

Interview with Russ Mitchell by Max G. Geier, September 20, 1996, at Mitchell's office in the Bend, Oregon U.S. Forest Service Forestry Sciences Laboratory / Part A & Part B merged.

After growing up in western Oregon with parents who worked for the State Forestry Department, Russ Mitchell arrived at Andrews Forest as a sophomore forestry student at OSU in 1953, the summer when the renaming from Blue River Experimental Forest was formalized. He worked with many of the early researchers and fellow students at the forest, including Roy Silen, Hank Gratkowski, and Mike Kerrick, as they laid out timber sales and conducted studies. After that first year at Andrews Forest he moved into entomology and worked for the PNW Station in that capacity elsewhere in the region, except for a few occasions when he could find an excuse to return – and even put in a study plot.

(Introductory remarks by Max Geier on purpose of study and focus of interview).

Max Geier: Now, if I've got this right, your first involvement on the Andrews was in 1953?

Russ Mitchell: 1953. I was a sophomore in college at Oregon State University, and every year they'd come around asking students what jobs they wanted. Until then, I had been working for the fire protection people, and I had worked for Eastern Lane [County] Fire Patrol the year before, and decided I'd had enough of fire. (Laughs) This job [HJA] sounded interesting, so I signed up for it.

Geier: Where were you fire-fighting before then?

Mitchell: I worked for Eastern Lane Fire Patrol near Cottage Grove, and I was a foreman of a crew down there. But it was a terrible summer, and I remember I spent most of my summer doing nothin' but waiting for fires, and it was too boring.

Geier: Did you do painting or anything?

Mitchell: Yeah. (Laughing) We painted rocks and we cleared some trails. So, that was interesting, and we had a couple of fires, but for the most part, nothing really exciting.

Geier: Maybe you could talk a little bit about your background up until that point, personal and academic, up until you got involved at OSU?

Mitchell: Well, I went to a high school in Forest Grove, Oregon. My dad, actually, both my parents, worked for, I forgot what it's called, the Northwest Oregon District of the Oregon Department of Forestry. They moved there in 1946, and that's when I moved there with them, and we lived right there on the grounds of the place. That was the year after the Tillamook burn, the big fire, and so, they were reorganizing then to rehabilitate the Tillamook burn. The state had just taken over, and up until then, it had been an association paid for by the private landowners, but the state had taken over because they'd gone broke with the forest burned by the Tillamook fire. That's where I started out working, actually (laughing), I started the year before that. I was 15-years-old, and it was 1945. I worked on the McKenzie River on the Eastern Lane Fire Patrol, very near the town of Blue River at a place called Sparks Ranch. It was a boarding house, we boarded there and lived in a tent. We had a small fire crew, and that was my first job. My parents moved to Forest Grove, and I

worked for Northwest Oregon District in the summer on a fire crew, and then, I went into military service, came back and went back to work for Eastern Lane and Western Lane. There's two different fire crews, and it was after that that I'd finally had my fill of fire. I didn't want to do it anymore, and then the opportunity arose at Oregon State, when they were sending students on to summer jobs. In those days, you had to have 2 years, as I recall, of summer work in forestry, in order to graduate.

Geier: When you were in the service, which branch of the service was that?

Mitchell: Marine Corps.

Geier: Marine Corps, okay. So you started at OSU when?

Mitchell: I think I started the winter quarter of 1949. I had been in the service one year, and then I started the winter quarter of '49. I went through the winter and spring quarter, then the Korean War started, and I went back in the service again. I got out, went back in in 1950, and I got back out in '52. That was the last year I worked for a fire outfit, the Eastern Oregon Fire Patrol, and then went back to college again. From then on, I worked for the station [PNW]. I worked that first year [1953] on the Andrews, which was actually called the Blue River Experimental Forest when I started [1948-53]. That was the year they had the dedication and changed it to the [H.J.] Andrews.

Geier: So, you have worked continuously with PNW Station since 1953?

Mitchell: That's right.

Geier: I'm just curious, your major at OSU was forestry. Right?

Mitchell: Forestry, yeah, forest management.

Geier: That was the reason you went to OSU, was because they had the forestry program there?

Mitchell: That's right.

Geier: If you could, talk a little about the people you worked with at OSU, first in the forestry program there?

Mitchell: At Oregon State?

Geier: That's right.

Mitchell: Well, Dunn [Paul] was the dean of the school at the time I started.

Geier: That'd be in '49?

Mitchell: Yeah, that'd be in '49, and Walter J. McCall was the dean afterwards, when I finally graduated.

Geier: Anybody you worked for?

Mitchell: I never worked with anybody. I think Ray Yoder was my major professor, but I never really worked with anybody on the staff there. The [PNW] experiment station had an office in the basement of the forestry building [OSU] at that time. Bob Ruth was headquartered there, in the office, and I guess Roy Silen came later, or he might have been there at the same time. I'm not sure.

Geier: He was there about that time. I talked to him.

Mitchell: Yeah.

Geier: So, you were going through the program, but you weren't working very closely with anybody on the faculty or anything?

Mitchell: No, I was (laughing) just a student, hanging in there.

Geier: So, when you took the summer job, you were really taking a blind job? You didn't know what you were getting into?

Mitchell: Yeah, I had no idea what it was going to be like, or anything. All I knew was that I wanted to get away from fire. I didn't want to do it anymore, and this seemed like a great job, or seemed like a possibility of a great job.

Geier: It's kind of hard to do, but is it possible, if you could look back and think about what your concept was of what an experimental forest was when you took that job. What did you think it was all about, or what kinds of things did you have in mind?

Mitchell: Well, I wish I could think of some lofty things, but I really didn't have any. All I knew is that I wanted to do something that related to forest management, with the management of forests and not to protect [fire suppression] them. I was no longer interested in that, and also, I knew it was something [beautiful] on the McKenzie. My very first job ever was on the McKenzie and I loved that place, and I wanted to go back up there again. That was the other thing I wanted to do.

Geier: So, the region, aspects of the landscape.

Mitchell: Yeah, the landscape was a big item.

Geier: Did you have any knowledge before going up there, what Roy Silen had been doing up there?

Mitchell: No, I didn't know Roy Silen. I didn't know anybody up there. I hadn't really had a lot of forestry, and I was only a sophomore. I guess I'd finished, but not completely, my sophomore year, because I was still in the middle of it. I hadn't had a lot of forestry up until then, some tree identification and field botany.

Geier: What was your first impression in '53 when you went down there and started working?

Mitchell: The first two weeks I was there it never quit raining. (Laughter) Roy Silen was my boss then, and the first thing that he had me do was dig out a weir for one of the creeks where they were measuring water flow. It may have been the very first weir that was there, I don't know, but that's what I did. I stood out there in the rain and water up to my knees, digging gravel out.

Geier: So, just a shovel and pick?

Mitchell: Just a shovel! (Laughter) Yeah, I was beginning to wonder about my decision at that time.

Geier: Was there a trailer house you were living in?

Mitchell: No, we lived where the ranger station is now. It was called Camp Belknap. As I recall, it was an old 3-C [CCC] camp, and it still looked like a 3-C camp. The real ranger station at the time

was at McKenzie Bridge, so we were upstream from there 5 or 6 miles. I guess that is where the ranger station is now, if you know where that is.

Geier: Yeah.

Mitchell: But anyhow, didn't look anything like it looks now, just those old tarpaper, 3-C camp type places. Actually, I had been there when I was a very small boy. I had lived in Eugene, and my dad drove a laundry truck and delivered laundry up to the 3-C camp. I remember going up there, actually eating in the mess hall, and now this, many years later,

Geier: Was that in the '30s sometime?

Mitchell: Yeah, it was about 1937, I would imagine, '36, '37, somewhere in that vicinity. And then, I ended up living in one of the regular bunkhouses in the same old buildings. One of the guys that lived in the bunkhouse with us was Mike Kerrick, who later became the supervisor of that forest.

Geier: Sure, I talked to him. He didn't talk about living in that bunkhouse, but he mentioned something about quarters.

Mitchell: Yes, he and I and 3 or 4 other guys lived there. I was the only one who worked for the [PNW] station. They were working for the McKenzie Bridge Ranger District. I remember we bought a washing machine, it was an ADC [brand], you'd plug it in and it would move, sort of bounce off the walls. (Laughter)

Geier: You were the only person there besides Roy working from the station then?

Mitchell: Hank Gratkowski was a graduate forester with a master's degree. They were the two people on the district. And Roy was sort of the chief boss, but I really worked for both of them. Many times I was in the field with one or the other, rarely with both of them.

Geier: Huh.

Mitchell: Had you met Hank Gratkowski yet?

Geier: No, I hadn't yet.

Mitchell: He's one of the early people. I worked with Hank quite a bit and with Roy quite a bit out there. After I dug weirs, my main job then seemed to be regeneration surveys. We had several clear-cuts up there, and I put in these 9-acre-plots, where I'd drive stakes in the ground, and I had, gosh, I can't remember, probably about 40 plots were clear-cut, and in that little acre plot, I would count every darn tree on it. And then, because I had just taken field botany, and my botany was pretty good, I actually did start the first botany collection. I don't know whatever happened to it, but I had a great large loose-leaf notebook with plants set on it. When we stayed at Camp Belknap, there was a house there and one of the foresters of the ranger district was also sort of a botany nut. I would bring him stuff or he would help me out, he would bring in stuff and we'd sort of quiz each other and see if we could stump each other with stuff we'd found. I was pretty good at it at that time, but I've sort of lost all my talent. (Chuckles)

Geier: So, you were pursuing your schoolwork there while you were working there also?

Mitchell: Yeah, that part was a lot of fun. Roy Silen gave me sort of a free hand to make collections when I was doing regeneration surveys. Often I was out there all by myself, going up and down

those hillsides. One time, Roy forgot me, as he always picked me up at the end of the day. We had a cookhouse then with 5 cooks and the most wonderful food you ever had in your life. It was dinner time and one of the cooks said, "Roy, where's Russ?" And he said, "Oh God." (Laughter) So, he had to drive out there, and it was 7 or 8 in the evening before he got me.

Geier: So, that cookhouse with 5 cooks. Was that for everybody up there, or for just the researchers?

Mitchell: No, that was for everybody, everybody that was living in the bunkhouse at the ranger station. And we had a packer in those days, who had a string of mules and horses, and he was there when he was not packing.

Geier: So, it sounds like you were living right there with people with the ranger station.

Mitchell: With the ranger station, mostly, they were summer employees. We were all students, like Mike. Mike was a summer employee at that time, too, and he was a senior out of the University of Minnesota. We also had trail crews when they came in they would stay there at the bunkhouse.

Geier: Permanent resident there, it sounds like, it was?

Mitchell: There was one permanent resident, who lived in a house. There was a house there about where the ranger station office is now, as I recall. I can't remember what, but he lived in that house, he and his wife and a couple of kids. He was a forester on the district.

Geier: So, the temporary workers, sounds like there were at least 5 in the bunkhouse.

Mitchell: Oh yeah, there were at least 5. It would grow when the trail crews came in. They would stay out 2-3 weeks at a time, and they'd just move 'em around, and then sometimes they'd come in for a few days, and then they'd go back out again.

