

White Grass Heritage Project “Sharing the Legacy”

INTERVIEWEE: Dick (D) Quast, (dude, first came in June 1954)  
and wife, Cynthia (C) Quast

INTERVIEWER: Roger (R) Butterbaugh, Caretaker of White Grass  
Ranch, Coordinator of the WG Heritage Project

LOCATION: Hammond Cabin, White Grass Ranch, Moose, Wyoming

DATE: September 1, 2014

Transcribed by Julie Greene in 2021

Note: This transcript has undergone minor edits, e.g., false starts and some text were removed to make it more “reader friendly”. Dick and Cynthia’s complete interview transcript is below.

R: (1:09) I would like to start with your journey to White Grass; how did you learn about White Grass, why you decided to come here and why you came here more than once?

D: My journey started in my sophomore and junior year at Boyd College in Boyd, Wisconsin. I got a job with the U.S. Geological Survey through the school to do mapping work for some project in Pinedale, Wyoming. I never saw the answer to this project. Pinedale, 60 years ago, was basically a cow town; there was no oil exploration, no gas exploration, just cattle and sheep. It was a very small town. It is not big now, but in those days, it was even smaller. It was a real western frontier town. They advertised themselves as the furthest town from the railroad in the United States. How true that was I don’t know but there was no rail.

We would do our survey work during the week. We had the whole weekend off. If you spent the whole weekend in Pinedale 60 years ago, there wasn’t much happening. So, we were fortunate that we could hitchhike to Jackson. It was something to do. As a result of that, I became knowledgeable about Jackson. It was very interesting. It was rustic and we had gambling in those days and the town was much smaller. The tourist aspect was nearly non-existence. They shut the town down at Labor Day and didn’t open until Memorial Day the next year. It was small but had more activity than Pinedale. So, we would come up, sleep in the town square and use the bathrooms in various establishments. That is how I got introduced.

Then I went back to school and in 1954, I married my first wife. We discussed where to go on a honeymoon. We didn’t have a lot of money and I said I knew a nice place in the mountains. We decided to drive to Jackson Hole on our honeymoon. Prior to that I had written to the Chamber of Commerce in Jackson to inquire about the various dude ranches. I didn’t know one from another because the closest that I got to ‘out of town’ (Jackson) was to the drive-in in the town of Jackson. We never ventured out and we didn’t have a car.

We looked at all the dude ranches (and there was a significant number as opposed to today) and I said White Grass looked good. It was right at the mountains and if you rode a horse, you would ride there. It was pulling a name out of the hat and hoping I was doing the right thing,

I made reservations here for one week and we drove out here from Chicago. We left the day after we were married to drive to Jackson, Wyoming. It took us 20 or 30 hours to get out here and you went through every country town, but it was America.

My first wife had never been past the Mississippi River so all this was new. It was new to me to the degree I had never ridden a horse. To come out here to ride horses was totally foreign. We thought we would give it a try; we were young and didn't know any better.

We arrived south of Jackson through the Hoback Canyon. In those days, the main highway was across the river along some bluffs and cliffs. When we arrived, it was June, and the snow was still melting. There had been a lot of rain and there were a lot of rockslides. We'd come from Chicago and when we got south of town, a policeman said we have trouble here, the road is closed. He said it opens periodically and just to wait. He said for us to take our turn and go through the land slide on the one lane road and when you start, keep going, don't stop and go as fast as you can. It was about ¼ mile. When it was my turn, I started through and all hell broke loose. Rocks started coming down and one landed in front of my car, bounced up into the windshield of the car and over the roof and landed on a truck. But I kept going! We got through. I turn to my wife and she is covered with glass from the window. I said, "Look what it did to the car!" From that point on, I didn't do well.

