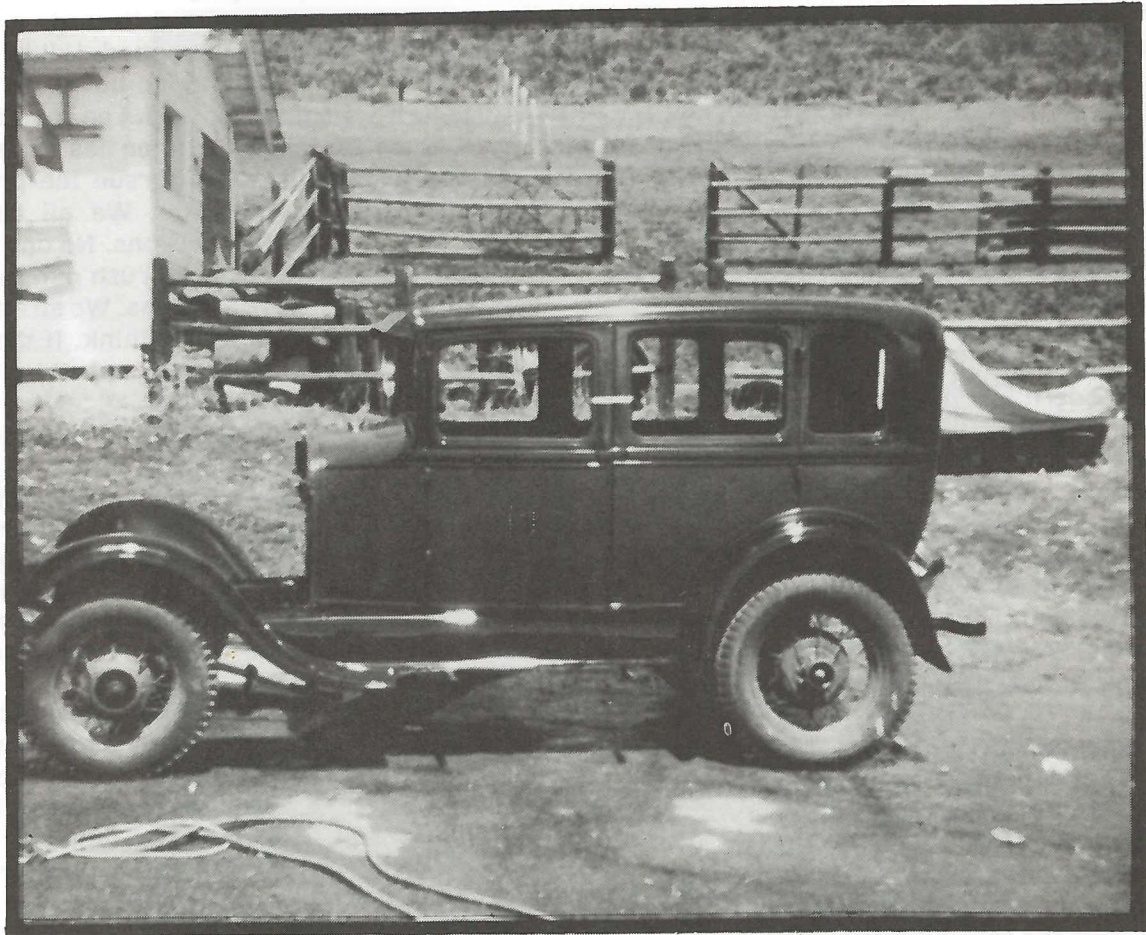


# CORY GUIRE

## MAN OF MANY HOBBIES



**BY NATHANIEL ETHRIDGE**

Cory Guire, a native Steamboat Springs resident, is a man of many hobbies and creative talents. He owns a few bees, a restored car or two, makes his own chokecherry wine, plays the fiddle, and in his spare time ranches land on River Road, south of Steamboat. When I (Nathaniel Ethridge) first met Cory I didn't realize all his varied interests and his ability to relate it to me with his active and intelligent mind. I talked to him on several occasions and he shared his life story with me.

