

**Oral History Interview of:
Jim Goss**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
September 24, 2014
Lubbock, Texas**

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Preferred Citation for this Document:

Goss, Jim Oral History Interview, September 24, 2014. Interview by Daniel Sanchez, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

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Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 44.1kHz/ 16bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews: Dr. Goss was interviewed 15 times between September 2014 and March 2015. This is Interview One of the series.

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Daniel U. Sánchez

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Paul Doran

Editor(s): Jason Rhode

Final Editor: Daniel U. Sánchez, Jim Goss

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Jim Goss, who discusses his ancestry, the settlement of the West, his childhood growing up on a ranch in Oregon, and his early education.

Length of Interview: 01:18:05

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Keywords

Ranching, the West, Oregon, settlement, Native American issues, Mormonism

Jim Goss (JG):

An interviewer, an interrogator in the Air Force.

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

All right, okay.

JG:

Used to run a recorder, and spy on Russian aircraft and stuff like that.

DS:

All right, well, that's on there already.

JG:

Yeah.

DS:

My name is Daniel Sanchez, today is September 24, 2014, I'm at the Southwest Collection in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of Texas Tech University, and today's guest is Dr. Jim Goss. And he will be telling us everything about his life in a series of interviews, probably, I'd say, about six or seven interviews probably. Jim, thank you very much for being here.

JG:

Yeah, glad to be here.

DS:

Okay, and you know what we're going to cover; we're going to do a little bit of your genealogy and your background, but let's start with your complete legal name and date and place of birth.

JG:

Okay, my complete legal name is James Arthur Goss, that's G-o-s-s. I don't know why I'm named after two English kings, because I don't have much English blood, or heritage. (laughs) But I was born September 14, 1934, so I was eighty years old last Sunday.

DS:

Wow, happy birthday.

JG:

Thank you. And as I look back over my life, these eighty years, it seems that I've sort of done my life in twenty-year spurts. And I guess I just finished the fourth quarter, and now I'm on overtime.

DS:
Yeah.

JG:
So I've got plenty of time to be interviewed.

DS:
Well I like the term "overtime" as opposed to "sudden death."

JG:
No, I figure I have thirty or forty more years.

DS:
Well that's good, that's good. (laughs) Well, let's start off a little bit of with your genealogy then, talk about your parents and grandparents.

JG:
Okay, well, to put me in perspective of my heritage, I was born on a ranch in Oregon, and I was born in my grandmother's house, my father's mother's house, in the front bedroom, and delivered by an old country doctor. And he was the second son which had been delivered to my parents, and he only charged my parents twenty dollars, since he charged for my brother twenty-five dollars, and he figured I was a discount. So that ranch I grew up on was on sort of a homestead. There was a mile square, and it was actually a square, or a township. And my father's mother and father had a house on the southwest corner of it, my mother's mother and father had a house on the southeast corner of it, and my mother and father had a house in the middle of the south side of it. So we were really an extended family in that situation. Going back to the beginning of my genealogy, well, my heritage is—well, it's multicultural. I'm part of the multicultural mix of the westward movement in this country. I'm Scotch-Irish, and French, and Shoshone Indian, and Cherokee. And I guess I don't have a diagram here, but I'll start I guess with my father's father, and his family. The Gosses originally came from Ireland, and they're Scotch-Irish, and my grandfather was born in Maryville, Tennessee—and by the way, that's the same community that Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson came from, so it's part of that same heritage—and my grandfather's ancestors had fought in the War of 1812, along with that mix of Scotch-Irish and Cherokee people, that fought in the Creek War part of that. So undoubtedly, they knew Andrew Jackson, and Sam Houston, during those times. And at the end of the Civil War, well, my ancestors on that side had, of course, been part of the rebellion during the Civil War, the Confederacy. They had to make a choice in Tennessee as a border state, and then, after the war, they were sort of displaced, and so they headed west when my grandfather was a child. And they had raised horses in Tennessee, and my grandfather was just a young boy at the time, but he had three sisters, and two brothers. And from Tennessee, the family drove a forty-head of

