

**Interviews with James “Jimmie” O’Rorke on
May 2 and May 7, 2009
At Rigden Farm Senior Living Center**



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Interview and transcription by Linda Bell

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Origins back East

I was born in Washington, Pennsylvania. My father was Irish. He came from New York and from a family of O’Rorkes, and his brother who I’d always heard was his idol, the man I was named for – James O’Rorke – was the State of New York’s architect for many years. With the Depression we lost all contact with the O’Rorke branch of the family. My father died soon after the Depression started. He lost – what would you say, a millionaire today? He’d grown up to be an expert in electronics and motors and around for the original maintenance of electric cars – horseless carriages they called them back then. He ended up with Overland Motors and he’d sell cars to the richest guy in town because they were very expensive.

He was building up to work on engines, both airplanes and cars. They would go around to the county fairs to build up an interest, especially in the planes they flew around for entertainment. This was just the beginnings of a new industry rising and he was a kind of inventor and mechanic type. He worked for one of the first car companies and they would sell a car in a town, to the first one in a town, and he would deliver it, along with other mechanics and a driver. When they delivered a car they would always send along a driver – a chauffeur – and a mechanic along with the car. Probably cars were very, very expensive, about the most expensive thing you could buy outside of your house. The men who delivered the car would stay for a month to train a mechanic as to how to maintain it and to train a chauffeur as to how to drive it. My father at that time was doing that kind of work, going out from the car factory and delivering cars.

After doing that for a while he ended up in Washington, Pennsylvania, the county seat of Washington County, about 30 miles south of Pittsburgh and about 30-40 miles north of West Virginia and east of Ohio. He liked the place so much that he decided to stay. He fell in love with a local gal. The name of the rich family was LeMoyne,

and the LeMoynes had enough money – their family built the first crematorium in the United States right close to where we lived on the top of a big hill near the south edge of town. The bones were still scattered outside the crematorium when I lived up there as a kid.

He married the local gal and opened up a distributorship for the cars, the Overland cars, right across from the first ward school that I walked a mile and half to get to after I grew up a while. I've got some pictures of it. At night he'd bring me home in his car.

I went all through school in Washington; first to the third ward school and then to that beautiful high school that the Works Projects Administration, the WPA during Roosevelt's term, built in the 1930s. I was born September 27, 1922. When I was in high school – this beautiful, beautiful high school – there was this wood shop, a beautiful machine shop. (It was) everything you could want in a school, even today. In the woodshop, where there were tools and a warehouse, why, I ran into photography. The old judge that I worked for, he liked me to take pictures of his grandchildren and I took pictures around the courthouse. I had an account with the Jewish couple I knew who ran the jewelry shop and carried photographic materials on the side, so on the \$2 or so a week I made from the judge.... He was an alderman in the third ward of the town which included half of Main Street and Washington Jefferson College and was mostly, about three-quarters, black. We said "colored" in those days and many businessmen were also colored people. It was part of the old emancipation Quaker movement (called the Underground Railroad) to move slaves out of the south before the Civil War and it went through our town. So there were many cellars, or fake cellars or extra cellars, that were hidden to help get them out of the South. So the city itself, and it still was when I lived there, very open and very non-segregationist. I can exaggerate that, but we were ahead of most of the country in being right. The president of my high school graduating class, 200 students or so, was a colored fellow. W&J was pretty open too – that's Washington and Jefferson College, a Presbyterian college built on the basis of some kind of Presbyterian medical school in Philadelphia if I remember. Of course that's a long time ago.

That was the year (the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor) – December 7th, 1941 – about six months before that I graduated. I was fooling around with photography. I photographed the last convocation of Civil War veterans that was in town, a final meeting in Washington, Pennsylvania. They were carried up Main Street in Lincolns and Cadillacs and stopped over by the courthouse right across from my office. And I took pictures of all the old veterans with the people who were escorting them. I think it was called a convocation – the GAR, the "Grand Army of the Republic" veterans,

that was the name used for the Northern Forces. So these were the GAR veterans. I didn't realize at 86 I was going to be just like them – I was a teen then.

Where I worked we had and read all the newspapers, the *Washington Observer* and the *Reporter*, the morning and evening newspapers, and all the magazines the judge got. I read them in my spare time. And I traveled around a good bit over to the courthouse and the different law offices and the Washington Trust Building. By that time my father had gone broke and my mother was working in social services. My brother had joined the Army and gone off to the Panama Canal. My sister who was still so young was shipped up to an aunt in New York who was married to a doctor up there. I lived in one of the houses that one of the fairly well-to-do Scotch side of my family had in that county. I was told they owned a good deal of Amwell Township, if my memory serves me right. They were the Houston family. My grandmother was a big woman and ran the place, Grandmother Kerr. She was married to a Welshman. They were very Scotch and he was very Welsh, a very quiet man, and the Scots people were very affluent and fluent in language. My grandmother had three boys and two daughters, one who was my mother and one who was the aunt that had my sister.

My mother was looking after her own family. My father went broke, but he worked in a big factory in Pittsburgh where we lived for a couple of years. A flood in about 1930-1931 wiped out the factory. It was an outfit with large contracts – hundreds of thousands of dollars in contracts to AT&T for large generators. He went broke and the banks were after him after that – he died soon after that in Pittsburgh.

World War II Disrupts Everything

My brother had already gone to Panama and the last we heard of him before I left was that he'd been picked out by his commanding officer to be sent to West Point. About that time I joined the Army. As I said, I was an amateur photographer. So I said I wanted to be a photographer. I'd seen the *Collier's* booklets of World War I and in one of the booklets was of a photograph of a battlefield with the dead and the machine guns and cannons leftover. Nobody was there except maybe some bodies and the photographer with his big camera. As he was squeezing the bulb to take a long detail picture at F16 of the remnants of the battlefield, he died as he was holding it. Some kind of bullet went off in the field and killed him. As he was falling he fell in front of the lens and you could see his shadow on the lens of the picture. *Colliers* was like *Life Magazine* in World War II. That picture made a big impression on me.

I wanted to be a photographer. I figured we were going to be in the war. Hitler already had a war in Europe. I thought I better get in early because I'd heard of all those guys being shipped off without training and everything in World War I. I'd heard war stories continuously around the office where I worked after school. As soon as I graduated I went over to Pittsburgh to the recruiter. He said, "What do you want to be?" I said "a photographer." "Well, that means Fort Monmouth." I said, "I didn't want to know how to use a gun, I just want to know how to use a camera." He said, "That's Fort Monmouth in New Jersey; we'll send you there."

He said, "Where do you want to go after that?"

"Not to Europe where that war's going on. We're going to be fighting that guy Hitler before long. I want to go to the Far East."

He said, "How about the Philippines?"

"Yep, I'll go to the Philippines."

Two big mistakes!

One of the lieutenants said, "Hell, you don't want to be a photographer. That only pays \$18 to \$20 a month." He said, "We got a job here. MacArthur wants a special kind of outfit that we're putting together. You'll be making \$60 a month as the company clerk for this new outfit, getting 200 men together. How does that sound – making \$60 a month within 6 months?" I said, "OK, that sounds good to me."

More people started coming into the barracks about that time and the first person that came into my barracks was an old guy, white-haired, with 35 years of service, and so took the office of sergeant. I said hello to him a couple of times but he never answered back, so I never talked to him again. But it turned out he was the first sergeant, the only real military man with military background to head this new unit they were putting together. The new unit turned out to be about radar, this new secret air warning system – the secret equipment that saved London and was able to pick up the Germans so they knew where the German flights were heading. They were able to put their defenses into the air.

