

Warm Valley Historical Project - Part II
Interview with JOSIE CALHOUN, age 85.
Sharon Kahin, interviewer
January 24, 1991

Sharon Kahin This is a conversation with Josephine Calhoun. It's January 24, 1991. This conversation is for the Warm Valley Historical Project.

SK: We could start with some basic questions like, you're 85, did you say?

Josie Calhoun: 85, I'll be 86 in April.

SK: And you were born at Ft. Washakie?

JC: Yes, I was born over at the old agency, you know, that's where Wind River is now.

SK: You were actually born at the agency?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: At the hospital there?

JC: No, they didn't have a hospital there and my grandmother was a —what do you call them?

SK: A midwife?

JC: A midwife and she—that's when I was born, just right there at the Wind River.

SK: Oh, and where did your parents live?

JC: Well, my mother was dead and my father, he was—oh, he was living over at Rawlins and at different places. He was a sheep herder.

SK: Uh-huh.

JC: And he was away from home a lot and I stayed with my grandmother ever since we was—since my sister was—She was the oldest and there was three of us. But my brother died when he was—in 1919, and then [garbled] left us too. But her grandmother raised us after our mother died.

SK: What was your grandmother's name?

JC: Virginia Martinez.

SK: Uh-huh. And what was your dad's name?

JC: James Reagan

SK: James Reagan—Was he from around here?

JC: Yeah, he was from around here. He was born to Evanston, over there, though, when they were living—when they lived over—before they came over to Wind River.

SK: Uh-huh.

JC: And he lived over there. But he didn't live around here until these later years.

SK: Was he a member of the Shoshone tribe?

JC: Uh-huh. He was—He was on the rolls at one time and when the rolls—I mean when the papers all burned in Wind River, he never did get back on again.

SK: Why was that?

JC: Well, he just wasn't around here and he just didn't reapply, you know, to get back on.

SK: But he was a sheep herder?

JC: Yeah, the biggest part of his life.

SK: And what about your mom, what was her name?

JC: Her name was Lula Driscoll

SK: And she was Shoshone?

JC: Yeah.

SK: And she was born around here?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: She was born here too?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: But you lived with your grandma?

JC: —No, I think she was born over to—I think they were all from over around Lyman and in through there.

SK: Was her family in the sheep business too?

JC: Oh, no.

SK: ‘Cuse there’s a lot of sheep ranching over there around Lyman, then wasn’t here?

JC: Uh-huh, no, she wasn’t.

SK: So you lived with your grandmother?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: And was it your grandmother who decided where you would go to get educated?

JC: Yeah, yeah. we lived with her ever since my brother was nine months old and I think I was two years old and I think Anita was four years old, when our mother died. So we lived with her all our lives up until she died in 1955.

SK: 1955? Let’s see, how old were you when you went to—did you go to the mission before you went to the government school?

JC: Nh-huh, no.

SK: You went to the government school first? Do you remember how old you were?

JC: No, I don’t know—A school age [laughs].

SK: Do you think you were around seven or ten?

JC: About—I must have been about—Yeah, I must have been about eight. I’m not sure, I can’t remember.

SK: Do you remember—do you remember what it was like going to school? Do you remember your first day at school? Or, what kind of impression did you have when they took you to school?

JC: Oh, I liked it here, ‘cuse there were a lot of kids to play with and that and then—‘cuse there was quite a few of us there. I liked it when I went there.

SK: When you were living with your grandmother, were you living near other

children or were you out in the country a ways?

JC: Well, we were out—out in the country most of the time—Just had neighbors here and there.

SK: So, when you went to the government school you had more children to play with?

JC: Uh-huh—otherwise it was just us three.

SK: Yeah?—um and how did it work? You went home on weekends?

JC: Yeah.

SK: Did your grandmother come and pick you up in the wagon?

JC: Yeah, she had a buggy and she used to come pick us up at the [school] and then we'd go home and stay over the weekend and then she'd bring us back on Sunday night.

S: About how far of a drive was that? Whereabouts were you living then?