horses when they started out, and they talked about going west into Missouri, and then, on west. They came through the Texas Panhandle here, and talked about the Comanches stopping them along the trail and asking them for breakfast, for food, and the Comanches were thinking about taking their horses. But my granddad said that they fed the leaders of the tribe, and fed them sourdough pancakes, and maple syrup, they brought a little keg of maple syrup along from the East. And when the Comanche leaders got ready to leave, one of them picked up the little keg of maple syrup, and put it under his arm and walked off with it, and said something about “You can have the horses, I’ll take this.” So they got their horses through the Texas plains, and the Texas Panhandle. And they went clear to California on the old trail, trailing these forty horses. But my granddad said that coming through Texas and Arizona, they came across a few more horses, so they ended up with about sixty-head when they got to California. Not going to say they were horse thieves, (laughs) or other things, but that little string of horses expanded. And they didn’t like California, that gold rush was still going on, and they thought it was too crowded, so they went out to Oregon. And they went all the way to Salem, Oregon, the capital, and they started investigating the land opportunities and things like that, and they didn’t like the government there, because the government was at the end of the Oregon Trail, and all those folks were New Englanders, and they said they didn’t like, “Those damn Yankee carpetbaggers that were running things in the capital of Oregon”. So they backtracked as far as they could in Oregon, to southeastern Oregon, and they settled around Klamath County, and started their ranch down there, as far as they could get from the state authorities, and the state of Oregon. And at that time, there were a lot of settlers who were from the South that had been dispossessed, because quite often, when they came back from the Civil War, their land had been taken by other people and things like that. And in parts of Missouri, and Arkansas, and places like that, if people had been a rebel—there were actually state laws after the war that, if they were rebels, they couldn’t even own property, things like that. So that’s the reason a lot of people went on west. And anyhow, that side of the family was in ranching, and cattle, and sheep-raising. And then the family expanded, and with the horses they started livery stables along the trail, and started a freighting business, and started livery stables along, well, thirty or forty miles, if you needed livery stables along these lines to keep the stage line going, and freighting going. So they were involved in that business—and to bring up that history, this was the Gosses—from Redding, California, on the trails up through northern California, and into Oregon, and into Idaho, and Washington, as the family expanded, they had these livery stables, and raised horses. And, well, for example, some of the families settled in Pendleton, Oregon, and were involved in the development of the Pendleton Roundup, the rodeo business there. And a lot of these livery stables turned into—well, the Model T came along, and the livery stables turned into auto repair shops, and then they turned into Ford agencies. And now if you go to La Grande, Oregon, at the north end of the trail that they had spread themselves across, and you go to Redding, California, you’ll be surprised to see, along the interstate, road signs advertising Goss Motors. Goss Motors in Redding, and Goss Motors in La Grande, Oregon. So that’s the sort of history of that family. And then my grandfather Goss, along the trip, settled in southern Oregon. And he married a lady called Sally

Chastain. So that was the Chastain family, and the Chastains were French Huguenots, they were French Protestants that had been forced out of France by the Inquisition. And they came to this country, and first they came to the Carolinas, but then they came into Kentucky, and then the next thing you hear about them is that they became mixed with the Cherokee, intermarried with the Cherokees. And anyhow, that family went west with the early settlers of the Cherokees, about 1820, and they settled where Arkansas, and Missouri, and Oklahoma come together. And they were called the “early settlers,” they went out there because there was all the handwriting on the wall that the government was going to push the Cherokees out of the Carolinas, and Georgia. So they weren’t part of the Trail of Tears, they were already out there, and they welcomed the Cherokees when they were run out by this so-called “Trail of Tears.” And I visited my great-great-great-grandparent’s home place that they originally had. And they farmed in what’s now Arkansas, near a place called Calico Rock, on the White River. And I stopped in and went to the county records, and found out where it was, and went and found the place, stopped in there, and there was a retired Air Force major who lived there then. But he took me around and showed me where the ruins of the old barn had been, and where the house had been. That had all been burned out during the Civil War, and that’s my father’s mother’s family had been pushed out and gone west too. And anyhow, I found the records, and visited the cemeteries, and saw the graves of some of my Chastain ancestors there. On that same trip, I visited Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which is the Cherokee tribal headquarters, and found my Chastain ancestors and my Goss ancestors there, both on the tribal rolls. And so there were registered tribal members at that time. The tribal genealogist asked me, said “Why don’t you come back home?” Found out I was an anthropologist, and did some interesting things, and was interested in genealogy, said, “Why don’t you come back home, we can get you registered, and we can get you a low-interest loan, and you can build a house right up here on this ridge.” So I said, “Well, no, I have a lot of other things going.” So that’s my mother’s side. I guess I should add that on that side, John Alexander Chastain, my great grandfather, who was Sally’s father, had been in the Civil War as a Confederate, and he had apprenticed himself in the assistance of a Confederate doctor, a surgeon. And so during the war, he was the assistant of a battlefield surgeon, doing the repairs on the people that were wounded during the Civil War. And they got out to southern Oregon in the 1870s, after the Civil War, and he put out a shingle as a doctor. Back then, you didn’t necessarily had to have the degree, you had to have the experience. On a frontier, you set up yourself as a doctor, and you set up a drugstore. And so he was then known as Dr. John Alexander Chastain. And he also developed ranch interests, and had that going too. But anyhow, he was a doctor on the frontier in Oregon in those days. And then they got married, Sally—and my grandfather Goss’ name by the way was Robert E. Lee Goss—

DS:

Okay, yeah, you had mentioned that, I was going to ask.

