

Calvin Johnson
Kanab 2001



Interview with Calvin C. Johnson

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Interviewer: Jay Haymond
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Jay: Let's talk about where and when you were born, first of all. Give us a context into the family into which you were born.

Calvin: I was born to Arthur and Carrie Johnson. Right on the corner of Main and Center, right where the old post office is now. I was raised right there on Main Street. We are the descendants of the old settlers of Johnson Canyon and my great-grandfather Nephi Johnson was the founder of Zion National Park. My folks were in the livestock business and the goat business. When the Great Depression hit, why everyone went broke, the Kane County Bank went broke. My parents had this corner lot, right on the corner of Main and Center. So they built a service station there and they started out with a little cafe, called the Blue Bird Café. My dad had some cabins in the back, he added the pool hall, the Kanab Billiards. They had kept about eighty acres of farm land a mile below Kanab here. During those years we worked the farm and they raised us to help in the cafe and cabins. We had milk cows and a few head of stock that we kept. We would run some of the cows, about fifteen head, down below Kanab, along the Arizona line right there. So they just struggled along that way. That was the beginning of Main

Street and Center, where now it is the ERA. They just worked and saved and invested. They didn't go into a lot of debt, they just added to their business as it progressed over the years. They started out running about eight to ten cabins that they had in the back lot plus the café in the front. Then they expanded the café to take care of the motel's laundry and stuff. They did all of their work. In those days, why they would rent their cabin out for twenty-five cents a day. They had one that they called a "double cabin," it was about twelve by sixteen and they put double beds in there and rented that out for fifty cents a day. At that time we had very little travel coming through, but you had quite a lot of transits and we had some business at that time. They used to call them "the drummers," the salesman. They would come in and they would stay there, you know, and we would feed them. My dad he took care of that and the service station. Eventually, he leased the service station out on the corner. Then my brother-in-law came in and they stayed there and they built the place up to where it is now. So that was my beginning, the start of my family. They actually built the main street of Kanab there, see.

Jay: The circumstances that prompted them to build that, I can see that looking like a tourist service. Surely that was quite visionary. What prompted them to see ahead?

Calvin: They had a great foresight and they were great business people. They were conservative you know. When they went broke and the banks went broke...when he built the pool hall, the ranchers and all that was were they would congregate in the winter time, see. Then he built the café and that

was were the local people would come and get a five cent hamburger. They could see the town growing. They had the ideal spot on the corner lot right there on Center and Main Street. They were wise enough, and that was the only alternative that they had, that was their salvation. They had a local carpenter here. He was a skilled, very good handyman. He could do everything that there was to be done with the construction. He was a good carpenter, he was a good rock mason, he could do plumbing work, he had quite a lot of experience. So they put it all together and it was their salvation, and they could see a lot of growth. At the time, the town was just a dirt street, and then there was paving and that. They could see we were in the heart of the Grand Canyon. People would come through, they would come out in their Model A cars and stuff and stay for two or three nights. They could see the potential for the growth with the families. Then the Union Pacific started running busses to the parks. They had a central place down below town, on the southwest corner of town, on what the called "the UP lodge." They would run people in there for their rest stops and their food and then they would run them to the canyon. So that was the thing that enticed them. Then, of course, they stayed in the livestock business too, even though through that second period we only had a few head of cows. I was quite interested in taking care of the cattle, even when I was a little kid. They put the responsibility on me there. Then there came this disease, the tuberculosis, among all the livestock. So they came in and killed all the livestock, all the goats. That was still in The Depression time. They raised big gardens, everyone here raised gardens. We had a big garden back in our

big lot there. She would use that produce in the café, you know, and she was a real good cook. My dad would take care of the cabins, repair them and stuff like that. That is how they made it. Then I came along and I was always interested in horses and saddles. We just kind of built up and I would go back and work on the farm, I had to work on the farm even when I was going to school. Then my granddad came and lived with us. This was long after The Depression, coming into the forties the late thirties. He went to work on the farm, he really improved the farm and we got it going pretty good. I was going to school, and then after I had graduated, I got married. I had an opportunity to buy one hundred and sixty acres out here twenty-five miles east of Kanab. It was an old homestead and they hadn't done anything with it and so we had a chance to buy that. I borrowed the money from the bank with my dad's signature. He had a number one real good credit rating all over the state. The State Bank of Salina, the President, Crandall, he thought the world of my dad. My dad had borrowed money from him and paid him back and he had a real relationship with the bank. I worked along with him on this, he had me become acquainted with the bank, I borrowed a little money from the bank, and paid it back just to establish a credit rating. That is the way you did it in those days. I started this in high school and I had built up a pretty good credit rating, all because of my dad and his acquaintance with this banker. Then we bought this ranch. I worked in the movies quite a bit, the movies were coming into this country in the late thirties and the forties. I went to work as an extra in the movies. My social security is with Columbia Studios. When I was about ten years old and it

was about thirty-three when I got that. We would go out and dress up as Indians. They would put that water and cocoa on us; we would have to go over to the tent that they built at the Parry Lodge about 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock in the morning. Then they would strip us down and paint us with cocoa and give us a bridge club and a wig, it was an Indian wig with the pig tails hanging down. Then we would go into an open air bus and ride out here ten to twenty miles. Boy, it was cold early in the morning. They had these little old "fagile busses," they called them. They would haul eleven to fifteen people. I worked in that and then later I took over the running of Kanab Billiards. I went in and upgraded it a whole lot, and put in some pretty strong restrictions on the smoking and chewing of tobacco and stuff. We had a pretty good operation there. Also I bought one hundred and sixty acres and built it up and I put a few cows out there. I don't know how far you want me to get into this.

Jay: You are doing fine, keep it up.

