

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

North American Indian

Personal Experience

O. H. 999

CHIEF WAHOO

Interviewed

by

Jay Toth

on

May 20, 1979

## Chief Wahoo

Chief Wahoo was born March 6, 1901 in a log cabin on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He was seventh of nineteen children. When he was twelve years old, he rode a horse to school with three other people. The school was seven and a half miles away. It was a one room school house with one hundred and twenty pupils. He went from the fifth to the eighth grade in one year, mainly because he would get the books and study in the summer.

The family depended on the Government money for food which came every three or six months. His grandmother, Yellow Robe, was killed at Wounded Knee. His father was a Spanish War veteran who just died this past winter.

On the reservation, Chief Wahoo would help pick corn and wheat. In the winter, he worked for the railroad cleaning switches for fifty cents an hour. He would travel around aimlessly picking up small jobs. He has been arrested over four hundred times and never convicted. Finally, he settled with the Chrysler Corporation in Detroit. This is where he met his wife and got her a job.

He likes animals very much. He used to keep a bear in his front yard and wrestle with it.

-Jay Toth

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INTERVIEWEE: CHIEF WAHOO

INTERVIEWER: Jay Toth

SUBJECT: Indian life, Wounded Knee

DATE: May 20, 1979

T: This is an interview with Chief Wahoo for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Jay Toth at 6877 Toma Road, Rootstown, Ohio on May 20, 1979 at 5:00 p.m. The project is North American Indians.

W: I was born on march 6, 1901 in a little log cabin up on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. When I was twelve years old, three of us had to ride on horseback seven miles and a half to go to school. That was when they first had room for us to go in, and then when there was a blizzard or something coming up, they would let us out of school early and hope we'd make it home. A lot of times, some of the kids never made it home. This is one of the reasons I find Indian Reservations are anything but a picnic. In winter out there, it would get to thirty and forty degrees below zero, and sometimes colder than that. The wind would blow seventy, sixty and eighty miles an hour. When you're out in the cold like that, the only thing you can do is find a cabin somewhere, or find a cave, or a good bank of snow and burrow down into it until the storm is over with. There's only one thing wrong with that--the storms last from three to six days. [They] have been known to last for nine days. [In] one of the longest blizzards out in that country, years ago, one of my uncles walked ninety-five miles through the blizzard to take some information. This was a long, long time ago.

T: What kind of information was it?

W: Well, he was taking some information about. . . . They was going to raid a certain group of Indians out in that country, so when they got there, there was nobody there. There was a family of Indians. The White folks were coming in and was going to raid them. But, I'll tell you, looking back on life, one thing about an Indian Reservation, you know who your friends are and you know who your enemies are. There's no questions. There's no half-way measures about it. They ain't patting you on the back one day and then sticking a knife in your back the next day. They're not like that. People are different, and they'll go out of their way to help a person.

A lot of people go on the Reservation trying to give them big ideas and everything like that they had back there. There's no place for that. There's no way in the world some of these ideas can work out there, because when you get a little bit of money from the government every three months and sometimes every six months, you depend on it for food. That's about all you spend it for. That's one hell of a life. But, if you live through, you can stand any other place in the world. I'll tell you that.

T: Do you remember your grandparents or your parents?

W: Yes, I remember them vaguely. My grandmother was Yellow Robe. She was killed at--they called it a battle, but it was a massacre--Wounded Knee. She's one of the ones on the monument. That was a deal where the Fourteenth Calvary was trying to get revenge for what happened to Custer and his men. The night before, they had taken all the guns away from the Indians. It was down in a valley like. It's kind of a cup shape, where Wounded Knee is. Three creeks come together and four trails cross there. They also told them, "If you hear a shot fired, open fire with a kitchkot gun." Now, there was hills all the way around there. It's kind of a cup shape where they was stationed. When you're looking up, you're looking right into a gun barrel.

