

Bert Raynes: I deny everything [laughter].

Karen Reinhart: He says that even before I introduce you. This is Karen Reinhart with the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum. Interviewing Bert Raynes in his home in Skyline, Ranch near Jackson, Wyoming, and the date today is February 12, 2010.

Bert: All right.

Karen: So, well, the first thing I guess I'd like to ask you is, when you came to Jackson Hole and, and why, what brought you here?

Bert: Okay. My wife and I, Meg. It's my wife's name. Came here in 1950 for the first time. We came because, as children, we had heard about Jackson Hole. Megan heard about it from her father, who would come through here in 1926. And she never really fully forgave him for not buying some land. And I came because I was a kid who read a lot. And I read a lot about the west and the animals of the West and Jackson Hole. And when we had our first chance to take a real vacation, we came out here. So, we came out here on our first real vacation.

Karen: So, what year would that have been?

Bert: 1950.

Karen: Okay.

Bert: It was after the war, the war and we came in the wrong month. Turns out, we came in June. We never really saw the whole mountain range. It rained every day. And the mosquitoes were interesting, but the people were nice. People, by and large, they're still nice.

Karen: And then, what happened after your first vacation?

Bert: Well, we decided we better see it, in a better time of year. So, thereafter we came in September. And back then, September's were pretty quiet here. A lot of things shut down. It was mostly hunters, and fishermen, and some hikers, climbers. But it was quiet. We like that. We kept doing that September after September, except for one year. Until we decided that we uhh, could leave the East and our families back there and see if we could live out here.

Karen: And you lived previously, where?

Bert: Well, Meg was born in Pennsylvania, I was born in New Jersey and we had lived in Upstate New York and near Cleveland, Ohio, and that we came from Cleveland, here.

Karen: So, what uhm, what town were you born in?

Bert: Jersey City, New Jersey.

Karen: And the year?

Bert: Early in the century.

Karen: [laughter] I wondered if you would answer that question or not. You have a reputation for not wanting to reveal your age.

Bert: That's correct.

Karen: [laughter] Okay. And, and then how many years-

Bert: And I don't want you to guess either.

Karen: I won't. How, how many years did you vacation here before you decided to move here, then?

Bert: Well, from 1950 with one exception to 72. 72, we came to stay.

Karen: And did you purchase this land at that time? And-

Bert: No, we had bought the land in 69, I think it was. And in 72, just built, 71 it was built. Probably, the last house in Jackson Hole built on a handshake.

Karen: Tell me more about that.

Bert: I wish I could remember the builder's name. It may come to me but may came out here and shake hands with the contractor.

Gave him the plans and I suppose, we went through some hopes for the building inspection. I wasn't here and we weren't here when this was built on a handshake.

Karen: Was it soon after Skyline was-

Bert: Skyline had been platted [in 1968], there were some other houses but it was relatively soon. Yeah. Yep. And we had lived in Deep Woods in Ohio and decided we'd like to be out in this sunshine, here. And we finished the inside. Can't believe it, but we did.

Karen: So, you came here after you retire from your work?

Bert: Yeah, I had a small consulting practice for a while here, but it languished rather rapidly.

Karen: And why, why was that the case?

Bert: My version?

Karen: Sure. This is all about you.

Bert: Well, this was a beef. It was a chemical engineering consulting.

And there wasn't much work for that, locally. So, it was still from the East and this was before fax machines and before computers and Federal Express and even reliable Winter Airline Service.

So, fortunately, it languished so I could not have to do that.

So, went out of business, pretty quickly. Although, if there's anybody out there, needs some consulting, let me know.

Karen: [laughter] Okay. Did you have to find another way to make [tapping sound] some money, then? [tapping sound]

Bert: Well, we skimped.

Karen: What did you do?

Bert: We skimped by because we had planned to retire. And uhh I did some, some work, occasionally. I get, I had some friends here and there in the business. So, I did a little consulting. Uhh, but I got to be paying for my clients to send something out here and wait a couple of weeks before a reply got back, and I don't blame them. I don't blame them.

Karen: You mentioned-

Bert: I don't know what would happen if they too had emails and fax machines, I may still have to work.

Karen: [laughter] Yeah. Tell me a little bit about [tapping sound] how you feel about technology and computers [tapping sound] and all of that.

Bert: [click's tongue] Ahh well, I think the biggest techno-, technological advance has been the ballpoint pen. And I'm sure that computers are wonderful. And occasionally people come over here and do things on my computer that are quite remarkable. [chuckles] Uhh, but I'm not comfortable with a lot of this stuff.

Karen: So, you own a computer?

Bert: I have a computer.

Karen: That you don't-

Bert: My friends, my friends, my doctor, in particular, laughed at me be-, for not having a... I had a dial-up and he thought that was hilarious. [chuckles] So, my friends, and I have a lot of friends, got me a computer, a very handsome computer. And I can do email, sometimes. And I have actually looked up a couple of things on Google. A triumph for me. [chuckles] And I have a one-way fax machine. Goes out. That's how I get my column in.

Karen: But you fax handwritten.

Bert: Handwri-, yeah I write by hand, yeah. It's my software.

Karen: That's great. What do you-

Bert: No, this is my hardware.

