

Roy Comstock

11/6/2003, T1, S1

RC: ...1922 in Cove.

HH: Were you born at home?

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: Was it common for people to be born home?

RC: See, there were six of us kids in the family and five of 'em was born in...in that house and one of 'em was born in South Dakota, my older sister, before they moved here.

HH: When did your parents move here?

RC: In... They came from South Dakota in 1911.

HH: And why did they move here from South Dakota?

RC: They'd heard Oregon was a great place and South Dakota wasn't the greatest place in the world to farm.

HH: _____

RC: ...was just a baby when they moved here.

HH: In what year do you know that they moved here?

RC: 1911.

HH: __ [tape interruption]

RC: There was a...in the... My uncle... My great-uncle Ansel was here first and he lived...he used to live up on the...where Charlie Swart lives now. That was Uncle Ansel, known as Ansel Comstock. He was the first one here and then my dad and my grandfather moved here at the same time. Dad bought that ranch or farm. He was always a farmer and then he bought that right... I don't know whether he bought that in '11 or '12, but he bought that right after he moved here.

HH: I think it would be interesting to...[tape interruption]

RC: He punched cows on the...in South Dakota when he was a young man for my great-uncle.

HH: And then he moved here and bought a farm.

RC: A ra...uh-huh.

HH: A ranch.

RC: Right up... It's where... Right up a mile from here.

HH: What was it called?

RC: Just... Just the Comstock place.

HH: Okay.

RC: It's... It's where Moores live now. I think the road up there's named Comstock Road. The house has been remodeled two or three times, but the Moores live in it now.

HH: And your father built the house there?

RC: No. Added onto it, but not... There was a house there.

HH: Okay.

RC: My father put runnin' water in the house - it was the first thing he did - and got electricity from the old Eastern Oregon Light and Power Company. He got the

light poles out and they put 'em in and Dad owned the line from the Mill Creek Lane...or Road into his house for years. He had to keep it up as far as poles.

HH: You had to make sure they were standing?

RC: Get new poles. Anytime I called whenever they'd say they needed one. And then they took it over. I don't know what year they took it...they took it over from 'em, but for years we owned that line.

HH: Your line had to maintain the poles that held it up?

RC: That's right.

HH: Did you actually... Did he actually put them in and stuff?

RC: No. They... They'd put... They'd put the... He dug the holes, but they put them in the ground for him, the power company did.

HH: So then this would be...[tape interruption]?

RC: No. Well, there was six of in the family, three boys and three girls.

HH: And which one were you?

RC: I was the last. I was the youngest.

HH: The baby.

RC: I'm the baby and the only one living now.

HH: What do you remember about your early childhood?

RC: Well, a happy...happy childhood, I guess you'd say. It really was... All of us... All of us worked on the farm and always had all these milk cows and always had a large garden, berries, __ wooden posts Dad did to sell. Things... Things was... In those days it was a lot different livin' then it is nowadays.

HH: How so?

RC: Money was hard to come by, especially in...when the Depression hit. I remember that when I was eight or nine. There was just no money. I guess in 1928 or '9 for several years there was just no money to be had. We always had plenty to eat because we raised our food. We had cows and a chicken bed – always had a lot of chickens – sold eggs. Everybody had cows and sold cream.

HH: __ used to sell...[tape interruption]

RC: It used to be... I was thinkin' about that the other day. There was three...three cream...three cream routes come in from Cove in those days. The co-op was in Union and then the Blue Mountain...Blue Mountain Creamery was...had a...they had a creamery over in La Grande and made butter and made butter in Union, the co-op. Then there was an independent that came in and they shipped it down to Portland. So everybody...everybody that had a place had a cow or two or three or up to a dozen or two dozen cows.

HH: So how do you remember the Depression affecting your neighbors, your neighbors or the community as a whole? Everybody...[tape interruption]...or did they miss not...[tape interruption]

RC: No. 'Cause we didn't... In those days we didn't go...maybe we'd go to La Grande once a week or my dad would to buy groceries and take the eggs in, sold the eggs in La Grande, then get groceries.

HH: ____

RC: ____ Of course we didn't have the money and we didn't need the money that they do now. It just wasn't...wasn't a thing that...wasn't any such thing as goin' to La Grande to see a show or that. They did have a show house at Cove at one time.

HH: Really?
RC: Yes.
HH: Where was it?
RC: Right down where... Down just right near where the tavern is now.
HH: Okay. And what was it called?
RC: I have no idea.
HH: Don't remember?
RC: No. There was a lot of things in Cove in the early days. They had...well, how many saw mills? They had a sawmill...of course that was in later years, but they had a... There was most always a sawmill in Cove.
HH: What kind of a sawmill was it? What did it produce? Anything in particular?
RC: No, just lumber and they sold it to farmers and different people. There was one they used to call the Barging Mill. It was up on the way to Moss Springs and it closed down. And then they had the Waite Mill...sawmill. Then in later years Clark Sharp and...I forget what that man's name was...built one at the end of Comstock Road there right below Clifford Toll's along Mill Creek there. That burned down and then they rebuilt that. John Edwards built...had an operating mill there and it burned down. And then they had one, of course, down in Cove.
HH: What was that one called?
RC: You got me. Oh, Ruth, what was the... I'll think about it.
HH: Okay.
RC: And it...it set right where...right where the gymnasium sits now.
HH: Okay. On the ____.
RC: Right there there was one and then there was one...one down below town on the Bert Hill place. I think the building is still there or maybe they tore it down, but there was a sawmill there. That was one that they moved from there by the schoolhouse on down and they built a new one down there.
HH: Okay, so the one that was where the gymnasium of the high school they moved down...
RC: They've remodeled it and put a new one in and then they tore it down and the school bought that piece of property. Kennis and...oh, what...Kennis was one of the owners. [voice in background] Who? No, no, Ruth. I'll think of it.
HH: Okay. Now you said that they used to do lots of things in Cove like a show house and mills.
RC: The show house, I don't know what...I don't know what happened to the show house, but I guess when they got...begin to get shows in La Grande and maybe travel a bit more it didn't ever...
HH: It didn't prosper.
RC: Didn't probably...didn't pay for itself. Used to be a bank in Cove.
HH: Really?
RC: And of course the flour mill was operating. I remember when the flour mill operated.
HH: What was it called?
RC: Flour mill?
HH: It was just called flour mill?

RC: Yeah. I don't know what...what the flour mill was called. Part of the building is still over there.

HH: Where is it? Where was that?

RC: That's... You go to the post office and go south there and it's where they have...I think they're making a...I believe stoves in there, camp stoves or something in there.

HH: Okay.

RC: And of course they had the saloon. They used to have a... The saloon came in after Prohibition. I guess they had a saloon in early days and then Prohibition came and then they... When I was in the sixth grade they built a new schoolhouse down here. We went to school in what was then the bank building. They moved the kids all over the Cove to go to school and the fifth and sixth grade went in the bank building and that was right on the corner where the tavern is now.

HH: Okay.

RC: And I remember then they sold...had the first beer garden after Prohibition and it was right where the post office is, right across the street from us. The ___helms opened that up. One time that building there was a drugstore there and of course we always...a long...many, many years they had a meat market in Cove. Lynn Chadwick had a meat market there right where the hair salon is now.

HH: ___

RC: That was just above the post office building right in there. And of course it had two grocery stores, Bill Hallmark's ___ is where the firehouse sit and then the building across the street was – when I was a kid – the ___ had a grocery store there.

HH: Did they both... Where they both open at the same time?

RC: Both open, yeah.

HH: Did they have similar items, or were they different?

RC: No, they both was grocery stores so...

HH: The same things.

RC: And then... That was when I was in high school...or grade school and high school and then they had...of course they always had a pool hall in Cove someplace there.

HH: Really?

RC: Oh yes. It was... The pool hall was right above... There was another building right in there where the firehouse is and that was the pool hall for years and years and years. And then they...it fell down and closed it down or something and Bill Hallmark's grocery store went out of business and he closed it up and they opened a pool hall there and it operated for long...many years. Right on the corner where the...I think it's maybe vacant...right on the corner right there where the fire...above the firehouse on the corner there.

HH: Let's go back to you were talking about...[tape interruption]...do you remember about school?

RC: What do I remember about school?

HH: Yeah, what do you remember about school? When did you start school?

RC: When did I start?

HH: Yes.

RC: I guess in the first grade down here when I was six, I guess. And my first grade teacher was Thelma Anderson. She was a... Her dad was the postmaster at the time, Logood Anderson, he was the postmaster, and Thelma Anderson was my first and second grade teacher. Then Eva Duncan, which many, many kids went to her. She was the third and fourth grade teacher.

HH: So you combined grades?

RC: What:

HH: You had two grades together?

RC: Two... Two grades... Two grades together all through... They was always together until I graduated. Even after the new schoolhouse was built, why, they was together. The fifth to sixth grade teacher I had Stella Edvalson from Union. Then the seventh and eighth grade teacher...I was I think the last class she taught...was Mrs. Mills. She was an excellent teacher and taught many, many years at Cove. Jimmy Mills they had...he was...our folks was quite close to them. They had a farm just a half-a-mile above the schoolhouse straight up the hill. It's where, oh, Bob...Bob Moxley lives now. That's where they lived. I was in... I went to school and my first year in the new schoolhouse was the seventh grade.

