

JEPSEN, Neal  
2003 / 2004  
Boulder



INTERVIEW WITH:	Neal Jepsen
INTERVIEWER:	Marsha Holland
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**Tape 1, Side 1**

MH: Today is December 6, 2003 and I'm in Boulder, Utah with Neal Jepsen. How are you doing today Neal?

NJ: I'm real good.

MH: It's nice weather we're having; cooler weather. I hope we get some rain soon.

NJ: Well, we've been hoping that for a long while.

MH: No kidding, about five years now. Neal, if you wouldn't mind, could you tell me your date of birth?

NJ: October the eighteenth, nineteen-nineteen.

MH: So you just had a birthday not too long ago?

NJ: Yes.

MH: And where was your place of birth?

NJ: At Richfield, Utah.

MH: Can you tell me a little about your family, what were your parents' names?

NJ: Alfred Jepsen and Nellie Jepsen. That was my mother and father.

MH: How did they end up in Richfield?

NJ: My father was born coming over here from Denmark. My mother, she was from over here in Wayne County but they had come from somewhere in the south, I couldn't tell you just where.

MH: Like the southern part of the states, right?

NJ: Not southern Utah, the southern part of the United States.

MH: How did they meet? Did they ever tell you how they got together?

NJ: I don't really know how they got together but being from Richfield and Loa, that's not a great distance between the two.

MH: Did you have brothers and sisters?

NJ: Oh yes, there were ten in our family.

MH: What number were you?

NJ: I'm in about the middle.

MH: Are any of your brothers and sisters still around?

NJ: I have one brother that lives here in Boulder, his name is Alfred Jepsen and then I have a brother in California, in San Leandro and a sister there also, Norma and Bryce.

MH: And they're in the San Leandro area?

NJ: Yes, and that San Lorenzo and San Leandro.

MH: How did you end up in Boulder, you and your brother?

NJ: The reason I ended up in Boulder was my uncle, he was a bachelor and he had quite a number of cattle and he had this ranch here. He always hired somebody to work for him and of course I was at high school age when it was just five bucks to

[unintelligible] when I could cowboy and I was interested in being a cowboy. So I came over here with him and lived there from about eight years with him.

MH: What was your uncle's name?

NJ: Niels Jepsen. I lived right there until I finally married Fay and we moved from there down to California. We lived in the Bay Area.

MH: Was it because of the war that you ended up going, or what was the draw?

NJ: It was the war right then. I went to work when I left Boulder and went in the shipyards, Kaiser Shipyard. Fay also worked there.

MH: That was in what town?

NJ: We lived in Richmond to start with and then San Leandro. Of course I was in the Navy then and I joined up with Treasure Island. I taught recruits there about a year and then I went from there over seas.

MH: I met someone else out of Kanab who also taught recruits, to soldiers who didn't know how to read or write.

NJ: Well, the only way they were recruited was as mess cooks. They served the officers in the officers' mess more or less.

MH: How old were you when you moved over?

NJ: I couldn't have been very old.

MH: Had you finished high school?

NJ: No I was just in my second year in high school.

MH: So you were about fifteen or so.

NJ: Yeah, about fifteen.

MH: And what did your uncle have you doing on the ranch?

NJ: Mostly I was a cowboy. At that time we rode the range here. In the winter time why we were probably gone six months all together. We would spend about half of every month down on the range.

MH: Can you describe for me that range?

NJ: Yes, I can tell you what it looks like.

MH: Yes and the names [of the places].

NJ: We run cattle in the Circle Cliffs and that took in what we called Flats down there and Horse Canyon and Silver Falls and Death Hollow and Moody's. So we really had a cool job in the wintertime.

MH: What was it like, those are kind of intricate canyons, and did you lose a lot of cattle in there?

NJ: Actually there isn't a lot of canyons down there however, what canyons there is, run back into the Escalante River. We never had too much trouble with cattle in canyons, that sort. We had to have our cattle depend upon the snow, the water. When we had to have water for our cattle why it was just such a small amount of water everywhere that we had to move them around a lot so they could drink.

MH: Would you move down one canyon into the Escalante and up another? How would you run them through?

NJ: We started out with my uncle's cattle. We started out right here there was one place we could go, we'd go down what they call the Indian Trail and that takes off up here into Steep Creek and drops in to The Gulch. Then we would ordinarily go down through Lower Boulder there and down into The Gulch, Long Canyon, and out into the Flats. And we run our cattle like that out in that, we called it the

higher country there. We'd go out there in fall, whenever the snow started. We was afraid the cattle would get snowed in because The Farm there is high enough. And we would start moving them down toward the lower country through Death Hollow and Silver Falls. And then we would just stay with our cattle and watch them real close all the time because our cattle were not... The feed is real poor in that country and you just didn't have anything much for them so we had to kind of more or less move around a lot.

MH: How many of you were there, that would do that?

NJ: It was my uncle, there was just two cowboys and Fay's father here and whoever he sent with us down. Then we always had the King Ranch down here and they had always sent, they had the biggest permit, cattle permit that is, down in there and we would take a few and so there would be about four or five of us.

MH: So the different ranches ran the cattle together?

NJ: Yes.

MH: And there were no fences then, right?

NJ: No fences.

MH: That really changed things didn't it?

NJ: It sure did. We started out by having allotments for the cattle and each one of us had some of these allotments.

MH: So that was about when the Taylor Grazing Act happened, so the time you're talking about is pre-BLM?