So, there was a shot fired, and until this day, they've never been able to find out who fired that first shot. It could have been the officer that went down there himself, because he was the only one that had any guns. They killed men, women and children. They opened up on them. Some of them tried to get away, and the cavalry took out after them. Then a bunch of Indians came into the camp. They was out hunting, and they heard the firing. They came in there and they drove the soldiers back. You can't call it a battle because a battle would be an exchange of shots or exchange of

bows. There's no way that these Indians could have defended themselves. That's just one of the deals. Just like Washita, Custer went in there when men were out hunting and he started killing men, women, dogs, and children, not necessarily in that order, and burning teepees. The ones who were out hunting come in and they drove Custer out of there. Thirty days before the Battle of Custer's Last Stand, they tried to get into another Indian village up on the Rosebud River. It's called the Battle of Rosebud and they got defeated then.

I don't know. You take the hole in the ground down here in the southern part of the state that Custer crawled out of, they got a monument down there. And I asked . . . we went down there a couple of years ago celebrating the hundred year anniversary of his death and one of his relatives said, "Custer was a brave man." I said, "What do you mean, a brave man? He would always go into the camp when the men were out and try to wipe the camp out." They said, "He was an honorable man." I said, "What do you mean, honorable? It's in the record that he had four of his officers hold down one woman while he raped her. Do you call that honorable? He wasn't man enough to do it himself. He had to have help." (laughter) Well, that's enough of that asshole anyway.

T: Okay. What about your parents?

W: Well, my parents . . . my father was a Spanish War veteran. He was born up in the Black Hills in South Dakota. I got a letter from a lawyer that he died this winter at his house. There ain't too much to tell about him all except, during the Depression, I used to run around the country doing harvesting, potatoes, picking corn, helping with the wheat harvest. In the wintertime, I'd go down to the railroad yards when they needed somebody to keep the railroads clean. I worked there 174 hours straight one time keeping two switches clean. As you get one side all cleared out, the wind would blow it full while you were doing the other side. It was a rough job, [and] it didn't pay much--fifty cents an hour.

But, you know, there'd one thing I can't understand. When there's a forest fire, they want Indians to fight the forest fire. When they have snow bound [roads], they want the Indians to clear the snow off. One thing they must remember, us Indians are human and we feel pain, sorrow, gladness, and sadness the same as anybody else. They call us savages, but one thing they forgot to write in history was that they took the Barbarians from Europe and brought them over here to take the land away from the savages, as we were called. But, now

they're trying to get back to the Indian way of life because they found out that Indians would take care of the land. When they killed animals, they didn't only kill them for food. They used the skins, the meat, the sinews, the bones, and the antlers. They used everything on them and they didn't kill anymore than they could handle at the time. When the White man come over here, the only thing he knew was to put meat down in brine so he would have his dead meat with his live meat. When the worms got into them, he had to scrape it off so he could fry it and eat it himself. But they learned how to smoke meat and cure meat from the Indians.

I don't know if you realize it or not, but 89 percent of the food in this country has been cultivated by Indians. Take your corn, potatoes, cucumbers. . . . Even Indians showed the White man how to eat what they used to call the Love Apple, which is the tomato. They figured it was poison, so they wouldn't eat it. That's how crazy they were. These are things that man must remember.

See, we didn't live in one spot too long. When the game got scarce, we moved on to another part. Like over near St. Louis, they've done some excavating, and they have found fourteen villages on top of each other. In between the villages is sand and flood stuff which shows that at various times, they have moved on.

Now, this Bureau of Indian Affairs is something else. Politicians owed a favor to somebody, and he put him ahead of one of these reservations just to get him out of his hair so he couldn't bother him in Washington. Some of these guys should have been sent to prison that were put in there. The last major uprising in this country was when the Utes took and killed an Indian agent and all of his family in Colorado. That was about 1913 that happened.

Well, all the treaties made in this country, there's never been one broke by an Indian. Like over there at the Saukano Fox . . . they made a treaty with them. As long as the grass is green, the treaty will hold. Five days later, they went out and started a prairie fire and said, "The treaty is no good now because the grass ain't green no more." These are tricks that they use--as long as the water flows, the sun rises, the moon shines. They are good sounding words, but they don't mean nothing. Just like this S.A.L.T. treaty, it ain't going to mean a damn thing either. I don't blame the senators for trying to figure it out. But, what I understand about it is they're way ahead of us and they are going to keep way ahead of us.