HH: What was it like being in the schoolhouse?

RC: It was... Of course we had two grades together. It was... I mean, it was brand new! We thought it was great.

HH: Did it seem to affect how you students conducted yourself being in a new building?

RC: How we what?

HH: How you conducted yourself?

RC: No. We... Everybody... I don't think that that made any change as far as that goes. We played out on the playground and just like they do now we mostly played softball or some game. In the wintertime we Fox and Geese and all that business, but that's some of the games they used to play.

HH: What's Fox and Geese?

RC: You have... You'd tromp a big circle of snow and then different things coming into the center and somebody's a fox and the rest are geese. I mean, that was...

HH: Is it sort of like Tag?

RC: Tag, yeah.

HH: Playing tag.

RC: Yeah. Only in the snow you'd have...it'd be a big circle and out on the playground. We always played that. But anyhow...

HH: [tape interruption]...like having two grades together? Did some of the older students help the younger students?

RC: No. The teacher was... I mean, that was just the way it was. When one side was reciting or something the other side she would give lessons to from maybe doin' your math or you was doin' your readin' or studying your spelling or something while the other side was...the other class was doing something. It was common practice of all the schools. Then like the one-room schoolhouse all eight grades, but I never went to one of those, but they did have 'em out in the valley.

Shanghais School's one of 'em. That came into Cove, ___ School and Lower Cove School.

HH: Why is it called Shanghais? Do you know?

RC: I don't. But it's still...that building is still there.

HH: Yeah, I see it.

RC: I don't know why it was Shanghais School. But I think some of the people around here yet that went to school in the Shanghais School. John Van Schoonhover I think he told me he did go to school in Shanghais School. But I always went here. And no busses. We either... We kids either walked to school or Dad would take us sometimes. In the wintertime we'd even ride on a sleigh with a team.

HH: Wow.

RC: And some of us rode horses. I had... I rode... In high school I rode a horse at times in the wintertime and tied it up...they had a barn there on the corner there...don't even know who lives there...right across from where Carol Richardson lives now. That was a red barn that Al Puckett owned and he let me keep my horse in the barn there and it was nice that way. We were friends with him and... There was... In the wintertime... Now on people can't even imagine what it was, but on a weekend and most weekdays it'd be from ten to thirty teams go up in the mountains to get wood everyday up this road.

HH: Wow.

RC: I mean, that...

HH: Everyday in the wintertime?

RC: In the winter when they had snow with sleds. Of course Saturdays and Sunday that was a great time for kids in Cove. They had their hand sleds and hook a...hook a ride behind one of those teams goin' up. Whoever... You'd go as far as you wanted to go up and then you could coast all the way down in the... And it got icy because it was good ___. Many times on the hill you'd have thirty, forty kids on the weekend sleigh-ridin' or sometimes we'd get together at night after we got older and have a sleigh-ridin' party.

HH: Wow. Now what road did they slide down?

RC: The one going up...we used to call it the dump yard...but the one going up to Barrel Springs.

HH: Okay.

RC: But where the red barn is on the corner there from there on up. We even went up the other way. Both road was used. They hauled woods on both roads.

HH: How do you spell Merrill Lane?

RC: Huh?

HH: Merrill Lane, you said, was the name of the road?

RC: Oh, I don't know what the... Barrel Springs.

HH: Merrill or Barrel?

RC: Barrel. Barrel Springs.

HH: Barrel. B-a-r-r-e-l?

RC: Yeah. The old-timers know what Barrel... In fact it had a barrel where there was a spring up there and that's the reason it was Barrel Springs and the other one was Moss Spring Road. Both of 'em was used, but probably more wood was hauled

because...I don't know what year that burn was, but this country all burned and that was what they called the Big Burn and they would get wood out of that Big Burn for years and years.

HH: Really? Was it a forest...

RC: Forest fire.

HH: Okay.

RC: Started off south of here. My dad helped fight it...on it. It was starting to go off Union way and came through this whole country.

HH: Wow.

RC: It used to be you could see all the dead trees, but now a lot of people don't even know what we're talkin' about when we're talkin' about the Big Burn, but that's what it used to call it.

HH: So started here in Union and it went through...

RC: Off... Off, well, south of Union up...up High Valley way someplace way up in there and came clear through.

HH: All the way through here? Did it go... Did it reach... It went all the way through to here in Cove?

RC: Above Cove. It didn't ever get...

HH: Okay.

RC: Around Barrel Springs, up in there.

HH: Okay.

RC: And even up...even up to the summit up Moss Springs way it was in that Mill Creek...South Mill Creek Canyon there, why, it burned in there. But that...those...the scars from that it's pretty well all growed in, but any of the old-timers would know what I'd be talking about. Young ones they can't imagine seein' those trees in there for years.

HH: _____

RC: In that same area we had – and I was in high school then – we had a 4-H Club and it was a forestry club and we went up and Alvin Orton and some...and I forget...he was a mail carrier here for years...and he was the leader and we went up and planted some trees up in there.

HH: Is that what you did with the forest group?

RC: What?

HH: Is that was the forestry...?

RC: It was a forestry club, yeah. I don't know whether...whether there's anybody else... I can't think of anybody else that was in that right now that's alive, but there may be some. I don't know.

HH: What other things did the forestry club do?

RC: We had... We had meetings, we had campouts. We went in...one time I remember he took us in on the Little Minam fishin' and we camped out.

HH: Now when did the forest fire happen? Do you remember?

RC: I don't. That was...

HH: What...

RC: I don't... It was before I can even remember. It think it was – and don't hold me to this – but I think it was around 1919, but I don't know for sure.

HH: Before you were...

RC: Oh yes, before I was born.

HH: Okay.

RC: But the trees...the old black pine trees was still good for years after that. They stood there. And a lot of those dead tamaracks that was in that fire stood there. Then they hauled thousands of cords of wood out of there, I mean literally did over the years from that fire. That wood... You're talkin' about wood... I said my dad made wood... Every winter we'd make wood up on that place because we had timber. One year, well, it was the year I graduated from high school – which would've been 1941 – Dad had...and it was cord wood. You probably don't know what cord wood is.

HH: I don't.

RC: It's four foot...four foot...four foot long and then you'd use a buzz saw and make it into sixteen inch wood.

HH: Okay.

RC: Dad had over a hundred cord of that made in the wintertime and I think he paid a dollar a cord to have it made and before I left here in '41, the fall, Dad and I got that out before I left and a lot of that wood was sold for \$3.50 to \$5.00 a cord delivered. Now it's a hundred-some dollars. And this was green-cut wood sawed up in sixteen inch and delivered here in Cove.

HH: Wow.

RC: That's how money is different.

HH: Mm-hmm. Very much so. So you said you left in '41. Did you go into the service then?

RC: No. Of course everybody at that time knew war was coming. I'd saw this ad in the paper about workin' in the aircraft deal and I wrote a letter, I think, and got reply and went to school in L. A. I was a eighteen year-old kid got on the...got on the train and went to L. A. and didn't know a soul. The people at the school met me and I lived in a rooming house for...I can't even think how much it was. The school wasn't very much. Dad and Mother was quite skeptical about the whole thing, but it turned out alright. I mean... In that rooming house I got to where I was friends with a... I asked a job from my board and room when...after I was there a few days and I got this manager and I washed dishes for a while, every morning I'd wash dishes before I'd go to school. This happened a week, ten days and one day he came by and he said, "Good morning," he said, "I'd already..." I got my breakfast out of it, too, that way, got my meals, as I remember for washin' dishes. He said, "Tomorrow morning you come and eat breakfast with me." I said, "I won't have my dishes done." He said, "Don't worry about dishes, you're not doin' 'em anymore." So I went and ate breakfast with him and from then on I went around and just kind of followed him around and inspected. He took a likin' to me and I didn't have to wash dishes and I got my board and room and everything was fine.

HH: Wow. Now what did you learn in school?

RC: It was just enough to get a job at...I got a job at Consolidary Aircraft in San Diego makin' B-24 bombers. I worked there... I don't know when I went to work there, but I worked there and lived in San Diego till January of '42 when my

older brother passed away and I came home and I never went back. I was supposed to go back, but I didn't.

HH: What kept you here?

RC: I didn't stay here. I went over to Pendleton and went to welding school, or a crash course in welding and went down to Portland and worked in the shipyard makin' the liberty ships, Swan Island and Keiser. In July of '42 I enlisted in the...as a naval cadet, D5 program. I was... Then I stayed there until I was called... I think it was in September and I started...actually started here in La Grande flyin' and we lived in the old Foley...the old Foley house right across from Montgomery Ward, they took that over, the government did, and it's what they called a CPT program, civilian pilot training, and I got my primary...got my license there just flyin' cubs. Then we went from there and we took classes up at the college, too, __ classes.

HH: At Eastern Oregon University?

RC: What?

HH: At Eastern?

RC: Yes.

HH: College.

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: Now you said that they had a training place in La Grande, was it? Or Union?

RC: No, La Grande.

HH: La Grande. So there was other people around here...

RC: Oh yes. They came from all over.

HH: Okay.

RC: Some of 'em from Portland, all over, in that program. There was some in the Army and some in the Navy. The funny part of the thing, the Navy people we got...I think we got seventy...I believe it was \$75 a month and the Army wasn't gettin' anything and they was quite...then, but later on they did get a lot more Army in and they eliminated the Navy program, I think. But from there I went to Prineville in secondary.

