

Saturday, July 21, 2007 9:42 a.m.

I spoke to Bill at a horse show that his wife and daughter were both competing in. He was weaving Hackamores, a skill which I interviewed him about. I asked him those questions related to his weaving, although I did so without the recorder because of technical difficulties, as well as recording an interview from the community member questionnaire. We sat on the left side of the bleachers, alone, save for the times when his daughter would come by or he had to go tend to something regarding the horses. He seemed bored and generally uninterested by the setting, my questions and really everything besides his weaving. At one point in the community interview he expresses concern at my report being shown to an employee at Stuarts which he states as his reason for not frequenting that market.

Cole Enabnit: So, could you tell me your full name again please?

Bill Black: My real name? Bill Black is what I go by.

CE: So, Bill, what's one of your favorite foods?

BB: Beef.

CE: How often do you get to eat it?

BB: Every day.

CE: Do you have any particular way you like to eat beef?

BB: No, cooked.

CE: So no beef sushi?

BB: I don't know that I've eaten beef sushi, I have eaten sushi.

CE: Do you like it?

BB: I do, some of it. If the fish is rubbery I don't care for it but some of the other stuff is pretty good.

CE: Do you have a least favorite food?

BB: Raisins.

CE: Do you eat them often?

BB: I don't. I was five years old when my grandfather told me they was made from stink bugs [laughs] I've eaten very few since.

CE: What'd you eat for evening meal yesterday?

BB: BBQ'd some cube steaks and corn. Canned corn. And ice cream.

CE: So thinking of the whole food system in the community, broadly, what are three things that you appreciate?

BB: I don't know. Yeah, I don't I haven't ever thought of it that way.

CE: Do you want to think about it a little bit?

BB: I don't think I'd ever get an answer for that one.

CE: Do you know anything about the food system in the community that you don't like?

BB: Nope. I don't eat out very much, in fact, very little. I do eat in restaurants when I'm on the road and it don't take much to get tired of it.

CE: What kind of places do you like to eat at when you go on the road?

BB: I eat at fast food places a lot. McDonald's a lot. I try to have one sit down meal in a restaurant somewhere; Denny's or places like that. Probably reasonable in cost.

CE: Do you wish they had any places like that in Lakeview?

BB: Well they do. They've gotten Burger King, or Queen, I eat their a lot, they've got the snack shack and they've got Jerry's.

CE: Do you eat at all those places?

BB: I have, yeah. I eat at Burger Queen quite a bit when I'm in town, which isn't that often, but when I am I eat, we grab a hamburger there.

CE: I haven't been there, what would you suggest I get if I go?

BB: Canadian burger.

CE: Canadian burger?

BB: yeah, it's a good one.

CE: What's it got on it?

BB: Canadian ham, lots of vegetables, it's good. We've got a Subway here too, and the Mexican restaurant is a good place to eat.

CE: Yeah, I've eaten there, it's good.

BB: Yeah it's, it's really good.

CE: So how does your household get its food?

BB: We come to town, this town, Lakeview. Safeway.

CE: Safeway. You ever go to Stewarts?

BB: Not very often, used to.

CE: How come?

BB: How far is this interview going?

CE: How long?

BB: No, how far... I got a hold of some meat out there that was kind of spoiled and uh, I talked to a guy and I didn't like how he handled it.

CE: Oh, you mean who am I showing it to? It's going to be used at OSU.

BB: Yeah, one of the meat cutters, one of the meat cutters I like quite a bit but this one, he didn't handle this situation very well. Made me mad. I used to do all my shopping there, because it is locally owned.

CE: And, uh, so do you hunt or fish at all?

BB: No, no I don't. I don't fish. I'll hunt before I fish?

CE: Do you like to do either of those things?

BB: No, not really.

CE: Do you raise any cattle or grown any vegetables.

BB: No, no. Might do something on the vegetable end next year. I saw this earth box the advertised back East.

CE: Oh yeah, what's that?