T: You mentioned some of the experiences in school. Can you describe on day in school? What was it like in school for you?

W: Well, our school was a one room school. There was a hundred and twenty-five of us children in there and we had one teacher. She taught all the way from the first grade to the tenth grade.

T: She was White, wasn't she?

W: Yes. She wasn't a bad person, though. She'd lived among the Indians for a long time. When she died when she was about eighty years old, she had two judges, three lawyers and a doctor who was her pall bearers [out] of the kids that she had taught.

T: That's pretty good.

W: I don't know how many teachers today will be able to do that. Her name was McManamon. She was a big raw-boned gal. [She'd] never been married. I remember one time, I was acting like I was asleep. She called on me to answer a question and I says, "What's the question?" She says, "Where is the Andes Mountains?" I told her they started at Central America and run the whole length of South America. Then she asked me what was the famous horseshoe in the world. Well, I says, "the Andes and the Rockies are in the western hemisphere, and in the eastern hemisphere, you got the Ural Mountains and the Himalayas, which form the horseshoe of the world." You know she jumped me ahead of the whole class because we hadn't been studying nothing about that, but yet I knew it. See, I made from the fifth [grade] to the eighth grade in one year. What I used to do was, in the summertime, I'd get a hold of books for the year ahead and I'd study them. I was lucky that I had a good memory.

T: A lot of the traditionals don't feel. . . . The don't want their kids reading books and going to school. What's your opinion of that?

W: Well, the idea of schooling isn't' so bad but here's the point: when you go to school and go to college then you go back to the Reservation, there's nothing there for you to do. Who wants to take and waste a lot of time to go to college and learn to be something and go back to the Reservation? Maybe the only job you can get is some dirty job the White man don't want to do, like lifting rocks out of a riverbed, picking rocks out of the field, picking potatoes, or things like that. Well, hell, you don't have to go to school to learn that. Schooling nowadays is a big farce, because when I went to school, a ninth grade education was equiva-

lent to a high school education today. You had to really know your stuff. Now, if you play football. . . . Well, did you ever listen to some of these high-paid salary athletes talk?

T: Oh yes.

W: You think they never got out of kindergarten. These are things that kind of. . . . Well, the whole school system has become commercial. Our teacher back in them days got twenty dollars a month and board. They lived with one people one month then go to live with another people for another month. They got to know the parents, the people, and the children. But now, when the school bell rings for the school to close, then she's the first one out of the room. Years ago, the teacher used to be the last one out of the room. [They would] make sure the fire was taken care of and the windows were shut down. But now, half of them are not teaching material.

Your school puts out a lot of teachers up there at K.S. (Kent State University). Now, here's what happens. I've done a little investigating on it. They study to be something else, and they're not going to be able to make it, so the last term, they tell them, "Listen, you have enough credits for education, but you can't make it in the field that you've picked out." So, they go in for education. If you don't believe me, you ask some of the professors up there. They'll tell you the same thing.

T: When did you leave the Reservation?

W: I left it in 1917. I go back every once in a while. But, as I go back and see the way them people are living . . . you've never seen poverty until you get on one of them western Reservations.

Now, there was seventeen of us kids in our family. some of them got an education, and some of them didn't. I'm the seventh one. Thinking back through the years at the way time changes, ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper, I've heard that expression that young people are going to hell but they haven't made it yet. They're pretty close to it, but they haven't quite made it.

T: What made you leave the Reservation?

W: Well, I left the Reservation to go to a school. When I went to that school, I was farmed out to people by the name of Jenecky, who were German. When he died, I was sent back to the school. Well, the woman was blind.



She's dead now. I stayed there a while, then I took off again. I got me a job in Yellowstone National Park. [I] worked out there during the summer then went to school again in the wintertime.