Kevin: Yeah.

Karen: Your hardware.

Bert: Yes, my hardware. See, I really know the lingo.

Karen: [chuckles] While you're a wonderful writer and we've all enjoyed your column for so many years, what, what year did you start, start that?

Bert: Oh, I know you'd ask that.

Karen: Well, I might even have that down here. 1980 is what I have. Does that make sense?

Bert: That maybe when it started full, full time.

Karen: Okay.

Bert: Before that, I would occasionally write a column for Dan Abrams who had the outdoor cone. Are you going to interview Dan?

Karen: Sure.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: Is he still here?

Bert: No, he's in Montana right now.

Karen: What part of Montana?

Bert: I think near Bozeman.

Karen: Coz that's where I live my, the other half of my life.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: So-

Bert: I may have that somewhere?

Karen: That would be great. [tapping sound]

Bert: I shouldn't keep bouncing on that black thing.

Karen: That's probably, okay. Uhm, gosh. You've done so many amazing things. Uhm, if you moved here in '72, what did you do for the first few years before you started writing your Burt Column? You did a little consulting-

Bert: There was consulting work, we finished the house and planted off these trees. Learn the country, we learned that. Having a garden here, was a hazardous occupation before they started spraying for mosquitoes. You had to wear a bee hat to be outside.

Karen: Was that true in all parts of the valley? Or just-

Bert: Oh yeah. Oh yes. Ask any real old-timer about the mosquitoes. Uhm.

Karen: Were you able to successfully grow anything here? Despite the mosquitoes.

Bert: In the early '70s, it was a cold wet period. So, you couldn't grow some of the stuff that's now being grown. You couldn't get a zucchini, and now, everybody grows zucchini. And tomatoes never ripened and beans would get frosted, but you could grow carrots. Peas did pretty well. Potatoes, of course. Cabbage. Things like that were pretty good. [tapping sound] But now, I haven't been to a county fair for some time, but I know people getting crops are unbelievable. And back then, because it was a cold wet cycle an hour, and a warm cycle or global heating.

Karen: So, talk to me more about your, your writing of your column. What inspired you? How you came up with topics? Did you interact with nature to come up with those topics? Or is it just about nature or how would you describe your column?

Bert: Far Afield. I cover all kinds of things. Ahh, the editors at the newspaper, obviously, don't read it. So, I get away with a lot of stuff. The news editors don't have high regard for their columnists.

At this point in time, I hope this changes. You hear that, Kevin?

Kevin: Oh, I got it done. [chuckles].

Bert: Uhm. Well, in my, in my work, you know, in the East. When I was a practicing chemical engineer, I had to write a lot. It was technical stuff, mostly, and also uhh business letters. So, I was accustomed to writing and dictating, actually. And when the... I was reading Reverend Dan Abrams outdoor column. He would occasionally call me up and ask me what birds were around. I'm a bird watcher, been a bird watching, you see since I was in my early twenties. I'm not going to tell you what year. [chuckles] And Meg was also. And I was watching birds, almost automatically, as I was going out and doing other things. We had to learn. I did not grow up knowing how to hunt. Did know how to fish. And survival in real cold weather was a challenge at first, because the footwear we had in winter in Cleveland didn't, doesn't cut the mustard here. And it was until we discovered Sorel boots, that we were sure we're going to be able to make it

in order of time.

Karen: How many years did you go without having Sorels?

Bert: One. One nasty winter. [chuckles] Ice fishing is difficult without some good footwear and make really, liked ice fish.

Karen: Did you ski, also?

Bert: Cross-country? [inaudible] No, should be quite a bit. Because you can carry binoculars and have a platform to watch stuff on skis or snowshoes. So, nature-watching was always part of what we did. Where were we? Anybody remember?

Karen: Uhm, yeah. We were just talking about your column. And how you're inspired-

Bert: Oh, column.

Karen: -to the subjects?

Bert: Yeah. Well, I always like to write. And uhh, when Dan Abrams retired, he's calm, he gave the Outdoor. I don't know if he did or those editors did. The outdoor column was called Outdoors. He gave the hunting and fishing to Paul Bruun and told me that nobody was interested in birds. And I consider that a challenge. So, I wrote, turns out some people like birds and my other philosophy of life, that comes through once in a while.

Karen: Which is?

Bert: Well, there's more to life than just one hobby. If the hobby is good, whatever it is, I think it should be satisfying forever. Barring injury and stuff. And lead you into other avenues that you might not suspect when you start out. You know, you can start out downhill skiing and then start to learn about snow and the various conditions. No exhibit. And save your life at the same time and maybe get into rescue work and things like that. I think that's satisfying. I, I think if all I ever did was go out and look at birds without trying to know something about them. That, that wouldn't be a true hobby. That would be, I don't know, fly by night. [chuckles]

And I like to write. When I'm writing, what I think is well, and my severest critic is no longer here, but I also criticize me. It's like being, like, it just comes out automatically without too much conscious thought, same for you? And that's a wonderful feeling. It doesn't happen on every column, I'll tell you, or every article, I bet. But when it does happen, it's joy.

Karen: Well said.

Bert: I should have had that recorded. [chuckles]

Karen: You got it? Yeah.