Our unit went to the northern Philippines with this radar unit and about 20 to 30 minutes before Pearl Harbor was hit, our radar was hit. It was spread out with 100 men or so in different parts of the Philippines and nearly all of them were hit. We were in northern Philippines 40 miles north of Clark Field, the biggest field over

there, and to the south on one of the Mechanic Mountains. So we were practically wiped out at the beginning. What was called "signal air craft warning" was run by a colonel working for MacArthur. It was to warn by getting signals from the Philipinos along the coast by telegraph or radio. We used that name, but we were really "radar" under the new setup. We were wiped out and I was the company clerk. The rest of the company was Signal Corps Aircraft Warning 5th Interceptor Command after we lost most of our radar. That's an air corps. When the 5th Interceptor Command was practically wiped out on Bataan and added to that provisional infantry division, I was Signal Corps Aircraft Warning 5th Interceptor Command Provisional Infantry Command Philippine Department.

We were all captured toward the south end on Bataan. We made the trip clear to the north. My men who were part of the outfit were supposed to defend at the end like we were supposed to, so it was more a rout; there wasn't any march. We went back over the mountains to go north, by then we were straggling up to the north.

Eventually we got (sent) to Japan and all the big cities were bombed in Japan. I watched Osaka burn when it was firebombed from the factory where I worked. After a couple of years at Osaka, they moved us out to the western end of Japan to a little tiny village facing a huge bay and that faced China and Korea. Ships were coming from China and Korea with food and they were being sunk or torpedoed on the way, the majority of them, and the ones that could still navigate would work their way into this 10- mile bay and come in and either sink in the middle or go up against beaches. That little village there, Maizuru, was between two mountains. The train would swoop into the village through tunnels and that's where the men unloaded things – Americans at the prison camp we were in, about 200 of us. They'd have to unload then reload before the train went on. It was bombed by the Americans two days before the end of the war. I was out in the bay at the time working with a tugboat getting food out of sunken ships. When we came in we found out a bomb had dropped where many Americans were working along with the British prisoners at the railroad. One of the Americans who was hit said, "If anyone ever gets back to Denver, Colorado, tell them what's happened to me" – he said this as he was dying. That was Preston King's brother.

A Strange Journey from Japan to Red Feather Lakes

One of the guys I ended up with back at the hospital at Fitzsimons (in Denver) remembered that and told me. We wrote to "Molly Mayfield" after we couldn't find these people in the phonebook. "Molly Mayfield" was a fake Dear Emma that was in the *Rocky Mountain News*. The story I always heard was that it was written by the

reporters in their spare time who had a lot of fun writing to themselves, and then they would answer their own letters. They had a great time of that and made "Molly Mayfield" the most famous newspaper person at that time in Colorado.

After this came out (in the paper) the lights in the Fitzsimons phone bank rang off – everybody seemed to know who this Preston King was. So Preston King's family came out to visit us in hospital. With me was one Texan from West Waco whose father was a big rancher there on the border, and the other was from Durango, Colorado. We'd been in the same prison camps and very good friends, both then and after the war.

The King family took us up a number of times to their cabin (in Red Feather) that they'd had ever since the Depression. With all the vacant, deserted, back-taxes-unpaid cabins in Red Feather, everything was pretty dead. (The Kings) still maintained their cabin with a number of other people. Their cabin was right beyond the Drake cabin – on the stream that comes out of Ramona Lake and goes to the east, just down a half city block to the Drakes.

Hugh Drake built a small cabin later right beyond that; no, it was his brother, Oscar Drake. Hugh built the big cabin back in the 20s. Bonnie is the one who fed the firefighters over the years and made the Red Feather wreaths that were sold all over the country, and hired most of the people (still in Red Feather in the winter to make them.) She made some money and their two kids were there – wonderful people. She was a wonderful cook and I ate at her home a great many times. Being a bachelor I ate out most of the time. ... But I'm getting ahead of myself.

When the Preston Kings took us up there we found all these vacant cabins down by the Ranger Station, right near the old entrance. (The Ranger Station) was beautifully maintained and wonderfully run by really professional people who fought the forest fires and maintained the place. No local government. Well, right there by Snake Lake – which really... they all had Indian names and during the 1920s it was Owassa Lake, but everybody called it Snake Lake – and right on the corner where you turned up to go further west right beyond the Ranger Station was this place where they had, before the Depression, the office for the real estate people that worked up there. It had all been abandoned and stuff left in it. We moved in, took over and fixed it up, put a roof on it – me and the other two ex-prisoners. We would all go together because we'd all known this brother of Preston King, so whenever (the Kings) went up, we went up. Or, whenever we could borrow a car, why, we'd go back up to Red Feather. We improved on the cabin and built a little addition on to it. We took stuff

up from used furniture places in Fort Collins. We went to other cabins and found stuff to rescue and we brought those things back to the cabin at Snake Lake.

Eventually, after we fixed it up, Red Feather began to develop a little bit, so on one of our trips up to the cabin we decided to stop at the courthouse in Fort Collins to find out who owned it. The owner was a Mrs. Quaintance in Golden, Colorado. We drove out to Golden – none of us knew where it was or anything about it – which is west of Denver. We got to the entrance of Golden and we saw on the street signs this address we were looking for, we got it down to the numbers, and it turned out to be this high hill with a road that went up and back down the side. I remember it was a dirt road and you saw a big house on the top of the hill, just one house up there. We drove up there and went to the porch, rang the bell, and an older lady came out. I asked her if she was Mrs. Quaintance and she said yes. I told her “We’ve taken over your homestead that you left up there in Red Feather Lakes. We fixed it all up and we wondered if you would mind very much us staying there until you’re ready to take it back?” She said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about, but come on in...” We all had tea together, all the three of us, and she said “oh, yeah, stay there, we’ve got a lot of stuff up there in Red Feather.” I later found out her father, (John) Ross, had bought land all over Colorado during the Depression and a lot of places up there in Red Feather.

Every time we could get off we went up there. We were still in the hospital, in one of those 1916 barracks in the field out beyond the main buildings. We all had the beginnings of TB and they shipped us west for that reason.

After I got to Red Feather I joined the movement to develop. I was on a full pension. My doctor said we’ll put you down for \$100 a month for one year, and then I think it was \$60 a month the second year. I asked why they cut me to \$60 a month the second year and the third year – nothing. He said, “Well, you won’t be around the third year. The \$60 will be enough to get along in the condition you’ll be in. We had a very bad name for the doctor – better not say it – Dr. “Rigor-mortis!” The nurses were young and beautiful, but the older nurse was kind of a rough old lady. But we eventually survived that and we all went to Red Feather.

Tex, the guy from Texas – I went down to visit him a couple of times – he had a ranch down on the Mexican border. He came up to Red Feather and he had a bunch of guns, like a good Texan, and he drank some, and he got into trouble and was picked up by the police in Fort Collins, speeding or something, and died soon after that. Ted Dunning had to go down to try and kind of talk the police into letting him go.

I ought to mention that both of them married young nurses they met at Fitzsimons. I tried to talk both of them out of it; "You're too darn young, stick around, get adjusted before you get married" So I didn't make friends with the nurses too well. But his wife I did eventually make good friends with and I visited them down in Texas.

The other guy was "Red" who stuttered very badly so people couldn't understand him very much. He was a great big fellow and he felt indebted to me because he never got enough food. He was a big hulk of a man. In the steel mill where we worked (in Japan) he eventually began to cut hair and give shaves every so often to the guys who could pay him in rice – like if they were sick and couldn't eat it – or cigarettes from the two or three cigarettes the Japanese gave out a month. This was all in lieu of real money. Red began to make a living that way. Well, I got him started on the hair cutting because I smuggled ... a pair of hair clippers into the factory and traded them off to Red for haircuts and shaves for the rest of my life – that was the deal.

And again, he was very close to me because I understood his stuttering. Red's wife – they both married nurses ... they lived long and happily. He was from Durango. He later went to college, lost his stuttering, and lived a good life. He died about a year ago and I heard from many in his family.