Calvin: Anyway, as I went on, my dream...from the time I was growing up ever since I was ten years old, I would go out in the summertime and work for these old cowboys. I ended up with an old cowboy, he was an old cowboy by the name of Frank Forgess. They would take me out when I was just a kid we would stay a few days, five or six days. We would ride and then come back. Then after I got a little older, I went out with a fellow by the name of Walt Haymond. He had a pretty good spread of cattle. Frank had kind of gone broke in the cow business. My dad put Frank in the pool hall and had him run that while I was building a cow ranch. I used to go out and

chase these wild horses all over the country, instead of me being around in town messing around, my recreation was going to chase horses. I didn't want to be hiding behind a plum bush smoking a cigarette or anything. I liked activity, so I would go out and do that. I got to know all of this country out through here. Then, when I got older and I had this chance to buy these one hundred and sixty acres, I had a dream of putting together a ranch out there. My dream was to have an operation big enough to take care of my family. By this time I had me two boys, I married my high school sweetheart, she was just a year older, we went together all through high school, and we got married when we got out of high school the year that I was a senior. I was very dedicated to a nice family and a good ranching operation. We are still married, we just celebrated our sixtieth wedding anniversary. So it has been the best thing in the world for both of us. We raised four boys and two girls, we are proud of all of them. We have had very little trouble with any of them. We have been close to the church all of our lives. Then I was working day and night. I had an opportunity to buy another little ranch. A lady and her husband were homesteading they were just five miles north of this ranch, that was in '45. I bought the first place in '44 and the second in '45, the homestead. They came out and homesteaded this area, her husband would go back to Arizona and work, they originally came from Texas. He got killed running after cattle, he was running after a cow and hit a badger hole and threw his horse over and he broke his neck. There she was stuck out there with two little boys. She worked like a trooper and just existed on deer meat and what little garden they raised, just

existed. So when I came into the picture, I knew them real well, she was a real good friend of my mother, through coming into town into the café and staying in the cabins overnight. She wanted my mother's boy to have her place, she called me "Carrie's boy." So then, I bought that from her and then I just gradually put the ranch together. It was interesting. I was out with this old man, Frank Forgeess, I was in the 4th grade of school, I remember that. We rode up on this ridge and looked off in this beautiful meadow down in this basin. I said, "Someday I am going to own that ranch, Frank." He laughed at me, you know, ha, ha, ha. Well, he lived to see me own that ranch. So I bought that, I pieced it together, first I bought an eighth of the family ranch. They lived in Tropic, the John Johnson family, he and his sons and the son-in-law. The one son wasn't a rancher, he didn't want to be any part of it. So I bought his eighth out, then I bought the other son's fourth of it. I gradually bought into where I owned five eighths of that operation. It went all the way over into Tropic. So I traded the upper part for the lower part and I put that ranch, what I call "the Nipple Ranch," together with what I call "the Jepson Ranch," the operation that I had already started. That made me a pretty nice unit. I fenced it all into private allotment and it took in about one hundred and thirty thousand acres all total. I bought the first homestead, a hundred and sixty acres. The next one was a hundred and sixty acres, and this Nipple Ranch was eight hundred acres and there was quite a lot of meadow in that ranch. I put that all together with the BLM and I fenced the outer perimeter, I cross fenced and I did a lot of reseeding and a lot of water development. When I went out into

this country there were some wild horses and they had fenced the Utah-Arizona line all through there. When they did that they shut off a lot of wild horses from coming up through Utah. But I had a little band up on the range that I call "the north end of the Kaibab Mountain," but they had no water. There wasn't any deer in the area at that time, where were a lot of goats and sheep. In fact, I got ahead of my story a little. When I bought this one hundred and sixty acres, there was a fellow there that ran a lot of goats. They had killed his goats, he had gone out of the business. He had sold to a sheep man. When I went into the business, I bought the sheep man out. I bought all the rights around to this private land. The private land was the base property for all those rights. When I bought the base property they had to sell all those rights. So I bought them.

Jay: Now, when you talk about rights, you are talking about water rights.

Calvin: Cattle, cattle permits.

Jay: I see.

Calvin: I filed on all the water rights, then I built water. I went up with a team and a scraper and built what I call "the Mustang Reservoir." I built a little pond up there and a little soil. Then I got me a used Ford-Ferguson tractor and I went up and enlarged that little reservoir. I hired a guy later on, I'm still working through the forties, in about '47, I hired a guy to go out and dig a little pond about the size of this room. It was probably fifteen feet in diameter and six to eight feet deep. It held water like a jug, that was were those mustangs would water. Of course, I was building my cattle, buying them from the Paiute Indians. The Paiute Indians had received some money from DIA and

the bought some purebred Hereford cattle, some real good quality stuff. So I bought some of their calves. Through some of the businesses here in town we had become more acquainted with the Indians, the Paiutes and some Navajos. We were very good friends, they worked for my parents. My mother would have them come in and do washings for her and stuff. My dad would hire them to build a fence and trade them groceries and things. Then I had accumulated these different permits, more permits then the country would really run, you know. When I put this all together and started to run it...on this Mustang Reservoir. After I built it and started running a few cows then the deer started showing up. Before that the only time a deer would show up is after a little bit of snow. Then they would go all through this country and through the breaks of the Kaibab and **kosher de Jacob?** I developed a lot of water on my private land, I went to work and did that right off the bat.

Jay: Was this run off? Or did you get some...

Calvin: Run off and some spring. A little bit of spring and I built a big reservoir and I still have them. In fact, I have three that I built. Then I put together one of the finest cow ranches in the southern part of the state. I had, at that time, I was supposed to run about twelve hundred head of cattle, year around. Well, after we fenced and seeded, I knew I couldn't run that much I agreed with the BLM to cut it down. I was supposed to run about eight hundred head the year around. After I went into the reseeding and development, this is where I frown on the person of the BLM; the agency is set up for a good cause, but the personnel really ruined the reputation. Right now it doesn't

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have a good rapport with the people, as you know, especially with the ranchers and stuff. Anyway, we signed an agreement, a management planned agreement, and they were supposed...

End of Side A

Begin Side B

Jay: Okay, you were talking with the BLM.

