

AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM BUDDE

Interviewer: Harold Smith Final 6/15/20 (corrections in parentheses)
(By Ross Marshall, proofed by Mary Conrad)

HS: Well, this is an interview with Jim Budde, a longtime member of the Oregon-California Trails Association, active in the Trails Head Chapter, a trail boss. The interview is taking place in the library in the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence. It is Wednesday September 25, 1996. Okay, Jim Budde, tell me about yourself, give us your name and where you were born, birth date, your parents' names, just a little personal information.

JB: Okay. My name is Jim Budde, born July 18, 1939, in Cincinnati, Ohio. I lived in Cincinnati all my life until 1969, when we moved to Kansas City, MO. Basically, I am a college graduate from the University of Cincinnati, College of Pharmacy, 1958-1962. I graduated in 1962 and got a master's degree from the University of Cincinnati in Political Science and worked in a pharmacy. The company I worked for in Cincinnati decided to move to the East Coast of the United States and that's where I joined Marion Laboratories in 1969. I stayed with Marion for 20 years until I retired in August of 1989.

Along the way, two significant things happened. I picked up another master's degree in Liberal Arts from Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas, and I stumbled onto the Oregon-California Trails Association. During the years I worked in the association I was rather inactive because I was still working. It was the time when I retired that I became heavily involved in the national organization. During that time period I did join the local chapter and that is the purpose of this history.

HS: Family?

JB: I have three daughters, three grown daughters. My wife's name is **Judy**. My daughters' names are Jean, Jody, and Janna. They are married and live in the Kansas City area.

HS: What are the highlights of your career?

JB: Highlights of my working career. Since I was in drug pharmaceutical research, participating in the development of several key drug products, which made contributions to humanity. The first one was a drug called Silvadine, which is a burn cream for people who are severely burned, third degree and worse, a life-saving drug. I worked on that for three, three and a half years. My job was to collect the research data to submit it to the Food and Drug Administration. The Food and Drug Administration was molasses-like in their decision making process. It took us three years to get that work done and then a year to get it approved. Probably the most significant thing of this whole process was the fact that there was no other drug at the time. People have died and with this drug people live. It was very refreshing and fulfilling to have participated in the process and see the end results of these people, to receive the letters that they sent back to you, thanking you for what you contributed. The second drug we worked on was a passive channel blocker which originated in Japan but Marion Laboratories licensed it, another life-saving drug. The development process was much longer but the results were very similar. People are walking around today that wouldn't have had a chance to walk around if it hadn't been for this drug. So those drugs hit a warm spot and I'm proud.

HS: Now you moved to Kansas City when?

JB: June 23, 1969. After we had lived our whole lives in Cincinnati, we picked up and came west in a 1964 Chevy II with the windows open, no air conditioning.

HS: (unclear) air conditioning.

JB: We probably made a tremendous mistake, but nothing ventured, nothing gained.

HS: Now what got you interested in history in general and the history of the trails in particular?

JB: I've always had an interest in history. That's probably one of the few subjects that I got relatively good grades in, mainly because I was interested in it. So I always kind of dabbled in it. One of the other reasons was the fact that we used to take vacation trips starting in 1975 going west. We had never been west of Kansas City, the Budde family. We kept running across the Lewis and Clark Trail, markers for the Santa Fe and markers for the Oregon Trail. My initial interest was in Lewis and Clark. That lasted about two years. I've always been a person to take college level courses if they seemed interesting. There were a number of these things that kept my interest going when I was working. That kind of buttressed my interest. Then in 1983 when I first heard about the formation of OCTA I kind of followed it, the chapter, and got involved, not necessarily as a participant but just kind of sitting in the back of the room type. Then when I had more time my interest grew.

HS: So you were aware of OCTA from the time it started about 1983.

JB: Mainly because of the news in the Kansas City Star. My job was a commitment to go to the first several conventions.

HS: What was the first convention you went to?