I used to drive them park rangers nuttier than a fruit-cake out there, because I would play and wrestle with the grizzly bears and crawl up in the mountain lion's den and play with the cubs. That used to shake them up because they couldn't [understand]. See, I have a natural way with animals. I've never been hurt by an animal, even wild animals. They know that I'm not going to hurt them. They know I'm their friend. Like, I have caught wolves in a trap and went up and opened the trap and let the wolf out, and they never even attempted to bite me.

I broke several people from trapping. One guy that lives up the countryside up here about five miles was trapping for foxes. He asked me to go with him one day to go out on the fox line . . . trap line. I went out there with him, and he had a little old fox in there that wasn't hardly nine months old. I started to sing a little Indian song to the fox and the fox quieted down. He was jumping around. [He was] caught by one foot, but was jumping around and he quieted down. I said to the fellow, "What did this little fox ever do to you?" [He said], "Nothing." I said, "Why do you want to trap the little old fellow for?" So, I talked him into letting him go and I took the fox out of the trap and was petting the fox. I said, "Okay, fellow, you better get going before he changes his mind." The fox looked at him and reached up, licked me on the face and run off. [He] looked back and let out a little noise, and then went on. You know, he picked up his trap line and never has trapped since.

T: What was that song that you sang?

W: Oh, it was an Indian fox song.

T: Could you sing it so I could. . . ?

W: Well, it's (sings in native language).

A friend of mine over here has got some animals caged up. He had a two year old bear out here one time. All the traffic would come by here. It would stop, and they lined up here. I took the bear around back to keep them from having an accident, because they had both sides of the road blocked up about a half mile up and down below. Some idiot got out of his car up there, and I was wrestling with the bear. He said, "What's that guy doing with the bear?" He said, "Wrestling with it." He says, "Oh, I thought he was

trying to breed it." He says, "Shut up, you damn fool. Get in your car," and away they went. There are things like that. Things people don't understand.

Seems like nowadays there's so much misunderstanding going on. There's no [such] thing as trying to interpret feelings of people. Like one day, I was up on top of a roof patching a hole up here, and a guy come up in a car, blew his horn and waved for me to come down. He wanted to know if I had a permit to fix the roof, and I told him, "Yes. It leaked. That's all the permit I needed." He started horsing around and I said, "Wait a minute. Are you going to help me? Are you going to pay taxes on this house?" He said, "No." I said, "You get your butt on the other side of that telephone pole before I put it over there for you." He went off and said, "I'll get the sheriff." I said, "Well, more power to you. I can't get him to come out here."

I called [the sheriff] one time. I caught a guy in my garage back here going through my tool box at three o'clock in the morning. So, I went out there and asked him what he was doing. He said, "What do you care?" I said, "Well, I happen to own this place." He said, "Well, you don't own much." I said, "I own less with people like you." So, I run him off. I had someone stealing gas out of my car. The dog let out a yip, and then I come around the back door and come around here. I had a thirty-thirty rifle in my hand, and I waited [until] he got by that telephone pole up there. I cut loose on the can and I hit it right on the seam. I busted that can wide open. The last I seen him, he was headed for Rootstown. [He] run right through that red light and almost got hit by a car, but he never come back to get his can. So, that stopped the stuff. You see that sign on the front of the house?

T: Sure do.

W: That means just what it says. [I] catch them prowling around here at nighttime. . . . What's it say there? It says, "Indian land. No trespassing. No stealing allowed. Beware of flying objects, they might be bullets."

T: That says it right there, don't it?

W: Yes. You'd be surprised [at] the salesman that come up here. They read that sign and get right back in the car. They don't even finagle that long. Do you want to shut that off for awhile? (Tape shuts off. Turns on.)

T: [Were you] in the service?

W: Yes. I was in the Fourteenth Cavalry in World War I. [In] World War II, I was in Michigan at the time. I was in the Michigan . . . we had blue uniforms. It wasn't Civil Defense, but it was, I think, part of the National Guard. They had us running around in the airport out there in the wintertime carrying a damn rifle and no shells. We were supposed to be watching the airport against. . . . (laughter)

T: What was the Fourteenth Cavalry like?