HH: The Army didn't get anything?

RC: I didn't think they did. Just for pay. They didn't have to pay anything. They might've got something, but I don't think they got as much as we did.

HH: You got \$75?

RC: As I remember we got... Yeah.

HH: Then you were being trained.

RC: Huh?

HH: While you were being trained?

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: And then did you live at home while you...?

RC: Oh no. We lived in that Foley building.

HH: Okay.

RC: There was a cook there. I can't even think of her name now. Probably gettin' ahead of the story on some of the stuff you wanted, I don't know.

HH: That's okay. I can just backtrack a little bit at a time. And then you were sent to Prineville?

RC: We went to Madras, and this was for secondary. We's flyin' steermens then and...[end tape]

11/6/03, T1, S2

RC: Anyhow, now just the living conditions in where we were staying is in the Madras Hotel. We was downstairs a bunch of...bunch of us and the sewer conditions was terrible so they moved us... They closed it down – I don't know whether they condemned it – it just got so bad that we moved to Prineville. I was still in secondary, hadn't finished the thing, when I was called down Navy pre-flight school at St. Mary's, California. So I went from Prineville to St. Mary's then. I was in the Navy then because it was the E5 program, Naval aviator.

HH: Now what happened with... Did you meet Ruth while you were growing up here in Cove?

RC: Oh no. No. That was way...that was after...that was many years afterwards.

HH: Okay. Where did you meet Ruth?

RC: When... Down to Pensacola, Florida.

HH: Okay, so we haven't gotten there yet. So you're in the E5 program and they sent you back down to California.

RC: St. Mary's Pre-Flight School.

HH: Pre-flight School.

RC: St. Mary's College. And I went through that and then I went into... After we finished that, why, I went to Primary...Navy Primary training flyin' the old Yellow Perils, the N3N's. We went to Los Alamedas in California for a primary base and then during that time, why, they closed that and made that an operational base for the Navy planes and I was transferred to Dallas, Texas. We went to the cool...cool sea breeze to 105 degrees almost overnight, as long as the train ride took us. It was terrible. It was hot in the summertime. I finished Primary at Dallas and then we...then we went to...some of 'em went to Corpus Christi, but I was fortunate and went to Pensacola ___ of the air" it was known as, still is I guess. And went through all the...all the schools there. Met Ruth on a blind date before I'd got commissioned. In fact, she pinned the wings on me when I got commissioned and got my wings.

HH: Wow. Did you... Did you... How did it happen?

RC: Huh?

HH: How did that happen? Did they send you the wings and you said, "Here, you can put 'em on me"?

RC: No. On a stage.

HH: Okay.

RC: Of course you had ceremonies for...

RC: It was pourin' down rain outside.

RC: They had a ceremony for the...for all the graduatin' commissioned officers that graduate there. And then from there after that, why, I went to Jacksonville, Florida flyin' SBD's, a dive bomb plane. We finished up and they shipped us out to California, El Toro, Marine base. I went in the Marine Corp when I commissioned. I kind of got ahead of myself. Some of us could go in the Marine

Corp. We put in for it and they'd take so many and that's the reason I went into the Marine Corp. It's still a Naval service, but I was in the Marine Corp part. Some of the ones I went to school with would be Navy ensigns and I was a second lieutenant.

HH: So you started out in the Navy.

RC: Started out in the Navy.

HH: Then you went into the Air Force.

RC: No. I went in... Not the Air Force.

HH: Okay.

RC: Marine Corp.

HH: Then you went to the Marine Corp.

RC: When I got commissioned.

HH: It was through the Navy that you went through flight school and then you were commissioned to the Marine Corp.

RC: Mm-hmm. That's when I finished flight school. Then... So I was a second lieutenant at Jacksonville, Florida, Cecil Field Air. Then I went to El Toro and we practiced dive bombing there till we got our orders to go overseas.

HH: Now when did you find the time to marry Ruth?

RC: After... After I'd been over seas and flew my term and time and come back on leave.

HH: Okay. How long were you over there flying and whereabouts?

RC: I was in this little island, Amaru, in the South Pacific for a while and then when the invasion of the Philippines, why, we started our planes up, flew 'em up. It took us I think six days to fly 'em up. We flew behind a DC3 and it had a flyin' boat to pick up any stragglers or anybody that had to go down. I was on the invasion of __. Then I come in we flew down to invasion of Mindanao and Jambawango. I was on both invasions there.

HH: How long were you away doing all that?

RC: How many? Fourteen?

HH: Wow. You counted?

RC: Through eighty-five missions.

HH: Wow. Now during this time did you have the chance to correspond with your family?

RC: Oh, we wrote letters.

HH: What was their impression? Did they see your initial move to L. A.?

RC: Only you mean... Do you mean to start with? No, but we...of course then we weren't in war until December 7th. In fact, San Diego I was watchin' a football game, a pro football game, in __ Stadium when at half time of the game – it was the San Diego Bombers against L. A. somebody, I don't think it was Rams then – halftime a lot of the San Diego players never came back out and nobody could figure out why. About that time the newspapers hit the stands that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And of course I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was. What was Pearl Harbor, you know? But all the Marine personnel was immediately called back to the base there and that's why they didn't come out.

HH: Okay. So did your... You said that your parents were initially skeptical of you going down there to begin with.

RC: You mean when I first went down?

HH: Yeah.

RC: There wasn't any... I guess there was local jobs here, farm jobs, you know, in 1941. There wasn't any industry. I just knew I wanted to do somethin' and I didn't have money really for college and that was the way I thought I could get ahead.

HH: Okay. So we'll go... We'll jump back to when you were on these missions.

RC: We could only say so much because it was supposed to be censored, everything was. In fact, pictures you sent home was censored with a stamp. Of course the officers... We could've... We could've said more than we did in it, but we weren't supposed to. It said where we were and what we were doing. They knew we was on bombing mission and they knew I was a pilot and that and they knew I was on strikes, but they didn't know... Because the news coverage was not like it is now. It just wasn't... You didn't have television. You had the radio, but they didn't...they didn't probably know I was on the invasion of the Philippines until they begin to get letters from up there. And most of it... I could show you how some of the censored things are, but they didn't say where were. It just past censored.

HH: So did they... Did you share about what local...

RC: Oh yeah. They would... They'd said the clippings of...you know, but by then I was away from here for two years and of course all the people I knew was in the service practically at that time. It was all-out war.

HH: How did it affect... Did they tell you much about how it affected the community to have young men leave?

RC: Yeah. I knew... When I come home on leave before I went overseas, why, of course you had sugar rationing, you had meat points, a meat ration, and you had gasoline rationing.

RC: And tires.

RC: Tires. You had tires rationed. On the farm you'd get a little more. Then, of course, most of the meat and that on the farm you didn't worry about. You even had butter was rationed. Dad had gasoline... When I come home on leave the first time I...have a gallon...you'd run in and you'd apply for...and they'd give servicemen so many gallons of gas. It isn't like now. Maybe, I don't know, I'm just sayin' I don't...can't remember whether I got eight or ten or fifteen gallons of gas, but it wasn't much. ____ The only place we'd go'd be La Grande. What now?

HH: Because they had their own food and whatnot?

RC: That part livin' on the farm they had their own meat. We always had meat and eggs and all the vegetables and fruit. So the only thing you had to buy really was staples and that kind – sugar and flour.

RC: hey were rationed.

RC: Flour... I don't think flour was rationed, but sugar was rationed. Even when I was... I'll go back a ways when I was kid I remember we always had a big berry patch. I don't know whether you know how much strawberries cost now a box or a crate.

HH: An individual little pint-sized basket can be at least a dollar, or probably more like two...[tape interruption]

RC: Then we'd raise strawberries and it was crates, what we called crates. There's twenty-four cups to a crate. Now this is cups, same size. I can remember lots of times they would sell for a \$1.50 to \$2.00 a crate.

HH: Wow.

RC: Now this I'm talkin' about crate.

HH: Right, not the little pints.

RC: Not the little pints. Then we got to where we was sellin' flats and one time... We had wonderful strawberries in the local... Back then the store on the corner...Dollar's Corner – George Anderson put that in there – and he found out we had strawberries. I think we got \$3.00 a flat and that was wonderful money in those days. That was just for twelve cups.

RC: [inaudible talking]

RC: This is years afterwards.

HH: Wow. Really?

RC: I mean like...

HH: Like twenty years.

RC: Like twenty years afterwards. In the early days it was kind of a race to see who would get their berries picked and get into La Grande ahead of the other ones to get to the stores because they could only take so much.

HH: Right. Did you and your siblings help pick the strawberries?

RC: Oh yes. And raspberries and black caps...blackberries. We always had two berry patches, King berries and strawberries.

HH: King berries being like raspberries?

RC: Raspberries, black caps, and blackberries, yea.

HH: [tape interruption]...caps and blackberries?

RC: Black cap is a black raspberry. And a black...

RC:

RC: It's just like a black...raspberry only it's black. A blackberry is bigger and is a blackberry.

HH: I knew what a blackberry was and a raspberry, but I don't think I've ever had a black cap.

RC: It's like a... There is... They're around, but... Getting back to picking berries – and this...this is before, of course, I was in high school. There was a local lady and she wanted some huckleberries and I went up and picked huckleberries. And I'd ride my horse up and I'd get three gallons of huckleberries and I got a dollar a gallon for 'em.