NJ: It wasn't that many years ago. When the grazing permits started we all run down there together and more or less anybody that wanted to run their cattle in there

just went ahead and nobody stopped them. There was some that even started after I came in here, started running their cattle in there, the Circle Cliffs. Well, we had kind of a rough time in the winter times with the cattle. Being they were all thin. All our mountain cattle here, we all run on the mountain and when we would take them off they were in fairly good shape when we'd turn 'em down into the Circle Cliffs.

MH: I was going to say that the range and the grazing up here is really good.

NJ: It was real good.

MH: And so they would have kind of a tough winter down in there?

NJ: Oh yes, we always hit a bad winter and...

MH: So when would you sell them? When would you normally sell them off?

NJ: In October.

MH: Yeah, before you took them down to the lower country.

NJ: Yes, when they had run on the mountain.

MH: When they were all fat.

NJ: We sold at that time, when we sold our cattle; everybody had to keep their yearlings. We went that way until they had trucks and they would truck them out. That was the only way we got them out and we started selling our calves in the fall of the year.

MH: Because the yearlings weren't strong enough to make the trail?

NJ: Well, it saved us a little more room on the range because yearlings we thought we were getting up there for nothing if they were calves but, when they were yearlings why they allotted us.

MH: I see. It's interesting the way it sort of moved into the allotment thing. At that transition point how old were you? Were you in your twenties then? Were you and Fay married?

NJ: We was married when I was twenty-two.

MH: So you remember fairly well when they moved to allotments?

NJ: Oh yeah.

MH: And what did you think? How did you think that would work?

NJ: I didn't really like it. What we were doing is there was only a few that was too involved in the fencing part. At that time I owned my own permit and so I was well we more or less picked out our allotments. We was watching them fence and what we picked out there was just four of us.

MH: Who was it then? It was King, Jepsen...?

NJ: King wasn't even up into the fenced area. He was down below us. Of course it was the same area in the Circle Cliffs. But he was, like I said, the biggest operator and he was below us. I was about the smallest one myself. Of course I didn't run my ranch, my uncle had it. There was my allotment and Leland's allotment, they run right together almost except that was Fay's brother. Then the next one over was Fay's brother, Otto, and his allotment was a little bit bigger than mine. The next one over was Anthony Coombs.

MH: What was it like out there in the wintertime, camping? That's what you were doing is camping weren't you?

NJ: Yes, we camped out always.

MH: Would just have a nice big, thick bedroll?

NJ: (Laughs)

MH: Did you have a nice camp?

NJ: No. We didn't have any..., all we had was pack horses to get our bedding and everything like that down to us. That's how we traveled, pretty light.

MH: So you had your horse and...?

NJ: Each one of us would have two or three horses. Each one of us would have probably two mules to pack outfits for us.

MH: That's quite a bit of stock to keep track of, isn't it, besides the cows?

NJ: Yes. We hobbled everything and that's the only way. We would just turn them out. You keep them hobbled and they usually stayed not too far away, but sometimes they would decide to go home.

MH: They would go home?

NJ: I've had them come in to Lower Boulder.

MH: Looking for the sweet grass of home? And did you also have a couple of dogs?

NJ: Well we would usually always have dogs. We didn't really use them on our cattle but we always had dogs.

MH: What about coyotes, or cougar, or bobcats? Did those animals ever bother you down there?

NJ: No, they didn't really bother us. We were always well armed.

MH: I was going to say you would want to be.

NJ: No we never had any trouble with wild animals.

MH: No particular adventures, eh?

NJ: There was an operator here, an old man. He was another bachelor, he wasn't married, he didn't have a family and he run cattle down there but he was too old to do his job and I believe that he had quite a time with keeping track of how many he had because I think when you aren't there to watch them, why somebody else will get them. Anyhow, he run cattle down there and a lot of his cattle, he wouldn't castrate his bulls and a lot of his cattle would get up and grow up and they would be branded. So his cattle were quite wild. But Fays's father bought the cattle and I think at the time that he bought them there was about sixty-five head. That's about all that was left. We never had corrals. What we would do is there was probably right around eight of us that went down to get them and brand them over to Haws'.

MH: So how did you get them up to the Haws'? Did somebody drive them?

NJ: Oh no. We took them, and started out down low, as far down as their cattle run and then we just take and catch all these cattle, we would round them up, all these cattle that was to be branded. We never had no corrals or anything so we would take them and herd them in these big washes and stay with two men.

MH: You would box them in.

NJ: Yes. And then about four of us would brand them.

MH: Was that the fun part of the job?

NJ: It was the fun part in some ways. (Laughing) We liked the cowboying part but then again it was pretty dangerous because Fay's father, he was quite a short fellow and he was the brander. He'd have just a heck of a time staying out of the way because they would fight just as quick as they got up. We were on the fight

all the time anyhow. We did that with all the cattle. We went from the Moody, come right back up through the old country and we caught all the cattle, all this fellow's cattle.

MH: Do you remember his name?

NJ: Alf Whatcott was his name.

MH: Watcott?

NJ: Yes. I believe about sixty-five of them, I'm not sure about the amount. They were quite wild and we had quite a time.

Fay: That's the way it was in those days. I'm sure my dad just bartered for those cattle. My Watcott was in Salt Lake and just too old to be down here. Because my dad bargained from the cattle and he trusted my dad enough. He caught and branded all of the time and my dad sent him a check. There was no contract, nothing just a verbal.