We went to Jackson and needed to call the insurance company. My wife was all right but scared. I asked someone in town where I could make a phone call and was told to go to the telephone company. The telephone company was in a log cabin and had the old switchboard where you plugged in the different jacks. The telephone operator looked out the window and asked what happened to my car. She asked if a moose had gotten us. My wife wondered why she said that. Then, I had to call Idaho Falls, where I could get a windshield. They said it would take a couple of days to get it. We drove up the current Moose-Wilson Road and went to the ranch. We arrived and Inga Galey met us and announced that we were on our honeymoon. They put us in a one bedroom cabin with a bathroom and that was our introduction and arrival to White Grass Ranch.

R: (10:41) What did you think when you got there?

D: I wasn't sure what to expect. I spent summer in cabins in Minnesota and Wisconsin because my father loved to fish but this was different because it had a great view here, very rustic with no electric heat. Each cabin was heated with a wood stove and it was just enough to live on. You didn't come here to stay in the cabin; you came here to spend the night and go out the next day and do things. So, they were clean but not overly embellished with anything. It was the basic cabin to sleep in.

R: You spent a week?

D: We spent a week and the first full day we were here, everyone came down to breakfast between 7am and 10am. So, we walked to breakfast and everyone was looking at the two newlyweds. They asked what we wanted to do and I said horseback riding. My wife had never been horseback riding. A single woman said she would go with us and to meet her at the barn at 10 am. We got into our rustic clothes and this woman comes down with chaps, boots, gloves and a whip. She is going to take us out. We had to get a horse.

You were assigned a horse when you arrived and we had not gotten a horse yet. George Clover was the head wrangler and George asked how much riding had we done. My wife said none and he smiled. I said I had ridden a little bit but not much. I got my horse and then they brought this horse out for my wife. They had loading steps to help get on the horse. They get my wife up on the horse without too much of a problem and she had to move on because another horse was coming from behind. She said

something but the horse didn't move so George told her to kick him. She nudges him and the horse still didn't move. So, George comes and takes his boot out of his stirrup and slams the horse. I thought there she goes and the horse went one step, two steps, three steps and stops. It was not a spirited animal and that was her introduction to western riding. We would ride around to different places on the ranch and this woman took us different places. Sometimes, groups would get organized, and we sometimes went with them. That is what we did every day. I didn't know how to fly fish so we just rode.

R: (15:35) Did you get the hang of it?

D: Got the hang of it and it was fun and different. That was what we did in subsequent years when we came out here. We were also meeting old dudes and we did get to meet some interesting people over the years.

R: How many times did you come back?

D: I would say around 8-10 times. When my son was old enough to be able to participate in the kids program, we brought him out when he was 6 or 7 years old. That lasted about 2 days. We found out he was allergic to horses, dogs, dust and ended up in the Jackson Hospital. He couldn't stay at the ranch. We really didn't have an indication that he couldn't handle it. In Chicago, we didn't have that experience. So, that was the last year I came with my family around 1970-1971. That was the end of the family trips out here.

R: Did you ever come alone?

D: The only time I came only alone was when I did this fall horse drive. As a family, we traveled the west a lot. We would come by and see people but we didn't get involved with the ranch.

R: (18:14) Sounds like if he had not the troubles with the allergies...

D: .....we would probably have kept coming back.

R: What attracted you to come back again and again?

D: It was totally different that the city. After a couple of trips, you got to know what was going on. The people we met here took us under their wing when we first got here. We were just 24 years old, just married and coming out here. There were a lot of repeat dudes here. Over the years, we go to meet some of them, and they were very interesting. The joy of coming out looking at the mountains, getting away from Chicago and coming out and doing something we were familiar with, that made it not a new experience all the time. We liked the friendliness of the guests and ranch people.

(19:25) Frank Galey was an outstanding host and an interesting guy. He was polished, Princeton educated, and he knew how to talk to people and keep them interested in his wild stories. I think the people and the repeating experience over the years is what we found interesting.

R: Did you typically come out and stay a week?

D: We had 2 weeks vacation from work. Sometimes we drove and sometimes we flew. In those days, you could fly in on Frontier Airlines. Most of the times we drove.

R: Did you ever consider yourself a “wannabe cowboy”? Did the western culture attract you?