JC: Oh, about five miles from where the school was and then later on, well, they built a—there was more settlers got in there and some white folks moved in and they built a school right close to where they lived and it was just a little ways across from where we lived. So, we went there for a while, but I didn't like it and I went back to the government school and my sister went to the school by the house.

SK: What was that school called—the new one that they built?

JC: The Countryman School, is the one that was up there. I don't remember what years it was built.

SK: Oh, can you tell me where it was—can you give me some idea where it was? Was it on—going up towards Crow Heart or where?

JC: No, it was right up from Ft. Washakie. We used to live up there —Well, it was about five miles—we never moved up to Crow Heart 'til after—Well, I got married—well, I had three or four kids and then I think I had—Well, [the] Chavez kids, they were all little then, that's when we moved to Crow Heart.

SK: After you got married?

JC: After that, uh-huh. But before that I lived at Ft. Washakie.

SK: Ok, so the Countryman School came in after some white—more white settlers and people like that came in?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Uh—What didn't you like about it? How was it different from the government school?

JC: Oh, I just didn't like to go back and forth to school. And when we were in government school all we had to do was just go from one building to the next.

SK: Yeah? 'Cuse it was a boarding school?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Well, you grew up with your grandmother—was it a lot different.. do you remember.. a big change going to the government school? Like was the food different or the clothing different?

JC: No.

SK: Nothing like that?

JC: No,—they made us wear uniforms down there. We all had the same kind of —they used to have that striped dresses, you know, and up—when we went to school we had to wear a blouse and a skirt that was—that was the same as it was at home, I just liked it better [laughs].

SK: So you wore a blouse and skirt around home, too?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Someone said that you had to wear blouses. Do you remember wearing bloomers?

JC: Yeah.

SK: [laughs]

JC: We used to have to wear them sateen bloomers. They had, you know, they had elastic around the legs and that'd keep our sox up [laughs].

SK: So that's how it worked—Sateen—well, did you sew those in class? Someone told me that she remembered sewing the bloomers and helping make the uniforms in class.

JC: No, I was too small for that. I was just—The bigger girls done that, they done all the sewing and all that.

SK: Well, what kinds of things did you do? Were there chores for the little girls too?

JC: No, we didn't have anything to do then.

SK: You too small?

JC: We had to —. I can't remember anything.

SK: Did you have to help set the table or—

JC: No.

SK: Nothing like that—that was—

JC: Nothing like that—that was early—Later on when I went there, you know—as you'd get little bigger and older and that, then they'd put you to washing dishes or setting tables or cleaning tables or something like that. But when I was there, I didn't have to do any of that 'cuse I wasn't big enough.

SK: So how long did you—how many years did you stay there the first time that you went there?

JC: Oh, I don't remember. I went there up until—'til we were up in the—then they took a bunch of them, you know, to —there was six or seven of us went from there. We went to Genoa, Nebraska to school.

SK: Um.. Do you remember some of the names of the girls that went with you to Nebraska?

JC: Yeah, there was Alice Peterson, and Grace O'neill and Eloise St. Clare [or St. Clair?] —and my sister, Anita Lard, Anita Reagan, then, and —and me and then there was some boys who went, but I can't remember who all they—I remember one boy was Russell —. Russell—um, I can't think of his last name though. Bullet—no, Bullert.

SK: Bullert? And what was Eloise's last name?

JC: Eloise St. Clare.

SK: Eloise St. Clare? Ok—uh—Do you know why you went to Nebraska? Was that your choice or did your grandmother want you to go?

JC: No, they.. . The government school took us—you know—paid our transportation down there and everything and it was just like a boarding school there too. But I do remember that I was in the eighth grade at that time.

SK: Eighth grade?

JC: Or the seventh grade. I was there two years and I had. I finished the eighth grade and that was it.

SK: Uh-huh. Was that as long as most of them stayed too? Stayed through the eighth grade? Uh—were they—did this school go up to the eighth grade, the government school? Did it go through the eighth grade? Could you have stayed here if you had wanted to, to finish school?

JC: I think so, uh-huh. I don't remember for sure, but I think it did.

SK: Do you know why they took you to school in Nebraska?