BB: It's a box that you fill up the reservoir on the bottom with water and it's self irrigated every day and it's got a fertilizer strip and everything. I tell ya, it's not bad, it's like 33 dollars for the box. I've got the deal back at the house, I've got it pinned up on the wall so I'll give 'em a call next year.

CE: Does your family have any trouble getting the food you want to eat?

BB: Nope, I'm not a picky eater, Tracy's not a big eater and Montana has no choice.

CE: Montana?

BB: That's my daughter.

[He took a break to go help his wife get his daughter ready for the horse show, resumed at next audio file.]

CE: So, what kind of history does your family have being involved in the food system?

BB: My dad used to raise cattle, in Colorado, and my mother was also raised on a cow outfit, before she married Dad.

CE: And how about food, what kind of food has your family eaten.

BB: A lot of beef and chicken and then we bought vegetables.

CE: So, do you have any family stories connected with food?

BB: No, no just meat and vegetables.

CE: Got any stories from growing up on the ranch?

BB: Well, I don't care for milk.

CE: [laugh] Are you kind of sick of it?

BB: I milked two cows, every morning and night, for seven years while I was going to school.

CE: What time did you have to get up in the morning to do that?

BB: We started our chores at 6:30, we got up at 6, at 6:30 I milked those two cows, my sister bottle fed 60 head of calves, my brother did the rest of the chores. We could do them chores in an hour and then catch the bus, about ten minutes to get on the bus. We did not have, I grew up with no running water. We had electricity but we had no running water and I had no telephone. All the way through my high school years.

CE: And where did you live?

BB: I grew up southeast of Pueblo Colorado.

CE: And how long ago did you move out here?

BB: I moved to Nevada in 1976 and worked out my North Nevada for almost 8 years before I moved out here to Oregon, I moved to Oregon in 84. I was at that ranch until '92 and I went down to California for a little spell then that ranch out there sold and I came back out here in '97.

CE: To Lakeview?

BB: Plush.

CE: Plush, okay.

BB: Yep, and I paid that house of two months ago.

CE: Oh yea? Congratulations.

BB: Yep, two years, paid 'er off, two years.

CE: That must feel pretty good.

BB: It does, some of this stuff pays off. [Gestures at the hackamore he is weaving]

CE: You got any family recipes?

BB: Well, I've got a garbage can omelet I've shared with a lot of people.

CE: Oh yeah, what's that?

BB: Start fry'n taters, fry some bacon, throw some eggs in there and olives and mushrooms and anything else you think might taste good, put some cheese into it, put a lid over it then eat it.

CE: How many eggs do you put in it, or is it proportional to the amount of stuff?

BB: Depends on how big of a crew your cooking for.

CE: I see, who do you usually make it for?

BB: I've made it for myself, I use three eggs and I've made it for a crew of 7, I used, uh, I used close to 18 or 20 eggs.

CE: Who were you cooking for when you were cooking for a crew of 7?

BB: Cowboys, I was cowboy'n for the MC.

CE: I don't know much about that ranch.

BB: Well, Frank Kayhill he's gone and walked out, they own part of it now. It liquidated and split up into 17 ownerships in '92. That was the end of the big ranch. That ranch used to run 7,000 cows; it was a good outfit.

CE: You were in on the cattle then?

BB: I was in charge of everything with the cows. Trail'n them out, we'd trail cows for nearly 7 days, to get 'em out. It was almost 70 miles to the back fence.

CE: Geesh, That must have been a ride.

BB: It was a lot of fun.

CE: How'd you get that job?

BB: Cards just kept fallin' in my place. I started out as a cowboy and I just kept gett'n promotions. [Talked to daughter about horse show a little].

CE: Any of your family members involved in growing or raising food right now?

BB: My sister owns a restaurant in Sugar City, Colorado and that's pretty much it. My folks are pretty much retired and my brother works for the county.

CE: What kind of restaurant is it?

BB: A very little one. A lot of things probably wouldn't be up to code but it's grandfathered in because she's had it so long.