MH: It was a different time.

NJ: He brought them up here and sold them. He pretty much didn't keep any of the cattle because they were a little wild.

MH: So what did you do with them? Is that what you said, you eventually sold them?

NJ: Yeah. We brought them up here and they kept them around here a little while and then sold them.

MH: But you remember when they were boxed up and you were trying to brand them?

NJ: I do remember that. And a lot of times the washes weren't just what we wanted but that was the only way we could catch them. I enjoyed all these kinds of things because that's what I came here for.

MH: Right, to cowboy. So you cowboied for your uncle, let's talk a little about your uncle. He ended up coming here from...?

NJ: From Richfield. He bought, well he was the biggest permit holder in the Forest Service permits and he bought this ranch and it was just above here. He was, like I said an old bachelor and kind of, he was about the age then, of course we think of him now, he quit ridding more or less when he was fifty years old. In this day and age why...

MH: ...you can go a lot longer.

NJ: But that's the way we handled them.

MH: You said a little about the corrals, that there just weren't that many corrals and you used the natural terrain features to sort of corral animals.

NJ: Out in the Circle Cliffs yeah, why there were really no corrals at all. We did build a few corrals, a couple of corrals up here on the mountain.

MH: Well, I suppose you had more material up here, didn't you?

NJ: Oh yes, it was easier to build corrals all right because there was lots of aspen and that's what we used to build them with.

MH: Would that last quite a long time, aspen?

NJ: Oh yeah, they would last for probably fifteen years.

MH: How did you construct them?

NJ: We built round corrals and we would just take the poles and set them up on a rock. As we went around the sides of the corral we would wire the poles and the posts at the openings.

MH: Were they like this then, parallel?

NJ: No, it was round. We just notched the poles and set one on top of the other. We used good-sized aspen to work with. Actually, the only reason we ever built corrals, I don't know about any of the other permittees, but all the permittees I knew around here, was the branding of calves for a lot of them on the mountain. Because the cattle were poor and everything on this range down here, on the lower range, the cows didn't have only a calf every other year. So some of the people, my uncle, he was one of the people, had cattle was in a lot better shape. We had a lot better amount of cattle and a fair calf crop than most people did.

MH: What do you think that was attributed to?

NJ: Just the feed. He run cattle on the range all the time up here on Forest Service and like I said we had the biggest permit up here and so our cattle did better.

MH: They were healthier.

NJ: We had the bulls run here on this Forest Service rather than run bulls on the lower range at all. All the cattle that was not permitted on the Forest Service, they had real poor calf crops, [sometimes] they didn't have any calves.

MH: So the Forest Service is actually better land to run your cattle on?

NJ: Oh yes, this is a beautiful mountain here. It doesn't look so good right now but it is a beautiful mountain with lots of feed.

MH: I know from talking to other folks that there have been times that there have been drought situations such as we have now. Do you remember anything as severe or long lasting?

NJ: We really are acquainted to drought all the time as far as that goes. Every three or four years we would have some bad years, [or poor]starts to them. Like I said on

our range down on BLM it was just real poor range. It had never been reseeded until we got our allotments and they started reseeding it. They only partly reseeded it even at that. They're still talking of reseeding this year again now.

MH: You've got to have some water to go along with that. The life of a cowboy can be pretty lonely, how did you and your partners deal with that?

NJ: On the range we just played cards and...

MH: Whittling?

NJ: We weren't whittlers. We always laughed at the Escalante people, they were whittlers.

MH: Would you run into those folks sometimes?

NJ: No. Our cattle, everything we had when it came to the Escalante River, it all come back our way and beyond the Escalante River, that was the start of their range.

MH: So you just played cards?

NJ: Just cards, that are about all we had, and maybe quarrel a little.

MH: Quarrel?

NJ: That's about the size of it.

MH: Somebody told me one of the things they would do, this is over towards south of Cannonville, they would do their own little rodeos out in the range.

NJ: Well, usually not us. We broke our own horses. Most operators had all these young horses, which was just about as much as the rodeo would have. They were breaking them to the saddle and such. It was always a little bit of fun watching. That was about it.

MH: Where would you get your horses? Were there still wild horses down in there?

NJ: Oh yeah, there's a lot of wild horses down there. We never got wild horses but not for saddle. One family up here had a few horses that they got, the Lymans. They rode those kind of horses. We never rode, the small horses. Our horses were all pretty good sized.

MH: When the cattle were up here on the mountain did you spend as much time with them?

NJ: No. All we did up here on the mountain was, none of them would run out on the top, on the top of the Boulder. Now they do, now since there were so many sheep and the sheep were more or less on the top of the Boulder. We never went up there.

MH: So you would be closer to home.

NJ: Yes, all we would do is we had to take care of our crops when we cut our hay and so forth why we'd have to put our hay up.

MH: And then right after you'd get your hay up though you would be out on the range.

NJ: Yeah, we would be out on the range.

MH: Did you look forward to that?

NJ: Always. I never was much for liking the farming.

MH: But you had to do a little of that.

NJ: Yes, we sure did.

MH: How would you get your supplies out there, your food and such?

NJ: Everything we took on the mule, later they put roads down through there. One road, anyhow. We carried everything in there in saddlebags. Each person would have all he could carry. The horses took grain all the time because the range was

so poor that we had to grain our horses all the time. So when we took our pack horses down most of it was grain we were carrying. Our bedding and our food was more or less limited.

MH: Did you ever cache stuff?

