

Verda Westenskow

2/24/03, T1, S1

VC: ...working now, Verda. Today is January...

VW: February.

VC: February the 24th and we are going to interview Verda Westenskow. I am just testing to see if this is working. [tape interruption] ...Verda, what is your full name, your maiden name, and did you have any nicknames?

VW: Yes, I did. Remember some. Are you recording now?

VC: Yes. Talk a little louder.

VW: My name is Verda Nebeker Westenskow and I do have a nickname, my baby brother was born after my dad died couldn't talk my name well so he called me Lovey...no, he called me Eddie and Viola, the younger sister, he called her Eddie...see you're gettin' me all flubbed up here.

VC: That's alright.

VW: I think of these ahead of time. I was called Eddie and Vi was called Lovey because she's younger than I.

VC: I think that's wonderful. Did it stick with you most of your life?

VW: All my young life.

VC: Yeah.

VW: I got rid of that when I went to school...just at home mostly.

VC: You know, it's... Now how many children were there?

VW: We had eight children. I was the sixth of eight children and I was the first one born out on the eighty acre ranch that my dad had just purchased before my birth, evidently.

VC: Okay, what year were you born, Verda?

VW: I was born May the 6th, 1917.

VC: So that makes you how old?

VW: I will be eighty-six in May of this year, May the 6th, 1917.

VC: Now is Gertie older or younger?

VW: Four years older.

VC: Four years older.

VW: I had a brother Vern was two years between us.

VC: So you had a wonderful family.

VW: Yes, we did.

VC: Were you named after someone else?

VW: No. The lady that helped take of mother at my birth suggested this name and I haven't liked it very well since, but it's Verda. It's a very unusual name.

VC: Yes, and you should enjoy having an unusual name.

VW: I have...I've got used to it.

VC: For years mine was unusual but now it's gettin' more common. Okay, now your parents names, what were they?

VW: My father's name was Joseph Wiley Nebeker and my mother's name was Annie Helen Lindsey Nebeker.

VC: And can you tell me their grandparents' names?

VW: Not off-hand.

VC: Okay, that's okay.

VW: I can tell you my grandfather Lindsey 'cause he's the one I'm the most familiar with. His name was Alexander Lindsey and my grandmother's name was...I wish you'd of suggested...I can't think when I'm pressured like this.

VC: That's okay. We'll just... Alright now, what do you remember...which grandparent was the closest to you?

VW: My grandmother Lindsey...but she wasn't very close to me when I was young growing up. My grandparents were older and I was one of the younger ones so I had not that much contact with my Grandma Lindsey. But I did go out there to her home once or twice and...for no reason, I guess, but I used to follow my Grandpa up to watch his garden and I always loved to go with him because he always had white peppermints in his pocket that he would treat me with. And I loved to go to my grandmother's cupboard because she always had...or little off-pantry is what she called it...Capri English blue dishes from England, you know, that she...it came from England. I loved them and she made the best oatmeal cereal I think I ever ate. I loved hers 'cause she cooked it in a double-boiler. It was all nice and creamy when I'd draw it up.

VC: Oh, yum. How did she serve it?

VW: I don't remember served, just in a little bowl. ____

VC: With cream? You just regular...

VW: I imagine. She always had...and she was English. I don't remember much 'cause I was only out there once or twice and they were older and I was younger.

VC: Was she Mormon, too?

VW: Oh yes. They were all family of twelve children and the parents came from New Zealand. We were...they were all foreigner, that's where they came from. And they came about 1910, I think it was, to this valley.

VC: So your relatives have been in this valley long time.

VW: Yes. The interestin' thing was they were headed...according to my grandfather's history...they were headed for Utah to be with the Saints. They were converts from New Zealand. But then they came down over this beautiful old mountain and they expected to see all plain just like they's just come through over across Pendleton and it was so beautiful that they thought "this just reminds of us of our valley in New Zealand." So instead they were gonna stop here and check it out. And they checked it out and they bought a home here and we've all been here ever since 'cause they raised their family here.

VC: Were they in town or were they on a ranch?

VW: No, they bought a ranch about two miles up here south of La Grande. There was a little valley up in there surrounded by mountains which reminded them of their farm back in New Zealand that they'd left.

VC: I think La Grande's one of the prettiest valleys that there ever were.

VW: My mother always said she never wanted to back to Zealand. She said this...her good friends the Stoddards had someday they traveled all over many places and they always thought this was the most beautiful valley they had... She always stayed right here. This is where...she had no desire to go back to New Zealand.

VC: Isn't that wonderful! It really is. Do you remember some of the childhood health, diseases, that they had and what they did for 'em in the early years?

VW: As a family? We had whooping cough and the measles and scarlet fever one time that we was subjected to and I was about the only one out of that family that didn't have at least a touch of it. We were quarantined for six weeks from school and from everything. We had to wait till we got over it and then they'd give us the signal we could come out again.

VC: I had scarlet fever when I was little.

VW: Did you?

VC: Yeah. I can remember bein' delirious.