Building for a Future in Red Feather Lakes

After I was discharged I went to Red Feather. When the other guys' wives saw Red Feather they decided that was not for them! No electricity, no water, and outhouses. So I ended up with the cabin that Mrs. Quaintance had more or less turned over to me.

I decided when I was a bachelor and all; I decided with my \$100 a month ... I got to know Ted (Dunning) and all the rest of them. I had \$500 to spend, so.... I asked Ted, "Who owns that entrance there at the new road straight up to town?" He said, "That was built by Lou Young because he built the CCC camp for the young people." Lou ran the kids and you can still see those old rock drains they built – all the way down (the Prairie Divide Road) to the Beckstead Ranch and along the road. The tunnels they dug under the road kept the water and ice off. A Mr. Ross owned land all over Colorado – Mrs. Quaintance's father – and when he died he left her all of it. Then she married Mr. Quaintance, a lawyer down on 16th Street (in Denver). Ted became the real estate man for Mr. Quaintance. He had come up to Red Feather from Sterling and bought the store from Mrs. Hastings. Mrs. Hastings was the sister to Ted

Blakney's wife, who was a wonderful person. I never knew Mrs. Hastings, but I got to know the Dunnings very well.

When I decided to build the cabin camp the land I wanted was right there on the corner and it turned out to be Quaintance land. I went up to talk to Mrs. Quaintance and she referred me to her husband, the lawyer, downtown. She had said, "Yes, I think A.D. will go along with it." He talked to me for quite a while down on 16th Street in Denver and he told me about all the land they had up there in Red Feather. I told him I wanted to buy just that piece of land at the entrance. He said "I'll have to consider it and go up there and look at it." I wanted the land between the Barker Ranch fence and the big rock piles at the top, up about 500 feet or so. That Barker Ranch belonged to Gene Barker's parents, but his father and mother were separated by then and it became Mrs. Melba Barker's place. She was a tough gal and sometimes dressed in cowboy attire. R.V. (Barker) was a great friend of mine and helped me a lot. He had a big lumber operation further up the mountain there.

Mr. Quaintance eventually sold it to me, but he kept the first 100 feet from the Barker Ranch (now the Swanson Ranch) going up to the north. They needed it for an entrance-way to all the land behind. But he was giving me the choice lot. He was smart enough to know that 100 feet might be needed. But I should have said, "Let's add the other hundred feet up to the rock pile" because whenever – this was before I was married of course – I had too many customers I would move out of my cabin and put a customer in there and I put my Army sleeping bag up on the rocks, a beautiful place. Animals would come and visit me at night. I've seen every kind of animal way up in there, and there was even water. Rocks that had big cavities would fill up with water and birds would fly down, and you could see sometimes fish because little fish would be dropped by the birds and they would grow in these puddles. Of course wintertime stopped all that. But I had extra blankets up there, cookies....

So when A.D. came up and looked at the property he began to talk to me about taking on the business of selling real estate for him, which Ted Dunning was already doing. I was good friends with Ted so that put me in sort of an awkward position but I gave him ideas of what could be done in dividing up the land between that which I wanted and all the land beyond. The fact that I had all these contacts with people through Mrs. Young, who owned the old Wallace Store up on the hill – they didn't buy it from the Wallaces, there was somebody in between. I said "She gets all kinds of letters from homemakers wanting to know about the facilities up there, and I can answer all these people." There were opportunities for capitalizing on the land behind the part that I wanted. Everybody that came to my cabin camp could go beyond into that beautiful area clear over to the other road (Creedmore Lakes Road) and see land

they would love. It is beautiful back there. But it's lucky he didn't do it; he saved a lot of good land and it's worth a lot of money now.

Here's the letter, because I wanted to start – I knew Mrs. Quaintance was going to support me and I was trying to win him over – so here's the letter that the granddaughter sent me a while back. It tells when this all happened. I met the two daughters one time when I went down to see Mrs. Quaintance, they were about 18 or so, and they were going off with two young men one night who had picked them up to go to the symphony. Now one of the granddaughters comes up to the meetings in Red Feather (Susan Bradley, appointed by the county to serve on the Red Feather Lakes Planning Advisory Committee). The daughter, who I knew as the daughter at the time, comes up with her – (Susan's) mother (Patricia Bradley).

So all this time I was leading him on that I was going to be his real estate man. Well, I couldn't do that to Ted Dunning. So Quaintance finally went along and sold me the land. I was good friends with the Quaintances for years. It ended up that when I built the cabin camp up there right at the entrance, I think they lent me \$5,000 and that along with the \$4,000-\$5,000 I had saved, that's how I started my cabin camp.

Everyone helped me build the camp – the Cooleys and the Becksteads, Mrs. Barker and R.V Barker. He was a wonderful guy. Cooley, he had three, four kids, and lived in the old garage that was turned into a home – where that (building) is now across from the Ranger Station on Dowdy Road. They had a sawmill and lumber yard on Deadman. Mrs. Cooley was very religious and her husband Eli Cooley “didn't give a damn.” They came from Arkansas. She taught Sunday School for years at the old church there across from Romona Lake.

The cabin camp was full most of the summer. We had a big outhouse there in back and I was beginning to build a bathhouse up on top by the time I sold it. And the REA hooked me up first.

My camp got the first electricity in Red Feather. In the Red Feather Lakes history (book) you'll read there that Ted Dunning described how REA came in. I knew a lot about REA because they took my cabins in the fall – or maybe the spring – during the week and they left their equipment right down there where I had decided to build a well, just off the side of the highway. Somehow that's where I built the well during that summer and the REA came in during the week to string up electric lines all over Red Feather. I plugged in the first electricity at my place because they used to stay in my cabins during the week and wanted to have an electric shave.

After I got in the cabin camp business, which could only be in the summertime, there wasn't much (to do) in the winter.

Incidentally, when I was running the camp, a guy drove in from Oklahoma or Arkansas, a timber cutter. We had lots of people work the timber and they were the ones who were good at it. Al and Lilly Woolman came with their daughter. He was completely exhausted and couldn't find a job, and they said, "Could we just move into one of your cabins?" It was as cold as can be, I think it was fall, and they had a little girl about six or seven years old. I said, "Sure, take a cabin."

They stayed on and pretty soon I hired the wife to make up the cabins after they were used. I made a deal with them, to go out – he finally found jobs out in the timber when the winter was over – in the meantime he built a log house from reclaimed timber from an unused cabin up on Deadman, up behind my place. I tapped it into the REA and the water. I think the place is still up there. I believe I turned it into a tool shed later on – no, I didn't do that. They lived there as long as I was there and when I signed it over I included them to be kept there as long as they wanted to stay.

After I married, my wife came up with me to Red Feather and we lived in my cabin, now the Alpine Lodge. We had seven cabins and we occupied the one at the entrance. It was very small but very nice. I bought a used generator from the Surplus Army supply store – I bought all kinds of things surplus. After the baby was born we had to get the baby out of there over the winter.

To the University of Northern Colorado on the GI Bill

I found a wife because eventually a number of college professors (from Greeley) – Prof. Lee West and a number of others ended up in Red Feather. They talked to me about the GI Bill of Rights and told me I ought to go to college down there. So I went down and signed up and they made me take the college entrance test. I'd taken it when I first got back with the military, before they discharged me, and I barely reached the level to be entered into college, "with stipulations." Well, I hadn't read anything in English for years and only come out of high school and forgot everything I learned there. So I took the test down there (in Greeley) and I did so well they waved all the requirements. Dr. Carson was his name, the registrar or something like that. He later taught courses in finance, I believe. I took one of his courses later. (They said) I could take anything I wanted at any level, including the masters' level.