CE: What kind of food do they serve?

BB: She, uh, one day a week, every day of the week she's open she has a special. She'll have Mexican food day, one day a week. Another day she'll have a thing called broaches it's hamburger and cabbage inside of some bread dough.

CE: I've never heard of that, it's called broaches?

BB: I think that's what she says they are. She sent some home with us last year, we microwaved 'em in Rawlins, Wyoming at KOA for dinner that night. She, uh, also serves spaghetti, that's her special, of course she also has the typical hamburger and cheeseburger stuff.

CE: So do you belong to any community groups?

BB: No.

CE: How do you think farmers and ranchers are doing in the community? Business wise and socially.

BB: Cattle market is up right now so they're doing okay, but cattle ranching and farming is really a lifestyle. You're not gonna get overly rich at it. It's just a lifestyle.

CE: You think people stay in it for the lifestyle?

BB: I do.

CE: That's kind of what I've found from talking to people.

BB: I'm still involved a little bit in lifestyle in what I'm doing now. I'm preserving an old craft and I'm making a living at it.

CE: Yeah, so what exactly do you call it?

BB: This is braiding. I'm braiding leather right now but I work a lot of rawhide.

CE: And so what are your customers like?

BB: The reigning cowhorse associate. It started out in California but they *use* what I'm make'n.

CE: So what's the tool called exactly?

BB: When it's done it'll be called a hackamore.

CE: A hackamore?

BB: Yeah.

CE: And it's a kind of whip?

BB: No, see I'll bend it like on that horse that my wife has, like what's on his nose, that's a hackamore. I've got to put the nose knot on first then I'll bend it.

CE: What do you know about how the disabled or elderly people in the community get their food?

BB: I don't know. I know about the WIC program because I'm on it.

CE: What's that?

BB: Well, it helps to buy some of the feed, milk and stuff, for, like Montana.

CE: Helps provide food for what?

BB: For Montana [the daughter].

CE: For Montana, okay. So do you know where the food comes from that people in the community eat?

BB: Nope, it comes on a truck. Safeway, it comes out of a warehouse.

CE: So do you eat much locally grown food, any meat?

BB: Right now I am. Kids was get'n a cow the other day, not very fat either, and he didn't want the whole thing so I split it with him. That cow come out of Adel. There's no fat at all, it's, those cube steaks we had last night was quite chewy. And then the other day this calf ran and got it's leg broke pretty bad so they asked me if I could use the meat. So, I said yes and I butchered it.

CE: Butchered it yourself?

BB: Mhmm, well, meat cutter's gonna cut it up but I had the hide and the guts out of it.

CE: Is that pretty tough?

BB: No.

CE: How do you do it?

BB: Cut their belly open and pull the guts out.

CE: What do you do with the guts?

BB: Coyotes will eat it. I did it right over, the other side of this mountain, is where I did it.

CE: So you just truck the cow out there and cut it open?

BB: Well, yeah, I was out brand'n and my pickup was there. So, we loaded the calf in there when we was done. And at home I pulled the hide off and I sawed it in half and let it hang in a tree all night and the next morning on the way to Klamath I dropped it off at the meat market there. I've butchered a lot. When I worked out for that big cattle outfit that was a cowboy's job, to butcher. On the Spanish ranch, at the Spanish ranch, in hay season they would have a hundred and twenty men on the payroll and right there, at Spanish ranch, they would go through a beef every four days. And we butchered. I was only there part time but every four days we'd butcher.

CE: And what's Spanish ranch?

BB: Just the name of a division. It was of a ranch I worked for, the headquarters was Spanish ranch.

CE: Where was that?

BB: North of Elk Horn, Nevada.

CE: How do you think the community could make more local food available to people?

BB: I don't know. There are a lot of ranchers around here that raise and eat meat. I'm gonna help ship some calves Tuesday with a friend of mine over in Beatty and I think those cattle are going to Colorado. My partner was, my friend was representing a buyer and their feed lots are all in Colorado, North east of Colorado.