JC: No, they just, just like those Indian schools now. they take them—Just like that one in Flandreau and the one up in Oregon, they take a bunch of them to school and they come home in the summers and on holidays. But we never got to come home on holidays 'cuse that was—We didn't have the money.

SK: It was too far?

JC: We just didn't have the money to pay for the fare back.

SK: —Were you happy about going to Nebraska?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Would you have preferred to have stayed here if you could have?

JC: Yeah, I liked it here.

SK: You liked Nebraska. What was it like? I don't remember just everything but I know we used to —they used to give you different details, you know, working and that and we'd work in the kitchen at times. Then we'd work in the bakery and then we'd work in the hospital and then we'd work in the laundry and different things like that. And I used to work in the laundry at Ft. Washakie, too, when I went there. But this woman who was —laundry matron, they called her—she had a little kid and she used to let me watch the little kid while she done—you know, oversee'd the other girls, and that was my job mostly.

SK: Baby sitting?

JC: Baby sitting [laughs].

SK: Um—Do you remember when you were at the government school—Someone told me that the woman who was the baker was a Shoshone. Do you remember any of the other Shoshone people who actually worked at the school?

JC: I don't think they was.

SK: You don't remember very many?

JC: I remember the matron's name. It's—you know the one at the girls' building, but I don't remember the others and I can't remember our teacher's name, either.

SK: Was she Shoshone or—

JC: No, her name was Sherman

SK: Sherman

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: What was the matron's job?

JC: Well, she was, you know,—oversee'd that the girls stayed in the building and done what they were supposed to and, well, just like an overseer, I guess.

SK: Yes, she took care of you?

JC: Uh-huh. And she'd give you the details of what you were supposed to do.

SK: And..uh—did you switch those details—Did you work in the laundry sometimes and then in the bakery and then in the—

JC: When we were in Nebraska, I did. But over here to the government school, I didn't. Only place I ever worked was in the laundry and that was just about a year before we went to Nebraska. But I took and baby sat for that woman. Her name was Miss Grosback at the time.

SK: Miss Grosback?

JC: She was married to one of the —Grosback's wife—uh, boys, that's over to Ethete. She was a white woman.

SK: Did you get along fairly well with the matron and the laundry person. Were they good people that were working at the school?

JC: Yeah, they were good people.

SK: Did you ever have any trouble with any of the teachers?

JC: Nh-huh, no, I never did. I always tried to do what I was told and that was it because our grandmother always taught us to do what we were told and keep still about it [laughs].

SK: Did you ever run away from school?

JC: No.

SK: Any of your friends ever run away?

JC: Huh?

SK: Any of your friends—? I was talking to marie Washakie and she said that she ran away from school a couple of times.

JC: Oh—no, she was younger than I was you know. I didn't.

[long pause]

SK: Did your brothers and sisters like the school? Did they like it as much as you did?

JC: Uh huh. My brother did but my sister didn't. She didn't like to go down there. She wanted to stay home and—

SK: What about—What kinds of things did you study there?

JC: Oh, just reading, writing and arithmetic was about all—and geography.

SK: Geography?

JC: Uh-huh. History—just—regular school work.

SK: Yeah? What about—did you learn how to embroider or sew or do anything like that?

JC: When I was in Nebraska, we did. We learned how to sew and I taught myself how to crochet and embroider and that—we didn't learn that in school.

SK: Well, tell me a little bit more.. if you could—about your uniforms. You had sateen bloomers ad these held up your stockings. They were black—those stockings, do you remember what color they were?

JC: Yeah, they were black.

SK: Uh-huh.

JC: And the bloomers were black and the dresses were that—we used to call them our mattress dresses. They looked kind of like them striped mattresses.

SK: Oh, like ticking, I think it's called, like you'd put on a pillow case—little blue stripes?

JC: Uh-huh. Well, they—that's what we called them, but they was just regular material, but that's what it looked like.

SK: So you called them your mattress dresses [laughs]. Did they have long sleeves?

JC: Yeah.

SK: Long sleeves? And did—What about—Did they give you a special coat to wear or—?

JC: No.

SK: Or anything like that?

[Woman enters] Well, hi.

JC: This is my daughter, Norma.

Norma: How do you do.