"I was born in October 1941 on my grandmother and grandfather's ranch in Strawberry Park. My father came here in 1923, as a child, with his brother, mother and father, and they lived in Oak Creek. He married my mother in 1934, and moved to Alma, Colorado, to work in the London Hard Rock Gold Mine. While he was there a running fuse prematurely fired a shot and blew him down, blowing rock all through his body. It took two years for him to recover. Then in 1943 after partially recovering from the ex-

pllosion, my father moved to Steamboat and bought his present ranch with his disability payments. My mother's folks came here in 1919 from Kansas and bought the Deerfoot Ranch. They had other relatives here long before 1919, the Newbys, Swineharts, Marvins, and Ellis families. I have three brothers and one sister.

"We had a good life, a hard life. Things were pretty stiff in those days and we didn't have a whole lot of goodies. In fact, I can remember being in junior high before I had my first soda pop. There were times when things were pretty lean. I can remember eating porcupines in the wintertime. We'd go out and get porcupines and skin 'em and pick 'em. I'd guess they're pretty much like pork, greasy. The thing that would get me about them was the shape of the bones, the legs and ribcage. We had to debone them to be able to eat them. Dad would never pamper us, he'd bring home sandwiches with porky meat and we were never able to eat our beef, we had to sell that.

"We lived on a ranch and all we had from farm produce was eggs and milk. The pigs and beef we had to sell, unless one was accidentally injured by lightning or a building blew over on one. This happened one time, so we got to eat that one. We had one with a broken leg one time, so we got to eat him too. Sometimes I think Dad thought we were injuring animals so we could eat them, but we didn't.

"We had as much as anyone in those days. Clothing was probably the thing we hurt from most. We didn't have snowmobile boots then. Those are the neatest thing that ever came out. We had felt packs, but we didn't have anything to put in them and they were for adults, not kids. So we wrapped our feet to go to the road to wait for the bus. We never froze our feet, but sometimes it was really cold. I think today we could do without a lot more, but it's nice to have things that are modern.

"We had a lot of things going when we were kids. We played cops and robbers and had bicycles. We rode a lot in the summer months, and in the winter most of our time was spent building igloos. We had lots of chores too. That kept us busy all day, everyday. When we weren't in school we had chores. This was true with most ranch kids. We worked at a young age and worked hard. It didn't hurt us any, we enjoyed it, I think.

"We entertained ourselves a lot up on Copper Ridge. That's between Elk River Valley and Strawberry Park. We spent a lot of hours tromping around. I know that ridge from one end to the other, both sides. I can remember my mother letting me go up there with my oldest brother from the time I was seven. We spent a lot of time up there, winter and summer. We always looked for porcupines, cleaned up on them and brought them home for chicken feed. We enjoyed being outdoors so much that we just spent a lot of time there.

"We always had projects. I had chickens and sheep. My older brothers had calves. We built a fort for the summertime, dug it in the ground and built a roof over it. That was one of our hideouts. We also rode a lot of calves, when Dad and Mom weren't around. We even tried the old bulls once or twice. My oldest brother was a big instigator of these things.

"We'd go into town for main events like the Fourth of July, and the rest of the time we stayed home. We had lots of options to go to town, but didn't take them. We would stay home and snitch Dad's rifle and target practice. We also rode horses we weren't supposed to ride. I can remember cornering Ralph Belton's horses. He always had six to twenty head, so we'd catch the wildest ones and ride 'em. One time we caught an old white horse so we could pack down a deer

we'd shot up on Copper Ridge. When we were done the horse had blood all over it, so Ralph Belton called the police and said that someone had shot his horse.

"School was a lot of fun. I enjoyed most of the teachers I had, and I didn't mind studying. I never had trouble studying until I started dieting for wrestling, and that affected my concentration so my grades dropped. I didn't get as much out of school as I could have, but what I gained had a tremendous effect on my ability to survive in this world. Education has a bearing on your ability to think and pursue the problems that we face in public life. We all have the responsibility to make decisions. No one tells us to wash behind the ears or brush our teeth, we have to make our own decisions. We stress to our own kids that they be able to think. If they can't see what to do then that's not thinking for themselves.