Calvin: Yes, we were talking about setting up, I had a lot of confidence in the district managers at the time here at the BLM. They seemed to want to work with me and help me, so we had a good rapport. He called me in one day, he is retired now, a guy by the name of Mr. Galt. He said, "I don't know what is happening to the agency, but I want to round you up so you have a good operation before I leave here." He was a good friend of mine. Best district manager we have had here, in my opinion. He had a lot of honor to him. Anyway, so we did, he asked me if I would cooperate with him in planting some crested wheat out here, a thousand acres, a fifty-fifty cooperative project. I told him, "Yes I would." So, we did, we planted, and this was right around about '52 or '53, no it was right about '51. We planted this thousand acres, we didn't fence it off, we needed to try to preserve it in the spring of the year. I told Mart Galt that I would go out there and ride, and I would do the best I could to keep all the stock and everything off of that during the growing season, to give it a chance, which I did. I just stayed right out there, and it was a success. So after we did that he said, "Now, if this is trifle, then we'll develop your unit. You cooperating with me gives you priority to develop this operation. You have the best potential in this

whole country of southern Utah, that I know of. I want to help you." Well, we made that start and then he retired. Then the next person that came in wanted to do everything but help me. We just couldn't put together a good management plan. We drew one up they wouldn't implement what I thought was the best means of the operation, knowing the climatic conditions of the country and all. Anyway, we made it and we all signed it on a trial basis. They would come in and spend a lot of money to develop this, you know, reseeding, and water development and all of that. There would be no trespassing. I could go ahead and operate the operation as I would see fit, according to climatic conditions, until it was completed. Then we would work the management plan. Well, I no sooner had signed the management plan when they started to enforce things like if I had a cow somewhere where the management plan hadn't stipulated, they would come out there and starting harassing me about trespassing. It made a real hardship on me. They tried to make me out to be the rebel. Instead of me going around and talking behind their backs, like everyone else would do, I would go up and tell them. They would make me a regular promise, and I had a lot of confidence in them. I thought they were honorable. They would make me a promise, then I would go and I would do what we agreed to do and they wouldn't back me up.

Jay: What do you think would motivated this kind of misbehavior, which is the reverse of what you experienced of Mr. Galt?

Calvin: My first range manager was a fellow by the name of Mr. Moffet. What they were, they were stockmen. See, the BLM when they started out, they hired

not based on one's schooling, but the reason that qualified them was their experience. A lot of them had been in the livestock business, and for one reason or another had gotten out of it. They had gone with the BLM, see. The first year that they were new, it was their background. So they understood the operations. Then after that, it was the schooling, you know, they came out of the colleges. Their qualifications were working on a hay ranch or any little thing they were doing while they were going to college, so their schooling qualified them. So when they got out of school they would come with more precipitation than we had here. They didn't have any experience, they went by the law of the book.

Jay: Do you think that was timidity on their part, because they were too timid to see what the picture was, so they hid behind the rules?

Calvin: I don't think it was. I don't think the word is timid. They came out with the attitude of dictatorship, a czar attitude. The BLM began acting like you were their servant, instead of them being your servant, to help you. Then the attitude was that you are going to do what we tell you to or it's trespassing. We are going to trespass you, and they did. Well, they would try to force me to go through a country, like in this country. I would run in a pasture that I had reseeded and fenced on the winter range and then they would want me to come back into that pasture on the first through the fifteenth of March. Well, in this country you don't have a re-growth. I told them when I signed that contract. My famous saying was, "I want a nest egg for drought and spring. So I've got to have a pasture with a lot of feed that I can come into for the spring of the year." I did that on a rotation basis. In fact I was the

first one to...when I bought this range out here, I went to Don Moffet, the first leader, and said, "I would like to..." I had a canyon that I had purchased, it was a BLM canyon, I had purchased the rights and had bought this spring, it had a live spring on it. So I went to Don Moffet and I said, "I would like to move my cattle off of this ranch, off in the spring of the year, and go into this canyon for as long as I could. Whether it be three weeks or a month, or whatever I could. I'll fence across this canyon if you'll let me do it." So, he did, he agreed. The fence that I put across [*he chuckles as he speaks*] that canyon is still there. I went out and did that, and this is before I had ever thought of a management plan. It was a year around operation then. When I reseeded this thousand acres then I would use this canyon to hold my cattle in there as long as I could to protect that, see. Then it seemed like the area managers that came here had the attitude that I was opposing them. It is a government procedure, I guess, and they tried to pin me as the bad guy. All I was doing was trying to build a ranch and protect my interests and my livelihood. The worse thing I ever did was to sign that management plan with them. Before they couldn't trespass me anywhere on my range. Then the stipulations of where I was supposed to be in these pastures was designated, but they promised me that they wouldn't enforce this until it was completed. That was the logic, that is common sense. As soon as I signed that, they were supposed to go out there and develop for me a lot of water and a lot of springs. To this day they have not done it! They have violated the agreement. Over the years there have been agreements, and verbal commitments, and written agreements that they have ignored. Some of the

personnel, and some of the district managers, that work for the BLM, they were sympathetic towards me, but they didn't dare say anything. Because, as you know, in government, the man above you, is the means of where you are going to progress, in a grade, you know. These guys, some of them were terrible that way, some of them that came into here. They were just a bizarre type of people. One guy, he was a Captain in the Army, or something, and he had gone through his retirement, and he came to the BLM. He had no background in livestock at all. He caused me a lot of trouble. His name, I don't mind saying, was Mart Galt, he is dead now. The thing that gripped me was that they skimmed. They would use their government credit cards at gas stations for their private vehicles. I caught one of them doing it, see. It was a fact the government would pay them. In those days the government would allow, I think five or ten dollars a day, to feed a horse, for them to have transportation. So they would take the horses and then they would take that money and then put the horses out to pasture. When we reseeded out here, I would not go for a trespass on my land, I fought them in other words, when they would try to trespass me, I would fight it, because the management plan was not completed. They had not done their part. I had spent a lot of money doing my part. Then they, through political action, they dropped me and they went next door, across the fence to my neighbor, and they put the money into developing *his* management plan. His arrangement was a complete failure. They should have been sued for misuse of public funds. In a lot cases over the years, I can see that.

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Jay: What do you think motivated that, I was going to say smallness, on their part?

