

Fred Winslow 3/6/03

Interviewer: John Turner

Narrator: Fred Winslow

I: Okay, when were you born?

FW: Born ninth month the twenty sixth day of twenty four.

I: And where?

FW: I was born in Malheur county right across the river on the Oregon side across the river from Weiser, Idaho.

I: And your name at birth?

FW: Fred Eugene Winslow.

I: And, when did you move to Union County?

FW: About spring of 1929.

I: So you were approximately five years old.

FW: I was four going on five.

I: What prompted your family to move to La Grande?

FW: My dad worked for C.H. McClure running the Monument Works, and he run it until McClures moved here.

I: Where did you live in those early days in La Grande?

FW: Well the first place we lived was down on Madison Street right by the [inaudible] so below where the Van Patten Lumber company was.

I: And where did you start school?

FW: Started school at Riveria. At that time we had moved and I was living over on W, or I was living on Y, I can't remember which, but I lived on Y right across from Simmons Grocery.

I: And you went through your grade school years at Riveria?

FW: No, then we moved on down to Spruce and Y, and in the third grade I started going to school to Greenwood and finished up at Greenwood until I went to junior high.

I: Was there anything particular you remember about going to those grade schools?

FW: Oh, I think probably the one that sticks in my mind more than anything was B. Young who was my teacher. I think one of the reasons I remember B more than anything was I had a leaky valve in my heart and I passed out in school one day. Came recess time and everybody else got up and marched out and I sat there and when she touched me I slid to the floor and as soon as I hit the floor, well I come to and she picked me up and took me home which was a couple of blocks away and told my Mother to keep me out of school and while she was talking to my Mother I turned around and went back to school [laughs]. B was a good teacher.

I: When you started to, uh, up to junior high, well you started at the ninth grade or eighth grade up at . . .

FW: Eighth grade and we started in uh . . . most of our classes was over in the old Central School building. And I don't remember too much about junior high or high school. I wasn't a good student. I didn't go to school any oftener than I had to [laughs]. One other teacher that really got my attention was . . . her name was McKenney. And that was down at Greenwood . . . and for what reason, I don't know if I'd done something or what, or whether I wasn't doing something, anyhow I'd always had a badly crossed eye and the doctor had just got it straightened up and she slammed me on the head with a book and crossed my eye again. That and a few other things, my father dying in 1935 when I was 11 years old, between those two things and a few more things I never cared for school very much so I didn't go any oftener than I had to and actually never finished high school even though I was a junior twice and done half of senior year.

I: Well there were many thing going on when you would have graduated from high school.

FW: The war had started.

I: The fact that your father died probably made quite a difference. Should I tell the first time that I remember you when we were in high school?

FW: Well, if you would like to tell that, John, you tell it to everybody else, you might as well tell it for this [laughs].

I: We were sitting in study hall and you said, "I don't want to be here." You went to the end of the study hall and jumped head first out the window and . . . what was the teacher's name?

FW: Mrs. Hull.

I: She says, "You can't do that" but you were gone. And that's the first time I remember you in high school. Course I was kind of impressed because I was in junior high myself and I'd never seen anybody do that before.

FW: Well I think you should remember me before that John, because you used to come to Burger's Grocery.

I: That's true.

FW: And I lived right across the street and what was called the Burger Gang hung around there, whole bunch of kids all about my age and Mrs. Burger used to let us work in the store. Dust chairs and stock shelves and things and get a bottle of pop or a candy bar doing it, and I probably learned more mathematics from Mrs. Burger than I did anyplace else because she had you, you could one of those little grocery slips that they wrote up the orders on and price things out and add 'em up and you got so you could add it faster than she could do it with an adding machine if she, after the way she taught you how to do it and you could do it.

I: Well, there was a lot of little grocery stores in every neighborhood in town, weren't there?

FW: There was lots of 'em. There was about four right in that neighborhood, four or five, 'bout five of 'em when you take Andrew's, Burger's, Divine's, Senden's, Greenwood Grocery. There was little grocery stores there all over the neighborhood and they all seemed to make a living at that time.

I: And those were really tough times too.

FW: It was tough times.