"When I was young my oldest brother and I had a hard time pleasing our father. If we did wrong we caught the devil, but we weren't overly punished. Most of our discipline came from our mother, and she carried a big stick but never hit very hard. I remember one time I was running from her and she caught me just as I was going under a fence, so I got out of my pants and kept going.

"My parents helped prepare us for life because we could see the hard time they had. They set an example for us. We learned a lot, even though we had a hard time pleasing them sometimes. I think I gained a lot from my folks. Of course making a living has never been hard for any of us. The main thing we learned as kids was to work. We've never been afraid to work.

"I remember working at the power plant with people who had been there for 15-20 years, and if you asked them to study they wouldn't do it if they weren't paid for it. The wages were cheap and it was kind of degrading when they transferred us from the McGreggor power plant to Hayden power plant and demoted us 90c an hour. I was making \$3.40 at McGreggor, and at Hayden I made \$2.50. I worked there for 13 years. Today because of the laws I wouldn't be able to work on a ranch when I was 15. When I was 15 I worked for Leo Robinson. We got up in the dark all summer and went to bed around 11:00 at night. We'd get up and milk the cows and then head for the fields. I would come in about dark to milk the cows, feed the calves and all the other animals. When Leo came in from the fields he'd do the separating. There were a few times that I finished early, so I'd mow the lawn or some other small job."

Working was an important part of Cory's youth. "I went to work at a really young age. We all had chores. I remember my first employer

when I was 12; I worked summers from then on. At 14 I went to a sheepshearing school and sheared my folks' sheep. I got more advanced and contracted more sheep and at 18 I was contracting 2000, 2500 each year, besides working out on a job and owning 200 head of sheep of my own. That's why I guess I'm slowing down now. I do things fast and get them out of the way, then take my time on the things I like."

Cory spends a great deal of free time mending and restoring his machinery. "I enjoy mechanics immensely, I always have, for my own use. I wouldn't rebuild a car or tractor for someone else, I just don't have the patience. To maintain something for someone and have them not change the oil or something bothers me because I have tremendous feeling for a piece of equipment. If they are not maintained properly like clean oil and proper greasing a machine can be damaged. So I really do it for enjoyment, and it can take hours for a small job.

"I rebuilt a 5010 John Deere tractor, the whole engine from the oilpan up. I put all new mains in it, had the crank ground, put in new pistons, pins, sleeves, bushings, camshaft bearings, all the new gaskets, valves, seats, and lugs. It took me quite awhile, but it rounded to precision.

"I spent two summers doing a 1934 AR Orchard John Deere tractor, rounding up the parts that were lacking. It is fully restored now except it's got some dents in it from its working days. I don't have too much in it. I found places where I could get parts reasonable. But like with my car, it's expensive from one standpoint but not so expensive. We use this tractor to harrow and to move things. We use it when we fix fence, and just for general use.



**"WHEN I WAS 14 I WORKED  
IN A TRUCK GARDEN."**

I asked Cory how he got the money to buy his first car. He told me, "When I was 12 I started working for W.C. Homer in their truck garden. Then I worked for various people as a yard helper. I also worked on Lyle and Erna Alexander's sheep ranch where I did yard work, fence building and irrigation work. And at the time I raised chickens with the assistance of my parents. Then when I was 14, I worked for the president of Routt County National Bank. He had this Model A, a 1929 town sedan. I purchased it from him when I was 15 for 50 dollars, and it was the only car I drove until I was 25. Then I retired the car and got a new one. It was to the point of being junked, but I saved it. I kept it for ten years in this garage and just the last three years I've been working on it. I have another car — a two door 1931 Sport Coupe that I want to restore also.