Geier: Did you guys go in to Blue River at all?

Mitchell: Not very often, because it was downstream from where we were. We hardly ever went down there. I lived there a lot in 1945 when I worked there, because we were just a mile away from them. Actually, we were just a half, or a quarter of a mile, from them. We swam in the river down there, and we used to have movies on Saturday nights, movies and a dance. We had a movie, then, everybody picked up the benches and moved them out, and we had a dance. (Laughing) So, the price of the movie ticket also included the dance.

Geier: This was in town?

Mitchell: Yeah, this was in the town of Blue River.

Geier: I was curious, as you said you didn't get down there much because it was downriver, that made me wonder what kind of transportation there was out there. You had to mostly use the river?

Mitchell: No, no. You could drive down. There was a good highway down there I used to drive. At the time, I was going with a girl in Eugene and I used to drive down every weekend. So I drove back-and-forth almost every week, down to Eugene.

Geier: But for the week you'd be out there?

Mitchell: Yeah, I'd be out there all the time, and this is getting ahead of the story. But somewhere in the middle of the summer, the experiment station ran out of money (laughs), so they got me a job on the district. Mike Kerrick and I worked together, we cruised timber way back up the hell and gone, and then we also laid out timber sales and so forth.

Geier: Maybe you could talk about a typical day up there in terms of hours you were working. It sounds like you had some free time to yourself to do some of your own work?

Mitchell: Well, I didn't have a lot of free time, but he [Silen] allowed me to make these collections and so on. In fact, Roy Silen encouraged me to make these botanical collections, because nobody had done it up until then. Typically, they would take me out, let me off, and I would do regeneration surveys. I would imagine that was more than 50 percent of my time, but sometimes I would work with Roy. For example, Roy and I would run P-lines. You know what a P-line is? It's a preliminary line for roads.

Geier: Okay, yeah.

Mitchell: We'd put in P-lines that went way to the hell-and-gone, and we'd be 5 or 6 miles from the nearest road. We'd be clear back in the back country, and at that time we only had one main road in, and one that crossed the river. We had one bridge that crossed the river that ran across a little ways, but not very far.

Geier: So, you were plotting out those routes.

Mitchell: Yeah, we'd plot out road routes. That was one thing we did. The other thing we did, is I worked with Hank Gratkowski, who had a wind-throw study going. I helped Hank on his wind-throw study, taking notes, or whatever he told me to do. Then Hank and I also laid out some of the clear-cuts, quite a few actually, and we'd go way the heck out in the backwoods, too. We were well in advance of the road though when laying out the clear-cuts. I remember those very well, because Hank was really hard to please. (Laughs) He'd lay that thing out, and then, he didn't like it. He'd go back and tear all the tags off, and we'd go start all over again and lay 'em out, and he'd say, "No, that corner's too sharp, the wind will come down, and blow all the trees down." And so, we'd take it out and do it again, and take it out and do it again, and....

Geier: What was the size of the clear-cuts you were laying out?

Mitchell: I think they were mostly 30 or 40 acres, in that vicinity. But there were some big clear-cuts. I know the one big clear-cut that was already done when I got there, was 1-I, I think the name of it was. It was in the first sale they had, it was a big long clear-cut, and was steep as hell. When I was putting the regeneration plots on it, Hank would help me on that. We actually let each other down on ropes in a couple places, it was so steep, and rocky.

Geier: So, unusually long and narrow?

Mitchell: Yeah, it was very long and narrow.

Geier: Yeah, Roy was talking a little bit about some of the units.

Mitchell: I'm sure they wouldn't have done that one, if they had it to do over again.

Geier: What was your perception of the rationale behind what was going on? What I'm trying to get a sense of here is, what you perceived as research opportunities there, research goals or objectives, things like that?

Mitchell: Well, I think one of the goals was to find out how it affected water flow, and the other one, the other goal was to learn how roads affected the water, and the other one was regeneration. That's how I spent a lot of time, counting the seedlings in plots.

Geier: The kind of work you were doing there, did it have an impact on what you decided to do with your academic work later?

Mitchell: Well, it didn't change the direction of my life, but at the same time, I really learned a lot, and it was helpful in my studies. I think it was helpful later when I went into entomology, and went to graduate school. It was useful, just the botanical work that I did, and working in some of the high elevations. The top of that forest [HJA] is pretty high [5,000 feet-plus], and you get up in some high elevation stuff that I'd never been in before. So, it was educational, and I guess I used it in places, but I can't say that it actually changed the direction of my life.

Geier: How long did you work down there afterwards?

Mitchell: I only worked on the experimental forest one year, and then, the next year, I went into entomology. I went into the same program where schools were giving summer jobs, and this job in entomology came up. I had talked to other guys about this job, and it sounded real interesting, because, for one thing, they travelled a lot, and I wanted to do some travelling. At the experimental forest, you stayed in the same place all the time. I wanted to travel and see more of the state, and I didn't mind getting the per diem either, because at the other place you had to pay for your own meals, although we didn't pay much. I think we only paid a dollar a day or so for food and lodging.

Geier: When you stayed in the CCC camp, were you paying lodging there too?

Mitchell: I don't recall exactly what it was, but I think it was about a dollar a day.

Geier: Okay.

Mitchell: Yeah, it was a good deal. As I say, the food was excellent. It was just really good. Then, when you did regeneration surveys, it was really hard work. You were climbing up and down, and you're out in the sun all day. I was young, so I could eat a lot of food. Boy, I could eat! First thing I did when I got home at night, was to drink a quart of milk. I'd drink the whole quart. (Laughs)

Geier: That reminds me of working at the dairy. I did hay work, we used to keep a half-gallon of milk in the fridge, and when we were done with the haying, we'd come in and drink almost the whole thing. (Laughter)

Mitchell: Yeah, I used to hay, too, when I was a kid. I remember, you'd get awful thirsty doing that.

Geier: When you stopped working on the Andrews, maybe you could kind of sketch out for me your subsequent career, where you went from there, the kinds of things you were involved in.

Mitchell: After the Andrews, I went to work for the entomology division of the, what did they call it? The division of Forest Insect Research [FIR], I guess it was called. The person I worked for was

Ken Wright. Right off the bat, he and I went out in the field, and we mostly worked on the Douglas-fir bark beetle, because there was a big outbreak of Douglas-fir bark beetles. The head of the division was Bob Furniss, who was as much instrumental for understanding entomology as anybody. He and Ken Wright; I worked for them as a summer employee a couple of years, and then, when I finally graduated, they said, you should go to Syracuse, as everyone went there if you were in forest entomology. So, I did too.

Geier: When did you go to Syracuse? That would be?

Mitchell: That was 1956 and '57. I guess the academic year of '56/57.

Geier: So, let's see, you got your master's degree there?

Mitchell: I got my masters, and then, while I was there, we had a fellow thinking of becoming a forest insect pathologist. They had arranged coop aid for him to go to Oregon State, and at the last minute, he decided he didn't want to do it. He was going to do something else. This coop-aid money was already established, and so, Bob Furniss asked me if I would like to take over that thing and work in entomology. I said, "Yeah, I would." So, I went back, and at that time, we had a new problem called a balsam wooly aphid. It was an introduced pest from Europe, and so they wanted me to work on my Ph.D. studying that. I had already worked on it in my masters back in Syracuse, so I just went on from there, went back to Oregon State and majored in entomology.

Geier: So, you finished up your degree when?

Mitchell: I got my degree in 1960.

Geier: That was a Ph.D.?

Mitchell: Yeah, a Ph.D. The year I was there was actually the first year Martha's [Brookes] husband was there. He taught insect physiology. I remember I took his first physiology class.

Geier: So, you met Martha somewhere around that time?

Mitchell: I don't remember when I met Martha. Just somewhere in there. It wasn't when I was a student. It was after I got my degree. I was still working in Portland. All the FIR people were working in Portland, and they built the lab in Corvallis [FSL-first part] in the time that we were there. Then, the entomology people and most of the biologists, moved out of Portland and down to Corvallis. I was one of the last biologists left at the Portland lab. I came down to Corvallis in '68. And somewhere after that, was when I met Martha.

Geier: From 1968?

Mitchell: Until 1980. And then I came over here [Bend], and I was here for two years. The accelerated research program for the spruce budworm had been going on in Portland, and Martha was in that program. One of the fellows who was the applications coordinator had become ill, to the point where he couldn't do his job anymore, so he left. At the same time, they were thinking about closing this lab down again. This was another time that they'd made a run, so people were searching around looking for a job, and the director transferred me to that job, for the person that left. Then Martha and I were working close together for the next two or two-and-a-half years.

Geier: Is this '83-'85, somewhere in there?

Mitchell: Yeah, about '82 through 84. About two-and-a-half years, I went there.

Geier: That was the same time they were trying to close the lab in Fairbanks, too, isn't it?

Mitchell: I don't remember whether Fairbanks was having a problem then or not. They might have been, I guess. This place [Bend] was going to be closed about three different times. This time was finally successful.

Geier: I think you said this already, but in 1984?

Mitchell: Then, after '84, I came back to Bend, and I was in Bend until I retired in '91.

Geier: What I want to do, is back up again, until the 1950s and 1960s. You were coming and going from the PNW Station, doing your graduate work. I was curious where you were doing your field work and who you were working with at that time, and if, in that time, you ever went back to the Andrews?

Mitchell: Yeah, I had been to the Andrews a few times after that, actually. I tried to get a study started on the population dynamics of an insignificant little aphid that lives on Douglas-fir almost everywhere. Almost every Douglas-fir has got one. I collected data for a couple years, and then I got transferred to some other thing and couldn't use the data. I've still got it, or still think I've got it.

Geier: So, you were doing some of that work on the Andrews sites?

Mitchell: Yeah, I did that, there was one plot I had at the Andrews, a one-acre plot that I kept populations. I think I did, I would measure populations, I think, four times a year. I went back there a number of times, but I don't think I've ever been back there since then, for any other reason.

Geier: When would that be, when you put that plot in on the Andrews?

Mitchell: Oh, my guess is around 1970, 1971, '72, something like that.

Geier: You were taking measurements four times a year, so how long did that go on?

Mitchell: I did it, I think, two years, and then I got another assignment. For one thing, I had an assignment in Switzerland for a year, and that sort of interfered with my field work that I had going continuously.

Geier: And then when you came back, you started up on something else?

Mitchell: Yeah, started out on something else.

Geier: Maybe you could talk about those two years of going down there, sort of infrequently, but enough to get a sense of the place. What's your sense of how the place had changed from 1953 to 1971?

Mitchell: Oh, it had changed dramatically, because there was a lot of roads in that hadn't been there. Some of those roads I'd laid out myself and P-lined, but I had a hard time orienting where I was, because it was all old-growth forest with, there was some clear-cuts, but there were clear-cuts I knew, but the other clear-cuts would disorient you when you're used to seeing or not seeing

them. So, it was a different feeling, I guess, to get into this forest that now had clear-cuts where it didn't used to have them.

Geier: So, what you remembered was P-lines through old growth, but once you got back what you saw were roads through clear-cuts?