I read all the magazines and all the books and listened to the radio, I dabbled in the stock market eventually. So I got into college. I got to know a lot of the professors

really well. The only requirement was that if I wanted a teaching certificate, that was regulated by the State of Colorado and I had to take certain education courses. So I took all them, and Dr. Rugg, who was the brother of the famous Dr. Rugg at Columbia University at that time, was one of the advent- guard people in education. Well his brother was the same way. Half my friends at Greeley called him a Communist, but he was just an advanced man in times of Roosevelt. He was a real liberal who could solve all the errors in our educational system. I really enjoyed him completely.

At that time, Colorado State University was what we called the “cow college.” I went to Greeley because that was considered one of the top schools in education, after Columbia, in the country. Greeley was the up-and-coming place. Fort Collins was for cowboys and mountain people. The intelligentsia went to Greeley. I went to Greeley in the wintertime, when I wasn't in Red Feather. In Red Feather I had a lot of unpaid responsibilities too.

Somebody sold me a car – oh, Hugh Drake – who was from Greeley. He introduced me to a wonderful mechanic who had a place in Greeley and he picked me out a car that really had been run by an old retired school teacher. It really was a perfect 1931 Chevrolet with a tire on the back and all. He got that for me for \$100. The mechanic was well known on the main drag there – his name was Cliff Sharp. I am indebted to him for all my life. I went everywhere with that car, just like a Jeep. In fact eventually, since he said I needed a truck, I had Ben Scott up in Red Feather cut off the back seats because I hardly ever used them. He put a truck frame on there so I used it as a truck as well as a passenger car. Well, after I bought it, the problem was getting the \$5 to buy the county license plates. I didn't have five bucks that I thought I could spend just to make a trip to Greeley every winter. So I went over Owl Canyon and then to, whatever that town is over there, and then down the back way, by Timnath and Severance, and eventually came the back way into Greeley. Then I'd park on the back side of the University and the police never came into the parking lot. So for all my three years down there I never had a license plate on my car. I shouldn't admit that.

Eventually my \$100 Chevrolet ... I was in post office one day up at Red Feather and Beck was there. He had a number of good cars but he had a beautiful green Jeep with a winch on it, everything, curtains on the sides. Becksteads – they had the big ranch at the bottom of the hill – and a house in Laporte. Well he was in the post office. He was a big sort of guy, with a cowboy hat and all, and he talked loudly. Here I was in this little hundred dollar car and by then I had a little money. So I asked him, “Hey Beck, how much did that Jeep cost? It must be a lot of money.”

“Why, do you want it?” he said. I said, “Yeah.” So he asked me how much I would pay and I said \$400; no, I think he said \$400. Whew, I bought that fast! I think he was making amends. There must have been a reason for that. He used to see me in that junk car and he's the guy that instigated getting the road through my property, because he'd drive through. I think he was paying me off.

In Greeley they had all these trailer houses that they used during World War II. They put them on the football field, or to the side, there must have been 20 or 30 of them, though by the time I was there the War was long over. They rented those out for \$75 a month or whatever it was. So I rented one and then sublet it to another guy who got to be a good friend of mine, so we were splitting the cost 50/50. More than that, we got to see all the football games free; we were there.

So I breezed through college taking only the things I really liked – political science, economics, and even a bit about the stock market. I was already buying a little here and there, in stocks.

I met my wife one of those falls or winters. I went down on to the campus and there was a little bridge – they probably still have it – and a little coffee and sandwich shop right in the middle of the campus, near the library. I'd eat there between classes and the place was always crowded between classes. One day there was a gal sitting there at a little tiny table and she looked up. I was walking around trying to find a place to sit and the seat next to her was empty and she said, “What do you know about Shakespeare?” I said, “I know everything about Shakespeare....” She said, “Sit down and tell me about it.” So I sat down with my coffee and my roll to tell her about Shakespeare about whom I knew practically nothing. We got to know each other and we saw each other a few times after that. Then I came to know she was not a freshman, like I thought, she was going to the experimental high school. She's been sent up by her father, a judge in the Canal Zone, to go to school and finish off her high school in the States.

My wife's name was Muriel Tatelman – her father was Judge Tatelman. He had been a ship's captain during World War I and his ship was sunk by Germans. He was from New York and after the war he went to Tennessee and got his law degree. He knew the FBI director, Hoover, and was appointed by Hoover, through the President, to the position of magistrate in the Canal Zone. He was on the Atlantic side, at Cristobal, the entrance to the Canal on the Atlantic side.

I didn't see her then for a year, and the next time I saw her, she really was a freshman in college. We got to know each other really well and I introduced her to the professors from Red Feather who lived in Greeley. There were quite a few of them. A lot of professors came to Red Feather in the summertime and they would talk to me. Three or four of them had cabins up there. Prof. West was the one I knew the best, he was professor of geography. He had two or three kids and I got to know all his kids really well. I was pretty well known in Red Feather at the time.

When we ran the store and post office we'd been married for two years by then and we had a baby and we went back down to the Canal Zone with the baby because we couldn't stay up there, with the way things were, in the wintertime. We went down to visit her mother and father. He had one of the best homes on the Canal Zone. All property in the Canal Zone was owned by the United States Government and everything was run by the Canal Zone Government, and that was always headed by the Chief Engineer. That was the most brilliant and recognized man out of the Engineer Corps. He was a governor in civilian clothes as that was the top position – the Chief Engineer. The Zone was run like every government should be run. Everything was right to par, in perfect shape, all the housing was assigned according to rank depending on how high they were on the hill. I ended up in one of the temporary houses down there – we stayed with the judge at his home, but the rule was for government housing, you could not have a guest over four months.

After four months Lou Young wrote and said, "Don't come up now. It's 40- below and there's 16 feet of snow. The roads won't be opened up for another couple of months." We couldn't go back, so I looked around. I was on 210% disability from the Army and I went over to the Army Civilian Personnel Office and I said, "I'd like to get a temporary job." The Army had a recruitment office there for civilian jobs.

Adventures Overseas

They said, "Yeah, we got a job – as assistant to the assistant personnel man – or rather lady. "OK," I said, "I'll take that job." Just four months, that's all I needed. That was in the office at Fort Clayton, at the second series of locks in the Canal Zone. There was a big Army building there. I went to work as the assistant to an assistant personnel clerk, a civilian job, and I got along fine, but it was only a four-month job.

They put me in a little village of wonderfully wooden houses on stilts. You put your car underneath and you lived up above. No windows, lots of sliding grates you moved up and down. But the kids could play underneath, especially during the long rainy season. While I was there they did a survey of all military bases, 150 or so

places, including the Canal Zone military part – anywhere they had military at their installations. The worldwide report that had been done said the worse part they found was poor management in the Canal Zone in the Southern Command, that later became the South American Command. General McGarr was so furious about it he ordered that things be done in an emergency. Get it done now, clean up what's going on! So here I was in the personnel office on a four-month deal when word came in – “Find somebody to do something about this horrible management situation we had.”

They went through all the files down there and my name came up. When I was lying in bed down at Fitzsimons, I'd done all these Army courses in management and that's of course what I'd been taking in college – a lot of management stuff and administration. They came across me in their records, and, Hell, I was the guy they were looking for. Which was quite an exaggeration because I wasn't really quite equipped to take on a whole command of the Latin American Administration of the Army.

So right away, I went from the low guy on the totem pole in the personnel office, a short-timer, into a “very important person.” They got some management experts who had written some books on it up from Washington, D.C., and they came down to help me get started. There was an unused basement from World War II in this building we were in, so they turned it into classrooms. Upstairs, I had a whole new division on the third floor and I began to give classes and train others. I took over what these guys in Washington showed me how to do, and I got pretty darned good at it.

It was the end of the four-month “tour” and I was due to go back to Red Feather to run my cabin camp. Instead, when they appointed me I said, “Give me a month to go up and straighten out my camp.” So I went back and sold the cabin camp. I sold it to a family that was building a cabin – that's my present cabin. They had the logs up and the roof on and I traded them the unfinished cabin as the first \$5,000 down payment on the camp. Metzler was the name and they had a couple of kids. I was lucky as could be, except Metzler died before the year was over and eventually they had a hard time of it.