**"I HAVE A 1931 SPORT COUPE THAT  
I WANT TO RESTORE ALSO."**

"I still have the upholstery, wheels and pinstriping to do yet on the Model A. The pinstriping will require some experience. I plan on taking a course in Denver this winter, then I think I can master it. I'm probably as excited about the pinstriping as I am about finishing the car. This is mainly a hobby. It's doing some of the things I planned on doing for years. I've saved the car and the tractor with this in mind, and possibly with some of the skills I pick up, I might do some custom work. To restore cars on a full time basis, I don't think I'd consider it."

Cory has to search for parts to fit these old cars or make them himself. "I get some of them out of catalogs and some from a place in Denver that carries strictly Model A parts. I can get just about anything I need, and a lot of the parts I rebuild. If I can't rebuild them, I try to have them rebuilt because I like to use the original ones. The car is worth on the market between 12,000 and 20,000 dollars and I've still got quite a bit to do to it. It's going to be all hand rubbed with

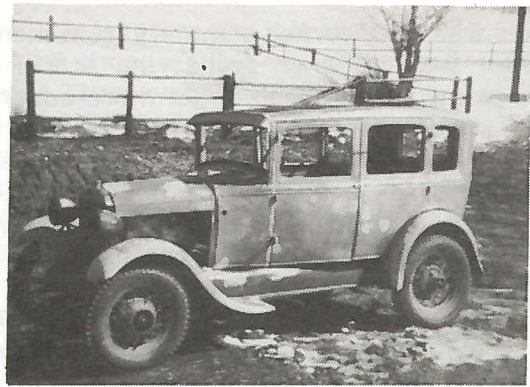
600 grit paper, and then I'll rub it back with compound to its final gloss. It will be done by hand because machines will leave swirls. It has to be straight rubbed or the swirls will show in the light. I had three choices on the color, and I went with the green. The top half is rock moss green except the window trim which is vagabond green, also the bottom half is vagabond green with black fenders, aprons and wheels.

"We plan to use this as our special occasion car, and in the parades. I have all the running boards that I haven't put on yet, because they must be sanded. I've got 18 coats of primer, a lot of them gone because I hand-sanded them off. I blocked it between coats, and then I have six coats of final paint of each color. I also had to make pieces because of damage or loss, like part of the fender. It will not qualify for the auto shows because a show car goes beyond the factory product. To be a show car the chassis and the bottom side of the fenders must be finished as perfect as the exterior. And to finish the car for show condition would make the car unusable.

"The only part I don't have for my car is a cowlband. A cowlband is a real delicate piece of chrome covered brass that goes in front of the gas tank. It's the only piece I'm lacking. A guy in Massachusetts offered me one for \$700. So I'm going to spend more time going to swap meets. A swap meet is a place where everyone has spare parts they take and trade. I have a set of headlights, a crossmember bar with a windshield and stantions for a 1931 Chevrolet roadster. This is something I can put in a swap meet. I have V-8 wheels and different blocks that don't match these cars. The next swap meet should be in April.

"At top speed the car will travel 60 miles an hour easily, so 50 and 55 is no problem. I put 80,000 miles on it before I parked it and it was running good then. The floor board was gone so I had to get a new floor. It had to be tapered and beveled from two different directions. I cut the top bows and all the top wood. I soaked them in the river to get the proper bend. An antique auto restorer from California thought it was really a good job. For the years I've driven it, it gets about 29 miles to the gallon. You control fuel mixture from inside the cab and spark the distributor from inside so you can retard it for climbing or open it for long straight drives. The gas tank is right under the windshield and it feeds into the carburetor, which is below the tank. It's got good gravitation and vacuum. A lot of old cars ran on a vacuum tank. The gas came from the rear into the vacuum tank which fed the intake manifold and created a vacuum. The vacuum had to be just right, and the temperature affected it.