HH: Wow. You rode up here up the mountain range?

RC: Mm-hmm. Ride from home up there. [tape interruption] I think they sell \$20 a gallon at least. I thought that was wonderful money. 'Cause my... I... My first workin' out I got a dollar a day.

HH: Wow.

RC: Hayin'.

HH: Oh, haying. That's completely different.

RC: A dollar a day is what...

HH: Right.

RC: And then they...then they begin to... I can remember when they started getting twenty-five cents an hour for farm labor. Of course that ten-hour day you'd get two-and-a-half.

HH: Right. When did they... When did they start changing from paying you per day to work verses per hour?

RC: About that time.

HH: When you were in high school?

RC: And later. Some of 'em still paid by the day, you know. Of course now it'd all hourly, but it was...

RC: ___now.

RC: It was a dollar a day. I mean, a lot of times that's what it was.

HH: So you did haying. About what age did you start doing that sort of thing?

RC: It was whenever you'd big enough to...

HH: Whenever you're big enough to do. When were you big enough to do that?

RC: Of course we worked on the farm until you...till you was big enough to go out with...that some other farmer would think you were big enough to handle a pitchfork or whatever you was doing. I suppose twelve to fourteen, you know, in the high school age begin to. Everybody had a... Everybody that milked cows almost in Cove had a silo, raised corn and had a silo. When I was in my senior year, the year I went...left here, I think I helped when we traded, you know.

HH: Labor for labor?

RC: Labor for labor. And I...Dad... I would go for him and I think I filled twelve or fourteen silos that year, different ones around. I don't know that any of those silos are still standing. I don't... I don't know. But every place had a silo.

HH: Was it all used for corn, all the silos?

RC: The corn was raised for the silos.

HH: Okay. Yeah.

RC: Yeah.

HH: So you... You did just about everything, didn't you? You picked berries...

RC: Oh yeah. I mean, whatever you...you know, whatever you could make a... You didn't get... We didn't get what you'd call an allowance. We got what we wanted, you know, but we didn't have money to spend much. It just wasn't there for a long time.

HH: So did other kids besides yourself when you were a child go out and get work so you had money to spend?

RC: Yeah. I mean... Another thing that – and I don't think there's anybody does it now, maybe one or two in the whole Union County – but every kid had a trap line for fur in the fall...in the winter.

HH: Really? What kind of... What kind of fur did they catch?

RC: Muskrat and mink.

HH: Wow.

RC: Every kid had his own territory. I mean, you just didn't go stompin' in on somebody else's place.

HH: What would happen if you did?

RC: Well, there'd be a fight. [laughs]

HH: That's what I wondered.

RC: I had this... I had this Mill Creek up in here and you'd...you'd get anywheres from as low as fifty cents up to...I think I got up to maybe three or four dollars at the best on the muskrat. Mink was...of course if you were lucky enough to catch the mink, why, they was higher priced. I think they would go up around twenty dollars.

HH: Wow.

RC: Which was a little bit...

HH: A lot more money then than it is now.

RC: Yes. Yeah.

HH: Now when did kids stop doing that? Do you know? Do you remember?

RC: When money got... I don't know when they stopped trapping, I don't.

HH: But from your memory, from your childhood through when you left the area in high school, kids were still trapping?

RC: Oh yeah. Yeah.

HH: Wow. Zoom back to you working...or being overseas in the Marine Corp and then you came back on leave and married Ruth. Did you do that in Texas?

RC: No. We did that in La Grande.

HH: So where did you meet her? You met her on a blind date where?

RC: In Pensacola.

HH: So you're from Pensacola? And then you came here a month before he came home.

RC:

HH: [tape interruption] ...you said "come on up?"

RC: No. I don't think this... She was here when I got here. It was just letters. But anyhow, that...

RC:

RC: I imagine. I don't... Yeah.

RC:

RC: No. I don't think it was six months 'cause I wasn't there that long.

HH: [tape interruption]...correspond with him when he was overseas?

RC: Oh yes. ___ I'm not gonna be able to write...[tape interruption]

HH: Little better, huh.

RC: Yeah.

HH: So she came here and lived with your family until you came home?

RC: Mm-hmm.

HH: [tape interruption]

RC: Well, it was over...what...ten days I guess, wasn't it?

RC: Yeah.

RC: I guess something like that.

HH: And were you home for good or were you home...

RC: Oh no. When I come home the war was still going on.

HH: Right.

RC: In fact, we had our orders... When we left here after we was married we went back to Cherry Point and we was following an SB2C squadron for the invasion of Japan. If they hadn't 've dropped the big one, why, we would've been on an

invasion of Japan with SB2Cs, but – that’s another dive bomber. SBD is a dive bomber. In fact, there it is right up on the wall.

HH: Then once...once the war was over what brought you back here to Union County?

RC: It was home, I guess, you’d say. I got... Tried... Of course tried the airlines and there was a hundred thousand pilots for a thousand jobs, you know how that was. I couldn’t get on the airlines and so then I got my instructors license and worked over at the airport here for a year, I guess, about.

HH: What year did you move back to Cove? Do you remember?

RC: Yeah. We bought... We bought this place in 1949.

RC:

RC: No. ’49. Dave was born here. Spring of ’49. It didn’t have inside plumbing. I mean it didn’t have a toilet in the house when we bought...

RC:

RC: So I did put the... I did put the bathroom in it in that house when we moved there – first thing we did.

RC:

RC: I know, but we was...we was farmin’. But anyhow...

HH: You taught for a year here at the local airport?

RC: Huh?

HH: You taught...

RC: Over here at the airport.

HH: Right. For about a year, you said?

RC: Uh-huh. And then... Then we went back to Tulsa, Oklahoma, went to __ school there __ and I got my instrument rating...I already had my instructors rating and got my instrument rating and aircraft and engine license. And we went to...moved to Iowa and I worked there for over a year, I guess.

RC:

RC: Yeah. Our oldest son was born there and the rest of ‘em was born here in this house...or not in this house, but here in La Grande.

HH: Wow. So what brought you back again then?

RC: Started out...I mean... It was... I wasn’t makin’ a fortune... I wasn’t makin’ big wages instructin’. You got so much an hour then you had to have a...you had to have a lot of students to make a real good livin’. I got three dollars an hour for dual time and a dollar for solo time and that’s what...that’s what I got. Most of the time I had a guarantee of two hundred dollars a month. I think that was in ’48 and ’49.

RC: We had pigs and we had cows...

RC: No, I’m talkin’ about when I was instructin’.

RC: Right.

HH: You said it wasn’t...it wasn’t makin’ enough.

RC: No.

HH: And so when you moved back here again then in...

RC: ’49.

HH: Spring of ’49?

RC: No. In the fall of... In the fall of... John was just a baby. Fall of ’48. We... Then... And then that next spring we bought the place here.

HH: And then...[tape interruption]
RC:
HH: How did you go from being an airplane...or flight instructor to a farmer?
RC: I grew up as a farmer...
HH: Right.
RC: ...and my dad had fruit and this was a...this had fruit on it, this place. It was available and we was able to...with what money that we'd saved and a loan, why, we was able to get it, struggle through.
HH: So you had fruit already on here? Were there fruit trees and berries?
RC: There was fruit trees here. ____
RC: All this was ____
RC: The old Carl Stacklin place, yeah.
RC:
HH: [tape interruption] So you had a bunch of fruit trees, pears and what else?
RC: The pears...we took... We didn't... Pears wasn't any marketable crop. Cherries was what was marketable. And we raised cows and hogs and berries and the whole ball of wax to make a...and milk cows. Then I'd work out... Besides that I'd work for Boise Cascade. I'd done two jobs. It was a struggle, but...
HH: What did you do for Boise Cascade?
RC: I worked some at the sawmill and then when the particle board opened I got a job there and I was there till I retired. I went to work there in 1966 and retired in '85. I was operator there.
HH: Did you raise milk cows or did you also...
RC: Oh yeah. We milked cows here too and hogs and...
HH: Did you raise beef cows?
RC: We had beef cows, yeah.
HH: And then you had some ____ or helpers on the farm?
RC: Oh yeah. They helped on the farm and they was just like any...
RC: We had ____
RC: ...I don't know about now, but – some of the kids work farms, high school kids – as soon as they're able, why, they got a job for helpin' somebody on the farm if we didn't have a job here for money. Money was hard...it's still hard to come by.
HH: You had a lot of work going on then, you were working at the mill, at Boise Cascade...[tape interruption]...other people to work here?
RC: We hired the pickers. We always had pickers, fruit tramps. They're white...we called 'em fruit tramps, that's what they called themselves.
HH: Oh really?
RC: Yeah. That was the name of 'em. That was... That was... Anybody that knows it is a fruit tramp. They came in from every...every year. It isn't like nowadays... It isn't like nowadays when the Mexicans come in the crews. These'd come in in ones and twos and maybe a car load.
HH: Did they sleep in tents and camp out?
RC: They'd camp out.
HH: Sort of like gypsies?

RC: Huh? Camp under the trees and right here in our own... In the house there used to be a barn here. It was two or three camps here and three or four camps up in the orchard up the water up there, the ditch there.

HH: Were they Mexicans?