NJ: No, we didn't. Each one of us would put so much into each meal and everything like that.

MH: So, what was your typical daily meal like, or meals?

NJ: We usually always had meat. In that day and age deer was quite plentiful and we took care of them so we helped ourselves.

MH: So you would have venison?

NJ: Yes, we had venison and ranches had pork and beef too.

MH: What about vegetables and fruit? Did you have some of those dried?

NJ: We had, with my uncle like he was, he brought the fruit from the Lyman's. Mrs. Lyman put up so much fruit, so we bought our fruit from them. We would buy it in the fall of the year, enough to take us through the winter. We'd buy our fruit from there and our butter from there. We'd pretty much supply our own meat.

MH: And would you make some bread or biscuits while you were down there.

NJ: With my uncle it was a little bit different than it was for other people for the reason that we had everything come in on the mail. We'd have our can stock in cases and so we always had a lot of canned stuff and most of the people they had their wives taking care of their food you know. And so we had both kinds. We ate pretty fair. We didn't suffer much.

MH: What was your favorite food to bring down with you?

NJ: Well, I believe for me when it come right down to it, pork and beans.

MH: The best, good old camp food. And water was ok; you could find springs and fresh water?

NJ: Well, we took and we'd have big enough containers with us that it we had to carry our water somewhere we'd take five gallon cans and we'd fill them up with water and bring them to our camps.

MH: They were cans or kegs, square cans?

NJ: What we used were milk cans, the five-gallon milk can.

MH: And with those supplies, how long would you be able to stay out?

NJ: We'd stay out maybe ten, twelve days something like that. Then we'd come back, come up to home and stay maybe that many days at home and go straight back.

MH: Right, get your laundry all cleaned up and re-supplied.

And so what would you do for entertainment around here? It's fairly isolated around here; did it ever bother you that you were so isolated?

NJ: No, not really. There were no cars in Boulder so we would travel on horseback. Fay can tell you she went to school horseback.

MH: She did tell me that.

NJ: That's mostly the way we traveled. If we were going to have a dance down here why we'd get on our horses...

**End of Side A, begin Side B**

MH: And you would meet up with the gals? That was the big social events, the dances and church too wasn't it?

NJ: Well, for those that went to church, I wasn't at church.

MH: Right, you were on the range a lot.

NJ: I'm not LDS so I didn't go to church.

MH: When you first came here, tell me what your impressions were when you first moved here from Richfield. Had you ever been to Boulder before?

NJ: I had been here.

MH: So you were a little bit familiar with it.

NJ: It was pretty isolated I suppose. I couldn't see where there was any chance of doing anything else out here. Like I said I was interested in the horses and wanted to be a cowboy.

MH: And you had a little bit of a feel for it because would come visit your uncle?

NJ: Yes. And in Richfield my dad had a small cattle operation. He ran cattle all on the forest service too. So I knew a little bit about it when I come here and knew what I wanted to do. There wasn't much to it.

MH: Did you come with your brother? Did you and your brother come together or did he come later?

NJ: No. When I come here why like I say my uncle had a hired man or two that was right there on the ranch and so everything that I did...

MH: With the hired hands?

NJ: He did have a hired man that was not too much older than me. He and I had a really good deal here. My uncle lived right above here and right next to him was another ranch, and they had quite a few boys in the family and they were all pretty well grown boys. So we had another ranch right across, oh maybe half a mile

from us and they had boys and so they all come to work at my uncle's ranch. We always said they come over there to smoke. (Laughs)

MH: Yeah, that's what young guys would do. They would come over and have a smoke.

NJ: Over there you know there wasn't anybody to stop them.

MH: Right, there wasn't anybody watching over them. It was the 'hang out' then.

NJ: It was. We had all those boys and we'd sit down and play cards and I read a lot so I wasn't as sharp as some of the card players. I would read a lot.

MH: Would you read on the range? Would you take your book with you?

NJ: I'd never read down there because all we had were candles.

MH: And during the day you were busy.

NJ: We'd play cards.

MH: Did you take down a new deck each time? (Laughs)

NJ: Almost.

MH: Neal, have you ever calculated how many miles you put on, on horseback? Have you ever thought about that?

NJ: Well, I know how many miles I could put on [in a day] but while we were there we would put on at the most, fifteen miles a day.

MH: That's plenty. That's a good long day.

NJ: We rode long days. If our horses was not too far away in the morning when we went to wrangle horses. I was a wrangler and if they were within a half a mile I figured that was quite close and by the time I would get the horses together and start them back then the cooks would have breakfast ready.

MH: So you had a cook along?

NJ: Always. We had them fellows that did the cooking and we enjoyed that because we were always kind of fussy about who the cook was.

MH: I bet, and I'll bet you were always hungry.

NJ: Yeah. (Laughter)

MH: So what do you think is going to happen with cattle ranching around here now? Your son is doing a bit of it now isn't he?

NJ: There are only just three or four guys that have got any cattle. I think as far as the range is concerned the BLM has got real nasty about that. My son bought a little bunch of cattle from me when I sold my cattle off. He bought forty head from me and I gave him that much of my forest permits. I sold everything but the forty head and I let him have it. So he started out running them on the range and then the BLM cut him off last winter.

MH: Does that mean that they had to bring them in early?

NJ: He wasn't even able to turn them out and this year, the same thing. I talked to BLM a little bit about his permit because I didn't think it was right but they claimed that they were going to reseed part of it and they say this drought ruined the grass. But I...