Calvin: I organized what was first a roping club, then later it was a livestock group. I joined the *National Cattle Growers* and the *State Cattle Growers* in the forties. I got into those organizations to be known and to market my cattle and stuff like that and for a voice, a strong voice. Then, this district manager, he couldn't eliminate the livestock man, but he could reduce ya down to where he couldn't offer it, due to drought conditions and all this myths they would use against you. They used everything. We couldn't supplement our cattle on public lands, they reduced these permits here in town. The cows would run up here on the ridge and they had done it all their lives. We did it for five or six months in the summer then they would feed their cattle on their farms in the wintertime, see. So they would have fifty, seventy, one hundred head of cattle. When I started this little organization [*he laughs*] I had maybe ten members that we got going, well when they reduced, when they started cutting these guys out of permits to run cattle, all the sudden I have fifty-two memberships from these grazers and these old boys. So, we had a fellow by the name of Dunc Findley, in the legislature and I knew the Taylors and the Craigs from the big operations in the northern part of the state. Maybe you have heard of those the Craig ranches and the Haslam ranches. Taylor was our state legislator and so I called him on the phone and set up a meeting with the state director and these directors here, the area managers. We all met in Salt Lake. We corrected that, I was the main spokesman, and we corrected that so that they

didn't reduce these guys, they could go ahead and operate. I never will forget, in this meeting, Taylor, he ran again in the Utah-Colorado line, he says, the state director's name was R.D. Nielson, and he said, "R.D. how come you send those kind of guys down into the southern part of the state? How come you send that kind of individual?" He said, these were the exact words he said, "R.D. we need the good ones in other places." [*Jay laughs in the background*] Now this guy, that was doing all of this, was sitting right there in the meeting with us when this conversation went on, and he just ducked his head.

Jay: Wow.

Calvin: Now, R.D. Nielson, the state director, he supported me in my ideas and in my plan. But, these guys down here would not do it. He had these suggestions, but they wouldn't do it, they tricked him as well as me, you know. So I don't have those feelings anymore, as you can tell, I had a lot of confidence in the department when I went into business. They just destroyed it with me. I am just telling you a part of it, my records are self explanatory. I've gone through the hearings, I have had the Attorney General out here. They have tried to penalize me in every way and shape that they can. Because on this deal, I was kind of the leader of these livestock men, and I probably had more guts than I did sense. But, my life has been lived with a right and a wrong. I never could stand a cheat, a thief, or a liar. I have lived that policy, and everyone that knows me knows this. So I would get irate, and I am a fiery type of guy. If you are wrong I am going to tell you that you are wrong. I'm not going to tell anyone else, I'll tell you first.

That is the way that I handled that, I thought that they would respect that. But they just took it the other way. What they decided they needed to do was destroy me because I was the leader of the clan. Well, they did everything they could, but I fought them teeth and toenail. It cost me a lot of money, it has cost me sweat and blood. But, I am still in the business. This guy ran twenty-nine permits, and he didn't have as much base property, but he got so discouraged, they just sold out. They bragged about it, they bragged about running twenty-nine permits out of business. So that is how the change in administration has come about. At the time, we didn't know it. But this is when they were being fooled about the environment. The cow man was an "Ignorant Amos" and he was just in the way; he was a problem. I have seen the attitude just grow more and more. This is when all of your critics, what they call them preservationists, we are all environmentalists, there isn't a rancher that has a lot of pride to take care of his...you know it's his livelihood, he is proud of his operation. I have been proud to be called a rancher and a cowboy, it is one of the best compliments you could give us, up until just recently. They have tried to defame that. I blame the top personalities in the BLM. It has come into it, and it goes right back into Washington, it is a hand-me-down. I've had Washington people come out here and instead of jumping in and helping, they have criticized us and threatened us with trespassing. Now these little operations, the one way that they have set with me, they have a lot of programs. They were supposed to develop water with me, they were supposed to develop a well, that they haven't done, it is on the books. But they have gone around, just to show

you the poor business heads they are, a guy that has ten or fifteen head of cattle they have gone in and spent several thousand dollars drilling a well. He has had water on his range, but they spend their money in bits and pieces like this. If they had completed my set up where I would be running eight hundred head of cattle the year around, then they would have been receiving several hundred thousand dollars from me on the grazing permits and stuff.

Jay: Yes.

Calvin: It would have justified the expense they would have put into me, rather than this other. But their attitudes, they are the poorest business people in the world. Even when they retire and go out, I don't know any one of them who has been successful just going into a business, they are satisfied where they are, see. We did have one who retired here, he married a women and they had cattle. He tried to take the operation over and he was a failure at it. They had to sell out. So, why do they come in with this. Right now, you can go into this BLM office and they will tell you that I am a trouble shooter, a trouble maker. If you ask them to look into my records. There are a lot of my records that Century has transferred into the Staircase. I don't work with the BLM, per se, up here anymore, I work with the Staircase. They have been very pleasant to work with up to this time. I have no complaints with this Staircase. It might be the lull before the storm. They have come out and hurt two or three permittees. They had wild cattle up on here and they have shot them. They were wrong by their actions, what they did. One was a widow women, they could have gone in and helped her a lot more than they did. They have hurt her and run her out of business, the

Griffins, over in Escalante. They have just run them out of business. It is because they couldn't get their cattle moved off the summer range, but, a lot of those cattle are wild cattle and they have been there for years and years and years. It was a cat fight that got started with disagreements. The government people have got the United States Government behind them and they use that. I saw a big difference in my operation with them. When they passed that law when President Kennedy got killed, then they passed the law of a felony offense of assault and battery. You have a ten year automatic offense against you. Even if you point your finger, they tried to pull that on me, yea. Because you know, I would go up and when I was talking, I would point my finger. A guy said, "Don't you point your finger at me." I said, "Well, you point your finger at me." So they have tried, they have gone to work and tried. They have taken me to a show cause hearing. Tried to make me a criminal, to have a federal offense. The one that came out of Washington DC, and I don't mind mentioning any names, Morgan Jamison. He went into the BLM over in Cedar, and they hated his insides over there. He went back to Washington. He came back here from Washington. He is retired now. He came back here to completely break me. Now, he came in, this was after Galt, after the `guid thing. This is what he told me, "Well, I'm wearing a black hat." He warned me right then, without even knowing me.