RC: No, no, no. No Mexicans then. It was all white pickers, all white. I started... I probably started with some of the first Mexicans here in Cove, but they was just single car-loads.

HH: Right. When... About what timeframe do you know that they started to change from being white...[tape interruption]

RC: In about the...near 1975 to '80 or maybe '80, '82. In that range.

HH: In that range. And you said you were one of the first to hire them?

RC: Mm-hmm.

HH: Were other... Were other farmers skeptical of hiring them?

RC: It wasn't so much the other farmers, but the white pickers didn't want... It was hard to get... I mean some of the white pickers wouldn't work with 'em. I had good pickers. Everybody had good pickers and you had bad pickers. Some of 'em used to be some of our best friends and come back for years and years. In fact, there kids'd come back and pick for us. We had two families that was that way.

HH: [tape interruption] ...you decided to go ahead and hire some Mexican pickers?

RC: They got... Didn't have enough pickers. We got so the white pickers...

HH: Were scarce?

RC: They was good, but they just didn't...

RC: It's hard work.

RC: There were just not many comin' in. Just not that many coming in. I don't know whether you want to go back in the war years. I got a Distinguished Flying Cross cluster and Air Medal of ____.

HH: Yeah, sure. The Cross.

RC: Distinguished Flying Cross...[end tape]

11/6/03, T2, S1

HH: Okay. So you're telling me about you sold off from your farm. When did you start selling off from the farm?

RC: I think... I think in 1978, I believe. I bought... I bought my brother's farm and I don't want to go into that. It was just a family dispute. I didn't...didn't want to get involved in it and I just sold it and I was wantin' ...gettin' near where I wantin' to retire and this place here was more than I wanted to keep goin' at and so we...we kept... At first we kept...out of this I guess we kept about forty acres and now we're down to sixteen.

HH: How many acres did you originally have?

RC: This place was originally eighty-five and then I bought ten acres to add to it and then the other place I bought was a hundred...no, two hundred and forty acres.

HH: Wow.

RC: And I had... At one time I had about fifty acres of cherries. It took about fifty pickers at the most. I had... Probably that was the biggest crew I had on the two places. That was all... That was practically all fruit plants. You can imagine how many camps you'd have. Some families was maybe a man and wife and four or five kids. So a bit better... You know, you always...you always wanted a big crew...a big family because they'd pick... The only bad thing part about that if they quit, why, you lost a lot of your crew, but if they didn't quit they got a lot of cherries.

HH: Why would they quit?

RC: Just like, I mean, the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Somebody was getting a little more money or a little better tree or a little better cherries. Some years you wouldn't have any...any...any problem and then the next year you'd have all kinds of problems depending on the crop and the whole thing. If you have a good crop you always had a lot easier time, a bad crop you had trouble because they had to make a wage, too. But after it got...after we got the crews of Mexicans in, you know, its easier to pick cherries than it used to be. It just is. Easier on the growers. And as far as the cost wise it's probably different cost wise.

HH: Was it easier...[tape interruption]

RC: Tools.

HH: Was it easier to pick cherries because of tools or people?

RC: Easier because of the Mexican labor. They want... They don't want... They want the job, they want to work. If you depended on it right now on the white people...white tramps coming in you wouldn't get any of 'em picked. It's that simple.

HH: They just demanded higher pay?

RC: Higher pay and they just didn't...people would...it's hard enough gettin' the local kids to work on a farm anymore.

HH: Do you remember...[tape interruption]...in the community that changed from...[tape interruption]

RC: Probably within the last twenty years it's changed some, I would say. You know, our kids grew up and they...they grew up in the '60s and '70s, '50s and '60s and they worked on the farm and they worked out. I'd say after the Vietnam War, maybe, in that area maybe. There is... There is... Don't get me wrong, there are some of the kids around and there's some from La Grande that will come out here and work for different farmers, but by and large...

HH: Most don't.

RC: By and large in the summertime it's pretty hard to get somebody. Right now, you know, if you get somebody to...I need a fence fixed, why, maybe they'd be willing, but they don't know how because they never grewed up with that kind of things.

HH: Right. Why do you think it changed during the Vietnam...after the Vietnam War? Was it that people farmed less, or...?

RC: No, they didn't farm less, but I think that money got...money got...better times. You know, back when... When the particle board plant opened in '66 and for a good many years over there any walked over there could get a job at Boise

Cascade. They came in from different places to get jobs in here. Now probably they're going out of this valley to get jobs 'cause there just isn't any jobs in there. The timber industry's way down, that's one thing. Not many... Not many jobs here for... There's some jobs that they don't want, but... I guess maybe they want more computer jobs, I don't know.

HH: That could be. If you want, I'll listen to what questions I asked and write down any questions I can think of.

RC: We can go back. A lot of things in the early...early Cove I remember. Oh, they had a...they had a freight line here in Cove, you know, at one time down here right there where the drive-in now, that was a building. The Weimers had a freight...opened a freight line up.

HH: Wow. I didn't know that.

RC: And there was two packin' house in Cove. In fact... And there was two prune dryers in Cove. There was a shingle mill in Cove. There was a box factory in Cove.

HH: A box factory!

RC: That's what we called it. It did... They did make little boxes, but then they had...oh, down there across from...right across from the tavern now there was a long building there that had the post office in it. It did have a meat market in it at one time, a slaughter house __. But they... Charlie Williams had what we called Knothole Factory. They made... They hired ten or twelve women in there to...and made novelty things and sold 'em in that building. It's all gone now, but had a...of course we always had a barber shop there.

HH: They called it the Knothole?

RC: That's what... That's what the local... You ask any of the old-timers where the Knothole Factory was and that's what it was.

HH: And it was just little novelties?

RC: Novelty things. Some people...

HH: Craft-like things?

RC: Crafts and... He was kind of an inventor. I don't have any of his stuff, I don't think, but some people around have some of it. And they shipped that stuff out.

HH: Wow.

RC: Sold it. And they had a harness...of course, had a harness shop. Everybody had to have a harness. Ron Puckett's granddad, Huble Blank, had a...he was janitor at school, but he had a harness shop down there.

HH: For the...

RC: To repair harnesses.

HH: For horses, okay.

RC: For the horses.

HH: Right.

RC: Yeah.

HH: When did... When did things start to change? It sounds like there was a lot of industry here in Cove.

RC: Cars changed it. It went from horse and buggy to mechanized, really.

HH: [tape interruption] ...figured out. I think it's on. There we go. A little button there.

RC: Transportation. They begin to get jobs in La Grande. In the early days there's nobody had a job in La Grande, it was almost local farm labor. And then they begin to get jobs in La Grande and commute a little bit. That...of course that opened things up on that. The gymnasium... The old gym down here was built... I can remember when it was built. And what they called the Macabee Hall used to sit down north of the post office right there where...right near where Arlene Goodson lives, in that area, and it burned down.

HH: What was it used for?

RC: To play basketball in.

HH: Okay.

RC: That's where they... It was a... It wasn't a... It was small, but that's where they played. And after it burned, why then Carl Stackland and he owned this place and he had a packin' house and he owned several places and I think he was on the school board. But he was the main drivin' force to get the gym in here. That gymnasium I want to say was built for seven to ten...seven or eight thousand dollars.

HH: Wow. That's...

RC: That was... But this is back in... I must've been in about the second or third grade when this... Because I played... I played basketball in...when I was in grade school in the old gym now.

HH: So Mr. Stackland built the old gym?

RC: He was the... He was the instigator of getting it going.

HH: Okay.

RC: I think the Rundle brothers...Rundle brothers did a lot of work on it, as I remember. But it was local carpenters around here and they'd built a lot of houses. I think they done a lot of work on that gym, but the driving force behind getting it going, I think, was Stackland. He was... He was kind of... Well, he had a packin' house and he shipped a lot of cherries out of here and had a lot of places, but tough times caught up to him, too, you know. The Depression wasn't good for people. It overextended many, I guess, maybe.

HH: Now cars came into the community before the Depression?

RC: Oh yeah. Yeah, but... Dad always had a... He had a car. I can barely remember the Model T. I can remember it because it used to have the magneto and I can remember him trying to get it started when it's cold weather. And the old...the old curtains on the side the...what do you call it?

HH: The glass?

RC: Yeah. Uh...

HH: Windshield?

RC: They had a windshield, but the curtains on the side. Plexiglas curtains. Isinglass.

HH: Isinglass, okay.

RC: But then Dad bought a brand new...I think that was in...whenever the Model A's come out he bought a brand new car then.

RC: Yeah, I remember it cost \$550.

RC: But the money was hard to come by, too.

HH: I would imagine that the Depression hurt the local businesses.

RC: It hurt everybody.

HH: Right. And how... I'm trying to get a grasp on how the local industry started going out of business. I'd imagine that the Depression hurt it, but also you said that the transportation changed and that had an effect also.

RC: Yeah. Like the sawmills, of course, they went out when the bigger companies took them over. Boise Cascade ended up buying the building out here at Cove, closed it down and then of course fire took one up here and it was never built back. Jobs... Jobs in La Grande. The railroad used to be a thrivin'... That took a lot of people that... There was a lot of people that worked the railroad, you know. They had to... They had the shops in La Grande.

HH: So what do you think affected to local businesses first, or more? Was it the popularity of cars, or was it the Depression?

RC: The Depression is really before the car deal.

HH: Okay. That's what I was wondering.