I: Yeah, the depression.

FW: I can remember before Dad died that Eplings owned about three or four stores here and Safeway had about four stores in town at that time. Eplings and Safeway would get in price wars over sugar, and of course they wouldn't sell it to Mr. Burger so he would give Dad some money and send him out to buy a hundred pound sacks of sugar and bring them back to the stores because you could buy cheaper off of them then you could out of a wholesale house and Mr. Burger had the money to do it so he would stock up anytime they had a price war, well he would stock up on things and put it in the basement of his store and make a good profit on it when the time came that he could get it out [laughs].

I: Those times when Safeway had a number of stores can you tell us where they were at the time?

FW: Well, one of 'em was in the old Foley Hotel Building and another one was down ... I think it was right there close to or in the same building that Mary China ...

I: It was directly under China Mary's.

FW: It was under China Mary's. That was before we got a western artist store in there. But there was one there and there was one where the Globe Furniture is and then there was one out on the corner of Fern Medicine, or Monroe.

I: Harrison Building.

FW: I think it was across the street and Harrison was, and then Harrison, from what I understand, Harrison's was related to Beverly somehow.

I: Beverly Strong Kirkwood.

FW: Yes. And Harrison's and Safeway went into partnership and it all became Safeway. And then when they build the new store on the corner of Adams and Fourth, which was right about where the old La Grande Hotel was.

I: The old La Grande Hotel sits right there on corner and they built the new store . . .

FW: They build the new store right out on the corner there, there was a little parking lot beside it.

I: When they had the store down where Globe Furniture is now that was actually the first attempt at the modern supermarket wasn't it?

FW: I think it was.

I: Whitey O'Neal was the manager.

FW: Could've been, I don't know that I was ever even in that store.

I: Do you remember them tearing down the old La Grande Hotel?

FW: I can remember a little bit of it, the one thing I can remember about the La Grande Hotel it was closed, and I think that the windows was out of it, and down in the lobby there was some toilets and bathtubs and stuff strung around in the lobby of it, and that's about all I can remember of it. I can remember I think it was open when we first moved here but I didn't get downtown too much until later years, few years later, and at that time I was out walking around downtown then I could remember the stuff being there in the lobby and there was a toilet sitting right out in the middle of the lobby floor [laughs].

I: Well, they tore it down in 1940, in August was when they tore it down. It's ironic that as we speak now they are tearing down what we used to call the new Safeway store. Well, when you first started, what was one of the first jobs that you did while you were growing up?

FW: Well, partly one, the first job that I had was before I was just about the time of the beginning of the war and they was building the ordnance depot over in Umatilla and in the summer time a fellow in Pendleton hired me just to pump gas. He was a mechanic, he didn't want to do any tire work, he didn't want to do any lube jobs or anything he'd done all mechanical work and he didn't like to be disturbed and he hired me in the summertime when I was over visiting my Aunt that lives over in Pendleton well he hired me I don't know how I even got the job, whether it was through a cousin or what, but I was only about 14,15 years old, and he hired me because the started that ordnance depot quite a little while before the war came along. And I can remember there was one guy who used to come in there and fill up with gas to drive over to Hermiston to work there, and his car burned oil real bad so he'd always take a quart full of used motor oil and then turn around and want another gallon or so to take with him and get the used motor oil from the station and take it with him and leave a smoke screen as he left [laughs].

I: Then you'd come back to La Grande and go to school?

FW: And I'd come back to La Grande to go to school. The first full time job I had here was with the old Modern Laundry. George McIntire owned that.

I: And what did you do with the Modern Laundry?

FW: I was delivering. Picking up and delivering laundry.

I: Well I thought there was a time that you drove taxi?

FW: I drove taxi, that was after the war was over, that was in '40 . . . starting in about '46 '47.

I: But you worked for Modern Laundry there for . . .

FW: I worked for the Modern Laundry and then I worked for another fellow by the name of Bill Rivers selling eggs and produce.

I: And that's the man who had what they call the Rivers Hotel?

FW: Yes.

I: And later Ken Flannery . . .

FW: Yeah it was his son-in-law and he eventually took over the egg business. But I was out of it before that.