CE: Is there any way you'd like to see the food system around here change? Or any additions you'd like to see made to it?

BB: I think for the climate I think that things, you ain't gonna change this climate. It isn't like, you go around Boise, Idaho it's whole a different world. But, uh, there's a lot of corn fields over there, they grow a lot of vegetables, little crops but I don't think you can grown that here. Big time, like they do over in Idaho. But they're selling, they're selling all that corn ground for houses now so I'd don't know what's going to happen over there.

CE: Have you heard about people changing food systems in there communities?

BB: No.

CE: Does that kind of thing interest you at all?

BB: Not yet.

CE: [chuckle] Could you see it interesting you in the future?

BB: If things start getting a little taught to get food it will.

CE: Do you think that could happen?

BB: Well, from what I see going on in Idaho, with people building all those houses up at farm ground, they're selling all them houses, I mean, selling that farm ground for houses, I can see a shortage of food starting to happen.

CE: Are you worried about people selling there farms around here? Gett'n 'em sub-divided for houses?

BB: I don't know, I know it's going on around here but I don't know how much. There are areas where I think they ought to be sub-dividing the ground. That's like between here and Winnemucca, Nevada on that high dessert where you can't grown nothing anyway. Of course, maybe you can't get any water out there I don't know, but that'd make a lot more sense to me. The city of Burbank, California. Burbank and Greendale was on to Spanish land grants and very, very nice look'n ground. Boy, that's all city now. They used to run, I don't know how big of a land grant those two was but I think they used to run close to 4,000 cows; back in the earlier day.

CE: Back how long ago?

BB: Back in like the 1800's.

CE: So, do you think there is anything else that would be important for me to know about the community or the food system around here? Can you think of anything?

BB: I can't, of course, you're asking questions that I never give much thought to right now.

CE: Well, I appreciate you answering them, it's real nice of you.

BB: So, what do you think Lakeview will be like in 20 years, or this area.

BB: I, I don't think it's gonna change a lot. It's a small town, the faces are gonna change, the storefronts, the stores are dying downtown anyway. Closing their doors, I've seen that happen in the town I grew up in too. The storefronts change, I don't know, we'll see that happening but the main, the biggest buying deal, they'll still go to Klamath falls. That's where people go to do their main shopping anyways.

CE: Is that where you go to do your main shopping?

BB: I, I do drop the money when I'm over there. I don't go over there very often but I do drop some money when I go over there.

CE: What kinds of places do you go to when you're there?

BB: Wal-Mart and the Big R; but I don't get groceries. We get all our groceries right here in town.

CE: Have you got any questions for me?

BB: Nope.

CE: I've got this other hunting and fishing questionnaire but you said you don't hunt or fish right?

BB: Right, people tell me I'm a patient guy but the guy who can go out and fish all day and not catch anything, that's a patient guy. I don't have that.

CE: [laugh]

BB: The last time I got into a fishing deal there was three of us. I was out on this cow outfit, we didn't have any meat in camp, we was gonna have some that night but we didn't have any for noon when we got home and there happened to be four little trout in this little old water hole when we was riding by on the crick and we just stopped and hobbled our horses and we went fish'n for 'em with sticks, rocks and hands.

CE: Did you catch 'em?

BB: We caught all four of 'em, had a hell of a good time. We got pretty wet, none of us got our ears knocked off, come pretty close, but none of us got our ears knocked off. Yeah, we had a good time.

CE: When was that?

BB: That was back in, like, '79. That was in '79, summer of '79. Don Hendrickson, Earl Grand and I.

CE: You mind if I ask you when you were born?

BB: December 31st of '44. That was a big tax write off.

CE: Big tax right off?

BB: Yeah, New Years Eve, last day of the year.

CE: Oh yeah.

BB: Folks got to write me off.

CE: That's good timing. Well, Bill, I really appreciate you helping me out with this.

BB: Yep.