JG:

Should add that—and she was Sarah Jane Chastain. And then they met my mother's parents in Klamath Falls in Bonanza, in southeastern Oregon—they were in the same community. And then the history of the two families sort of merged together after that. This is getting pretty tangled, I don't know if it will be all sorted out in the oral history.

DS:

Well they're going to do a full transcript, so that'll help them.

JG:

That'll help them, okay. Are they going to have me there during the transcription?

DS:

Well we can, we can provide you with a copy to proofread.

JG:

Yeah.

DS:

And then you can go back through there, and make amends or whatever.

JG:

Make some notes and things like that. Well, my mother's family were Mormons.

DS:

Oh.

JG:

And so that's another side of the story. And, let's see, my great-grandfather Darley came over—well, it was around 1850. He was converted in England by Mormon missionaries in England. He was converted in Liverpool, where he was a shipwright. Now the name Darley is actually French, it's D'Arles in the south of France, Arles, where Van Gogh painted and things like that. And that's Basque Country, on the border between France and Spain. So they talked about their Basque heritage in the Pyrenees area, in the mountains between Spain and France. And anyhow, they had been evidently part of the reformation, the Protestant revolution too, and had left France. And they were on the border of France and Spain; he said they were Basques, which is a different than either one of those. And it wasn't clear whether at that time they were Spanish-speaking, or French-speaking, or which; they could have been either. But they moved to England during the Protestant Reformation, and changed their name to Darley—D'Arles or D'arley to Darley. So they're ultimately French, and the family briefly was in England. And he was a single

man working in the shipyards in Liverpool, governing ships, he was a shipwright. So when he came to the United States, he came on a ship over from Liverpool, and came into New Orleans, and he took the boat on the Mississippi to the jumping-off place that the Mormons had for going on west to Utah. And he got in with one of those wagon trains going west to Utah. And anyhow, he'd been a shipwright, and that was a master carpenter's job, so he was a skilled carpenter. And when he got out there and got with the Mormons, he became involved in a lot of the building of the buildings in Salt Lake and things like that. And then it gets a little complicated after that, because his wife was a Shoshone Indian. Anyhow, she was a Shoshone Indian that had been—well, her parents had been killed by the United States Army during the Civil War. They were a part of a bear hunter's band that lived in Cache Valley in northern Utah, and the Mormons were settling there, and there was conflict between the Indians and the Mormons. And Colonel Conner was the California column of the California volunteers who were part of the Union army, who were in Utah at that time. And their job was to keep the Mormons under control, because the Union was afraid that the Mormons might join the Confederacy during that time. So anyhow, the soldiers under Colonel Connor didn't have a lot of things to do, since they weren't in combat and everything, so he took them out to calm the Indians, and there was a terrible massacre, this band. And after the battle, my grandmother, Jemima, was one of the children left on the battlefield after that. And another Mormon, who had come from England, named John Thirkell, and his wife, who was a Shoshone Indian, went to the battlefield and gathered up the orphan children, and took five of them, five of the girls back, and adopted them into their family. And so my great-grandmother Jemima was a Shoshone Indian, who had been adopted into this family with the other orphaned children. And the Mormons integrated these orphan children into the families very quickly, gave them their own names, and pretty soon by another generation, of course they merged into the family, and they forgot about them being Indians, and they didn't talk about it much. But my grandfather, who was their youngest son, spoke his mother's Shoshoni, as well as a little French, and English. And then he worked with other Indians, learned several other Indian languages. And over the years, he told me the history of his mother's family, and things like that. So that's where the Shoshone heritage comes in. So, that grandfather, whose name was Charles Thirkell Darley, and his middle name, of course, is the name of the adoptive father of his mother. So I can't claim that Thirkell line, you see, because Jemima was adopted into that family. But John Thirkell was an interesting character himself, because he had evidently gotten in trouble in England. He was a gamekeeper on one of the estates that belonged to the royalty, and anyhow, he got caught poaching. And as he tried to escape, he got shot in the leg, and his leg was broken, and he hid out for a while his leg mended, but it didn't mend very good, so he always had a limp. But he got to Liverpool and took one of these boats to England, and he was converted. But when he got to Utah, he sort of became a—I guess you'd call him a "mountain man," a trapper, and a hunter, and things like that. And anyhow, he had married a Shoshone woman, so they're the ones that adopted these children. So that's the mixture I am, and if you stop to think about it, it's part of the multicultural mix of the American frontier, as things were woven together. And most Americans, of course, are mixtures of one kind or another; hardly a pure anything.