I took over the other place and began working on that. After that, every time I'd get a vacation over the next six or seven years I'd go back there to Red Feather for a month and work on the cabin. Sometimes the family came up, but not always. Sometimes they had school and all. I have to think about that one....

I was in that permanent job five or six years I think. I got everything going in that position and everything was wonderful, I got two big commendations there from the

General for outstanding ... and the second was a meritorious award, all at once I was ready to get out of the job. I was getting bored. They hired two different people, one an American and one a Panamanian, to take over all the work I was doing to set up management arrangements for improvements.

From Panama I moved to other countries in Central America. Wherever there was trouble and the State Department wanted somebody, they'd pick me up. It was usually the military side. Anywhere the State Department is and there's trouble, there's usually military too. One extreme to the other...

The State Department wanted me in an emergency they had in a big program with a lot of money they'd gotten into in Guatemala. A real dangerous problem with dictators and troubles. I was hired by the State Department and my wife and family went up there. After we got there, the Guatemalans fired their man in this program for management improvement. He was a strong and tough guy and couldn't get along with an American Puerto Rican who spoke Spanish fluently. She couldn't put up with him, and he couldn't put up with her, so ended up, both of them were fired and the Guatemalans put in an elderly man, a wonderful old fellow, and he was my counterpart on the Guatemalan side. By then I was speaking really good Spanish.

The day after I got there I met Don Roberto who was known all over the town in the government, and we got on wonderfully. He introduced me to his family. But his son, who was either a captain or a major, worked with the military. The next day the son was driving home and university kids on the street were yelling dirty words at him. They despised the military and the government and as they were standing on the street corner they would scream and yell at him as he came by. This last time he made a circle and went up the same street again to confront them and one of students had a gun and killed him right there. So the third day I was there, Don Roberto took me to his son's funeral.

We were in Guatemala 12 years, but in the meantime things happened in the Dominican Republic and I went there at night. We landed right outside a luxury hotel where bands were playing and everyone was happy and on up the beach ... but downtown, where we decided to walk from the hotel, about 500 feet down the way there were a lot of sandbags and a bunch of soldiers from Latin America. We said, "How are things further on?" They said, "Passé señores, everything is fine," so we headed on toward town. A couple more miles and we came to a big plaza, all the lights on, kids around, restaurants going. We got to talking with the people and they said, "Further on downtown there is a revolution going on.... They're going to kick

those guys out of the palace.” Then someone said, “Yeah, we’ve got a lot of trouble with those gringos, too, and we’re shooting them.”

We said, “oh, oh – let’s get out of here....” We said we were Guatemalans. They were from the islands and didn’t know what the score was. We wandered back to the hotel. The next morning I reported in, and asked “what’s my job.” “You’re to work with the new provisional president we just put in office.” This was a short-time military deal....

I was never a regular State Department person, going up the ranks. I never lived in Washington, D.C. We went to other places. I went to Nicaragua, after the overthrow of Somoza. I went with a group and we met with “Tacho,” the big well-built son of the dictator. I stayed at a hotel on the third floor and the earthquake had just happened and much of the city and the country was destroyed. I stayed with the others that went with me at the International Hotel. That’s where Howard Hughes, who was kind of nutty in his later days, stayed with the entourage of Mormons that he trusted. They had the third floor. He was gone by then.

My family stayed in Guatemala when I went to these trouble spots. We had a beautiful home in Guatemala. Turned out we were in the home owned by the head of the “White Hand” group – a right-wing killer group who, if they painted white hands on the front your house, meant you were to be killed. They put me in there so the intelligence people ... they were all in Zone Ten, but I was in Zone Nine, with very few Americans from the Embassy. We were about four blocks from a large industrial park filled with Mayan Indians who came to the city – they had outdoor restaurants and all kinds of colorful crafts.

By this time I have three children, two boys and a girl – Regan, the first, then Robin and Susan. We were together wherever we went, except for when I went over to Vietnam. They didn’t go to Vietnam. I came back to the cabin in Red Feather Lakes and we bought a house on Meadowlark in Fort Collins. They stayed in Colorado. I was in Vietnam for two years. After the first year I came back for a visit, then back. I was in the north of South Vietnam. I was with the State Department. I was the chief of the public information office or some such thing for the five provinces. We were the American presence along with the Vietnamese for the five provinces. My main assignment, and my title, was “censor” for the upper provinces of the Vietnamese government. I worked with a Vietnamese guy who spoke perfect English, French, a good guy, and I went with him many times – he had his own helicopter, but he wasn’t the pilot. I was his go-between with the Americans. It was a strange relationship. I admired him greatly, he was so well-prepared.

After Vietnam the State Department assigned me to Honduras. I came back to Colorado for a visit, and the family went with me to Honduras. We lived just a block from the Embassy. I was there for two years, but I finally resigned. The guy I was replacing had been sent out of the country by the director and it was awfully hard to figure out what the score was, or what my job was. They wanted me to do what I'd done in Guatemala, but it was a completely different situation. The job was hopeless – I never really did understand it all.

That would have been maybe in the mid-1970s. We all came back to Meadowlark in Fort Collins after Honduras – and Red Feather of course. I got into all kinds of things in Red Feather. My wife's father was still in the Canal Zone, but then they finally settled in Florida. My wife got so sick in Colorado – she couldn't stand the climate – and she couldn't go to Red Feather anymore, so we moved to Arizona and bought a little house there in Mesa. My wife had trouble with her lungs. I would come back to Red Feather from time to time, but my wife couldn't. She finally passed away down there. Once the kids were through school and college and that, I came back to Red Feather.

All the old guys were gone by the time I came back.

Of Roads and Property Stakes

Kiersteads – they took over Lou (Young's) place after he died – his cabin and the barn. After everybody began to steal the common ground, the first thing that somebody did was to put everything in Lou's name while he was still alive. So his place and the barn became his, and that was out of the "common grounds." Same with my place.... I was down in Panama I guess and Lou wrote me; "Boy, you better file for that land in front of your cabin." So that's when I filed for the ground in front of me because my cabin was across from Lou's. From Lou's barn, up, and the same to the south, and way to the west and east, they only had 5 or 10 feet in front of the cabins because they had all this "common ground" in front. There was no reason to have a big road – just a place to take your horse in or your Model T – that took 8 to 10 feet in front. That's what you'll see on the original plats of all of Red Feather. What they've tried to do over the years is tried to turn those into wider roads as the cars and trucks got bigger.

Now what they're doing in my case, they are taking over a road in the wrong direction – going up the hill. That's where all the animals used to go up and down,

and that's where the snow piles up 17 to 20 feet right at the top. So now the people cross right in front of my house. That goes into a good long story.

The main gate (to Red Feather) was back by the hotel where the pillars are, up past the Ranger Station. The hotel was right before you got there, on the left. All the stores were there. Then the road went on to Snake Lake (Owassa). Right there at Snake Lake was the small building I took over as my home that had been a cabin broker's place until then. So if you went past Owassa Lake down toward Dowdy you turned left and went through the (Silver) Fox Farm, over the cattle guards, so you could go up into the tower there and look down on all the foxes. By that time though, fox were out of fashion as women's attire. When you crossed (the farm you came out) at the Prairie Divide Road, down past the Beckstead Ranch, or the back of the Beckstead Ranch, then on to the other ranches, past the Sloans and up to Prairie Divide. That was the road. It didn't (as it does today) come up the hill into Red Feather. After ... well, Beck started to cut straight up; he didn't want to go across, and the people who owned the Fox Farm then, the Bliccos, they didn't like having all those cars coming through their place anymore. They didn't need it for going up into the tower; they didn't have foxes any more. Things were pretty tough during the Depression and all, so they cut it off every chance they got and put locks on the gates, at both ends.