"This Model A was probably the best thing

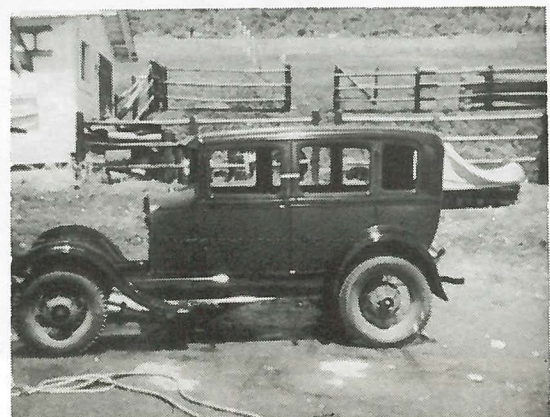


**STARTING ON THE CAR.**

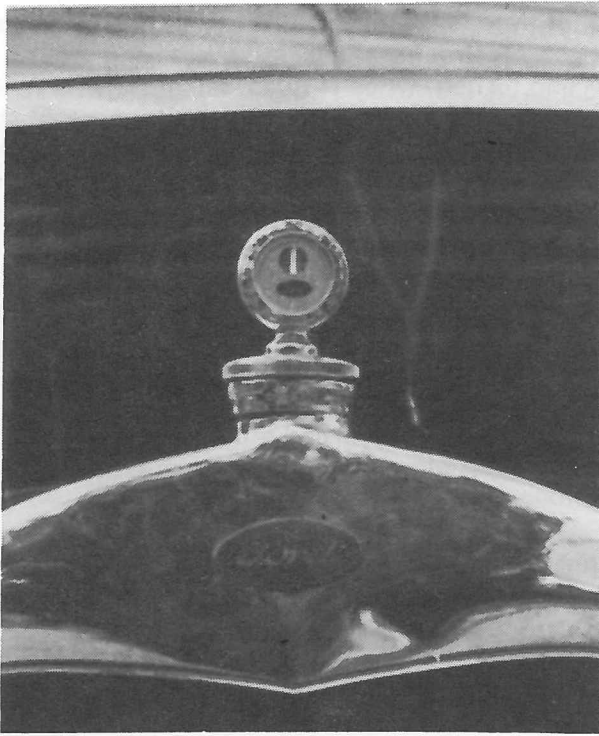
they ever came out with because they were looking for an economy car that the general public could afford. Lincoln, Dodge and many others had cars that only the rich could afford. This car sold for \$750 new and I bought it for \$50 used.

"I have been offered money for the car and the tractor. That was before the tractor was painted. The people wanted it because of the style, but I wouldn't sell it. The car's body was made when Ford was on strike, so Ford contracted Murry to build bodies. This has an engraved emblem of Murry, the coach builder. I've had people look at the car, see the emblem and want to buy it right away, mainly old car enthusiasts. I ordered glass patterns, but none quite fit. I also ordered patterns for the top of the car and it was all off, so I ended up taking all my old wood, mapped it and cut it. Most of my work was hand work with chisels and hammers and hand saws. It took me seven days apiece to cut the wood for my doors because they have so many curves that had to be doweled together.

"I work on the weekdays when I get my chores done and other work caught up. I do a lot of small jobs in the winter and between them I work on the car. I don't get eight hours a day on it, or even four, but once I start on a job I really have to bear down and work until I finish. I'll have a lot of fun finishing this because I have the heavy part out of the way.



**HALF WAY!**



**"OVER 8000 ACCESSORIES WERE MADE FOR THE MODEL A'S."**

"There were over 8000 accessories made for the Model A's. Accessories don't hurt the originality. All the chrome parts were brass underneath and this is why they deteriorated. The 28's and 29's were plated with nickel, then they used zinc. I went for the additional chrome plating to make it last."

Restoring a car of this sort requires much. Cory told me about the parts that have changed over the years. "The original tires were impossible to keep. I have an Atlas, a Goodyear, a Monarch, and other different brands. The tires that are on the back are to a Model A ton truck. I found them at a ranch for free, so I put them on for a little more speed. All the brakes were mechanical. I have a lot better brakes now. The old ones had never been turned or rebuilt. I've put bands on a couple of times but the linkage and things are the same. I'm going to rig the brakes, so they don't rattle. Some people called these the Rattle A instead of the Model A. The rods that run to the brake lines had rubber grommets on them and after the grommets wore off, they rattled a lot.