VW: But we were very fortunate that we grew up healthy. Our mother was wonderful was to take care of us with her home remedy, turpentine and lard to grease our chest. And...I don't know, she was just greatly blessed to take care of us.

VC: Oh, I'm sure.

VW: In fact, her patriarchal blessing told her that she would be like this, that'd she be able to take care of her family...in not those many words, but...

VC: And that was for colds?

VW: Oh colds, we always had colds.

VC: Yes, I'm sure.

VW: All that cold sores around my mouth I remember used to make me so miserable.

VC: Now I don't imagine...did you have a dentist when you were little?

VW: I can remember when I got ___ but not...

VC: Didn't need one until...

VW: Not when we're small. We didn't talk about that.

VC: I bet not. And there's a doctor, I suppose, in town?

VW: Yeah, yeah. We had to come to La Grande to get...they had to come out there...the doctors'd call to take care of Mother when the baby...when I was born.

VC: Oh yeah, they used to make house calls. Wasn't that wonderful!

VW: And my mother was, I think, the midwife of the town...little community out there. She always...every time a baby was born she went and she knew we could take care of ourselves and she sometimes gone with 'em to help for a week at a time. So we all knew what just we had to do.

VC: I think it's great to become to self-sufficient when you're kids.

VW: That's what we learned.

VC: Too many of 'em aren't. Too many of get in trouble. Now did you have any accidents when you were young? Did you hurt yourself in any ways?

VW: I had...don't remember anything really serious with me except I had my tonsils and adenoids out the same time my girlfriend, Annie Flower now, we were in the same time. And what her specialist took her tonsils out just like that and they were butchering me for a long time it seemed like, Mother said. It took her...me a lot longer time to have mine out.

VC: Probably longer to heal, too.

VW: I can't remember that, but I hate to say this, but it left me with my nerves in my face twitching, my mouth and my face, and I...used to make me feel really bad 'cause people'd make fun of me, you know, and I couldn't control it. So Mother

took me to this Dr. Rohlston, who became a real good friend of ours, and he said, “the surgeon that took you out he cut nerves to your eyes that affected them like that.” So he set me up with glasses and I’ve worn glasses ever since I was six years old.

VC: And the glasses helped the twitching?

VW: Yes. And eventually it stopped.

VC: Thank God for that.

VW: He treated me...__ growing up.

VC: Yeah? That’s neat. So Edna Mae Flowers was one of your playmates?

VW: Oh, we were just like that. We rode horses together. We were just a few months apart.

VC: Is she still... She used to live out there at Island City.

VW: Yes, but she’s back in their old home now. They added onto her parents’ home, which was just across the street from...the road from where the schoolhouse was. And after school we’d just go over there and pick out her horse and ride it and it was named Belle, I think. And when we’d try to get on her the horse would turn it’s head around and bite us...bite at us so we had to be careful. But we...

VC: Horses can be so ornery sometimes.

VW: Oh, but we loved ‘em.

VC: Yes.

VW: We just grew up on horses.

VC: Oh, I’ll bet you did. Okay, do you remember some of the trips? Did you go on very many trips?

VW: I didn’t get out of this valley until I was in my senior year of high school and that was when I stayed with __ to help take care of her two young children so I could graduate from school. I had no transportation because the busses didn’t come back and forth. So I stayed with __ and took care of Larry and Teddy. Teddy was just six weeks old. So I was their nanny, I guess you’d call me today. They were just my most wonderful parents. They were my second parents.

VC: Isn’t that nice?

VW: So he cut my hair...cut off my long hair and made me look real sharp and everybody loved it short and I did too. And I loved them. They were such great second parents.

VC: Isn’t that nice?

VW: Yes.

VC: Yeah, I tell ya. Okay, can you think of any unusual happenings in your childhood?

VW: No. We’s a little community out there and our school and the church were all about the same, one was across the street from the other, out across the road. And it seemed like we had a wonderful time out there. We were just like a little...a big family there and most of us were Latter-day Saint people who lived there. And we had our little church over there with the wire strung across the building, you know, for classrooms. And so we just knew everything that was goin’ on, but we loved our little church and we loved to sing the songs out there...because we didn’t have too many anyway, but...

VC: So when did you start taking piano lessons?

VW: When I was... I really didn't have too many lessons. When I first started my...of course my mother couldn't afford piano lessons so...but she let our oldest dau...her oldest daughter, Helen, have a few in here at the lady's out here in May Park area. So Helen would take her lesson and then she'd come home and she knew I loved it too and so she'd tell me the notes. So I practiced and practiced on the church hymn books and that's how I learned to play piano.

VC: It's a blessing you're still doin' it.

VW: After I got in a little older when I was able to...Helen was up and married then, I guess...and then she let me have a few lessons in for another...the same lady that gave Helen lessons in here...out there in May Park area. And I don't remember havin' long...couldn't 've been long, but I loved what she taught me and I just took to it because I loved it so much. And I had to do most of it on my own.

VC: Yes. And here you are today still playin' for church, playin' the organ, playin' the piano for the Relief Society.

