

Ruth Corriell edited

The Early Years

RC: My name is Ruth Evaline Hoss. My mother's name was Edna Scott. She was from Hilgard and the daughter of John Winfield Scott. My father was Hugh C. Hoss. I won't tell you what the C stands for because he hated his middle name. I had two brothers, Gifford Scott Hoss and Lloyd Kermit Hoss.

I was born between eleven-thirty and midnight; I almost got to be born on July 20th instead of the 19th. My father, a good, strong sturdy man who had fought in World War I in hand to hand combat, came in to assist the doctor, but as he came in and took one look and he fainted. The doctor saw him going down -- he was out practically -- and he kicked him through the door. He said, "Get out of here." Dad was past functioning on his own, he was out. We kidded Dad about that for years.

Looking at my father he would look like the last person on earth that ever would faint from anything. He'd seen bloodshed and hand-to-hand combat in war. It could've been or the smell of ether that they used in those days, what a horrible smell.

I: Do you have relatives from your mother's family here?

RC: I know very little about that family. My grandfather Scott died 1924. He saw me and held me and that's all I know about it.

My Grandfather Winfield Skunk lived up at Hilgard where my mother was born. She was born into a strong Seventh-day Adventist family. Mother didn't follow that religion because her mother died when she was two and she wasn't taught any of it. Mother had a number of relatives that wouldn't eat meat.

I: When did the Hoss family come to Union County?

RC: In the 1860's, because my grandfather Hoss helped build the railroad and that was completed in 1883.

I: You grew up right out here under Mt. Emily?

RC: I was born just beyond the Graham Tree farm on Hunter Road. There was a big white house and a round red barn there called the White place. The barn was built by the same man who built more over in Wallowa County. White was a fireman in town and had bought out here, renting to my father and mother.

We lived there until I was about four-and-a-half when we moved down to the N. K. West ranch on Sand Ridge Road. We lived there for seven years and my father farmed. Finally we moved back onto the home place where the grandparents lived off of Hunter Road.

Our property was off of Webster Road, off of Woodell. We rented that place; we were going to buy it about the time my grandfather had a heart attack.

It was a big stucco house. It had been a Victorian house, old-fashioned, a lot of gingerbread stuff outside, and they remodeled it into a 'modern' farmhouse.

I: They took all the gingerbread off?

RC: Yes, they destroyed it. My dad just nearly collapsed. They threw away lamp fixtures, what you'd give anything to have nowadays. They just threw them out in a trash bag.

Our house was back about two hundred yards in the field. They burned it here a few years ago. It was a big place, barns and shops. My mother was crying one day when she came over to see me, she said, "They're burning down at the Woodell place." The Lone Star School was just along there on the ridge.

I: How large was it?

RC: One room with an anti-room. There was a pitcher pump outside for water. The Carl Webster place is there now but wasn't when I was a child.

I: Were there a lot of places around out here?

RC: Quite a few farms. We thought nothing of walking a couple of miles to see a neighbor. It was dirt roads, no gravel or anything. You had mud in the winter and fall. The county took care of the roads but they didn't have a lot of money and we had rural delivery of mail.

Jim Woodell lived near us. When I was probably five or six years old and my brother Peter was older, our Mother left us alone one afternoon while she went in to town to get groceries. Dad was out farming somewhere. We were bored with life and thought we'd find something interesting to do, so we walked down to the corner in front of Jim Woodell's house.

There was a big culvert right there at the corner that had water in it part of the year, but it was dry at that point. We started to crawl through this big culvert. In the culvert was a box filled with liquor, bootleg liquor. Apparently, we'd run into a drop point where they brought stuff out and hid it and then farmers came and bought it up. It was during prohibition, the early 30's then.

We were good little children and knew that wasn't ours so we didn't bother it but we went around it. We crawled on through the culvert and left it right there, didn't even tell our folks.

I: Did you know what it was?

RC: We knew what it was. The next afternoon my mother went someplace for an hour or so and we went down to the shop. Attached to our shop was a room where the hired man had a bunk bed. Of course we didn't have any qualms about bothering people's things when they lived on our place. So we went in to see what he had in his little bedroom there.

We were just looking around and discovered the same box of liquor. The bottles were all full. I can't remember whether they had metal caps or corks, but we spent the afternoon emptying all the bottles into the pig troughs.

Then Father got back to the ranch as did Mother. We had a bunch of pigs that were kind of staggering around, they'd had a little too much to drink. Dad came in just fuming. He said, "What happened? What is this?" We had to confess what we found. Not knowing what it was, but that it didn't smell good so we emptied it. The hired man quit real quick like. Dad had nobody to help him with milking that night, so many cows to milk and he had to do it by himself. Dad brought us in and sat us down on stools and filled a teaspoon with the taste of this liquor. He said, "I want you to taste it. Just put your tongue on it and see if you like it, see what it tastes like." Of course it was terrible, horrible stuff that somebody had concocted in their backyard. We didn't bother liquor again; we didn't touch it. That was nasty stuff.

I: How many bottles were there, do you remember?

RC: It was probably a fruit jar box with the divisions in it, maybe twelve bottles. Our dad was perturbed because he was afraid his little children would drink it.

I: Did the pigs survive okay?

RC: They lived through it, but the hired man either quit or my father suggested he quit after the incident.

I: Did hired men kind of come and go a lot?

RC: You'd have them around for maybe a couple of years if they were satisfactory, and then they would find something better to do and moved on. We had a procession of haying crews and hired men, a lot of people like that around.

I: Were they like migrant workers are today?

RC: It was the Depression years and they were lucky to have a job so they worked for practically nothing. N. K. West paid them, we didn't. N. K. West also paid my brother and I to trap squirrels and we'd save the tails to prove to him how many we had caught. I can remember he'd come in, sit on the porch and talk to Dad. His car door would stand open where there was a pocket that held all these tails.

I: How did you trap them?

RC: Little squirrel traps we put out in the field and then check them the next day. We got paid a penny or two per tail. It wasn't big money, but we enjoyed getting it.

Horse and Buggy Riding

RC: There was an old horse and buggy down in the carriage shop that my grandmother had used. It just sat there and nobody ever used it. Well, it dawned on my cousin and I that we could hook a saddle horse up to that and we could travel around, we'd have wheels.

I was about fourteen at the time. We'd come up to somebody that was stopped at their mailbox, getting their mail, and we'd stick our heads out of the buggy and yell, "Get a horse!" and gallop by. Our folks didn't approve.

I: Did you scare the people?

RC: Yes. We rode all those lanes and things back and forth. One day we took the horse and buggy and went down the lane there on the home place. Granddad had had the lane out to the house graveled and graded up so it was high and the ditches were deep on both sides. Somehow going down that lane, the horse begun to run away. I could see my wheel going down in that ditch. I knew that the buggy would turn and I'd be crushed between the wheel and the buggy so I jumped out. I hit hard enough that I gave myself a concussion and I broke all my ribs.

I came to up at bed in the house. My cousin had got me back to our house somehow since I was really mashed up.

I: Did you get in trouble?

RC: My mother was real mad and cried. The next time we were able to be out and about again, we went out to hook up the horse and buggy, the harness wasn't there; there was no harness. We asked Granddad if he'd seen the horse's harness. "Yes," he said, "I had." He'd cut it up into tiny

little pieces. He said, "I'm not letting any grandchild of mine get killed on my place." That was the end of our buggy running. Good thing they stopped us, we were getting mighty dangerous.

I got really hurt when that buggy crashed. I was out of school a couple of weeks. When I went back to school that fall and was playing soccer out on the field, some gal kicked the ball into my head. It hit me right where I'd had the concussion. They carried me into the locker room and that is where I woke up.

We didn't have good sense in those days. I rode horses pretty well, but I didn't do any harnessing or bridling them, I let somebody else do that.

N.K. West Place

I: You said you had lived on the N.K. West Place?

RC: We there for a few years. They had a big dairy, I think the Davis family owns it now. They lived on the other side of the valley but had this place in Summerville, the West Intake.

I: What is the West Intake?

RC: There was a big water reservoir that supplied a lot of the north end of the valley with water and the West's owned it; they called it the West Intake.

I: What was it exactly?

RC: It was like a swimming pool full of water up in the woods, a big reservoir. The water came from a big spring.

I: Did people come there to get water?

RC: I think they had it piped out to the different homes along where End Road is now.

I: Were there very many houses along End Road?

RC: No, not at that time. The End's lived up there but I can't think of anyone else who was up in there at that time. It's a regular little community now. Our ranch was next door to Berryman's and I think Clergets live there now. Reed Stewart bought the place from Scotts and, after a divorce, he sold the place to the Clergets.

I: How long did you live there?

RC: We lived on the West Ranch probably two years when Dad was foreman on the West ranches. We lived across the driveway from the West's big house. Ours was a small white house, nice but not up to the standards of the West family. They even had a doorbell and that was pretty unusual in the '30s since people didn't have that type of thing out in the country.

The ranch was on Hunter Road before you get to Pleasant Grove Grange Hall on the right-hand side. It was a little ways off the road. When we moved to the West place as children we were fascinated because they had milking machines. We had seen milking done by hand, but they had milking machines and ran a good-sized dairy. There were also cement sidewalks that you could roller-skate on; it wasn't real country-like, it was a little city by itself.

There used to be two buttes here, a big butte and a little butte. The little butte was tore up by the county, I guess for gravel and rock. There is a rock pit there now owned by Mike Partney.

My dad would go down each day and watch very carefully when they were digging the butte out; he was interested to see if there were any Indian artifacts.

I: Did he find any?

RC: I don't know that he did there, but he did on the home place, lots of arrowheads and stuff. This county apparently had been an Indian feeding place, where various tribes came over from Umatilla. Dad would meet them up on top of the mountain lots of times.

I: Did he know they were coming or he'd just be out there?

RC: He'd just be horseback riding. He would talk to them as much as he could, be friends with them.

I: Is the West house still there?

RC: Yes, it was a gray stucco house, down a long road off of Hunter Road. It was near where End Road joins Hunter Road. The timber was quite thick at that time and my brother, being two years older, told me that tigers lived in those woods. I was petrified to go out by myself.

I: How old were you?

RC: I was about four-and-a-half. I'd go up to the mailbox, be scared to death, but I wouldn't tell anybody I was scared. I checked very carefully under the bed at night to make sure those tigers weren't there.

I: So your Dad was a foreman on the N K West Ranch and your mother was a homemaker?

RC: He worked for N. K. West, but we lived on our own ranch there at Clergets.

I: Did you have a fruit orchard then?

RC: Yes, there was an orchard out to the south of the house. It wasn't as big as the orchard at Flannigan's place next door. They had a large cherry orchard that had been put in while I was in College.

I: How long did you live in that place?

RC: We moved there when I was twelve and I lived there until I was twenty-four. I was familiar with that area because my grandparents had always lived there, and we were back and forth to their place a lot.

There was the home place that my grandparents owned and there was on that place a smaller house, called the Little House. When Granddad had the heart attack, he and Grandma moved out of the big house into the Little House, and we moved into the Big House and took over the operation of the ranch. This Little House had been moved out of the field where it had set for years and was closer to the Big house. They finished out their life there.

Lone Star School

I: Where did you go to school?

RC: I went to the Lone Star School.

I: I don't know that school name, nor where it was.

RC: No, nobody apparently knows. I asked Gary Webster after I'd seen his dad's obituary. "Gary, I see that your dad went to Lone Star. Do you know when Lone Star School was built?" He said, "I haven't the vaguest notion. Why don't you call Dorotha Voruz in town. She would know. She's written a book of rural schools here in the valley."

So I phoned her one day and asked about the Lone Star School. She said, "I've never heard of it." I said, "Oh, you have to! I went to school there for a number of years and I know people who went to school there: Jim Leuw's daughter, Pauline Howard, Claude Woodell, and all of the neighborhood." She said, "Well, I've just never heard of it."

I: How long did you go to the Lone Star School?

RC: My sixth grade was the last year I went to Lone Star. There were three children in our family who went there and Edna Greiner. It was just a little country schoolhouse, with one teacher who taught all eight grades.

In first grade I had Jeanette Hanford. My second and third grade I took together and had Vivian Beardon. In fourth grade there was Blanche Billings from Imbler, and in fifth we had a man teacher. He was so handsome and we thought he was wonderful! His name was Rollo Gerard.

I: Where is he from?

RC: I think he came from Washington, although I'm not sure. He had a brother in town that ran Gerard's Jewelry for years and he came here and lived with them. There were only four of us in the school so the District questioned whether to close it or not.

My brother was ready to go into high school. He had to pay tuition if he went to La Grande. My Dad didn't feel that Imbler had decent enough facilities and he felt that us kids were not getting the education we needed. The tuition problem bothered the folks, so mother and us three kids moved to town.

Head Cheese Sandwich

RC: I can remember going to one neighbor's after school, it was the Rafe Greiner place. One of their daughters, an eighth grader and a big girl was a neighbor and a friend. They offered me a head cheese sandwich. Well, I didn't know what head cheese was, but a sandwich sounded alright. I took and ate it, and I went home and told my folks what I had eaten. Dad said, "You know what they make head cheese out of?" I didn't know. I found out they were a German family and they scrape the skull of the animal, whatever kind, and then grind it up to make head cheese – eyes, brain, you name it. I wouldn't have touched it if I'd known. But I didn't and I ate it with enjoyment. It was a good sandwich. I am glad I didn't know what it was.

My mother used to cook the tongue and slice it for sandwiches. I used to look under the kettle lids to see what was brewing on the stove and I would run into a tongue now and then. I never ate that stuff. My father felt that way about chicken. He'd seen too many chickens out in the barn lot. He didn't like them. I grew up not caring a lot about chicken either. I'll eat chicken, but it isn't my favorite dish.

We lived in town during the school year, renting a house. We went to school and didn't have to pay tuition because we were residents of La Grande. Of course we went home every weekend to the ranch.

I: Did you do that for six years?

RC: It was a long time, but it was fun. They eventually closed the Lone Star School completely; there weren't any kids left after the Hoss family moved except for Edna and she went to the Imbler school.

I: Any particular memories you have the Lone Star School?

RC: I tried to burn the school down one day when I was in the first grade. We were having a big Christmas program -- the Christmas Story -- that was a community thing. Everybody came to it, all crowded into the little school house to watch. At that time there were eight or ten of us kids going there.

We decorated the room and had the tree up. I was to be an angel in this Christmas scene. I had this gauze costume that was just lovely. My mother had put this shiny stuff like tinsel on and I was going to be beautiful.

There was the cradle and I was the angel standing back behind the scene. All of a sudden I looked out at, and the whole room was coming toward me, men were all running up toward me. I didn't know they were coming to get me, but they obviously were coming right at the stage. Some other child in the scene had a candle and had edged in behind me, and my gauze wings caught on fire. My father saw the smoke, he and two or three other men got up out of the crowd and all rushed to the stage and pounded out the fire while I burned. I felt terrible because my beautiful costume had been ruined, I was a singed angel from then on.

I didn't cry over much anything but I was scared.

I: Were you a little girl for you age or about average?

RC: I was tall for my age. I noticed in a picture when I was in first grade, I am in my little dress and looking like a cherub with red hair and on my feet are boy's shoes. They came up over my ankles.

It was the Depression years and I'd wear my shoes to school. I would be so bored; I'd finish my work, there wasn't any more and I would to sit there and scoot my feet in and out, in and out until they'd be broken down in the back. I just went through so many shoes finally my mother said, "If you don't stop doing that I'm going to let you wear one of the boy's shoes to school one day." That was the day they took our first grade picture. There I am in my clunky shoes smiling happily.

I: Did you only have to wear them one day?

RC: Yes, one day and that was the day. I quit scuffing my shoes after that. My folks didn't have that much money in their pockets to run to town to buy another pair of shoes.

I: You grew up years during the Depression, did you always had enough to eat?

RC: Eating was never a problem in our house.

I: Did you have chickens and a garden?

RC: Yes, but my father didn't like chicken so I didn't.

I: You were his little princess?

RC: Yes, I was his little princess. My father was a handsome fellow and he had a cleft chin. I wanted to be like him so when I would go to sleep at night, I did my best to dig a hole in my chin. It never worked.

I'd go to Ladies Aide Society meetings with my mother and the ladies would ooh and aah over my dark red hair. They would say, "Oh, you just look just like your mother." I'd come home and I'd cry and cry and cry. Must've made my mother really feel good. I loved her intensely, but I wanted to look like my father. I didn't want to look like my mother even though my face resembled hers. I think how terrible it must've made her feel because I'd cry every time.

I: Did she know what you were crying about?

RC: Yes, she knew what I was crying about.

I: Did she have red hair?

RC: My mother's hair was blond and my father was brown. The red hair just came down through the family.

College Years

I: You went to La Grande high school, matriculated and then you went to Eastern?

RC: I was at Eastern for two years and then I transferred to University of Oregon where I graduated.

I: What was your major?

RC: I graduated in sociology. I had started out in journalism. I took it the first year I went down to Eugene but I didn't like my roommates who were all journalism majors; we ate, talked, slept journalism all the time so I thought, "I got to get out of this, I can't stand it."

I: Why didn't you like it?

RC: Maybe I didn't like the girls. They would prop their feet up on the desk, smoked cigarettes, they were a hardnosed group, a really tough gang.

I thought, "I don't want to be that way." So I got out of there and came home but my mother wasn't too delighted to see me. I'd spent the family savings on going to University of Oregon. She said, "Well, you'll have to go back, you'll just have to go back." I said, "I can't, I dropped out. I went in and talked to the dean, told her you were ill and I needed to be at home. I've been dropped from the registrar's and it's too late to get back in this year." She said, "Well, in that case, you better find a job."

I thought I was so sophisticated and accomplished that I could just walk down Adams Avenue and they'd be delighted to see me coming. They weren't that delighted, believe me; I knocked on an awful lot of doors. My uncle Dr. Gilstrap, a physician in town who had married Julia Hoss, my Dad's sister, called me and said, "Ruth, I hear you're looking for a job." I said, "Yes, you got one?" He replied, "I need a receptionist." I said, "Okay, what time do I go to work?"

I: How long were you a receptionist?

- RC: I only worked there about six months until Uncle Kleris had to go to Mayo Clinic to have a kidney problem checked out. In the meantime, I had found other work and was taking courses up at the college.
- I: Did you go back to the University of Oregon in Eugene to finish school?
- RC: Yes, I went back to Eugene and graduated. I came back to La Grande to rest up from all the hard college work, to make chocolate cake and enjoy myself, eat late breakfasts and read. When I had gotten home, my mother and a journalist here in town met me at the bus and said, "We've got a job for you. They want you to apply at the welfare office, they need a case worker." I didn't intend to go into casework at all, but I got the job and I went to work.
- I: You did that for how long?
- RC: I had gotten married in September of 1948 to Jack Corriell (John P. Corriell). I worked for about three years before I got married and then I worked afterwards, went out on cases throughout the valley. At that time, there were two caseworkers, myself and woman named Genevieve Nelson. We divided the valley with the railroad as the division line; I had everything north of the tracks to the county line.
- I: You must have had a lot of cases?
- RC: Yes, lots of them – poor people, unwed mothers with children. We also did adoptions. After a couple years, they added a man caseworker which took some of the pressure off. The caseload was about right, because we didn't have to switch cases around and Genevieve was from this locale. She knew people and I knew people and once in a while you'd bump into your mother's best friend who was applying for help and you didn't want to handle that case.
- I: This was in the late '40's and was there a welfare program set up for mothers and dependent children?
- RC: Yes. It's the same as they have now except they call it something different now.
- I: Did they have food stamps?
- RC: I don't think so, but they did have some sort of food stamp program for a while. I had a fellow call me from the grocery where he worked, he said, "Ruth, what on earth are you giving this woman food stamps for? She comes in here, buys an order of dates and food that even I can't afford to buy -- fancy stuff." I said, "Keith, we don't have any way of monitoring. It's a government program, the stamps are given out to those who are eligible for them and they can spend them any way they want. They want to spend it on bottles of liquor that's fine."
- I: Do you think welfare programs like that probably started during the Depression?
- RC: I suppose so. That's partly why I switched from journalism to sociology. I had to find something where I could use the credits I'd already built up at school, and I didn't want to go into English necessarily and be an English teacher. I thought there are poor people in this world, there'll always be poor people in this world that need to be taken care of. I'll do something in that area. So I got a degree in sociology.
- I: Did you enjoy the work?
- RC: I loved it. I worked every day and every day was different. You never knew what was going to happen.

I: Were you out in the field or did you just stay in the office?

RC: You were in the office maybe part of the day, but usually you were out in a state car if you're going out to check on families. It was fun and interesting work.

I: When you were a social worker, was there much physical and sexual abuse against women and children?

RC: We definitely had it in those days. I never ran into a wife that was battered or anything of that sort, but I have seen a few sexually abused children. However, people didn't talk about it much. You had trouble getting people to report any abuse, to call the office and tell you, so you could go out on a case. You had to have some indication, you couldn't just barge in and say, "Hey, I think something's wrong here."

I: Then you had kids and you quit work?

RC: I wasn't home very long. I had Todd and two days short of two years I had the twins, Scott and Stephanie. Stephanie was a red-haired girl and Scott a dark-haired boy, three children under the age of two. I was frantic for a few years.

I: Where did you live then?

RC: By then we lived in town. My Dad and Tom Ruckland from Imbler had bought two houses down on Eleventh Street when I was in college. Tom made the payments on the one he bought and we lived in the other one and paid the payments on it. So we had a house in town as well as at the ranch.

When I came back from college I lived in town, worked, made money and spent it. I didn't have to pay the folks any board or room so it was nice. After Jack and I got married we lived there until the twins were probably six months old. We had moved our big bed out into the living room and given the tiny bedroom to the three children. Jack came home one afternoon and he said, "I bought a house." He bought a house up on Oak Street about a block from the Central School. I was delighted.

I remember my son came home one day when he was in the primary grades; he was simply beaming as he came through the door with an armload of daffodils.

I asked, "Scott, where did you get those?" He was so thrilled he had brought his Mother flowers He said, "I got them out of Florence Miller's back yard." There was an acre of daffodils she was weeding. Scott had picked some. I said, "You know what we've got to do? We've got to go next door and talk to Florence." Scott went over and Florence was lovely about it, hoped I enjoyed them but 'don't do that again, Scott'.

Corriell Family

I: When you met Jack, did you go out to Ruckle Road to see his house and meet his family?

RC: Yes, I was a little startled when I saw it the first time. It was almost primitive it was so little. I was totally startled that the place was so backwoodsy. Jack's dad, Jim Corriell, had reached the point where he had given up his business in Nebraska, traded some stocks or something. There was a fellow who couldn't pay him what he owed so he paid him off with this piece of wooded property out here in Oregon.

Jim drove out and built a little place there. He and his wife had had Jack and then another child, eighteen years younger. Jack was twenty and in the service when the other child was born.

I: Were you surprised because they were poor?

RC: Yes, but everybody was poor in those days, but they seemed to be poorer than the rural rich. He enjoyed living backwoods-like, with an outhouse and a little shed for a cow.

I: Tell me about Jack.

RC: Jack was one of the first three out of Union County to be drafted in World War II. He spent time in Africa, Germany, France and Italy; he was away for five years. They were bombed a few times and things like that in Africa, but they didn't do any armed combat.

I: Did you meet him after he came home from the war?

RC: The secretary/bookkeeper at the welfare office, Agnes Woodburn, said, "You know, I know a fellow who is back from the service and I think he'd like to meet you. Why don't you come to dinner some evening?" A blind date was the last thing I was thinking about going on, even when her husband came to pick me up to take me over there.

I told him, "I'm not going. I'm not going." He said, "You have to go. Agnes has the dinner ready. She's expecting you." So I said, "Oh, alright." I went and I met him that evening.

I: Did you hit it off right away?

RC: Yes, three months later I was engaged and we were married in September. I was twenty-four years old. My mother thought I was an old maid; she thought there was no hope at all.

Medical Care in the Valley

I: How about like medical care for women?

RC: Oh, it was great, if you could afford it. Of course we had a doctor, Clarence L Gilstrap, in the family whom we didn't have to pay. He was married to my father's sister.

I: When you were having children where'd you have them?

RC: I had Todd in the St. Joseph Hospital. I remember vividly that he was the only baby on the floor. I went in and delivered in one evening. There was a woman in there with her baby, but she was leaving that day. She came down and told me goodbye and hoped I had good luck. After that for about the next six days I was alone on the third floor of the St. Joseph's Hospital. When you heard the elevator coming you knew your husband was on the way or it was the doctor.

I: Was there another hospital in town?

RC: Yes, the old Grande Ronde Hospital, up where the White Birch Apartments were. As you come into town from the west, on that curve where the nursing home is now was the Grande Ronde Hospital.

I: Did some people go to one hospital and some people go to another because of a class distinction?

RC: Not particularly. St. Joseph was Catholic and of course the people who were Catholic definitely went to the St. Joseph. But I went to the St. Joseph because it was near where we lived. Later

when I had the twins, Uncle Clarence had bought the Grande Ronde Hospital I was expected to go there. I stayed in the hospital for ten days to recuperate because that is what the Doctor said to do. I have two sets of twin great-grandchildren.

Iowa School

I: We are driving down Hunter Road and looking for the Iowa and Lone Star Schools.

RC: Iowa School was back on that fork. It was called the Iowa School because the people were from Iowa that started there. I think there was a wagon train that came from Iowa. We are at Hunter Road and Stanley Lane. There was a school right here on the corner. It had been there for a good many years. I had pictures of my aunts, Dad's sisters, and Dad who went to school here.

I would love to dig those photos out and show them to you. However, I walked in one day trying to remember how some relative looked and I knew I had all the Hoss pictures filed in my rec room in boxes. I walked in there and there were no boxes; they were gone. I have no idea what happened. Whether someone was cleaning up the house after Jack died helping me burned up old stuff and they went in with the garbage. Or whether some family member knew I had them and came in and removed them. I have no idea.

I lost pictures as far back as the Civil War days that my grandmother had had. I had bunches of pictures, the whole floor was littered with them. Now they are all gone.

I: Your kids didn't take them?

RC: I questioned them. I said, "Did any of you bother those pictures?" Todd said, "No, Mom. I know what you mean. I saw them, but I never would destroy something of that sort."

I: We are now at Monroe Lane.

RC: At the end of this lane my great grandfather settled here. His name was Henry Holst. This next place was my maternal grandmother York's, her parents lived there. And the next place was ours which is now the Clergets.

I: Do you mean your grandparents got to know each other because they were neighbors?

RC: Yes. Nobody had cars then, they couldn't travel any distance.

I: So they married each other because they knew each other?

RC: Yes. It makes me homesick to see the place. I don't know if the Berrymans still own this place or not. I think Mr. Berryman died and I knew the girls were discussing putting it up for sale. This is corner you turn on if you want to go to Lone Star, where I went to grade school before we moved to town and I went to Ackerman. My brothers went to the Iowa School and I came here.

I went there. I think it went back years before me. My brother and I used to ski from our place out here on the sand ridge going across fields when we were little kids over to Grandma's.

I: Tell me a little about the Pleasant Grove Grange.

Pleasant Grove Grange

RC: I have belonged to the Pleasant Grove grange for years and years, I have been a member since 1938..

I: How long is Pleasant Grove grange been going do you think?

RC: I probably have papers someplace that say when it was organized, but it was following the Civil War that granges came in.

I: What did the granges do?

RC: I can remember my parents going to the Pleasant Grove grange to make mattresses that they used themselves. The county extension group brought out ticking and stuffing for them and showed them how to make mattresses. They used feathers and rags, batting and so on. I used to go down with my parents when they did that.

One time they made cheese, great big cheeses for their own consumption. They also worked on getting rural free delivery of mail due to political pressure of the Grange. A lot of volunteer labor has gone into this Grange. We had lots of potlucks here over the years.

Now my dad went to high school down here. They had a big school house either to the left or to the right of the grange building. He went to high school there. I don't know how many years of high school they gave, but I know he took several years. John Lewis built that grange building with a crew of men to help him.

My folks were invited to join the grange when they lived out on the sand ridge where Lone Star school was. Dad went to what they called a penny drill. After the meeting they marched around an altar and they would put some change in a bowl; that was for buying sick people flowers, taking care of the sick and so on.

It was during the Depression and Dad reached in his pocket but he didn't have any loose coins to put in, so he gave them a dollar, big money in those days. Mother kind of looked up on the altar. He said, "It was the last money they're ever going to get from me." We laughed over that because my father worked and gave so much to that the grange during the next fifty years. It wasn't the last dollar he spent there.

I: When you came to this site for Pleasant Grove grange, was this the same building?

RC: Yes, the same building, it's been repainted and the back steps didn't use to be as nice. They used to be old wooden steps. It's basically the same, except for the toilets. They had outside toilets then. I remember when my twins were little they always needed to go potty. They would get up out of the meeting and trail through the brush; it was dark and I would take them out there. There was an outhouse for the boys over here and girls had one back in that corner.

In later years my husband and Dean Johnson, who was a carpenter, built the indoor restrooms. After he'd work all day he'd have his supper and then come out here. But everything else is the same, the kitchen and all of the paneling in the big room.

I: How many people would come to meetings back then?

RC: About thirty or forty on a regular basis.

I: How often did you have meetings?

RC: Twice a month, first and third Saturdays. My father was Master for a good many years. I can remember one blizzard night on the ranch he'd began getting himself all togged up in his winter clothing. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "To the grange. I've got to go down and open the hall." I said, "You can't get there. The roads haven't been plowed. There won't be anybody there." He didn't care. He skied down from my grandparent's place when we lived there.

I: How old were you then?

RC: I couldn't join the grange until I was fourteen. I went all the time, but I had to sit out in the kitchen while they had their meetings. I didn't get to hear the secret order, but as quick as I was fourteen, I joined.

I've been a member ever since. I told Dorothy Wagner over the phone the other day, "Dorothy, I don't know why I pay my grange dues. I don't have grange insurance or anything." I guess it's just sentiment. I've hung on this long I'll continue paying them, but I don't go. I haven't been in ten, fifteen years.

I: How often do they have meetings now?

RC: According to Dorothy Wagner it's a bit haphazard. They don't seem to know that they're supposed to have regular meetings and be doing political things, presenting things to the legislature to pass and so on. They seem to have lost the idea of what grange is for. It's more of a social get-together with people coming from La Grande. The grange used to be our entertainment dances and music and it was fun. People can turn on their own TVs or go to town nowadays.

I: When you came here from the sand ridge, did you come by car?

RC: Yes, we had a Dodge. It was the early 1930's then, and we had a car. We would go to town once a week for groceries and during the winter, it was probably every six weeks or so since the roads were not plowed that often out here. During wartime gas was rationed. You only used the car when it was very necessary.

I remember my brother Gifford did a lot of screwy things. One day my mother went out and called Dad in for supper. She said, "Where are the hired men?" Dad said, "Oh, they went home." They didn't have any transportation. She said, "How did they go home?" He said, "I had Gifford drive them home."

Gifford was awfully young then, probably about five. He had to get off the seat to get to the peddles to push them and then get back on the seat. Mother was a little anxious, but Dad was very confident Gifford could handle it. He knew how to drive. There wasn't any traffic on the road, to speak of. Gifford would take them from the ranch up to the sand ridge over to the N. K. West ranch.

RC: I laugh with I think about Island City. It's become so important, a thriving little spot. When I was in high school we considered the kids that came from Island City as country hicks. They were kind of poor kids that lived out there.

I: What did you think about the other communities, like Elgin?

RC: Elgin was a just a little town over there someplace. I didn't know much about Elgin as a child until my brother grew up and met the Hug family; he married a Hug girl and suddenly Elgin was important.

WWII

I: Tell me what it was like during World War II.

RC: I remember sugar rationing during the war. All I worried about was the sugar stamp. I think the stamp was for ten pounds a week or something like that. I wanted to have my desserts. I could eat dessert at breakfast and eat it all day long.

I've never been bothered with being fat except for one summer when I came home from college my mother had an ever-bearing strawberry patch. We had lovely big strawberries all summer and we also had thick cream. I put on thirty pounds that summer.

I had a brother in the radar service, in London, England. They carefully hid their communications from the Germans but if they were captured, Gifford said they were given pills to take, technically poison pills. If they were captured they would be tortured for their information, so they had these pills to take.

He was where they had the buzz bombs. Gifford'd say you'd hear their funny sound and not know where they were going to land.

Looking At Photos

RC: My uncle built a tractor out of old discarded parts. We had one that he built that had kerosene lamps on the front of it. We loved to drive that to town and wait till it got dark, so we could light those lamps. They wouldn't go out as we drove, and we attracted a lot of attention.

RC: Here's a photo of Jack right after we were married. We were up where the Clergets live now and there's the old house with the tree down through the roof. There is the main, double story part of the house. When Dad built it, he said "I'm not going to be able to build near that grove". Granddad always said somebody would get killed by those pines someday.

My dad homesteaded land up at Telocaset around 1917. He had three thousand acres or so. He had to sell that land to build the house. When the trees fell on the house we had to have someplace to live real fast.

Another Ruth Corriell

RC: There is another Ruth Corriell. Oh, we had trouble! When I got married I found out her first name was Ruth, too. Not only that, she was Ruth E., my middle name's Evaline, hers was Elva.

I The first thing she said to me was, "You can be called Ruth Corriell Junior and I'll be Ruth Corriell Senior." I said, "No, I will not be junior to anybody. Nobody's going to call me junior."

I put my foot down right there and then. I said, "You can change your name to Rebecca or whatever you want."

I: Did you get along okay with her?

RC: Not particularly. I had all sorts of trouble with the same name. I went to vote one night and they checked the roll and they said, "You're not registered." I said, "Oh, you all know me." They were people I knew and I'd been walking in there for years. They said, "You're not on the register." I said, "Well, what do I do to get to vote?" It was for a presidential election and I wanted to vote. I had to go hunt up the county clerk and get an affidavit that I was who I am. They had seen two Ruth Corriells on the list. They had taken one off and it happened to be me that got taken off.

RC: That's Joe Berryman having his wood lot thinned. Dad just couldn't stand it because to cut a tree down was almost a sin in his language. We used to laugh when we sent Dad up to get the Christmas tree from our wood lot. I'd stand, watch and say to Mom, "Oh Mom, you should see the tree he got." It'd be one-sided or a weakling that he cut off. He wasn't going to cut any of those good trees and bring down.

RC: Here's my fat little face, round like a pumpkin, and there's our pet bear. We had turkeys too. I hated them; they would always chase me and I'd lay down in the dirt and cry when they'd peck at me. Dad would say, "They won't hurt you, just get up." They'd cook one for Thanksgiving and it didn't look good even cooked. I didn't like turkey at all.

There's Iowa School back in the days when my aunt was a little girl. The rest of the kids I don't recognize I counted a group twenty kids there. One teacher taught those kids in all the different grades, and they got a pretty good education.

Snow Taxi Service at the Ranch

RC: That photo is at the ranch, and there's the sled that my dad used to go down and get a people from the road. You couldn't drive up that hill in the wintertime. Dad usually spent his Sunday's running a taxi service back and forth getting this carload of people, bringing them up and then taking this bunch down. We used to have lots of visitors and my mother loved to cook. The first thing she'd say when somebody came was, "I wonder if they'll stay for dinner," hoping they would. I'd always thought the opposite: "I wonder if they'll leave before lunch." I wasn't my mother.

I: People would just drop by?

RC: They'd phone and say, "We're coming out." Dad'd take the rig and go down and get them.