D: The culture attracted me. I always liked adventure stories and read a lot about cowboys. Sixty years ago, there were real cowboys here and there were real ranches. The multi-million dollar places hadn't arrived yet so these were real ranches and real cowboys. They dressed like it, acted like it - all the things you would expect a cowboy to be.

R: Did you ever see yourself being a cowboy?

D: That is hard work. I had an office job. I liked the experience and enjoyed doing a little of it but doing it for 12 months a year....No.

R: You read a lot of things about the west as a younger kid; what did you read, did you have an image of what you would find out here?

D: To a great degree, the locals were what I thought a real western guy or woman would be like.

R: Which is?

D: Rough looking, spoke their mind, used a lot of language you would not want to hear over and over again but that is the way they talked. It didn't disappoint me, even the permanent ranch people here were cowboys. The wranglers that came for the summer got slovenly but they were just here for 2 months and then went back east to school. George Clover would be a typical western individual - big, burly, rough talking, rough but always related to the people well. He was kind. If my wife was having trouble with the horse, he would not ridicule her because he was there to help.

R: (23:32) You are describing your time here at the ranch as being taken care of appropriately, supported and made to feel comfortable.

D: But if you wanted to stay and do nothing, no one came around and said what's up or are you okay. If you needed help, you needed to search for it a little.

R: You mentioned as a youngster, your dad and you and your family would go to Wisconsin to fish. Was that an attraction to the outdoors?

D: Yes, that is how we got introduced to non-city living. We also had a summer home in Wisconsin, which I grew up in. I spent the summers up there so being outdoors was not totally foreign to me.

R: So, you pick a vacation spot....

D: Yea, I wasn't trying to go spend my honeymoon in New York City. It had to be something different. I loved the west and done field work out there.

R: After your week honeymoon out here, were you a hero or a....

D: I guess it was tolerated because we came back here 2 years later. I couldn't afford to come every year. When my wife was pregnant, she was well cared for.

R: You said you went to college and majored in what field?

D: I majored in geography and geology.

R: Is your professional field represented in your degree?

D: No. I graduated in 1952 and the Korean War was going on and most of the people I went to school with got drafted or enlisted. I didn't have to do that because my only brother was killed in WWII and I was exempt from military service as a surviving son. I had an opportunity and choice of things. I had a job with Standard Oil of Indiana and Exploration, out of Oklahoma City. I had a training program job offer with General Electric in a business training course. I took that job. I thought exploration was fine but as I grew older and hoped to have a family, I didn't want to be spending time away from my family all over the world and that is what they were doing in India, Saudi Arabia, etc. I liked geology and it was an easy way to get through school but I didn't think in the long run it was what I wanted to do for my family.

R: Was the food okay here?

D: Yes.

R: Many people we have interviewed have talked about the end of the day there would be cocktails at Frank's place.

D: Cocktails in those days were done individually at cabins. People would invite others to come and have a drink. They didn't have a bar at the main cabin. There were cocktail parties before every meal.

R: Were people drinking responsibly?

D:(28:44) I didn't see that they weren't. Some of these guys were pretty good drinkers.

R: Was that staff?

D: No, guests. One of the things Frank would do is, frequently, ask male guests to come to his cabin and play poker. There was a lot of drinking going on there and a lot of money changing hands. I didn't play poker but there was big money down there and they gambled a lot. And, they drank a lot. We went a number of times just to observe and it was intense at times.

R: Was that a minor part of the ranch?

D: It had no attraction to me but was interesting to see what was going on but that was not why we came.

R: So, it wasn't the major thrust of the ranch.

D: No, absolutely not. Outdoors activity was the main focus - horseback riding and fishing. A lot of people fished.

R: Did you do the fishing too?

D: No. I fished with my father growing up in Wisconsin and Michigan for years. But it (fly fishing) was totally different than lake fishing. I didn't have enough time in a week to get into fly fishing. The ranch would have floats that they would offer. Activities were mostly oriented to shopping in town or outdoor activity from the ranch.