I: When you went to work and you bought your first car, what kind of car did you buy?

FW: I bought the '34 Chevrolet two door . . . and that was, I can't remember the year.

I: Remember about how much you had to pay for it?

FW: No, I don't have any idea.

I: You didn't make much money in those days?

FW: No.

I: About what did you earn?

FW: I think when I went to work for the Modern Laundry I was getting something like 17.50 a week. When I went to work for Bill Rivers I was getting 35 dollars a week.

I: Went up.

FW: I went up but I put in a lot more hours too and covered a lot more territory [laughs].

I: Were you into the town pretty well in those days making deliveries?

FW: Yeah. Right now I don't know whether I would like to try delivering or not, they put in some new streets around here, we got new streets that I never heard of because we spread out a little farther.

I: Well, they expanded the city limits a lot more than it was.

FW: Yeah.

I: During that time the population was about eight thousand, was that correct?

FW: I imagine it was around eight to nine thousand. I think we probably had, maybe not quite as many, but almost as many kids in school as there is now.

I: And I assume that you stayed out of the service because of this heart problem?

FW: No it wasn't a heart problem. I was drafted, went to Spokane, was up being sworn in and they called me back and told me that I had inactive TB. And I told 'em I did not, but it done no good so when I got back home I went to Dr. Gilstrap and the ones they took up there was little postage stamp size x-rays and I knew that there couldn't be that much trouble with my lungs so, or that I'd never had TB, so I went to Gilstrap and had some big x-rays taken and had them sent down to The Dalles to the TB hospital, they came back that I did not have any inactive TB the only thing I had was scar tissue in my lungs from having double pneumonia twice when I was a baby.

I: Oh.

FW: And of course starting smoking at 11 years old didn't help the situation and it had left some of the stuff in my lungs that made the scar tissue more prominent.

I: It uh . . .

FW: Then when the Korean war came along I took my reports from the TB hospital to the draft board and they still never reclassified me even after I took 'em in even though the war was still going on. I took 'em in and they still didn't reclassify me. Then when the Korean did come along in the '50s I was drafted again and sent to Boise that time for a physical, passed the physical but I was too old for 'em, they didn't want me they wanted kids [laughs].

I: Well, it really didn't break your heart did it [laughs]?

FW: No . . . I was really heart broken when all my buddies went and I didn't get to go.

I: I understand that.

FW: But after seeing what some of them went through and the condition some of them came home, I felt that I was pretty lucky in some ways.

I: What is the biggest change that you have seen in La Grande during that time from when you moved here 'till . . .

FW: Well, I'd say probably the biggest change is going on right now when you go out on the Island City strip and fight that traffic out there [laughs]. And a lot of changes down through town. We've had four lanes of traffic down through town, now we have two lanes of traffic but we had two lanes of traffic then it went to four lanes of traffic then it has gone back to two lanes of traffic again . . . and I think it was a crying shame when they moved Safeway all the way down to the other end of town and left nothing up in this end of town.

I: It kind of changed the center of town?

FW: Yes it did.

I: A longer way for a lot of people to go to buy some groceries.

FW: Yeah I could walk from home up to the old Safeway but I don't think I could make it up to the new one and bring home a sack of groceries anymore.

I: Well then, what time did you start work for the New Way Cleaners?

FW: I started to work for those in September of 1950.

I: And you were delivering again?

FW: Yes, I'd left the . . . well in the mean time I drove cab and then I worked for Fountain Wholesale for a few months, almost a year . . . and then I went back to driving cab and then I got an opportunity to work for New Way. At that time Maple Walters owned it.

I: And while you were driving cab, what was the worst thing that . . . a lot of things happen to cab drivers, did that concern you?