VW: _____

VC: You know, if you didn't do it I'll bet your hands would get so stiff you couldn't use 'em. Probably it helps to exercise 'em.

VW: Oh, I'm glad for that, yes, because I have to do this anyway. But now I'm havin' a few health problems that are kind of a problem for me.

VC: Dog gone it! Okay. Do you remember some of the visitors to your home?

VW: Yes, I remember Brother Ray Baum, the father of our bishop Ray Baum who had been... He used to come out through there selling life insurance, you know, and Mother never could afford to buy life insurance. But we always enjoyed having him come. He was always so nice and friendly. Then we had another gentleman who is...had a problem getting around and he'd come out and sell these products like Betty Blakney used to sell? What do you call those?

VC: Oh, Watkins?

VW: Watkins, yes. My mother would by her turp...not turp...I don't know, but some salve that we used. In fact, every little drug store ____.

VC: Oh yes. They sold vanilla and all kinds of things.

VW: Yes. And I think they sold some pudding mixtures later on.

VC: Yeah. Spices, pepper. I remember Mother used to buy pepper from him.

VW: And then he'd generally stay all night because he's travelin' around, you know, slow like they did then. And Mother always gave him a place to stay.

VC: Did you get any of the leaders of the church come out there?

VW: No, I don't think so. I don't remember ever...see, we had the same bishop, was Anna Mae Flower's father, E. D. Whiting, was the only bishop in that little community for twenty-seven years until they...

VC: Things kind of changed.

VW: People grew up and moved away...

VC: I mean they kept bishops a whole lot longer then, didn't they?

VW: He was about the only one out there because it took just what priesthood leaders that were there just to ____ the leadership places. But we had a wonderful ward out there. Everybody was active. I can't remember anybody inactive.

VC: In the wintertime did you go sledding and stuff?

VW: Oh yes. Somehow we had an old bobsled where we could hook the horses up to and then we...the nice moonlight night we'd hook up the horses to the sled, gather up all the kids in the neighborhood and away we'd go in the moonlight night where we could see.

VC: What...

VW: Oh, we did have a good time!

VC: Remember how many that bobsled'd hold?

VW: Twelve, fifteen, I can't remember, but it'd hold a lot. It was a big...

VC: Big.

VW: Big.

VC: What, a couple of horses?

VW: Yes. Always horses, that's all we knew was horses. That's how we got to town, the horse and buggy. Or else ride our horse...

VC: Peaceful days, then, but hard work days in a way.

VW: They were hard work in a way, but I can't remember feelin' bad or feelin' hard for myself or anything. We had a wonderful life.

VC: No, it was just...just the necessary things of everyday life.

VW: Our Mother was father and mother to us all these years. And she had a chance to marry different times, but she always said, "Nobody else is gonna raise my children." She joined the church and she was gonna have her children brought up in the church. ___ knew what was expected of her and we...we loved the church. We always went down to our little churchhouse. They always knew the Nebeker kids were gonna be down there ahead of time. [laughs] We'd come early so we could watch 'em...go help pack the ___ wood around the big old pot-bellied stove and watch while the priesthood leaders came and built the fire. And that's all we had was the...

VC: Yeah, you had wood heat in your home.

VW: Oh yes.

VC: And your mother probably cooked on a wood stove.

VW: Oh yes. We'd go up there into the mountains and Mother...

VC: How'd she get her wood?

VW: We had an old...some kind of ___ we'd carry up there and the trees ___ you know, that we could haul back down.

VC: Who'd cut 'em up?

VW: Be just haulin' trees and because when we got down there and she'd pile up all we could do then she'd hire a man to come in with a...

VC: So you...

VW: ...saw it for her.

VC: So you...the kids and your mother would lift these logs up...

VW: No, I can't... No, I don't remember me doin' it. She had my brothers...see, Vern and Wiley were bigger as they grew older. And that's my mother she'd made him promise...my dad knew he was gonna die and he...___ that he made her promise that she wouldn't separate the children. He said, "They are growing up and they are big enough to help you with... You keep the farm." Because he had only bought it when I was born. He had all these children to raise. And so that's what she did. He had not had...been raised up in his family. They'd been so poor

down there in Utah that he'd always had to work out away from the home and hadn't really been raised up with his family.

VC: Now this is the same farm the Gertie...she got out there in...

VW: No. No, my dad...well, that's the farm that we...when she grew up in is where Wiley is. That was our home. But that was the Leal Hibbert farm down there where she is now.

VC: Yeah, but when she was young she said she bought out ___ a team of horses and was plowin' when she was about thirteen.

VW: Oh yes. She did all... That's why I was committed to bein' the housekeeper and the cook when our oldest sister Helen married. And she liked horses and playin' out there, you know...

VC: She was a tomboy and you were the homemaker.

VW: I was the homemaker. And we were very satisfied.

VC: Oh that's great.

VW: But that didn't mean that I didn't do an awful lot of hoein' gardens and shocking hay, you know, and turn it over when the rain would come so... So we all worked.

VC: I imagine you had chickens.