R: Cynthia is here and you all are married. You referenced that your first wife was the person whom you came out here with on your honeymoon. Before the interview, you were talking that you and your first wife were good friends with Cynthia and Al, her husband. As I understand it, there was a period of time in your adult lives that your spouses died (within a year) but before that all four of you were good friends. Later, you and Cynthia became husband and wife. Cynthia, you mentioned that when Dick and his first wife would come out here and return to the Chicago area, you would hear stories about the ranch. What were your impressions?

C: (32:13) I just thought it was such an adventure and was foreign to me. I had never been farther west than the Mississippi River. That was just the end of the world to me; and a little crazy. That wasn't my idea of what you did on a honeymoon or a vacation. A vacation was going to Mexico and lying in the sun with my first husband. This was different from my point of view.

R: After you got married did you and Dick come west?

D: We did, we came before we got married. We were married at the Chapel of the Transfiguration (in Moose, Wyoming a few miles from White Grass).

R: Was that an adventure?

C: The whole thing has been as adventure. Who goes out here to grow old.

R: But you have and you spend your summers here. And, you are living out here seasonally and have a home (in Chicago).

C: We used to spend January, February and March here when we could still move better. It is like living on the moon, a little bit. He took me to Antarctica. Our first date was hiking in Switzerland.

R: You married Mr. Adventure.

C: Oh yes. It has been a lot of fun.

D: I did a lot of hiking in Switzerland over the years. Before we started to come out here, I had a lot of time available, and I got involved with a person in Switzerland who had a business there. So, for a number of years, we would go and hike different parts of Switzerland. It kept my outdoor activity going. Still trying to do it as best as I can though I am getting older.

R: I often have seen you both hiking the meadow here and back down to the gate.

Dick, what intrigued you to take part in driving the horses to Dubois in the fall?

D: I started getting involved in the horse drive when I couldn't come out here with my family because they couldn't tolerate the weather. We had been away for a number of years and we would get mailings periodically. They would advertise the horse drive. They used to keep the horses here all winter. But, one winter was very bad and they couldn't get feed in here. The horses had a lot of problems. You will see the dead cottonwoods around here; the horses ate the bark off the cottonwood trees. That is what killed them. After that, Frank realized you never knew what a winter would be and he decided it would be better to take the horses over to Dubois, Wyoming, which is across the Gros Ventres mountains. It is at a lower elevation and is on leeward side of the mountains. It didn't get as much snow and they could tolerate the winters there.

D: (38:00) They had to get the horses over there and people would pay to do that, and I said, "here I am". They always had a group of people. They just rode along and the wranglers would do all the work. We started the trip from the ranch. They would bring cattle/horse trucks in and would load them up. They would drive them to the Teton Valley Dude Ranch. They would start off from there. They would go up the Gros Ventre Road, over Union Pass, and down into Dubois. They would take them to a big pasture and let them go. They spend the winter there. In the spring, they were brought back early when it was not great weather. But in the fall, it was great ride, trees are turning color and you get to ride with all the cowboys and their dogs. You can stay in a tent, have a nice meal, and ride a horse all day. It was fun. It was well supplied and there was never a point that you didn't have something to eat. You were well taken care of.

R: (39:51) You were not working; you were a guest?

D: No, we didn't work, we just rode. It was fun and outdoors. It was exciting because sometimes horses would get away and they would go rope them. It is the kind of thing you see in a movie. It took them about 3 nights and 4 days.

R: The records should say that Dick has made part of the White Grass Heritage Project Collection/Archive, a series of letters on original stationery with signatures of Frank, Inga and Nona (Frank's second wife) over the course of several years. It includes payments, receipts, etc. Also, in that collection of papers, Dick has included an original brochure which contains a narration on one side and a picture on the other for this horse drive. What is written about the last day of the trip goes something like this "we came down off the mountain and it was an easy day's ride because we were always riding down the mountain. You cross some beautiful streams and then with all the horses, we come to Dubois and we drive the horses down the main street with police escort and red light going". It continues on to say as you are going down main street, "the old women come out to watch you go by and the children are cheering you and there are at least a couple of town drunks watching you go by."