JB: My first convention was the one in Carson City, Nevada, which took place in 1986. I just came back from my 10th convention. They get better each time.

HS: And they're always held somewhere on the trail.

JB: The conventions are held annually the second week of August and they are held some place along the trail. Since we have been through 13 of these things, we are starting to go back and repeat. We now have one scheduled for the year 2000 in the Greater Kansas City area. The first convention was held here in 1983 so we have just about run out of major sites along the trail. Some of the smaller cities may disagree with us.

HS: The 1985 convention was in Scotts Bluff, Nebraska. That seemed to intensify the feeling of a lot of people because here was a convention where they could take tour trips eastward to Chimney Rock and Court House Rock and see graves along the trail and take trips west to Fort Laramie, the wagon tracks, that sort of thing. So consequently I suspect that that may have triggered the idea of the Trails Head Chapter here.

JB: I'm not sure why they started the chapters. I suspect what happened was the initial original convention, which was 1983 there were roughly 100 to 110 people that actually came to the convention. The numbers grew, you know. I think they had like 200 members by the end of the first year. But they kept adding 100 to 200 a year. It was getting up to the range of 600, 700, 800 people. And at this time there were a number of incidents along the trail or portions of the trail that were destroyed by farmers who did not know this was the trail or some of the

utility companies laying pipelines or fiber optic cable. It kind of galvanized the people into forming chapters so that they could watch over, safeguard portions of the trail. Obviously the national organization, which was headquarterless at that time—we had no home base. The home base was whoever was the president. In the first two and a half years the president was Greg Franzwa, who was in St. Louis, not exactly the best place to monitor the trails. So that's when the chapters formed or started. I'm not aware of who came first or what. They just kind of formed regional or chapters along state lines, most of which still exist today.

HS: Did you have any involvement at all when they first started to form a chapter here, the Trails Head, in the fall of '85?

JB: My involvement was that I got a notice to attend a meeting, at the Roeland Park Library.

HS: That would have been in February of '86, I believe.

JB: As I said, I went there. I had a heck of a time finding the place. I arrived late. I remember four people sitting up at the front, Rich Nolf and Duke Sumonia. There was someone else. I don't remember his name. They, I believe were the first officers that were elected [not really]. I attended a couple of other organizational meetings. I participated in some of the events.

HS: Were you still working at that time?

JB: Yes, I worked up to August of '89.

NJ: So you were involved in the formative meeting of OCTA?

JB: Other than being a warm body in the back of the room at a couple meetings, I did not participate.

HS: There had been a group that had met out at Keys (Cave) Springs on the 12th of November of '85.

JB: I didn't attend that meeting.

HS: I suspect there again there were just a few people there. But the idea was germinating. Then Greg Franzwa wrote to Barbara Magerl a week or two later and said that we are getting that chapter going. In your early involvement and interest in this did you have any dealings with Franzwa or did he have any influence on you?

JB: The only influence that Franzwa had on me, other than being one of the 12 apostles, was I also remember the Westport Historical Society. I had been attending meetings of that group. I recall one meeting where they had Greg as a speaker. I don't remember the date of this, but I think it predated the formation of the Trails Head Chapter because Greg came out, made a pitch for his book, showed some slides, and just gave a rousing talk, [could have been the November, 1984 meeting at the Majors Barn - yes]. That probably was instrumental in stimulating my interest. So when Barbara sent the announcements around and published it in the paper—she was a great public relations person—I saw it and that's when I joined the local chapter. That's the influence Greg had on me, other than reading his book, which I had read back in the '70s and reread when we traveled west on our vacations.

HS: So you just gradually moved into participation with the Trails Head Chapter as you were also moving into participation with the national organization.

JB: I gradually moved into the chapter level when I became treasurer. I think that was (late) 1987. I guess someone was impressed with the way I kept books. Word got

around that they were looking for a treasurer. They had a president. They had a treasurer who was adequate for the early days of OCTA. But there had been some grumblings on the board that they needed someone who was willing to do more. Somebody sent my name in and the next thing I knew I was nominated for treasurer in 1989. I accepted, so that's how I got involved in national. If you stand around the circle long enough, the finger eventually points to you.