FW: No it really didn't. I can tell you one story . . . I went down and picked up a couple of colored fellows one night, or one day, one afternoon, down they had a little colored restaurant down on Madison Street, no, on Monroe. [inaudible] And I went down there and picked up a couple of fellows and George Trice came out, George is a brother to Lucky, and he was quite a fellow, he worked for . . . Eldridge Packing Company, he'd done their killing for 'em and I hauled George quite a bit in the cab so George come out and he looked down in the cab and he come around and climbed in the cab, these two fellows got in the back seat and he climbed in the cab and he says, they wanted to go down and see some gal down here, lived in a shack down by Eldridge Packing Company . . . So we got down there and he says, "What do I owe ya?" And I told 'em and they started arguing with me, and George says, "You called the boy, you rode with the boy, now pay the boy." So they kind of quit arguing, paid me, got out, George said, "Can I ride back to town with you now?" And I says, "Yeah George, you can ride back to town with me." Started back into town and George says, "Only reason I come is because it was you driving, I don't like them other drivers up there." He says, "Them is mean niggers. They would've cut your throat for that amount of money. When I seen it was you I ride along with you but I don't like them other drivers, I'd let them go ahead and take 'em [laughs]." And I thought well it pays to treat George nice and have him as a friend.

I: Well Lucky Trice, his brother was kind of the unofficial . . . mayor of the colored section wasn't he?

FW: Yeah. And another thing, John, when I first moved here and lived down on Madison, we hadn't been there but a few days . . . And to my knowledge there was only one colored fellow in town at that time, there could've been more that I don't remember, this is the only one I remember. And he came walking down the street and I don't remember, but my mother said that he come walking down the street and I took one look at him and come into the house screaming . . . it was the first colored fellow that I'd ever seen, I'd never seen any over at Weiser when we lived there, and I'd didn't, that's the first one I'd ever seen and he was August Stange's chauffeur . . . He was a big fellow dressed nice because he had his [inaudible] pants on with his leather leggings and stuff, and that's the only one I can, I don't even know if he was married or not because I don't remember seeing a black woman I just can remember seeing him or being told I'd seen him, and then later years after we'd moved out of the neighborhood well then there was more colored people around and I'd seen 'em and went to school with 'em and everything.

I: Well, there were the Trices . . .

FW: Torrances, Bill Terry, which was a nephew I think of Lucky Trice, Bob Trice yeah, nephew I think of Lucky Trice.

I: Well, Lucky's mother was Bob Terry's grandmother.

FW: Oh.

I: But they were nice people.

FW: They were.

I: Very nice people

FW: I got along with all of 'em, there was one or two of the families here that uh . . . you wouldn't want for next door neighbors but there was a lot of 'em that I would just assume have for next door neighbors rather than some of the white people around town [laughs].

I: I can appreciate that. Well, then working for New Way, when did you get married?

FW: Which time, John [laughs]?

I: Well, you have a son and . . .

FW: Well, that was my second marriage.

I: And you have a daughter . . .

FW: I've got a son and a daughter, but my first wife, we were married about 1952 and she had a girl. She was about four years older than me and so she had a daughter that was a teenager when we got married and we wasn't married but about, we was married about three years. And uh . . . we couldn't get along so that ended there but since then I have been in touch again with my stepdaughter there, and we were quite close. I just happened to go up to her mother's funeral, I wanted to see her, see if she came to her, I knew she would be there at her mother's funeral, I wanted to see her mainly but I went to her mother's funeral and we have been in touch ever since.

I: That's nice.

FW: She's a nice girl. Has a nice family and she's . . . lives up in northern Idaho.

I: And you son works for an airline?

FW: No he used to work for an airline but he lives in Lincoln, Nebraska now and works for Square D, making electrical breakers.

I: Oh.

FW: That goes in your breaker boxes. And, I got married again in 1960, early '61 and I married a lady that had three boys . . . and then we had two of our own which was my son and about three years later my daughter . . . and then about the time I got her kids raised completely and gone, well, she decided she wanted out so she was gone and my kids come to live with my, my son lived with me most of the time after we were divorced, well he came to live with me because he didn't want to live with his mother. And then my daughter was 16 she decided she didn't want to live with her mother any longer so she came to live with me so I was raising two kids in this little one bedroom house [laughs]. One on the hide-a-bed and one in the room in the basement.

I: How many years then did you work for New Way Cleaners?

FW: I was there for 22 years.

I: 22 years.

FW: It had changed hands and went from New Way to Craig's eventually, they didn't use the name Craig's for quite a little while and then finally went to Craig's New Way and then just went to Craig's Cleaners.