MH: On this permit you don't think it's such a ...?

NJ: I think it's wrong but he doesn't get [to range]no cattle out there again this year.

MH: So that means you have to feed them all?

NJ: (Unintelligible)

MH: I was out on Spencer Flat a couple of weeks ago and there was no grass. I mean it was really pretty poor looking. I guess the different areas...

NJ: This area that I was in, it was always seeded see and I don't believe they've ever reseeded anything else, down there.

MH: It's always been a question for me. There's that whole time when the BLM really promoted ranching and land use and they did the railing and the reseeding, they built roads, the CCC did a lot of that work and corrals. Now it's like a big flip-flop.

FJ: Tell her about the one time they put us all in separate allotments.

NJ: I have told her.

MH: We talked about that.

NJ: They didn't really take them away from us but what it was was, each allotment belonged to a man. They come in and didn't think that was the way to go after we had started using it that way. Why they come in and come up with the idea they was wanting to reseed it for us. We kind of went along with the idea that it would be good. Well, then they started in saying well, "Before we can reseed, we have to have all of you put half of your permit turned back in to the BLM until after this reseeding all blossoms out and makes the grass". So we went that way. But it never did grow up.

FJ: They never did get around to giving our permits back.

NJ: No, they didn't.

MH: That's frustrating.

NJ: They only reseeded three allotments. The biggest allotment was, Fay's brother had the biggest allotment down there and they never did reseed it. We didn't gain too much from the BLM.

MH: It wasn't the (unintelligible).

NJ: It was better range, it was deep soil, no rocks.

MH: And so do you still have your horse?

NJ: Yeah, just one.

MH: I think I have a picture of you on you horse. What's the horse's name.

NJ: Super is what I call him.

MH: Super?

NJ: Um hum, a white horse.

FJ: He still rides.

MH: It's just beautiful country.

NJ: Well, we got rid of our horses when we sold our cattle.

MH: You had quite a few horses didn't you?

NJ: Everybody here had a lot of horses.

MH: Were there horse races? I've heard there were horse races.

NJ: Just on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July; the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> sometimes.

MH: So, when the war started, did cattle ranching change too, because a lot of young men left the area? For instance you went away and some of your brothers went away. Who was it, I am trying to remember, was it a Jepsen that's down in Kanab? What's her name? Karen Alvey

FJ: Karen was a Jepsen, but she married Ladell Alvey, that is our niece.

NJ: She is from my family, my brother's daughter.

MH: When you went to California, did you stay with them?

NJ: We stayed with one other brother.

FJ: Then they all went in the Navy, all four of them.

MH: What happened here?

NJ: They went right on ranching. they never changed much. Neils sold out right after World War II.

MH: So, you were in the Navy. Cowboy goes to sea?

NJ: I was on a PT boat, so I was in some rough waters (chuckles).

MH: Those were small boats but fast.

NJ: Yes, fast. They were the fastest things in the waters that they had.

MH: That must have been exciting too?

NJ: Well, it was at times.

MH: You probably saw a lot of different country by boat?

NJ: Yes.

MH: Was there an adjustment from being a land person to being on the sea so much?

NJ: Every night, we did most of our work at night, and we'd travel maybe fifty miles during the night on patrol in Japanese waters. What we were doing was supposed to stop the Japanese getting supplies. We tried to lock them out of their supplies.

MH: A major strategy of war: stop the supplies.

NJ: It was quite a supply line. I don't really know where they got their supplies.

They came in with boats also, similar to the PT boats. Where they came from or how far, I don't really know.

MH: Were you happy to come home? You were in California for a while though?

NJ: We were there eight years.

MH: What made you decide to come back to Boulder?

NJ: Fay's family died. Her dad and mother both died, so we came back here. Fay mentions something but it is inaudible.) I still wanted to be a cowboy. (Laughter).

MH: It is a good life. It is a life of solitude.

NJ: You asked me if you thought we were too lonesome. I told you, where we lived there were boys; all kinds of them.

FJ: They used to go over to his uncle's who was single, the ole' bachelor pad and they would come over and sneak a Bull Durham. (Laughter)

NJ: Yes, they all smoked Bull Durham. It wasn't too lonesome for me anyhow. I don't know about Fay if she was too lonesome or not?

FJ: Oh, no. (comments inaudible)

MH: Well, it is a beautiful land.

FJ: No, place like it.

MH: Any parting thought about the land, cowboying, or ranching?

NJ: We have enjoyed living here. Both Fay and I cannot imagine living somewhere else.

MH: I would like to say thank you for your time and the interview.

NJ: My time is not too much. About all I do is read. I read about everything. I am a westerner. I prefer things about the West. On television, we have how many stations of western shows?

**Interview ends**

UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT AND DEED OF GIFT

I hereby give to the Utah State Historical Society the tapes and transcriptions of the interview/interviews recorded on Dec 6, 2003 and grant the Utah State Historical Society the right to make the tapes and transcriptions available to the public for such educational and research purposes that are in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Society's Utah History Information Center.