DS:
Yeah.

JG:
Not any such thing as a pure Anglo-Saxon, or anything like that.

DS:
Do we dare say most aren't as aware of it though, as you are?

JG:
Yeah, I'd say most people haven't really dug into it. And, of course, my Mormon ancestors have actually published books of their genealogies, since they're interested in keeping track of their genealogies. And their belief system, of course, they believe that they can have baptism by proxy, and if they find out who all their ancestors were who didn't have a chance to be Mormons, they can be baptized by proxy, and make sure that their ancestors get to the same heaven, whether they want to or not. So it's—well, I won't go into that, but I'm not a believer in that tradition. But anyhow, I've always been curious about these things, so I've taken what they've written in these books, and I have quite a file of my own family history on the other sides too. And most people don't take the time to investigate it, and take the time to follow the trails where they came from, and even find where they lived at different times.

DS:
Yeah, well didn't one of your ancestors also—weren't they a surveyor, can you talk about that?

JG:
Well that's Charlie, that's the—yeah, that's the next thing. Charlie then was the son of William Henry Darley and Jemima Thirkell; took the name of her adoptive parents, of course. But she had belonged to a bear hunter's band, and she probably was a relative of a bear hunter in this small band, and they were intermarried. And sometimes, some of the people in the community called her Jemima Bear. And anyhow, she had three sisters—well, three other adopted Shoshone girls, that may or may not have been sisters, because the Shoshone's equated your cousins with brothers and sisters, and so it was a big clan arrangement. So anyhow, Jemima was Bear clan, and still was in communication with some of the members of that Shoshone tribe. So my grandfather, Charles Thirkell Darley, was the youngest of twelve children that they had. And he was born in what they call Maughan's Fort, the original building in Cache Valley, Utah, where Logan is now, where Idaho State University is. And he went to about three years in elementary school that they had in Wellsville, Utah; and he worked on his father's farm, and ranch development, and herded sheep in the mountains in the summer; and they also had a dairy, and they made butter, and cheese; and they farmed, they raised wheat, they raised alfalfa, and such further stock and so on. And they were involved in a freighting business; they freighted their

cheese, and butter, and jerk meat, and wheat—they had a mill, they ground the wheat. My grandfather, by the way, built several of the mills. My great-grandfather, he was a skilled carpenter, so some of the mills in that valley that ground the wheat to make flour and so on, he designed them and built them, and did that sort of work. And then the produce they shipped to places like Virginia City, Montana, to the mining camps; that is, they supplied a lot of the mining camps in Utah, and Idaho, and Montana. So they developed a pretty big business there, but there was twelve children, and he was the youngest. And of course, by the time he was ready to be an adult, all of the farming and the operations of the family had been divided up among the older brothers. Most younger brothers, there were two sisters out of the twelve, there were ten brothers. And so there wasn't much opportunity for him there. In England, the primogeniture system, the oldest son inherited, and it was sort of the same way. So he decided he'd go to college, so they had started that Utah Agricultural College, which is now Utah State, and so he and his brother went over and went and talked to—it was just a small college—they went and talked to the president, to see if they could go to college—they only had two years of elementary school—said “Sure, come on.” So, they were enrolled in the irrigation engineering program, because that's what the college was primarily established for, it was an agricultural engineering place. So they were enrolled as irrigation engineering students, so they learned how to lay out irrigation companies, and make the desert bloom. And that brings us up to 1906—my grandfather was born in 1880, and he lived to be ten days past a hundred-and-one. You can imagine the changes he saw from 1880—everything—horses, and wagons, and so on. And wasn't even an automobile out in the West yet, or anything like that, and no electricity. So in 1906, Teddy Roosevelt had, of course, pushed the development of the Bureau of Reclamation, and that was one of his pet projects, was to irrigate desert lands in the West, and to also drain marshlands and turn it into farmland. So anyhow, there was my grandfather twenty-six years old in 1906, and he had had two years of engineering training at the college, and the Bureau of Reclamation was sending their representatives around to hire irrigation engineers for the Bureau of Reclamation. So they hired him in the Bureau of Reclamation, and started his career. And he left Utah and went to southern Oregon, to Klamath Falls in Bonanza in southern Oregon, where my father's families were already established. So that's when he met them; they came together. So he worked for the Bureau of Reclamation, he was with the first group that started the Klamath Reclamation Project, he was with the first group that surveyed the water resources that came into the Klamath Basin, he was what they called a “watermaster” at that time—he did so many things. This gets to another aside: John C. Frémont, big explorer of the West, who was with the Army Corps of Engineers—what became the Corps of Engineers—had surveyed the road from The Dalles on the Columbia River in northern Oregon, all the way down to southern Oregon, and into California. This was just, I guess, would have been 1845, and he'd surveyed the eastern side of Klamath Lake, which the major tributaries in the Klamath Basin go into. So he mapped the eastern side, but then John. C. Frémont, in 1847, when the war with Mexico started, and the United States started talking California from Mexico, Frémont, of course, was involved in the planning of that, and he had come up on the west side of Klamath Lake in southern Oregon, and