Bert: Cute little machine.

Karen: Yeah, it's pretty amazing. Yep. It's still going. But what were your favorite or are your favorite subjects to write about or do research about?

Bert: Well, long term, it's animals, birds, other animals. Occasionally, I talk about the activities of the most unsuccessful animal on the planet. Mankind. Which is a fascination. Sure is ugly beast in a lot of ways.

Karen: List some of those ways, for us.

Bert: Power-hungry people. Good examples are politicians, by and large, not everyone. And to be fair, I think a lot of them are, have initial good motives and get corrupted by the system. Some very rapidly. [chuckles] Which makes me think they were susceptible. Uhm nations that are belligerent more, like, nations like the Congo that are permitting the holocaust on their people right now. 19, no 2010. We were never going to let that happen again, what is happening. And nations, even including us, that have people in need of food and shelter, and medical care and we don't take care of them and we're rich. Like that, I try not to think about that too often.

Karen: No, it's a bit depressing.

Bert: It's a bit depressing but it's there.

Karen: Would you tell us a little bit about-

Bert: Individuals too. I should have, there are, there are individuals who for either power or money will do almost anything. Nobody here, of course.

Karen: Of course, not. How do you think, uhm... Well, what were people like in Jackson when you first moved here in the early '70s compared to today and you know, just the basic character of the town and well-

Bert: That's a good question. We had the advantage of having come out here, so many Septembers. That we had built up friendships here. So, we started out with a bunch of people who know us by our first names and what we did, fished with, and hunted with, and hikes with, and had quite a few drinks with, and who were urging us to come. One couple wanted us to come 10 years before we did and start a commercial laundry because they thought that then commercial laundry was cheating them on their laundry. They ran a motel and they could almost guarantee customers if we came. I just didn't want to.

Well, we weren't ready to come for a number of reasons. I thought my work was important, then, and family reasons. But I couldn't see myself operating steam-cleaning services at that point. Nothing wrong with it there, our mayor does it, but I didn't want to do it. But they, they had signed up a couple of motels already.

Sometimes we wonder what would happen, but we didn't do it.

And the people, it was just really starting to change as a result of the Megalopolis out there, North.

Karen: The Jackson Hole Mountain Resort?

Bert: Yeah. Which changed everything, really. And uhh I still find it very easy in this town to make your acquaintance and friends, in a hurry. Much easier than any other place we ever lived. That's for sure. And it was the people, it was just scenery of course in the outer doors in the west and all that, but really Megan and I always felt it was the people most attracted us. So, we had that advantage, we knew a bunch of people. But the changes have been enormous. I haven't been in a store for a few years, more than a few. But I understand, you can get such things as strawberries and fruit that has spoiled and fresh fish. Now, that wasn't always the case. Fresh meat too, even. Early days, fresh produce was not always available.

Karen: So, what did you do to get through the winter? As far as food goes?

Bert: Oh it wasn't desperate. I mean-

Karen: No, I mean-

Bert: Fred's Market made two trips to Salt Lake a week. The trouble was the truck wasn't insulated, [chuckles] so the stuff would freeze on the way back up from Salt Lake. [laughter]

Kevin: Wow.

Karen: [laughter] So, did you rely-

Bert: And you know that you can go and you can get fresh flowers-

Karen: That's right.

Bert: In, I guess, both of the stores, I've only been in Smith's twice, when they first opened. And the flowers are really something. It had always been my habit where we lived in the east at every Friday night, I would bring home, Meg, flowers. Well, out here, when we first came, you didn't do that. There was a little flower shop but the flowers were mostly pretty gone by the time they were made it to Jackson. Now, you can get all kinds of stuff. You can get orchids. Imagine that.

Karen: So, tell me why you began the Jackson Hole Bird Club and what led up to that. What that looks like, what, who, what, who were members, and what you did, as a, as a club?

Bert: We doing the same thing, now. It was Reverend Abrams again. Good Old, Dan. He found out that people will enjoy the occasional remarks about birds in his column. So, he brought up the idea with me, of seeing if we could start an Audubon chapter. Well, I was interested in the idea of a bird club, but I had, had an unpleasant experience with an Audubon chapter in Cleveland. So, I announced this get-together, which was at church, First Baptist Church, or maybe in Dan's house, I don't remember. And said that I was interested in a bird club, and, but

not Audubon. Because I didn't think that Audubon would attract enough people here and for personal reasons. So, if you're in a meeting, [inaudible] something you should know and somebody says, "I think XO to be done." Don't you say why it should be done, because they gotta at you and say, "You're it. You're doing why." So, Dan being a smart man, said, "Okay, no Audubon chapter. I understand why the dues were pretty high but people here then-" [phone rings]

Bert: And uhh that started- [phone rings] Shall, let it ring or... [item dropped]

Karen: That's up to you. Do you want to pause this? [phone rings]

Bert: Yeah. [item dropped] Back then, the people that came to that first meeting. Uhh were, mostly... people been here awhile. And we're not, well-to-do. They took all sorts of jobs. You know, the typical former Jackson Hole and they're still, people have three and four jobs and 18 different careers. When they finally end up. And the Audubon fee was a deterrent and they said, so. The Hartgraves were there, they used to live. Ted Hearthgrave and...