W: Oh, the Fourteenth Cavalry in them days, was a horse unit. I was in troop B at the time, and I was a black horse.

T: What's the difference as a black horse?

W: Oh, just the color of the horses. Some troops had spotted horses, some the white horse troop. See, we had to take a . . . I had to laugh. When I went in, they was gong to teach me how to ride a horse. Well, I knew more about riding a horse than the guy who was teaching me.

When I got through there, I went to Minnesota. [It was] about that time the Depression hit. So, I started picking corn and garden fruit and thrashing crews. We started down in Mexico harvesting stuff, then go up to Canada, then work back down to Mexico. I picked tomatoes in California for a dollar and thirty-five cents a day. I had to pay a dollar and a quarter for a place to sleep and the food, so I was just coining the money. I'll never forget, when I first started for him, he said, "Red. . . ." I thought that he meant pick the red tomatoes. So, I'm picking red tomatoes and I had about fifteen bushel picked of them. Well, then the guy come out and says, "No. No. Not a red! A green! Pick'm a green!"

The next outfit I was working for. . . . They were selling wine for a dollar and a half a pint and had a credit payer who says he always was in debt. When I left, he was in debt. I had to go to the next field with him in order to not drink and wine or anything there, but they had a lot of ways. But, during the harvest, as long as the harvest was on, you was a harvest hand. As soon as that harvest was over with, overnight you became a bum. While the harvest was on, they welcomed you around there, but as soon as the over with, they wanted to throw you in jail for vagrancy or something like that. I roamed all over this country and learned a lot of things.

T: What are some of your experiences that you've come across?

W: Well, one time, I got in a fight in Shadow, Nebraska and got locked up in jail for four days. Then, I got out and I jumped on a train. I took the train to Boom, Iowa. [When] I got off the train in Boom Iowa, it was early in the morning. [It was] about seven thirty or eight o'clock or something like that. I was going over to the restaurant to get something to eat because I was hungry. I had been on the train all day and all night. We were riding that for six hundred miles. I started to cross the street to the restaurant and a police car come by, and it had a man and a woman in it. She says, "There he is!" So he says, "Hey you! Stop!" I looked around and I'm the only one on the street, so I stopped. She said, "Yes, that's him." He said, "Get against the wall! Put your hands up! Put one of them behind you." So, he shook me down and took me in jail, locked me up in jail.

Well, about 10:30, he come down there and he took me up to court. They wouldn't tell me what I was arrested for. I got in court. This woman had claimed that I raped her two nights before. I said, "I've never been in this town before. I don't know nobody here. I just got off the train. I've never been here before. I don't know this woman." I said, "What day did that happen?" and she told me, and I bust out laughing. The judge said, "What's so funny?" I said, "I was in jail in Shadow, Nebraska. You call up there to Crawford County and the sheriff up there. He'll tell you that I got out here the night before last." So, they went out, made a telephone call, and came back, and they handed the judge a slip and he says, "Are you sure this is the guy?" She says, "Yes, I'll know him on my death bed." He says, "Well, according to this report, the man was in jail six hundred miles away." It paid to know where you was at that time.

Then, I was coming out of Denver one time in 1933. [I was] walking down the highway carrying all my belongings with me, which wasn't too much. I got picked up. I was supposed to have stolen a car load of silk that night before. Hell, I didn't even have a silk thread on me. So, they held me fourteen days, then they finally turned me loose. But, these are things that can happen to you. You can be in the right place at the wrong time, and be a stranger is all. . . .

One of the most comical things that happened to me was--it's comical now that I think back on it, but it wasn't that the time--I'd been in Tennessee for about seven years and come back [to a] little old town over in Iowa to see some people I used to know who I had

worked for, and I was arrested. This girl claims that I had been the father of her child. Her child was two months old and I hadn't been there for over seven years, and the judge says, "How do you figure he's the father of your child?" She said, "Well, I was thinking about him at the time." He says, "Huh? Repeat that." She says, "I was thinking about him at the time." He threw the case out of court.