VW: Oh, we had...every time company came my mother didn't have anything prepared she'd go out and she'd have that chicken killed and cooked...[laughs] Everybody likes to tell me at Grandma's Nebeker's place...Nellie Nebeker what she was always called, Nellie Nebeker.

VC: Oh, I'll bet. I'll bet. Okay, so you attended school out there. Do you remember any just special activities associated with school?

VW: Oh, I should say! For my eighth grade...we had an...when we were in the eighth grade we had a young man named...Mr. Beernun, we called him, from Portland. He was a golf pro before he was teaching school out in that little country school. ___ golf club ___ like golf clubs. But we played all kinds of games. We had programs out there. When I was in...was I was in the eighth grade Anna Mae Flower and I were in the little Christmas play that we put on for the community and she was the mother and I was ___ and the elves, all the elves. And I had to pretend like I was weeping over somethin'...I could never...I'd be weepin' and she'd be laughin'. [laughs]

VC: You'd havin' a hard time weeping.

VW: But we had a lot fun with that little program. And then the...then always the church always put on a play or some big program out there for Christmas. And so we'd...on Christmas Eve we'd all go down to the churchhouse and they...people in the ward had...well, we'd...guess I'm gettin' ahead of myself...but we had this wonderful program and then when Christmas...and program was all over then you could hear...a man came...one of the leaders ___ "Just got word from Santa, he's just comin' over Mt. Emily." Do you know how excited all us little kids were?

VC: Oh, of course.

VW: And pretty soon we'd hear those jingle of the bells and the feet on the roof, you know, and here he'd come runnin' in the back door with his sack on his back and

there we were, Santa Clause in person. And he'd pass out these big sacks of candy __ of course and talk and jolly and laugh and we had such a good time.

VC: Were oranges a real treat when you were young?

VW: Yes. Mother always managed to get oranges for Christmas and a big bunch of mixed nuts. And each one of us had a stocking, we always tried to get the biggest sock we could find.

VC: Yes.

VW: So when we wake up in the morning we just like excited we couldn't hardly stand it and there's always be a big orange in the toe of the sock and then a few trinkets up in top and nuts, of course, the shell. That's the way we spent our Christmas, just eating and laughing and cracking nuts and playin' out in the snow if the snow were there.

VC: Now what were some of the gifts you'd get at Christmas? Did you have games? I bet you played games a lot.

VW: I don't remember any of the gifts except I do remember one rag doll I got and she was my most precious doll. And I couldn't find her... I lost her one time and I couldn't find her and I never did know what happened to her.

VC: So you haven't forgotten that.

VW: But we always... There's one Christmas I especially remember. I want...this candy bit didn't come very often, you know, so I decided I wasn't...didn't want to eat it up all now. So I went and hid it somewhere in amongst my stuff. And one day...I'd forgotten all about it...one day I found it and if you don't think that was a treat.

VC: Oh, I'll bet. Later on in the year, huh? Yeah. Oh. Okay, who or what... Oh, do you remember any humorous associations besides you two laughin' over the play? [laughs]

VW: Oh, I don't know. __ we always were laughing and talking, havin' fun together. We loved to play games out in our...just off from the house into the sort of...where orchard was, really, and it was grassy, but open. We always were playin' baseball it seemed like or in the snow in the wintertime. We'd play Run, Sheep, Run and Chasin' the __...Chasin' the Fox...Chasin' the Geese.

VC: And Annie, Annie Over? Did you ever play that where you throw the ball...

VW: Yes! I couldn't think of the name of that.

VC: That's all I can remember it bein' called, Annie, Annie Over.

VW: Yes, uh-huh. And we played Hide and Seek. My cousins used to love to come out and play and then we'd had that whole orchard up there and the whole farm and down the barn.

VC: Especially when it's dusk and it's just startin' to get dark and you could find such good hiding places.

VW: I don't remember that, but we didn't have any trouble findin' hiding places.

VC: What was I gonna say?

VW: When company would come we'd...always we didn't have room in the house for many people, you know, and so the adults stay in there, but the kids we'd all head down to the barn in the hay loft...the boys would anyway...

VC: Jumpin' off in the hay. Yes. I used to make mud pies when I was real young.

VW: I can't remember makin' mud pies, but we had a little stream of water that came down right by the house. In fact, it was an old well there. And so we'd get...in the summertime we'd get this big old tub full of the water out of the well, that was our swimmin' pool. We'd dounce ourself in that all summer. I thought that was great.

VC: Get cooled off. Oh, I tell ya. Our youth is so wonderful, it really is, but I don't think I'd wanta go back.

VW: Oh no, but memories.

VC: Okay. Who or what influenced you to take certain courses or do the things that you might not otherwise have done?

VW: I had my own choice. I new pretty much what I wanted. Just all I could get...I always loved world history and I was pretty good at mathematics. And, see, I was a pretty good students. I always...I got an ___ honor pin when I graduated, so did Anna Mae Hud, and we felt very satisfied that we were able to do that and we were just country girls comin' into high school.

VC: So did you plan on going to work or did you take classes, bookkeeping or anything like that?

VW: No. And that's the one sad thing of my life, I wish I had. I took shorthand and typing, I was real good at it, but I didn't ___ wasn't too interested, but it's only thing...I loved that. And I've always been sorry that I didn't take bookkeeping because nobody suggested it or gave any suggestions. I just picked out what I thought I wanted. But Mr. Blunt was one of my teachers there when I was in the grade of high school and he called me over to his house one day and he said, "I think you'd make a good teacher." And that was the only suggestion I ever had.

VC: And so did you go on to become a teacher?

VW: No, I just graduated...I graduated when I was seventeen because...Anna Mae and I both made two grades in one year out in the little grade school. I was really kind of ahead...what was that question?

VC: I can't remember. [laughs]

VW: Yes, I did think I was gonna be a secretary, but the boys they'd laugh, "Oh, you're not gonna be a secretary, Verda." And then so I went with... After I graduated from high school I went down...Ida down in Utah at that time stayin' and working and she had written me, "If you come down here Uncle Hal thinks that he can find you a job." That was during the Depression and jobs just weren't available. And I hadn't been out the valley but one time and that was to Washington to visit relatives ___. It was the first time I'd ever been out of the valley. So I was excited to get out and try my wings and see where I was at.

VC: Where did you say she was?

VW: In Salt Lake down there with my uncle...mother's sister Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Harold. And so she had gone down there to help take care of our grandmother with Aunt Dorothy and that's how Ida got down there. And then so she wanted me to come down and so I went down there after I graduated...right after I graduated in 1934 and my Uncle Hal...of course Ida she put me right into Heniger's Business College. She thought, "If she's gonna be a secretary she needs to be in there." And they were advertising, "We'll give you a job... You come here and we'll guarantee a job." So I went there, spent a wonderful summer

there with Ida and going to the big city and Salt Lake was a wonder to me. And I met some wonderful families down there. One family, of course, had a couple of sons who...had a good time dancing and things that I had never been doin' before in going out that big resort out there, what, Lagoon, with his family. And anyway, I spent a wonderful summer there, but came fall and...

VC: You got to go to the temple?

VW: No. See, I wasn't...hadn't got my endowment. I was just a young girl.

VC: That's right, you don't go to the temple till you're married, do you?

VW: But I was right there by the temple and...get ahead of myself, but Ida and I were there to go to a Conference one time and we were outside, you know, with a visitor. But Salt Lake was a wonderful place for me then. But I...they sent me out on a job, I was in a hat...little hat shop, not the selling part, but this man had a little hat shop and he needed somebody to watch his office. So he sent me over there for twelve-and-a-half a week. That was my salary and that was a lot for me, you know, you weren't used to havin' money. And so I was there for about a month maybe, or so, and then they had a chance to...somebody up there in Idaho...I can't remember the name of the place, it's up there practically about where President Benson lived, it's in that area...for two months job I would've got, my, a hundred dollars or something more a month if I got for two months just when they were doin' this harvesting of the sugar beets. So I thought, well, my goodness, that sounds like a gold mine, but I wasn't prepared for it. I hadn't had any bookkeeping and I didn't have any office machines. I was just getting into compolitor work and I loved it when they sent me up there and I couldn't...I just couldn't do it. And so that was my sad, sad loss of a job, my first real chance to make a little money. And so I was kind of depressed and I was getting a little homesick and I had Al back here waitin' a long time...

VC: Oh, you'd already met him, huh?

VW: Oh, __ I knew him ever since I was fourteen years old. And he was waiting for me to grow up and make up my mind what I want to do in life. And so I decide I come back home. I just couldn't go back to Aunt Dorothy as a failure and so I'd go... That's where I came home here and Al and I were married.

VC: About 19-what?

VW: The fall of 1934 when I graduated. I was just down there for one summer from June...May to October and then I came home.

VC: So how soon did you and Al get married?

VW: Not until February. I still hadn't made up my mind, you know. Things had been kind of depressing and I had a chance for another job at the motor company and I knew I wasn't prepared for all that kind of work. I didn't really want to be a secretary so I decided it was home life for me. I wanted a husband and a good husband...

VC: What did Al do for a living at that time?

VW: He had the store, he's workin' in the Imbler Cash store. His brother started that on Al's money that he got out of his accident. And so Al worked in the store all the time and then, of course...

VC: Now what accident did Al have?

VW: Oh, he lost his leg when he's ten-years old out there in Imbler at that crossing that goes across the road. The airplane had come out there to...and the children, young people, all was excited to see an airplane come out there in the valley. So there was a man at the service station who had a big flatbed truck...[end tape]

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VC: ...because we didn't get it recorded. How many kids got hurt?

VW: Two boys got killed, his two nephews got killed and then another little boy, and then Al was the other fatality, but he was the only one that...that was able to recover. The other boys didn't get hurt like that. But it was a terrible thing for Al, his...these two nephews had just grown up with him, about the same age, and so it was harder...his sister's only sons. She was the oldest in the family and Al was the youngest in their family. So they grew up just like brothers.

VC: Oh, I'm sure.

VW: It was heartbreaking thing, but...

