

Dick Bonney

10/11/04, T1, S1

ES: This is Dick Bonney, Richard Bonney, in Union, Oregon at his home on Monday, October 11, 2004. Tell me where you were born and when.

DB: I was born in Bellingham, Washington, in the first day of April, 1915.

ES: Why were your parents there?

DB: Dad was working at a shingle mill at that time. My mother was born there...or raised there. Then we moved to... We moved to Oregon City for a while then we moved to Bonneville where there's...there was just a hatchery there then, no dam. It was 1919 we moved there, I think. Then Dad got a job with state fish hatchery, or really the Game Commission, and they sent him up to...he was foreman at the fish hatchery at Bonneville. They sent him up here to build this new hatchery up here which is not there anymore.

ES: Was he in charge of construction?

DB: No, he was just in general in charge.

ES: How do you think he learned about fish hatcheries?

DB: He'd been working at some fish...with fish in Washington State some.

ES: It was on the job rather than in a school?

DB: Yeah. He never...hardly went to school.

ES: What do you remember about the choice of Union, Catherine Creek I think it was, for the hatchery? Do you know why it was chosen?

DB: No, I don't. I was only four years old.

ES: I thought maybe you'd learned since then.

DB: No. Rundel brothers from Cove – three boys and their dad – built the hatchery building.

ES: Say that name again.

DB: Rundel.

ES: R-u-n-d-l-e?

DB: d-e-l, I think, something like that, d-a-l.

ES: They were construction?

DB: They constructed the whole building. Dad notified 'em in Portland that he was ready to be transferred because he had finished his job and they told him they hadn't got a replacement yet. It took 'em seventeen years to finally replace him and he finally got transferred. It was a real interesting place to be raised. We had millions of fish all the time.

ES: About what age do you remember seeing the fish come up the river?

DB: Oh, about six.

ES: About six?

DB: Yeah.

ES: And you'd say millions? Was it really full in the spring?

DB: No, I mean in the hatchery, the little fish.

ES: I see.

DB: But the salmon run up this river must've been thousands of 'em every year. Of course a lot of people tried to catch 'em and they weren't fit to eat, they'd all shrunk down...

ES: Tell me how they'd come from the ocean to here.

DB: Just migrated.

ES: I know, but the route that they took.

DB: Up the Columbia and they wound up in the Grande Ronde and then Catherine Creek.

ES: Did they go to the Snake from the Columbia?

DB: I don't know.

ES: The Grande Ronde River doesn't run into the Columbia, does it?

DB: No.

ES: But it does run into the Snake, I think.

DB: I guess they came up the Snake.

ES: They must've come up the Snake.

DB: Yeah, then the Grande Ronde and then Catherine Creek.

ES: That must've been a thousand miles.

DB: Oh, it was a long way. They were about that big around when they got here.

ES: About six inches.

DB: Yeah. They were big when they left the ocean.

ES: Oh, you mean six inches around? They shrunk in the middle. They were hungry.

DB: Yeah, they were. They didn't eat when they spawned. That's why they lost all that weight.

ES: Where did the fish that came up Catherine Creek spawn?

DB: In Catherine Creek.

ES: At what point? Don't they go up farther...?

DB: Oh yeah. They went clear up to the Catherine Creek meadows, spawn up there. Of course the Indians came over from Pendleton on horseback to fish for 'em. They'd split 'em down the back, open 'em and lay 'em up on sagebrush to let 'em dry.

ES: Did you see them do that?

DB: Oh yeah. Then they... I talked with some of them. Then when they got dry they throw 'em in a gunnysack and take 'em back to Pendleton. That was their winter food, I guess. One old Indian – this may be not a very interesting – his name was Willy Cayuse. See, Dad worked for the Game Commission and the Indians didn't always understand the laws that got from the...so they'd come and talk to my dad. He could speak Chinook.

ES: How did he learn that?

DB: He was raised on the ___ down there, part of the time of his life.

ES: Did he have any Indian blood do you think?

DB: No, I don't think so. He was just a Scotchman. One time the Indians was goin' back to Pendleton and Willy Cayuse came down Catherine Creek on horseback. He rode into our yard and he got off his horse, talked to dad a minute, and then he gave him the most beautiful little pouch you ever saw made out of corn husks and velvet and deer skin and absolutely beautiful.

ES: Do you know what happened to it?

DB: Yeah. And then he got up back on his horse and the squaw said somethin' to him. So he got off and came over and took two pennies out of the pouch, gave it back to Dad, and he left. You know what, I took that pouch down to Mary Hill and gave it to the curator there and we had two Indian baskets and I took those there. Last time I went down there the Apache basket, which is a berry basket, it's flat, they had it up on a wall with a light on it and my name on it. It made me feel pretty good, yeah.

ES: Why do you think they wanted to give him such a fine gift?

DB: I don't know.

ES: They must've liked him.

DB: They liked him.

ES: Had he done anything to help them?

DB: He was their informational...when they needed... I've seen three or four of 'em come and set on the hatchery porch, sat on the floor, sat there a half hour and never say a word and then they started talking to Dad.

ES: He must've been one of very few white men around here who spoke Chinook, maybe the only one?

DB: Yeah. He tried to teach me, but I'm a little thick, I couldn't get it. They go up the creek...

ES: Would this have been in the late 1920s?

DB: Yeah, mostly. I think so. No, maybe a little bit in the '30s. It was a long time ago. They'd go up the Creek and camp on Ed Miles' land, put up their teepees, and fish there a while. Then they'd all pack up and go back to Pendleton horseback.

ES: How long do you think they would fish? How many days?

DB: Sometimes a month.

ES: Was there no other place around where they could've fished the salmon?

DB: Probably they could've fished the Grande Ronde.

ES: I should think so.

DB: I don't know what they did there. This... My memory is not too good because I was pretty young.

ES: I understand.

DB: I'm not makin' up anything, I'm trying to tell it right.

ES: Do you think that the numbers of fish that were coming up each year to spawn had anything to do with placing the fish hatchery here?

DB: I think so. I don't know why they chose...

ES: Would it have been closer to where they could gather eggs than some other place on any of the rivers here?

DB: See, the hatchery dad run was a trout hatchery, it wasn't salmon.

ES: So it must've been some other reason then.

DB: Yeah. I don't know where they got... I know they shipped the trout eggs in. He'd always get 'em off the truck. They'd come in square crates and they had little trays of eggs in 'em and several trays in each tray. Dad would put 'em in a... He had what they called egg baskets, these square metal baskets about that big and...

ES: That's about eighteen inches or twenty-four inches long?

DB: Yeah, something. And about that wide.
ES: A foot wide.
DB: Yeah. He'd just set them in a trough and the water would run through and they would hatch. He distributed millions of fish right around here, trout.
ES: What can you tell me about how the fish hatchery looked right after he built it? Do you have a picture?
DB: Yeah.
ES: Good.
DB: Someplace. [recording paused]
ES: So you can't tell me anything about the hatchery looked?
DB: It was just a big building and it had these...they went up Catherine Creek and cut the water into a pipe down to the hatchery. They had troughs every so often and it had tanks every so often. It had head troughs and each trough had a spout to turn it off and on.
ES: Did it look like fish hatcheries look these days?
DB: I doubt it.
ES: You doubt it.
DB: It was just a plain old-fashioned... It's still up there if you want to...
ES: The building is.
DB: The building is there. It's the highway shop now. They cut all the front porch and everything off.
ES: Were all the troughs under cover?
DB: No. They were just in this big building.
ES: Yeah, but under cover in the building, not outdoors?
DB: No, they weren't outdoors.
ES: I've seen fish hatcheries where the troughs were outside.
DB: No, they weren't. Then we had several ponds that we'd put fish in. Dad would strain 'em out of there and haul 'em up to some lake or some river.
ES: Did he want to get you up there to help?
DB: I don't think I'd be much help. I was pretty young. I guess I helped him some.
ES: You said maybe into the '30s so we're getting...you're over ten years old.
DB: Oh yeah.
ES: Boys who are ten years old can be a help.
DB: If they want to. I helped my dad quite a bit, but I didn't do anything real hard work.
ES: How many other men did he have there?
DB: He always had one and sometimes two or three. ___ and all that stuff. Sometimes he had two or three men in the busy season, in the wintertime nobody 'cause he'd let all his fish go.
ES: Did he go onto another job or did he retire from that one?
DB: He went to another hatchery in K__ down on the Seaside. I don't know whether you know it from the river there.
ES: I haven't seen it.
DB: It's gone now, I think. But he went to that one.
ES: Did you move there, too?

DB: No. I had two brothers and two sisters. My kid brother lived him and I went down and stayed here by _____. My stepmother and I just didn't hitch so I left.

ES: And came back to Union?

DB: No, I went down to pitch hops and I went down and picked up potatoes in Klamath Falls and I finally come back up here. I went to logging once there.

ES: Earlier I think you told me that you went to high school in Union.

DB: Yeah.

ES: So did you come back when you were at the beginning of high school years, like ninth grade?

DB: I was out of high school.

ES: After he went to Seaside?

DB: Yeah.

ES: I see.

DB: I was gone then.

ES: Let's come back then to school years here at Union. Did you enter the elementary school here?

DB: First grade.

ES: And at that time I think there were two schools in Union, weren't there?

DB: Yeah, North School and South School.

ES: North and South. Which one did you go to?

DB: South.

ES: South. Why wouldn't you have gone to the North?

DB: I lived up Catherine Creek and this was in the South School territory.

ES: Closer to it.

DB: Yeah.

ES: Did those two schools look pretty much alike?

DB: No. One of 'em was brick and plaster and the other one was wood.

ES: Which one did you go to?

DB: I went to the plaster one.

ES: Plaster one. Was that a little more modern then?

DB: If you could call it so, I guess.

ES: [laugh] For it's time.

DB: Yeah, for it's time it probably was a modern school.

ES: So you entered first grade there, I think you said?

DB: Yeah.

ES: And went through eighth?

DB: Yeah. And then went through high school.

ES: At that time schools were conducted somewhat differently from the way they are now. A lot of people say that the discipline was more strict.

DB: Oh boy!

ES: And you might expect to have your hand slapped with a ruler or...

DB: Or your butt!

ES: ...your bottom hit with a rubber hose.

DB: I had some of that.

ES: You did?

DB: We had a principal in that school, we called him Fat Car. It was not very respectful, but that's what we called him. He was big and boy you didn't mess with him. He'd take a rubber hose and really lay it on you. I had it happen to me once. I learned something.