JC: What did you say your name was?

SK: Sharon. Well, you had black stockings and black bloomers and "mattress dresses." Any kind of hats or anything like that or was that pretty much it?

JC: No, I don't think so. I don't remember what we—Just regular coats, I think—I can't remember about the coats.

SK: What about Sunday. Did you have to change? Did you have special Sunday dresses, or—?

JC: Well, we went home on Saturday and Sunday. So—our grandmother used to come pick us up on Friday nights lots of times and we'd go home. So I don't know.

SK: Ok. Did you have to go to church? Did you have to come back Sunday afternoon for church or anything like that?

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: You said that you went to the mission school too, at one point. Roberts mission? Did you ever go there?

JC: Yeah. I went there one year and —It was a good deal the same as the others only we had to go to church. Then I went to St. Stephen's for school for one year—two years.

SK: To the boarding school at St. Stephen's?

JC: It was a boarding school at that time, uh-huh.

SK: So, the mission was pretty much the same as the government school?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: What about St. Stephen's—was it any different?

JC: That was a Catholic school. They [her kids?] went down there too when they were younger. They were all good schools. I liked them all.

SK: Do you remember—did you speak—did you speak Shoshone when you went to the schools? Did you know any English or did you just speak Shoshone?

JC: No, I spoke English all the time. I learned just a little bit of Shoshone, but not—

SK: So, you spoke English in the home—that's what you spoke?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Do you remember when you went to school at the government school, what they did for punishment or were there rules and regulations? Did you ever get into trouble for doing anything?

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: Or did your friends?

JC: I don't remember what they did do for punishment.

SK: Do you remember some of the things you weren't supposed to do?

JC: Oh, yeah. I remember, but I can't think of it right off. They tell me, you know, when you go there that you're not supposed to do this or to do that, and so, I just tried to follow the rules. I don't remember what it was not.

SK: Were you allowed to go away from the buildings or did you have to stay in a certain area?

JC: Yeah, we had a certain area. But they had a campus that we could go out there and play and—but they had a fence all around it and we didn't —.

SK: What about—Did they celebrate Christmas or anything like that or had most of the students gone home?

JC: Most of them went home. I guess pretty near all of them went home.

SK: At the government school?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: What about at the mission? Did you have any special celebrations at Christmas or Easter or—Did people go home then?

JC: Yeah, they went home, too, they didn't—

SK: Do you remember who your teacher was at the mission school?

JC: Yeah, I remember my teacher at the mission but I couldn't—Her name was Mary Anne Roberts.

SK: Mary Anne?

JC: I couldn't remember—Deborah Beck[?] was the Roberts—Old man Roberts was the preacher and then his daughters was teaching.

SK: Did you meet Rev. Roberts? You must have met him. Do you remember what he was like?

JC: Oh, yes, I knew him [chuckles]

SK: What kind of a person was he?

JC: Oh, he was a nice old guy. His wife—she was the matron of the building—she took care of that—She was kind of a funny little old lady. Kind of a prissy little old lady. Other than that, she was nice too.

SK: Which of the three schools did you prefer, that you went to here?

JC: Oh, I liked all of them, so I didn't—

SK: Was there any particular reason that you went to the mission school then went over to St. Stephen's?

JC: No, no reason. We just went.

SK: —Was that the school's decision or your grandmother decided that or —.? Do you remember why you moved from one to the other?

JC: No. What?

SK: Do you remember why you moved from one to the other? Or did your grandmother want you to or—did the school want you to?

JC: I don't remember. I think grandma wanted us to go. Just to change and see how different ones were run, I think.

SK: Uh—And you lived then—Let's see—how old were you when you went to Robert's mission?

JC: I don't have any idea [laughs].

SK: You don't remember?[laughs] I just remember—Let's see —the little girls had the upstairs dorms, didn't they? And the older girls had the bottom, didn't they?

JC: Yeah.

SK: Which were you? On the top floor or on the bottom floor?

JC: I was on the top.

SK: So you must have been somewhat younger then.

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: And when you went to the school over at St. Stephen's—do you remember—was that after the mission school or—?

JC: Uh-huh

SK: So, you would have been a little bit older then?