See, I've been arrested over four hundred times but no convictions. . . . Well, like a little town up in Michigan. . . . My car broke down. I was living in Detroit at the time, and my car broke down. I was walking to a place up there called Groves Point. It was about one o'clock [in the morning.] I wanted to get down where I could catch a streetcar and go home. I got arrested for walking on the streets after twelve o'clock at night.

(Tape turns off. Turns on.)

In a snow storm, there was a pow wow in the wintertime up there. You couldn't hardly see. You know how snow blows in waves?

T: Right?

W: You couldn't hardly tell if your was on the road or not. I was on a four lane highway and Lord Almighty, this guy passed me. I had an idea of where I was at. I said, "I bet he never makes that bend up there," to another guy with me. Sure enough, he's up and flagged me down. He said, "Send a wrecker out to get me out. I'm up there in the cornfield." I says, "What the hell do you need a wrecker for? You didn't need one to get down in there. You shouldn't need one to get out," and drove off and left him. (laughter) But, he was traveling eighty miles and hour or more in conditions like that.

T: Where did you meet your wife at?

W: I met her at Willow Run. I was government marshal at Willow Run Village at the time, and I ran across her. She was having trouble. Her mother gave her car fare and five dollars and sent up to Willow Run to get a job. She had to wait two weeks to get a pay. So, she was broke and I said, "I'll tell you what, I'll take you over to the Ford Motor Company and they'll give you a loan." So, I went over there and I told them that she was up there and that she was working there at the plant at Willow Run. [I asked] if they couldn't give her an advance on her pay, because I said, "The girl's out of money, and she don't know anybody up here." So, they give her about two day's advance of the pay she

had coming, and that's how I met her and started. . . . Well, I kept track of her to see if she was doing all right.

Now there was a funny thing, too. Out there at Willow Run, I was on duty twenty-four hours a day. When I first took the job over, they had a lot of vandalism down there, people knocking holes in the wall and all that sort of stuff, and I broke that up. I took about seven guns away from guys. One night I got a call that some guy was bringing some beer in the recreation room where the children and everybody was. So, I went up there and [I said], "Who owns this beer?" He says, "I do." I said, "Get it out of there." [He says], "Well, we drank beer before you came up here, and we're going to do it now." I said, "Where are you from, fellow?" He said, "Harlem County, Kentucky," and he drew out a .32 pistol. I reached in my pocket. I used to smoke then. I pulled a cigarette out. [I said], "Hey, you got a match?" He said, "Yes," and he went to shift that gun, and I hit him. (laughter) I watched him fall out into the street, and I got the gun away from him.

I called the law, and they come and took him. Now, they found out that he was out on parole out of jail down in Harlem County, and they didn't know where in the hell he was at. He hadn't reported. So he sent word to me that he wanted to see me before they took him down there so I went down to the jail house to see him and he says, "Won't you drop the charges?" [I said], "I don't have no charges against you. You were just locked up for investigation. If I put charges up, they couldn't be taking you back down there." I said, "Well, you should have thought of that when you were trying to play man-of-war." (laughter)

I worked there, and when I quit the job there. . . . That was a government Reservation deal and they had to pass an act through Congress so the county and the state police could police the place. Up to then, they had to have a government marshal, so I was appointed government marshal at the time.

A lot of funny things happened out there, too. I had a headache one night and I walked out to the apple orchard away from the recreation hall. So, I walked out there and [thought] maybe my head would clear up a little bit. I was holding a light on a couple. All of a sudden, she opens her eyes, sees me, and recognized me, and she hollered, "Rape!" She had both arms and legs around the guy. So I said, "Turn that poor son of a bitch loose so he can run." (laughter) Everybody does that now.

