Of course, my bulls run. So, anyway, the highway patrolman calls and says there's a crippled bull here along the road and somebody's hit it. So, I go up and he's on the fight. I get in through the fence, [02:27:00] and then I patched it up the best I can. I'm not supposed to mess with that fence. It's controlled access highway. I don't even have a key to the gates going onto it. So, the lawyer from Ohio calls me up and wants me to pay for the car. (laughter)

JUNGE: Wait a minute. This wasn't your fence.

SHEPPERSON: That's what I told him.

JUNGE: It's a right-of-way fence, isn't it?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah, it's a right-of-way fence. Anyway -- but, the other part of it is -- anyway, I told him, you know, I -- you know me. I told him. I said, "I want to see your

license to practice law in Wyoming." That's the first thing I said. (laughter)

JUNGE: So, how did you resolve it?

SHEPPERSON: Well, I told him to go jump in a lake and get hold of the Highway Department. That isn't my fence, you know. I don't know if he did or not, but it's hard to sue the Highway Department. But, Jim Moore, on the road to Gillette -- his horse got out there and some people hit it and it killed them. They sued Jim Moore because there was a cattle guard there [02:28:00] but there was no gate across it, and I don't know how they did it for sure, but that's a state highway, which is a little different than a federal highway. But, yeah, they sued him.

JUNGE: But, it would seem like there would still be -- the right-of-way is controlled by the state --

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- because the right-of-way at my house is controlled by the state -- the highway.

SHEPPERSON: But, it's -- the rules are -- you know, you were asking me how things changed. We never even saw people when I was a kid. (laughter) You know, we lived in the country then. Truthfully, our neighbors are really good -- really good. You know, we'd -- that's our job -- keep our cattle kind of on our side of an imaginary line and then,

if a few of them got over there, the neighbor would come in. Our neighbors were sheep people, and my granddad and my dad would say, "Well, I had the kids up there doing the best they could do, but some of them got over there. But, [02:29:00] we left some grass up here. Just take your herder and use some of that, you know, to keep it even." You know, they got along really good. But, as new people come in that aren't used to our custom and culture, those things change.

JUNGE: Well, you're -- there's an old saying and you know it and everybody knows it -- good fences make good neighbors.

SHEPPERSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: Do you think that's true?

SHEPPERSON: No. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, thanks a lot! (laughter)

SHEPPERSON: My best neighbor over here is (inaudible).

JUNGE: Who -- south of here?

SHEPPERSON: Yeah. Oh, what a good neighbor he is. There is about a two- or three-wire fence between him and us. Usually, there's at least one strand up. (laughter) Every year, we mix up a few cows but not very many. My cows kind of stay over here and his -- you know, neither one of us [02:30:00] over-graze and they're used to their home range. But, a few of them get over. I say, "Randy, I've got a

hired man with a few days and, you know, we could go up and kind of rebuild some of that fence and make it better." He says, "You send somebody and we'll share some material." He said, "Frank, I'd just rather gather them, horse them back, and work them separate." Just all he said --  
(laughter)

JUNGE: It didn't bother him.

SHEPPERSON: Doesn't bother him. We -- he's fair and square and even. But, I'm giving you an example. A good fence doesn't make a good neighbor, particularly. A good neighbor is a good neighbor, no matter what the fences are.

JUNGE: Good point, good point, yeah. Well, you know, there's so much more I wanted to talk to you about. Didn't I come in here to talk about aviation?

SHEPPERSON: (laughter) Yeah. You want to see my airplane?  
(laughter)

JUNGE: Yeah. I want to take a picture of you with your airplane, but is it -- it's pretty wet out there yet. Is that OK with you?

SHEPPERSON: We can jump in that little four-wheeler and --

JUNGE: [02:31:00] OK. Well, let me put all this stuff away and I need to call Bob Eisele because he's expecting me. I don't think I'm going to make it today. Sheridan is how many --

SHEPPERSON: Two hours.

JUNGE: Two hours away? But, I can't get him. I can't get him by my phone. I don't think I -- I couldn't even --

SHEPPERSON: You can right now. You're sitting in front of that thing.

JUNGE: All right. Well, now, wait a minute. Oh, I guess it must be out in the --

SHEPPERSON: No wonder you can't get him on your phone. You don't have a phone! (laughter)

JUNGE: Oh, man!

SHEPPERSON: Can I take this thing off?

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I'm sorry. Here -- let's stop.

SHEPPERSON: You going to leave me pinned down here?

JUNGE: I got it. I got it. Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE

