ELMA & LYLE SANDERSON

Union County residents for 78 & 40 years respectively

AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviews in September, 2002
at their home in La Grande OR

Interviewer: Eugene Smith

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
2004
(revised from 2003)

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
An Affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society

A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation formed in 2002

In collaboration with Eastern Oregon University
Cove Improvement Club History Committee
Elgin Museum & Historical Society
Union Museum Society

Purposes

To record & publish oral histories of long-time Union County residents
&
To create a community encyclopedia

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Preface

Much of the history of a place is stored in the memories of people who have lived there. Their stories may be told to family members, but, unless someone makes a special effort to record these stories, they become lost to future generations.

Each of the historical societies in Union County, Oregon has begun to make that effort. Tape recordings exist in several locations, some of them transcribed in written form, others not. A more ambitious and thorough effort seemed necessary so that more of the oral history of Union County could be captured and preserved.

The Union County, Oregon History Project, begun in 2002, is making that more ambitious effort. One of its principal purposes is to collect as many oral histories of older Union County residents as possible and to make them available in both taped and written form. This edited transcript is part of the series of oral histories to be produced by that project.

About the Interviews and This Edited Version

The interviews with Elma and Lyle Sanderson took place at their home in La Grande. Both in their 80s, they were mentally alert and physically active.

The interviewer was Eugene Smith, a volunteer with the Union County, Oregon History Project. He completed one two-hour interview on September 16, 2002 and a one-hour interview on September 26, 2002.

Heather Pilling's full transcription (available for research purposes) presents the literal contents of the interview. The edited version presented here differs from the literal transcription in the following characteristics:

- reorganization of content

- deletion of some extraneous comments

- omission of false sentence starts and other normal speech fillers that detract from readability

- normalization of pronunciation and grammar in conformity with standards of written English.

ES designates Elma Sanderson's words, *LS* Lyle Sanderson's*, and *I* the interviewer's.

*Lyle's nickname is Sandy; it is used throughout the transcript.

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Both Born in Union County

I: Please tell me your full names, birthdates, and places of birth.

ES: I'm Elma Conrad Sherwood Sanderson. I was born at Summerville; my dad delivered me on November 8, 1921. The doctor would have come in his horse and buggy, but he couldn't get there in time. There was nothing else Dad could do.

LS: My name is Lyle Gail Sanderson, born July 26, 1915. Those were the days when you called for a doctor, but the chances of his getting there were slight. My dad had his team hooked up to go work in the field when Mom called out to him, "I think it's coming." So, according to what they later told me, he left the harness on, jumped on the saddle horse, and headed off for Elgin, which is about seven miles from the Sanderson Springs farm. Dr. Kirby was somewhere else; by the time my dad found him, got him turned around, and back home late in the afternoon, I'd been there quite a while. My mother had somehow gotten a hold of her mother, who lived about a quarter of a mile away, and she made delivery, as she'd done many times.

Grandma Niederer, by the way, was born and raised near our home; her parents came to the Grande Ronde Valley with the Hug family in the early 1870s.

By the time Dad and the doctor got back, I'd been squalling for hours. Elma says I'm still squalling.

I: How much of the rest of your lives have you lived in Union County?

ES: I have lived in Union County except for about a year and a half in Umatilla County and three years in Washington, though not always in Summerville. I lived out on the Foothill Road south of La Grande for thirty-four years and raised a family there. My first husband was born and died at that place in 1984.

Elma's Memories of Summerville

I: What memories do you retain of what the north part of the valley looked like when you were young?

ES: In Summerville, when I was young, my uncle owned a grocery store in a building that is the Rebeccas and Odd Fellows hall now. [This largest building in the Summerville business area, built in 1874, still stands.] He and his family lived in the back part of the first-floor store. On the north side of that building were Fred Hamilton's harness shop and Lott Elmer's barber shop. The post office was in my uncle's store, and, after Uncle John died, Mother had it in her house, which

Sandy in flour-sack dress, 1916
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

was next to the store. The store, after Uncle John passed away, was sold to June Brothers and thereafter burned down.

I: Was that a general merchandise store?

ES: No, just mostly groceries and gasoline.

I: Were you in the store when it was operating?

ES: Yes, many, many times.

I: Can you describe the way things were laid out and how business was conducted?

ES: It was a big, one-room store. On the left was not exactly a soda fountain, because they didn't make sodas or anything there, but they did sell ice cream and soft drinks. There was a big stove beyond that, where, in the wintertime, all the men in Summerville came to pass away the time and shoot the breeze. Shelves were all along the wall. When a customer came in and read items off a shopping list, my uncle would reach each one off the shelf and put it on the counter. He marked the price of each item on a pad, and at the end added up the total.

I: It took quite a while to shop, didn't it?

ES: It sure did. And he had a very good penny-candy counter. Sometimes get two things for a penny. That's long gone.

I: Why would you go in? Just to buy penny candy?

ES: For that and because we lived right next door I spent a lot of time in there.

I: Do you remember anything about what was discussed in conversation?

ES: No, other than one day a man came in and said he was looking for a derrick driver. My mother, who happened to be in the store then, said, pointing to me, "I have one right here." It was Louis Standley and he couldn't believe that a girl would drive derrick [a hay-loading device], but I had driven derrick every summer. He said, "OK, we'll try her." So I got the job a driving derrick.

Elma's Work in Hay Harvest

I: How do you do that?

ES: A derrick is built to make a haystack. It's built of timbers and has a big arm with a hay fork attached to it. The arm swings to get the hay where they want to drop a load of hay. Usually, they were pretty good-sized loads on the fork, and it took a team and a cart to drive it out and back up. All I had to do was sit there; the horses had done it so many times they did it automatically--waiting for me to holler to start backing up. Once in a while I'd have to hang on to them or get them to stop and come back. It was fun being there, and, of course, I liked horses.

LS: Can I make a point here? Every farmer had a hay barn that would hold between twenty and fifty tons of hay. A wagonload of hay pulled up under the hay mow, the Jackson fork would pick the hay up from the load of hay. The horse, with a cable hooked onto a single tree, pulled the cable and the forkful of hay over a pulley at the top of the barn. The cable moved on a track at the top of the barn; when it got where it was supposed to be, a fellow pulled a rope and tripped the fork to release the hay.

I: Tell me more about the Jackson fork.

ES: It has tines on it about thirty inches long--probably five or six of them--and they're sharp. When it swings around, you better watch out. I don't remember hearing of anybody being injured or killed that way, but they probably watched it pretty closely.

Sandy's Early Memories of Family

I: Sandy, do you remember other aspects of Summerville when you were quite young?

LS: Two important things come to my mind when I was quite small; neither of them has to do with Summerville itself, but I think historically they are interesting. The first one occurred when I was about four years old--1919. My dad and mom bought a new Model-T Ford from Eugene Hug, who has a lot of historical significance. We got it to try to better our lives by going to a dairy farm north of Victoria, British Columbia. When we left home, probably early in the morning, everything we had of much value was packed into this Model-T Ford. We went to La Grande and started across the Blue Mountains, headed for Pendleton. I still remember to this day watching for trees painted with a red, white, and blue circles; those trees would tell us that we were on the right road. Frequently, there were other paths for wagons. My brother and I ran ahead to look for trees with these markings so that we could go in the right direction. We would run ahead, see a marked tree, and shout, "Here it is!" My brother was usually the first to see it. We kids did a lot of walking.

We went as far as the area of the town of Meacham, which was a long day that day. The weather must have been good because we did all right on that part, even though that Model-T Ford wouldn't always go up a hill forward. We had to back up because gasoline flowed only with gravity. So we had periods where we had to back up the hills. At one place, Deadman's Pass, we had to use a block and tackle to get us up the hill.

I: When you said the trip was to improve your life, was the idea to find a better place to live?

LS: Yes, and that's another long story because it proved quite fruitless.

I: What was wrong with Summerville as a place to live?

Conrad family--Elma's grandparents, uncles, and aunts--shocking wheat or oats in Summerville area for drying and later threshing, early 1900s

Photo courtesy of Elma Sanderson

LS: We were doing pretty well. My mother and my dad married about two years before my older brother was born. My dad came here probably in his middle teens and lived about a half mile from where my mother was born and raised. His mother and dad had come from Scotland and followed the wheat harvest from Canada to make enough money to travel. My father was born in Canada, soon after they were married.

They spent one winter after harvesting in Montana and then traveled on west. I don't have the exact story of what prompted them to come to the Grande Ronde Valley, but they did move here. My dad at that time was a kid of seven or eight years old, probably about 1900. They settled over on a place out of Flora [in Wallowa County] on the banks of the Grande Ronde River so that my granddad could go across the Grande Ronde River the next year to harvest or help plant and grow the wheat in that part of the country. Shortly after they got there, my dad's younger sister, Bessie, who later become Bessie Oliver, was born. They lived in a little cabin with a dirt floor and the most basic of possessions.

When he went over to get some work the next spring one morning, my grandmother Sanderson was tending to her normal chores when she saw a rattlesnake on the dirt floor, curled up close to where Bessie was in a crib. When Grandpa Sanderson came back from what he set out to do, Grandma Sanderson said, "We're moving!" They moved to La Grande and later out to Summerville and established the old Sanderson place close to where I was born and raised.

My mom and dad had us two children then--me four and Virgil, my brother, about ten. They just thought, "We can do better." They had pictures of going to work for a dairy that a relative of ours had in British Columbia. It didn't work out.

I: Did *do better* mean to them anything other than having more money?

LS: We had no money in those days. For many years, we traded beef or pork that we had butchered with other people. We worked for people and

Sanderson parents with sons Lyle (younger) and Virgil (older), ca. 1918
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

Sanderson parents with Sandy, ca. 1920
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

traded manpower for manpower. That was pretty much the way we lived till I got up in high school.

Visits from the Watkins Man

I: I suspect, though, that at that time you might occasionally see a Montgomery Ward catalog or you might see a Watkins product man come by.

LS: We sure did.

I: They wanted money, didn't they? Did you want what they had to sell?

LS: We'd dream of having what they had to sell. During harvest time, my dad worked for farmers. As I was growing up, he got a dollar a day and board and room. Mom stayed at home and we did a lot on the farm. In the wintertime, we did a lot of cutting of wood for rails and fence posts and sold those in the spring and summer; that would bring in some money. In the fall we might have a bit of wheat and perhaps potatoes and other things that we could sell to get money. And we sold some of the cattle we raised.

I: Tell me about a visit from the Watkins-products man.

LS: I still remember his name--Louis Peck. He was a fascinating man, who had only one leg.

I: Did he arrive by a horse and a buggy or car?

LS: He arrived in a horse and buggy and always stayed overnight with us. It just seemed like a convenient place. We so enjoyed him. He was a rather portly man and seemed awfully old to us kids; he was probably nearly forty.

I: How was he dressed?

LS: Oh, dressed nicely, with a hat, definitely a hat. I think he lived in Cove--not so far away. We only had two bedrooms, so he would sleep with my brother or me. When he took that big old wooden leg off, we were fascinated. He paid probably twenty or twenty-five cents, and that would go toward our purchases.

I: Did he come with two or three big suitcases?

LS: Yes, and they were pretty heavy for him to handle. He'd bring them in and lay them out on the table and floor. My mother did all the buying. But I have to tell you this one thing that was just funny. My Granddad Sanderson had younger brother, Uncle Harry, that everybody loved. These were the days of prohibition, and Uncle Harry, being a good Scotchman, indulged as much as he could whenever he could. It always made my mother furious that, after the Watkins man had been there a little while, Uncle Harry would come and the vanilla extract disappeared. He enjoyed getting his vanilla.

Sanderson family house near Sanderson Springs (north of Summerville), late 1910s
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

I: [looking at label on Sandersons' empty vanilla bottle] It does say alcohol--eight and a quarter percent. That gives it a kick!

LS: The Raleigh man also came by with Raleigh products.

I: Similar to the Watkins products?

ES: Yes.

LS: We watched for the Raleigh man, but I guess Watkins was the more prominent of the two.

I: How often did these men come?

LS: Probably twice a year.

I: Did they come when it was snowing?

LS: No.

I: Do you have the impression that your mother was buying more than two or three items at a time?

Vanilla extract sold by Watkins man
Photo by Eugene Smith

LS: Yes. I would think twelve or fifteen things.

I: Were they mostly in the vanilla and food line, or did she buy brushes and washcloths and other sorts of things like that?

ES: Mother got those from the Fuller brush man.

LS: We never did have a Fuller brush when I was a kid. There were other things such as you suggested, but I'm not sure about that.

ES: I have another story on the Watkins man. The Watkins Company had a red liniment that they put out in the same type bottle as their vanilla. When I worked for a lady one summer for my room and board, we were cooking for hay men. In baking a pie once, she put what she thought was vanilla into this pie. I looked at it and noticed it wasn't quite the right color. I tasted it. Sure enough, she had grabbed the red liniment bottle instead of the vanilla bottle. So we just dipped it out, stirred in the vanilla, and it was fine.

I: Did anybody remark about that?

ES: No, they were too busy eating.

Sandy and his mother with her Rhode Island Red chickens, 1920s
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

I: Did you shop from the Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalog or wish you could?

ES: Not an awful lot.

I: Did you spend some time leafing through--wishing?

ES: I sat and looked at them, yes.

I: What kinds of items especially attracted your attention?

ES: Probably clothing, which we didn't have too much of in those days. My mother worked for a dollar a day and kept two kids, so we didn't have a lot. I did more wishing than buying.

I: Did that wishing ever become so strong that you really felt as though you wanted to be able to change your situation so you could have more of those things?

ES: No. Since we didn't have them, we didn't know what they would be like to have them. Just having enough clothes to go to school and maybe a new dress or a new pair of shoes on Easter was all I ever cared about.

I: At that time, there really wasn't much of a consuming urge?

ES: There really wasn't.

Activities in Summerville

ES: I might say some more about Summerville when it was a thriving town. There was a big livery stable, a hotel, a bank, and a brewery, though none was operating at the time that I lived there. And there was a large hall that the Masons had built; the Masonic lodge was quite active. Every Memorial Day, women in the valley brought food for a big Memorial Day dinner. People stood in line clear around that hall, waiting to eat. I don't remember how much they charged for it, but I know that I felt privileged to be able to wait on tables and serve ice cream. Many people have remarked about those wonderful dinners and about what a good way it was to spend Memorial Day. The money they made went to upkeep of the Summerville cemetery.

I: What was usually on the menu?

ES: Fried chicken, ham, beef, turkey, pies of all kinds, pastries--all you can think of.

I: Were you involved in preparing food?

ES: I was too young to do that.

I: Was that an all-day affair?

ES: Yes. It lasted as long as anybody came.

I: Any entertainment?

ES: No band, no screaming, no hollering.

I: Did people dress any differently from the ordinary day?

ES: Yes. Mostly dresses and good pants.

I: About how many people usually came to the dinner?

ES: I'd say three hundred to three hundred-fifty.

LS: The whole valley, including many people from La Grande, would come. We participated, both of us. When my brother and another boy were old

enough, they carried coffee from a house where a group of people were making it. They brought the coffee in a big pot to the hall. When I got old enough, I did the same. We made fifty cents, and fifty cents was a lot of money in those days!

I: Surely the men brought their own liquor?

LS: No.

ES: I don't think there was any liquor.

LS: Your uncle and another guy or two were moonshiners; they perhaps had something out at the car.

I: Tell me about these moonshine manufacturers.

ES: I know my uncle made beer.

LS: He made beer and wine.

I: Did they do it out in a shed somewhere?

LS: No, they did it right in the house. But whiskey was made in a place where they didn't want to be caught at it.

ES: They didn't want to get caught making beer either. Dad made beer. He'd give me a cup of it; I'd take a sip and go out behind the house, pour it out, and go back for another one. I don't know if he thought I was drinking it or not.

I: What did you want him to think?

ES: I don't know.

Reading and Music

I: There must have been a newspaper in Summerville at that time, wasn't there?

LS: I don't remember.

ES: I don't remember, either.

I: Did you read any newspaper?

LS: We had *The Observer* later in life. I think I was probably in high school before we could afford it.

I: I asked that partly to find out whether reading was a part of each of your young lives.

ES: I don't remember reading the newspaper.

LS: I read everything else we had, sometimes two or three times--fifteen or twenty books that were very precious to us.

I: Do you remember what some of them were?

LS: *God Made the World* was one. Another had to do with World War I--pictures and episodes of war. We had *Ben Hur*, *St. Elmo*, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*.

I: No books that were specifically for children or young people?

LS: Yes, there were.

ES: I couldn't be bothered to get along with those books. I had better things to do.

I: Was music part of your young lives?

LS: When I was in high school, I traded a horse for a saxophone, though I never did read music worth a hoot. Learning to play it gave me a lot of satisfaction. My brother later bought it from me, so I got my money back.

I: Did you teach yourself to play?

LS: By ear, yes. When he got it, he played in a little orchestra for weekend dances at Summerville or Pleasant Grove.

Attending Dry Creek School

I: Dry Creek School was closest to you, wasn't it?

LS: My dad went through five or six years of school there. He went only in wintertime, when it was too stormy to work. He finally made it into fourth grade. My mother went all eight grades there. The first year that we got back from British Columbia, the teacher lived in our home. My brother drove her and me to school by horse and buggy.

I: What time did she need to get there?

LS: School took up at 9:00, so we had to be there early enough to get a fire started in the stove in one big room. The wood was in an anteroom. The outhouses were outside.

LS: The following year, a local lady by the name of Fern McGinnis was the teacher. She was born and raised near the school. Her dad, Clem McGinnis, was so proud. He had a threshing machine; just before school opened that year, he showed us a big, wide strap he had made from the machine's belt and told us, "Those kids are gonna be good because, if they aren't, here's what I made for her to use!" There was some pretty ornery kids at that time, so she whacked a few of them with that strap. After that, the kids put on three or four pairs of britches over their overalls. They'd yell and holler when she whipped one and then another. Somebody got to laughing, so she whipped him. The kids made a farce out of it. She whipped till she got tired. I may be exaggerating, but not much.

Then another teacher named Pet Elmer came--a raw-boned lady, probably five feet seven, with a stern look. She made some of the kids who had been so ornery before and who wore several pairs of britches take off all except one. She gave one licking with her little belt, and that was it. One of the kid's dads brought his kid up to my dad, who was on the school board that year, and showed him what had happened. My dad said, "He probably needed it." But not many kids got lickings, and almost everybody said that was one of the best years we ever had. She was a good teacher and we learned well. She was firm but fair, a well-respected woman.

I: Was most of your learning by rote--memorization of multiplication tables, spelling, lists of prepositions, capitals of states?

ES: We had all of that. You bet we did.

I: Did any of the teachers you thought were good go beyond rote learning?

Dry Creek School (north of Summerville), same building in which Sandy attended school
Photo by Eugene Smith, 2002

For instance, were there ever discussions about controversial subjects to make you think more deeply?

ES: I don't think we were old enough to really pay too much attention, or it wasn't as important then as it is now.

LS: Pet Elmer, probably without realizing it, did some of this. I was having too much fun playing as a kid growing up, and my last three years in grade school were kind of easy.

Attending Imbler High School

LS: My eighth grade teacher was only seventeen years old. When it came to taking the county examination to complete eighth grade, I barely passed. Consequently, when I got to be a freshman at Imbler High School, things were terribly hard. The good subject in high school for boys was agriculture, but, since I had already made up my mind I didn't want to be a farmer, I had nothing to do with 4-H or those kinds of classes. I took French and ancient history--classes like that. I had to learn how to learn. My freshman class was hard on me in other ways, too. I don't know if I was eating too much creamery stuff or what, but I broke out in boils and pimples. I was a mess as a kid in high school, and I weighed about ninety pounds.

By the time my brother was in high school, we moved to Summerville, almost five miles closer to Imbler than our previous home, and roads were snowed in the wintertime. If some way or another we could get a ride from some kid that did have transportation, we'd get to school. Otherwise, we had to walk.

Sandy's Aunt Bessie and Uncle Bert Oliver

ES: Sandy had an aunt that lived about a half a mile from the Dry Creek School. My brother and I boarded up at my aunt's, which was a little up the hill from Sanderson Springs. Five of us kids walked from my aunt's place to

Sandy at about age 16

Imbler High School boys' glee club, ca. 1930
(Sandy, center row, third from right)
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

and from school. We picked up Sandy and all his cousins along the way, making eight or ten of us all together. Every night on our way home from school, one of us would have to have a drink of water at his Aunt Bessie's place. She always had cookies or apples or something, so we'd all get treated, but somebody had to have a drink of water before we got going. That is quite a memory.

LS: Aunt Bessie was kind to every kid that lived up that direction. She and her husband, Uncle Bert Oliver, had three children, all under ten years old. I guess it was either the second or third of July that the parents had gone out to milk the cows. Their house had a mantle with a clock or something on it and a table with a kerosene lamp on it. The oldest of these three children got up on the table to reach the mantle, where the parents had placed some firecrackers. They tipped the table and the lamp over and set the house on fire. All three children perished.

ES: Then they turned around and had three more children.

LS: They built a house down below it to start all over again. She loved kids. When they came home from school, she always had something. She never said anything bad about anybody.

ES: They used to have Easter gatherings there, and everybody dressed in their new Easter clothes. They brought food, hid Easter eggs for the kids, and had prizes for them. It was quite something to look forward to. I've missed that, I think, more than anything in my later years. Two of them are still alive: one very senior Emery Oliver is the second of the children they raised later; the other is a daughter.

Illegal Activity

I: When you were growing up in the Summerville/Imbler region, were you aware of crime of any sort?

ES: Only on Halloween--tipping over toilets and putting wagons up on the schoolhouse.

LS: One thing that might be interesting is

Imbler High School baseball team, ca. 1931
(Sandy, back row, second from right)
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

while I was quite young at the time. Till Taylor, sheriff of Umatilla County, was killed by escapees from the state penitentiary. They were loose. We didn't have many telephones, but people kept track of each other. When they heard a report that these two men had escaped somewhere in La Grande area and were traveling across what we called the old winter trail--now the Tollgate highway--they formed a posse of perhaps six men north of Summerville. One of them was my uncle, Bert Oliver, Emery's dad. The posse was told that the escapees were probably seeking places to get warm and perhaps to get food at a sheepherder's camp, which was near the road going through there. When the posse came upon this place one evening, one man went up to ask the sheepherder if two men were there sleeping. He pointed out where they were. The rest of the posse came in and took these two without incident. It was unusual to have that kind of a crime.

I: What kind of illegal activity could young people have gotten involved with at that time?

ES: Drinking.

LS: Yes, drinking. There wasn't too much drinking; it was tolerated and pretty well stayed within bounds. Occasionally, there was an automobile accident and sometimes deaths, but there was no real crime involved and little prosecution.

I: Did you feel as though you were living among honest, virtuous people?

LS: Absolutely.

ES: Yes.

LS: If there was such a thing, everybody knew about it by word of mouth. For an example, perhaps somebody stole grain. In those days, we had grain in sacks piled in fields. If some of them disappeared, we pretty well knew who took it; we were usually right. Most thieves became identified and were pretty much isolated as far as friendships with the families were concerned; they moved out of the valley. I can think of a few cases like that.

Going to Sunday School and Church

I: What role were you aware that churches played in people's lives in the 1920s and '30s?

ES: I went to Sunday School at the church in Summerville. My Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Starns, and what she said was law. I tried not to miss a Sunday, including services in the evening, and I sang. Many times my mother sang solos for a program. One of the Ten Commandments that I remember so clearly and try hard to stick with is "Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain." It makes cold chills go over me when I hear somebody do that. She was a wonderful Sunday School teacher.

I: How did she attain her power or ability to make you think that what she said was the law?

ES: I don't know. She was just a good person. I was at that age where it was something to look up to. Evangelists came through and held meetings. I joined the church and was baptized in the Cove swimming pool.

I: Was it the Baptist?

ES: I always thought I was a Methodist,

but I came to find out I was actually in a Baptist church. I didn't know the difference.

I: Can you tell me more about why people seemed to accept so readily the precepts and rules of the church? One way that some churches try to make people do the right thing is to threaten them with hellfire and eternal damnation.

ES: I did believe that there was a hell and a heaven, but when the evangelists get going, anything comes out. But I can't tell you, really.

I: You felt it though. You felt that the church was an important influence on people's behavior.

ES: I felt like it was, but I didn't have any problems.

I: Did they define for you what virtue is?

ES: If they did, I don't remember. That's been eighty years ago! I never did believe in smoking and drinking. I swear once in a while. A good person doesn't smoke or drink.

I: Were you aware of the theology?

ES: Not too much other than Easter Sunday and Christmas. I didn't go to church much after I was an adult. I had three kids. I had cows to milk and chores to do, and I couldn't get it all done.

I: Sandy, did you have any connection at all with a church?

LS: Yes and no. I should've had quite a lot of influence. During my fifth grade of school, when I lived in Imbler, my closest male friend was a Mormon. We went to church almost every Sunday. It wasn't that my folks said, "You must go" or "You don't need to go." It was just that it was pleasant. When I got into high school and often lived with them in the wintertime, I always went to church on Sunday. They had a group called the Trailblazers, which is similar to the Boy Scouts, that I enjoyed being in. These were very pleasant experiences, but as far as absorbing the church as something that affected my life, Lynn, my friend, and his family affected me quite a bit, but so did people who were otherwise. I never became engrossed with religion. So over the years in growing up myself I have nothing either way on the Mormon religion.

I: Did you have the sense when you were fairly young living around here that there was considerable religious tolerance? That there wasn't any particular denomination that was looked down upon or persecuted?

LS: I grew up that way under my parents' supervision.

Seeing People of Other Races

I: When both of you were in your early years, did you have any contact whatsoever with people of another race?

ES: Chinatown was where the Ford garage used to be on Jefferson Avenue. My dad, who hurt his back in the war, used to get some kind of a concoction from the Chinese. It was a yucky green color, but he would drink that stuff and it was supposed to help him.

I: When I ask about religion and race I'm trying to get at any perceptions you might have had about tensions, disagreements, or lack of respect for people who didn't fit quite the majority look and set of habits.

LS: None whatsoever for me.

ES: I can't think of any.

LS: Without realizing it, I think we never quite accepted interracial marriages. It was not until I got out in the big world that I started encountering it.

ES: Now it's a common thing.

I: Did either of you have memorable experiences with anybody in the medical profession in your early years?

LS: Shortly after I went to work for Union Oil Company, I went deer hunting north of Summerville--way up in back of where I was born and raised. A fellow hunting with me unfortunately shot me in my leg--blew this side of it off. After a rough experience getting into town to a doctor, I got hold of a doctor who had just come to town. He name was a Dr. Otten. I was so impressed by his care. This was in October, 1941, just a little while before Pearl Harbor. He took a look at my leg and said, "I've got to get somebody that knows more than I do." So he got another doctor, who said, "We'd better take the kid's leg off. It's been nearly four hours and with a gunshot wound, he's bound to get blood poisoning." Otten said, "No. I told him I would try to save his leg if I could. We've been getting miraculous results from sulfa drugs." Apparently the older doctor didn't know enough about them; he said, "We'll work on him. We'll try to do best we can, but this is such a mess that, if he gets blood poisoning, it will have to be cut. We might as well take it off now, but we'll try the sulfa." They saved it. I still have a leg. Dr. Otten was always my favorite doctor because of that.

Sandy with deer he had shot and that he was preparing to display by driving along Adams Avenue in La Grande in a borrowed 1933 Chevrolet, late 1930s
Photo courtesy of Lyle Sanderson

A Shooting Accident and Medical Care

LS: That particular summer in 1941 was the second year that Eastern Oregon College had introduced courses in flying. I was ripe to be drafted, so I thought I'd see if I could get a commission. I signed up for night classes in meteorology and navigation and flew during the daytime. I'd completed my primary flying and signed up for the Army Air Corps and went into secondary flying on October 23, when the accident happened. That put me into 4F [military category of unfit for service], ending my military flying career. I limped badly until fifteen years ago, when I got a new knee that has lengthened my leg.

I: Had you had previous work at Eastern Oregon Normal School, as it was called then?

LS: I graduated in 1936.

I: With a four-year degree?

LS: Two. Junior college.

I: They didn't call it *junior college* then, did they?

Attending Eastern Oregon Normal School

LS: I went to a normal school, but they called it junior college, yes. My majors were economics and psychology. I didn't want to be a farmer. I got out of college, and I still didn't know what I wanted.

ES: I took classes at the normal school the first year it was in operation--1929. I was in third grade. The experimental school or lab school, I think they called it. That was what it was. But soon I didn't want to go to it anymore.

I: Why didn't you want to go to it anymore?

ES: Every six weeks we got a new batch of student teachers.

I: What was wrong with that?

ES: We had just gotten used them, and then new ones came in. To me, it was kind of a turmoil.

I: You wanted more stability?

ES: Yes.

I: Otherwise, was it enjoyable being there?

ES: Yes. We were going to have a puppet show, and the castle I had drawn was picked for the puppet show.

I: Do you remember any more details about that school or about the building, such as Evensong?

ES: Oh, you bet.

I: What are your memories of it?

ES: How beautiful it was, with the graduates coming down the steps and then the ceremonies.

Other Incidents in Union County History

I: What else might you like to tell about Union County history?

Inlow Hall, Eastern Oregon University, 2002:
the first building on campus in 1929
Photo by Eugene Smith

LS: There was a fiber factory behind Dry Creek School, powered by water. Fibers made out of pine needles were used for horses' collars. We little kids sneaked out behind the schoolhouse, rolled this fiber up, and smoked it. I guess the factory was not very successful, though.

There were other little mills between where we lived and Summerville, all using the power from this creek. Of the five springs that feed it, one was on Granddad Sanderson's place and four on my dad's place. That's why they're called Sanderson Springs. Their flow was the same in middle of January as it was in the middle of July--twice the volume it is today.

In the early '20s, the city of La Grande surveyed that water, considering it as a source for the city. After the survey, the city voted no because it didn't have very much fall and was going to cost quite a lot of money for pumping the water to La Grande.

Another memory involves the Umatilla Indians from the Pendleton reservation. Every Spring they packed up and headed up over the Blue Mountains by the trail we referred to as the Government Trail, or sometimes the Indian Trail. They came right down to my dad's place and camped there for close to a week. They'd stay there because of an abundance of fish and ruffled grouse. They gathered roots and herbs and all the things that Indians use--all right there.

Before my dad bought the place, they camped where the big spring flowed into the other three that were on our property. When Dad got the property, before he ever put fences in, they'd come there for a little while on the way to the Wallowas. In the Fall they came back and stopped again at that natural place to camp. They needed to rest their horses and let them eat native grass. While they were there, we could trade for anything they made, like moccasins and gloves. Before we made the trip to Vancouver Island, I stood behind my dad and watched as he went down there to their campfire at night, looking at those strange, funny people.

Elma in 1947
Photo courtesy of Elma Sanderson

Pool near origin of Sanderson Springs and Indian campground (north of Summerville), 2002
Photo by Eugene Smith

I: They were entirely peaceful, weren't they?

LS: Absolutely! One year they came in an automobile--no horses anymore--and stayed only a day or two. After a while, they never came anymore. That was a bit of history.

ES: They also used to camp on the Sherwood place on the Foothill Road [southeast of La Grande]. Down in the meadow it was blue with camas. They dug camas roots. There was a warm spring to the north of the house, where they did their washing.

LS: Sheepherders came by, too. When we little kids heard that their sheep were there, we'd run down to the very edge of our property and ask them if we could help them herd the sheep. Sheep herders are always glad to get rid of bummer lambs, so they'd give us a lamb that we bottle-fed.

A Few Words of Gratitude and Hope

LS: We, who have both been blessed by having started our lives in the Grande Ronde Valley, realize that we have been given a treasure to pass on about this valley's past. When we recall our own youths and how much easier it was for us than for our parents and the generation before, we see how fortunate we have been.

This valley has shaped itself well and shows itself likely to do so in the future. Each local resident should be proud of the part he or she is helping to shape a part of this great country.

Sanderson family gravesite in Summerville Cemetery, 2002
Photo by Eugene Smith

Appendix
Excerpts from a Sanderson family history

THE

SANDERSON

FAMILY HISTORY

The Sanderson family tree has its roots in auld Scotland. We belong to the clan MacDonell. Clans usually took the name of the Chief. Our clan was probably named after a Chief by the name of Donell or Donald. "Mac" denotes "son of" so his son was MacDonell. Criginally this clan belonged to the MacDonald Clan, but in Glengarry and Keppoch the name was spelled MacDonell. When a clan grew in numbers it was divided into "septs" or sevenths. The Sandersons are a sept of the Clan MacDonell and wear the MacDonell tartan which appears on the cover of this book.

The name Sanderson comes originally from the name Alexander, which is an ancient name. It means "Defender of Men." Cne of the best known men in history bearing this name was Alexander the Great of Greece (356-323 B. C.) conqueror of the western world. The name Alexander is found in the Bible (Mark 15:21) whose father, Simon, bore the cross of Jesus. Three Kings of Scotland were named Alexander. So that it is natural that children in that country were called Alexander after the King. The Scotch, in a characteristic manner, shortened the name to "Sandy"; then the son was called "Sanders" and the grandson "Sanderson."

There is a tradition that the author's great grandfather was a shepherd in the hills north of Edinburgh, Scotland. However the earliest authentic trace of our ancestors which has been discovered by the author so far was when David Sanderson, his brother Alexander, and two sisters: Isobel and Jean sailed from Edinburgh, Scotland, about the year 1850 on the ship of Captain William Hastie. During the voyage, which was of ample time in those days, Captain Hastie and Jean Sanderson fell in love.

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Jim and Zee drove me along the road which wound around the hills of that beautiful ranch country to the farm of Jim's deceased brother, Donald. I felt really proud of Donald's family. After he passed on in 1958 Winnifred and their four children: Eileen, Larry, Gary and Randy carried on the farm successfully. When we called I had the pleasure of meeting the brave, clever mother and her three fine sons.

While in the beautiful city of Tacoma (there is a falls on the river in the downtown district) I visited Jim's sister, Doris Elizabeth, who is married to Ellsworth McDonald. Ellsworth told me that he went to school with Irene Sanderson, Uncle Tom's daughter, when their families lived in Almira, Wash. He recalls putting the end of her pig-tail in an ink-well. He didn't say what happened when she discovered the trick. I imagine the sparks flew! Doris and Ellsworth have two children: Kenneth and Gary --both married.

Now we will come down off the branches of the family tree towards the trunk so far as the family history in Canada is concerned. David and Betsy (Deachman) Sanderson had nine children: Mathew, born March 27, 1852; Catherine born April 17, 1856 (lived only one year); Thomas born 1858 (lived only six months); David Deachman (my father) born November 21, 1859; Alexander, born December 12, 1861; Thomas, born March 21, 1864; Henry, born September 18, 1869; Annie, born December 6, 1871 and Abraham, born February 25, 1873.

The eldest, Mathew, who was born at Lanark, Ontario, married Euphemia Young. They had two children born in Howick, Ontario; Epsie, born January 16, 1881; and David Lunham born January 12, 1884. Euphemia had a respiratory disease, probably asthma. The Doctor told Mathew that he should seek a warmer climate for his wife's health. He went first to California, but he found the land there was too expensive. He worked his way up the West Coast as far as Oregon. He settled on a homestead near the hamlet of Flora, Oregon. When I visited Summerville in the beautiful and fertile Grand Ronde Valley in 1965 the Sanderson Clan organized an

expedition of fifteen relatives to visit the old homestead some seventy miles distant. Dorothy (Sanderson's) husband, Tom Craig, had discovered the old homestead while hunting in the district a few years previous. He acted as our guide and after some serious and prolonged discussion with some natives at Flora we succeeded in rediscovering the old homestead. The spring of fresh water was there; the old orchard was there faithfully bearing apples and in a depression of the ground which once was a cellar we found the charred remains of squared timbers which had once been the loghouse Matt built for his family on that rocky hillside in the early 1880's. In the party that visited the old homestead was the first child to be born there: Bessie Deachman Sanderson in the year 1887. She mentioned on the trip that she had never been back since she left there as a three year old. Matt. and Phemie were real pioneers. The mail was brought up the river by boat and Phemie used to ride over the mountain range on horse-back down to the river to get the mail. Matt. had to team his supplies from La Grande which was 102 miles away. It was a rocky land and a hard life. One danger was rattlesnakes. There was a square hole cut in the lower corner of the door of the log cabin to let the cat in and out. One day Phemie came into the cabin and found a rattlesnake standing on its tail looking in at the baby in her crib. The snake had one eye on the cat which seemed to be charmed. Aunt Phemie wasn't charmed. She seized a broom and swatted the snake out of the cabin. When Matt. came home that night she said, "That settles it! We are going to move out of this rocky place." As I looked around at that hilly, desolate range of rocky land, I didn't blame her one bit. Uncle Matt.'s brother, Tom, had homesteaded a farm next to him. Apparently they had stayed there over three years for they had "proven up" on the homesteads. Matt. sold his farm to a man named Ferguson. Matthew and Phemie moved into the Grand Ronde Valley near Island City where they both worked for a butter and cheese firm for some years. They sold the cheese to a mining company about fifty miles away. Some of Aunt Phemie's butter, packed in salt, was shipped every year to a man in New York City who had liked the sample he had tasted when he travelled through Island City. Later Matt. worked in a sugar factory at La Grand,

living at Island City. He bought land at Island City which he later sold and then bought land at Summerville--the farm on which his son, Charles, and his grand-daughter, Dorothy Craig, now live.

Mathew and Euphemia Sanderson had eight children: Epsie, born January 16, 1881; David Lunham, born January 12, 1884; Bessie Deachman, born May 20, 1887; Willie Wilson, born October 29, 1890; Mary Ellen, born October 11, 1893; Annie Rachel, born October 18, 1895; Charles Mathew, born May 1, 1898; and Stuart Alexander, born December 14, 1899.

Epsie Sanderson married William Doble McAllister. They had one daughter, Mildred, who was born at Island City, Oregon, February 23, 1900. Later Epsie married Oscar Johnson and lived at Miles City, Montana.

Mildred McAllister married Samuel Hudson. She has a stepson: Samuel Thomas Hudson, born at Miles City, Montana, March 22, 1917. Samuel married Monema Gibson, who was born at Miles City, September 26, 1925. They have four children: Rosalie Ola, born November 20, 1949;' Schrene, born June 17, 1950; Bonita, born December 1, 1952; and Tommy born March 7, 1960.

Later Mildred McAllister married Newman Daily, son of John O. and Mallie (Broadus) Daily of Broadus, Montana. They have two daughters: Lorraine and Jeanne Epsie.

Lorraine married Richard A. Schulze of Chicago, Illinois, on June 14, 1941, at St. Louis, Mo. They have three children: Richard Newman, born December 24, 1942; Monta Lee, born December 13, 1943; Tommy Laird, born July 5, 1957 at Miles City, Montana.

Jeanne Epsie married James Blair and they have one son, Jimmy.

Richard Newman Schulze married Cheryl Keubler on March 1, 1964. They have a son: Richard Newman, born January, 1966, at Vista, California.

Monta Lee Schulze married Michael Kirk August 14, 1963, at Oceanside, California.

David Lunham Sanderson married Sylvia Niederer on December 29, 1907. They had two sons: Virgil David and Lyle Gail. Virgil was born May 16, 1909 at Summerville, Oregon. On December 27, 1939 he married Theresa Louise Gietlhuber. We Canadians claim Theresa, because she was born at Vancouver, British Columbia, February 12, 1911. When I had the pleasure of visiting their home "Sanderson Springs' Theresa showed us around, and upon my word I do not believe I have ever seen a more picturesque home. It is, of course, the latest design and has grand picture-windows, one of which looks out over a rippling brook. I am warning Virgil and Theresa not to make their home any more beautiful--lest they won't want to go to heaven. Virgil and Theresa have two daughters: Elizabeth Sylvia Sanderson, born March 28, 1945 and Georgene Mary Sanderson, born December 29, 1951.

Lyle Gail Sanderson was born July 26, 1915. Lyle married Verona May McBrayer November 10, 1957. Verona was born March 31, 1918. Lyle works for the Union Oil Company of California. They live in Portland, Oregon.

David Lunham Sanderson passed away June 2, 1951, and his wife, Sylvia Anna Niederer Sanderson, predeceased him on October 22, 1943. The name Lunham is an old family name. My sister's name was Margaret Lunham Sanderson. She didn't like the name....but still it persists.

Bessie Deachman Sanderson married Burt Cliver. They have three children: Harold, born May 14, 1910; Emery, born March 27, 1912 and Madelene, born November 19, 1914.

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