I: Then you decided to go to work for the mill?

FW: Yeah, it was getting tougher and tougher to make a living. Well, it turned out to be kind of like the cab business was. That was one of the reasons I left the cab business, is the business had went down until you couldn't hardly make any money at it by 1950 it was getting pretty sad in the cab business, and I went to work there in the dry cleaning business and was there for 22 years and it was gradually . . . well, wash and wear things were cutting in and . . . everything like that and I had a family to support and I finally got an interview and got on . . . at the Particle Board for Boise Cascade.

I: Well, that made for a better retirement and . . .

FW: I couldn't, I'd be in a lot worse shape, I don't have a big retirement but I do have a retirement and I do have my insurance.

I: Well, that's great.

FW: My supplementary insurance . . . the only problem with that is they keep raising it. In fact I got a letter yesterday telling me it was going up another \$15 a month.

I: I don't know where it is going to stop.

FW: I don't think it is going to stop John [laughs]. Because there is a few dollars left there so they are going to get it before it is over and done with [laughs]. But that was a good job and it was a good move for me to go out there and I did like the job.

I: What did you do with the Particle Board?

FW: I worked just labor for quite some time, and that meant sweeping floors and banding up the units, cleanup, just general labor. Until the big jobs come along and I'd work temporary, once in a while they'd stick me up and train me a little bit as a grader and one thing or another and, so two jobs came up a grader's job and a heister job. I thought well, I bid on both of 'em and I got both of 'em and I had to make up my mind which one of 'em I was going to do and I thought, well I can probably get in less trouble driving a fork lift than I can up there trying to grade that board, if you sit there and go to sleep [laughs] and the board goes by you might get in trouble, so I thought for sure I could stay awake out on a forklift so I drove forklift after oh, about three or four years I was there, I was there for 15 years until I retired.

I: They made a good quality product out there, didn't they?

FW: They made a good quality product. It uh, they had a good business, in fact, in the winter time a lot of times they kept the saw mill running even though it was running in the red to make sure we had enough material to make boards because we was running in the black and we was carrying the whole works. We was carrying La Grande and Elgin both a lot of times in the winter time because sometimes their stuff wasn't moving as well as the Particle Board was, so they would run those while we was making, 'cuz we could make a profit.

I: Well, that is good for something. We have sure seen a difference in the size of the logs and things they bring in though haven't we?

FW: Oh, you have seen that, and it amazes me the amount of logs that's in the log yard this year. If you haven't drove by and noticed it John, you want to take a look when you go by because that log yard is the fullest I have ever seen it!

I: But they are just little tiny poles.

FW: Yeah, they aren't real big trees. There's some fairly decent ones, probably 18 inches to two feet or a little better but . . . They're not real big but I have never seen that many logs in that log yard. Course we've had an open winter and it's been easy for 'em to do it.

I: Yeah, that's true . . . Well, there is a lot of change in working . . .

FW: . . . don't like unions, a lot of 'em do. I don't approve some things that the union does. I think a lot of times they will protect somebody that don't need protecting, that's

been drinking on the job or doing something else or different things like that. And a lot of times the union will protect 'em or get their job back after they've been fired and some of this I don't really go for but I do believe that we need unions. If we didn't have unions I think a lot more of the management would take advantage of their employees.

I: Well, they were pretty low paid until unions came along.

FW: Yes they was, when you go back to . . . and some of your union jobs even was because I had, someone asked me one day what I was making when I was working at the New Way Cleaners, he'd come up here from Boise and they was union down there and we was not union here and he asked me what I was making, and I says, "Well, I'm making \$35 a week plus commissions." And I says, "Just depends on how hard I work how much money I make and how well things go." And I says, "You have your slow times of the year and good times but I make a pretty fair living with my commissions and my \$35 a week. And he says, "Well what does it average?" And I give him the figure, I can't remember now just exactly what it was, but I was making 60, 70 dollars a week at that time. And that was more than he was making on a union job down in Boise doing the same thing I was doing [laughs]. So unions didn't always pay best, but they did come up. In fact actually I checked the Particle Board when it first opened and I couldn't make as much money there as I was making when I was working at the cleaning plant at that time.