JC: Uh-huh

SK: Ok, so —what about at home? Can you describe what your home looked like around then? Did you live in a cabin or a house or did you have one of those walled tents?

JC: No, we had a house—a log house.

SK: A log house. Do you remember how many rooms it had?

JC: Yeah.

SK: Well, could you? [did JC gesture one?] —One room?

JC: One room [laughs], no, it was two.

Norma[?]¹: Grandma's house had two rooms.

JC: We had a kitchen and a bedroom —most of 'em had that in the early days—they didn't have these big fancy houses.

SK: A lot of people had—lived in tents, didn't they?

JC: Lived in tents —boarded up tents, uh-huh. A lot of them did.

SK: So, you all slept on the floor in one room?

JC: No, we had beds—we had beds, dressers—

SK: How big was the room? Was it as big as this or bigger?

JC: I don't remember. It was bigger, I think.

SK: Uh-huh—and when you went home in the summertime, did you help in the garden or

¹I'm not sure if this is Josie's daughter's voice or not. Did her sister, Anita, come in with Norma? This woman sounds older and her responses seem more consistent with Josie's responses.

did you have chores that you had to do in the summer?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: Could you describe them—the kinds of things you used to do then?

JC: Well, we used to have to cut wood and carry wood and help—grandma had some milk cows and we used to have to help milk—just regular chores.

SK: You cut wood—the girls cut wood?

JC: Uh-huh. We didn't have nobody else to cut it, so we had to cut it.

Norma[?]: There was no boys, just a bunch of girls.

SK: Well, good for you!

JC: We used to have to drag it out of the timber.

SK: How did you do that? Did you have a horse?

JC: No.

SK: Just did it your selves?

JC: We was—we was the horses [laughs].

SK: And just cut it up with a saw or did you have an ax?

Norma[?]: Ax.

JC: They used to have saws too—but we used an ax mostly.

SK: Well, how did your grandmother manage when you went to school, then?

JC: Well, she managed, same way.

SK: Uh—did you raise a garden? Did your grandma have a garden?

JC: Yeah.

SK: and what about wheat? Did you have any grain or wheat that you grew?

JC: Oh, she used to grow wheat all the time and then we'd have flour made from it and—they used to make flour and they had this mill right there at the fort and they used to make flour and breakfast food for the—if, you know, the people that raised grain.

SK: Uh-huh. I'm just going to turn this over a minute.

END SIDE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO

SK: —You married during the depression?

JC: Yeah, I guess, uh-huh.

SK: In the Thirties and Forties?

JC: I don't remember what year it was.

SK: Did your husband ranch? Or what did he do?

JC: Just worked, whenever they had any jobs that'd come up, then he'd work, but we stayed over there with grandma.

SK: But you still hadn't moved to Crow Heart then?

JC: No, we didn't move to Crow Heart until—oh—I can't remember what year we moved there.

SK: And your husband's name—What was your husband's name?

JC: My first husband's name was Louis Javits and the second husband was Joe Calhoun.

SK: Joe Calhoun—. Do you remember what it was like during the depression? Was it any different from what had happened before? Did it make any particular memories?

JC: We always had a hard life so I couldn't tell [laughs]—not much different.

SK: Not much difference, some—

JC: But I do know that they used to give these—Kind of like stamps or something and you had to use them—and you were only allowed to buy so much flour or sugar or shoes and coffee—

SK: Where did you go to buy the—

JC: Ft. Ormsby or Ft. Washakie—they had grocery stores there.

SK: And that's where you got the stamps too? Did the stamps come from Ft. Washakie?

JC: They came from Ft. Washakie, I think, I can't remember where they got them.

SK: —What—Looking back at all the schooling you had, what was the most useful thing about that that you can remember?

JC: I can't remember.

SK: When you went to Nebraska, was that much different from the government school?

JC: No, it wasn't too much different. We had the same—it was on the same line of schooling and that.

SK: Did you have uniforms there too?

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: Didn't have uniforms there?

JC: No, you could wear what ever you wanted to.

SK: And at St. Stephen's, did you have different uniforms there?

JC: I can't remember.