had started to map that. But the Klamath Indians had stopped him, and anyhow, Kit Carson was with him on that trip, and a lot of other mountain men, and they killed several in the party. So Frémont didn't map the west side, so one of my grandfather's first assignments was to map the west side of the lake; map the side of the lake that John C. Frémont hadn't mapped on that side. And he had wonderful stories about that. He mapped it in the winter with his crew, and they lived on an island in the lake, and they waited until the lake was frozen. You can't imagine how miserable it was when the lake was frozen in the winter, and that country blizzard blowing down off the Cascade Mountains. But, he mapped the west side from the ice, because the east side was very marshy up to where the edge of it was, and you couldn't really do a good job of mapping from the marsh, because you had to go out in rafts, and boats, and things like that. So he waited until it got frozen and he could walk on the ice, and then he mapped the west side of the lake that way. And after that mapping, he laid out the first roads on the west side of the lake, and was in on the development of that basin for a long, long time. And he always said he was thrice cursed. He said, "I'm thrice cursed," he said, "I'm an Indian, and I'm a Mormon, and I work for the government." And most of the time he was working, he had to keep all three of those a secret, because they were three unpopular categories in the West at that time. And he'd actually been shot at with his mother for being an Indian, and shot at with his father for being a Mormon, and he was shot at by Indians for being a surveyor at different times—luckily, he ducked. But his story is really interesting, and it's an interesting story of what I call a "cultural broker." I think the multicultural people in the West that could participate in different cultures, and usually different languages, were very important in the development of the West, and they don't get enough credit. But he went on to work for not only the Bureau of Reclamation, but the Corps of Engineers. He was a surveyor on the Columbia and Snake River projects, and his surveys were used to put those dams into the Columbia River and the Snake River. One of the first things I remember—and looking back, I was just three years old in 1937—but I remember that trip. My dad had a '36 Ford, and my dad and my grandfather, this is grandfather Charlie, took me with them and went up to the dedication of the Bonneville Dam, which was when it was the second damn after the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River, which was, of course, to bring electricity for the first time to our ranch and things like that. And Charlie had been on the survey on it, so he'd been invited, and so we went up to that dedication. And that's about the first thing I remember is that trip up the Columbia Gorge. And then President Franklin Roosevelt was dedicating it, and the Nez Perce and Yakima Indian chiefs came and put a war bonnet on President Roosevelt's head, and that's the first image I remember, when I was three years old.

DS:

Wow.

JG:

So anyhow, my grandfather was involved in all sorts of things in the opening of the West. And again, back to the history—it's unfortunate that more people that were involved in that didn't

pass it on, and pass it on when these folks got older. So much of the history I got from my grandfather; my grandfather took an interest in me. I remember on the ranch, when I was growing up—of course I worked on the ranch up until I was nineteen, and decided I didn't really want that hard work the rest of my life—and it was the end of the Korean War and I joined the Air Force, and then I never came back to the ranch. But when I was working on the ranch, I worked all summer with no shirt on, and paying for it with skin cancer now. And my grandfather saw me out there one day putting oil in the tractor, servicing the tractor, and I always carried a knife, and I used my knife to open the cans of oil, and to pour in the tractor. And he said "Man, you can use a knife! You look just like a Buck Indian." He was obviously so proud of me that I was, well, resourceful like that. And anyhow, he took me hunting many times where he used to hunt, and he knew everyplace to fish in the Klamath Basin, and I spent a lot of time with him. And he knew where to take a stand to always get your deer on the first day of the season, and things like that. So I learned a lot with him, going over the territory that he knew so well; he mapped all this area, and knew every trail, and every good fishing hole, and all these things. So that was an education that many people just don't get. Oh and then, just to get back to him again—I'm going to talk later about my time in the service, and my time getting educated—but then at, I guess, about twenty-four years old, I came back, close to where my grandfather was. And by this time he was in his late eighties, and nineties, and I guess it was about 1965. I was a professor at Washington State University, and anyhow, I had married and had two children by that time. And I made a point of going back to Klamath where he had a place on Klamath Lake, and spending time with him every summer. At least a month every summer we stayed with my grandparents on Klamath Lake for a vacation. And I recorded some of his stories; by that time, I'd had experience with things like this, and learned a lot of things about his history that I hadn't learned before. And the great thing about that is my children, for those years when I was at Washington State University—I was there twelve years—and we kept in touch every summer with my grandparents. So my children got the experience of knowing their great-grandparents, and histories, and fishing with them, and things like this. So my children value that, too. So I guess I'm an advocate for keeping your grandparents as long as you can, and communicating with them, because they have valuable information. I valued the knowledge that I got from my grandfather as much as I ever got from any university. So he really made me what I am; put me in the direction that I was going. And I had trouble reading as a child, trouble learning to read. This is going to take a long time, because everything kicks into another story.