I: But you did have more friendships?

FW: Yeah, but I went along about four or five years and then I tried it again, get on there and got on . . . out there at the Particle Board and the first year I was there I doubled what I had been making. So the wages had come up from the time they first opened . . . And there's a lot of nice fellows to work with, I enjoyed most people I worked with and we had some good foremen and we had some bad foremen. If you had a bad foreman he could really give you a bad time [laughs] . . . but I think that goes in any occupation, anywhere.

I: Well, La Grande has been a lot of building around and things have changed . . .

FW: Yeah, you go up and look over at the college and you look over that campus up there from what it was when I went, first here and all we had was the administration building and then they eventually built the first dormitory over there, Dorian Hall. And then added onto that, called the wing of it Hunt Hall.

I: Well, the war made a lot of difference because at that time all these servicemen came home and had the GI bill and they went to school . . .

FW: And you could tell the ones that first came and got away from home and went to school, and you can still do it today. They've never been away from home before and they're pretty wild when they first get here when they're freshmen first here, but most of the time I've seen 'em up there, 'cuz I had called on the dormitories up there all the time

when I was working at the laundry and the dry cleaning plant. See the kids stand out there and throw snowballs and break the windows out of the dormitories and one thing or another, go into a dormitory and if they wanted in somebody's room they'd just kick the door in and went in if they had it locked. I don't know whether much of that goes on these days or not, but it was back in those days.

I: Rather wild.

FW: Well, rather wild when they first get away from home and never been out before, been under Mom and Dad's thumb, and I think quite a bit of that still goes on today [laughs] . . . especially when I walk down through town early in the morning after a weekend and find all the flower pots dumped over along the sidewalk, things like that, it's a little disgusting at times.

I: You know it seems like every once in a while they slash tires then they break out windows, then they go up to the cemetery and knock over the tomb stones, then a few years later it's done again, not necessarily in that order but . . .

FW: That happened once when my dad was running the Monument Works . . . and there was a bunch of 'em, I can't remember whether there was a Bride of Frankenstein, or something else, some movie they'd went to and afterwards they went up and turned over a bunch of stones and messed 'em up. In order to keep them kids from going to jail, my dad went down nights and worked on those stones and refinished 'em and the fellow that lived with us, he worked there too, he live down to Weiser, Idaho, and after Dad died he moved back down there, but he lived with us, board and roomed with us am left his family in Weezer, they didn't want to move up here. So he worked here and done the polishing of the stones, Dad done all the chisel work on 'em, all that time of work. Laid out all the patterns for 'em and done all the, used air chisels at that time now they sand blast them but he used air chisels, and done those. Henry Crim lived with us, he . . . he set the stones, he'd go out and set all the stones in the cemeteries. They had quite a territory, that old truck they had, I don't know it wouldn't run over about 15 miles an hour, how it ever went to Baker and Pendleton and all over that I don't know [laughs] but it sure didn't run very fast. But Dad went down and worked nights and Henry, he went out on his own time more or less and reset all those stones then, just to keep those guys from going to jail.

I: Well, that was a nice thing. Sometimes you wish they'd catch more of 'em that do these things. What kind of hobbies did you have?

FW: Never really had too much hobbies John, I didn't have time for them most of the time [laughs].

I: Well, I know later you started in photography and . . .

FW: I got into that basically when I retired, and I've kind of dropped back on it, I don't know I kind of lost interest in it. I can't remember even when I had the camera out of the bag last time.

I: Well, you used to go out to the camera club.

FW: I belonged to the camera club for . . . oh gosh about 13, 14 years I guess. And it was an experience, I didn't learn as much as I would have liked to have learned. I thought it would be more of a learning experience than it was.

I: Well, they did have competition between the members and slideshows, and competed with other areas.

FW: And I think that's part of the problem, because I was talking to one of the members a while back and she says, "Well I've mainly joined for a learning experience." And I says, "I never did learn to much. Most of the time I'd ask somebody to help me and well yeah they'd help me, but then they never had time." So she says, "Well," she says, "you know some of your" course this was basically all slides, and she says, "yours was kind of fuzzy." And I says, "Well nobody ever told me that." And I says, "I couldn't see that there was very much wrong with it." And she says, "Well yours was kind of fuzzy." Well see nobody ever told me because I might have been more competition to 'em if I knew what I was doing [laughs].