Jay: Scary.

Calvin: Well, yes. They have all done that. I'm the wrong guy to try and scare. When I hear the call of a lion, I go outside and look around and see where he is at. I don't hide in the corner, you know. So, my aggressiveness, they have

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tried to use that against me, all I have done is try to defend myself. We had a guy from Washington come out here, and he worked in the Attorney General's...

End of Side B, Tape one

Begin Side A, Tape two

Jay: Okay, you were talking about your visitor.

Calvin: Yes, he was an official out of the FBI office that they had called out to reprimand me. They said that I had, what they were doing, they had harassed my cattle, and I really got after them about it. They told me, this visitor, this FBI man told me, he called me on the phone. He had the sheriff call me on the phone and I came down to the office. He said, "I have been here for two weeks investigating you, through the BLM. I want you to know your records are self-explanatory. If you will cooperate with me then I will help you. When they harass you, if you will take two steps back for me, I'll take one forward for you." I said, "All right." He said, "When they go out here and harass you, don't you go out and cuss them out or get after them. You come back in here and get on the phone and call me, at the Attorney General." They told him I was a dangerous man. My vocabulary is straight and when I'm angry I tell them how it is. When they are abusing your livestock, well, they killed a cow in Capple Mine, they chased it to death. My wife and I caught them doing that. So I said, "All right!" He said, "I have five United States Attorney Generals over in Cedar City waiting for me to come back right now. I am going over there and tell them that you are

just an old rancher trying to make a living. That is the way I see it and you are being harassed from the department." I said, "Where have you been for thirty years?" *[they laugh]* So that is what they did. It's back my way. They did go back and cause me some trouble, this is with this guy, and the guy called him and set him back. But I have gone through all of that. I have spent two hundred thousand dollars plus blood and sweat, putting together a nice operation out here. They haven't completed their water projects they were supposed to, that they have signed the agreements on. They haven't completed their seeding projects with me, and I have used my own expense to do that. They took water away from me and they took land away from...my water I have filed on. Even one of their own employees, when he was transferred out of here, I still have his note, he said, "You have the best law suit against these people that I know of anywhere." He encouraged me to do it, but, I didn't want to get into that. Well, I have put all this money into development. I have fenced and I have cross-fenced. I've got a beautiful operation and they are still trying to decide how I am going to run. The last few years, since the Staircase has come over it has been in kind of limbo and they have allowed me to operate, you know, without a lot of restrictions and the range shows it. I have been able to move cattle when there was a rain. In this country it might rain in one area a quarter mile away or two hundred yards and not hit this other area. So I would put my cattle in the pasture where the feed is. Even if they had been fed, and the feed would come back, that was the place to go, not where it is drought and no grain. My country shows improvement since I've had the flexibility of doing that a

little bit. The only way that I have stayed in the business is through grim determination.

Jay: Good records.

Calvin: Good records. See, I wanted a family operation. I had four boys and I wanted it big enough to where we had a good family operation. I haven't been able to do that. I am running less cattle today than before I started with the reseeded and the development of this ranch. I have what they call, "a suspended non-use," up to seven hundred and thirty-five head, but I am only running three hundred and sixty-five to four hundred head of cattle right now. Even on my private land, where it should be 100% public land. So they not only cut you, but when you start on these plans they not only take two-thirds away from you and let you run on one-third of it for a year, see, on what they call, "a rotation bases," which is poor management. It is better to feed each pasture through the year, and fertilize your pasture...see these lands are just like your farm, if you don't mulch it and fertilize it, it won't grow. If you leave it alone, a good example is your parks, you have an overgrowth of everything and the elements and the land dies, then you don't produce the food value. What they call, "wolf lands," it goes dormant. I've had them out. I have had the Soil Conservation, I have proved the best way to do this is to utilize it. They go on what they say are their own statistics of management, which is for the birds. But, I'm encouraged now a little bit with this new...I don't agree with the Monument, but maybe, and I am strongly for eliminating the Monument. At least I have two good reasons, the main reason is, it is against the law, the way they set this Monument up,

it is against The Antiquities Act. They allowed Clinton to do it, they gave him a backing and allowed him to do what he wanted to. In many incidents, he has demoralized this nation more than anything I have seen in my life. Through his lies and through his leadership. You can look around us, we have been demoralized till it is terrible. Hopefully now we can get back on track, we can build it back. But so much damage has been done. You can look at our youth, you can look at the attitude of our youth, and the criminology and the suicide, and your schools. In this last eight years with the Clinton administration it has gotten much worse. So the BLM and all the government agencies they follow the leadership, they follow the side which is in control. So that has made it a hardship on us. Now, when Carter was in there and we were having trouble, then Reagan came in with his position, and with Watts, with me here, in my experience, this BLM backed away from me and stayed clear all the time that Watts was in there. They were scared to death. As soon as he left they came right back in and hit you. So it has been an interesting time. I could write quite a book on my experiences. It has certainly discouraged me and my faith in the actions of our personnel in our government! This is the best government in the world, and I know that. I'm proud of this country and I love it. I am happy that I'm where I'm at. These agencies if they would use a positive attitude and be accountable, these are one of the things that I think are important. I told Cannon last night, if they could make each individual accountable, financially and personally accountable for the detriment that they have done, and the waste of money that they have used, you know to police instead of

help, to dictate and police, we would be so much farther ahead than we are right now. They can take an action, they can just tell you you're in trespass. One man can tell you that you have to move all your cattle off this range by two days, and if you don't go do it, they can trespass you and eliminate your permit. Of course, they have tried to do that with me but I have tried to fight back and I have even got out of the administrative and go into civil action to win my case. And even at that, I had to move my cattle off for three months, but I happened to have private land to put them on. There are a lot of permittees that don't have that private land.

Jay: So they are stuck.