DS:

It does.

JG:

Since I'm talking about my childhood, I'm dyslexic, and I was a terrible stutterer. I didn't get out of stuttering until I was in the Air Force; all through school, I was a stutterer. And as a stutterer, I was often very quiet; self-conscious about being a stutterer, and could hardly get a sentence

started sometimes. So I was a better listener. And I had a very good first grade teacher, and my mother was very involved with me, and they started reading everything they could on stuttering and trying to crack through my problem learning to read, since you'd very quickly get stigmatized and classified as retarded or something if you couldn't read. And they didn't really know what dyslexia was at that time, but later on it was obvious that was what I went through. So they worked very, very hard with me, to get me through, learn how to read. And after I learned how to read, I never quit reading—I'd read everything I could. And main thing that was on my grandfather's shelf, most of the books that I knew about, were early histories of things—the journals of John Frémont, for example. He had all those journals, and he had the journals of the early surveys of the West. So I learned to read reading about Kit Carson, and John Frémont, and being interested in Indians. We had Indians working on our ranch in the summers, and when we were harvesting for example on the ranch, if there's a run of smelt, nice fish on the Sandy River, the Indians had to go over there. So they just quit work, and loaded up, and went over there and caught smelt. When there was a low tide—we were only sixty miles from the coast at that time—and when there was a low tide, and the clamming was good, all of our Indian workers, and bean pickers, and things like that would load up and go, and I'd go with them. We closed that shop until we did that sort of thing. So growing up, I was working with the Indians—and I showed you the picture last time of the—that was 1937, the picture of me in there with several hundred refugees from the Depression, and the Dust Bowl. So that's the environment that I grew up in—ranching, and farming, and working with migrant workers, and things like that. So all of those things sort of blend in together. So—but I got off my grandfather, but in my teaching, I've encouraged students to go back and to get to know their grandparents, and get to know what they have to say. In my anthropology classes, and in my folklore class, I encourage students to go back and record the life history of their grandparents. So I'm an advocate for that.

DS:

Yeah, as you've been talking about all this, we've been talking about a lot of your genealogy, a little bit of your early years; and you talked about one of the first memories that you have—can you talk about some of the other stuff, about what life was like as a child growing up in that part of Oregon?

JG:

Oh yeah. I often think of a brain as a storage of films; they're videotapes. So yeah, put on another reel, and let's go. Okay, my first memories were when I was about three, and I guess I told you that we lived on this ranch that was sort of a cooperative between both sides of the family. And my mother's youngest two sisters were my primary babysitters. I remember them, I guess, from the time I was three. They were always doing tricky things; they were very different. My Aunt Ima was the next to the youngest, name is Ima Pearl Darley, Ima Pearl. I had a student once named Ima Pigg, but I always think of that as a funny name. My grandmother's name was Pearl, Sylvia Pearl, but then the next to the youngest daughter they had was Ima Pearl Darley,

and then the youngest one was Virginia. And Ima was sort of ornery, and Virginia was sort of innocent. And later on in my teens, I was calling Ima ornery and calling Virginia clueless; they're very different. And now one of the first things I remember was them asking if I wanted to go to school with them. Now, they were about fourteen, fifteen, I guess, something like that, and they were going to a high school at the town, which is where the school for our district was. And I went, "Oh sure, I'd like to go." And so they took me to school, and they took me into the school nurse's office, and they gave me a vaccination (laughs). You remember things like that; no, I wasn't very happy with my favorite babysitters, they tricked me into going to school; I didn't know what they were doing, I didn't like that very much.

DS:

Well, they got that taken care of, though.