ES: Do you think as a result of that kind of treatment kids developed more respects for the teachers and the administrators?

DB: I think so.

ES: Or was it fear?

DB: Now...no, not...

ES: Or both?

DB: Maybe both, yeah. Maybe both.

ES: I suspect more fear than respect, though.

DB: Yeah. You got a big guy that bellers after you all the time that kind of puts the fear in you alright. But he was a good teacher. What we learned from him was... 'fraid no to.

ES: What do you remember as one of the subjects that...where you felt you learned the most?

DB: Mathematics.

ES: And up through eighth grade did that include some algebra or was it all arithmetic?

DB: No, we didn't do algebra 'til you was up in high school.

ES: All arithmetic.

DB: Yeah.

ES: Including fractions?

DB: Yeah.

ES: Fractions are hard for a lot of people.

DB: I know it. But it seemed to come to me kind of naturally. But when I got in high school I kind of lost it.

ES: Do you remember arithmetic ever being taught with blocks of wood or anything concrete that would help you visualize numerical concepts?

DB: No, I don't remember that.

ES: Was it pretty much right out of textbooks?

DB: Yeah.

ES: And memorizing the multiplication tables and...

DB: The adding and everything.

ES: ...drilled on columns of figures, long division. What else?

DB: That was about the extent of it in grade school. I don't remember any algebra. We got that when we got into high school, geometry...

ES: Did you take any of the state exams in eighth grade?

DB: No.

ES: Maybe they weren't doing that when you graduated.

DB: Now wait a minute, maybe I did. We did have an examination, I remember that.

ES: It would've been in May probably.

DB: Yeah.

ES: And they were not easy.

DB: No. They might've... They probably were furnished by the state. We had a...what they called a school superintendent over the whole territory.

ES: The county superintendent.

DB: Yeah. He used to come see us once in a while. He was ___ lookin' old guy, scare you to death. But he never bothered anybody.

ES: What source of, let's say, pleasurable activities would you associate with the first eight grades of school?

DB: We used to kind of made up games we played out in the yard. The yard was full of boulders that big, no grass or anything, just a boulder yard.

ES: Hard to run on.

DB: Oh yeah. We played... We had one – I think somebody made it up – it's called Pum-Pum-Pullaway. If they pull you off your side... Oh, I can't tell you how. But anyway, that's one game I remember. Then we played lots of marbles. The kids don't even know what marbles are now.

ES: You need cement for that or some kind of hard surface.

DB: Yeah, we dug holes.

ES: Any organized activities at school that were recreational or at least more entertaining than doing arithmetic problems?

DB: Yeah. We used to play baseball and Fat Car was a referee and what he said goes.

ES: That was baseball or softball?

DB: Baseball, regular baseball. Sometimes it was an old wore out one, but we used it anyway.

ES: Was that for recess or after school?

DB: Probably recess mostly and sometimes before school, after school.

ES: Did you have a team that played the other school?

DB: No. We just played among ourselves.

ES: Nothing like Little League then?

DB: No, no. I'd never heard of Little League until a few years...

ES: No, nobody did, but sometimes schools had teams and they played each other occasionally. Do you remember anything about the eighth grade graduation?

DB: No. I think we just got out of school.

ES: No ceremony?

DB: I don't recall one. There could've been one, but I don't recall. I know when we graduated from high school we had a ceremony, but I can't remember anything...

ES: Was there any music in the first eight grades?

DB: Somebody played a piano once in a while.

ES: While you sang?

DB: Yeah, I guess so. We had a couple of teachers... We had eight teachers, one for each grade. We had a couple of teachers would play the piano. But other than that I don't remember.

ES: Were all these teachers women except for Fat Car?

DB: I think... No, they had an eighth grade teacher that was in the high school building named Workman and he was the only man teacher I knew of except Fat Car.

ES: How did the women dress at that time, the teachers?

DB: The dressed like they should.

ES: Which is?

DB: They didn't wear pants, never heard of that. They wore dresses and blouses or something. But as far as slacks I'd never heard of that. They didn't do it. They probably couldn't...wouldn't let 'em.

ES: Did the teachers ever smile?

DB: Oh yeah. Some of 'em were pretty smiley. I remember a couple of 'em was kind of crabby, but not too bad. We had a good school.

ES: Do you think any of the teachers were married?

DB: Yeah. Mrs. Vain was and Fat Car was.

ES: I mean women.

DB: Mrs. Reese, that's the first grade, and Mrs. Ade, and that's the sixth grade. That's all I can recall being married.

ES: At that time Union was bigger than it is now.

DB: No, smaller.

ES: It had more businesses, I know.

DB: Oh yeah, it had a lot of businesses.

ES: And kids came in from quite a distance from the farms and the fish hatchery.

DB: Yeah.

ES: Did you know most of the other kids in Union schools?

DB: Yeah. I knew most of 'em. I didn't know much about the North School because they were __ as far as we was concerned.

ES: Did you have to go right back to the fish hatchery area after school or were there other after-school activities that kept you in town?

DB: No, I usually went right home. About a half a mile up the creek.

ES: And if you didn't... How did you get there? By bus?

DB: Wasn't no busses.

ES: How did you get there? Walk?

DB: Walk or Dad had to bring us or something. The first school bus... Harry Avery had the first school bus and he had a route that took from Pondosa __ that was his route. The only school bus that we ever had here then.

ES: Why would it have come from Pondosa?

DB: Had a lot of kids up there that come to this...

ES: You mean there was no school at Pondosa?

DB: Yeah, there was.

ES: There was a school right near that lumber...the mill area.

DB: Yeah.

ES: Maybe that was for high school?

DB: I don't know. I know there was a school because I used to go up there to clam feeds in the basement of it.

ES: My suspect is they went through the eighth grade and then they had to come to Union for high school.

DB: I think so, yeah. That was it.

ES: Just the way kids from Telocaset had to come to Union High School.

DB: Yeah. And Rainbow Flats. Do you know where that is?

ES: I don't think I've ever seen it, but I've...people have told me where it is.

DB: They had a little schoolhouse up there, one-room school. Old Fat Car wound up...that was his last job up there teaching school in that one-room school.

ES: At the time you were going to school at Union there was a railroad, a Union Pacific Railroad, through here over in Pyles Canyon. Were you close enough to have anything at all to do with that?

DB: What?

ES: Seeing it or understanding more about how it worked?

DB: I came in here on it. That's the way we got here from Bonneville the 5th of January. I remember it was 5 above and the wind blowing like hell and snow that deep. My mother she had four and a half kids to look after.

ES: She was pregnant?

DB: She was pregnant, yeah. My dad was already here. The most amazing thing we lived... When we first got here Dad couldn't find a place to rent, nobody wanted to rent, so we lived in two rooms up over the D & D Restaurant.

ES: The building that's there now?

DB: Yeah. Al Turner run a pool hall downstairs. I remember... And we had to eat the Chinese restaurant, someplace close in town, across the street. I remember all us kids'd start to bawl every time we had to go to that restaurant, I don't know why.

ES: Starting to bawl?

DB: Bawl, yeah.

ES: You didn't like it?

DB: Didn't like it, I guess. So Mrs. Turner, Al Turner run the pool hall, his wife came to see my mother one time and she said, "I'm sick of making these little kids bawl." So they had an old restaurant in the place and the kitchen was all boarded up. So they went down there and they nailed everything shut. I can still smell the lye water they cleaned that old kitchen with. We ate there for a while after that.

ES: Did you have to go to a restaurant because there was no way to cook in your two room apartment?

DB: Just two bedrooms is all it was. Can you imagine that with all those kids and Dad and Mother?

ES: No, it's hard to imagine.

DB: When we moved up to the hatchery finally the Game Commission shipped in an Aladdin house, it was a pre-fab called an Aladdin, but it all had to be put together. It wasn't already assembled like they do now. Walt Davis, I think it was, put it together for us. By that time there was five of us kids. We had one bedroom, one living room, one kitchen, one small bathroom and a screened in back porch. That's where we lived for two or three years. I don't know how we did, but we did. Then they built... There's a little story about that. Some of the inspectors came up from Portland to look at the hatchery. Mother told Dad, "You tell them I'm gonna cook dinner for 'em" in this little house. So she did, but she moved all the furniture a little ways out from the wall. Boy, it was tight goin'! But we had a good dinner there and they appreciated it and the next year they built her a new house. I think that's the way she got it. They tore it down since.

ES: What can you remember about what meals usually consisted of, breakfast, lunch and dinner?

DB: Breakfast was either hot cakes or mush, as we called it, cereal.
ES: They didn't serve that at the Chinese restaurant.
DB: No. After we lived...
ES: Oh, after you lived there, okay.
DB: I don't remember it. All I remember is I didn't like that Chinese restaurant. I don't know why, but I didn't like it.
ES: Mush and...?
DB: Sometimes biscuits or hot cakes or mush or biscuits. Once in a while bacon and ham or something. Then for the next meal it was always tators and gravy and meat of some kind.
ES: You mean lunch?
DB: Lunch, yeah.
ES: Not when you were going to school.
DB: No. I took a lard pail to school. Mother always put it up for me.
ES: What was in the lard pail?
DB: Sandwiches mostly.
ES: And fruit?
DB: Once in a while an apple or something like that.
ES: A stick of celery?
DB: No.
ES: No chips, no chocolate bar, no can of chocolate milk?
DB: No. Just plain old food. I think... I believe we took some milk in a can or a jar or something.
ES: Did you have a cow?
DB: Oh yeah. We had a good cow.
ES: Did you have to milk it?
DB: No. Dad milked it. Until we got a hired girl from up the creek and he made her milk the cow and he made breakfast while she milked the cow. That was Stella Edvalson. She was an old teacher up here.
ES: Oh yes.
DB: For supper it was just about the same.
ES: Tators and gravy?
DB: Tators and gravy and fruit, lots of fruit, and milk, lots of milk. That's about it.
ES: Why no meat for dinner?
DB: We probably had meat, I just forgot about that.
ES: Did you have a pig or some other source of your own meat?
DB: We had a pig, I know that, maybe two pigs.
ES: Butcher one each year?
DB: Yeah. We bought our meat at the butcher shop.
ES: Do you think that since your father was an employee of the Game Commission his salary might have been a little higher than other people's around here?
DB: A little bit, yeah. I think he was making about \$125 or \$150 a month.
ES: Which could go quite a ways at the time.
DB: Yeah. It was a lot better than what it was during the Depression.
ES: Now the Depression. You were in high school then, weren't you?
DB: Yeah. I was in high school...well, I was out of high school a while.

ES: You said you were born in 1919?
DB: 1915.
ES: 1915, okay. '25, '35, you would've been twenty in 1935 and that was just before the Depression started breaking up a little bit with Franklin D. Roosevelt programs. So you were in high school from what, 1927 or so?
DB: Let's see. I graduated in '33 and so...
ES: 1929 you might've been in high school.
DB: I think so. That's about the time, yeah.
ES: Was there anything about high school that particularly interested you, subjects I mean?
DB: Yes. As I remember English - we called it English or language - was my favorite. I don't know how good I was at it, but that was my favorite.
ES: What appealed to you about that?
DB: We had a real good teacher.
ES: That could be it.
DB: Her name was Ms. Shapper.
ES: What?
DB: Shapper.
ES: Shapper? S-h-a-p-p-e-r? [end of tape]

10/11/04, T1, S2

DB: The kids didn't fool with her. She was a disciplinarian, but she was a good teacher. I didn't do... I guess I didn't too well in high school. I kind of got off my track when I got to high school.
ES: Let's stick to English for a bit. Are you talking about the literature part or the writing part, the grammar part?
DB: Maybe... The writing part. Literature, I guess you could say, too.
ES: Literature is mainly reading, but you can also write about what you read.
DB: It was kind of general with me. I guess that's the way you'd say it.
ES: You said she was strict. What made her class seem appealing to you?
DB: I really don't know. I just felt... But...
ES: You just left with good feelings about it?
DB: Yeah. She was not... She was not really strict. She was tolerant, but she didn't get along with any foolishness. That's what I meant. Some teachers did, but when you went to Ms. Shapper's room you mind your p's and q's.
ES: Can you remember anything you read?
DB: No. Not right off. Old Lady of the Lake. That was a standard. I don't know if I remembered any of it, but I read it. I can't recall right off. It's been a long time ago.
ES: Yes, it has. Did you find that you were having more and more difficulty with high school as you went through? The subjects got harder, or you just had less interest? What?
DB: I was kind of rebellious, I believe.
ES: You weren't alone in that, I imagine.
DB: No. A lot of us were.

ES: Maybe you got it from the other guys?

DB: I don't know. But it seemed to me like when I went from grade school to high school something kind of threw me. Of course I had three or four different teachers, which I wasn't used to, and I had a couple of men teachers that were pretty rough because I was kind of rebellious, I guess. So high school... I got through it.

ES: Did you give any thought to the possibility of going to college?

DB: Yeah, but it was impossible. Dad didn't have...

ES: For money?

DB: For money.

ES: What about the other kids in the high school? Were some of them talking about going to college?

DB: Yeah. Some went, but I don't... Let's see, yeah, there were two or three of 'em. Burt Meyers I think went and Evan Halsey. That's the only two I can...

ES: Was there any encouragement for kids of your age to consider going to college?

DB: They talked to us about it, but we'd turn a deaf ear. I did. I didn't want to go to college.

ES: What were they especially saying why you should go to college or consider it?

DB: I don't recall.

ES: Did they say anything about getting a better job?

DB: Oh yeah. That was the first thing they always told me. But I wasn't interested. I guess I wanted to be a carpenter from day one.

ES: Let's talk about your desire to be a carpenter. What might have brought on that desire or that interest?

DB: Working with my hands. My head wasn't too good, but my hands were good. I built this first house... I built this. I moved in here in '55. Then I built several houses and I built a lot of furniture and a lot of cab... That's one of my cabinets there and these are... I built a lot of stuff.

ES: At the time when you just out of high school how was it possible to learn carpentry skills?

DB: You just had to go to work with a carpenter. That was pretty...

ES: Was that easy to do?

DB: No, it wasn't.

ES: I wouldn't think so. How did you get your job as a carpenter?

DB: I just went on my own and did it.

ES: I'm trying to get at how you learned how to do it, though?

DB: Self-taught.

ES: Had you been watching other people doing it?

DB: I suppose. You see, Dad hired a lot of carpenters when he built the hatchery and then every once in a while he'd get a couple of carpenters to do something around that and I always watched 'em.

ES: Did you find you could hammer nails without hitting your thumb most of the time?

DB: After practice.

ES: [laughs] How about doing a straight line with a handsaw?

DB: I could do that.

ES: Because that's what you had to. There were no machines.

DB: No machines. Then when I went... I guess I got married...no, I wasn't. Newport on the coast. ___ took me down there to help his son build a building. I didn't know what I was supposed to do, but I... That's the first carpenter job I had. Then I got married. My wife worked in the post office twenty-six years.

ES: Had she grown up in Union?

DB: No. She was ___, North Dakota. I went out on my own. Somebody... This next house I built was for Merl Langford, I think.

ES: Let's come back to right after you got married. Did you come right away to Union?

DB: Yeah.

ES: Where did you find a place to live?

DB: We lived with Walt and Ma Stevens for a while and then I found this little house next door. We lived there nine years.

ES: You mean initially you and your wife had moved in with two men?

DB: No.

ES: It was a couple?

DB: A couple, yeah.

ES: And you had one room in their house?

DB: Yeah.

ES: What kind of an arrangement would that be for newlyweds?

DB: It wasn't too neat, but that's the best we could do. We must've lived there with them for a month, maybe something like that.

ES: Were you earning some money by that time?

DB: Not too much.

ES: Not too much.

DB: No. But then we moved into this little house over here and then I had a job working up here at the garage. But that wasn't my thing. I didn't like it.

ES: You couldn't find any carpentry work so you had to do something else?

DB: Yeah.

ES: And then did you work in grocery stores, too?

DB: Oh yeah. That was before I was married. Before the war. I was single then. I boarded down here with an old lady.

ES: At that time when you were doing odd jobs or maybe when you were first married and there wasn't much money, what was your attitude generally toward everyday life? Cheerful? What?

DB: I think so. I think I did pretty well.

ES: What was there to be cheerful about?

DB: I was home where I belonged. It's good country and good people. I didn't have any trouble.

ES: No reason to worry?

DB: No. And Trudy, my wife, finally got a job at the post office and that helped a lot. That's about the time when I started building things for people. I had a pretty good reputation.

ES: So I guess that means that you were sort of an independent carpenter? You didn't work for a contractor?

DB: No. I hired somebody once in a while to work for me for a little while. No, I didn't work for contract. Well, yes I did. I helped build the big Conley house when Rundle brothers – the same people who built the hatchery – was building that big house out in the valley. I worked there for a...

ES: Do you know where Maxine Conley lives now?

DB: Yeah.

ES: That'd be Conley Stewart.

DB: I worked on that.

ES: That's a big house.

DB: That's a big house.

ES: So most of the time you were building smaller houses?

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: Where'd you get the plan?

DB: Right there.

ES: You would... Were these houses built on speculation or were they built for...?

DB: Built for somebody.

ES: Did you ask them what they wanted? Or was it just living room, dining room, two bedrooms...?

DB: Yeah, that was it. I built Al Peters – do you know him?

ES: No.

DB: He used to be the banker here. I built his house. That was the last one. I built Willard Weiss' house. He was a barber. I built Merl Langford's house and Ralph Sydes' house and this house and I don't remember any more.

ES: When you first started building houses did they include indoor plumbing?

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: A bathroom?

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: So you didn't have to deal with outhouses?

DB: No. Nothing like that.

ES: Where were you getting your materials?

DB: From up here at the Oregon Trail Lumber Company made most of 'em.

ES: What is now Bronson's?

DB: No. I bought from...but the mill up there above...Hess Mill.

ES: Tell me about that. I don't know much about that.

DB: It was this guy that lived over here, G. I. Hess, he...

ES: H-e-s-s?

DB: H-e-s...yeah. He owned a mill up here. I worked there for a little while one time. I didn't care for it.

ES: Cutting lumber?

DB: I worked in the planer. But it shut down and burned down.

ES: Was that mill supplying lumber for many parts of Union County or just Union?

DB: Oh, they shipped lumber out all... That's what this little railroad bit, shipped lumber.

ES: Tell me more about that railroad.

DB: We called that the Dinky. It had several different engines.

ES: But they were all small?

DB: No, they were standard size.
ES: Why was it called the Dinky? Was it because it was such a short line?
DB: I guess so. It just run up here and right back to...
ES: It went from where to where?
DB: From Union to the junction, that was it, to the Union Pacific junction.
ES: That's over by Hot Lake?
DB: No, right down here.
ES: Right down here?
DB: Yeah.
ES: Where?
DB: When you're leaving town...
ES: Going toward La Grande?
DB: Yeah. And where the road takes off that's Miller Lane and that takes you right down to where the junction was. That road goes on around and comes out at Hot Lake, but not the railroad, it didn't.
ES: Why would that have been called Union Junction? Because it joined the Union Pacific line?
DB: I guess. I don't know why.
ES: That's my misunderstanding because I thought the junction was closer to Hot Lake.
DB: No.
ES: Miller Road, did you say?
DB: Yeah, Miller Lane.
ES: Miller Lane.
DB: I don't know what they call it, I call it that. Ed Miller lived on it.
ES: At this end where did it stop?
DB: At the mill.
ES: And the mill again was exactly where?
DB: You know where Bronson Lumber is?
ES: Yes.
DB: You just go right straight on like you're goin' up Catherine Creek. It's up there a little ways on the right.
ES: Wasn't there another mill near the agricultural station?
DB: Yeah, the experiment station we called it. It's right down there.
ES: What mill was that?
DB: No, that wasn't the mill, that was agriculture.
ES: I know, but I thought there was a mill near it?
DB: Oh yeah, that was right here, that was my neighbor.
ES: What was that called?
DB: Ronde Valley.
ES: Grande Ronde Valley?
DB: Just Ronde Valley.
ES: Ronde Valley?
DB: Yeah.
ES: How long do you think it was there?
DB: It's been gone for five or six years.