NARRATOR Neil Jepson

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Boulder, Utah

8 SIGNATURE Neil Jepson

DATE 12-06-03

INTERVIEWER Marsha Holm

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Provo, UT

SIGNATURE Marsha Holm

DATE 1-03

INTERVIEW WITH: Neal Jepsen  
INTERVIEWER: Marsha Holland  
INTERVIEW NUMBER: Two  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 6, 2004  
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Jepsen home, Boulder, Utah  
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Life on the range: Bounds, Iron Top, cowboy stories  
TRANSCRIBER: Marsha Holland  
DATE: January 2007  
Sony DAT Walkman recorder

**Interview is a follow-up and begins in progress with a discussion on several cattle that were trapped out on Bounds mesa area.**

MH: What is that mesa called? (Inaudible section)

NJ: Actually, it was where the Escalante River comes into the Colorado.

It is water that is from the dam that has backed up to there (Glen Canyon Dam), backed up to where these cattle were at. Lars tried to get them out for beef. Mac could tell you more about it than I could, because he went out on there with Lars.

MH: I haven't ever heard any stories about having to beef the cattle out on the range.

NJ: Well, sometimes it is the only way to get them off is to butcher them.

MH: Well, it also makes you wonder how the cows got to where they got to. Were they just looking for feed?

NJ: Well, no, Lars put them out on there. It was a piece of ground that the BLM or anybody else did not claim, so he put his cattle, I don't know how many head, maybe 12 head and a bull with them. Quite a few years he used this allotment out there and I don't know who, it wasn't Mac that was with him all the time. (see Allen Gomez interview) Different ones went with him on to it. I do know this much about the allotment there, because where I was at in Moody, it ran back on a

ridge called Iron Top. He had to go right on down across Iron Top to get to this range that Lars had.

MH: What was Lars' last name?

NJ: Peterson. He was a dentist.

MH: Ah, that was his full time occupation. (Laughter)

Iron Top, that is in between where the Escalante comes out?

NJ: Yes, it is where the water backs up to the Escalante. Mac could tell you a lot more about it.

MH: Why was it named that?

NJ: I don't believe it was good for anything else. (Laughter) Nothing grew there, it was just sandstone. I don't know even that much about it. I was next to Iron Top and I think it was just sandrock.

MH: Did your range ever take you over to the Wolverine Cabin?

NJ: Oh, yes. My range covered all of that, everything down there from Iron Top back this way.

MH: Could you tell me systematically the drainages and ridges your range covered?

NJ: I would have to think it over.

MH: It goes Iron Top into the Escalante.

NJ: Horse Canyon goes to one big mesa down there; Bounds Bench, runs all the way down through there along the [Escalante] river. Each one of these places like Bounds Bench, is up from there is Wolverine, then next up from there is Horse Canyon. Horse Canyon is really all flat country, but that was one of the big ridges that came out of there.

MH: Did many outfits run their cattle in and out through Horse Canyon?

NJ: It actually belonged to King's and Burns Ormund, he did run a few cattle out there and was allowed to get off into the river and water his cattle. Burns just put them out on those little benches. King was a big operator. He run his cattle on all of the same country. I believe that Mac rode for him a little bit. Mac might remember more.

MH: Why would you stay in Wolverine at the cabin? Do you know who built it?

NJ: I believe you are talking about; this cabin was one of the cabins from the uranium hunters who built a bunch of cabins in there. He built a whole camp, this uranium outfit. I think that Burns Ormund was the one who put that Horse Canyon cabin down there. It wasn't big enough, you couldn't haul it. All these places run into the river, all the canyons. Up where I was, was in the flats. That country had its own water, springs.

MH: What were the names of the springs you depended on?

NJ: Horse Canyon water and Brinkerhoff water. We ended having the BLM pipe the water out there from Indian Trail Bench, piped it out into a lot of our area.

MH: They piped it? That seems like good support for ranchers.

NJ: It was a real good spring. The spring is up on Indian Trail Canyon and they piped it from there down to...well, it started in the Corner Flats and out a couple of miles.

MH: Was it an above ground pipe or buried? Tell me about the pipeline.

NJ: It was steel pipe and I don't remember what size it was either, it wasn't four inch, smaller than that. They buried it. It is still out there.

MH: It comes out on...

NJ: ...on the Flats there. There is a corral there where the water comes out, right close to the corral. That is the only outlet. The water runs right out past there and we had it clear out to right below Brinkerhoff, which has its own little spring and into...

FJ: And there is a big tank down on Onion Beds and out there on the flats, all those allotments have got a big tank of water.

NJ: What happened is the BLM wanted to fence it. We made a lot of fuss about it, we finally had to buy the fencing for it and we fenced it and we took our allotments. The furthest one out was mine. Fay's brother, Leland, and Otto, both brothers had allotments in there, and Coomb's, that was the four of us that had allotments there. This water went to all the allotments.

MH: So, if you had to fence it, there was no way for the cattle to go to their natural watering spots, so BLM brought water into the allotments?

NJ: Yes. More or less. We were not in favor of it because we wanted to water our cattle independent and we didn't want to split it up.

MH: Were folks more successful when they ran together. Is that true?

NJ: We all got along good. In those days, like when I used to ride with the old timers, all this country was poor. Their cattle almost died on the range. My Uncle Neils, his cattle were out on there, but he run out on the Forest Service [too]. Most of the other people did not run on the Forest Service, they did not have an allotment on Forest Service. His cattle done pretty good in there. Most of the people took

losses of one type; they lost a lot of cattle, starved to death. Of course now, it is good range when go out, because there are no cows. (Laughter)

MH: That's what it has come to, I guess.

When you would go on the range, you camped; you didn't stay in cabins, did you?

NJ: No, we camped. We did finally break down and start using a tent. (Laughter)

That was years later. We would put it on the ground; just find a level piece of ground without too much snow on it.