VC: Here he was so injured and then lose his cousins. Oh, I tell ya.

VW: Do you have another question maybe? More on that?

VC: Yes. Let me pause. [tape interruption] Do you remember when Al proposed to ya?

VW: Yes, but was nothing spectacular about it because I'd known him from the time I was fourteen years old, I just graduated from the eighth grade. And he lived on one side of the valley by Mt. Harris and I lived under the valley...under the mountain Emily. So we just across from each other. And he had his eye on me from the time he saw me, he said, and "I'm gonna marry that girl." I didn't think so because I knew he was seven years older than I and I wasn't interested in only just havin' fun. And first time I'd been out in...out of Mt. Glen is to go over to Imbler little ward to their socials and that's where I first met him due to a cousin of his. We lived across the street from him, my best girlfriend that I'd met after I...at this church social. Her name was Wynona Westenskow. So she invited me out there to watch her in a play when she was in her high school and I was...she's the same age as I was.

VC: Was she related to Al?

VW: She was a second-cousin. Lived right across the street from him. So...

VC: Was she helpin' him?

VW: No, she didn't care about that at all. But he used to come over...couldn't dance, of course, but he could play in the little band that they had. And he was a drummer and they had a fiddler, an Indian fellow, young fellow, really good a fiddler. And then they had a piano player and Al was the drummer and one of his cousins...yeah, his cousin...was the trumpet player. So they had quite a good orchestra. And so I would love to dance and Wynona and I we...there wasn't boys to dance with all the time, so Wynona and I really could cut a rug. [laugh]

VC: What kind of dancing did you do?

VW: ___ waltzes and circle two-steps and the Virginia Reel, you know, and all those old time dances. We just had a ball!

VC: Oh, I bet.
VW: That was our main activity was just goin' to the dances and...
VC: Of course!
VW: ...and socials where we'd take a pie and box lunches. And that's where Al...
VC: Did you do that in school where you...?
VW: No, we did that out to Imbler. That's were the socialize I had at the beginning.
VC: You'd take a box lunch and the guys would bid on it?
VW: Yes. You'd de...they looked just as pretty as you could. And I took a pie...we had a pie social out there, that's how I really met Al, I guess. He had his eye on my pie and I don't know how he found it, but he got it and then Lester was lik...wantin' it, too...Lester West...his cousin, and he said he felt so guilty so he let Lester have the pie. [laughs]
VC: And he never got any of it?
VW: I've never got it...no.
VC: And Al never got any of it? Do you remember what kind it was?
VW: No. I can't remember. I can't remember. Then from then on it was just...I just knew him growing up, you know, back and forth. We'd go to shows once in a while, but I lived over there and I was in town goin' to high school and he was out there workin' in the store. And he'd just come in and take me for rides up to Wallowa Lake sometime and we had a flat tire and then we had to go get it fixed before we could get back. Just...just...
VC: Okay, now were you married in Imbler or where?
VW: No, we went to Walla Walla. He wasn't active in the church and his family were kind of inactive. And he had...working overtime Sundays and everything so...[cough]...we went over there and go married in Walla Walla. Then we were sealed after we had Barbara and Anne, our two sweet little girls. They were just eleven months apart. Finally he got...let's see, just before Joyce was born we went down and were sealed in the Salt Lake temple and that was a wonderful occasion.
VC: Oh, of course!
VW: I made my little girls beautiful white dresses and...
VC: Oh, and you got all sealed together.
VW: Yeah, uh-huh.
VC: Okay. Now how many children did you have?
VW: We had seven.
VC: Uh-huh. And what were their names?
VW: Raymond Alfred, named after his dad, and let's see...after the girls I'll start to the first: Barbara and Anne...and then Joyce was our first one after we were sealed...so Joyce...she was really a joy, we were so happy to have her...and then... Got me all fuddled here. Barbara and Anne and Joyce and then Raymond and Gordon and Beverly and M__ were a little later, they come later.
VC: Okay. Okay. Alright. In your settling down to married life and your new home...or where was your first home?
VW: We have five different places out there in Imbler before we got settled. We started out with...in his parents' big home. They had...they were older, really older, and so we had no place to go anyway, but they let us stay there for the first

month, maybe. And then we wanted to be by ourselves so we went down and bought a...rented a house down the street in Imbler. Seemed like we were moved from house to house before we found one. But then my brother-in-law...or my...Al's brother that owned the store he wanted to go to Union and so he...Al was in charge and he wanted us to move out of that house and come down and rent his house. And so we were back and forth five different places, but finally...

VC: So did he go to Union and start another store?

VW: Yeah, but that was only after his dad died. When his dad died in 1945 before the war ended. But before we were out there in Imbler he sold the store that Al was ___ He sold the store to his brother...another brother, Wallace, who were old and his mother died when George was born, just a few months after George was born. So we moved up into their big home and he said, "You can have the house if you'll just come up and take care of us" and so that's what we did. And took care of them until after he died in 1945. She had died in '40.

VC: Where was that house at Imbler? Was that by...

VW: Across from the Moore's place. Do you know...

VC: Yes.