JG:

Yeah, it's taken care of. So I remember things like that. When I was growing up, first of all, we lived in the first house that had been built on the homestead. And it was a square house with four rooms; they built lots of square houses with four rooms. And no upstairs, and there's no electricity—of course, 1934, in back country—it was four miles to the nearest store. There was a general store, at a place called West Stayton, and there was a railroad station, there was a railroad, and then there was just a few houses scattered around that – that was West Stayton, Oregon. And just an old general store, which was also the post office, with a hitching post out in front of it. My dad, and my uncle, and grandfather rode horses to the general store, and things like that. And then there were a lot of woodlots, where the forest hadn't been cleared for farming yet. And of course we got our firewood from the woodlots on the ranch, and so we grew up cutting down trees, and hauling firewood, and we had to heat the house with firewood. And our job every day was taking firewood to the heating wood stove in the living room, and in the kitchen, there was a wood stove, and had to cut the wood out there with an axe every day, smaller, to go in that. And that's where we heated our water in a tank on the side of the kitchen wood stove; that's the only hot water we had. And we had a bath every Saturday, in what do they call them in Spanish? A *tina* a tub a galvanized washtub —of course for years, I was the youngest one, so I was the last one to get a bath, and the water wasn't hot anymore. And then during the wintertime, my brother and I were in a back bedroom, so there's no central heating, so there wasn't any heat. So, wintertime in Oregon, cold, and it's either foggy or raining all winter long—cold, miserable rain. If you didn't work in the rain, you didn't get your work done. So we grew up with rubber boots, and slickers out on horses in miserable weather. So it's just the status quo for living on a ranch on the frontier. In those days it was still the frontier in many ways. The road in front of the place was a dirt road, and there was mud most of the time. And I remember when they finally put gravel on, and there was a gravel road for a long time, and then I remember when they put pavement on it, black macadam road. Well, after the Bonneville Dam went in, and we started getting electricity—see, President Roosevelt had promised us all that we'd get

electricity when they put that dam in. It took him quite a few more years, maybe ten more years. I must have been about thirteen when we got an electric line put in. And then, of course, that changed everything; we had an electric pump on the well. Before that, of course, we just had the pitcher pump on the back porch. Then, with the electricity, we put an electric pump on the well, and we got inside plumbing, and we added a little addition on the house, which was a bathroom; we didn't have to go the privy anymore outside the house. So I helped—I guess I was about thirteen—I helped my dad wire the house with the first lights, and the first plugins, I remember all that. So, you tell that to kids at school these days, they don't believe you could be that old—"No television?" But it would of course been a little bit better in towns, if towns got conveniences first, but we didn't out there. So anyhow, you saw all these things develop, you didn't think about it much at the time. Then later, I helped my dad—I guess about 1950—I helped my dad build a new house. So on a farm-and-ranch combination, you learned to do everything: you're a carpenter, you're a farmer, well, you're a mechanic. We overhauled our own tractors, we had a shop, we had a machine shed, we overhauled our own tractors; we built a lot of our own irrigation equipment; learned to weld aluminum pipes and things like that; learned to be welders—have all these skills. So, looking back on it, it was valuable to do anything, to build a house and be a mechanic—all these sorts of things; you're skilled in many ways. (laughs) So that was my childhood on the ranch, and then the grade school I went to--

DS:

You read my mind, I was going to take you back to the formal learning. (laughs)

JG:

Yeah, back to the formal learning. I didn't go to a one-room grade school, I went to a three-room grade school.

DS:

Oh.

JG:

Actually, it was where there four rooms, but one room was unfinished—we called it the "vacant room," that's where we had a basketball hoop; it was our gymnasium, one of the rooms. And the first, second, and third class in one room, the fourth, fifth, and sixth in another room, and the seventh and eighth in the third room. And so I went through grade school there, and I don't remember too much about it. It turned out my mother had kept expanding the library, and she sort of saw that I got about any book I was really interested in as I was growing up. And I think we ended up with more books in our home than the grade school had in its library. And I remember, I got kind of bored with school, and my mother insisted that I did things like take piano lessons. And I was glad when my sister came along, so she took the pressure off me to take piano lessons, and dancing lessons, and things like that. And anyhow, to make a long story short,