Mitchell: Yeah, through old growth.

Geier: So, what's your perception of the kind of people involved, you were talking earlier about some pretty close connections between the staff, or, you were doing work on the experimental forest, and people who were with the ranger district who were down there in the camp. What is your perception of those kinds of things in 1970-1973?

Mitchell: Well, I don't remember that there was a lot of work from the people on the district with the site. I don't know that they tolerated us, or helped us out, or anything. I think they were generally helpful. The ranger at the time was kind of a (laughs) fundamentalist, I remember,

Geier: Fundamentalist in the forestry sense, or something else?

Mitchell: He was a fundamentalist in the religious sense. He and his wife I guess were pretty strong Baptists or something. I shouldn't say Baptist, I have no idea what they were, but I remember Roy Silen used to have a poker party. He had a trailer. He didn't actually live in one of the bunkhouses. He had a silver stream trailer he lived in, and he'd have poker parties up there. I remember Brit Ash was the ranger at the time. I think he said he absolutely forbid him to do that, and I think they just ignored him and played poker anyway.

Geier: So that was Brit Ash then. Do you know how to spell that name?

Mitchell: Brit was his first name, Brit, and Ash.

Geier: Okay. So that was in the '50s?

Mitchell: That was when I first went there in '53. He was the ranger there, and he had been the ranger on that district for, gosh, 20 years, or something like that.

Geier: And Roy was talking about him a little bit.

Mitchell: Yeah, (laughing) he was a kind of a salty old guy. I remember when I did go work for the district, and I was working, of course, under him. Mike [Kerrick] and I were, I remember one place we worked in Quartz Creek, we were cruising timber back there, and it was about 5 or 6 miles back into that place, and when you come out, it was all downhill, there was a lot of switchbacks, and we'd come straight across the switchbacks. In fact, it made Brit Ash very angry, if we didn't cut switchbacks. (Laughs) It was, "Break down the trail," and so forth.

Geier: What's your recollections about Mike Kerrick in that period?

Mitchell: He was a student, just like I was, and he was an outgoing, easy guy to know. We had a lot of fun together. He and I camped out many evenings, many nights, in mosquito [infested] places and everything.

Geier: Had you known him before you went down there?

Mitchell: No, I hadn't known him at all, you know, he was a student from, as I say, I think it was Minnesota. I'm not real sure.

Geier: Yeah, I think that's right.

Mitchell: Yeah, and he was a senior, I was a sophomore, so he was the natural leader. I did what he told me to do. He had worked for that district in summers before.

Geier: In fact, he said he did some fire work before. Did you guys talk at all about your fire work? Because you'd done some of that yourself?

Mitchell: I can't remember that we talked about that. I don't recall that. We had some interesting places, in fact, that one place I mentioned that we cruised where we camped out. It was the most magnificent camp you ever saw. It was just like a cathedral, these huge Douglas-firs, and a creek running through it, and nothing growing underneath it. It was so dark under there, you know, it was a magnificent camp. But the mosquitos would practically eat you alive. Then another place, where you had to cross the Blue River on a log. I remember going up to a place called Tidbits Creek, and we put out a timber sale up there, Mike and I. I guess the timber had been laid out, and we were mapping it in. And ran a compass line around there. Yeah, somebody had laid it out with string, and there's a guy named Corson Williams, who was the sort of engineer there. He laid it out, and then Mike and I came in and stapled tags on all the trees that we went around to make it more permanent.

And we also mapped it with a compass. And that was a hell of a place to get in and out of. I mean, there was huge, big rocks in there and no trails, just cross country. We had a guy that come in with us, his name was Al Weiner. I'll never forget Al. He was coming in there to help us work, and we told him that he had to leave by 3 o'clock, or he'd never get down to the river before it got dark. So, he didn't make it, and he had to cross this river on a log. It was a roaring river, and you didn't want to do it in the dark, because you could hear that thing right when you'd get there. So he didn't make it, so he ended up spending the whole night camped over there. Corson Williams, who was sort of our boss, told us, we're not gonna wait for him. We did wait for dark, and when it was pitch dark, we had a hell of a time getting out of there. Because you couldn't see anything. It was under old-growth and everything walking down this trail. So, he spent the whole night on that river, he didn't smoke, so he didn't have any matches.

Geier: Oh jeez. That would be a good reason to take up smoking, I guess. How far up was that?

Mitchell: Well, you went up like you were going into Andrews, and then there was a trail that went off before you got up there, and you crossed the river, and then went up. I'd have to look at a map. I can't even remember which the direction is, but I remember you had to cross Blue River on this log, and then just take off cross-country.

Geier: Did you ever encounter any problems with wildlife?

Mitchell: No, I never did. Mosquitos, but that was just one of those things you had to put up with.

Geier: Hmm. Jerry Franklin told a story about how he would push himself, when he first started working out there, he'd push himself to go out into the woods farther and farther each time, until he felt comfortable out there. Now you grew up around Tillamook area?

Mitchell: Yeah, I was raised in the woods. I'm surprised at Jerry Franklin, he was raised in Waldport or Reedsport, or someplace down there.

Geier: Camas, I think, or maybe not. [Camas, Washington/Columbia River east of Vancouver].

Mitchell: Anyhow, I'd lived almost all of my life in the woods, so it just seems natural. It never occurred to me to be concerned. (Chuckles)

Geier: Aside from other people holding you back until after dark, were there ever any problems there?

Mitchell: No, it didn't bother me any, you know, we had a trail to go out, and the only problem was finding the trail. We had this dog, Tippy, who was pretty good, if you could keep ahold of Tippy. That belonged to Corson Williams.

Geier: Whose dog was that?

Mitchell: That was Corson Williams' dog, Tippy all went in it. The first thing that Tippy did in the morning was give you a stick, and if you were dumb enough to pick up that stick and throw it, you had Tippy for the rest of the day. (Laughter)

Geier: What kind of dog was that?

Mitchell: Oh, sort of a mixture, it looked like mostly a border collie or something. Another funny story with Tippy was, at this one place up Quartz Creek, where Mike and I had camped. The packer would bring us food in. Well, we didn't tell him what, he just sort of brought food. I don't know how it evolved, but anyhow, we always had lots of Spam, neither Mike nor I would eat it, and it just sort of accumulated. He'd always bring another load the next week. (Laughs) So, Al Weiner and I remember somebody else in the [forest] supervisor's office would come up there to ... I don't know why they were up there. I think they were just out seeing what was going on in the woods. Anyhow, they stayed with us one night. Al Wiener saw the Spam, and was going to show us some new way he was going to treat it that would make it more palatable. He was cutting it up, I remember. There was a stump, he'd throw it [Spam] on the stump, he'd cut another [piece] and Tippy would go 'oomph,' he'd cut another, and Tippy would go 'oomph' (laughter). He [Tippy] ate a whole can of that, and Mike and I were just sitting there watching Tippy eat this. (Laughter)

Geier: So, Al wasn't aware the dog was eating it?

Mitchell: No, he wasn't aware of it. (Laughter) And he turned around and saw that, and he started throwing rocks at poor old Tippy. You could see Tippy standing around the edge of the camp all night, as we had a fire in there. (Laughter)

Geier: That's probably the best use of Spam I ever heard. (Laughter) If you kind of compare those experiences to the time you came back and the kind of field work you were doing in '71 and '72, how accessible were the sites you were working on, how did you get there?

Mitchell: Well, the place I was working on was in Sale #2, as I recall, and that sale had just started when I was there. I actually took regeneration surveys [in the 1950s], so then when I came back there the trees were, oh, 4 to 5 feet tall, and I knew that was what size trees I wanted, because I wanted to stay with them a few years as they grew. So, the place I picked was right alongside the

road, I wanted one that was easily accessible and that was fairly flat, and so that's where I took it right beside the road and right beside these trees and everything.

Geier: I think you said this earlier, but what size plot were you working with there?

Mitchell: It was about an acre. And I remember, as I recall, I took samples from 50 trees per acre.

Geier: Let's see now, you were in Bend, but now, were you in the Corvallis Lab at this time?

Mitchell: Yeah, I was in Corvallis.

Geier: So, when you went down there to work, did you go down there overnight?

Mitchell: No, we used to go down, we'd get up real early in the morning, drive down there, and then come home the same day. And at the time, we didn't have a lot of operational money.

Geier: Were there facilities there at that time, if you'd wanted to stay?

Mitchell: No, there were no facilities there. I was surprised to find out from Martha that there are facilities now. I haven't been there since then [early 1970s]. There were no facilities any time I was there. Of any kind out there. There was nothing out there. [1st- maintenance structure, early 1970s]

Geier: You should go visit it, it's pretty interesting now.

Mitchell: Is that right?

Geier: It's like a hotel there. So, when you went there, you'd basically pack in whatever you needed to survive for that day?

Mitchell: Yeah, you could drive right to the plot I was going to. And when I was first there too, there were graduate students that had a tent down by the river. That was Harry [Howard] Horton [one of the graduate students]. I don't know if you've met Harry Horton?

Geier: No.

Mitchell: He was a graduate student who was working on the fish population on Lookout Creek. He was working on, I don't know if it was his Ph.D. or his masters.

Geier: At OSU in fisheries?

Mitchell: Huh?

Geier: At OSU, was he in the fisheries program?

Mitchell: Yeah, he was at OSU, a graduate student in their program, and he later became part of the faculty. I think he may still be on the faculty. Or, he may be retired, but I think he still lives in Corvallis. Martha knows him.

Geier: So he was doing research there for a while?

Mitchell: Yeah, he was doing research on the fish population on Lookout Creek. I helped him one time, and I gather that other people, Roy and Hank, helped him other times. We'd be dragging a net up Lookout Creek, we'd all get in the creek, and drag this net up the creek, and net the fish out of a certain little stretch of the stream, just to count the population.

Geier: Do you recall much about the fish population. High, low, or --?

Mitchell: No, I can't tell you. I know I always envied Howard, because he could go out and he had a collector's permit. He could fish anytime he wanted to. (Laughter)

Geier: So, did you do fishing up there?

Mitchell: I fished right across the river from Belknap Camp. This is on the McKenzie River. You just went about, oh, 50 yards through the brush [to river]. I had never fished, really much, until then, and Roy Silen taught me how to roll-cast with flies, so I used to go over there and fly fish. You know, I used to catch quite a few fish out of there.

Geier: I think this was before Al Levno was up there. Did you run across him up there?

Mitchell: Al wasn't there then, no. I know Al Levno, but I didn't really know him until after this.

Geier: How did you come to know him?

Mitchell: Well, when we were both at Corvallis.

Geier: Okay. So, this was after you were up there. Did you ever talk about it with him when you were up there?

Mitchell: I must have, but I don't recall our conversations. It seems like we ought to have talked about it.

Geier: It wasn't like a central characteristic of your -- [work]

Mitchell: No, there wasn't any reason to talk about it.

Geier: I want to get back to this point that we started out with; some of the differences between the 1950s and the 1970s. It didn't sound like there were too many other researchers up there, like you had earlier in the 1950s. It was rare, apparently, to run across someone working up there, like Harry Horton. Is that right?