Karen: Sherry?

Bert: Sherry is the daughter, what was the wife's name?

Karen: Hmm, I don't know.

Bert: I'm not so good at names, anymore. Uhm and also Audubon had... well, not a lot of Audubon Society was not a well-liked named here, with these people. There weren't that many people at the first meeting. And so, I wrote bylaws for a little club that would have as its purpose to look at nature. I should have called it the Nature Club rather than the Bird Club because it is a nature club. And to accumulate the observations and pass them to people, other people and to socialize as a hobby. And we have established, we established dues of five dollars a year and seven dollars for a couple or a family. And used to advertise ourselves as a Best Buy in Jackson Hole and are Dozer stool, as I remember five dollars and 7.50 for, and we don't do any, take any political opinions. As a group, we do try to help the animals. It's too small. The number of people, maybe, maybe 35 active. And some others that support, but don't ever come. And we meet, report observations of what's been going on, have a little refreshment, and then a talk.

Karen: That's nice due. How often do you meet?

Bert: Once a month, on the second Sunday. And everybody's welcome. People seem to have a good time.

Karen: Yes. You hold that, a regular meeting place or people's homes?

Bert: We meet in the Jackson Town Hall. In the summer, weather permitting, we meet outside on the Burke walk, you know where that is?

Karen: I have heard of it. Is that near Moose?

Bert: No.

Karen: I don't know where it is.

Bert: It's adjacent to the, you going to edit this, aren't you?

Karen: Uhm it will be transcribed.

Bert: Oh, okay.

Karen: Word for word, but then-

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: You know.

Bert: Well, immediately next to the visitor center in the north end of town. A few yards, there's a little platform, a viewing platform. That's was built for me

Karen: Nice.

Bert: Says so, on the sign.

Karen: I need to check that out

Bert: You should go there.

Karen: I will.

Bert: People get married there.

Karen: Tell me about the cottonwood that was planted for Meg.

Bert: Huh. Yes. In 1985, they had a dinner for Megan and me at the Museum of, National Museum of Wildlife Art. And as one of the nice things they did and said about us. Planted cottonwood trees in an enclosure on the Elk Refuge across from the National Museum. And the trees were in honor of Meg. And the idea behind it was that Megan and I had noticed that the two old cottonwoods to the north of the enclosure, which is on Flat Creek. Homesteaders planted and they were not going to stay up forever. And in fact, one has come down and they were great Eagle trees. And other birds would perch on it too, but especially when the sleigh rides were on the other side of the Refuge, over closer to the Butte. The Eagles would hang out longer during the day than they do now. Now, they're there early in the morning and afternoon when the vehicles aren't running around. And it was also at the, to be nice to have some young trees coming up. And people did that for Meg, and it's very nice. I wish it were better known, but that's it.

Karen: Is there some sort of plaque there?

Bert: That there was a small plaque there, there's a copy of it in my everything room.

Karen: Okay.

Bert: Uhm it's just a small plaque and it was extremely handsome of the Refuge to do it. I mean, that was very nice, among other things though. Now, you can visit there in the spring and summer and see what the wildflowers' varieties were before so many grazing animals got to that stretch. So, it's, it's kind of a little remnant of that. What would it be called, the uhh alluvial plain, I guess. And then on closer to the Elk Refuge headquarters, there's a bunch of shrubs that were planted as an experiment to see what would survive. And I think what the Elk would leave alone and what they would consume, but I'm not sure that part of the experiment was ever done. I'm not sure, that was when Bruce Smith was here and he's been gone a while now. Sill active up in Montana but, but it's, sometimes they drive me out there and the wildflowers are pretty and sturdy looking to, I mean. They would grow tall with had a chance.

I understand now, they're trying to revegetate some of the banks of Flat Creek, how they're going to keep the Elk away? I don't know.

I mean, you have that many animals. I have nothing else to do. Should give him televisions and computers. [chuckles]

Karen: Well, since you, since you've lived here for, you've served on a lot of uhm, nonprofit boards and, and you've been really involved in the community, can you speak a little bit about that? Like uhh-

Bert: Well, yeah.

Karen: Which groups you did serve on?

Bert: Well, we always felt that if we ever had the chance to put something back into our community, wherever we were living, and it's kind of a citizen's obligation to, to do it if you can. And we didn't have a lot of money to do it with. But we had time, once we came out here and got a little bit settled and I'm more outgoing and Meg was, she was more, shy but she was always there. And I got interested in the library. I was on the library board which I enjoyed very much. There are three old libraries then.

Karen: What years would that have been?

Bert: I know it was six years and I imagine it was in the late '70s, early '80s maybe somewhere in there. And, I got involved in the Historical Society and the Jackson Hole Museum which within separate and not always in agreement. [chuckles] I'm sure you've heard about that.

Karen: Yes.

Bert: And I try to bring them together, kind of succeeded, I think. In general, I'm not a great board member. I tend to read the bylaws and try to do what the bylaws say [chuckles] and that is not always welcomed, I have found through the years. Have you found that? Okay. And the Bird Club, of course, been going on [sneeze] since the early. since the late '70s. The Conservation Alliance when it first started up, uhh-

Karen: You were on the board?