RC: The Depression nobody...nobody much had car...they had cars, but they used 'em as something useful that you had to have. My dad he'd have to go to La Grande. But to jump in the car and just go from here to there to a ballgame or something, you didn't do that. When I played in high school – talking about ballgames – we didn't have...of course we didn't have a school bus and so local people would... Most generally the coach would take a car and depending on how many kids'd go...if there's two teams, the first team and second team, or JV, maybe there would be three or four cars go. But some of the business people... Bill Hallmark used to a lot of times take 'em. Tom Toll I think took 'em. Some of the school board members took 'em.

HH: So people in the community who had cars would drive the teams around?

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: And did you ever have to go by horse and buggy?

RC: Do what?

HH: Did you ever have to go by horse or that sort of the transportation, or was it all by car?

RC: Always went in a car. But when we come back from a ballgame like from...we'd go to Enterprise or up the branch...we'd get home at maybe twelve or one o'clock and they'd let you out down at the gym and I walked home two miles.

HH: Wow.

RC: They didn't... Nobody met me...

RC:

RC: Like in the wintertime you had to go home and milk the cows, help do the chores and if we had ball practice...sometimes we'd have ball practice at seven o'clock or somethin'...we'd walk home and milk the cows, walk back and walk back up after the ball practice. That's just the way it was. You didn't...

HH: What was... What was the equipment like back then for ball? I'm imagining you're talking about basketball and football.

RC: Mm-hmm. Basketball, of course, you had your...you had your same equipment, but you didn't have all the stuff that they have now. I might say, you know, I played football down where...and baseball when I was in high school. I played down where the Cove Sportsman Club is now. That's where the ball field was.

HH: Oh.

RC: And then when I was in... I think when I was a junior the school board bought that piece of ground where the ball field is now. That was in willows and the creek ran down through the center of that. They cleared that. Conley's brought their D8 up...their Cat and leveled it out. High school boys every time we'd have anything we'd have to go pick up brush and rocks and stuff to make it... And we played... I played football on that, but we also played down on the other, too.

HH: You had to clear the field to play on.

RC: Oh yes. It was...

HH: Was rough?

RC: It wasn't grass. It was rocks and brush. It was... That was when I was in high school.

HH: So basketball the equipment was generally the same.

RC: It's pretty much the same other than they don't...you don't have...we had maybe one ball or two balls, but now they got ten balls or something like that, or twenty, you know. We didn't have the weights and all that stuff, that way.

HH: What about football?

RC: You had your pads and you didn't have facemask. No such thing as a facemask. We didn't have any... We had a jersey and pads and a pair of pants and shoes and that was what... Of course we had a helmet. It had... It didn't have... Of course nobody wore a mouthpiece, it wasn't required to have one.

HH: Do you remember anybody getting their faces mashed up or their teeth knocked out?

RC: Oh yeah. Yeah, sure it happened. Yeah. You know, I'm... I don't know... I know one or two names. But yeah, you always got somethin'. My knees was always skinned up from the dirt on those...hittin' those rocks, gravel. I played quarterback and runnin' back and always...always had my knees skinned up.

HH: Did most of the boys participate in sports?

RC: Pretty much, yeah.

HH: Almost everyone.

RC: Not everyone, but pretty much everyone. We all... It's just like now, you always had a kid that didn't...didn't. But we... And most generally most all of 'em played basketball. We had a pretty good turnout.

RC:

RC: What?

RC: I showed her that picture ___ football team.

RC: Oh. I'm not in that, though.

RC: No. That was before your time.

HH: What about baseball? What was the equipment like then? Did you have helmets like they do now?

RC: No. No helmets. And we had about three bats probably. And we'd have three or four balls. It's just like...you know, you didn't have... You didn't have a two or three dozen bats and that. We did have... Cove did uniforms when I played.

RC: I don't... I don't even know what year this was.

RC: Let's see. Maybe I can tell.

RC: But it was before your time, I think.

RC: What's on the back?

RC:

RC: Yeah, this is... It says Edith Magill. It doesn't say on the back. Yeah, it says up there, year... I want to say 19...I don't know. I'll show you in a minute.

HH: Who gave you the photo?

RC: Pardon?

HH: Who gave you the photo?

RC: A cousin's.

RC: That's 1910.

HH: Was it from her childhood?

RC: They were here showin' us her pictures and...

RC: Of course that's before I was born.

HH: Oh. This is the Cove High School Football team.

RC: 1910. That's the year before my dad moved here.

RC: Yeah. That was the year...the year before.

HH: So this is your cousin's photo? Was her brother or sibling...

RC: No. She just had that photograph. They've all accumulated a lot of pictures from their grandparents and things like that.

RC: That's the three cousins there.

HH: Oh.

RC: That's the cousins right there.

RC: Look at the noses, they're all...you can tell they're related. [laughs]

HH: Isn't that funny! [recording interruption] Okay. What do you know about the Cherry Festival?

RC: It... The Cherry Festival was early days – and I don't know what year it started – but it was quite a celebration. They had a Queen Anne and a King Bing. But it ended...what most people now think around 1818 or 1819, in that area. I guess... I don't know what it quit, lack of interest or just why. And then it was revived again just, what, three years ago, I believe. I'm not sure whatever that is.

HH: 2000, 2001, somewhere around there?

RC: Yeah, whatever's on that picture. We can took and see.

HH: Okay.

RC: That was the first one and they asked me to be the grand marshal of that.

HH: What do you know about the May Day Festival?

RC: May Day festivals when I was a kid it was more...more really...it was more like a community deal with the high school and grade school. The high school had a May Queen and the grade schools put on a program in the morning and it was held either in the schoolhouse or outside, they sometimes held it outside, the program. Quite a community affair. And then the high school itself, the girls and the boys, the freshman and seniors would be on one side and the juniors and sophomores would be on the other competing in athletic sports, track and field and then swimming. And then in the afternoon they'd end up...late afternoon with a baseball game.

HH: Would everybody...

RC: Everybody participated in that and it was lots of fun and a big interest with the community, too. They done a lot of decorations and of course wound the May Pole, the grade school did one... Most generally the third and fourth or fifth and

sixth...generally third and fourth grade wound the May Pole. It was quite a celebration.

HH: What sort of festivities did the grade school put on?

RC: Just pageants and little skits and that kind of things. And of course they all had their little dresses and the boys, as I remember, probably had white shirts or their best clothes that way. And most generally I think it was one of the classes in high school would – and I'm not sure which one it was – would get the...they sold hamburgers and hot dogs through the Home Ec room and ice cream. [telephone ringing] [recording paused]

HH: Okay. You were telling about May Day Festival. The high school sold food like hot dogs and ice cream.

RC: Hot dogs, hamburgers and ice cream cones. I don't know, probably lemonade. They didn't have pop like we know it today when I was young. But hamburgers probably was sold for on a dime and maybe hot dogs were a nickel, or maybe fifteen cents. That was... Then the swimming meet would always take place up at the Cove swimming pool.

HH: They would have a swim meet?

RC: That was part of the athletic deal. As I remember then the winning grade would get a party – and I don't even remember what kind of a party – but it was always quite a competition to see who would come in first on the...on the deal.

HH: And then what do you remember about the local town folk that weren't in school? How were they involved?

RC: The townspeople?

HH: Mm-hmm.

RC: We had a lot of support from the townspeople, especially like baseball games and basketball and football, just like we do now. On May Day there was always a lot of townspeople. May Day it kind of just was a community day. Kind of like a Cherry Festival, really. The program was well-attended and then the athletic contests was well-attended. They had some old-timers. Grover Duffy used to be the judge of the athletic deal, he was one of the judges. I don't know who all was that, but...

HH: Duffy, you spell it d-u-f-f-y?

RC: Yes.

HH: And Grover, g-r...

RC: Grover, yes. And his brother Ben is the one that run the flourmill when I was a kid. He had the flour...

HH: What was... Where was the flourmill?

RC: Where was the flour mill?

HH: Yeah, where was the flourmill?

RC: Part of the building there now. It's right across from the post office, go south across Mill Creek and it's...it's part of the...part of the building is there now. It was... In early days it run with water power. Mill Pond up on Mill Hill they took it out of Mill Creek and they had a pipe goin' down to the waterwheel and that's what they ground their grain with and it made flour.

HH: When did they go out of business? Or do you know why?

RC: Transportation and probably labor costs. The mill in Island City sold flour. I can remember going there and my dad buyin' what they call mill feed. It was a by-product of makin' flour and wheat there, chicken feed sometimes when you'd run out.

HH: You would buy that in Island City or...

RC: No, that was here in Cove. I got a little story to tell you about the... When we went to school in the bank building...the fifth and sixth grade when they was building a new schoolhouse they had the... Mill Hill was kind of our kids' playground. We didn't have a playground so we played up on Mill Hill. There as four or five of us boys and we just...which we probably knew, but, I don't know, we was up there...and the old pipe with the water come down was still intact. I don't know who's idea it was, but there was four or five of us in on it and we found a rock, a round rock, that would fit inside that pipe. And this is noon hour and so it was... It was disconnected as far as using for the... It had been converted to electricity, but the pipe and the wheel was still intact. So we got that rock and sent it down that pipe and you could hear that all over Cove and when it hit that water...hit the wheel down there the dust just flew out the top of that mill. The boys, four or five of us, we ran up towards the swimmin' pool and clear up there and we didn't get back to school for about an hour. The dust just flew out of the top of the mill from that wheel.