Mitchell: I can't remember. Bob Tarrant worked up there when I was first there. At least, I saw him up there one time. He was the soils guy, and later become one of the directors of the station [PNW]. But I had no idea what he was doing, and he wasn't there very long.

Geier: It sounds like whenever you ran across someone up there, it was kind of an event.

Mitchell: Yeah, they would sort of come in to look around or something, and then they were gone again. I remember Leo Isaacs was there too, and I remember that very well, because Leo Isaacs was sort of the guru of the first silviculture [major player, 1st half of 20th Century in Pacific Northwest forest science]. I mean, when I was in school, that's all they ever talked about, was Leo Isaacs. I mean, that was a great man. Actually, I rode in a car with him. I thought that was something.

Geier: So, he was just up there on a tour?

Mitchell: I think so. I remember there was quite a few people in the car, and I don't remember any other people other than him. I guess I was so enamored that I'd get to meet the great man.

Geier: So, did he make an impression on you?

Mitchell: Yeah, he seemed a real kindly old man. I remember him talking to everybody, and people were always asking him questions, and the very slow and considerate way that he talked. I thought, "Gosh, this guy, he really does know a lot."

Geier: So, that was when you were just an undergraduate student?

Mitchell: Yeah, I was just a sophomore, so what do I know? (Laughter)

Geier: Can you recall anything like that from the '70s?

Mitchell: No, I rarely ran into anybody when I was working up there. And I don't even know that there was anybody really in charge of the forest that you told when you were working there. You just sort of did your work, and since I was working on a plot nobody would be the least bit interested in, I just think there wouldn't be anybody else working on top of me. I'm not sure I even told anybody that I was working there. There wasn't anybody that you could tell, that I recall.

Geier: So, you didn't really interact with any staff down there or anything?

Mitchell: No, no. There were no facilities on the forest, and I can't remember that there was anybody who was there [on-site, U.S. Forest Service]. There used to be a technician I remember, and I guess maybe that was Al.

Geier: Probably Al [Levno].

Mitchell: And I may have talked to Al. Maybe Al and I knew I was up there, but that was about it.

Geier: Where did you encounter people when you went up there, if it wasn't on the Andrews? Did you run into people in the Blue River district?

Mitchell: Al, I knew, of course, from the lab in Corvallis, but I never did run into anybody up there. There was no place up there for them to be, other than there was the ranger station at Blue River, and I think maybe Mike [Kerrick] was the ranger there then.

Geier: Yeah, I think that's right. Did you have any interaction with people at the ranger station?

Mitchell: No, I didn't. I think I may have stopped to see Mike, but just a friendly, social thing.

Geier: Do you recall going to Blue River at all in that period?

Mitchell: In the town of Blue River?

Geier: Yeah, in Blue River?

Mitchell: Maybe stopped for a cup of coffee or something.

Geier: I'm just trying to get a sense of how the community changed.

Mitchell: Oh, Blue River hasn't changed a heck of a lot. (Laughter) From 1945, that's when I first knew it, it's pretty much the same. Very little change. I remember when I was there in '45 there was a big flap about somebody wanting to put in a trolley for a diner. There was no place to eat in that place, so that was a big flap. Since then it has changed very little, other than there is a road that bypasses [the town]. The road used to go through the middle of Blue River, of course. Went by the high school, and down past Sparks Ranch. In 1945 it was just a little quarter of a mile there, and Sparks ranch had been a famous roadhouse, or something, in its day, going back into the '20s, I

think. Mrs. Sparks had home-cooked food, and when you got there at dinner time, everybody ate at the same table. We ate at the same table all the time, with a bunch of engineers.

Geier: So, you guys went there, that in the 1940s, when you worked there as a student?

Mitchell: Well, I was just 15 years old then. I was still in high school.

Geier: So this was in 1945?

Mitchell: Yeah, that was in 1945, when I was in Sparks Ranch. Sparks Ranch was still there when I was there in '53, but I don't think it was serving as a boarding house anymore, and I think Mrs. Sparks had died, and she was the guiding force.

Geier: You mentioned earlier you might have stopped in occasionally for coffee. Where would that be?

Mitchell: Well, just about the same place that diner was at, I think. It was right in Blue River. That's the only time I stopped there.

Geier: Some other people mentioned there was a bar in town where people stopped for drinks after work up there?

Mitchell: Yeah, there was a bar, but I never did go there at the time for drinking. I remember there used to be a place that had topless dancers [the Cougar Room], or something. That was really quite a change from the old days. That was about the only significant change, I think, in Blue River. Otherwise, as I say, Blue River didn't look a lot different. In fact, there was a fly-tying shop that was there in later years. That was there when I was first up there as a kid, a 15-year-old kid.

Geier: Can you recall, from when you were there in the '50s, did the people of Blue River have any sense of what the forest up there was, the experimental forest? Do you have any sense of that?

Mitchell: I doubt it. I doubt they knew of the experimental forest unless they happened to work up there for a logging crew. The logger that logged it was named Mike Savelich. He was from Eugene, and I don't really know where all his people came from. (Laughs) Some of them were relatives. He was from Yugoslavia [Croatian heritage], and he brought a whole bunch of people up there when I was there who couldn't even speak English.

Geier: Mike Kerrick was telling me he hired a lot of Croatians. This would explain why. They were his relatives?

Mitchell: They were his relatives, yeah. (Laughs) I think they were all his kinfolk, you know.

Geier: And they spoke in Croatian?

Mitchell: I think so. I had tried to talk to them, and I wasn't getting anywhere. I remember though, he was putting culverts in, and culverts were really expensive. I didn't realize that until I worked up there. It's a piece of tin; couldn't be expensive. They'd make these culverts as short as possible, and his relatives from Croatia, or wherever they were from in Yugoslavia, built rocks around them, so he had nice rock works around the end of the culverts. I thought we had the nicest looking culverts of anybody in the forest. I imagine the rocks are still there. There was nice rock work all around it.

Geier: Art McKee, I think told me [story about culverts]. Do you recall if Roy Silen had an interest in that, as possibly [help in] solving problems with roads? [Road washouts, erosion, runoff, etc.]

Mitchell: Yeah, he was interested in that. I remember him talking about doing measures to reduce the flow of the erosion around culverts and stuff like that.

Geier: Your recollection of Mike Savelich and his crew, was that Roy Silen suggested they do that?

Mitchell: Well, it may have been a cooperative thing. I have no idea how that come about. But I remember Roy talking about it, and I remember seeing these guys do it.

Geier: Did you have much interaction with Mike Savelich yourself?

Mitchell: No, I didn't. I had met him, but he didn't talk much to a sophomore. But I do remember more than once, he would say things like, "Now there's a good tree there," or, "It's gonna fall down," or "Why don't we take that tree out." And Hank Gratkowski would never let him have the tree he wanted. He would never give in: "No, that tree is gonna stay!" (Laughs) Hank was a very intense guy. When you meet him, you'll see, he was so different than Roy. There was a lot of conflict, really, between those two, because they worked so differently. I mean, two different personalities entirely, and Hank, I think knew what he was going to do to

End of Side A, Tape 1 (of 2)

Begin Side B, Tape 1 (of 2)

Geier: Sorry, you were talking about?

Mitchell: Well, as I said, Hank was a very intense guy. He was very organized, he knew exactly what he was going to do, and he had everything lined up and it had to go that way. If it didn't, he'd get very upset. Well, Roy had a big broad plan, maybe for this week, or maybe for this month, or maybe just for this year, I'm not sure, but when you went out for work in the morning, he wasn't always sure what he was going to do. (Laughter) That's the way Roy worked. He could carry all this stuff in his mind, and he appeared to be disorganized. I really respected Roy, because he was really a sharp guy, but Roy, that's the way he worked. And Roy also thought about everything, I mean everything. There was nothing that he wouldn't think about. He'd have some plan about, it would be forestry, or it would be world politics, or anything. He'd expound upon it, and it just used to drive Hank crazy. (Laughter)

Geier: So, Hank was much more detail-oriented than Roy?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Geier: That could be a good mix, where you'd have one person who was kind of a broad thinker, and the other one was kind of a detail man. But you said they had conflicts?

Mitchell: Yeah, I think it bothered Hank more than it bothered Roy. I don't know if it bothered Roy. I mean, he's so easy-going of a guy. It shouldn't have bothered him particularly, but it used to bother Hank. I knew it bothered Hank, because he would occasionally sit down and start griping at me, and I had dinner with Hank a few times, and was friends with his family. He lived right in McKenzie Bridge. He had a house there, and a good family, so I had dinner with him a few times.

He was an old-fashioned, old-world kind of a guy, in his family relationships. He made all the decisions. (Laughs) I mean, his wife couldn't buy groceries unless he told her what to buy.

Geier: He's still around, isn't he?

Mitchell: The last time I knew, he lived in Roseburg.

Geier: Do you have any contact with him anymore?

Mitchell: No, I haven't had any contact with Hank for a long time. Not since he worked for a while in Corvallis, and that was the last time I knew him.

Geier: So, you re-connected with him later when you started working in Corvallis?

Mitchell: Yeah, I got slightly connected with him, but not very seriously, and I never really did get close to him after that early Andrews experience. We had some good times, and we worked a long ways out in the woods. (Laughs) One place we worked out in the woods was by the river, and we were sitting having lunch. So, he was pushing rocks down the hill, watching them roll down the hill. There was a Douglas-fir sapling stand way down the hill, I don't know exactly where, but I'd been there one time, but it was all Douglas-fir saplings. These rocks rolled through and skinned up a whole bunch of trees. Roy Silen went out there about 2 or 3 weeks later, and he said, (laughing), "Some sons-of-a-bitches, you know, rolled rocks down there." Hank and I were just sitting there, saying, "Wonder who would have done that?" (Laughing)

Geier: Was Roy incensed about that?

Mitchell: Yeah, he was really unhappy about that. I mean, he was really mad that somebody would go scarring up those trees with these damn rocks. Wow, when we were rolling them rocks, we hadn't been thinking about those trees down there.

Geier: Sure. You mentioned that Roy was always thinking about things to do. What's your recollection about his perception of that experimental forest and what its purpose was?

Mitchell: Well, I remember, he was very excited about it. I remember him saying, "Here's an opportunity. I get to open up a forest all by myself and have it planned out the way I want it to be done." He was really excited about that kind of work, and what it would turn out to be. I remember, I was so surprised in later years, when he said he was going into genetics, and completely retooling, essentially. He was going back to school in genetics and so forth, and getting away from that forest. I thought that forest would be his life.

Geier: But he wasn't really there very long.

Mitchell: I don't know how long he was there.

End Section A, Mitchell Transcript / Start Section B of Transcript

****Both sections of interview took place on same day and place, Sept 20, 1996, Bend, Oregon.**

Russ Mitchell: I don't know how long he [Roy Silen] was there.

Max Geier: He left the year after you were there. Yeah, he was there from '48 to '54, and he mentioned that it was put under the control of the forest supervisor in '54, '55, and he didn't ever have the heart to go back there. So, it sounds like you were saying, he took a very personal stake?