HS: Yeah. So how long did you serve as treasurer for the chapter?

JB: Starting in late 1987 it would be nine years, (6 if count 4 yrs when Jim was elected and 2 when Judy was elected), with the exception of one year (two years) that Henry Boppart was treasurer and another year that Jim Lee was treasurer. I've been treasurer ever since. So I guess that's seven out of nine. I volunteered to be treasurer for next year to keep the continuity going.

HS: Yeah. Tell me a little more about the growth of the chapter. When you got involved in '87, about how many people were in the chapter?

JB: I would say that the number of people that we had on the mailing list was about pretty close to 100. It might even have been over 100. The number of people who actually paid dues was somewhere in the range of 60 to 70. The difference being the influence of Barbara Magerl, who would send copies of the newsletter to virtually every newspaper and a lot of other organizations as well as the other chapters within OCTA. So there is roughly 20 to 25 percent of the total membership who were what we call freebies. Gradually, sometimes you got a request, sometimes you got nothing. Most of the time we got nothing. We whittled this down to a select few. So now the membership has pretty much

stabilized in the 70 to 75 members per year range that actually pay dues. The free range is probably somewhere in the range of 12 to 15, which included all the other 10 chapters and headquarters.

HS: The decision was made early on by the national organization that dictated that no one could join a regional chapter who was not also a member of the national organization.

JB: Correct

HS: Was that a factor in the membership being large or small?

JB: I think it's a factor, but I don't think it's a significant factor. The reason being is that 90 percent of your people, 90 percent plus, are members of national. That's how they find out about the local. There are those who say they have no interest. Usually they can't afford to participate in the conventions or they have no interest in the national events, but they do have an interest in the local history. You have these people who come up from time to time. Periodically we scan the membership list and tell them, "You can't join the local without being in the national." A painful process. I will admit we are fairly loose about this, particularly with long-time members. As the national has grown, they do provide a list of members in the national that are in your geographic area. We periodically have mailings to these people. The end result is that you can usually pick up in the range of 20 to 30 percent of these.

I don't know why people join national and don't join local. Again, the fear that they may be called on to participate. Some people like to read but they just don't want to participate in the administration of the chapter. That's

characteristic of Trails Head. There are six or eight people who basically run the thing, not by design or desire, just because we have not been successful in exciting the other members to put their shoulder to the wheel for a year or two.

HS: Plus the fact that you were present at the creation, so to speak.

JB: I guess that's a factor.

HS: The Trails Head Chapter is not the first local chapter, as I recall. The California people had started early on.

JB: I suspect it was California and Hawaii. They had one member from Hawaii so they put that on there. Now they dropped. Now the people are talking about forming their own chapter, as they should because they are totally dominated by the California.

HS: Yeah.

JB: I think Northwest wasn't far behind. That's Oregon and Washington and now Western Canada. Probably Idaho, Wyoming and Nebraska jumped in early. Colorado. Remember Trails Head used to be from St. Joseph, Missouri, south. It is no longer. They split off several years after Trails Head was formed because they think the people from St. Joe got tired of driving down to Kansas City.

JW: Now one of the founders of Trails Head is active in the St. Joseph chapter, isn't he? [Rich Nolf]

JB: Well, let's say he pays his dues. He's pretty much delegated that to Jackie Lewin. He will show up for an occasional meeting.

HS: You mentioned Duke Sumonia. What can you tell me about him as far as his part in the chapter from your recollection about the chapter?

JB: Well, I recall the original meeting. He was forced into this thing. Once he was forced into it he pretty much agreed to work with it. I thought that he had some kind of medical condition. Shortly thereafter, he suddenly disappeared. I found out later he had moved to Colorado. I don't know why. I don't know how the early officers chose to administer this. I have a feeling there were some executive meetings, and I'm sure that Duke participated in it. The fact that he pulled up stakes and moved to Colorado, it just evaporated. That's all I can say about Duke. I only met him once or twice.