MH: Yes, that is the winter range, that low country. Who were the old timers you rode with then?

NJ: Me! (Chuckles) Kings, John King's family and Fay's family (Haws) and my uncle and his cattle.

MH: How were the Kings able to make their operation so successful? They were successful, right?

NJ: They had lots of cattle.

FJ: The Haws had lots of cattle, too.

MH: Moosemans?

NJ: Their cattle didn't go too far below Boulder, in Deer Creek. They put their cattle up above the road in Deer Creek and they had what they called Little Bounds.

That was attached to Big Bounds and not very many cattle.

FJ: Bakers had a lot of cattle. They are one of the older families here, too

NJ: Bakers were on the Moody.

MH: I have just recently run into one of the King granddaughter; Ann Reynolds and she said she would chat with me about that operation sometime.

NJ: Ann's dad, Clyde, was an old cowboy here. He was one of the big operators, and of course Reed was around here for awhile, but he went off his rocker and they would put him into an asylum for a while and then they would turn him loose again.

FJ: They were John Kings' sons and Ann is the granddaughter of John King. The Kings and Bakers, Petersons and Haws were the older families and you can read that in Lenora's book.

NJ: The range was so poor; you never thought they would make it home. There were no roads, just trails and everything had to be driven.

FJ: They would go down with pack horses and stay two or three weeks in the winter and take care of them as best they could. In the spring when they would round them up to bring them home, that was a long ordeal, to trail them home and they were poor and small and it was cold.

MH: What motivated people to keep cattle in that in range?

NJ: We had no other.

FJ: Well, they say there was no other way to make a living, but they loved it.

(Laughter) My dad was a cowboy and never did anything else and never wanted to do anything else.

NJ: That was the way they all were. John King he was a real character. He was about ninety some odd years old and he was still riding his horse. He would take a pack horse from Boulder and fill the bags with hay and go down and get one of the

poor cows started for home, and I'll bet half of them he ever got started, died right there. (Laughter)

FJ: That was the only way to get hay down there, no roads and we had no trucks in those days. Like Neal said, John rode his horse right up until he died. He used to ride past here and go up the country a ways and then he would come back this far and then come in and say, "I've just got to rest a minute." He would come in and lay down on the couch or right on the floor and lay there for awhile, snore, go to sleep and snore and then get up and go on home.

NJ: About 15 minutes is what he always said, but he usually laid there for about a half an hour. He was always that way. He was a man who spent a long time in the saddle. If he spent a lot of time when he was ninety, you know he spent a lot of time in the saddle when he was seventy. He was that kind of a guy.

MH: So, you would run into him when you were out.

FJ: They rode together. The families rode together.

NJ: Oh, yeah, we all rode together. John had cattle up where we did too. He had cattle all over; he was that big of an operator, about a thousand head and more than that at one time too.

FJ: They would pack up and all go down there together. They had their pack horses, the mules and their grub stake on the mules and put it all together and ride together.

NJ: When we gathered our cattle, it was really only one trail out of there, we had to average it up, who was going which days and so forth. At that time when we started our cattle up, we started to shift each one to their selves.(sorting) When we

got in Boulder, they had to go to your ranch and we just couldn't turn them loose, they went to the ranch then we would turn them onto the Forest Service, or some of us would; not too many had permits on the Forest .

MH: It seemed like a good thing to have, the Forest Service land, so you could get the cattle strong again?

NP: Yes, there wasn't much handling to it. The quicker we got them onto the Forest Service, the only thing there was (meaning the cattle were poor) and never had too many bulls. Actually, they would have a 50% calf crop, maybe. Even in Escalante, I have heard them say that there was only 10% calf crop. (chuckles) Ten of a hundred head is pretty bad.

MH: When you are out on the range camped, would strangers ever roam through?

NP: Oh, no. There were very few that ever did come. Even the passenger cars.

MH: How about shooting stars? Would those keep you up at night?

NP: No we didn't worry about the stars. Too tired. We rode from morning till night, two meals; breakfast and dinner.

MH: So, you guys sound like you were just as mangy and poor as the cattle you brought in.

NP: Yes, pretty much (chuckles)

FJ: They did not have an obesity problem in those days. I don't remember people being fat then, but it is a big health problem today. They worked too hard and they didn't eat a lot of junk food.

MH: You were still out on that range during the uranium boom, right? What was that like?

NP: Well, there were quite a lot of miners (prospectors) out looking. I believe I was about the only one benefited much from it? Fay's brother, Leland, and I, we had a mine together, [several claims]. A guy come here one day and offered me, once we located this ore, he came here and asked me what I would take for my share. I sold it to him right then (Laughter) He gave me \$20,000.00 right then. He went down to Leland and Leland, who had the other half of the mine claim, wanted \$80,000.00 and the guy wouldn't pay it to him. I believe that was it.

FJ: Many people said, "Ah, you shouldn't have sold, you are going to get lots of money for that." And he never got a penny.

NP: He hung on.

FP: Lots of big stories about the uranium.

MH: You know this country.

NJ: I believe that we had more uranium mine claims than anybody. And I had a brother come from California, looking for uranium.

MH: What was it like running into those guys out in the middle of nowhere?

FP: They were all going to be rich someday. It was a big thing.

NJ: They were pretty much to themselves. They didn't want to bring us in. They didn't bother us, they might scare your cattle or a few things like that, and we never had too much trouble and got along all right. They made roads down there then. That is what started the roads down there, uranium.