The Forest Service was a top- notch organization in those days and their appearance was terrific; the real model of a Forest Service station. They would come and cut off the locks every time the Bliccos put them up. A continuing struggle was going on. Of course people like Beckstead and all, they preferred to come right up to the stores and all without going through the Bliccos' place. It was just a dirt track. I have dozens of pictures of the old road. It became a cut-through and Lou used it himself when he started bringing his horses up to graze in the summer time. This track went by my place. It's where the Prairie Divide Road is now. So the idea that it was the original road and all is completely wrong. It was a Forest Service Road. But there are battles on all those roads.

Now the battle is on the other side of me there. I got the word from Lou, when I was in Panama, to claim that section of prairie, because all those places that went up to the west (of me) are on the edge of the public commons. The commons was a place where there was a big fireplace and all kinds of activities – sports and all – were held in that area because that was where all the water came down in the spring and summer. It came down through that sluice, across from what now is the road and on down the canyon. It was across from the firehouse and the POA building – right across the road. That's where all the picnics and all the get-togethers were held.

All of that was because of the church outfit on the top of the hill. When I went up there it was a Baptist outfit that had conventions every year. Things kept changing as they went along. What was the Prairie Divide Road before, that went through Fox Acres, then made a turnoff that went to Nokomis Lake. Then from Nokomis Lake there was a dirt road on up to Balsam Lane. You can see it on the old county maps I have here. Balsam Lane went up and around the Bible Conference and up to the Wallace Store, and particularly to get to the Worley well, which is still there. That was a place to get certified water and that's where Nokomis Road came up from Lake Nokomis and on up and then stopped about three lots before it got to my place. It didn't come on through because that was part of the wild animal track and where it snowed and all melted. But now today, one of the last times we were up there, why here – night and day – here were the people coming off the Prairie Divide Road which the county got legitimately from me, and paid me for it, and Lou too, but now that Nokomis Road doesn't stop at Balsam Lane. They tried to make Hiawatha Lane up in front of those other cabins but the last times I've been up there, there was an old car, a station wagon parked there, and it looked like someone was trying to stop people making that into a road too.

When they built the (Prairie Divide) road, they took the dirt for the road in hundreds of loads of dirt from lowering Apache Lake and hauled it up – truck load after truck load – and they had my permission to come up (all the way up) the Nokomis Road. But then instead of going up Balsam they kept on coming past those three lots there and turning in front of my place to where the new road was being built, and down to the Stenzel's new place. They were building lakes down there too, I guess.

I have all the promises, and I still have the written agreements that they wouldn't do that, but then they built that entrance way there on the new Prairie Divide road, a big wide entrance (to Nokomis). Everyone began to use that in the wintertime, and they still do. Going up the other way, I think they blocked that up, trying to keep them out ... although in the latest thing I saw, it was going to be called Hiawatha Heights Road or something like that. That would cut out all those cabins, including mine, built up almost to the edge of the little trail, a foot path, that was in front of every lot throughout Red Feather. Behind me now, about two lots behind, was a place where all the cowboys, back in the 1920s, could stay as they were running the cattle back and forth. That was seasonable, and there was a junk heap, but someone tore it down.

I got fair compensation for what I gave to the Prairie Divide Road, but that was fought over and they had surveyors and everything. They dealt with me on it and I gave in ... because it made sense; it had become the road. It went through all the

county processes. The climate has changed now. Stealing roads still goes on. Yeah, stealing other people's land, five-feet, eight-feet, ten-feet things, that have now become part of the Nokomis Road and Balsam Road. They put Nokomis right through my place. They got permission from me in the first place because they (said they) were going to restore it when they got through. But it ended up, when they put in the new road, they took out my septic tank. There was sewage running down the hill. They fixed all that. But then the guy next door that bought part of my Lot 8 began to move over on my place and took over my old septic tanks and the storage places I own by the entrance. That's the cabin right next to me.

The cabin behind me just happened. That was taken over and resurveyed and again, they took land from me there. All through the years, every time I got back, the markers of the different surveyors were moved around. I better not get into that because that is really complicated and it still exists.

They found the owner of the big lot behind me, Jim Marshall, down in Arizona. Three Jim Marshalls in the phone book, but I finally found him.

Sometimes the original reference points for the lots in Red Feather were wrong, but it doesn't matter once it was staked out by the county surveyor and the stakes were put in – they were wood in those days. The surveyor was elected too and he and Lou worked together putting in the stakes. They reassured me by showing me where my stakes were but I've watched them move over the years, back and forth, up and down, on all sides, and when I came back they were all gone. One of them was where that big tower you see was put up – the guy, my next door neighbor, assured me that (it) wasn't permanent, just put there temporarily so he could get the airwaves way up there. Every time I came back, he'd have another foot of concrete on the base. Then when the roads cut in on the lots beyond him and his lot, they gave him two big lots between him and (Glen) Scott, just beyond. So he claimed everything he could and they allowed him to establish his eastern line which changed my permanent border. I lost my septic tank and the place where I shipped all my water underneath. Now it has to go to that tank out there. He's taken out the pipes. But the county ... I wasn't around enough to defend my interest. That gets deeper in and deeper. I hired a guy that worked for an outfit that worked for the Reids years ago when they had one of the dirt roads going across their place and they got it moved with the help of this surveying outfit. I talked to this fellow and he assured me he could resurvey it and have the stakes moved back five feet from the roads, so when they plowed, they wouldn't take out the original stakes. I said, "That's what's already happened now." The plows have always taken all the survey markers out. And my neighbor's been moving them around.

People quote Ted Dunning as saying oh well. Some of the real estate people up there when a client says, "I want to be closer to the road," they reply, "Well, let's arrange that." Then they'd take the stake out of the ground and move it. My next door neighbor did it all the time.

Eventually the county gave me that, so everything is mine, the county treasurer says it's mine too, but the surveyor found – after telling me all the things they'd do for me, move my markers and all – they are not my markers. They've redone the place.

Special People and Places in Red Feather Lakes

(When I first went up to Red Feather) everything was going on about that time to resurrect the place. Ted Dunning had been up there about four years at the time and Mrs. Wallace in the original store on the top of the other hill. Mildred Dunning was a wonderful, wonderful person. She was a Seventh Day Adventist who really practiced her religion. She was good to everybody. She would give the merchandize away.... They adopted two kids, Billy and Mary. Mary, I talked with a couple of years ago in Mesa and she was turned off on Red Feather. Billy died in Fort Collins. He became a truck driver and he had a whole load of pipes, as I heard the story, and as he was tightening them up, they fell off and killed him.

Ted was not a practicing Seventh Day Adventist. In fact ... they didn't like to eat meat, and Mildred was very particular about it. She was one great cook, but there was no meat in her meals. Ted, every once in a while, would sneak across the street to Edmond's old restaurant right across – we called it "3-2 Beer" or some such thing. He'd go over there for a hamburger. After the mail came in, he'd run over there. He was also the "post office." The post office was right there with an entrance to the left. I acted as postmaster for a couple of weeks one year when they went off to a postmaster convention. The postage stamps then were 2¢ a piece and the postmaster in a fourth class post office could keep the money – I believe that was the story.

We were told to run the store and live in the back. They said, "Eat anything you want to." This was before we had any kids. There were so few things on the shelves... We felt guilty every time we took something off the shelf – a can of beans, and now only three left. There wasn't much in the store. It was a very small place at that time and we cooked up in the back, there.

So I ran the post office, and as I understand it, it was a fourth class post office and the mail came – the "stage," we didn't say the mail, we called it the "stage" – came three

times a week. It was a stage route before, so it was still called the "stage." The driver was a stage driver, and that was Ernie Rowe when I was up there. He was a very conscientious guy. He had a few deliveries on the way up – this ranch and that ranch. But then it grew over the years and it became an impossible job because he had to stop at all these ranches that were turning into living colonies with all those boxes out there.