HS: Have you been a moving force in the ongoing life of the Trails Head Chapter?

JB: I'd say they wouldn't probably survive without me without a fair amount of trouble because I'm not the figurehead leader. I'm more of an organizer and work behind the scenes, a record keeper, a bureaucratic type. I keep the records and make sure the books are balanced. I don't relish the spot of being president. I think most of the members would agree that the books are well kept. I am an idea person, one of the idea people that comes up with the idea and then lets somebody else implement it. I think probably my main contribution to this whole thing is the fact that the nuts and bolts of the books are kept in order and, second, I throw ideas out for the board or the group to consider, sometimes forcing them through because I'm willing to do the work. We have no shortage of ideas of things to do. But you look around the room and you see the same seven or eight people. So the question is, okay it's a great idea, but who is going to do it? Somebody needs to grab the ball and run. I guess between Barbara Magerl and myself and John Leamon, those are the three implementers. [and some others]

HS: Thinking back over the years of your involvement with Trails Head, could you comment on the program ideas the chapter has had? How have programs been developed? Has there been a consistency to them?

JB: The most prevalent program has been the treks, the series of one or two treks along some portion of the trail. Looking back over the 10 or so years we've been in existence, I think we've probably done in the range of 15 or 16 of these in the can, so to speak. At least they were in the memory of John Leamon's computer until it was pilched a couple months ago. But I think we've got copies. This was from the basis of the convention tours in the year 2000. So that's the most consistent. We have striven to get outside speakers, first local, which we've pretty much exhausted. We've tried to bring in people who were either passing through or to piggyback with the Santa Fe Trail Chapter, the Missouri Outfitters or the National Frontier Trail Center. There are only so many speakers and once you've gone through them a couple times, it's hard to draw people in. We've combined and had several joint meetings with the Gateway Chapter. We've had some notable meetings. We've had the workshop, the seminar we called it, back in October of 1994, where we actually had four speakers who spoke to them. We put in (it) on in KC. It was a tremendous amount of work but it didn't pan out to be as popular as we thought it would. We are probably going to do it again with a different set of speakers, with less emphasis on trying to attract teachers, social studies teachers, with more potential to getting the local populace into it, historic organizations. I was thinking in terms of a book review format, which I am kind of excited about because I think that could be developed into something and

maybe attract some of the inactive people back. We have a problem in this area. There are too darn many historical organizations. The net result is that you don't have any one strong. What you have is a lot of weak ones. You talk about Westport (unclear) (H/S), Santa Fe Trail (unclear) (Association), National Frontier Trails Center. There are just so many people interested in that. Those people who are interested in it have multiple memberships. You reach a point when you get meetinged and volunteered to death. We've tried to explore establishing some sort of regional organization that would have kind of a parent organization. The individual historic societies would become like children to this. It would give us the advantage of greater numbers and fewer officers and the ability to attract more prominent speakers, etc. We've been trying to sell this to some of the other organizations.

HS: You're talking about organizations like perhaps Jackson County Historical Society? (unclear) [Missouri?] Historical Society in Missouri? Organizations like that? Kansas State Historical Society?

JB: That would be a second phase, a later phase. The first one would be to get this coalition of these smaller groups together like the Trails Head Chapter and possibly Gateway and the Missouri Outfitters, the Friends of the Frontier Trail Center, a Civil War roundtable kind of thing.

HS: Possibly the Kansas Posse of Westerners?

JB: Absolutely. I'm not sure of the name of the organization. The Heritage League is trying to do the same thing. We need to be careful not to duplicate the efforts they've tried, tried to become sort of a clearing house.

NJ: Tell me about the publication put out by the Trails Head Chapter. I think it's called "Trails Head Tidings."

JB: Tidings.

HS: It started out in July of 1987. What can you tell me about the history of that publication?