Mitchell: Yeah, he really was like that. I don't know if the supervisor at that time was a guy named Bruckart [John D. Bruckart], or Buckner, something like that. He was a hard-nosed son-of-a-bitch, and I think there was some animosity between the experimental forest and Bruckart.

Geier: You can't recall what it was about?

Mitchell: I can't remember his reasons, because I was just on the periphery, listening in on the conversations.

Geier: You mentioned earlier that Roy had conflicts because of his poker games, something that cropped up with Brit Ash. Was this the same kind of thing, or was this something different?

Mitchell: No, that was different. I sort of got the feeling the thing with Buckner [Bruckart], or whatever his name was, was about land management and how they were doing it, and was maybe about even timber sales. I've got no idea how that comes out.

Geier: Now, you had a lot of work experience at that time, which was laying out roads and things, but you'd been around a lot of forests.

Mitchell: I hadn't been around a lot of forests, but I had worked in the forest, in fire protection up until that year, but I'd never done anything in management in this area. It was all pretty new to me. The engineering part, the p-lines, and so forth. I'd already had the first year of engineering [training], so I knew how to throw a chain and put out a compass, simple things like that.

Geier: I was wondering if anything struck you at that time as unusual, the way the roads were being put in, or about the streams and different things with water? [Water runoff, turbidity, erosion, etc.]

Mitchell: I had no preconceptions, since I'd never put in a road before. The only thing I remember in engineering is they said no roads should be more than 6 percent [grade], and when we got out there, we actually put some grades in that were steeper than 6 percent. I remember, Roy said, "The reason for that is that we've got to keep our road distance down as much as possible, and if it means running a little at 8 percent or something like that, well, we're going to do it. The loggers will complain about it, or they'll complain a little, but still, they'll log it anyway, and they'll haul it anyway." And that was it, because I remember when I did work for Corson Williams later in the year, we put in some roads there too, and, gosh darn, we stayed under 6 percent, and it was a real chore to do that sometimes. We put in a p-line that must have been 2 miles long, and had to take it all out again, because we'd got ourselves in a corner and couldn't get out of it without going over 6 percent. (Laughs) So, we put in a whole bunch more road so we could stay in the 6 percent rule.

Geier: That's interesting that Roy was waiving those rules.

Mitchell: Yeah, he was essentially waiving those rules. I don't know if he was permitted to do that, or not, but he did that.

Geier: You said that he made you keep the roads down, but you mean the mileage?

Mitchell: Yes. He [Silen] wanted to keep the number of linear miles of road to the absolute minimum for logging and access, because I guess they knew even then that roads were the source of a lot of erosion from logging.

Geier: You were talking earlier about his conflict with [Bruckart], or whatever his name was. I wonder if this would have been one of the points of controversy. Did they keep fighting over it?

Mitchell: I don't have the slightest idea.

Geier: It sounds like Mike Savelich would be the guy that would have to deal with it. (Laughter)

Mitchell: Mike, as I understand, was not the primary contractor. I think he was the subcontractor. Somebody with more money was ahead of him. You want to check that with Roy. He would certainly know much better than I would, but that was my impression, that there was somebody else. [Who held contracts, posted bonds, etc.]

Geier: He talked about Mike Savelich, but he didn't mention he was a subcontractor, but I didn't ask him that question.

Mitchell: Nobody else worked there. He essentially did everything by himself. But, I still think there was somebody else backing him, that had more money and could post bonds and all that stuff.

Geier: I already asked you whether you were involved with Mike at all. Were you around at all, or was there much road construction going on when you were there, or were you just running the lines out? You mentioned there was just the one road in there.

Mitchell: There was the road that went all the way up to 1 and 2 [HJA experimental watersheds], then, there was a road that went across the creek, but it didn't go very far. I cannot remember a road construction [project], but there must have been. Maybe not that year. Maybe that year there wasn't any. I don't know. I just don't remember any at all. I remember Mike worked out there, and the crew. And I think it was part of Mike's equipment, too, used before the dedication. They had to clean out someplace in the lower part of the watershed [for dedication ceremony], and the forest [Willamette NF] was involved in that. I remember there were people from the forest in on that, the dedication, cleaning up for that, and putting in that big rock with the plaque. [Constructed in 1953]

Geier: Yeah, you were there.

Mitchell: I was there the day of the renaming. I remember I had a pickup full of water that I had to put in peoples' cars that would overheat. They went all the way to the top [main road at that time] for some reason. I can't remember why, but there were some speeches up there. People were driving their individual cars, they'd drive clear up there, and I was providing water in case anybody overheated. I can't remember if anybody did overheat. Then, they came back down and had a talk down there. I remember Mrs. Andrews, who was there, and she said something.

Geier: I've got to talk to her too, because I've got a friend says she still lives in Corvallis, and she would be willing to be interviewed for that.

Mitchell: Oh, does she live in Corvallis?

Geier: Yes, but I haven't met her yet. What's her name? Virginia? [Willien was widow of H.J. Andrews, Virginia, daughter of Andrews, Carolyn, his grand-daughter. All were present at event].

Mitchell: I can't remember. I just remember she was there and talked.

Geier: Did she talk about her husband, do you remember?

Mitchell: I can't remember.

Geier: You said they went up to the top. Was that up to Carpenter Lookout?

Mitchell: No, you couldn't even get close to that. It was a place called unit 1-I, and that's where everybody had to go to get a sort of a distant view, the best view you could get [at that time].

Geier: Okay.

Mitchell: That was pretty high up, by the clear-cut that was so long and steep. You know that Hank and I, rolled (chuckling), those big things you put cables on? Those big reels? We rolled one of those things off of that thing. (Laughter) It must of went 50 feet, or maybe even 100 feet in the air, down at the bottom. It just popped out of there, popped clear out of the damn trees. (Laughing)

Geier: Oh, jeez. I guess you never told that one to Roy, eh? (Laughter)

Mitchell: No, we never told Roy about that one either. (Laughter) Yeah, that was fun though to watch it go. It took huge leaps when it went down.

Geier: So, Hank was with you on that one?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Geier: Sounds like you had good times with each other. (Laughter)

Mitchell: Yeah, he was serious in some respects, and in other places, he was young as a kid, I guess.

Geier: I'm curious about Roy's reputation for poker games. Did you go out there and do that at all when you were there?

Mitchell: No, I wasn't involved [in his games]. I was too young. I knew he had 'em, and I knew that Brit Ash disapproved of them, and his wife, too. She was sort of the leader of the McKenzie Bridge society up there.

Geier: Mrs. Ash?

Mitchell: Mrs. Ash, yeah. Roy wasn't married then. He didn't get married until sometime later. In fact, there is one of those stories you've probably heard about. In those days, we used to get paid in, your paychecks were really IBM cards, you know, the punch cards?

Geier: Oh yeah.

Mitchell: You weren't supposed to spindle or fold them, or anything like that? Well, Roy had spent a lot of time up there, and we ate in the mess hall, so he didn't really have a lot of reason to spend his money. The checks sort of accumulated, he wrapped them up in this rubber band, and he had them in this trailer house. And as I remember, and the mice got in there and apparently ate holes into his paychecks. (Laughing) Sort of screwed up the accounting system.

Geier: So, he's famous, I guess, for not spending money? I'm kind of curious here about what you mentioned of the McKenzie Bridge society. This would be a social circle up there of people that were residents in the area?

Mitchell: Yeah. I think so. That's just what Hank told me. Hank lived in McKenzie Bridge, so he knew about it, and we would be more cynical about them than they deserved. (Laughing) I really had no idea.

Geier: Hank Gratkowski was up there. How long was he up there? Do you know?

Mitchell: No, I don't really know. I think he came right out of school, right out of his master's degree. I think he got his masters at Harvard or Yale, one of those places, maybe Yale. And I don't know how long he stayed after Roy left. I think he went to Roseburg after that and worked down there. He started working on brush control, I knew that was his thing. Maybe he left the same time Hank did, I mean, that Roy did. Roy switched to genetics, and Hank switched to herbicide work.

Geier: They were both [PNW] station employees, weren't they?

Mitchell: Yeah, they were both station employees. But there was a lab, we had a research center or something in Roseburg for a while, and that's where he went.

Geier: You told me this already, but Hank had a house there and was he married?

Mitchell: Yes, he was married and had two children. He had a boy and a girl. Both preschoolers at the time, as I recall.

Geier: So, he was essentially looking from outside at McKenzie Bridge society?

Mitchell: Yeah, he'd just moved there, hadn't been there very long. He was from Pennsylvania. I think it was probably the first time he'd ever been in the Northwest.

Geier: Isn't that where Fred Swanson's from? [Pennsylvania]

Mitchell: Is that right?

Geier: I think I've got that right.

Mitchell: I remember Hank talking about, if they were going to give the world an enema, they'd give it in Scranton [Pennsylvania]. (Laughter) He wasn't sorry to leave that place at all.

Geier: It sounds like you spent most of your time with Hank.

Mitchell: Yeah, I probably spent most of my time with Hank. Far more than with Roy, but I remember doing p-lines with Roy, and I remember doing that more than anything. Gosh, he's hard to keep up with in the woods [Roy Silen]. That guy just goes like crazy.

Geier: Which one?

Mitchell: Roy does.

Geier: Roy. Is that right?

Mitchell: Yeah, (laughs) he really scrambles through the brush and everything.

Geier: You'd done quite a bit of walking through the woods yourself by that time.

Mitchell: Yeah, I wasn't really having a tough time of it, but you had to hustle right along. Roy had a cocker spaniel named Rusty, and when you'd start out in the morning, Rusty would run this way and that way like dogs do. But, by the end of the day, if you were coming back cross-country

through old-growth wind-throw and every other darn thing, that dog couldn't make it. (Laughter) You'd have to pick him up and put him over the log, because he just couldn't get over it. He had him completely pooped. And that was one time you could easily stay up with Roy, because he'd have to keep track of that dog, or I'd be keeping track of that mutt.

Geier: He wouldn't make you carry it though, right?

Mitchell: Well, I did carry it some. I wouldn't carry it very far, but I would carry it over a log or something like that.

Geier: Well, it's something then, you were there just for the summer, and you then you spent two years off and on later in the '70s, but that was a pretty tight-knit group you were in.

Mitchell: Yeah, that was a good group. That was a wonderful year. It probably was one of the most entertaining years, I think, that I have ever had. That, along with the work I did with Mike Kerrick when I went over to the district. That was a wonderful summer. And I was young enough, and working hard enough, that I could eat food like crazy and not get fat. (Laughs) I remember, the food was magnificent.

Geier: I remember I used to work for a farmer, and part of the wages was to give us dinner, and I never ate so much fish and chicken in my life. (Laughter) Anyway, you mentioned that this experience really had no parallels except when you worked with Mike Kerrick, for the district. [Blue River Ranger District, Willamette National Forest] Was that the same period?

Mitchell: Well, it's the same period. I worked on the experimental forest, and then I worked with Mike, because that's when they ran out of money.

Geier: Okay, I'm sorry.

Mitchell: And I don't remember how long that was. I think I worked with Mike for about a month.