ES: Was it built in the 1920s?
DB: No, it was probably the 1940s, something like that, I'd guess.
ES: So it might have operated for fifty years?
DB: Probably more like thirty years I think.
ES: As far as you know, what kinds of lumber were these two...or trees were these two mills using?
DB: ___, tamarack, red fir, pine, and some white fir. I think that's about it.
ES: How were they getting the logs out of the woods?
DB: On trucks. Just load 'em on a truck and bring 'em out.
ES: This was past the days of horses?
DB: Yeah. At first it was horses for this mill. 'Cause they had horses...
ES: The Hess mill?
DB: Yeah. He had... The loggers all had horses then. Burt Shelton was the logger then and...
ES: Did they load the logs on wagons and have the horses pull the wagons?
DB: Yeah, kind of. I guess you'd say that.
ES: What do you think was the diameter of most of those trees?
DB: Big. Like that.
ES: First growth, old growth?
DB: Oh yeah. A lot of it was first growth, old growth.
ES: Maybe three feet in diameter?
DB: Two feet average I suppose.
ES: Those are big logs.
DB: Boy, they are now. They're like that.
ES: I know. They're little spindly things. Do you remember watching the wagon load or with the horses bringing logs in?
DB: Some, not too much. I knew what was goin' on, but...
ES: I just wondered if you'd actually witnessed the methods they used to handle these logs?
DB: They skidded 'em with horses. Then they cross-hauled 'em to load 'em on a wagon.
ES: Did you say skinned?
DB: Skid.
ES: Skid them?
DB: Skidded, yeah.
ES: That was out of the...
DB: Where they fell to the landing.
ES: They brought them to sort of a gathering place?
DB: A landing they called it, yeah.
ES: And then they had some kind of a winch device to get them onto the wagon?
DB: No, they cross-hauled most of 'em.
ES: Cross-hauled?
DB: Yeah.
ES: How does that work?
DB: You put two skids up to the wagon and the horses are on the other...
ES: At an angle of what? Maybe thirty degrees?

DB: As flat as you could make it.
ES: Ten degrees preferably.
DB: And then they had the team on the other side of that wagon and they'd hook onto this log and skid it right up there and load it.
ES: How'd they attach the chain or the rope to the log?
DB: I don't remember. See, all the logging I did was on the coast and we did it different. We had donkey engines and stuff like that. But they probably just put a loop on each end and drug it up there, something like that. I don't really remember.
ES: Maybe what? Ten, twelve, fifteen logs on a wagon and that'd be a full load?
DB: The trucks... They went to trucks.
ES: I know.
DB: The wagons, oh yeah, that'd be a big load.
ES: Using that method it could take almost all day to load a wagon.
DB: Yeah, it would. It was slow. But the interesting thing about it was... Then they went to trucks. We called log trucks – they looked like pickups now – and they hauled short logs, sixteen foot was the maximum. That was all the logs that came out of there.
ES: Do you know how the logs were barked?
DB: Barked?
ES: Yes. Removal of the bark?
DB: No. They just... We had slab wood and that was the bark. They'd just take a slab off of each side and...
ES: Okay. They would cut off. It wasn't scraped off by any other method?
DB: No.
ES: Did these... Did the Hess mill when you were near it make a lot of noise?
DB: I lived about half a mile up above it and I never heard it. I could hear the whistle when they'd blow the noon whistle, but I don't remember... This mill did. It was... I was sure glad when they moved that thing.
ES: It was the sound of the saws?
DB: Yeah. And the dirt and dust. Sometimes it would get so the wind would blow dirt out of the yard 'til I couldn't see that house across the street. So I'd have to leave town and go up the creek or something and wait 'til it...
ES: Do you remember hearing about accidents in mills around here?
DB: Not too much. I know one guy got killed up here. I can't remember his name. I suppose there was some, but I don't recall. Just that one I can recall him. He was a real nice young man.
ES: What do you think a mill owner would have done if a man was seriously injured on the job?
DB: He did the best he could. He'd try to get him to a hospital or something.
ES: Would he put out the money for his care?
DB: Yeah, usually.
ES: To help his family?
DB: Yeah. Hess would. I don't know about this guy down here.
ES: Did you know Mr. Hess?
DB: I knew him very well. He financed my house.

ES: Oh, he did?
DB: Yeah.
ES: Tell me more about him, the kind of man he was and what kind of business practices he had.
DB: He had the Oregon Trail Garage and sold cars. He owned the mill and he owned this house, of course, or his wife did. He was a pretty sharp guy. But he... I knew him all my life and my dad knew him 'cause they used to fish together lots of times. He was a nice fellow, but he was kind of...what would you say. When I wanted to build the house, for instance, I was working for him at the garage up here. I got to thinking about this big vacant lot – and I was living right next to it. So I went in his office one day and I said, “Mr. Hess, I’d like to build a house on your lot down there.” He just looked at me. I said, “You’d have to finance me to do it.” He set there a little bit and he said, “I’m going to Portland. When I get back – I’ll be back Friday – and I want you to have a good set of plans and specifications for a new house and then I’ll finance it.” He paid for it. Paid everything.
ES: Who was to live in the house?
DB: Me.
ES: Just for you?
DB: I’ve always lived here.
ES: So why would he finance your house?
DB: His wife owned the lot and the only reason I could think of is he just thought it would be a good thing to do for this guy that lived in that shack where we’d been living nine years. It’s been remodeled lately. That’s the only reason I can think of, he just thought “it’d be a good thing to do, I’ll do that.” He paid all the bills.
ES: Do you think that was common?
DB: No, it wasn’t. He wasn’t that generous with most people. But he was a...
ES: He wasn’t giving you the money, you were to pay it back?
DB: Oh yeah.
ES: So he was your banker.
DB: Yeah, that’s right.
ES: Did he charge interest?
DB: No. He just... He just told me how much it was and we made a note of it, put it on a note. I paid it back over the years.
ES: But you’d never been his employee, had you?
DB: Once or twice. I worked in his garage up here and I worked in his planer mill.
ES: He must have judged your character then?
DB: He probably did. I don’t know.
ES: Did you sign anything?
DB: No, I don’t think so.
ES: Just a handshake?
DB: Just a handshake.
ES: Man, you were lucky!
DB: Yeah, I was. And he... He never even came over and looked at the house after I got it done. He just told me... He told his bookkeeper how much to charge me a month and that was it, I paid it off.

ES: Did the land come with that deal?
DB: Oh yeah.
ES: His wife must have agreed then.
DB: She wanted a house here. I know that.
ES: At that stage of your lives – and by this time, what? Did you say you moved in here in '55?
DB: '55.
ES: That's not very long ago. Maybe we can go back a little farther. I'd like to hear you talk about the social life and the business life in Union, the way people... You've already told me that Mr. Hess trusted you and didn't charge interest – which is amazing. That isn't any kind of deal you'd get now. But tell me about how people seemed to feel about one another, what kinds of business dealings they had with one another.
DB: There was a whole lot of businesses up and down Main Street. There was everything. There was everything from Old Abe run the hat shop to his garage and the Union Hotel. It was a busy town. See, this was the main highway.
ES: Oh yes, Highway 30.
DB: Most people got so they had cars. Some of us still had buggies. They seemed to be compatible, they got along good.
ES: When you went into shop at a grocery store or a pharmacy did you always pay right on the spot?
DB: Sometimes, sometimes charge it. Some people had credit... Credit was what broke Mr. Haggerty. He gave too much credit.
ES: He had a grocery?
DB: Yeah, he had a grocery store. He was a good old man, but he... People'd come in there and he'd talk to 'em, alright, alright, and maybe he'd never see 'em again. They'd just take it and be gone.
ES: Took him for a sucker.
DB: Sucker, yeah. So he didn't... He finally... I guess he... He went broke. He had to move out. Then the... Westenskow put his grocery store in there and Ray Coles, the guy I worked for, he bought it.
ES: C-o-l-e-s?
DB: Yeah. Ray Coles, yeah. Then I went to work for Carl Posey. I worked in his store, too. All three of 'em.
ES: Were you a cash register in these store or stocking the shelves or everything?
DB: Everything. You was everything. Of course we had to stock shelves a lot and we run a cash register.
ES: Were the first grocery stores that you knew about the kind where the customer would go up to the counter with a list and then the grocer would get each item individually? You didn't push a basket around or you didn't have a basket to carry it in?
DB: I had a basket when I worked for Carl Posey. His store is still here. Mike's Grocery was his store. He finally got some little baskets and put 'em in kind of a place there. The thing I remember about those baskets his boy was about ten years old and he got in there and jumped on them baskets and broke 'em all to hell. That's how I remember the baskets...

ES: He had trouble with his dad that night, I'll bet.

DB: I don't know. His dad didn't seem to have much control. His mother, ooh, that was different.

ES: Tell me a little more about the shopping experience. You must've witnessed a lot of people coming in.

DB: A lot of farmers and people from Pondosa traded in Union. We had a good drugstore, __, and about four or five service stations, all of them pretty busy. Of course this was the main road. Before I knew anything about this town they had a woolen mill four stories high down this part of town. Old man Abe Eaden owned it. Then they had a flourmill about four stories high. It's all gone now. They tore everything down.

ES: Were you in either of those buildings?

DB: I was in the old one after it was abandoned, the woolen mill.

ES: The flourmill?

DB: No, the woolen mill. I worked in the flourmill a little while.

ES: Do you know exactly what went on in the woolen mill?

DB: No. it was all gone, the machinery and everything was down when I... I was just a little kid when I went down there and looked at it.

ES: I wanted you to tell me more about the shopping experience in a grocery store.

DB: You had to be friendly, I know that.

ES: Why?

DB: Because you want 'em to come back. If you weren't friendly to people they stayed away.

ES: What did being friendly mean at that time? What did you do?

DB: You watched your language and you smiled a lot and you helped people all you could, carried groceries out. Just had to be a friendly appearance, that's all.

ES: Were you, when you were working at the grocery store, still in the mode where you had to go get the groceries and bring them to the counter?

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: Did you have to go up on a ladder?

DB: I don't remember that.

ES: Some of the shelves were pretty high, weren't they?

DB: Yeah, but I don't remember having to get on a ladder.

ES: How did you get the containers from the top shelves?

DB: Just reach and get 'em.

ES: You could reach?

DB: Yeah.

ES: You didn't have a pole with a grabber thing on it?

DB: No.

ES: I remember that from when my mother was shopping. Did most people shop almost every day so they didn't have a lot at each?

DB: Yeah, but the main shopping day was Saturday. The mill come in and all the farmers come. Everybody come with a horse and buggy or a horse and wagon, most of 'em.

ES: What did you put their groceries in?

DB: We had the boxes that we bought the groceries in, cardboard boxes. We'd put 'em in that. They used them for that.

ES: No bags?

DB: Yeah, we had sacks, but no big bags, no.