HH: Wow. So you... Did you get those wheels going by...

RC: Oh yeah. That rock hit that wheel, hit the water wheel down in the mill.

HH: And it got it going again?

RC: Oh yes, it just roared.

HH: Wow. And you ran off because you didn't want to get in trouble, or...

RC: That's right. [laughs]

HH: What made you come back?

RC: Of course we had to come back. We had to go back to school. But we... Then of course Ben Duffy he come a runnin' out there and up on these little short fat guys. He was a-huntin' who'd done that and he knew about who done it, but he didn't... We snuck back into school about an hour later, I think, and never did anything come of it. I'll always remember that dust flyin' out of the top of that mill.

RC:

RC: Oh yes, we would've, but...

HH: But you didn't.

RC: We didn't, no.

HH: So you said everybody could hear it. Did you hear comments from anybody wonderin' who did it?

RC: Oh, it was pretty well known. I mean the kids at school all knew who done it and of course it was the talk around. But it really, I guess, didn't hurt anything, but it...it made a little roar and a commotion and dust around there for a little bit...[end tape]

11/6/03, T2, S2

RC: Are we goin'?

HH: You are goin'.

RC: The flourmill... I think economic times and transportation stopped the flourmill. They... I guess in the early days before I can remember they shipped with the railroad and then... So I think that's the reason it went out, just economic times, probably, and the transportation. The railroad going out probably was one cause of it.

HH: So the railroad used to ship their goods and then the railroad was no longer available?

RC: Railroad quit... Yeah, they had abandoned the road, the route, and so then it relied on trucks and freight that way. There was a freight business here in Cove, but I...I don't know... But I think the economic times is probably what put the flourmill out.

HH: Do you remember what timeframe that the mill went out?

RC: Making flour I really don't, but it was still going in...they were still selling grain there and doing some business there in...I'd say in the 1935, but this could... I think he was still in business, but I don't know how much flour he was making.

HH: Right. So why did the railroad quit? Do you know?

RC: Probably not enough profit. I'm sure that's what... Not... You know, nothing to really... In Cove there wasn't enough to sustain it.

HH: So before the railroad transported things out of the flourmill?

RC: I think they shipped flour and then they shipped cherries in season. I don't know what...

HH: Did they ship lumber?

RC: This... I don't... I don't know. They didn't have a mill down there that connected to it. They'd 've had to haul it with a team, but I assume they did, but this I don't know. But they did... They did load cherries, but this is seasonal, very seasonal, you know. And of course prunes. And you wanted to ask about the cherries and the prunes...

HH: Yeah, the packinghouse. How did... Before we go onto that, how did the railroad quit...quit transporting goods, how did that affect other business? Like the flourmill relied on that to get their flour out and then I would imagine the cherries and prune business also relied on that. Did that have an affect on those industries?

RC: They didn't have that much affect because by then they had trucks and they would load 'em on the boxes...the packed fruit on boxes and take 'em to La Grande and ice 'em down there in an ice car and ship 'em out that way.

HH: I see.

RC: When I was... When I was workin' in the packin' house and I started there when I was old enough and worked there till it shut down. Conley...Conley brothers hauled it...the fruit with their truck. Herman Heyford iced the cars with his ice out of the...that he'd put up with icehouses...he had ice ponds up there.

HH: Now Conleys, is that what the road Conley Road's named after?

RC: That's... And the big... And there's still...still Conley name out here on the farm, Conley Farms.

HH: Okay.

RC: Then there was the two...two packin' houses. It was Stacklin, who owned this farm – in fact we bought from Carl Stacklin, Jr. – they had a packin' house downtown. And it's right about where the...right near where the...it's just down from the drive-in now...the drive-in. And then the other packin'house is still standing and they receive it...the receiving shed down there now. It's still standing as it was then.

HH: What does it receive? A receiving shed for...?

RC: Right now they use it to receive cherries, ship cherries out.

HH: Okay.

RC: That's where the cherries go out. Of course Miller has his own receiving and shipping place here in Cove now on his own ranch. But the one down there when...up until even in the... When we bought this place there was probably a... I have the list of cherry growers. ___ was the manager for years as a co-op and there was well over a hundred...hundred growers. I think a hundred-and-thirty I counted. And now they're down to about eight or...six or eight is all that is in the association.

HH: Wow. Why is that? Do you know?

RC: A small... Small growers can't afford to...

HH: Competition?

RC: Competition and small...small growers it costs too much to spray and take care of one or two, three trees like they used to have. Anybody that had a tree and had extra fruit, why, they could bring 'em down and ___ would take 'em and they was a member. Now it's not economical, feasible to do that.

RC:

RC: What?

RC: Sprays. Spray...

RC: Spray is one thing that they have to concentrate... Of course we had spray then, too, but not as...not as probably as much now.

HH: So spraying has increased...standards...

RC: The bugs has got more, I think. They're hard to control. The prunes... They'd... They would ship prunes out of here besides they had two prune dryers. John Dean had a prune dryer and Tom Conklin had a prune dryer. And they shipped those... Bought prunes and dried them and would sell those prunes. But that...that got... They fired... Those dryers was wood, a wood furnace, wood deals. The last...last year we picked...shipped cherries – I remember this well – they've...they had business and...not makin' any money at all on fresh fruit. It was hard times and so cherries didn't sell very good. The last year we shipped the cannery came in and bought the cherries. And some of the cherries that we shipped we lost money on and the prunes paid the freight on what my dad shipped he took enough prunes down to...and they made enough money to pay the freight on the cherries...on the shipped cherries it was that bad. And Paul's...Paulius brothers come in and then bought... And we shipped... When I was still in high school they took over. And when we bought this place Paulius brothers was still buying cherries and I sold cherries to Paulius brothers for a good many years.

HH: Paulius brothers?

RC: Paulius brother, Henry and Salem. And then Paulius brothers sold out to...help me out, Ruth.

RC: ...pineapple.

RC: Huh?

RC: Pineapple.

HH: Dole?

RC: Dole. Dole pineapple.

HH: Dole bought out...

RC: Dole Incorporation bought Paulius Brothers in Salem and they...we shipped to them for a good many years. In fact, almost up until I would – I'm just guessing at this – but about '75, '6, or '7 we were still selling to Dole.

HH: You were here?

RC: I was here, uh-huh.

HH: Now Paulius, is it p-a-u...

RC: P-a-u-l...

HH: S.

RC: Paul...i-u-s, I think it was.

HH: P-a-u-l-i-u-s?

RC: Does that look right? Yeah, I think...Paulius Brothers cannery in Salem. And that's where the... That's where Dole... They bought that cannery and they run that till...it closed down...the fruit operation because canned cherries is not a think that they buy in the stores anymore. You don't buy very many canned cherries. There's only one – that we know of – one cannery in the Northwest now and that's at Vancouver that cans cherries.

RC:

RC: But you...they just don't... You go in your grocery store and there's not much shelf space for canned cherries.

HH: No.

RC: If you find 'em, why, there's very little shelf space.

HH: True. I think they're good. So now what do you remember about the packinghouses?

RC: Packinghouses?

HH: Yes.

RC: It was a fun time for me to work. I got... I mean it was a good job for a kid like... And I got on because my dad was a cherry grower and so they __ tried to hire... And there was only like four or five boys...three or four boys that...that got jobs. I think that I got around twenty-five to twenty-seven cents an hour when I started in. And we...what we call...carry the boxes for the packers. They had two belts that they dumped cherries on and they had from six to eight sorters, women sorters, and then they'd have probably at least ten packers on each line, maybe more, that actually packed the cherries. They'd make two rows of what they called packed fruit and then they'd... We'd pick up those packed boxes and take 'em down at the end of the line and then they'd fill the rest of 'em with cherries...loose cherries. So it had two rows of packed cherries faced and then...then they'd fill the top of the boxes and put a lid on it and then when it was opened up...it was opened up all you would see would be just faces of cherries,

no stems. The stems was on there, but they'd open the opposite side. It was pretty...pretty packin'. They have pictures of this in...when they have their Cherry Festival now. The women that packed the cherries got so much...so much a box for packin' those cherries. It was...it was some fast packers. They made...

HH: They got paid per box?

RC: They got... As I remember they got – and I could be wrong on this – but I think from maybe three, four, five cents a box for packin' those. They'd sometimes pack a hundred boxes or a hundred-and-twenty boxes a day. So they made six, seven dollars.

HH: How old were you when you got hired on there?

RC: I think probably fourteen.

HH: Were the other boys who worked with you haulin' boxes about the same age?

RC: About the same age. And then, of course, they had some...the men, older men...they would have probably four or five, six...they had men runnin'...or two men runnin' the wheel carts and bringin' the cherries to the belts, a man dumpin' the cherries on the belt. And then it took two or three box makers. They'd put... They'd buy the shuck and Frank Music and his wife, both of 'em, made boxes. And then Tom...Tom Harris made boxes.

HH: So the packing houses did everything from making boxes...

RC: They got a ship in – they called it box ship – and they'd put...they'd line 'em with paper. One of the girls would paste paper inside so that they was fancy that way. They put a label on the ends of 'em. I have some labels here.

HH:

RC: That they used. In fact, we have several labels.