Geier: That was the last part of the summer, right?

Mitchell: The last part of the summer, right.

Geier: Now, you didn't have a lot of contacts at the time you started working there for knowing what was going on, but compared to the other places you've worked, was there anything unusual about this place and the people you were working with, that really strikes you?

Mitchell: No, no, it wasn't unusual, it was certainly different than, after that when I worked for the experiment station. But then, I was on the road all the time working for Ken Wright as an entomologist, so it was an entirely different kind of life. Also, we went to Portland and that was our home base. So, we would be in Portland a lot, which was vastly different from when I was working at the Andrews. Portland was some distant place I'd heard about.

Geier: You'd never been there then?

Mitchell: Well, I shouldn't say that, because my folks had lived in Forest Grove, and that's only 20 miles from Portland. But the headquarters, I knew there was a headquarters somewhere in Portland, and there was a station director [PNW] there, and later, I got to know the station directors. But, I didn't know them that first year. In those days, I think the station director knew everybody in the station, including the summer employees. And he probably introduced himself to

me. It didn't ring a bell, but I know after, when I worked in later years as a summer employee, that I did know the director, and the director knew me, and everybody there. The station was a lot smaller then.

Geier: Did you know Phil Briegleb?

Mitchell: Oh yeah. I knew Phil.

Geier: Roy told this story about Phil Briegleb coming out and spotting the Andrews as a place to study old growth.

Mitchell: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that.

Geier: Yeah, he was telling me he went out there on a backpacking trip or something. I was just curious, I don't know how much you know about that.

Mitchell: I had known him when he was the director [PNW Station, 1964-71], of course, and I don't remember him before his being the director. (Laughs)

Geier: I can check with some other sources. Do you recall when he was the director?

Mitchell: I remember him when he was the director, but I didn't know him before he was the director. There was several people before him, as the director.

Geier: I don't get the sense he was much of a real close friend, or anything? You knew him, but -- ?

Mitchell: Oh, I knew him, yeah. But, he wasn't a close friend.

Geier: So, it was just a sign of the times, when the director knew most of the people in the station.

Mitchell: Yeah, in those days, he knew us all. I mean, he could say the name immediately. We talked to him socially, and we had coffee with him. The first year after Bob Cowlin [Robert Cowlin, PNW Station Director, 1951-60, colleague of H.J. Andrews, 1930-51] was there, he used to go out for coffee with everybody, and he was about the last one I can remember who did that. (Laughs) But, it's possible that Phil did. That was still pretty casual in those days, too.

Geier: Cowlin would take people out individually, or he would -- ?

Mitchell: Oh no, he would just join us. There would be a bunch of people, say, from the insect division, and we would all go down to the local [spot]. There was a little corner restaurant there where we would have coffee. For some reason we never made coffee in the place, we always went out. So, when we went out, Cowlin would very often join us. Had coffee with us.

Geier: That's an interesting change to go from going out for coffee to having it in.

Mitchell: Yeah, we never did that. I can't remember anybody having coffee in. We always had it out. And really, for about the rest of the time I was in the station, we still went out. Some people made their coffee in, but the station statisticians and I, and several other people; we always went out and had coffee. Even when I went back in 1982, from 1982 to '84, we'd still go out and have coffee.

Geier: I was going to say, once you'd gotten used to that, it would be hard to give that up. If you had any chance at all.

Mitchell: (Laughing)

Geier: Sounds like what you're saying is, once you got into entomology, the kind of research you were doing, was really more based out of the lab somewhere. You'd drive up to a place, do your work, and get out.

Mitchell: Yeah, and that we worked out of Portland and we didn't have any place we really stayed at. When I first started out, you hardly ever stayed in motels, you always stayed in ranger stations [U.S. Forest Service]. Ranger stations always seemed to have a place where you could stay, that they had extra space in the bunkhouse. Some of them even had a special room, and we used to do that fairly often. Another thing is, we worked a lot with Weyerhaeuser Company for some reason. I guess because Ken Wright had a lot of contacts with Weyerhaeuser, so I spent a lot of time on the Millacoma tree farms down at Coos Bay, and up at Mount St. Helens, and places where the Weyerhaeuser company [had operations], and we'd stay in their bunkhouse at night.

Geier: That raises some things. The first one, when you were working with people in the Forest Insect Research [FIR], were you aware of anybody doing research at that time in the Andrews?

Mitchell: No. There was nobody doing any research in the Andrews on anything. When I first started working for Ken, we were working on Douglas-fir beetles, and they had just had a big blowdown, and they'd had a lot of blowdown in the Andrews Experimental Forest in that one. They had one big, rip-roaring storm that took down a lot of trees. I remember, both Hank and Roy talked about that. You might want to talk to them about that. That was a scary time. They were clear back in the forest and had this damn windstorm come in and trees were falling all over the place.

Geier: In fact, I think Roy was talking about something like that.

Mitchell: Hank told me that they got down, I don't know if they were together or not, but they got down behind a great big tree that was already down, just waited it out, and the wind blew. That meant coming out late at night and crawling over a mess of wind-throw and so forth. If you would talk to him, I think that was something that would scare the crap out of anybody.

Geier: So, when was that particular windstorm? That wouldn't be the ...? [See Gratkowski 1956 publication in *Forest Science* about wind-throw in the Andrews Forest]

Mitchell: You know, I'm not sure exactly when that was. It was '52 that sticks in my mind as the windstorm and windfall, but it might have been, it might have been '51. The beetle, the Doug-fir beetle comes up pretty fast after wind-throw. What happens is the beetles go into the wind-throw and then the populations build up in one year, and then they go to green trees, and if you get enough wind-throw, and enough time to build up the population, I think there may have been a small wind-throw the year before that, too, so I think they had three years in a row of new wind-throw.

Geier: I'm curious, because with wind-throw and the concern about beetles, why there were not studies done on this at the Andrews. [More studies on wind-throw in later years in/around the HJA].

Mitchell: I don't know. I can't tell you that either. I can't remember that much beetle-kill in the Andrews, and that may have been it. There were other places where they had a lot of beetle kill,

and the coast, the Coast forest was one; coastal Siuslaw and on the Millacoma Tree Farm, which was Weyerhaeuser land. It seems to me that's where most of the beetle kill was, but I can't say for sure.

Geier: Now, I don't know enough about this, but –

Mitchell: -- But at any rate, I know they didn't do a lot of research up there. You know, it's funny, when I first went to FIR [Forest Insect Research], they didn't do a lot of research. We had two groups. We had surveys and we had research, they were sort of mixed, and people sort of did both. When I first came there, we did a lot more extension work than we did research.

Geier: Oh, I see.

Mitchell: And it sort of was a bone of contention, really, later in our careers, because everybody says, "Well, you were in the experiment station all this time, where are all the publications in those early years?" Well, there was no emphasis on publications, the emphasis was on going out and helping people with their problems.

Geier: So, you did surveys?

Mitchell: Yeah. And flew out to help the ranger districts, private companies and everybody else.

Geier: So, an experimental forest wouldn't really be on your priority list?

Mitchell: No, it really wasn't on the agenda.

Geier: Sure. Did you know Don Schmiede?

Mitchell: Yeah, I knew Don.

Geier: I talked to him on the Alaska study I did earlier. He talked along similar lines. In that case, he was talking about Alaska and the relative lack of resources and the number of people who needed them, and they were always in a reactionary mode. Is that true down here also?

Mitchell: Yeah, it was sort of that way too. We were always fighting the last major crisis, and we even had an organization that sort of generated crises. It was called the Northwest Forest Health Action Council. Any time there was a little crisis, they always got on it to see if they could get some more money from somewhere, and the government would give them more entomologists in those situations. Actually, I came on in that respect. The crisis that I came on for was the balsam woolly aphid [invasive species], which was an introduced pest from Europe that kills true firs.

Geier: Who was on that council?

Mitchell: Well, Bob Furniss, who was the division chief, really, he was sort of the hidden member. (Laughing) He was the guy who sort of pulled all the strings, but there was a guy named Bill Hagenstein, a lobbyist for industrial forestry, who was one of the critical guys. Another guy was named Ernie Colby. He was also sort of a lobbyist for, but he was more of a local lobbyist. Hagenstein was a lobbyist from Washington, D.C. Bob Furniss, and Ernie Colby, and Bill Hagenstein, sort of run that organization.

Geier: Hmm.

Mitchell: In that order, but Bob Furniss was sort of sub-rosa. He played behind the scenes, because he wasn't officially supposed to be doing anything like that.

Geier: So, Hagenstein was probably pretty much running the show?

Mitchell: Yeah. Colby and Hagenstein.

Geier: The other topic you covered earlier, you mentioned there was some work done at Mount St. Helens. Was there any relation to the volcanic plots up there in 1980?

Mitchell: No. I actually had several plots up there myself, but they were all blown flat [by 1980 eruption]. We worked on the balsam woolly aphid, first picked up in the Mount St. Helens area, and that's where we did our early work, on Weyerhaeuser Company land and the Gifford Pinchot Forest. The Weyerhaeuser Company property there was quite mixed; it was checker-boarded all throughout there. [Alternate section land-ownership pattern] Some of our best and biggest populations were on Weyerhaeuser land, so I worked with Norm Johnson. Do you know Norm Johnson?

Geier: Yeah.

Mitchell: There's more than one Norm Johnson. There's a Norm Johnson that's in the university system [forest policy professor in OSU], and there's a Norm Johnson that's president of the Weyerhaeuser Company.

Geier: Okay. I don't know that one [Weyerhaeuser].

Mitchell: (Laughing) That's the one I'm more concerned with.

Geier: Okay. That's an important distinction. The reason I asked is that the reason that Mount St. Helens got my attention, is that the Andrews group as it eventually emerged in the 1970s, really kind of jelled around the Mount St. Helens explosion [1980], as I understand. They went up there and had this "pulse," [group science endeavors that involved intense field work in one locale for 2 weeks or so] and I'm just curious if you had any interaction, if you had any plots up there?

Mitchell: No. I had plots up there, but I never really was involved with them. They were not just in poor condition, they had just disappeared. I mean, there was nothing left of them. They just blew 'em all to pieces [St. Helens' May 18 eruption]. There was nothing there to look at. (Laughs)

Geier: So there would be a lot of down trees in other areas up there?

Mitchell: Yeah, but I never really got involved in it at all. I would have liked to, because it was country I'd worked in a lot. For example, I knew Harry Truman [old-timer who refused to leave his lodge on Spirit Lake at base of Mt. St. Helens, became a media "celebrity," and was then killed in landslide and eruption]. I used to go out and shoot the shit with him.

Geier: He was the guy up there at Spirit Lake?

Mitchell: Yeah, he was the guy that got buried up there. [1980 eruption] I worked up there quite a bit and for a long time, but it was always my impression the Andrews Group got started before that. The university got involved at Andrews, once the university got involved and there was National Science Foundation money drifting in, that's when things really started happening out there.

Geier: Yeah.

Mitchell: I don't think the Forest Service money was key. There wasn't a lot of it in there, I don't think, because it was nothing fundamental. It [Forest Service research in 1950s] was mostly silviculture research and watersheds, stuff like that.