Then I run across a couple guys out there one night. I heard some hollering and yelling going on. I went outside, and here, they got knives. They were trying to have a knife fight. I said, "What in the hell are you guys doing?" They said, "We're having a knife fight." Both of them were cut up pretty bad. I said, "Well, give me them knives." They give them to me, and I took them to the infirmary there and had them.

But, it's strange how people . . . they get caught doing something like that. I come out of that old school. I told these people here in the village, "Make me constable here, and I'll bust up this petty larceny crap that's going on around here. You won't have to pay me no money. Just give me a couple dollars for every ass I kick and every head I knock in." They said, "Oh, you can't do that no more." I said, "That's the only way to break it up."

T: So, what do you see for the future of the American Indian?

W: I don't know. Just like this march they had out in Washington. I tried to talk them [into] walking up there with some equipment because Carter wouldn't even meet with them. He sent a Mexican out to talk to them and they sent the Mexican back to him. The only way Indians are going to be able to do anything in this country is if some way they can make the White man live up to these treaties they wrote. They promised them food and things like that, and they don't live up to none of their promises.

Well, just like . . . here let me take this [map] a minute. This is South Dakota. Now, this part of South Dakota was [given] to the White man by the Indians. All the rest of that is supposed to be their land forever. Soon as they found out there was gold in the Black Hills, then they started filtering in all up through there. That's what caused the Indians. . . . Like Custer, he was supposed to keep the gold miners out of the Black Hills. Hell, his men was up there panning for gold, and things like that. Well, I'll tell you, if you make a treaty and you don't keep it, you become a fraud. The only thing I can see for Indians to do is buy up a bunch of land some way or another and run it themselves, and go back to the old way of life because. . . . Sitting Bull made a statement before the Battle of Little Bighorn. He said, "If we lose this land through battle, don't worry because the White man will make the forest so no bird will fly in it. He'll make the prairie so no animal will walk over it. He'll mix the water up so bad that no fish will swim in it," then he says, "When he leaves then we'll go cure the land, and it will be ours again."

So, now they talk about going to the moon. A lot of people don't realize it. Like I say here in Portage County. . . . They don't realize that this Earth is like our body. If we don't take care of this Earth, and we don't take care of our body, we get sick. We're going to have all kinds of ailments. And all this atom stuff their fooling with and chemicals. . . . This country will never run out of food as long as it got chemicals. One reason I think that we have so many deformed children and feeble-minded kids is chemicals. Drugs and alcohol . . . people should never put nothing in their body that's going to hurt them. Well, then like this milk they sell today. Sixty years ago, if you sold that type of milk, they would have locked you up in jail. There's no vitamins in that stuff. There's just chemicals. Natural milk was a lot healthier for you. I could tell them people that. . . .

(Side one ends.)

I was up on top of a bridge and a guy come around, woke me up and give me a job. Did I tell you about that?

T: No.

W: I used to work in a youth center in Chicago. I could stand that city so long, then I had to get the hell out of there. So, I was hitchhiking and going to go to Wyoming at the time. I was over in Iowa and got sleepy one night. I was [in] snaky country. I knew it was snaky around there, so I didn't want to lay down in the grass. So, I come to this bridge across the highway. It has a concrete abutment like them old-time bridges had. So, I crawled on top of it and went to sleep. In the morning, this guy woke me up, shaking me, and he said, "What are you doing out here, fellow?" I said, "Oh, I've been walking from Chicago and I was tired. I know this is snaky country and I laid down on top of the railing of the bridge here to keep from getting bit by a snake." He said, "I'm a farmer. Would you be interested in any work?" And I said, "Yes, I'm getting a little low on money. I'll go to work." This was around the harvest time--wheat harvest. So, he took me out to his farm. He had his daughter with him. She was about eleven years old at the time. [She was] a short, chunky gal. So, he took me out to the farm. We had breakfast and then he went out to the field, cut some wheat and put it in shocks to get it ready for thrashing crews.