D: That is probably true. A little poetic, I am not sure it was quite that way but I do remember the town people cheering us on. It was an event with 60 or 70 horses going right through town.

R: (42:57) The last line reads that "after the horses are delivered where they are suppose to be, you have a dinner cooked over the fire; the best steaks you ever had."

Note: The Fall Horse Drive Brochure can be seen at [www.whitegrass.org](http://www.whitegrass.org) under Collections/Documents/White Grass Brochures.

D: We were well fed. One of the horse drives I was on, there was a real wrangler and his sheepdog that would help herd the horses by nipping at them. We were on Union Pass and the dog got too close to a horse and the horse kicked him and broke his back. The wrangler took his gun and shot the dog. It still brings tears to my eyes. That is the way it was, could be rough. He couldn't do anything for the dog and he couldn't let him suffer.

R: Did it surprise you that it was the wrangler that put his own dog down?

D: It was his dog. That is nature in the raw. It was an interesting trip though.

R: You describe it as well organized and a professional operation.

D: Yes, it was well organized. It was a ranch priority. The cooks were there and it was the end of the summer season and it was a farewell party. Frank was always there and George Clover had gone off and formed his own hunting business. The guys that were there knew what to do.

R: In your descriptions of going to the barn on your first trip to White Grass, you talked about the lady all decked out in chaps and gloves who was going to help you ride. Did you ever get the chaps, gloves, etc?

D: No, blue jeans. I didn't have cowboy boots. I didn't get that western. I didn't become a made-up cowboy.

R: In your years before or after the ranch, were you ever involved in the conservation movement, protecting the lands, keeping the wilderness?

D: Not actively. I wasn't out ringing doorbells but financially I would support the various organizations like the Sierra Club. When we got more familiar with what was going on in Wyoming, we started to support the opens lands and the Grand Teton National Park Association. I was always sympathetic to the cause but never did anything outwardly to promote it. I believed in it, and I still do.

R: Was that reinforced or developed or initiated because of your time here?

D: I think it started here. Growing up and in college we were not exposed to it. In Wisconsin there was nothing similar to that. But out here, you got to see the results of some of that, either good or bad. I think it started out west. I don't give to big organizations anymore, but I confine my giving to local groups in this area.

R: When you give money to nature/conservation types of organizations, what are your goals and what are you supporting?

D: It depends on what their goals are. If I like their goals, I will support them. A lot of it is open lands, maintaining open lands, acquiring open lands and making sure they are reasonably funded. I want to know where my money is going. If it is a local group, I can see the results, if they are good or bad. I think the open lands have been very successful.

R: (49:10) The open lands would be supporting animal migration.



D: Yes, animal migration - buying up available property and turning it into conservation easements that preclude big development. The owners have to be in on it and when they are ready to give up some of their land to prevent big development, I will support them as best as I can.

R: I find it interesting that being a city boy that this is a very different environment. But part of your philanthropy is keeping Wyoming open and wild.

D: I like to keep it open and wild. I see a lot of the local people don't always have that thought in mind. That gets to be on the political side out here and some of that bothers me.

R: There is a lot of restoration here at White Grass which is being turned into a preservation training center. You decided to financially support the efforts here to preserve a cabin. You start here in 1954, your horse drive is in the 1970s and here it is, 2019, and you have chosen to support the efforts here after being away. Why would you do that and what keeps you connected to this place emotionally, psychologically or intellectually? It seems important to both of you.

D: When the ranch collapsed and Frank died, the Park took it over. The Park did nothing with a beautiful working ranch. They let it fall down. I wrote a letter to the superintendent several years ago saying it was a disgrace what was going on. I said if the park wasn't going to do anything with it, at least tear it down. It is ugly looking and an eye sore. It is a disgrace to a ranch that was successful and the Park let it fall apart. I never got an answer.