Calvin: I qualified. I tried my best to be the best cooperator they had out here. That's another thing, I'm the first to one to reseed. I'm the first one to fence up a management plan. I have spent more money on public lands than any other permittee in this country for development of water and stuff. I have filed on the waters. I tried to do everything according to law, and be straight with it. I would have given anything if I could have had a good relationship with these people up here. They don't want that. In fact I was told, they have been schooled, that you don't make friends with the ranchers. That is part of their schooling when they come out. That is why they bring them in and keep them for five years, for the longest, and then transfer them. It is a transferring deal. Then they upgrade them when they transfer, no matter how much damage they have done behind them. If they will move somewhere, they will get a grade.

Jay: That is promoting an adversarial relationship isn't it?

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Calvin: Yes, it certainly is. 99% of these people only stay in there for their twenty years, for their retirement. Everyone of them, and these are the people I am talking about, every single one of them have criticized the BLM when they have left. They are not loyal to them, not one bit. You can back me up. You can go talk to the guy that retired here. He turned around and was an asset to us on helping us to restrain the BLM. He became the president in our local livestock operation. He just went gung-ho after them. He was an asset to us after he got out. On these roads, we have had our problems with the BLM. They tried to take our roads away from us. They tried to take our water away from us. They have tried to restrict us. They have come in and picked up endangered species, to eliminate us off the range. They've used every trick in the book. This goshawk, they have chased the industries out of this country. For fifty years the salvation of this area was the sawmill on the Kaibab. They came in with this goshawk, and there is no such a thing as a goshawk on the Kaibab, and there never has been. But they claim that there was, and they cause so much trouble. The Whiting brothers they had been in there for so long that the older brothers had died, they just got fed up with it. They didn't sell out for millions of dollars like they could have done, they just phased out, they just quit because of all the hassle. With all of your Sierra Clubs, and these critics, these preservationists, whatever you call them, they would go out and sabotage the machinery. They have done it all over the country, you have heard about it. Now, those tactics...it seems to me that if I had gone out and destroyed your property, I would be in jail. These clubs come out, they say they will take the responsibility. But, then

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they can't pinpoint it, so everyone over looks it, no one will go after them because of the political pressure. You are well aware of that. People like us here in this little community we are the ones who suffer. We need a lot of help, that is the main reason that I'm telling you this, and I welcome you to check the records and go check this out, see.

Jay: Yes.

Calvin: It is just factual. I can take you out and show you what I am telling you on the range, what I have done, the improvements, and what they have done, what they haven't done. They've come in and done some, but they haven't done what they agreed to do. We had to redo a pipeline, my neighbors and me, that they had done here twenty-five or thirty years ago. They didn't do it right, they didn't complete it, they didn't go in and fix it from start to finish like it needed to be, they did it half-way, you know. The weakest point of any fence or building is the flaw. You have to fix it to be as strong as the rest, in other words, if you are building a house, you have to build all the walls solid or you're not going to have a house. What I'm saying is it's no better than its weakest place. Any construction is no better than the weakest spot and that is the way you develop your water lines. They are no better than your areas that are not completed see, that's why you need your water. I just wish each individual would be accountable for these decisions instead of riding on the United States Government. You are being prosecuted by the United States Government, that is a sickening heading when you know it is only one individual.

Jay: Vindictive.

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Calvin: It is very vindictive. It is a very, very, vindictive organization. They can't stand one another. They are fighting each other. They are jealous of one another, right within their own agencies. The state and federal have predatory controls. We have coyote and lion troubles out here. They have restricted our government trapper, so he couldn't come out and protect you in the spring when the coyotes are coming after your calves. I had one fellow come down and they wouldn't let him set his traps. He decided, well, Calvin's land, his private land is so situated that we will control it on his private land. They said, "We control Calvin Johnson's private land, you can't." So he came down and told me. It took me just two and one half steps to go up there and find out who paid the taxes on my private land. I corrected that situation. I told him to go put his stations up on my private land. I had state land I qualified in my allotment. I had twenty-three state sections before I had fenced up, out in that area that I had leased. A lot of them I couldn't use, only just a little bit, off and on with the BLM. A lot of them were laid over the ledges. For the benefit of the state and the schools, I leased every one of them. I have had some of them ever since 1944. Now, you figure right to this day, our Governor gave them away, again, I think that is a violation of the law. We all have personal contracts of grazing on these state sections. When you figure that I have been in the business fifty years, and paying around two thousand to twenty-five hundred dollars a year on these state sections, that is a pretty good amount of money that has gone into education. It hasn't been used properly, but that is the money that has gone towards it. Another thing is the state has been real lax about it, they have let

the BLM manage their lands as well as the BLM land. I can understand that, because of six sections out of the township, the state can't afford that. They should have a little trust in the BLM. But all your wood gathering, and post cutting and stumpage, I've seen it in my own area and all around. You go up to the BLM and get a permit to cut so many posts, you pay them fifty cents a stumpage for the post. Well, half of those posts will be cut on state land. Now I have checked into this, there has not been a penny that has gone into the state lands for the permits for these posts that they are buying at the BLM.

Jay: They are not keeping very good track.

Calvin: They are not, oh they don't care, as long as you go in and buy a permit. They will show you where the state lands are, but you can go out and cut anywhere. I can take you out here and show you old stumpage where it has been done over the years! I have done it myself, when I was building this fence, I would go out and I had an agreement with them and they violated that. I would cut so many posts, I would have them after ten days, and if the project wasn't ready then I would sell those posts. I did that, but I would go get the permit and sell the posts. Well, I'll be doggone if they didn't cause me a problem on that. I sold the posts, I had the permit, they tried to sight me with a trespass on those posts because they were set up for the fencing project. Well, instead of having it written down, it was on our agreement, it was the verbal agreement with the district manager, Mr. Galt, and he was good. Well, these underdogs that were going to show us, they go out there and mark these posts red. So I had to go through that hassle, but I didn't pay

any trespass. I proved my point on it and was backed up by Mr. Galt, but they put him on the spot. The one guy that did this was the most sour individual that I have ever seen. He wasn't a very big fellow, Kay Wilks was his name, and he got to where he was next to the assistant of the BLM in Washington. He was the sourest apple that we ever had run through here. I was in a meeting, and the word had come. I was in Phoenix and a representative from the BLM had referred to us that Kay Wilks had called them in the meeting, we were all together and said "We are responsible for the management of these public lands and we are going to manage these public lands the way they are supposed to be!" So he cautioned us, he said, "If you livestock men want to save your neck, the best thing you can do is claim tenure on these lands. Start right now claiming tenure on these lands." Well, I brought that back to the group here and they didn't understand what I was saying. I realized it and I was in it and I knew what was happening. I brought that into the public means just lately about the tenure of these lands. I have used it with the BLM. I have told them that these are not their lands. My ancestors were here, we are the most hospitable people around. Anyone that comes into this country on our ranches, I welcome them, we welcome them. We will feed them, we will clothe them, you know, we well bed them. We keep that in our cabins all the time, that is the old school. Have food and water if someone gets lost, and firewood. We have lived by that school, I have. I have been robbed some, but I still do it. I kind of lost my thought right there, where I was on that.