ES: Did any of them bring bags or boxes to put their groceries in?

DB: I suppose they did. I suppose they did.

ES: Did your grocery store include a butcher area?

DB: We also had a butcher shop. It's still up there. But now each grocery store has it's own butcher shop, like Mike's got one in the back. When I worked for Carl...or Ray Coles they delivered meat from the butcher shop everyday, so much hamburger, so much... And we had a meat case.

ES: There wasn't much cutting going on in the store?

DB: No. There is now in Mike's store because he's got a butcher and he's got a real nice butcher shop in the back. But the other stores mostly bought right out of the butcher shop.

ES: How much of the meat and the eggs and chickens maybe were local?

DB: All the eggs were practically local. Some of the meat, but we always went to the butcher shop. Then they'd cut it up and sell it. The chickens they were pretty much homegrown around here. Everybody had a chicken yard, used pretty much chickens.

ES: Milk?

DB: Milk, yeah. They had a...

ES: Local?

DB: They had a creamery... They had two creameries, Blue Mountain and Union Co-op Creamery. They run trucks and picked up milk all over the county, the valley, and haul it in there and make butter. Blue Mountain, run by an old man named Haulsy, they hauled all his to La Grande...[end tape]

10/11/04, T2, S1

ES: Anything else you could say about shopping? Some things needed to be refrigerated, didn't they, in your store?

DB: Oh yes.

ES: How did you do that?

DB: We had refrigerators.

ES: Was it ice or electric?

DB: No. Regular cold storage refrigerator. It wasn't ice.

ES: Motors then.

DB: Yeah, motors.

ES: Freon and then...

DB: That's right.

ES: ...cooled it down. There was a movie house in Union, wasn't there?

DB: Oh yeah, Cozy Theater.

ES: Cozy?

DB: Yeah. It was run by a Mrs. Webb, she owned it. She couldn't hear anything and the kids'd raise hell down in the front row and here'd come the old lady with a flashlight just bull ___. [laughs] They was all silent movies when I went there.

ES: 1920s.

DB: Yeah, '20s. It was all silent movie and somebody played the piano for music. Then finally she sold it, I guess, and I went to...good movies, had noise.

ES: Talkies.

DB: Talkies, yeah. The talkies, yeah. Then they tore it down. They tore down everything around here that's worth a damn.

ES: Yeah. La Grande is good at that, too.

DB: I read about that. We lost both of our schoolhouses and theater and a lot of houses and some businesses have been torn down. I don't know why. It just happened.

ES: There was a period when people didn't like things to look old.

DB: I guess so. Must've been.

ES: This Cozy Theater how many performances a week, or how many nights a week?

DB: Every night.

ES: Every night?

DB: As I remember, every night.

ES: And would people fill the place?

DB: Pretty much. Pretty much. If you get old Hoot Gibson or Richard Dicks or some of them old-timers they'd come to watch them. I don't think... Thinkin' back, they weren't much. No, they weren't much of a movie.

ES: Some people would say that about movies today, also.

DB: I guess so, yeah. I guess so, yeah.

ES: Were there any kinds of traveling shows that came to Union?

DB: Oh yeah. Every once in a while there was a tent show. I remember one of 'em was Toby Tyler. I remember that one 'cause I sneaked into that one.

ES: What did he do?

DB: He just a comedian. Told a lot of corny jokes and had a funny uniform. Then they had some other people where they would do other things, too. Then we had... We still have carnivals every year here.

ES: Traveling carnivals.

DB: Yeah. And we had... Oh, I remember several tents shows up there. I can't tell you what they were, but they set up right there where the old South School is.

ES: Where the what?

DB: Where the old South School where they tore it down and it was a lot this size and that's where they'd set up.

ES: Was this kind of thing something that almost everybody in town would come to?

DB: Pretty near.

ES: There was no better entertainment available.

DB: That's all there was.

ES: How often would people go to La Grande either for shopping or entertainment?

DB: Too often. Too often.

ES: What do you mean by that?

DB: They would pass the merchants here and go to La Grande and spend their money.

ES: When did that start happening? '40s?
DB: Whenever they got cars.
ES: Of course there were cars from early part of the twentieth century, maybe most people didn't have until the '20s or '30s.
DB: No, we didn't have cars. Most people had a horse or a buggy or a wagon or something. And Main Street had hitch racks. Of course there was no pavement then. That hitch rack and everybody'd come and tie up the damn hitch racks. I used to do that. I had a horse.
ES: Who cleaned up the horse...
DB: I don't know. I suppose the city commissioner, the city whatever he was. Ed Sherman I suppose he was the old... He was the guy that...street commissioner. He had an old white team and that's the only thing he had.
ES: A shovel and a bucket.
DB: A shovel and a bucket, yeah. Then you've got Charlie Hanson and he graduated to a wheelbarrow. [laughs] It was pretty primitive.
ES: Why do you think once people had cars they thought that La Grande was more appealing to go for shopping?
DB: Bigger stores, one thing or other.
ES: Could they get things there that they couldn't really get in Union?
DB: You still can.
ES: Give me a couple of examples from long ago.
DB: Mother made... I had two little sisters and two brothers and myself and she made a lot of our clothes and she had to go to La Grande to get material. We had a clothing store up here and one down there, but for some reason she wanted to go to La Grande. Maybe it was just to get out of the house, I don't know.
ES: Did that have the affect of causing some of the businesses in Union to go out of business?
DB: Yeah. Livy was a Jew. He lived right over here. He was a nice guy. There was a whole family of 'em, Mick and Leon and Edna, Stella, and there was a whole bunch of 'em. They run the store. They were... A lot of people didn't go to their store. I don't really know why.
ES: Prejudice.
DB: Prejudice, probably. They were nice people. I liked 'em. Stella she was kind of funny, but old Mick and... When I got sick with typhoid fever I was in Hot Lake for four months and when I got home old Mick came up and brought a big white cake. They were nice people. But they're all gone now and Sue Briggs lives in the house. Do you know Sue?
ES: No. Were there any black people living in Union?
DB: Yes. Just one or two. They never were prevalent. They had an old guy named Willy Torrance and he lived down at the junction. Every night he walked to town winter or summer to buy a little bit of groceries for supper and he'd walk back. I liked the old man. I talked to him a few times. He had a son named Willy Torrance and I'm not sure, I think he went to either Baker or La Grande High School.
ES: I think he became a well-known football player.
DB: Yes, he did.

ES: What did Willy Sr. do for work?
DB: He worked on the section. That's where the section hands lived.
ES: What do you think was the attitude of most people in Union about people with black faces?
DB: Not too good in the early days. Now they take it, but in the early days they...
ES: Did you ever hear comments?
DB: Niggers, niggers, niggers. Every one of 'em was a nigger. I still don't think that's right. They're people. I've still got friends that call 'em niggers. I straighten 'em out once in a while, but it don't do any good.
ES: At least you let them know where you stand. You mentioned being in Hot Lake for four weeks, was it?
DB: Four months.
ES: Four months. With typhoid fever.
DB: Yeah.
ES: Let's start with the typhoid fever. Where do you think you got it and why?
DB: I'm a carrier. I was working on Campbell's ranch up the creek and this old lady, Mrs. Loveland, was cookin' there. Four of us got typhoid fever. They finally discovered that it was the old lady so they isolated her in La Grande in a little house. I guess she lived there 'til she died.
ES: What were your symptoms?
DB: They starve you to death.
ES: No, your symptoms. What did you first notice about why you were sick?
DB: I got hot. Had fever.
ES: Fever.
DB: Yeah, fever. My mother... I come down with it on the Minam River horseback way back in the mountains and boy I got sick. I didn't get all the way home. I got back to the Campbell ranch – I'd been working there – and I went in there and nobody was home so I went to bed on a couch they had there. They found me and I was delirious, I guess. So they called Dad and he...
ES: You were in your twenties then?
DB: 1931.
ES: When you graduated from high school then?
DB: Yeah.
ES: Okay. You were about sixteen.
DB: About sixteen. That's what it was, sixteen. They took me over and they kept me there four months. That was a miserable time. No air-conditioning and they put me right on the brick side of that hot building and no air. I'd just liked to died.
ES: How were they treating you?
DB: The best they could.
ES: I mean what were they doing?
DB: They didn't feed me. They'd feed me a little bowl of jello and a little bowl of applesauce drained through a rag and a glass of milk once a day. I went from 130 pounds down to 80 pounds before I got out of there.
ES: They were starving you to cure you?

DB: You see, the doctor explained to me the reason we can't feed you solid food your intestines are so thin it'll break 'em and that'll be it." So that was the reason, I guess.

ES: They could've fed you the milk and the jello three times a day, I should think.

DB: I would think so, but they didn't.

ES: Were you lying down all the time?

DB: Oh yeah. I was too weak to hardly turn over in bed. I got real weak.

ES: Were you in a room with other...?

DB: No. I was isolated because it was contagious.

ES: Tell me about the nursing.

DB: I don't remember too much about 'em. I guess they were good nurses. I had one old lady I didn't like, but that don't make her a bad nurse. They did the best they could.

ES: Were you able to get out of the bed to go to the toilet?

DB: No.

ES: So they'd prepare that in the bed?

DB: Bedpan, yeah. That's a miserable experience!

ES: Do you remember any other details about being in Hot Lake? The sounds you heard, smells, or other patients?

DB: They put me in a room right next to the diet kitchen. I could smell that food all day long and I couldn't have any of it. That was...

ES: Did it smell good?

DB: Oh, it was wonderful! That was bad planning. I think they should've put me someplace down the hall or something. But it's been a long time ago.

ES: You were there for four months, you probably improved gradually.

DB: Yeah. I got where they'd get me up in a wheelchair and take me out on the veranda and leave me out there for too long. I'd get to shakin' I was gettin' so weak. I guess they did that on purpose so I would get stronger.

ES: Did you talk to other patients?

DB: No. I wasn't allowed to. See, I had typhoid, I was contagious. Even the doctor washed his hands before he left the room.

ES: That's a good idea.

DB: Good idea.

ES: How did they decide, as far as you know, that you weren't contagious anymore?

DB: I don't really recall. I just know... My mother came over every day to see me. She couldn't drive, but somebody would bring her. I think they told her that I was ready to come home because she came over and brought my brother in the car and brought me home and put me right to bed.

ES: Do you think that experience could've had any affect on how you felt about high school?

DB: I don't know. It might've been. See, I missed half a year.

ES: That's a lot.