Several interesting experiences happened while traveling in this car, so I asked Cory to tell me some of them. "I took it to college with me, and I can remember driving down the Gunnison main street when they had the snow plowed to the center of the street like a divider. We would drive up the bank and down the other side into the other lane of traffic. One time we were doing this and high centered right on top of the bank. So we all went off to get shovels and when we got back there was a policeman who said, 'Well, son,

let's just leave it there for the night.' So it sat there all night on top of that bank. I can remember getting up at two or three in the morning to see if it was still there.

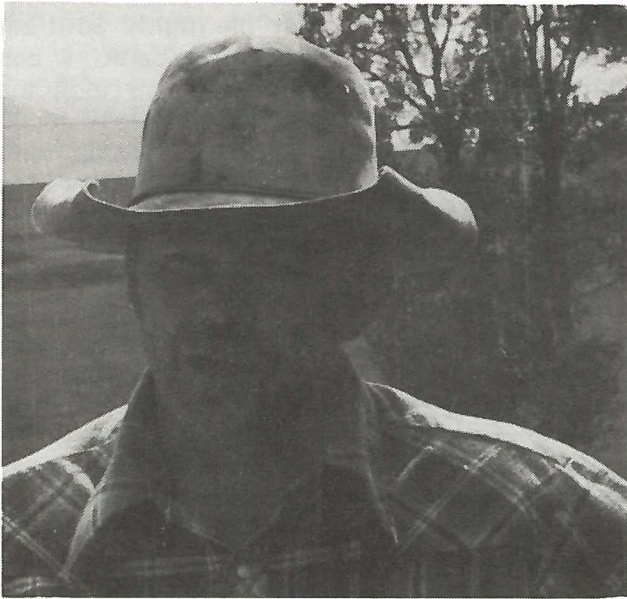
"Another time, I turned around at a stop light, and since it's a pretty light car it will spin around easy. So I spun around, slid up on someone's lawn and stopped right in front of the window. I quickly put it in gear and drove off. Another time I took it out of gear coming down Rabbit Ears when I was working for Loudermilk Construction Co. I never could remember how many times I was on two wheels, and I could never get it back into high gear. I couldn't synchronize the transmission with the motor. I could floor the engine, but it would never match the speed of the transmission with the motor. I had my oldest brother with me, and he would never ride with me again.

"My car was mainly for work, that's why I never did many crazy things with it. I had to do all the mechanical work on it. I also didn't have places to buy parts for it. I scrounged around a lot getting parts from ranchers that had odd parts, or cars that were wrecked."

Cory used his car for jobs and other things. "Mainly I'd haul my sheep shearing stuff around. I remember the time I went up to Clark to shear Mrs. Thorton Brown's sheep. She was the author of *The Sheepman* in Reader's Digest and the book *The Shepherdess of Elk River Valley* which is about her career as a sheep woman in the Yampa Valley. I sheared her sheep for a lot of years. I remember one time it was so cold that I needed hot water to dip my handpiece in because the lanolin would build up on the shears and I couldn't get through the wool. Mrs. Brown got me a real big aluminum tea kettle full of hot water to use. When I got done, I sat the tea kettle on the running board of my Model A, so I wouldn't forget to return it. I took everything back to the house, and she paid me. Then coming down Elk River I heard something clank, so I stopped and went back, and it was that tea kettle. It was dented up quite a bit, but I took it back to her. I can remember today, she chewed on me and gave me a lecture, and I can remember her main words, 'The kids today. They have no responsibility.'"

As I talked with Cory I was surprised at his versatility. The more we conversed the more I found out about other hobbies.