VW: They both made out...

VC: Right next door to George Royce eventually, huh?

VW: Does George Royce own that big house ___?

VC: No, he had a new home there.

VW: No, that was down the street closer to the school.

VC: A little bit. Yeah. Yeah. That was wonderful. So then you had a home, a big old home, huh?

VW: Yes, we lived there from the time Joyce was born and then Raymond and Gordon. Then we moved to...after he died in 1945...

VC: Father? Al's father?

VW: Al's father. Then...

VC: What was his name?

VW: Hans.

VC: Hans.

VW: Hans. He was the oldest of their family, Westenskows. So Al...his brother Ervin had gone to Imbler...or Union and set up, oh, just takin' care of mach...or refriger...refrigeration, a business. And so he decided if Al wanted the store he could...he buy it. He had done that before. And so we had the store out there for ten years. We bought it for a hundred dollars a month to get the store. And so that was before we moved to Union. I should've said that first.

VC: That was the little store there in Imbler?

VW: Yes, it was Imbler Cash Store.

VC: Is that the one on the corner?

VW: Yes.

VC: Yeah.

VW: That's the one we had.

VC: Oh my.

VW: For ten years out there. So then we moved to Union and then we built a house out there and we've been in about twenty-some houses in our different times of

movin'. But it's always been exciting if you always wanted a better house 'cause he was...went into selling insurance...or real estate with my brother Vern. They had Westenskow-Nebeker Real Estate Insurance here for twenty-five years.

VC: So did you...after you sold the store in Imbler then you...he went into real estate?

VW: No, we went to Union there. For about thirteen years we were in Union.

VC: And what did you...he do there?

VW: Lots of things. He was a businessman. First we bought...we opened up a little grocery store over there for a year, but he didn't want to that. And the...Ivy's store was right next to his store and they wanted to sell it to the man who was running the theatre in Elgin. So he bought the variety store for them and we were in that for five years. And then while there he got...his brother had the theatre. He had just built that and remodeled it, you know. It's a real nice modern theatre, too, before television came in. And so he didn't want to bother with that, he sold it and then Al started working there at nights while he was getting established in real estate. And anyway...it's such a long story, you won't want all this. [laughs] That's where he got his license in real estate was out there while he was runnin' the theatre at nights. And he'd...we drove back and forth five years to La Grande from our new home that we built there in Union across from the Methodist church. And that's where Beverly and M__ were born, when we lived there in Union. And anyway...

VC: So then did he start his own real estate or did he...?

VW: Oh yes. He had an office in La Grande here with my brother. But he'd drive back and forth for five years while he was runnin' the theatre at night and sell real estate in here in La Grande. So he had a busy day and when he came home I had to have dinner ready so that we could eat this up and be down by the theatre for six o'clock to open up the doors. And we had quite a little theatre...nice lovely movies ____.

VC: Oh yes.

VW: And we'd have a full house nearly all the...every night. Tickets were fifty cents for adults and sixty-five cents if they could sit in the lounges in the back. Ten cents for children. And that was how we met Dale and Doris Wyatt. They'd come over just after they come to La Grande, they were first married. So they'd drive over to out little theatre __ up above, little stairway up above and a little balcony sort of, and they loved to come over and go to the shows and they'd go up in this little balcony. They were just newly married. That's...they were wonderful friends.

VC: Oh, that's neat. So then when did he sell out...when did you move to La Grande?

VW: We had a lease on a...another longer story, I'll cut it short...he got a lease on the theatre. This man had bought my brother-in-law out, but he got tired of runnin' it so he sold it to Al...gave him a chance to lease it for five years. So that's what we did. He moved to Springfield later on...in the meantime. When Beverly was just a tiny baby... Al wasn't happy down there, he was goin' into real estate down there and he got in an office, but he wasn't happy just sittin' in there takin' care of the office. He had retired anyway by then. So we came back to La Grande...

VC: About what year was that?

VW: 19--...[tape interruption]

VC: We're done. No, it's still goin'.

VW: Hold 'er off for a minute while I think. [tape interruption] ...Al run the theatre for five years.

VC: After you come back from Springfield?

VW: We've come back from Springfield and live in Union. We were there for thirteen years. In that...in that time he had lease on the theatre for five years. So as soon as that was up television had come in and that was ruin' their business and we were through anyway with it. And that's when we moved to La Grande. Now what do you want me to tell you? I was always active in the church out there. I had all kinds of jobs, but you haven't got room for that.

VC: Yes, we do. What were some of the church positions that you've held and Al held?

VW: Al was either the financial clerk or the ward...ward clerk all during his church. And he was just a high priest group leader, too. He was always active in church as soon as Beverly and M__ were born. We were...he became active, we got rid of that Sunday work and he come back and never missed a time after that. So we had a wonderful time. I was always... I was president of the Young Women's as soon as I got over there in Union and worked in the Young Women's program after that. I've always had every job in the church, I think, except secretary until that was when I had my accident, fell, down here before I moved out to Anne and Bob's. And that was...

VC: Oh. I bet you've been Relief Society President.