One story I heard – I was long gone by that time – the new guy that took over as "stage" driver had all these boxes and by the time he got to Red Feather he was exhausted. As I heard the story, why eventually he asked somebody about it; "How do you handle this job?" I think he had to take some side-trips down the Elkhorn too. And he was told, "Oh, you just take the fourth class mail and throw it into the barn." Just take the first, second and third." That didn't work out too well for him – the authorities had expectations, I guess. Anyway, those are all stories – who knows what's true or not!

When I was handling the mail, three times a week, mail was a 2¢ stamp and there were not 10 or 20 mailboxes. I had to use a key to get in. I did very little business – I sold maybe 3 or 4 stamps. Everybody went over to – after the mail came in (at noon) or while they were waiting for the mail – to the restaurant across the street. Of course later there were a lot more people.

Ted Blakney came by and eventually built a shop down on the corner – a curio shop. He built that beautiful thing, that place (now Lone Pine Realty), but he couldn't sell diddly-dang. Nobody wanted curios in Red Feather! He couldn't make a go of it there, so he began to handle ice cream. Unfortunately for him, Mrs. Wallace started making ice cream up on the hill. Ted was so upset about it, he didn't want competition. Anyway, Ted's solution was to build the place next door as an ice house, no inside to it, just a place to store ice. That he eventually made some money on. He also put in gas pumps there. Later he sold the place on the corner. The Sandbergs ran Ted's store after he sold it off.

I think the restaurant was originally begun by Emma Phipps – long before I came. Then it was Louise Stevens when I was there – the Stevens family was a big family. Then Gladys Herring had it after that. She had two sisters; (Mary and Georgia – Mary later became Mary Stenzel. Their maiden name was Galloup.)

Ted (Dunning) had a sister who was a brilliant old lady, way up in her late years. She had a house built right behind the store, which is still there. She was probably the most intelligent person I think I knew in Red Feather at that time. She eventually

died down here in Fort Collins in the Seventh Day Adventist home south of town. She went down there because of Mildred. I visited many times, and our family did. She got along wonderfully with the kids.

Now Mrs. Young; that is a whole other story. She ran the *Homemaker* and she was about the best known homemaker with her magazine and daily radio program. Jessie Young, and she was one strong character. She had an adopted girl who kind of looked after things and helped her and an adopted boy, no two young boys. One of them was Richard. The girl and the older boy were very ordinary children, but you could see that Richard, at 12 or 13, was a sharp as could be, really a brain. He ended up in Denver as a top lawyer.

Mrs. Young ran pictures of me with her kids in the *Homemaker* and I got dozens and dozens of letters, and she got lots of letters, about cabins – “can we come and visit you?” And many of them did, hundreds came out to visit the store. It was a good business, except Jessie was “all” business. She didn’t give much time to these people who thought they were part of the “Homemaker’s” family – from all over Iowa, Nebraska, and all the places she came from. The *Homemaker* was 8 or 10 pages and it came out every month and she was on radio every day, and she broadcast from Red Feather. She was already well-known before they moved out (to Colorado) – that was just an add-on. She was from Nebraska. I’ve got something about her in my papers, about how much business she had and everything else. Again, that’s all buried....

Lou Young was one of my best friends, from the very beginning. I never saw him in a restaurant – I was thinking about that the other day. He probably didn’t have enough money. But he built the big barn, he built the house, and had me over to dinner dozens and dozens of times, especially when I was a bachelor. He told me all the old stories and about the history; he was a great talker. He told me why Deadman Mountain – why was it named Deadman. The fellow went up to kill a bear or some such thing, he tied up his horse and the bear killed him. Ted Dunning told the story in the *History of Larimer County* by Ansel Watrus. There’s quite a lot in there too from the Sloan family. Lots of good stuff about Log Cabin. I never knew the people that had money and had ranches. The truth was people weren’t all that rich in those days – they had a hard time paying the taxes. But the families lasted – from Livermore to Virginia Dale to Log Cabin to down the Elkhorn and up Prairie Divide. Some of the new people were people with money that came in, a different kind of people, like the Becksteads and the Maxwells, and especially up around to the west, expanding, buying up lots and all that.

(Then there was) Hans Schmalzreid for instance, "Uncle Hans." I think he was part of the Messmer family and he stayed at my cabin before they built the place that became the hair cutting place. He was a master cabinetmaker. He had been in the U.S. Army.

The library was the best thing we ever got in Red Feather. It started in the basement of the POA building. Wonderful people who started it and they put a lot of their own money into it. Like Bob Thorson and his son in building the POA building. When the library was in under the POA building, down in the basement on dirt, they had to make it bigger before they could lay a concrete floor. Everyone dug a bit of dirt when they visited and took a bucket load of dirt out with them when they left. That was when Kathie Morissette was librarian. Her husband Bert helped a lot too.

Ted Dunning of course was responsible for building the churches. Oh, the church I went to was Mrs. Sharp's, and is now the thrift shop. They were missionaries that had been in China and they were very tough. And all the kids, including the Cooley kids, and the Seventh Day Adventist kids and the Catholic kids had to go to there. There was no electricity and I went with two or three other adults and these old ladies were very tough. They'd say, "Billy, you are going to go straight to Hell if you don't straighten up!" And then the little girls would yell out to the boys, "Bobby – you're going straight to Hell unless you stop that!" That was the motto of the school – "you're going straight to Hell."

A Dabble into Politics

When I ran for Superintendent of Schools I knew quite a lot of people in Fort Collins. I spent a lot of time at the courthouse and I learned how people buy up delinquent tax deals. When they come in and pay it up, you get a little money back on it. So I began to buy up all those tax deals. At times, I had to pay up to get enough money to pay my taxes and it cost a buck and half or so more, but I could make \$10 or \$12 a month by buying those up with my spare cash. So I got to know the people all around the courthouse. And I began to meet all these political people and I kept up on politics. When the elections came up they needed a judge of elections – a Democrat and a Republican – for the district. At that time the elections were held at Log Cabin, but that was dying out, so they moved them up to Red Feather, up to the old schoolhouse. Somewhere – I haven't found it yet – is a picture of the school with five kids. I think there were the Cooley's kids and McCarthy's kid, a young lady, and someone else. I helped run an election in Red Feather to float a bond issue to build a new school. All we had was that place with outside pumps and cold and kids coming on their horses; it was a horrible place. The school teachers they could get shouldn't

be school teachers. Ted Dunning helped with this. You had to be a resident to vote on the issue – or maybe you had to own property. I got to know the head of the Democratic Party and they needed a representative in the district, once Log Cabin was changed to Red Feather. So I was the Red Feather representative. I was the judge of the election.

After the school bond issue passed there were two ranchers who contested it, after I was gone. They claimed in their affidavit that some people voted after the polls closed, the legal closing time for balloting. But what happened was, one of the new ranchers – the different kind of “new” ranchers had taken over – he came in right at the second we had to stop the balloting, but he was inside. The door closed behind him. The rules were anyone inside when you closed the door would be allowed to vote, even if it was past the time. So I was in some other country then when they made an affidavit. It was two of our well-known citizen ranchers up there, because those are the guys that are going to be hurt the most by raising taxes. This was to build a new school – which later became a church and now is the clinic. Of course after that school became too small, there were only five kids going to school at the time, they built the big beautiful new school to the west. The (original) bond issue passed overwhelmingly so their affidavit really didn't count, but it was so obvious what they were doing, I think the judges just threw it out. But I wasn't around.