R: I hear bitterness towards the Park.

D: Yes, I know money is always an issue but they made no attempt to do anything. I think they wanted to have it fall down faster than it did.

R: It almost sound like your voice was quivering when you were talking about watching it slip away. Was that a part of you with it?

D: Yes, I get emotional talking about it.

R: So, now the attitude is thank you. Yes, thank you.

D: It could never become another dude ranch. By preserving the buildings, they are in better shape now than they were when they were operating.

R: Do you support the idea of a training center teaching historic preservation skills?

D: Yea, it is useful part of what they could do with the buildings.

C: Honoring the memory of the tradition by listening to Dick, who is a real conservationist, is wonderful to gender this kind of support. It has been a real gift.

R: In what way a gift?

C: A gift to be here and see this place and see the people who loved and honored it. I think there is a status with White Grass in the community and will probably grow because of the activity of the alumni

and the training center. There are wonderful skills being preserved. The process itself of the restoration of White Grass has been very important and meaningful for me and for others.

R: Are there other things you would like to say?

D: I would like to mention that we met some very interesting people here. Interesting because they were well known. For example, I had never met the ambassador to Libya before or the head fundraiser for Eisenhower's campaign, but I did here. They were friendly and asked you to come for cocktails.

One of the guests we met was named Wally Westmore, who was the head makeup artist for one of the big studios. One year I traveled to California for business, and Wally and his wife had us out to their house. They took us to the studios the next day. We met Alan Ladd of Shane and Bing Crosby. And a gentleman named Horace Matthews, who was Eisenhower's head fundraiser. We went to their house in Philadelphia and were waited on by their butler. Those were the kind of people that were out here. They were really down to earth people and friendly.

R: (1:01:54) Coming here enriched your lives in so many ways then and after by going to their homes.

Part Two:

C: (0:17) And, my children and grandchildren know about the ranch and our experiences. We have had some outstanding moments talking to your crews.

D: I remember the animal encounters here. The bats were here at night and you could see them looking at you. I mentioned to Frank and he said they wouldn't hurt you, and to pull up the covers over you. We had weasels come and Frank had chickens and I mentioned to Frank that we had a nice weasel running around our cabin. He went and got a gun and there was no more weasels and his chickens were fine. Frank had pigs and he was always fighting with the park because the bears would come down where the pigs were being fed. At one time, he shot a bear and the Park did not like that but he said it was self-defense. Frank always had labs with him and they were always at his heels.

R: (2:55) If you were to sum Frank up in a paragraph or two, what would you say?

D: Frank was intelligence, smooth in a western way. He acted and dressed like a cowboy but he didn't talk like a cowboy. He knew the ins and outs of the west and what he could and couldn't do. He took every advantage of it. He was a guy you trusted and liked. He was cordial and friendly and was available to help if you needed it.

R: Was he a good businessman?

D: I am not sure. He sold the right to the ranch to the Park with the idea that he had a lifetime occupancy to the property. He took that money and invested it in a resort in Nevis (British West Indies). He would go down there in the winters. It was an old sugar plantation to his Wyoming guests. We never went. Eventually that was sold. I don't know business wise how that worked out. He inherited the ranch from his stepfather. Frank was a great man. He acted like a cowboy but he didn't look like one.

C: He is still a legend.

D: I guess he is.

R: (5:30) I think most people think he was.

C: I don't know if he was a John Wayne but he is a legend.

D: You could sit there and listen to his stories for hours. His experiences with guests were always entertaining.

R: Anything else you wish to add?

C: It is great to be part of this (the WG Heritage Project).

D: It is good to be part of this and to see what is happening here.

R: Thank you so much for your thoughts and the work you have done here and continued support.

D: We will continue to support it as long as you finish my cabin (that Dick and Cynthia were funding for rehabilitation).

R: I think there will be a start on a new roof for it tomorrow.

D: (On a different subject), I left the big brochure on the Moose Wilson Road re-work on the table at home. You need to read it because you will like some of it but not all of it.