"I have 18 colonies of bees. It is just a hobby. I have never had enough honey to sell because I've only had them three or four years, and I'm trying to understand them better before I expand. We had one good year, and the rest we've sort of blamed on dry summers for the lack of honey. The last few summers have been poor. Other people with bees say the same thing. About five



**"CORY IS ALWAYS READY TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS."**

years ago we had three hives that made more honey than 18 hives did this year. There are 30,000 to one-half million bees a hive. It depends on the strength of the hive, which depends on the virility of the queen. Sometimes I get stung a lot, but not badly. However my wife has recently developed an allergic reaction to bee stings, which may slow down this hobby some."

Busy as Cory is he seems to find time for other projects and entertainment. His musical talents have extended to an interest in playing the fiddle. "My brother got a guitar for his birthday, and I wanted a fiddle in the worst way. Grandpa mentioned that his dad had one he had found in the attic of an old building. Mother wrote Aunt Twila and had her send it to me. It is a really nice fiddle. It's an 1814 Joh. Batt. Schweitzer. I think it's an original from all the data I have from appraising, however they won't appraise it if I don't send it in, and I won't send it in. It has a full piece pearwood back. The fiddle has a beautiful tone, and I played it at the Old Time Fiddle Contest.

"I also have a Jacobus Stainer copy, it's a pretty fiddle too. I have another one that belonged to my father's stepdad. When they mailed it to me it got broke all up. I sent it away to be fixed, and they never glued it on the inside, so it fell apart again. I fixed it, and I have the original catgut strings on it, and they are hard to tune because they keep stretching. I always tune it with a pipe because by ear I tune it to a different key. I make my own rosin from pitch from our pine trees. I boil it, filter it, and put it into paper cups to store. It works just as well as what you can buy, and if you do it right it won't discolor your bow.

"There's a million tunes to play, which takes a

lot of time to learn, and it is complicated. I spent a lot of time making mistakes and doing it wrong. Then when I was fourteen I was in Denver with my folks, and I found a book at the Goodwill store. Then I learned how to hold the fiddle and the bow, and that's how I quit making mistakes. I never had a teacher, I just learned by myself. If I would have had a coach, I feel I really could have done something with it. People usually start messing around and discover talents, like the lady who wrote 'The Golden Eagle'; she's 80 and plays by ear. Also 'The Orange Blossom Special' was written by a person who couldn't read music. Some songs are easier than others. That's what makes it fun, a relaxing thing to do."

Another of Cory's interests is making chokecherry wine. He briefly told me about his process. "I pick the berries and mash them to get the seeds out. I then mix them with measured amounts of sugar and water and set the mixture in the cellar to ferment. After a period of time the mixture is strained and bottled and set in a cool place to age. I let it age for about 50 to 60 days, before I store it. I make about 20 to 25 gallons in a batch. I keep most of it, but I give some of it to friends and relatives."

When I ended the interview I asked Cory many of the traditional questions about philosophy of life discussed with many of our past interviewers. He replied, "If I would live my life over again, I would be more efficient with my money. I used most of my money for gas, because I worked in Hayden. I could have bought a home in Hayden near the power plant that I could have rented when I didn't need it, and that would have paid for my gas. When I first started buying gas for the farm in bulk it was 28 cents a gallon. The tractor I have now is worth \$28,000, but when I bought it in '63 I paid \$8,000. Today with gas at a dollar per gallon and the wheat at \$3.50 a bushel the balance is crazy. In '72 I had 200 laying hens. I checked with Safeway to see if I could sell my eggs. They offered me 35 cents a dozen, and I had to wash, candle, crate, and wax them. Then Safeway put them directly on the shelf for 75 cents a dozen. You have to wax the eggs so that air doesn't penetrate the shell and deteriorate the egg. The balance was not profitable for me, so I just chopped them."

After several discussions with Cory I think that I'm more aware of the time and effort that goes into antique cars and the next time that I see one in a parade or show I'll know not to take it for granted. Cory has many endeavors, hobbies, and interests, of which we have only touched on a few. With all these jobs keeping him busy I'm sure he will live to see many more Three Wire Winters here in the Yampa Valley.