RC:

RC: They had... They packed pears and apples here, both, but not the Association, that was pretty much...Rundle's packed pears and apples and...

HH: What do you mean the Association?

RC: That was... That was the co-op, the Cherry Growers Co-op, it was a co-op association. And then the other was more or less private that used the packin' houses. Stacklin packed apples and pears out at his packin'house, too. But apples never... They had a lot of acres of apples, they had a lot of acres of prunes, more so than they did cherries in the early days. Lots of prune makers. But they've...they just wasn't a payin' crop in the same way the apples and pears, but the cherries have survived.

HH: So there was a couple different packinghouses and one was for the Cherry Growers Co-op?

RC: Uh-huh. And the other one was a private.

HH: And that...they did...

RC: They did the same.

HH: They packed cherries, too?

RC: He packed cherries and apples and pears. In fact, he had...Stacklin had quite an acreage of cherries and then he'd buy cherries from different growers and ship.

RC:

RC: That what?

RC:

RC: Yeah, they'd ship...they had pears. But then Stacklin went out of business before...before the other ones. And at that time there would be two crews workin' two different packin'houses, women...summer jobs or about a month that they had work.

HH: So the packinghouses provided about a month of work?

RC: About a month, three weeks maybe. They all counted on those...that job in the summer. Girls, high school girls all...all packed fruit and the older ladies, too.

HH: So you said that Stacklin's packinghouse went out of business first?

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: And do you know why that is?

RC: I think economics. Hard times and just because...just like the Association quit shippin' they didn't...wasn't a payin' proposition then. It was in the Depression and times was tough.

HH: What... When did... How long after the Stacklin quit did the co-op packinghouse quit?

RC: About... I don't know when the Stacklin quit, but the co-op quit packin' cherries in about 1936 or '7. 'Cause I graduated in '41 and we'd been sellin'...we'd been selling to the cannery before that. So it was before I graduated. I'd say from – I'm just guessing between '36 to '40, but I think more like '36 or '7 when Paulius Brothers come in and started buyin' the cherries. They was very fair...very fair corporation.

HH: So when the packinghouses went out of business then the Paulius Brothers came in and were able to buy these cherries?

RC: Uh-huh. They bought... They'd come in and it was altogether different. They brought their own boxes in. Before that everybody had to have their own boxes to pick their fruit and Paulius run in, why, they had their own boxes and bring 'em in. And they brought them in with trucks and took 'em out with trucks. They had a man receivin' cherries down at __ and he got paid__.

HH: Is there anything else that you would like to share that you remember about cherry growin' life?

RC: Cherry growin'? Where the... Where the... When I was a kid the fruit tramps... Where the Adventist church is right now was a grove of trees, a grove of locust trees and that was where the fruit tramps would...lots of 'em come in and camp there and go out and pick from there. That was... I really don't know who owned it. It was just there and they used that for a campground for a good many years.

HH: Now what was the trees? It was locusts?

RC: Locust trees.

HH: Locust trees.

RC: Yeah, locust trees. There's some of 'em still down around there. The church was a little...a church was there, but it was...it was to the south of that and right about where the Adventist church in there. And I can remember when goin' down to the packin' shed, why, there would be camps in there and they'd have their campfire in there and smoke would be comin' up where they'd be cookin' and different things.

HH: They lived in tents or whatnot?

RC: Tents, yeah. There's no trailerhouses then, of course. I remember when the first...one of our fruit tramps come in and he had a trailerhouse. It was kind of a makeshift thing, but they had it. It was a...

RC:

RC: It probably was... That was when I was a kid, though, that I'm talkin' about. The other thing that I might share with you is – and I don't know when this stopped – but every fall – and I can remember this as plain as I can see it right now – the Indians would come over from Pendleton, Chief Minthorn, and go into the Minam every year to get deer and white fish. And they'd have their horses and the bucks 'd be riding and the chief and they'd have their ___, whatever they call 'em, draggin' behind the...going up Mill Creek Road here and the squaws would be walkin' along. They'd come in from Pendleton and go into the Minam. They'd come there at Salmon Hole in the Minam.

HH: And the squaws would pick camas?

RC: They'd... No, that was... They'd pick huckleberries, but they helped...they'd done the work, of course, of pickin' the berries and smokin' the fish. But they...they dug camas out here on what we call...what I call the Roy Baker place. It's where...right past the grange hall. That used to be where they'd dig camas roots and make flour.

HH: Oh, right near the grange hall there?

RC: Uh-huh.

HH: ___ And you know... Can you describe... Do you know what camas root is like?

RC: It's a... It's a... It's a blue flower and then the root is just... I don't know... I've never dug any up. I've got a...and I think it probably is still there. There is a camas root here on our...a plant or two on our road, but I've never let anybody...never advertised it, but its there. I've never dug any up, but I...they dug the roots up and then they powered it and make flour out of it.

HH: When about... Do you remember when they stopped coming to do that?

RC: I don't remember when they...when they...but I would say in the '30s they stopped. But I was a small... I can remember this goin' down...goin' down I think probably to the packin'house, about that time of year, or maybe school started. Or when they was goin' up we'd meet 'em. It was something that I could remember for a kid was...I asked Dad, "Well, they're going into the Minam." It was Chief Minthorn. That name is...I think there's a Minthorn over their now and there had been forever, I think.

HH: Minthorn. Is that spelled...

RC: Minthorn.

HH: ...just like Minthorn.

RC: M-i-n-t, horn.

HH: And Minam. How do you spell Minam?

RC: M-i-n-a-n. Minam River.

HH: Okay. Wow. But it stopped sometime in the '30s?

RC: I would say in the middle...mid-'30s, I would say, probably they stopped. Maybe... Yeah, that...as near as I can recall.

HH: Do you know why they stopped?

RC: No, I don't. I... Maybe they... Maybe by then they had their transportation... Maybe they still went in there, but maybe they used cars to come over. I don't know.

RC:

RC: It wasn't... They didn't go in there to get flour. They went in there to hunt and get white fish. That was... That was what they...they went after white fish out of the Minam River, Big Minam.

HH: That's really interesting. Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to share?

RC: I probably missed a lot of things, but... One thing I might want to share... I don't know what year...we talkin' about the sawmills here in Cove. I can remember when my dad sold his first logs off the place up there. I'm talkin' about trees that hadn't been...virgin timber that hadn't been cut. As I remember he got three dollars a thousand for the pine and I think he got the white fir was less and between three to five dollars a thousand where now its six or seven hundred dollars a thousand.

HH: Wow. A thousand meaning a thousand...

RC: A thousand feet.

HH: Wow. And now its how much? About...

RC: Six... Pine now, as I understand it, is over six hundred...six hundred dollars.

HH: Per thousand.

RC: Yes. Good pine. But he... And it was... It was started... They started using that logs there at the end Clark Sharp built that mill and they had a contract to make the railroad ties and that's what it was...went into.

HH: Do you know what they... Did they make railroad ties for all over or local?

RC: They had a contract I suppose with...I don't know who they had 'em with, whether it was Union Pacific or whether...who they contracted with.

HH:

RC: It was railroad ties was what...was why they put the mill in there. And then of course they sold the lumber out 'cause you always had some lumber besides the railroad ties, but that was what it went in there for. And they wanted fir and tamarack for that. But it was... A cord... Like I told you the other day, a cord of wood was from three to five dollars a cord and that's pretty much in line with a thousand foot of...thousand foot of lumber.

HH: Yeah, it is.

RC: So that's...that's how much economics has changed. But that was in the...right after the Depression and I'm not sure...that was probably around, I'm guessing this, '35, '36, or '37 that Dad sold that, in that area.

HH: Sold the...

RC: First timber that he sold, first logs.

HH: Lets take a look at your photos.

RC: Hmm?

HH: Let's take a look at your photographs.

RC: Okay. I'm a trustee on the...original trustee on the __ Tony Kankridge Educational Foundation which gives scholarships for students in Union and Wallowa Counties, Northeastern Oregon we call it. Since... We've been doing it

since 1978 and this year it's up to about \$900,000 that we've give away. We don't dip into the original money, this is all on interest. So when we go on somebody else will have the money to do the same with.

HH: And how was the Foundation started?

RC: These two...two ranchers over by Union didn't have any heirs and they was always supportive of the youth around here and they set this up and that was in their wills that the money for their ranch and timber holdings went into this. We do... We do have money to loan...loans, but now we have 'em because the interest rate is low we haven't been makin' any loans. It mainly is our scholarship.

RC: And they're nice scholarships, too, about \$5,000.

RC: I'm a past master of the Mt. Fanny Grange and past master...or past president of the Cove Sportsman Club.

HH: You have been?

RC: I have...I am and I'm also a life member of the VFW in La Grande, 2990, and a life member of the Elks Club.

HH: So you're pretty active still.

RC: I try to be. I don't do much with the Sportsman Club and I don't get to VFW meetings too much because it's a little hard for me to go up the stairs, but I help...this year...last year we presented a flag down here to the school and Burt Hill is another life member and last winter over here he asked me to help. We're still active in the Sportsman Club. That was in...I was in the Cove...officer of the Cove Cherry Association for a good many years, secretary of that and the director and...

RC: And I've been too busy with kids.

RC: Ruth is... Ruth is in the Auxiliary of the VFW and of course she __ and a member of the Sportsman Club. We try to stay active. I support the school activities, ballgames.

HH: Good...[end tape]