Norma: Probably, because we did.

JC: Yeah, probably did—On Sunday we had to go to church.

Norma: We wore, what?, Shirts and, what do you call those navy blue [garbled]. What do you call those?

JC: Jumpers?

SK: Jumpers, oh, you had jumpers.

Norma: Jumpers and [garbled, high tops?]

JC: When we were there about 19—, I don't remember what we had to wear when I went there.

SK: What about the mission school? Do you remember what you wore at the mission school?

JC: No, they didn't have no uniforms either. You could wear anything. I didn't go there too long. My grandmother was off working so we stayed there and went to school while she was off working and when she came back, well, we went home and then I went back to the government school.

SK: So, you were just there for a short time?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: I see—Someone was telling me that the government school, every year, they used to have

a big fair. Do you remember those, or maybe that was after your time.

JC: That was later in the—in later years, but when we went, they didn't have it.

SK: Do you remember the fairs—can you tell me a little bit about them?

JC: No, I can't remember.

SK: And someone else mentioned that they had rodeos at the government school. Was that later too?

JC: I don't remember them having rodeos.

SK: You don't remember? Did you have any kind of special play activities, sports or anything?

JC: Oh, yes. They had basketball and—and-baseball and, that was about the only two. Then on the one night a week they used to have a dance for them and—they had the dance.

SK: What kind of dance was it?

JC: Just—They'd dance the waltz or two-step—about the only kind of dance they danced.

SK: Did they have to teach you how to do that? I never knew how to waltz at when I was that age [laughs].

JC: Oh, yeah, they had to teach you how to dance and all that.

SK: So, you learned how to do the waltz and the two step?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: And that was during the school week?

JC: Yeah. In the evenings, sometimes. They'd have a dance for them—mostly on Friday.

SK: And did all ages go to the dance or just older students, do you remember?

JC: I don't remember, but I think it was just mostly for the students.

SK: Did you enjoy them?

JC: Yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes we'd go home—It just depended.

SK: Basketball, baseball —did the girls play baseball?

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: That was for boys?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: But you played basketball?

JC: No.

SK: That was boys only too?

JC: they had girls teams too, but I never played.

Norma: They had girls softball teams.

SK: Oh, so you never played? What other kinds of—like for younger girls—were there swings and like that?

JC: Yeah—We had swings and—just swings, mostly—and a slide. They had a slide and swings and that was it.

SK: What was your favorite thing about the government school? Was there anything that sticks out in your mind?

JC: No, I can't remember what—

SK: Robert's Mission—anything special that you remember about that?

JC: Nh-huh. No, I can't remember any—

SK: But at Robert's Mission, someone had mentioned that there was a round-shaped play house for the girls. Do you remember that at all?

JC: Uh-huh. I don't remember. They had those merry-go— I mean, those things you get on and go 'round and 'round but—

Norma: A carousel

JC: Kind of like that, uh-huh. It was just kind of like a teeter-totter, only it'd go around.

SK: Was that at the government school?

JC: Nh-huh, at the mission.

SK: At the mission school? Uh.. and when you were at the mission school did you have to do things like help with the laundry and the baking and that kind of thing as well?

JC: Not at the mission, nh-huh.

SK: Not at the mission, ok. Well that's about all. I've run out of questions, but that's the kind of thing—oh, I know what I wanted to ask you. Do you remember wearing hats at the mission school called sage chicken hats? Someone said that they used to go to church with these hats that had feathers in them —uh—that looked like chicken feathers.

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: They may have changed—

JC: But we never went to the church. We used to go home over the weekend and then we'd go with grandma to church. But she always would go to the mission for church.

SK: Oh, I see. Did a lot of families do that? Take their families and go to the mission?

JC: Uh-huh.

SK: And when you were a student then, did you go to—Bible study? Did you have to study the Bible at the mission school?

JC: When I was at St. Stephen's I did, but not at the mission.

SK: Ok—oh—what about when you went to Nebraska? Did you have to go to church or study the Bible, there too?

JC: We had to go to church, but we never—

SK: Didn't have Bible study?

JC: Nh-huh.

SK: Alright. Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

END OF TAPE