VW: No, I haven't done that much in Relief Society. I've been pianist, or, you know, and then organist has been about my favorite calling. I've done about everything except secretary and had that calling before I fell and that took care of that 'cause I was laid up and had to go out to Anne and Bob's. Now what else did you want to...?

VC: Let me pause. [tape interruption] What are some of the hobbies besides your music?

VW: Music is great. I love to sew. I sewed all my children's clothes when they were growing up and I loved to. I was complimented once, a man approached me and said, "How can you afford to buy all the good clothes for you children?" And I said, "I sew them." And we were thrifty. I was the thrifty one of the two of us. Al he...

VC: Takes a balance, doesn't it?

VW: You bet. And we always worked out. The Lord blessed us in so many ways, I'll tell ya.

VC: Oh, I can imagine. Do you love to read?

VW: Oh, I love to read, yes. And I love to garden, I love to see things grow.

VC: Oh, that's me, too.

VW: And I love to ride horses.

VC: Do you still ride horses?

VW: We had... Oh, not now. Myla would love to get me on a horse, but I'd break every bone in my body. [laughs]

VC: That's all you need! That would be terrible. What are some of your plans and hopes for your future? I mean you seem to be very well settled here.

VW: I have a wonderful family and we just adored our family. Our whole life's been dedicated to our family and the church. And we loved each other and he was a kind gentle husband and father.

VC: He had a good life.

VW: He... We've had a wonderful life. And I've got wonderful memories and stacks of books and things that I... Church always came first in our lives and our family.

VC: That's why you've had a good life.

VW: And our children have grown up with the same desires. They really love doing what they're doing.

VC: Definitely. You... Anne is still on a mission with her husband Bob.

VW: Yes. And they'll be released the 15th of April of this year, 2003.

VC: Oh, tax time. [laughs] He comes home tax time.

VW: They're anxious to get home. Bob's had a few problems out there and it's a miracle that he's even been able to fulfill that mission.

VC: I know it.

VW: But he loved it and they've been with inactive people and people just loved them out there. ___ said if they just stay longer they'd give 'em a house, they'd furnish money and everything they wanted.

VC: Oh my. That's good.

VW: But it's been a great thing. Bob always felt bad 'cause he hadn't been on a mission and so he said, "If I die on the mission..."

VC: Can't think of a better place to be.

VW: No, I don't. And he has a doctor in his ward and he says, "I'm watchin' you real careful 'cause I don't want anything to happen to you on my watch."

VC: Oh, isn't that great! Verda, I think we've had a very, very interesting, wonderful life story.

VW: I hope I haven't talked too much.

VC: No, you haven't! That's what this is all about. And so we're gonna close now... [tape interruption] We discovered that we have room left on the tape and so we're going to just...we're going to talk about some other things. You're gonna tell me how many have gone on missions?

VW: It's over a hundred out of our own family, counting the spouses. And so many of 'em...most have been on missions and their spouses have been. And our grandchildren...I've lost track of them since Al passed away because I haven't been able to keep up with them all. But we do have some great-great-grandchildren now from some of our older...our oldest daughter, her family, and they're just spread all over. But they love to come together as a family since that they're spread so far.

VC: Where are some of the places that they've been on missions?

VW: Oh, it's hard to say. Got these two grandsons that just came back, one's from Mexico, from the Philippines. A grandson's been back to New Zealand and my grandparents, of course, their sons, my uncles, have been back to England and New Zealand, to South Africa...Gordon's one son was during all that trouble down there...and they've been all over Uruguay then places here in the States.

But they've been just...oh, and Deann's up in St. Petersburg in Russia.
And...there's just hardly anyplace they haven't been, some of 'em or other.

VC: And Bob and Anne are in, what, Texas?

VW: And Chile down there and did I say Uruguay?

VC: Yeah. I'll tell ya, you've been a wonderful...

VW: They're a missionary family, I'm really proud of 'em. But we were trying to figure up here just recently how many missionaries have been sent out just from our family and there was over a hundred.

VC: Oh, I think that's marvelous.

VW: You know, from the different family families and the missionaries that they've married. And so it's been a wonderful time for us to remember.

VC: It's something to be very proud of, too, that you've been able to raise your children and have it go right on down to the grandchildren.

VW: We aren't...we're not all perfect, but, you know, some of 'em have drifted away and then they'd come back and you still keep prayin' for 'em.

VC: It's like I told David and them that someday his kids may have to baptize my kids 'cause I don't think I'm ever gonna get 'em in the church.

VW: Yeah, but they've got...they've the spark of it ___ with 'em. You're a wonderful member. I just appreciate you. You seem so smart and intelligent and know how to express your things so well.

VC: I'm glad to have you for my visiting teacher because I enjoy you thoroughly and it's nice to get to know you better, really.

VW: And I haven't really known you, either, until I moved into this ward. Just very sweet lady.

VC: We're not supposed to talk about me. We're talking about you. [laughs]

VW: I think I'm about talked out.

VC: Let's just pause. [tape interruption]

VW: ...I just sign down here then? [recording stopped]