DB: Yeah. I was there all summer and part of the winter. So when I went back to school the teachers told me I did a lot better after I... I lost a half a year so they let me graduate with 3 ½ years. I tried hard. I tried. The thing about it was I liked manual training and I took two periods of that.

ES: That's where you learned how to be a carpenter.

DB: That's part of it, yeah. Old man Baxter was our instructor and he taught me a lot.

ES: Back to Hot Lake for a minute, at that time of course Dr. Phy was no longer there. He had died earlier.

DB: No. His boy was there.

ES: Mark.

DB: Yeah, Mark.

ES: And from what I've heard almost immediately Hot Lake started to deteriorate, it wasn't being kept up very well.

DB: I think that's probably right, probably right.

ES: Do you remember anything else you noticed about that?

DB: They had a... It was just like a little town. They had a pharmacy and a restaurant and a whole lot of things there.

ES: Those are all holdovers from Dr. Phy, the first Dr. Phy.

DB: Yeah, sure they were. But they eventually kind of just wilted away, I guess.

ES: Did you go out to the springhouse?

DB: No.

ES: You know where that is, don't you?

DB: Yeah.

ES: Could you smell the lake?

DB: Oh yeah. I can still smell it when I drive by. I went to the springhouse after I got better. My dad took me over there for a checkup or something and we went out in the spring...drank a little bit of that old stinkin' water. It was quite a place. The doctor had a chauffer and a little car, all a town.

ES: What did other people you talked to in Union seem to think about Hot Lake?

DB: Of course it's been closed up for years.

ES: Yeah, but I mean about the time when you were there.

DB: There was four of us there, me and Betty Campbell, Ward Horn and Addy Campbell. We all had typhoid. I was the only one that had it that bad, me and Betty.

ES: Do you think you all got it from the same woman?

DB: Oh yeah. We was all over at the same ranch. They put her in a little house up there and she wrote a letter to ____, that's the man I was staying with. I think I read it once. She kind of cussed him out. The last few words, there you are in a nutshell. I didn't blame her too much. She was old and had to go up there and live like that. I suppose she was on welfare, I imagine, or relief we called it then. I suppose she was. I didn't dislike the old lady. She was kind of peculiar. She had funny ideas, but I got along with her.

ES: Maybe you'd like to talk a little more about conditions during the depression? Experiences you had directly as well as things you observed about how the depression was affecting people.

DB: I know a lot of fellows who were – I don't recall their names, but I worked with 'em – who was working for a dollar a day.

ES: And glad of it.

DB: And pitchin' hay and damn glad to get it. They had three or four kids and how they made it I don't know, and was renting a house. How do you do that on a dollar a day?

ES: You barter things, perhaps, work and vegetable, fruit.

DB: They probably did. Probably raised a garden. Maybe they had a cow or hog or something. But they never seemed to get down. They never really got down. They were always cheerful.

ES: Did it seem to you that some of the mill owners or the people who owned stores in Union were doing okay?

DB: Yeah. I think... I think so. I don't know for sure.

ES: Did you ever see people begging?

DB: Oh yes. I had... There's lots of traffic from Arkansas and different places going through here, just destitute people. They'd come to the store, "could you spare a loaf of bread or anything?" Old man Haggerty he'd get irritated, but he'd usually do it. We had a family here named...I think their name was Nelson. Old Grandma Nelson she was a little old country woman and no teeth and one thing or other. She had three little grandkids out there trying to live in a house. So she'd come to the store and ordered a bunch of groceries. I took 'em out 'cause I was the delivery boy. She said... Bill said, "You get the money. Don't let her get you out without giving you the money." When I got out there the old lady didn't have any money. She said, "I could pay you sooner or later, but I don't have any money now." So I paid the bill out of my pocket. I never told Bill Haggerty. I just told him I got some money. When the hold lady come in about a month later to pay that bill it had already been paid. She said, "Who paid it?" Bill knew I paid it, I guess. He said, "he paid it." That old lady was really grateful for it. I think she died right soon after that. I don't know whatever happened to the kids. She had little bitty kids. Every time you'd take something, boy, they was all lookin' in the grocery box. You could tell they was hungry. But that's the only experience I had. I had a lot of guys come through, like I said, going through asking for meat or milk or something. Usually they got it.

ES: Was this a man and a wife and about ten children?

DB: Sometimes, yeah.

ES: What kinds of cars or trucks were they in?

DB: You couldn't hardly tell what they looked like they was so covered up with old crap, old furniture and mattresses and all that stuff.

ES: Where were they going?

DB: I don't know. I guess the Willamette Valley.

ES: You didn't ask them?

DB: No. I don't remember.

ES: Hand to mouth all the way.

DB: It was hand to mouth, yeah. They'd probably been doin' that since they left Arkansas or wherever they come from, gettin' by.

ES: Wasn't that kind of depressing?

DB: It was.

ES: Seeing so many people coming through?

DB: It was depressing, yeah. It was. To me it was, anyway. When I see one of 'em come through the door, old clothes on, "oh god, here comes another one." Sure enough.

ES: Dirty, smelly.

DB: Kind of smelly and dirty. Four or five, six little kids in the back of an old truck or something. It wasn't a good life.

ES: Did any of them stick around Union for a while?

DB: Yeah. I think some guys are here yet. I can't remember just who all they are, but I know we'd call 'em Arkies or Oakies. There's a few of them here yet.

ES: Was that because they thought they could get a job here?

DB: Some of 'em did. Some of 'em got a job in the mill. They couldn't hire too many 'cause they had their own people to take care of. It was a sad time, a real sad time. I didn't notice it too much because I usually had a job. It wasn't a good job, but I had a job. I know at the end of the depression I was looking for work and the lady that run the hotel offered me a job for a dollar a day, seven days a week, twelve hours a day and I had to scrub the floor every night, that big old white floor in that hotel.

ES: The lobby.

DB: I had to scrub that.

ES: What else did you have to do?

DB: I had to keep the furnace going, which was a job. We was burning sawdust as I remember. That was about it. Then I had to wait on people, of course.

ES: Doing what?

DB: Clerk.

ES: At the desk.

DB: Rent rooms and all that stuff.

ES: What kinds of people coming through typically would stay at the hotel? It wasn't to Oakies and the Arkies was it?

DB: No. Not very many. We had traveling salesmen. There was lots of salesmen then. If you worked for Swift and Company you had to be on the road, or anybody. A lot of salesmen and they all stayed there, or nearly all of 'em I guess. And some people just traveling going through.

ES: I'll bet they were in shinier cars and were dressed better.

DB: Oh yeah. Oh, they were. You bet you. They weren't tramps.

ES: Do you think that for the time this was a really quite good hotel?

DB: It was a good hotel, a dandy. But different people have owned it and finally old man Meyers was the last one and it went downhill real bad.

ES: At the time you were there was there a restaurant as part of it?

DB: Yeah, there was.

ES: Can you describe that?

DB: It was a beautiful dining room. I know it was all white linen. Of course they cooked on a big old long woodstove. It was pretty damn good cookin'. They had several different people cookin' there from time to time.

ES: Did you ever eat there?

DB: Oh yeah, that's where I ate my meals.

ES: That would cost the company then beyond the dollar?

DB: Yeah, that was beyond the... I usually ate there. They had three waitresses, I remember, that worked in the restaurant part. Did you know Dave Baum?

ES: I know who he is, or was.

DB: His sister, I went to school with her, and she was workin' there as a waitress. She's gone now. And a girl called Vivian Jorry she worked there. She went walking in her sleep. I'd be settin' there at the desk maybe midnight or after and here'd she come out of her room, come over ___ and everything, her eyes plum shut, and walk around the lobby. I'd go over and wake her up and, "Oh! Did I do that again?" And she'd go... [laughs] She was a nice person. I can't remember who the other girl was. There was three of 'em. Some stranger, I guess.

ES: While you were working there were there any events in the parlor?

DB: Oh yeah. They had a lot of things going on.

ES: Like what?

DB: Dances. ___ hold a dance and some guys come through with lecturing and just odds and ends things like this, quite a bit of it.

ES: Was that a better place for those kinds of things?

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: I mean the lectures and the Cozy Theater.

DB: Oh yeah.

ES: Or maybe the Cozy Theater was gone by then?

DB: No, it wasn't. All it had was little old seats. There wasn't no place for... Oh, they could lecture up on stage, I guess, but they used the hotel mostly. I remember that old theater had a Farmer Night every week where they'd give away groceries and stuff. Of course that was costing the merchants downtown. I remember that part of it. It's been a good town to me. It's been a real good town.

ES: Why do you say that?

DB: I've lived here eighty-five years mostly and I've always been able to get a job and I've had all kinds of friends here, lots of friends. Of course they're all gone now, but I had a lot of friends. I called squared dances for fifteen years.

ES: Tell me where they were held.

DB: In about the old hatchery, the sportsmen's club up there.

ES: Is that still there?

DB: Yep.

ES: Is it kind of a meeting hall?

DB: A lot of people use it for that, yeah. It's right as you go up the creek and cross the bridge where the hatchery was there you look to your left and it's right down there.

ES: What kind of condition is it?

DB: Pretty good, I think, yeah.

ES: You don't just start calling square dancing out of nowhere; you learn how to do it. So you how did you learn?

DB: It wasn't easy. It took me quite a while.

ES: Had you done a lot of square dancing before?

DB: No.

ES: You watched them?

DB: I watched 'em. When I was a little kid we'd square dance some. We called it square dancing, I don't think it was. No, my friend Don Gale he was a caller.

ES: Miskel's husband.

DB: Miskel's husband. He was a caller and he talked me into goin' up there and takin' some lessons. I took lessons and I learned to square dance and then I had to learn to call. That took a little while, but I caught on pretty good. I never called a square dance I didn't fill the hall, I'll tell you that. Everybody would dance to me, pretty near everybody.

ES: What do you think you did that made you more popular?

DB: I had a good voice.

ES: Good strong voice.

DB: A good strong voice. And I did a lot of singing calls and that's important. And I could sing. I can't now 'cause I can't hardly breathe, but I could sing pretty good then. I sang in the choir at church for a while. So I knew I could sing.

ES: Did you ever take singing lessons in Union?

DB: No, just natural.

ES: I suppose you were paid for square dance calling.

DB: No.

ES: You weren't?

DB: I paid a dollar every time I went to a square dance. They didn't pay callers. If they hired a caller from out of town, a traveling caller, they paid him of course.