MH: Who actually put in those roads?

FJ: BLM?

NJ: No, we built the roads from here down to Long Canyon and then the County, I guess. That is what ended up going around all though there because there were enough tractors around then, a lot of these miners had Caterpillar tractors and they made the roads wherever they wanted to. There were a few people around here that worked for the union miners too; it didn't amount to too much. It was quite a deal, the uranium boom. They didn't have too much to say, you would see their outfit pass, they never stopped.

FJ: Imagine that now, with the Grand Staircase, there are signs all over down there now that say not to go off the road. You could never do anything like that now.

MH: You have to ask why the change in philosophy now, where once they would allow a water pipeline to be put in, and roads cut, the cabins built. It was more like the government encouraged people to use and access their resources.

FJ: You can't do anything down there now. Last time we were down there, we wanted to pick up some of these flat rocks, but boy we were scared we might get caught! (laughter)

MH: You can't take anything. We were taking about this when we were up on Merrill's Bench yesterday. It has all been railed, one part is still smooth and seeded, and that was another type of improvement. All that cedar it still piled up and you can't touch it, seems like wasted resource.

FJ: They are still supposed to be reseeding.

NJ: Yes, they have been working [on it] for just a few years. It didn't do much. The Forest Service has always been that way, you could never build a road on the Forest Service, but the BLM was different. In fact, there was no one really in

control on the BLM for years. I was here when the BLM came around and talked about getting down there, in our country. I had been here quite a long time by then. I don't think they had that much of a hold here. Then, when that [Taylor Grazing Act], it changed.

MH: Let's talk about Georgie Davis' camp. He was a cowboy, a ranch hand?

NJ: He was a cowboy. He was here all the time. He worked for John King for years. In the latter years he worked for my uncle. That is how I came to ride with Georgie, he worked for my uncle. I just don't know where Georgie Davis' camp would be. I didn't know that he had anything. Georgie never went to school and I think he was just real young when he came here, just a kid. He went to work here. Some of the ranchers kind of kept him busy and pretty quick he was old enough to ride and punch cattle. He was a real old timer. He had done everything, he was unbelievable with horses. He could ride bucking horses like nothing. Everything he did was the same way. He had two or three horses of his own. We talked about Georgie all the time. He was just unbelievable, how rough he was. He had a hair lip, they didn't really make fun of him or make trouble with him because he was so easy to get along with. They tell tales about him that are unbelievable. A lot of cowboys tied the rope to the saddle, to the horn. We had this big wild steer, and a bunch of them were there[trying to rope the steer]. Georgie roped the steer. When he roped the steer, why, the steer broke and run, and when he run it jerked Georgie's saddle off. Georgie, he didn't get off his horse, he just went with the saddle. He stayed on that saddle; once in a while the old steer would stop and turn to fight. When he would fight Georgie would get

[under] the saddle, then when the steer would start out again, why, Georgie would go into the saddle again. He done this for quite a little bit and then when... well, Georgie had a new rawhide rope. He was that kind of a cowboy that braided his own. One of the guys rode up and said, "I'll cut the rope!" Georgie said, "Don't cut my rope!" (Laughter) It was a new rawhide rope. He stayed right on the saddle until he rode him out. He rode everything out. He was just unbelievable.

MH: Everyone must have had adventures like that out there?

NJ: Oh, yes. They tell stories on Georgie all the time. Georgie was different. He wasn't rough with people, not fighting with people. He was rough on horses and cattle, an old timer.

MH: Did you ever have any of those wild steer come after you?

NJ: It is usual when you are monkeying with cattle, [that] you always have them kind of cows, they will fight you. [At] The corrals, when we were branding the cattle down there to Fay's dad, Henry Haws, why, he was a short fellow. He was the guy that did the branding. We would rope them and throw them down. Fay's brother, Otto, who was a little on the timid side anyhow, was supposed to be the one helping his dad. I'll bet Henry never got a chance to run and hide because Otto had already beaten him to it. (Laughter)

MH: Sounds like he was smart.

NJ: Kind of timid. Fay's dad, well, I'll tell you these were mean cattle and were wild. They had never been handled and never knew what it was. We would rope them and throw them, when you would let them up after they were branded, boy, they was mad. (Laughter)

MH: What about some of the hazards the weather presented down there. Would it ever hold you up?

NJ: We rode in any kind of weather. When we left home here, we go to work with our cattle whether it was stormy or not. We were all pretty much the same way; everybody then was a real character. They had to be. Sometimes you would see men with just boots on and snow all up around on top of them. Most of the time you would see cowboys who would have overshoes, but a lot of time a leather boot was all.

MH: How many times do you think you have been thrown off a horse Neal?

NJ: Thrown off? A few times, that's all. (chuckles) Usually the horse, well, most of us rode horses that were mean. We would have to figure out how to get along with them. Sometimes that happened, sometimes it didn't.

MH: What were their habits that made them mean?

NJ: Some horses would kick or strike, mostly buck. Young horses that never been rode had that buck in them. Lots of the old horses still had a lot of buck in them; kind of born that way.

MH: Why did you prefer mean horses?

NJ: That was what we had to ride. We knew it so we enjoyed it. And again, you couldn't very well go and get them replaced, so you had them one way or the other.

MH: Any broken bones?

NJ: Not too many, one broken a few times. Arms; when I was a kid; I had three broken arms when I was just a kid.

**End of Interview**