Bert: Oh, I've never been on the board.

Karen: But you were active?

Bert: Yeah, trying to be. And what I like to do and, or liked to do, past tense, maybe? Is if there's a task, a one-person task, preferably, that doesn't require committee meetings. Give me the task and if I can do it, I'll do it. And that's it. But I'm not really good in meetings and I recognize that. So, I would be given some little test here and there, some, if I could do it, I could do it. And if I couldn't, I would get somebody else. But I do feel... an obligation to put back into the community. I think every citizen ought to, it's, it's supposed to be a republic, for Pete's sake. Although I don't think anybody knows that anymore, enough, not enough people know this anymore.

Karen: Why do you feel it's important that people give back to their community?

Bert: Oh, I don't know that it's anything beyond the personal feeling. I was brought up to understand. That this is a remarkable experiment, we're living in. People have the right to free speech.

I have the right to assemble, although it seems to be going away.

Uhh that some ideas like uhh obligatory education through certain grade levels was free. In that everybody paid for it and if you could take advantage of it, it was something you couldn't get almost anywhere else. This is what I was told. I don't know if that's totally true, their Mayhem. Our founding fathers were great, but they took ideas from other places too. And that you had a, well in my family was an obligation to vote. And if you didn't vote, you shouldn't complain. So, I guess I just felt that if I had a chance to do something, you know when I was able to. And the first cleanups of Flat Creek, that kind of got started back in the early '70s sometime. I help clean up Flat Creek. It was astonishing what we got out of Flat Creek.

Karen: Well, what kind of things did you get out of Flat Creek?

Bert: Refrigerators, tires by the Johnsons, I'm talking just about the big things, stoves, [inaudible]. Even that little [chuckles] pond behind the Visitor Center had fairly large stuff in that, not the big refrigerators or anything but a lot of trash. And people just did it, they didn't, I mean, somebody said, "Let's do it on the next day." And it didn't require a big promotion. People just kind of did it. Have any of your people talked about the uhh, oh boy, Cattleman's Barbecue or whatever?

Karen: The Cattlemen's banquet or picnic, I think maybe it was called. Is that what you're talking

about? The annual-

Bert: And this, in the fall?

Karen: I'm not sure what time of year. We've got pictures of the Cattlemen's or the Cowman's picnic.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: I don't know if it's the same thing.

Bert: That was just guys, people getting together.

Karen: I think there's less of that, now, these days.

Bert: Uhh, I don't get around enough to answer that question with any authority, I think so. That's why with Meg and Bert Raynes' fund, we've had two potlucks. The kind of brings back the potluck get-together, on a, with a more spontaneous feel than an organized. And if I can arrange it, where I can get to it. It's a little hard for me to get to places, now. I don't drive. Although, I'm thinking of hand controls. So, lookout.

Karen: Sounds good. I'll watch for you.

Bert: Lookout.

Karen: I'd like to hear a little bit more about the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund. And if you think we have time, to talk about that and the legacy of that and what it means and-

Bert: Well, I don't know what the legacy will be. [chuckles]

Karen: What is your-

Bert: Well-

Karen: What are your goals with the- [tapping sound]

Bert: Well, when Meg was out when Meg's... was sick. Uhm we always, we always talk through our whole, from the day we met. And one of the things we talked about was, could we do anything for the Wildlife that we, so much, have enjoyed? In addition to whatever we were doing, but, you know, memberships in this and that, and the other stuff and the Bird Club. And we thought of some small projects that we thought we could help locally. Because occasionally, we would hear about some projects, it comes up in the papers. Somebody has a project to refurbish a stretch of Clack Creek or some other Creek and they got half the amount of money they need. What they need is another 800 dollars or fifteen hundred dollars and we thought if we could maybe help that kind of project. And so, we came up with the idea of this fund, to have cash available for that sort of endeavor. Well, I have appointed some advisors. Not aboard, You

hear me?

Karen: Yes. [chuckles]

Bert: And they like the idea, but they had among them, other ideas for the fun. And there they go and I must follow for I am their leader. They have enlarged the concept, these are wonderful people. And one of the first projects that came up, turned out to have a problem. It involves Harlequin ducks and it involves a veterinarian whose licensed to, to implant transmitters. And there was nobody licensed in Wyoming at the time, so we had to look for another, other projects. But at the same time, people started almost coming out of the woodwork, saying, "Hey, this whole concept we can, we can, we can go cooperate with you or you can cooperate with us."

And all of a sudden, [chuckles] we've had, in one year, thanks to these other people, I'll be glad to give you their names, uhh the most state [?] project, data for the game and fish. To find out where the Moose were, on the valley floor. We're going to do that again. We've had cooperation with a pike-up, projects with the fishing wire, with the game and fish, Bridget Teton National Forest, Gary Teton, and Teton Science School Research Group, and maybe, uhm, and the Community Wildlife Foundation. We've trained over a hundred and fifty people in nature mapping, which involves taking the GPS unit out and recording what you are seeing. We've recorded something like a hundred and fifty for pika sites.

Karen: Wow.

Bert: Including one at 5400 feet

Karen: That low?

Bert: That low.

Karen: Interesting.