Geier: Yeah, I think that's pretty accurate. I think in the 1970s, the IBP sort of took off, and Fred [Swanson] was talking about Mount St. Helens as a time when they kind of took their show on the road and really started to think about the broader implications.

Mitchell: Yeah, that could be.

Geier: The thing I'm most interested here is that you had a really memorable experience in that summer you were down there, and then you did go back there, but the Andrews never really became a central focus of anything you did after that.

Mitchell: No. Never did. There was no reason to, I guess. I worked on a number of different problems, and that one little aphid study was the only one that I did. I only went there because it fit in geographically. I had some plots elsewhere, and I wanted that location, because it was in the Cascades, and I had some in the coast forests. I knew the trees should be about the right age, I could drive to them, and that they would be protected, at least hoped they would get protection. (Laughter) I had a bad experience on the Wind River, or on the Cascade Head [Experimental Forest], where I'd had a plot that I'd been working on for a number of years, that got cleaned out, because they forgot about it. Bob Ruth was in charge of the forest then, he'd forgotten all about it, and allowed the Siuslaw National Forest to get in there, and just really screwed up 10 years of work.

Geier: Did you do much work at Cascade Head?

Mitchell: Yeah, I worked over there quite a bit. I worked on the Sitka spruce weevil for quite a bit, and I had a plot over there I did every year for 25 years, and with Ken Wright and Norm Johnson, who I mentioned. We published on it just recently.

Geier: Do you recall much about the administration of that forest, the people that were involved? Who did you have contact with over there is sort of what I'm getting at.

Mitchell: Well, the guy I mentioned, Bob Ruth, was the forester who was in charge of that. And there was a technician over there who lived there, we'd talk to him, he kept the roads cleaned out, and generally knew where things were. [Jack Booth] But Bob Ruth was the forester-in-charge, and he actually lived over there for a while in that cabin. Then there was another guy named Verne Yerkes, that lived there afterwards, and he later went back to Minnesota, to the experiment station over there. Another guy named Bob Matteson, was a forester on the forest there. I don't think anybody moved in there after Verne Yerkes. He actually lived in that house. There was a nice house there. Have you been there?

Geier: No, I haven't.

Mitchell: Well, there's a nice house there that's still there. Foresters did live in that house.

Geier: I'm curious, because Roy talked about the development of Cascade Head in comparison to what he was doing over at the Andrews. You obviously worked there for a long period of time, it sounds like. It was 25 years that you were involved there?

Mitchell: Yeah, 25 years.

Geier: There's a lot of reasons for why you would put in sites there, but did you have any perceptions of the differences between the two experimental forests?

Mitchell: Well, it was more established, for one thing. Cascade Head had places where we could stay, that was the one reason we stayed there, and of course, because I was working with the Sitka spruce weevil, obviously, the Sitka spruce weevil is not a problem in the Andrews, because they didn't have any Sitka spruce.

Geier: But facilities, it sounds like?

Mitchell: Yeah, the facilities service there was nice. They had a good place to stay, and you didn't have anything like that in the Andrews. As I said, I didn't even know they had anyplace there until I was talking to Martha the other day.

Geier: It's all been built since '90 something, '91 or '92. [Permanent campus at H.J. Andrews with administration, lodging, classroom, and laboratory facilities, mostly built in early 1990s.]

Mitchell: Is that right?

Geier: Before that it was trailer houses, things like that. [Nicknamed "Ghetto in the Meadow"]

Mitchell: But anyhow, there was no place to stay there, and there's really not many places to stay up the river. I can only think of one motel up there by the golf course, that's the only place I know of to stay up there. [Up-river area, Blue River to McKenzie Bridge and east of there in river valley.]

Geier: So really, the isolation of the site was a deterrent for you to do any work up there?

Mitchell: Yeah, it's really not an easy spot to get to, and if you do get up there, it's not a place you can get a place to stay.

Geier: Uh-huh.

Mitchell: And there just wasn't that much research on Douglas-fir. It's interesting how entomology works. I always wondered how long it would take everybody, somebody in Washington [D.C. office] to find out that we didn't do much entomology research on the west side. Most of it was done on the east side [of Cascades' crest] But all the entomologists were stationed on the west side.

Geier: Huh.

Mitchell: I was really one of the first entomologists to come to the east side, but I was probably the one who worked most on the west side. (Laughs)

Geier: How did that happen?

Mitchell: I don't know how that happened, but, when this lab wanted an entomologist, I was selected. I wasn't sure exactly how I was selected, but I didn't mind it.

Geier: That's an interesting comment, because I think that Roy was mentioning how all of their work before they started at the Andrews was on the east side. Roy or Al Levno, one of the two, were talking about it. I think it was Roy,

Mitchell: Yeah.

Geier: Then he was put in charge of developing this forest on the west side. His research interests were there. I'm just intrigued with what you were saying about how the facilities at Cascade Head were attractive to you. What kind of things were you doing there?

Mitchell: Well, Sitka spruce weevil was a problem in the spruce all up and down the coast of Oregon and Washington, and into British Columbia. Ken Wright, who I worked for, had always been interested in it, so he had worked a lot with Franz Auerbach in Seaside, and he wanted to do some work down in Cascade Head, too, in the stands of Sitka spruce. That's where the work is done, and so that's one reason why we were there, actually. I didn't select those at all. Ken selected them, and then I just went on from there.

Geier: So, the kind of work you were doing required you to spend a lot of time in the field?

Mitchell: Yeah, we had a lot of plot work. Even when he was doing genetics work, Roy was involved there, because there was a genetic component to the program. They tried to do some grafting, they did a lot of grafting, and I think they did some sawing work.

Geier: Sawing work?

Mitchell: Sawing, you know, making cuttings.

Geier: Oh.

Mitchell: And the plot we had over there, was a plot that had 10 species and hybrids of spruce on it. That's the one we stayed on for 25 years to check on them, on the degree of infestations or attacks on the various species and the hybrids, and how much it affected growth. So we carried that on. That was just one of the plots. We had a couple other plots up in Raymond, Washington, too.

Geier: Hmm. It sounds like Ken Wright was pretty influential in them.

Mitchell: Yeah, he sort of got those started. He and Norm Johnson, the guy who, as I said was vice president [of Weyerhaeuser]. He wasn't always a vice president, he used to be just like us. (Laughs)

Geier: Yeah.

Mitchell: Actually, he was a classmate of mine. We went to school together.

Geier: At OSU?

Mitchell: Oregon State, yeah.

Geier: What you just mentioned there, I was going to follow up on that. I don't want to keep you too long, if you need to be somewhere.

Mitchell: No, I don't have to be anywhere.

Geier: Okay. Just a couple more things here. I think you mentioned earlier that Hank Gratkowski was a graduate of Harvard or Yale?

Mitchell: I think Yale. The Yale School of Forestry.

Geier: Okay. Did you ever get any sense after getting your degree at OSU, that Syracuse was the place that you were kind of expected to go?

Mitchell: Yeah, that's where all forest entomologists in those days went.

Geier: Ken didn't go there, did he?

Mitchell: Well, Ken actually went to Duke.

Geier: Yeah, I'm sorry, that's right.

Mitchell: He was the exception, though. Most everybody else in our group, Furniss and [unintelligible, possibly Wright] they got all of them, almost everyone, almost all the Canadian entomologists too. We knew almost all of them, too, and all the forest entomologists from elsewhere had gone to Syracuse, and they had all worked for a guy named [unintelligible-noted name at SU.]

Geier: So, it was kind of a tight-knit group?

Mitchell: Yeah, everybody knew everybody. Even graduate students knew all the graduate students, and you knew all the people working in it.

Geier: That's what I was getting at, several schools are like that, close knit, schools like Yale and Syracuse, where people go there and get pretty close ties. Did you ever get a sense at Oregon State University that this kind of a thing was going there?

Mitchell: No, I never did. It's interesting, as I never even gave it a great deal of thought, and I knew a lot of graduate students at Syracuse who weren't entomologists, but when I was at Oregon State, I was in the entomology department. I don't know if I knew any graduate students in forestry, despite the fact my minor was forestry and I took some courses in that. Maybe I did meet a few and I've forgotten them.

Geier: So, if you're looking at interdisciplinary exchanges, you wouldn't say that's normal at OSU?

Mitchell: No, it wasn't in those days. It may be better now than it was, but, it wasn't, sometimes. I think there were a lot of turf wars going on. I never really paid that much attention, but later, there was a fellow in, what was his name now? He was Chinese, a geneticist that worked at the state lab over there on Philomath Road. He had some money and wanted a grad student to do something. He was a golfer, and he and I went golfing many times. I once said, "We would really like to know a lot more information about the insects that lodge in noble fir, in the pine, in the seeds." He said, "That's a good idea, seed-cone insects." He had some money, and we were going to have this kid minor in entomology. We talked with Jack Lattin, and Jack wouldn't have anything to do with it. He said he had to major in entomology or he wouldn't even touch him. I was surprised, and I said, "But Jack, the money does not come from you, it comes from the forestry thing, they want it in the forestry." But he didn't care. He said he had to be in entomology or he wouldn't touch him.

Geier: That's a pretty sharp line.

Mitchell: Yeah, I was really surprised, because I'd known Jack for years. I always thought he's a pretty level-headed guy, and maybe he thought he was being level-headed, but I was really kind of irritated by it. I was on his [the student] committee, but we did it in forestry.

Geier: I'm trying to keep track of this now. You went to Syracuse for a masters, and then, you came back and got your Ph.D. at Oregon State University. Had things changed at all in that period, or was Oregon State University pretty much the same?

Mitchell: No, it was pretty much the same. I didn't want to do it in forestry. I wanted to do it in entomology, because I had had all the forestry I thought I needed. What I needed then, was biology, insect biology, so I decided to do it just in entomology, and minor in forestry. I didn't really take a lot of courses in forestry, because I'd had quite a few of them. I took a couple of ecology courses there with Bill Ferrell [OSU-COF professor], but I really wasn't over there very much. I admit that.

Geier: I was just trying to get a handle on some of the differences between Syracuse and OSU. It just strikes me as interesting that there was so little contact between entomologists and other programs. You were telling me is that there was really no entomology work at the Andrews, although so many people there are from Oregon State University. That's interesting.

Mitchell: One reason for this big difference is that entomology at Oregon State is a department in another college. At Syracuse, everybody is in the college of forestry. (Laughs) Everybody.

Geier: Oh, okay.

Mitchell: There's maybe 3 buildings there and they're close together, but everybody is in the same thing. When you have a graduate student seminar or something, you have people from every department there, it seems like, because it gets advertised through the whole system. All the biologists know about it, about something that's going on in botany, zoology, landscaping, or something else. About the only place that didn't get involved was the wood products people. They seemed to be by themselves.

Geier: So, part of it is the architecture. [Structure of school/departments/disciplines]

Mitchell: Yeah. It's the architecture and the administration of it. We were all in the college of forestry, and then, the college of forestry is stuck on the campus at Syracuse, but it really belongs to New York State University [system of state-funded schools], so we were all by ourselves over here in this one side of Syracuse University.