He had four daughters. I worked for him from about after the harvest [until] pretty near September. One day, I said to him, "Well, I got to be going." He



said, "Okay." So, he paid me what I had coming, and I left. Next spring, coming back that way, I thought I'd stop off and see him. I stopped off to see him. He had a boy and four girls. I forget his name now. The name don't mean too much anyway. Anyhow, I worked for him through fall that year and he wanted me to stay all winter. Well, I was getting thirty dollars a month. [I was] supposed to get thirty dollars a month. So, first month he paid me. The second month, he paid me fifteen dollars. He said, "Well, you've been on my place before, and you know my girls. I got four daughters. You've been getting a little, ain't you?" I said, "No, I didn't hire out for that." He said, "It's there to get. I don't want you using no forest." I didn't say nothing, so I worked the next month. I used to meet one up in the hayloft, then meet one down in the chicken coop. (laughter) Went out to the milk house. Then, I used to have a visitor at during the night.

Well, we were sitting there at the table one day, and one of the daughters started getting sick. He looked at them, and he looked at me and kind of grinned. I guess he figured, "Well, here's where I got this guy hooked for nothing," you know. The next morning, his wife got morning sickness at the table. So, he looked at me and he kind of frowned. I ate a couple extra pieces of ham and a couple extra eggs. I went upstairs and packed my clothes, and he said, "I want to see you a little bit out in the barn when you come down those stairs." I said, "Okay." I went and threw my suitcase out the window. By that time, the milkman was coming and I caught the milkman going down the road into town. I caught the first train out of there. I didn't give a damn which way it was going! (laughter)

I didn't go back there [until] . . . it was forty-one years. Never told my wife about it. I was going by there. I wasn't within five miles of there, so I thought, "Well, I might as well see if any of them are still alive." I went and seen the son. I was going to talk to him, and he was as busy as hell. He said, "Go over and see my mother. She'd like to see you." So, I went over there. We sat around and talked for awhile, and she called up her other daughters. They all come there. They told me one of them had four children, one had six children, another had a couple, and one had one. Boy, that one was a dead ringer. (laughter) He was thirty-nine years old. He was a dead ringer. So, I looked at my watch and I said, "Oh, I got to get going, because I want to be up the road." I was going to the Reservation at the time, and I had a truckload of clothes and everything. So, I took off.

After we got going, my wife said, "Did you notice that son of the oldest daughter? He looks like a picture of you when you was young." I says, "Well, I ain't seen them people for a long, long time." Anyhow, I got out of it by saying, "Well, every once in a while, someone in the world has got a twin looker--somebody that looks like him a little bit." So, it never dawned on her and she got off the subject.

Coming back there, I stopped by there. One of them I hadn't seen was there. They used to write. I used to hear from them. They bought a trailer and they was traveling a lot. They was going to stop by here and see me if they knew how to get here. So, I wrote down the instructions for them. Never did hear no more from them after that.

I often wondered if he. . . . Well, [the farmer] died during the period of time I was gone. I often wondered if he hadn't realized it would have been a lot better to pay me my money I had coming. (laughter)

At this center I worked at up there. . . . I used to go away and come back. I'd winter there half the time. When spring come, I was gone over the wind. If the sun shone for two days, I was on my way out of Chicago. But, I could only stand a big city for awhile and then I have to get the hell out of it, because there's so much corruption in there it's pitiful. When you see things. This was back during the [prohibition] days. That was damn near fifty years ago. Back during the dry days, if you wanted a drink, you'd see the cop walking a beat. He could tell you who had the speak easy. Just ask him where the nearest one was at, and he'd point you out one.

But, I don't know. Some of the experiences I've had in life were things that. . . . One time, I was working up near Jackson, Michigan for a farmer up there. He said, "Now, when my wife and I argue, I don't want you to take her part." So, they had one hell of an argument that come almost to blows at the breakfast table one day, and he went out to the barn. She said something and asked me what I thought about it. I said, "Well, this is all in life. You got to take these things in your stride." He heard me say part of it so he came in and fired me, because I was taking his wife's side. I was about ready to leave anyway because the guy was a ding-a-ling. Anyhow, these are little passages of life that once in awhile come across your mind.

END OF INTERVIEW