Bert: I mean, that was unexpected, to say the least. And I understand it's going to be a piker conference here, next month. Uhm we have developed, we, there has been developed, a system for recording the data that's compatible with the Wyoming data recording system. The state Game and Fish, one. We're trying to cooperate with the muse, with the university, but they're having real financial problems, I understand. But we're hoping that's going to happen. That would be really nice. And uhm, people have started contributing to the, the fund. So, it looks like you may have a life that goes on. And I know that would please Meg and pleases me. And we, you know Greg McHuron?

Karen: No, I've heard the name.

Bert: An artist here, been painting here a long time. He and I have done a book, which we hope to have out this summer.

Karen: What's the name, the book?

Bert: Burns of Sage and Scree. [stretching sounds]

Karen: Oh, great title. [exhales] Yes, I was gonna ask you about the books you're working on.

Bert: [laughter] You like my system?

Karen: Looks like my system, Bert.

Bert: It's an early version. It's going to be 12 by 12.

Karen: Oh, wonderful. Wow. Were these the, no, are you working on another book about uncommon birds? or birds that people don't think about as much. Or is this the book that you told me about last-

Bert: Yeah, this, this is that book.

Karen: It's beautiful.

Bert: Or you ought to see him in person and you'll be able to tune in March, they're going to hang some of them or maybe all of them at the Museum.

Karen: Excellent.

Bert: In a special, err in a room by itself. I, I don't remember the dates but I think it's early in March.

Karen: Early in March...

Bert: So, it's not too-

Karen: ... it's coming right up.

Bert: Yeah, It's coming right up.

Karen: Excellent. Good for you. Are you, are you working on another book as well? Or just this one? But I thought I heard a rumor that you were working on two books

Bert: Curmudgeon lady.

Karen: What?

Bert: The lady who gave me the title, Curmudgeon Chronicles

Karen: Okay. Uhuh.

Bert: And did that caricature on the cover. Is last, I heard expanding that book with some newer columns. And I have not heard from her this year. I know she was away for a while, but I suppose I should find out if that's still true.

Karen: This is lovely. I'll look forward-

Bert: You need a book written?

Karen: Do I need one, written?

Bert: You write your own?

Karen: Yeah. That's another story. I don't want to talk about me.
Uhm, let me look at my questions here. Are you getting tired? Do you want to stop?

Bert: I'm not tired.

Karen: Okay.

Bert: Are you?

Karen: Heck no. I could talk to you all day.

Bert: I can lie all day. [chuckles]

Karen: [chuckles] Tell me a little bit about the books that you have written. You've written five, right? Plus this one, this is number six. Do I have that right?

Bert: Yeah, I think so.

Karen: Can you list the books that you've written or talk a little bit about.

Bert: Okay.

Karen: All or some of them?

Bert: Well, the first one was Birds of Grand Teton National Park and Surrounding Areas, which I did for the Grand Teton Natural History Association. At the time, they've changed their name, uhm, I don't know why. Doesn't seem to have the same ring. Must have been a committee. [chuckles] And that turned out to be, it's still in print. And it was written as a different kind of Field Guide. I was a little humor and some, some attempt describing the habitat to the people. And also, it was at a time when some guys, whose names were not well-known, were hungry for someplace to get their work. Tom Mangelsen, Jeff Foott, Edward Mendell, and other people who were invited to submit slides, photographs, including John Turner. Now, we were so smart that we turned down John Turner's picture of bald eagles for the cover. And when John became the head of the Fish and Wildlife Service, he didn't ever stop teasing me whenever he, we met

[chuckles] and I never stopped apologizing. [laughter] Oh gosh. But that was 85, I think. And I think was one of the first ventures, think the second venture for that Association. The first one being all the smeary, sketchbook, if I remember that correctly. And that book, oh it won, an award or two and it still sells. It's still valid. The next book was Valley So Sweet, which is my favorite. And then I wrote...

Karen: Yeah, I ask you why it's your favorite?

Bert: Well, it has, it has my real feelings about the valley. And I believe, still. And uhh, Meg said, It's a nice little book and she picked the title. So, for all those reasons. And then, Curmudgeon Chronicles, which some people like the title of. It does seem one they remember.

Karen: That's true. It has a very unique ring.

Bert: Yeah. Uhh, Becky Woods, she did all the drawings to illustrations. Very talented kid. I, we're mostly, mostly columns that were recycled. A few new ones I think. And I had an opportunity to put in that one, I think. What I said at that thank you 1995, big to-do they gave for us. Uhm, so, the crowd there, there was a big crowd.

We had a hundred sixty-five people at this late at potluck. At least.

Karen: That's great.

Bert: No fistfights.

Karen: That's even better? [chuckles]

Bert: I don't know. Good fistfight, [chuckles] now and then, Jackson way. [laughter] And somewhere, in between there somewhere, I have to look it up. Darwin Wile was living here, then. And Darwin Wile is a really avid, very good bird watcher and legs of steel, he can hike near as I can tell for a week without stopping to eat. And he wanted to do a hiking, bird-watching trail. Folk and he and I cooperated on that. He did all the hiking. He hates every dog on foot of it. And that's called bird find, finding the birds of Jackson Hole. And while there have been changes in the urbanized part of the valley. I think it still holds for the park and the forest, quite well. I've suggested to Darwin, bringing it up to date, and he's not interested in my suggestion. So, that's going to go out of print. If it's not already out of print. People still ask for it though. So, we'll see.