End Side A, Tape 2

Begin Side B, Tape 2

Jay: Well, we have reached a point where we have talked about the way the BLM has managed the land, in your experience. There are a couple of things that I wanted to ask you. You attended a meeting last night with Representative Chris Cannon. He came down and talked to his constituency and others and then you had a chance as one of his constituents to respond.

Calvin: Yes.

Jay: For the record, what is your reaction to that particular meeting? His attitude, if you care to give it, and what you tried to get him to understand.

Calvin: I am well satisfied with his attitude. I came away from that meeting feeling good about him. I went down and introduced myself, talked with him. He felt the pressures and the attitude, and he agreed with the way the BLM and the Staircase, their attitude. He is not satisfied one bit with them. He is not in for this Staircase, per se, as it is. He is 100% for modifying it back to abiding by the law. There is a lot of these lands that are flat sagebrush lands and my suggestions to him were that we needed the protection of our waters. See the waters belong to the state. Then when we as individuals file on these waters, for the use, for the benefit of our corn and livestock uses. We need those protected. I have had issues with the BLM where they have tried to take, and control the water, even my water filings. I have had to protest

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their filings. They have no business filing on any water. They don't have any use for the water.

Jay: Yes.

Calvin: They are the administrators of our lands and we are the owners and the operators of the livestock and the homes and the cow camps. They have tried to come in and take that over. So, that was my concern. Because I have had this experience with them trying to do that with us, several of us. Right now, they have been pushed back two or three times but they keep trying to take complete control. Then it was the grazing. Even though the grazing is mandated by the President when he set these monuments up, it still allows these agencies, BLM agencies, and the Staircase is still under the BLM regulation. Through a trespass, or any little violation that they can catch you at, then they can take you to a hearing and revoke your permit. They cause you so much hassle that you are going to get out. Some of the permittees have sold the conservative district and got out from under the hassle. And, of course, they win, that's what they want you to do is to eliminate the cattle. That's the thing that I wanted him to work on is our security and our freedom to operate our operations, our livestock and ranches, to our benefit using our own judgment. Who knows better than the rancher about climatic conditions and where the feed and the water is on his ranch. I have preached that to these people for many years. I am out there all the time, and I am in the business, as most ranchers are, for our livelihood. We are not going to become millionaires, but we want a good, decent living. That is our main purpose in life, and for them to come up and

make a decision that is detrimental to that is a process of ruining it. They do that. They use that against us. The other thing that I suggested to Congressman Cannon is that Congressman Jim Hansen suggested that we do away with the Escalante-Staircase Monument, make a trade off, establish a monument in the St. George area where there is a new find of dinosaur tracks. They found quite a find down there. Now that would be a great trade off. So I suggested to Cannon that he get behind Jim Hansen and support him on this proposal. Now those are the three things I brought up. I am satisfied with the responses that I got from him on that. Now, when you say get behind him and support one of your co-workers, I don't know. To me I assume that he accepted that well and I hope he did. The next thing that I brought out to him was, that he is one of the law makers, when Clinton broke this law it is the responsibility of our national lawmakers to rectify that and stand by the constitutional law! Which they haven't done. Even though we are a minority we need to have a strong voice. In my opinion, if you are a strong personality you have a strong point of persuasion and suggestion see. There are so many of those people back in there, they just hear the cover of what's happening out in the West and they don't know the facts. Through our diplomatic policies among one another, I don't think they are really understanding our situations. I don't think it is being spread very well. That is my personality again, probably what they feel, if I was there they would understand where I was coming from. I was a county commissioner here and there was no question were I stood. They would like for me to run again. I went in in '81 for four years and I signed up again for

just two years because I had all I wanted, I didn't want a career out of that. I got my points across. We got a land-fill. We made a lot of progress in that time. We got our power and our sub-divisions and we got a correction. We got quite a lot accomplished in there. We had a group of commissioners that cooperated with one another, as our saying goes, and we were a successful group. Anyway, I made the stand for the people here while I was in there, and they know that. Some of them feel that maybe I am too aggressive, but that is the way I am. My vocabulary is limited so I tell it in a way that you can understand it. *[he gives a good hearty laugh]* Sometimes it is a little crude. I feel real good about his attitude. I hope that he is solid, you know.

Jay: Yes.

Calvin: That will be the proof in the pudding.

Jay: Sure. He knows that you are going to be watching though.

Calvin: He accepted my...he patted me on the arm and he appreciated my comments. There wasn't a question...you know a lot of them will stand up and they will prepare this presentation and they write it up, and they read it out, and you pick one or two high points. To me, if you have something to say, then the shorter and the stronger that you say it, then the more understanding that you'll get.

Jay: Simple and direct.

Calvin: Right. You don't need seventy-two pages, or twenty-two, or three pages of jib-jab. I know Hansen and I know Hatch very well. I support them. I think they are good men, and I support Bennett, I think he is a good man. All in their positions. I am not happy with what is happening in our Republican

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party now, we had the majority and now we are losing that a little bit. In my opinion, if you are competing with someone and they get a stroke ahead of you, then you work harder to catch up or get ahead of them, see. That just means you work harder. I hope that this is not just another procedure, and when I talked to him I said, "I hope that this is just not another procedure." So many of these meetings they come down to pacify you for a vote, or just a...