ES: If you got the biggest crowd why didn't they pay you?

DB: I don't know.

ES: You never asked?

DB: We had a club and I was part of a club. Several of us called that didn't have...they never got paid.

ES: Describe for me if you would a typical maybe Saturday evening, that's when they'd be?

DB: Yeah.

ES: How did the people dress when they came?

DB: We had... The woman all had a blue dress. It was part of their uniform for square dancing. The men just had ordinary clothes. Then it got to where the women would come in slacks or something like that and it kind of spoiled it.

ES: Did they look better in the blue dresses?

DB: Yeah.

ES: The dresses would swing around when they were...

DB: Yeah, and you could see the whole hall of just blue dresses. It was beautiful.

ES: Dresses they made?

DB: Yeah, some of 'em. My wife had one, but I guess she gave it away or something.

ES: So these people come early in the evening, seven o'clock?

DB: About seven o'clock, something like that.

ES: And were there musicians there?

DB: We used a phonograph.

ES: You did?

DB: Yeah.

ES: Cheaper?

DB: Oh yeah. Cheaper and... I've still got it out there.
ES: Did you have a certain pattern or series that you always went through the same sorts of dances each time?
DB: No.
ES: It was always different?
DB: I had about a hundred dances...records.
ES: What did you do for the people who didn't know some of the dances? Did you teach them?
DB: We had a teacher...[end tape]

10/11/04, T2, S2

ES: ...an instruction session and then a dance session and then another instruction session? How does that work?
DB: The instruction session was on a different night.
ES: I see. About how long would people dance continuously? An hour?
DB: Yeah.
ES: And then what?
DB: You go home.
ES: No drinks or food?
DB: Oh yeah, we always had that. Every dance we had a dinner afterwards, pretty near every time.
ES: Who made the dinners?
DB: Had potluck, mostly potluck, I think, yeah.
ES: What were some of the dishes people brought?
DB: Cakes and pies and salads and...
ES: Casseroles?
DB: Casserole, all...
ES: Beans.
DB: Beans. Everything.
ES: Corn on the cob?
DB: I don't remember that, but I remember just about anything. Just like a potluck.
ES: Who supplied all the plates and the forks and the knives?
DB: The club had... I think the Sportsmen's Club has them right in their kitchen. Yeah.
ES: Did the men help wash the dishes afterwards?
DB: Very seldom.
ES: [laugh]
DB: Very seldom.
ES: What did the men do while the women were cleaning up then?
DB: Just set around and talk, I guess. Or some of 'em went home.
ES: Did you see any liquor at those dances?
DB: No. That was taboo. We had a couple of guys that'd come there a little tipsy, but they had to quit that.
ES: If I guy brought a bottle then you kicked him out?
DB: He knew better than to bring it in.

ES: Some guys would anyway.

DB: Just don't go. It was a clean sport, let's put it that way. It was clean. Now we had a guy, two guys, that you could tell they'd been drinking before they got there. They'd get a little tipsy sometimes, but if they got too bad, why...

ES: Out they went.

DB: Out they went, yeah. They'd take themselves out usually 'cause they knew what was happening. But all in all it was a wonderful thing to do for people.

ES: Were you doing this pretty much fifty-two weeks a year?

DB: Pretty much, yeah. I'd call up here and sometimes I'd call in La Grande or Elgin or Baker.

ES: Did they pay you?

DB: No. It was all volunteer.

ES: They didn't even pay for your gas to get there?

DB: No.

ES: You gave a lot.

DB: All the callers had to do it.

ES: Did you prefer calling to dancing?

DB: Yeah, I really did. But I danced quite a bit, but I liked to call. I really enjoyed it because the people were so friendly to me. They'd all want to dance when I called, you know. Not all of 'em, but the majority of 'em. We had some callers that were...they couldn't get people out. They just didn't have it, I guess.

ES: Some callers are easier to follow than others, I suppose.

DB: Oh yeah, yeah. That's easy.

ES: What do you think the most popular period for square dancing was in...?

DB: In the winter.

ES: I mean years, what sequence of years?

DB: Let's see, we haven't square danced for six, seven, eight years. Before that it was...well, probably for twenty-five years it was popular and then it kind of died out.

ES: Was it popular when you were a little kid?

DB: No, I don't think so. A guy came through here, a professional caller, and taught people here to call square dances and that's where it all started.

ES: I think that this must've been fairly common throughout the county.

DB: It was.

ES: You said you went to Elgin and Cove and La Grande.

DB: Enterprise, Joseph...no...yeah, I think I went to Joseph once.

ES: What might be the age range of people who would come usually?

DB: Anywhere from probably fifteen to eighty-five. We had some real old dancers. My god they could dance, too!

ES: Did many people come alone?

DB: We had two or three that came alone.

ES: The kids who were fifteen probably came alone or would they bring a boyfriend or a girlfriend?

DB: Yeah, usually. But they didn't last too long. They wanted to do something else. It was kind of boring for them, I guess.

ES: So mostly people in their twenties, thirties, forties?

DB: Yeah, right along there.

ES: ...did you notice that square dancing was becoming less popular?

DB: In our club here we got some people in there that tore it up. I mean they...how would I put it? They just wore it out. They took over, took charge, and they didn't know what they was doin' and people just drift away. You've got to know what you're doin' if your gonna run somethin', you know. We had woman in particular, boy, she was a fright! She'd been to square dances about six weeks, I guess, and she hadn't learned, she couldn't dance. She got up and said, "there's a lot of problems with this club, but we're gonna straighten 'em out." By god that did it. It just about ruined us. People said, "hell with her." There was two of 'em, two women that was that way, and they finally wore it clear out.

ES: Were you involved with any other kinds of clubs or organizations in Union?

DB: Sportsmen's Club.

ES: Tell me about that. It sounds like fishing.

DB: Fishing, hunting.

ES: What was the purpose of the club?

DB: I don't know. It was just a bunch of sportsmen got together. My dad was president for a while and they had dances in the Sportsmen's Club. My dad played for 'em, he was a fiddler. They had... Every year they had a clam feed or a crab feed, big, big deal. I guess that was just about it.

ES: It wasn't anything like an Elks Club?

DB: Oh no. No, they were just a bunch of old rednecks havin' a good time.

ES: [laugh] Do you think most of the guys around here were rednecks?

DB: Not most of 'em, but we got a few.

ES: What did you notice about political activities here? Were you aware of Republicans, Democrats, maybe other parties?

DB: Yeah. ___ just lately because we've had a hell of a mess here.

ES: Yeah, but earlier days.

DB: Oh yeah, but I wasn't much on politics. My dad wasn't either. He said, "I'm not smart enough to be smart like them guys" so...

ES: Did you vote?

DB: Oh yeah, I've always voted.

ES: You must've been reading things or hearing things that influenced the way you voted.

DB: And sometimes it was just an opinion I had on my own, somebody I liked or didn't like.

ES: Given what you noticed during the Depression, what was your opinion about Franklin D. Roosevelt?

DB: I liked him. I really did.

ES: Because?

DB: He seemed he got things moving, more than anybody else. He had the different organizations, the WPA, PWA and so on, and he got 'em movin'. I thought he was a nice man, pretty good guy.

ES: When the Second World War began and the country changed in many ways did you start thinking about politics in any different ways?

DB: I went right in the Navy as soon as I could. I didn't know much about politics then. I was out to sea all the time on an old wore out World War One destroyer.

ES: When you came back, Franklin Roosevelt was in his fourth term and Wendell Wilkie had opposed him a few years before. Harry Truman he was vice-president and then Roosevelt died all of a sudden and Harry Truman became president. That shook a lot of people up. How were you?

DB: Didn't bother me.

ES: No? What did you think? What did you know about him?

DB: I used to hear him on the radio quite often. I'd read in the papers certain things he'd done or go and do. Just kind of formed an opinion, I guess.

ES: One of the reasons I'm asking you is that I know that for a number of years there was a newspaper in Union called the Union Republican. I've read some of the issues of it. It was pretty straight-line Republican thinking.

DB: Oh yeah. I've got one right there, 1960.

ES: So I was wondering whether that...whether the opinions they spread affected you or many other people in town?

DB: I don't think so. Not very much. He was just an old country guy that published a newspaper and that's the way he looked at it. Several...there were several publishers.

ES: Over the years that you were here do you think that Union was leaning more Republican or Democrat?

DB: I think Republican.

ES: You do?

DB: I think. I'm not sure.

ES: Do you know any particular beliefs of the Republican party that people liked here?

DB: I can't recall.

ES: One of the things they often have said is that government shouldn't interfere in people's lives and any kind of regulation coming from the government. People in areas like this often say that's bad.

DB: Yeah, I've heard that. I don't know. We had so many... That old man Syberd and old man Lewis and old man McPherson and Don McPherson and somebody... About five or six people published that paper. The last one he finally just faded out.

ES: Did you read it regularly?

DB: Yeah, when I see it I read it, yeah.

ES: No, in the past did you read it?

DB: Oh yeah. I read it just the other day, 1960.

ES: I meant when you were younger.

DB: Oh no. I didn't pay much attention.

ES: You didn't?

DB: No.

ES: Did you read *The Observer*?

DB: Some.

ES: How about *The Oregonian* or *The Journal*?

DB: We always took *The Oregonian*, that was Republican.

ES: Was that your main source of news?

DB: Yeah. Dad and Mother always took that. And I took it for years 'til it got kind of...I just couldn't do it anymore, I just quit. I don't read very good. I don't see very good, that is on print and stuff. I've got a Bible there but I can't read it because it's too fine of print. So my eyes aren't too good. This is what I use mostly to read.

ES: A magnifying glass. Can you tell me something about your observation of churches in Union?

DB: They tell me one time there was eight of 'em. I don't know about that for sure, but there was the Adventist, the Presbyterian and the Methodist and Baptist... I had 'em counted once.

ES: LDS.

DB: LDS, yeah, that's a big church here.

ES: Was there a Catholic church?

DB: Catholic, yeah.

ES: That's seven, I think, there.

DB: About eight churches here, but they all... Now the Presbyterian church that's where I started Sunday School. It was out here where the Gravy Dave's restaurant is now. That's where we had the Presbyterian church. It was a beautiful old church. Of course I guess they run out of Presbyterians so they tore it down. I went to school there...or went to church there. Then the...

ES: Do you think with all these churches that almost everybody in Union belonged to at least one?

DB: Pretty near had to. There was that many people. We was only about a thousand people then. I know the Mormon church was pretty strong.