And then we're Tom Mangelsen of Winter Birds, Winter Wing, excuse me. Also, a Meg title, which in which I take advantage of Tom's reputation and pictures, with no hesitation whatsoever.

Karen: [chuckles] I like that.

Bert: Well, what do you do with the historical photographs?

Karen: What do you mean?

Bert: You take advantage of them.

Karen: Well, sure.

Bert: Sure! Well, there's Mangelsen taking these damn pictures and look at the reputation he's got

Karen: Yeah, yeah. And you know, both being writers, it's sad but true. It's the photographs that sell the books.

Bert: Probably.

Karen: You know, I hate to admit it but-

Bert: How are the sales?

Karen: Pardon?

Bert: How are the sales?

Karen: Oh, of my books? Pretty good, mostly in the summer though.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: You know, when Yellowstone is open.

Bert: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Karen: How about you? Still good?

Bert: Keep me in gin.

Karen: Good.

Bert: Barely.

Karen: Yeah, good. I'm excited about your new book and I love the title. Who came up with the title for that one?

Bert: Me.

Karen: You? Aww it's, it's very good. And that's Birds of Sage and Scree. So, uhm...

Bert: The proceeds will go to the Meg and Bert Raynes Fund.

Karen: Great. That's great.

Bert: If there are precedes.

Karen: There will be, I'm certain of it. Oh, would you speak to what you think the future of The Valleys Wildlife? As well, as the future of people in Jackson Hole might be. What your thoughts are on that or future challenges?

Bert: [exhales] [click's tongue] Well, in 2010, I see some hope. for the Wildlife and for this, and to, for the people here, once again to become more of a community. The holes that were taken in connection with the revision of the comprehensive plan. With the enormous percentages of 85, 84, 88 percentage of people putting Wildlife first. For their concerns and for their reason for being here, was I thought incredible. And I don't think the enormity has sunk into our politicians, at all. And I think that's a shame. Somebody ought to pound it into him. I try, but, and judging from the interest in the nature of man watching the bird, backyard bird thing that was started under the farms and other people.

When I say the fun now, I'm including the whole mob. It's quite encouraging. And if we can build on that and sustain that, we might have a chance. On the other hand, there's always the forces of development and pressures of all kinds for increased roads and increase speeds. On the increased roads and you know what that's gonna do? Inevitable. Uhm I can get very pessimistic about the long-term. This planet, there's too many people. However, I want to think that we're supposed to be the intelligent animal and I will say that we're probably one of them, anyway. They just found out that prairie dogs have something like 13 vocalizations that communicate with each other. Speech. Where's the puppy? Under here?

Karen: No. Right here

Bert: Under there?

Karen: Yeah.

Bert: She rules me.

Karen: [chuckles] I believe it.

Bert: She tells me what she wants. And right now. So, if we're smart about it, I think we can coexist, pretty well, for a long time. If we persist in overpopulation, sooner or later planet's going to say, it can't do it anymore. Fix it. It's up to you, kids.

Karen: [chuckles] Yeah, you're right.

Bert: So, I guess that's my point which is waffling on my moody days. I don't see any hope at all. On my brighter days, I think there's a chance. Best I can do. I would love to see this become more of, return to being more of a community when it was smaller. But it's not all just Jackson Hole, from what I can tell, and I don't travel now. It's our whole society has changed from 50 years ago. I talked to people who come from other places or have been to other places and they all talk about the urban sprawl and the plethora of fast food joints at all, just the same and how

you can... Well, I remember driving through Phoenix, thinking that the whole thing is built of a grid, composed of rectangles each one having a gas station and grocery store on one end of the street, a shoe store, apartment house, a drugstore. A little rectangle, one that's replicated in every direction, for thousands of square miles, you can drive through it for days, it seemed. And people talking about, they talk about that and Victor, I haven't been in Victor for a while. I was, it looks like...

Karen: It's changing? a little bit.

Bert: I think.

Karen: They're working on their own definition of community. We can talk about that after we...

Bert: Okay.

Karen: ...after this.

Bert: Okay.

Karen: Uhm what do you think that the people of Jackson Hole or Jackson in particular, what have to do to regain that feeling of community? Do you have any, besides reducing the numbers of people here? Is there something else that could be done?

Bert: [sighs] Well... I like to think there is. Exactly, what I don't know. Right now, it seems to me, we've got the business. Community and odds with almost everybody else. The Developers. Community at odds, with almost everybody else, reflexively. Uhm seems to be [scratching sound] either so much going on, that there's no time to get outside your circle. Or that the antagonism should have been built up. Make people, not one to try another circle. What could bring them all together? I like to think, the new Museum would help. I'm going to write about it this week, I think. Uhm, well, I promise to, but is it on the ballot?

Karen: Uhm, not officially, yet. I think it was recommended to be take, taking a look at and it's moving forward but it's not definitively on the ballot, yet.

Bert: Okay.

Karen: Yeah.