Democrats hardly ever got elected to anything. I came from a long line of Republicans back in Pennsylvania. Democrats were the insurgents – the South. I was a Democrat. I was talking to a real estate man who was running for assessor for the county. Ordinarily the Republicans that wanted to keep their jobs just got reelected every year, but he thought because he was well known he could win being a Democrat, so he got himself on the ballot. But, there was no Democrat running for Superintendent of Schools. I think I heard at the time that the superintendent had been there for 27 years. There was no chance ... and with no idea in fact what the superintendent of schools did, but they put my name on the ballot. I campaigned once or twice in some of the other precincts – down the mountain and up Poudre Canyon. The big thing then was whether they wanted consolidated schools down on there on the plains against keeping the local schools up in the mountains. The Democrats printed up 2,000 cards for me, like you've seen. Somehow, on the Democratic side, they could put people on the ballot whether or not they even wanted to run. McCarthy was on (that 1952 ballot) and of course Stevenson against Eisenhower. I got more votes in the county than Stevenson did, and, I got more votes than McCarthy. It's one of my talking points; I beat McCarthy and Stevenson. I think I won three precincts.

If I'd ever gone back to Pennsylvania when I got out of the Army hospital in Denver, I probably would have become a lawyer. The judge I worked for, 50 years in office, his 2 sons became lawyers. After the one son died ... I liked so well, his two families, (the) grandfather's family – his name was Judge Carmichael, the Alderman. Michael Carmichael was one of the grandsons; Michael and Spook and Dennis. They were all Scotch-Irish. But instead, I wanted to retire in Red Feather.

Addendum to James R. “Jimmy” O’Rorke interview

From Susan O’Rorke; March 2010

There is one cute bit about Hans Schmalzreid that my father forgot to mention. Hans and my father were very, very close. The last 10 years or so, Hans had horrible vision. He used to carry candies in one pocket, and dog treats in the other. Whenever he saw small children, he'd always stop to say hi. On more than one occasion, he'd pass along a dog treat to the child instead of a candy.

At one point, Hans was ill and hadn't been able to take care of his place. I went over to tidy up and try to help. I think I was 17 at the time. All the kitchen drawers had mousetraps in them, two had mice in the traps that had been there for a very long time, but Hans hadn't been able to see them!

Hans was known in town for baking the most impressive cakes – angel food with frosting. He was always in the front of the line for any potluck, and everyone always made a fuss over his cakes. One year, Rick Rogers, the owner of the Pot Belly offered to give him a free steak dinner on his birthday, if Hans would bring one of his famous cakes. When it was time to serve the cake, Hans took an old string out of his pocket. He uncoiled it and used it to slice the cake. After each slice, he would lick the string, then go on to cut the next slice. When he was done serving, he licked the string one last time, then carefully recoiled it and put it in his pocket.

Red Feather had a lot of really special characters, like Hans, and like my dad.

Yes, my dad and the colonel (Col. Hughes) were very close. But in a different way than my dad felt about Hans. I always felt my dad looked to Hans as a sort of father figure. It was a very touching relationship. On the other hand, his relationship with the Colonel was more contemporary – they used to love to argue, etc. The Colonel’s wife, Ann, used to always gush about how handsome my dad was, and it used to drive Colonel Hughes crazy! Colonel Hughes was my ally when my father wouldn’t let me get my driver’s license. He stepped up for me and kept arguing with my dad that he should let me drive. I’ll always feel indebted to him for that!

From Jean Emond; March 2010

Hans sold the building east of the Trading Post to Elspeth Bauer, which she used as a beauty shop, later owned by Marijean Barela for the same purpose, now rented as a vet clinic. And yes, Hans was part of the Messmer family that had a cabin on Nokomis and a son Joe. I'll never forget Joe: I received my first kiss from him.

Jim was an avowed Democrat but a very close friend of the late Col. John Hughes who was a conservative Republican. He and John loved debating and ribbing each other and they were so friendly doing that.

Don't know whether Jim told you a similar story, but 15 or so years ago he joked to Mark and me that when the Republicans held their caucuses in Red Feather, they held it at the POA building. He added, "We three Democrats held our caucus at the Pot Belly."

Muriel, Jim's wife, was such a great person. Both Jim and Muriel were so good to my mother, Bonnie Drake, especially Jim who made a habit of checking out books from the Fort Collins Library and bringing them to my mother at her home there. He knew she would enjoy them.

Regarding stakes being moved around, that's been going on in Red Feather for years in various places, including on Pipsissewa Lane and Ramona Drive southeast of our old cabins about 20 years ago, per what the late Tom Rosecrans told me.

Subsequent to interview: Information from Jimmy O'Rorke as told to Linda Bell

At first when I was looking to buy the property for my camp, Mr. Quaintance wanted me to buy the land where the fish hatchery was – what now has been made into a community park. He proposed I set up a restaurant on the upper part of the land, then patrons could catch their fish and we could prepare and serve it. I went along with him for a while, but I never really entertained the idea because the land was too wet.

Obituary: Jim O'Rorke

By [NFN](#) On January 30, 2013 In [Dispatches](#), [Obituaries](#), [Red Feather Lakes](#) · [Add Comment](#)

James (Jim) Richard O'Rorke, 90, of Red Feather Lakes passed away on Jan. 6, 2013. Jim was born in Washington, Penn. on Sept. 27, 1922.

He was a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II and survived the Bataan Death March.

O'Rorke served with the U.S. Army Signal Corp (Sergeant Major) in the Philipines, survived the death march and POW experience in Japan to escape two weeks before the end of the War. He was personally acknowledged by Gen. Douglas MacArthur at the war's end at the Yokohama Grand Hotel in Japan.

After four years in Japanese prison camps, he recuperated at Fitzsimons hospital in Denver and then established himself in Red Feather Lakes, where he built a cabin lodge, as well as his own cabin which his family still uses frequently.

He attended university at what is now UNC in Greeley where he met his wife, Muriel (Tatelman) O'Rorke, who predeceased him in 1991.

On a trip to Panama in 1953 to visit his in-laws, O'Rorke was offered a position with the Canal Zone which then led to his lifelong career as a Foreign Service Officer (FSO1) with the U.S. State Department. He was posted in Guatemala and Honduras and did two voluntary tours of duty in Vietnam during that war.

During his service, he received numerous commendations from various presidents and high ranking State Department officials. He was also a 32nd Degree Member of the Masonic Temple.

O'Rorke was fluent in Spanish and Japanese and spoke Vietnamese and Mandarin and was continually trying to improve. He was up-to-date on current events and read The New York Times, a ritual that provided fodder for debate, discussion and many laughs with his friends. He also was fond of his pipe and could be found smoking outside Rigden Farm on most warm days; he insisted even to his doctors that the pipe helped clear his lungs. In November, he was able to meet President Barack Obama during his campaign stop in Fort Collins.

Many will remember that in his '70's he decided to add a basement to his cabin in Red Feather Lakes, a task which he achieved using pick axe to break up the rock and shovels and wheelbarrows to move the debris — a feat which took him several years. Many attribute his longevity to the vigorous task he undertook at such an advanced age while suffering the hidden chuckles of his friends and neighbors (most of whom he outlived). One of his favorite sayings was "que sera, sera" — whatever will be, will be.

O'Rorke will be remembered as a stubborn debater with a kind heart and passionate feelings for human dignity and the underprivileged. He contributed to many charities promoting the causes of equal rights, women's issues, racial and religious acceptance and other public causes.

O'Rorke is survived by his children: Susan O'Rorke of Fort Collins, Robin O'Rorke of Fort Collins and Scottsdale, Ariz. and Regan O'Rorke of Nicaragua. He will be fondly remembered by Susan's daughters Taryn and Teagan Sebba, who visited him almost and became almost permanent fixtures at Rigden Farm. His other grandchildren include Kendall, Morgan and Riley, who flew to Colorado to honor their grandfather. His extended family in Ecuador, led by Tomas O'Rorke-Araujo, will also miss him.