ES: During the years that you were involved, what do you think were some of the contributions that churches made to the community?

DB: I think the Methodist church – where I belong now – I think in years past it was a lot bigger than it is now, a lot more people. And it had some...well, not rich people, people with money and they contributed quite a bit to everything.

ES: What did the churches do for the community?

DB: That's kind of hard to answer.

ES: If they contributed in noticeable ways you probably would have noticed.

DB: Yeah. I know the Mormons have been awful strong here in this town and they contributed quite a bit. The Methodist, not too strong now, but they used to be pretty strong and they contributed quite a bit, in money wise, to different organizations. I don't know much about the rest of the churches.

ES: A little more intangibly, did you notice ways that attendance at church or being involved in churches affected people's behavior?

DB: Some, yeah. We had an ___, that's young people, had about thirty people. Of course they're all gone now, they're all dead. But we did a lot. We'd have ice cream socials and donate the money to somebody and things like that.

ES: I'll put it more specifically, do you think that churches in some way cut down on immoral or illegal activity in Union?

DB: I think it did at one time, yeah. I don't know about now.

ES: Longer ago.

DB: Yeah, I think they did.

ES: You didn't see much or know about much immoral activity?

DB: Not too much, no.

ES: Never a house of prostitution?

DB: Not that I know. I don't know about it if there was. No, I don't...

ES: Drinking?

DB: We've always had some drinking, you know. We've always had a few drunks, old Wade Shelton and Clark Martin and people like that.

ES: Isolated cases.

DB: Yeah, isolated cases.

ES: High school kids, during the time you knew about what was going on in the high school was drinking common?

DB: No. We didn't drink. We just didn't do it.

ES: Do you think that was related to the churches?

DB: Some. I believe it was, yeah, some. Now of course I don't know about the Baptist church and the Catholic church and those people 'cause I didn't know about them. But it was pretty...the Methodist and the Presbyterian – which is the only two churches I was ever associated with – we didn't do that. When I was younger, that is.

ES: So can you honestly say that in all the years, earlier years, when you were walking the streets of Union you didn't see anything going on that you thought was questionable activity?

DB: I saw a few fights, that's questionable.

ES: A couple of men? Not gang fights, just a couple of men?

DB: Just settle a grudge. I'd run into old Shelton once in a while, Martin once in a while, Butch Phillips, and they were usually drunk or partly drunk. They were habitual. That's about all I remember.

ES: Had police activity been noticeable around here?

DB: It's more noticeable now than it ever was. Like I told you, the first marshall I remember had that old white horse and the buggy and that was his police car. He was a pretty good old guy, but if you got too rough he'd put you in jail.

ES: Where was the jail?

DB: Do you know where city hall is?

ES: Yes.

DB: Right in the back of that.

ES: Did you ever see inside it?

DB: Oh yeah. I've been inside it. Not legally, I wasn't towed in, I just went in there with some other kids to look at it.

ES: How many cells?

DB: Just one.

ES: With bunks?

DB: Yeah, it had a bunk.

ES: And a pail to pee in?

DB: I don't know about that. [laughs] I don't know about that.

ES: I don't suppose people would stay in the jail for more than a couple days.

DB: No. No. If there was something pretty serious they always sent 'em to La Grande 'cause they had a better court and everything over there.

ES: Do you remember any important fires in the business district?

DB: Yeah. Let's see, the Oregon Trail Garage, or what used to be the Oregon Trail. It belonged to Hess.

ES: Where you worked briefly.

DB: Yeah. During... When I was on the coast it had a fire, burned part of it down. They've rebuilt it.

ES: Was it a wooden building?

DB: No, it was brick. It used to be an old bank in part of it. Where the D & D Restaurant is it burned once downstairs and they built it back.

ES: What kind of equipment did Union have to try to put out a fire?

DB: You mean a long time ago?

ES: Yes.

DB: They had a hose wagon and it was run by manpower. You had to grab on and run like hell.

ES: It was a hand pump?

DB: Yeah, it had a hand pump to fill it. They had a... At that end of town they had once fire bell up on a little platform.

ES: The north end of town.

DB: And the south end up on city hall there was a fire bell. That was it. I knew some of them old fellows that was on the fire department and boy they could run with that wagon!

ES: They were all volunteers, I suppose?

DB: Oh yeah, volunteer absolutely.

ES: Did you ever go to a fire and watch what they did?

DB: Oh yeah. I went to several... I was on the fire department for a little while. That was before the war, I guess, and when I left they took me off, of course.

ES: Can you describe one of those fires and what went on?

DB: Just a lot of smoke and a lot of hollerin' and draggin' hoses here, there and squirtin' water around.

ES: Did people come from all over town to watch?

DB: Oh yeah, a lot of times they did. Sometimes the cops would have to run 'em off. We had a fire out in north Union where they burned up a baby. I can't remember just what the particulars were there.

ES: At that time did firemen try to rescue anybody who was inside?

DB: Oh yeah, they tried to do their job.

ES: Where do you think they got training?

DB: They didn't get trained. They trained themselves.

ES: Even then there were certain techniques for fighting fires that they needed to know about.

DB: I suppose the chief give 'em a lecture. I don't know. I never had any training when I was on it. I wasn't on it too long.

ES: Why did you agree to do it?

DB: They needed a fireman, I guess, some firemen, and I said I'd do it. I went to several of their meetings and I went to a couple or three of their fires. The old

Halsey house, I went to that one. Then I went to the Navy. When I come back somebody else had my badge and I said, "you just keep that badge."

ES: You said, too, that you were on the school board for a while.

DB: Yeah.

ES: How did that come about?

DB: I just decided I could help the school.

ES: You said you didn't like school much.

DB: I didn't, but I learned better after I got out. I found it was a valuable experience for anybody. And so I was on there about four years, I think.

ES: About what period was that?

DB: Let's see, I was married in '46. About early '50s or something like that. Those guys are all dead now.

ES: What were some of the things you had to decide?

DB: A big thing we had to decide is where to get the money and where to spend it. That was the big thing.

ES: In addition to state money?

DB: Yeah.

ES: You were getting state money at that time?

DB: I think so, yeah.

ES: But you needed more for what?

DB: For gymnasiums and stuff like...

ES: To build.

DB: To build things. There was four or five of us on the school board and I don't remember too much about... We had to put a new roof on. That's expensive.

ES: So did this involve having a levy?

DB: Yeah. Oh yeah, we had to have a levy.

ES: Did you have to go out and talk to people to persuade them?

DB: I guess somebody did. I didn't say much. No, I didn't. They could either do it or they... We had a couple of sourballs on there with me that I didn't like very well. They fought everything. One of 'em when we'd have to spend, oh, say, \$20,000 for something boy he was right "that will cost me so much" and he'd vote against it every time. He didn't belong on the school board, but he was there.

ES: Did you school board meetings ever involved anything that was going on in classrooms?

DB: Yeah. Every once in a while a teacher would talk to us about something going on.

ES: Just to inform you about how they were teaching geometry or whatever?

DB: Yeah. And sometimes they had a problem with a couple of students. We had to kick a couple of them out, you know.

ES: Usually the principal or the superintendent does that.

DB: Yeah, but...

ES: Why did the school board have to be involved?

DB: He'd pay... We'd have to approve it.

ES: Oh, you did?

DB: Yeah. Before he could do it, yeah.

ES: You mean kick him out permanently?

DB: No, just suspension. He could come back. I had... I remember two students we had to do that to and they come back pretty good kids.

ES: What was your judgment about how much interest most people in the community had about schools?

DB: Not very much until we had a problem and then everybody had an opinion. That's difficult.

ES: A problem usually involving money?

DB: Yeah, or students or building or something. Usually money.

ES: That's kind of what you'd expect, isn't it?

DB: Yeah.

ES: When things are going alright they leave you alone.

DB: See, we had a...we had to have a budget, a levy. That got a lot of criticism always.

ES: One of the things I'd like to know is – and you probably know the answer – why did the school board and the school administrators decide to keep the high school pretty much the way it is? It's been there probably since about 1910. Why did they decide not to tear that down and just to maybe touch it up a little bit?

DB: I know one thing, we'd 've run into a hell of a lot of opposition if we ever tried it because boy people are... You don't know how people can turn on ya. One of your best friends could tell you off, you know, 'cause you're on the school board.

ES: Why do people feel so strongly about the high school building?

DB: I don't know. It's old and it's... I think Martin Davis told me he went to the first freshman class there in 1910. So it's pretty old and it's pretty solid. We've done some improving, or they have lately. They put in some new restrooms and things like that that were old-fashioned. But you don't hear much about it. But if we started to tear it down, good god, you'd have to leave town! Oh, it'd be terrible!

ES: I think it is unusual that people have been so willing to keep the old building. As you know, in La Grande Central School and La Grande High School were both torn down. The old Greenwood School.

DB: I went to... I don't know which building it was. They were talking about tearing it down and I went through it. They said it was unsteady and all this. I couldn't see a damn thing wrong with it. It looked...the walls looked just as good as they ever did. But they got it done. I don't know. La Grande is kind of a... They've got some people that are kind of anti, anti-everything.

ES: Many towns do.

DB: We have 'em here.

ES: I'm almost out of tape here, but go back to when you said that you've lived in Union for about eighty-five years and you've made a lot of friends here and you haven't apparently wanted to move away. Is there anything else you could say about Union that makes it so significant to you?

DB: Memories.

ES: Of?

DB: People.

ES: People.

DB: All the merchants up and down the street and people that lived... Just memories of good people. That's the main thing, I think. I've just known that we've always had good people

ES: Is there... Does that have to do somehow maybe with the location of Union or the size of Union or any other thing you can put your finger on to say why it's different from other places?

DB: Not really. I know it's...the size of it's about two thousand now. It was about a thousand when I came here. But the size of it...I really can't answer that. It's just about it I like it.

ES: It's a feeling.

DB: It's a feeling, yeah.

ES: Have you ever been tempted to move away?

DB: No. I moved away once I came back. No, I never did. We came here, we built this little house and we've lived here since '55 and I'm pretty happy just right here. There's a few people around that I like yet. A lot of 'em are gone, of course, most of 'em are gone, but there's a few that help me out once in a while if I need 'em and talk to me and good to me.

ES: Have you ever felt lonely here?

DB: Ever since my wife died I've been...this is a lonely house. But you gotta live with it. You can't do anything about it. We had fifty-one wonderful years...[end tape]