JB: Well, it's gone through a number of editors, including myself. [Actually, Jim never did any issues – he and Judy only mailed some flyers] Me and the wife put it out for a number of issues. Barbara Magerl had done it several times. It is now in the hands of Mary Conrad. Basically, it's designed to keep the membership informed of upcoming events from the Trails Head Chapter and also to spread the word about other historical events or occurrences that are going to take place in the Jackson and Johnson County area. It usually has the flavor of the editor. The current flavor seems to be an emphasis on archeology, which is Mary Conrad's love, which is fine. We're getting a number of requests from other people because of this flavor. Basically it's a newsletter, what's happening in the chapter and also acts as an historic record. We can look back and see names, faces, places, events.

HS: Minutes have been kept of the meetings of the chapter over the years, have they?

JB: Yes. There has been a secretary off and on. I'm sort of acting secretary because our existing secretary (Tom McCutcheon) just moved to [Rock] Springs. So I inherited the book. And the election is coming up in November, so hopefully I will pass the book to someone else. There is a written record. Maybe a few meetings have been missed. But probably 95 to 98 percent of it is there.

HS: Who would have a reasonably complete file of the minutes of the meetings?

JB: Myself, Mary Conrad, Tom (McCutcheon), Ross Marshall.

HS: These have been passed on then from one secretary to another.

JB: There is one master copy, master book.

HS: Where is it located?

JB: Right now it's on my dining room table.

HS: All right.

JB: My wife wants me to get rid of it.

HS: I've got a dining table like that.

JB: Multiple copies are made for distribution. So even if the master copy disappeared, I think it could be reconstructed. Probably what we should do is take the first 10 years, since we are at that point, and take them and bind them and store them some place. It's better than them getting lost or getting gravy spilled on them.

HS: You know, we have been talking about things and your experiences, which of course is the purpose of our talk here. But let me run down a list of events and dates that I understand were involved in forming the chapter. After I've done that, I'd be interested in any comments that you'd want to make, either elaborating on any of those or taking issue with any of them.

JB: Okay.

HS: The announcement of the local chapter organization which was to be held on November 12th, 1985 in Cave Spring (unclear) Center. This discussion was to include the scope, purpose, name of the chapter, new structure and election of

officers. Organizers of this meeting, as I understand it, were Barbara Magerl and Sylvia Mooney. Of course at that time she worked at Cave Springs. There was an executive committee chosen to implement the organization of the local chapter. This group got together at the Rodeway Inn out in Overland Park early the next year on January 22nd of '86. People there were chairperson, a fellow by the name of Mike Duncan, Elaine McNabney was there, Ross Marshall, Peggy Smith, Rich Nolf, and Barbara Bernauer. That group then invited members to an organizational meeting at the library where you arrived late at Cedar Roe Library, down about 83rd and Roeland. Then the first issue of "Trails Head Tidings" appeared in July of '87. This, I think, is a brief outline. Does that pretty much conform to your understanding and recollection?

JB: I can only recollect from the Roeland Meeting. The first two I was not involved in. I possibly received a notice. I don't know. At that time I was a member of the national office. I can't add anything to it. I know I wasn't at the Rodeway thing and I seriously doubt I was at Cave Springs.

HS: I think you would remember that. Of course the one at Overland Park at the Rodeway Inn was just an executive committee as I understand. I've pretty well directed questions at you and I know you've given this some thought before we sat down here. What things would you like to comment on or pass along as far as the history of the chapter?

JB: I wish that the history could have been more comprehensive and more positive in the sense of accomplishments. I'm not sure. You see some of the Western chapters that have major signs that mark the trail and map the trail. Part of the

problem Trails Head has faced is the fact that we are an urban trail chapter. Very little trail exists. What does exist is of limited scope and probably already marked by someone like the Daughters of the American Revolution or Kansas City Parks and Recreation. So sometimes it's hard to get people motivated to participate and to become active in a chapter like a western chapter in a concrete jungle.