Bert: Uhm... I understand that you get good, turnouts for the Museum's activities at the world-

Karen: Oh. The Story-Telling Program Series has been amazing.

Bert: I wish I could get there. So, that's difficult.

Karen: Well, I, I can certainly make arrangements for someone to come and pick you up and, you know, help get you in the building and etcetera.

Bret: Let me try that.

Karen: Okay.

Bret: I have friends that might do it too. But I think activities like that help, a great deal. I think the National Museum of Art with their community programs is helping. But I often remark to myself, and Meg and I used to talk about it. That when we used to get out in the route, we almost never saw a lawyer, socially or the guys that do all the construction, but we used to. When there wasn't so much to do. And I think that's just our society today. I just, I don't know if the library could do more, but the library really does stuff. If you read the papers and stuff, and I don't mean just the local papers. Everybody's so busy today, there's no time. And actually, I have, can't imagine why, how anybody ever has time today to go to a movie. You know you got to be on your computer, you got your job. If you have children, you have children. If you're in any groups at all, they have meetings. If you want to put you're in mind on some community affairs, you have to go to those meetings. And then you have to watch people do obscene things on the stage, valving phrases I've, fortunately, can't hear. At night on television, when you have time? Is your life that scheduled? or going back and forth must add to your free time deficiency.

Karen: In a big way.

Bert: Yeah. I don't know what to do about that.

Karen: Simplify your life somehow, I guess.

Bert: One of the reasons for the potluck, is to get people to relax and socialize. And people do it, potluck, and picnics, and things like that. The bigger, the population, the harder it is to find a place big enough for everybody.

Karen: Yeah.

Bert: It would be, it would probably take a President of the United States to bring us back together. And if you remember election night and that scene in Chicago, where there were people of every stripe? I was really, quite a remarkable moment. But when you have to fight an implacable enemy, every day. It's hard to bring people together. I don't know. I pass. [chuckles]

Karen: No, you're comments were good.

Bert: Actually, if I knew, I would have expressed that before. [laughter]

Karen: Well, I've asked you some tough questions, I think? Are there, and, of course, you've received so many awards, outstanding awards.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: Just, that just blows me away and-

Bert: It's a good thing I don't believe any of them.

Karen: Well, I think you should. But you're-

Bert: Except the ones, where Meg was mentioned.

Karen: That's really kind. I can see-

Bert: Those are the ones that mean something. You ever see her picture?

Karen: Yeah, I've seen the one on the left. I haven't seen the one on the right. I'll look more closely after we turn the tape off. Uhm, but just for the record, for the tape, uhm, Bert won the Rungius Medal awarded by the National Museum of Wildlife Art in 2001.

Bert: Oh, thought it was 2000.

Karen: Really? Oh, well you-

Bert: I'm not sure.

Karen: This is just what I founded in a newspaper article, but they're not always right?

Bert: No.

Karen: 2005, Outstanding Conservationist of the Year by Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance?

Bert: Yeah, it's up there somewhere.

Karen: Yeah, I see it, actually. The Bison in the Tetons, their 2007, Wyoming Outdoor Hall of Fame.

Bert: Yeah.

Karen: And that was for both you and Meg, wasn't it?

Bert: Yep.

Karen: And then, 2008, Hometown Hero by the town of Jackson.

Bert: Yep.

Karen: So, and I'm probably missing some. You've been a very celebrated individual and uhm...

Bert: Don't believe a word of it.

Karen: ...well I'm honored to...

Bert: Don't believe a word [inaudible]

Karen: ...to be able to speak with you today. And uhh, is there anything else that you'd like to add, your feelings about the valley or anything else at all?

Bert: Well, I'd like to thank perhaps the new Museum. Could, well, inform, some of the people who don't know, anything of the history of the valley. And that it seems even to include the kids coming out of our high school. Some of them are, it's not most, I don't need a lot of them. But they don't seem to be taught or exposed to anything. I don't know if school groups come through.

Karen: It's very limited, now. Because, you know, the museum as you know is only open in summer.

Bert: Yeah. Yeah.

Karen: But we're hoping that-

Bert: Do you get school groups of their, our school groups? No, they're out of school.

Karen: Correct. But like, today, for example, my assistant Becca Stevens, she does almost all of the Youth, while, if not all of the Youth Education Programs. And she's giving history classes to the Middle School...

Bert: Oh, good.

Karen: ...students.

Bert: I'm delighted.

Karen: She's there-

Bert: Is that a no?

Karen: No. We've always done that. But, that we have to go to them, to present their curriculum programs, rather than have them come to us because there's no facility...

Bert: Right, right.

Karen: ...for them to go to. But she's, she's great. So, we, you know, we aim to increase that with the new Museum, certainly.

Bert: I'd like to see that. I wish I could be more active, but I can't. So, I don't want to tear myself at me, any more than...

Karen: That's right.

Bert: ...just to say that.

Karen: Well, thank you for this. I will...

Bert: Thank you.

Karen: ...conclude and you can always let me know if you think of some other story you'd like to tell. Uhm, I didn't get a chance to talk to you about humorous stories or things like that. Do you want to save that for another time?

Bert: Okay, I'll try to think of some.

Karen: Okay, thank you so much for-

Bert: Thank you.

Karen: Turn this off.

[END]