after I learned to read, I never stopped reading, and I was ahead of most of the kids in class. So there was basic talent there; I don't know where it came from, but I ended up being, in eighth grade, valedictorian of the class. And anyhow, I went from there to the Union High School, which was six miles away. I guess it would have been 1948. That was Stayton Union High School, and it was six miles away, but they didn't provide a bus, so you had to get there on your own. So I was driving tractors and things by the time I was twelve, so I started driving the pickup to school when I started high school in 1948; I guess I would have been thirteen, fourteen. And we weren't bothered much with the highway patrol, or game wardens, or anything back then in that area. Young people were driving without licenses, and you couldn't get a learner's permit until you were fifteen, couldn't get a driver's license until you were sixteen, but I was driving to school by the time I was fourteen, I guess. And anyhow, when I started to high school, my dad's lawyer told my dad and me that I had to get some skills in business practice and things like that. He said, "To get Jim to take things like typing. If he could learn to type, that'd be worth a million dollars to him down the line," things like that. So my dad went into Salem and bought a brand new 1948 Royal Standard Manual Typewriter, and gave it to me, and set it up in my room with a desk, and insisted that I take typing. So I learned to type at fourteen, and got to be a real speed typist, touch typist, speed typist. And I ended up doing real well in high school, I was on the honor roll most of the time, on the honor society, and I was the editor of my school paper for both my junior and senior years. Usually, it was just a senior that was the editor, but they made me editor my junior year. And it was a mimeographed newspaper, so the masters had to be typed; for two years I typed the masters for the school newspaper. So I developed that skill, and I read a lot more than most of the kids, and I took every chance to do things like school plays. I found that when I played another role, other than me, I didn't stutter as much. And I remember, I read a lot of Shakespeare and things like that, and most of the kids in my class weren't interested in Shakespeare. "What's Shakespeare going to do me?" and "I'm going to be a rancher, or run a service filling station down here," or something like that. And anyhow, I used to get up by myself and recite Shakespeare's plays. Some of them I memorized word-for-word all the way through, and I practiced breaking out of my stuttering by being somebody else. And that's the main way I broke out of it. So I was in the school plays, and by the time I graduated, I won a scholarship in drama from Linfield College, one of the oldest colleges in Oregon. And then I also had a scholarship for journalism from the University of Oregon. And I had a lot of stress at that time, because my grandmother, who was the daughter of Dr. Chastain, told me if I wanted to be a doctor, she'd pay my way through medical school. So I had a lot of choices to make when I went to the university. So I chose the University of Oregon, my brother had gone there before me. My brother was three grades ahead of me all through school. And so I went to the University of Oregon that first year on that journalism scholarship, and I took geology courses, and I really liked geology, I liked historical geology. And I think the only other course were the requirements that I had to take at that time. I guess I had studied Spanish in high school; my dad suggested that, he'd studied Spanish in high school in 1925, and could speak a little Spanish. And he had a lot of friends who were Spanish speakers, growing up on a ranch in southern Oregon; there were

Basque families who were Spanish speakers. And he enjoyed that language—he could recite poems in Spanish that he learned in 1925, he enjoyed Spanish music and things like that. So that had been my exposure to foreign languages, it was just a little bit of Spanish besides English, and a few Shoshone words from my grandfather and things like that. But my sophomore year, I really didn't know what I wanted to do; I decided I didn't want to be a doctor, I knew that because of my dyslexia I never had any real skill at mathematics, and numbers, and lines, or columns—things I can't deal with very well; getting confused. I'd had a lot of difficulty remember phone numbers and things like that. And I transferred to the University of Arizona in geology, but they put me in geological engineering. I liked historic geology, but the engineering side of it, they expected me to take trigonometry, and calculus, and things like that—and I just barely got through high school algebra—not good at numbers at all. So, I got very frustrated my sophomore year at the University of Arizona in geological engineering—I liked historical geology, I liked the geological history of life and things like that, but wasn't interested in the engineering part, and wasn't really interested in mining, or oil drilling, or anything like that. So I didn't really know what I was after, and I was not getting good grades; that fall, I was sure that I wasn't going to do very well, and the Korean War was going on, and the draft was getting close to me, and so I dropped out and joined the Air Force. Well, when I dropped out that fall, I guess that would've been 1952, '53, I was really afraid to tell my parents—they're up in Oregon, I was at the University of Arizona—and tell them that I had dropped out, so I had a friend in Wickenburg that had known the rodeo business, but had a guest ranch at Wickenburg, Arizona, on the Hassayampa River. So I dropped out and went over there, and he gave me a job being a wrangler for the dudes that they took on trail rides to the old Vulture Mines, and things like that. So I did that for the rest of fall semester, and didn't go home until Christmas, and didn't let my folks know that I dropped out. So I was a dropout, and then I went in the Air Force January 11, 1954.

DS:

Well, let me take a little stop here so I can change storage cards on that.

JG:

That's a good break time, heading for the Air Force. You got everything on this up until that time?

DS:

Mm-hmm.

JG:

You got everything?

DS:

Mm-hmm.

JG:

All right, all my detours, all the—I was that way lecturing, but that's another story, but then I'd have to tell that other [story].

End of interview



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