Basically that's the problem we face. The chapter in St. Joe pretty much faces the same thing, although they can go five miles west and find agricultural country.

We have to go 20 or 30 miles. But all in all I'd have to say that our task isn't defined in terms of signs or a trail map. Our job is basically to keep an urban chapter going through such things as speakers and treks.

HS: We haven't had clearly defined projects, with the possible exception of the treks.

JB: As I said, in terms of marking or mapping, there isn't a whole lot we can do, unless there is a call that comes down from the national. For example, I think it was three years ago that the preservation chair, Tom Hunt requested that each chapter document all the markers, regardless of their source, along the trail.

Trails Head undertook to do that from Independence to the Kansas border near Maryville and to photograph them, including the inscriptions on them and to send these to the national headquarters, where they would be stored. The idea would be that as the chapters participated we would create a big sandwich. Each chapter would have a big book with every marker as a baseline of what has been marked. And it would also give us a chance through analysis to determine were there some gaps where markers might be placed, or signs. So that's in progress. We are the first chapter to get this done, for which we have gotten numerous accolades and

snides from some of the other chapters who said we only had 50 miles to cover. They had the whole state of Wyoming from east to west. You get into that. So Trails Head is one up on that. We were blessed by the national. So I think that is an accomplishment. I think our main task is to keep the spirit and memory of the trail alive. Our mechanism of doing that is seminars and treks to some degree. We have two secondary functions here. One is to help support the national headquarters. That is mainly done through, I guess, myself as treasurer and the time I put in here. For the most part the chapter doesn't support the national in that sense but personally in projects. In times past they did come out. They did call for volunteers, particularly in the form of Elaine McNabney and the Pennistons from the Gateway Chapter, who helped through the years in getting out the quarterly issues of the newsletter and the Overland Journal and specialized mailings. Now that we have gone to a fulfillment house [?] there isn't that great of a demand. We pretty much burned these volunteers out over a 10-year period. That is one function, to help support the national office. The other is, since the advent of the National Frontier Trails Center, to support this effort. The chapter does that indirectly, I guess, through a national (unclear) library, donations, participating in some of the meetings and research projects. The (unclear) project, which we administrate through volunteers for (unclear). Also we try and support the National Frontier Trails Center. Ultimately, we probably don't have a current data base. They can run the searches themselves. I think that is a couple years away, maybe, as much as a decade because the data base isn't that big yet. We need to double it in size before we start sprinkling it around. Once that happens

we will probably call a (unclear) chapter to administer that. The Frontier Trails Center doesn't have the staff to do that. It is going to take a person who is knowledgeable about the trails, knowledgeable about the system, who has a day or two a week to do it.

HS: You have already commented on one of the things that has kept the chapter from being more active, that is the fact that there are so many overlapping historical organizations around.

JB: I heard this statistic a few years ago, that there were 123 separate historical organizations that were active in some form in Johnson and Jackson County. Even if there was just the membership, let's say 70 members within the Trails Head Group, you multiply that. You are looking at a range of almost 10,000 people in historic organizations. It's a lot of people, a lot of interest. Unfortunately, it moves down the quality and quantity of leadership in the individual organizations. That's why this attempt to create or move through this umbrella organization. It needs to be explored. But each organization is fiercely independent.

HS: They have their own focus.

JB: Right. Their focus may be the Civil War and they really don't care about the Oregon Trail. I feel just the opposite. There is only a limited amount of time and resources that you can devote to it.

HS: Anything else you want to comment on?

JB: Looking back on our track record of 10 years we need to do more. We can become calloused. We have some shortcomings within the chapter, that is this

magnificent seven that runs it. We are striving to expand this to help the seven because some of these people aren't going to be here when you do this five years from now. And the chapter potentially could collapse. That would be tragic.

HS: Well, Mark Twain said it is a terrible death to be talked to death. So thank you for taking the time to talk, Jim, to give us your perspective of the Trails Head Chapter and its part in the national organization. Thank you so much, Jim Budde.