Geier: This is probably my last question, as I don't want to keep you all day here, today. It gets tiring after a while. I know. (Laughter) Earlier, you were talking about Hank Gratkowski and his wife, and you said something about how he was from the "old country" school. We've been talking a little bit about some of the differences in terms of academic careers, and I was just curious. First of all, he was Polish, wasn't he?

Mitchell: Yeah, Polish. I think he was raised in a Polish family, I think, pretty much from the old country. I don't think it was a factor in his academic thinking. I think it was the way he was raised.

Geier: Okay, but he wasn't an immigrant?

Mitchell: No, he was not, himself.

Geier: Was his wife, do you know?

Mitchell: No, I don't think she was either. I think that his parents were Polish immigrants. Maybe. I don't even know that for sure.

Geier: Oh, okay.

Mitchell: But I think, even back east, if you lived in a Polish community, even if two or three generations away [from original migration], they still keep their culture, pretty much.

Geier: Yeah, okay.

Mitchell: You must have noticed that in Minnesota. (Laughs)

Geier: Oh yeah. It was often a source of tension there. I didn't live there, but my brother grew up on the iron range with a real diverse mix. We were Germans, so there was a lot of conflict, actually. Okay, that line of questioning probably wouldn't go anywhere then. I had an idea there that had to do with immigration and Mike Savelich [Croatian heritage] being hired, and as a contractor. But Hank was not the person responsible for hiring, or for contracting anyway, he laid out roads?

Mitchell: Well, I don't really know how the division of labor there was. But I remember, Mike used to come to Hank quite frequently, and ask him about whether he could cut this tree or he'd cut that tree, or if they needed to change the boundaries on the cutting line. You know, there's always sort of give-and-take on these sort of things.

Geier: They worked pretty closely together then?

Mitchell: I know that they'd work pretty close together, because I'd be there, standing there listening to their conversations. I know they did that. The funny thing is, and I'm sure Roy did the same thing, but I don't remember it much. I spent a lot more time with Hank than I did with Roy.

Geier: You mentioned that Mike was always pushing for another tree.

Mitchell: Yeah, he always wanted his trees cut. It just was standard, you know. Trees are worth a lot. Each Douglas-fir has got about 5,000 board feet of timber, something like that.

Geier: Sounds like that was almost a running joke. Was Mike really serious?

Mitchell: Oh, I think that he was. He always tried. (Laughter)

Geier: Yeah, I was curious. Mike Kerrick mentioned that Mike Savelich was always complaining, and Ed Anderson. I interviewed him, too. I don't know if you knew him.

Mitchell: Who?

Geier: Ed Anderson? He was at the district [Blue River R.D.] for a while.

Mitchell: No, I don't know him.

Geier: Both of them mentioned that Mike Savelich was always complaining about this or that, how the plots were laid out, that they were unusual. You couldn't fall the trees inside the clear-cuts and

things like that, but he always came back and did it. There was that complaining going on, but it was always the same person that did it, so something was working out there.

Mitchell: Yeah, I think they worked pretty well together. I can imagine that he must have gotten frustrated, because I know Hank knew exactly how he wanted everything done. If he wanted the trees all felled this direction, he had a reason for having them fall that direction, and he probably said that in the contract that this is how it is supposed to be. So, if he had a little corner in the stand, that's the way he had that corner, and he had it there for a reason. It wasn't just by accident. It wasn't just because he happened to be feeling bad that day, or good, or whatever. He had a reason. Because, I remember putting in those lines and taking them out, and putting them in and taking them out, and, God, I'd feel so frustrated. (Laughs)

Geier: What kinds of things were concerning him?

Mitchell: Most of the time it was about the way the wind was blowing, and where the lines would be in relation to the topography. Whether it would be funneling wind into a corner, or over the top of a ridge, or something like that. He had some concepts about how the wind blew, and he was trying to keep the wind-throw on the margins of clear-cuts down. And we had some old clear-cuts where the wind had gone through and really took out a lot, because they'd been designed badly. Well, he was learning from those, and didn't want to make that same mistake twice. I remember a couple places in Sale 1 [1949-50, survey/sale], where the clear-cuts were too close together, and the wind came funneling through and it just ripped out everything, and had a lot of wind-throw.

Geier: It's interesting, the idea of learning from those clear-cuts. It was pretty quickly, actually, only 3 or 4 years [into experimental forest's young history].

Mitchell: Yeah. He was right on top of it.

Geier: I wanted to ask, and I'll probably end with this question. You've had some graduate students since you started working at the station. Have any of your students worked on the Andrews?

Mitchell: No. None of them did. Well, I know one thing that I was going to mention, that maybe you already went through this when you met with Jerry Franklin, but there was a plantation of cork-bark fir in the Andrews. It was there when I was there in '53. And I remember Jerry, I think it may be his very first publication, went up and looked at it, and wrote a paper on it. I always wondered whatever happened to that, but I bet you that's Jerry's first publication. I remember reviewing it, because he knew that I had worked on it. I had done something with it, but I can't remember what I'd done. Maybe I'd mapped the trees or something, but, in my early days. I don't even remember why there was a cork bark plantation there. I wonder if it's still there.

Geier: That's interesting. You reviewed his first paper, as far as you know. Was it a good review?

Mitchell: Yeah. He did a good job. Jerry always was a good writer.

Geier: Did you know Jerry very closely?

Mitchell: Yeah, I knew him pretty well. He and I wrote at least one paper together, and we actually got an award for it. That was an interesting paper, too. Jerry and I are actually both good writers, I guess, but we do it differently. (Laughs)] So, we put this paper together, we re-wrote and re-wrote

and sent it back-and-forth, back-and-forth, and neither one of us was happy with what the other one had done. But we finally got it through, and we submitted it to the guy who was head of timber management. He'd just been to some short course in Bend or someplace, and he was cutting out articles and our words. He didn't agree and butchered it something awful. And then, Ken Wright got involved in it, and he butchered it up some more. So, Jerry and I got this thing back, and we said, "This is a Goddamn bunch of bullshit." What we did is we wrote a real nice story and letter about how nice it was, and how much they'd helped us and everything, and then we went ahead and left it exactly like it was. (Laughs) Submitted it for publication, it sailed right through, and we got an award for it. (Laughter) Then these two guys said, "See how much our help got you." (Laughing) Yeah, it really helped out.

Geier: I wasn't aware of this collaboration you were involved in. How did you get together with Jerry?

Mitchell: He and I were both working on subalpine [fir] --

End of Side B, Tape 1 (of 2)

Begin Side A, Tape 2 (of 2)

Geier: (resumes recording) Okay, go ahead.

Mitchell: Well, it's not a very long story. I said that Jerry and I were both working on subalpine fir at the same time. He was working on it from an ecological standpoint, and I was to some extent, but my focus was the balsam woolly aphid. It was killing a lot of subalpine fir at the lower elevations of where subalpine fir grows along the Cascades. Anyhow, he comes to me one day and asks, "What's your impression about how subalpine fir grows?" I said, I think it's a pioneer species. Before, we always said it was highly tolerant to shade. That's the byword, everybody says that trees grow highly tolerant to shade and grew up underneath [shade of other trees], but subalpine fir didn't fit that model, despite the fact that that's what it was supposed to act like. He and I agreed on that, and we started comparing notes and so forth. So, we wrote this paper on the successional status of subalpine fir in the Cascade Range, and threw in stuff on the balsam woolly aphid, which at that time looked like it could pretty much wipe out subalpine fir in some critical environments, particularly on avalanche slopes. That's how we got we got together and how this paper was turned out.

Geier: Hmm. Had you known him before that?

Mitchell: Yeah, I knew him before that. We're both about the same age, we both came to the station [PNW] about the same time.

Geier: When was this, roughly?

Mitchell: Huh?

Geier: When was this study, roughly?

Mitchell: When was that? Must have been around '65, something like that. I can't remember now.

Geier: Well, you knew Jerry from the station, and that was when the station was small, so pretty much everybody knew everybody.

Mitchell: Yeah. Everybody knew everybody in the station those days.

Geier: So, you knew him, but you really hadn't worked with him until this project?

Mitchell: No, no.

Geier: And did you work with him after this much?

Mitchell: No, I never worked with him after that, much, other than we talked to each other about various things we were doing. And occasionally, we asked each other's advice on something that one knew more about than the other one did, but that's about it.

Geier: Your insights that this species was a pioneer species; what was the origin of that insight?

Mitchell: That the tree was a pioneer species?

Geier: Yeah, the tree.

Mitchell: From the way he was working with it, Jerry found out it only seemed to be growing on open spots, and that's the same impression that I'd got. When I was working in stands where I had subalpine fir and silver fir, I always had lots of silver fir coming up underneath, and I never had any subalpine fir coming up underneath. And where there was subalpine fir, it was always in some avalanche track or in a meadow, where the beavers had dammed it up long ago, and then the trees had invaded the edge, and they were always subalpine fir. It was out growing in the open in the sun. That was always my impression. I didn't really study it. I just looked at it. But it sure looked to me like this was a pioneer species. And lava beds, that was the other place that they were constantly [growing]. They always got into lava beds, one of the few trees that does.

Geier: Nobody had ever made that connection before?

Mitchell: Nobody'd seen it, at least, nobody had worked at it in the region. As a matter of fact, when I first started working out on the aphid, we weren't sure how to tell the difference between subalpine fir and silver fir. (Laughs) They grow in the same places and sometimes they look the same. Once you get onto them, it's a cinch. But at first we didn't know, and that's because nobody had ever worked on them. They were just a couple species that "flew on by," and nobody paid attention to them.

Geier: Well, the only question I've got, is if you've got any issues that you think this study ought to be addressing. Anything in particular that you'd like to see? In relation to studies on the Andrews?

Mitchell: On the Andrews?

Geier: Uh-huh.

Mitchell: No. I'll probably regret not saying anything. I always thought that if you could get up and look at what's up in the tall trees, that it would be interesting. Not that it would be worth anything, but it must be a different life up there, but I never knew how you would do that. But I guess they're addressing that.

Geier: You mean the canopy work?

Mitchell: Yeah, working in canopies, and they've got better equipment for doing that now than we did. Regeneration, also. I guess regeneration insects, and seed and cone insects, those are two things that never got addressed very well. We don't know what happens to all that regeneration that starts out 1-year-olds, 2-year olds, and so forth. You know, there's a terrific population. When I was counting regeneration, there's a terrific population of Douglas-fir and other things, other trees. Yew, for example, grows a lot out there, and then it all disappears. I don't know where it goes. But I would like to have seen some sort of a life cycle study on regeneration that's really good, that would identify what's taking out regeneration. Because my feeling is that there's a lot of insects that we don't even acknowledge as being the problem, or that are even involved in that.

Geier: These are questions that kind of interested you, but you didn't have the resources, or the opportunity?

Mitchell: I never had the opportunity to do it. I always wanted to work on regeneration insects, and I always wanted to work on seed and cone insects. Nobody else was interested, I mean, people who had money, who had control of the money, weren't interested.

Geier: Well, we should probably end this, but if you want to take a look at that, if you have time to look at that prospectus.

End of Interview