Jay: Window dressing.

Calvin: Window dressing. That is what I have experienced with our government agencies so much. The public hearings, 90% of your public hearings, that we have had here, the truth comes out in the paper from their stand point. They dress it up for their benefit.

Jay: Right.

Calvin: So, I hope that this is [*he lets out a long, tired sigh*] meant to be a solid action as he is going to endeavor to stand by. I think we were all pretty well satisfied. I told these BLM people up here several years ago, "You know I would rather go to a dentist than come up to that office." How much lower can you get than that, Jay? [*they both laugh*] There is a lot of people that work in there, like I have said, they are intimidated themselves to where they dare not, until they retire and get out of there, they are not going to commit themselves. I can't stand that kind of stuff. If you are going to crawl underneath a snakes belly you are going to do it all your life. That damn snake is going to bite you to death.

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Jay: So you think really, that they think that when you go up there you are just there to harass them?

Calvin: Well, they think that, they think I just cause them trouble. But if anyone that goes up there and comments that we would like to see Mr. Johnson's records, then your going to...we would like to see all sides of this. I would give anything to have...I think I mentioned that last night, that I would like to see a complete investigation of this office. Cedar City is the district office and this is the area office, it used to be the district office. They moved it to Cedar, and the guy here that was the area manager here went over to Cedar with the district. We get the offshoot. There has been two or three guys sent from the Cedar office over here to reprimand me. I think they found out that they have a little hard rock to work with and they don't like it. I am too far over in the book to be...I tried my best to work with them, right when they were harassing me, I would grit my teeth and have many sleepless nights trying to figure how I could work around them and make it better. But there was no way. They had their finger there and I was the one they were going to get, under any circumstances. It has come back to me from guys after they have left here. I'm sure if you were to go up there as a stranger and mention my name, I'm sure you would get a derogatory response. I don't mind that, it isn't that I am in bad with them, they are in bad with me, and that is pretty serious. If they had been at that meeting last night and heard what went on, they would realize they are in bad with the majority of the people. I'm not for anyone going out and destroying our lands, I'm for protecting our lands as much as anyone else because that is our livelihood;

that is our salvation. I have a family, I have kids that I have raised here. One boy works with me, my other son, well, I have two boys that work with me, one full time and has been for fifteen years. Then I have another boy that has a ranch up in Scootum and he and his sons have a ranch up in St. John, Arizona but they are on private land. Now he does have BLM lands up there, and he has done a lot of work with reseedings up there too. He can work with them up there. In fact, they will tell you that he is more of a cooperator than his dad. He has seen me stand up and fight and have a soul. He has used more diplomacy. He has had his troubles too. But, I do believe, I have hopes, I have always had hopes, I am seventy-eight years old and I still have hopes. I have worked all my life so that I could go out and stay where I want to, handle the cattle they way I feel that they should be handled, and enjoy my later years on my life's dream, see, and I have been unable to do it. It is a pressure all the time. I still am unable to do it. They had me to such a point in my mid-years that I even hated to go to the post office to get a letter because I knew that it would be a certified or registered letter from them for something they were going to pin on me.

Jay: Show cause of.

Calvin: Show cause of. Of course, I'm not the only one. When this was going on with me, I stood alone. The public at that time wasn't aware of what they were doing, even the other ranchers. Another thing that they would do, every neighbor, whether you have a house or a lot, you are a little disgruntled at some of the things your neighbor does and has. He might have a fence that isn't just right, it might be on your side of the fence a foot

and it ought to be on his side, it ought to be over where it should be. That is the way we are out there, and they were wise to that, and I picked that up early in my life, in my business up here. They would call you in individually and if you could spiel something about your neighbor, they would document that. That's what they wanted. And you asked the question a little while ago about the process of intimidation. Well, here's what they do, how that is passed on, see I'm already known, not personally but known about, when a new man comes into these offices up here because of the memos that they have, you never see them on your records, you see. I have gone in there and accused that, I have asked them to see my records and I want to see the personal memos that you have. Well, they don't have any personal memos there. I do know that they do have them. I have been told that by some of the employees. There is a new man that has just come in now. I have a little spinal bifida granddaughter that is working up here, you know on that workshop thing. She is in the BLM office. Of course, my whole family knows that there is no hidden fact about our position with the BLM.

Anyway, they have got her working up there and so she is here one day and I said, "Is your new manager, your new boss shown up yet?" She said, "Oh yes, he is here." I said, "How do you like him." She said, "Oh, grandpa I don't know. I asked him if he knew you, and he said he didn't know you, but he knew about you, and the trouble that you caused up there. He knew that when ever I went up there I caused trouble." Now isn't that something to pass on. That shows the belittlement of educated individuals. I wouldn't say anything about anyone like that. I don't pass judgment like that. I don't care

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how mean you are to half of the people, if you treat me right, I don't care what they say, I take it for face value, the way you are to me. You might have defended yourself, you never know. I don't prejudge I don't do that and I get upset at those that do. I know that is the way these people are. I have seen it all the time. To me it is just proven they are very vindictive, very little in many ways. I think an accounting, we could spend a small percentage of our money, if we could go through these offices and make them accountable for their operation, even if there is shredding of the records and stuff, it is like I told them last night, they might shred the records up there, but I still have mine from clear back to the 1940's. I have kept check stubs and everything. It is just a matter of having our government feel like it is important enough, and this is just a small example. You know as well as I do how broad that is all through our government agencies. No matter how good the top man we have, he cannot put his finger on all that goes on in these lower agencies.

Jay: Your hoping really for a performance audit, aren't you?

Calvin: Yes. Before I get out of the business, or pass on, it would be one of the best pleasures in my life.

Jay: I am about out of tape, and I wanted to on tape thank you for this time today, and I appreciate it very much.

Calvin: What you have got from me is one small paragraph on one page. [*he laughs a big hearty laugh*]

Interview with Calvin C. Johnson

End of Interview

UTAH DIVISION OF STATE HISTORY

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Interview Agreement and Deed of Gift

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview and my interest in Utah history,

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