I: Well, equipment has a lot to do with it . . . but I've seen some awful good pictures taken from simple equipment.

FW: Yeah.

I: Do you remember before World War II when the art center was down where 10 Depot Street is now?

FW: No, I was never in that, and don't think I ever knew there was one in there.

I: Well they uh, President Roosevelt had thought that arts was a good thing for people to know about at the time and I can't remember the photographer that was down there, he became a pretty famous photographer during World War II, a friend of Fred Hills, and he was administrator of the art center, and the little old lady from Cove taught leather work and there was a boy from C.C. [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp up at Starkey turnoff and he came down and taught woodchipping, and there was photography in the basement. Mrs. Scalla and a number of fellows from the *Observer* I know would come over and do pictures in the basement there. It was a good place for kids to learn.

FW: I never knew anything about that. I never even knew it was there. You see what I sheltered life I run, John [laughs].

I: Well, you must have been busy at the time.

FW: I don't ever know that I knew anything about that one.

I: Well, being a little younger than you I probably had a little more time on my hands . . .

FW: Well, I usually kept busy, like I say. There for a long time we was working down there in the grocery store, we'd dust shelves, and put out merchandise for a candy bar or a bottle of pop. You can't do with kids that way anymore but . . .

I: This is where . . .

FW: It was an education, and she liked kids. Halloween came along, she'd spend a week before Halloween sacking up little sacks of penny candy and stuff and sticking some things together, and set a deal up by the front deal of the store there and sit there all evening long handing out sacks to the kids as they came buy. She liked kids, didn't have any of her own so she took 'em all in. Almost every one of us kids that were called the Burger Gang at one time or another worked there in the store and as we got older we got more than a bottle of pop and a candy bar, she paid us for the things we done. And I got to thinking back here the other day, and I'm the only one left of the old original Burger Gang.

I: I remember Keith Roll.

FW: Yeah, Keith Roll, he's gone, Don Caldwell's gone . . . Ted Higgy.

I: In those early days did you ever go down to the Elks at Christmas and get a bag of candy when they were . . .

FW: I don't think I ever did.

I: I know the Elks club gave out candy there and we've got pictures down of kids lined up for a block, during those hard times before World War II.

FW: And as tough as things was, course my dad, he made good money there at the Monument works, but after he died well we didn't have much of anything. We had a place that belonged to my granddad where I was born out on the Oregon side of the Snake River from Weiser, 26 acres there and we sold it after my dad died, a couple three years after Dad died well Mom sold that and got I think \$1500 out of it, and we bought a house and paid \$1100 for it.

I: Houses were fairly cheap in La Grande before World War II.

FW: Well, as I understood it, I may be wrong about this and I don't know whether I should be quoted on it or not, but I understood that the house that Lot Snodgrass lived in up there that he only paid \$2500 for that one. And I know we only paid \$1100 for that one, and the one that I wanted my mother to buy was on up on the other side of the tracks

on cedar street and there was two houses there. There was a little house in behind it and we could've bought that for \$1500 and she wouldn't do it, she wanted to stay on this side of the tracks.

I: Well, I can appreciate . . . I think the house when we lived at 2116 [inaudible] sold for \$2100. But that was a lot of money in those days.

FW: Yes it was.

I: People weren't making a lot.

FW: Well, I had opportunities and I never done it. I kick myself ever since then, but when I was working there at the Modern Laundry and along a little later then that when I was working at the cleaning plant I had several people tell me, "[inaudible] I'm leaving and I can't sell my house, why don't you take it, buy it from me, take it and just start making me payments on it. You can rent it and I only want \$2500 for it." Well, I didn't have the money to make the down payment and then I thought if I can't keep it rented how do I make the payments on it so I wouldn't buy the things. And I had several offers, I could've probably bought myself a dozen houses around town and I could be sitting on easy street now if I wasn't such a coward.

I: Well, a lot of people had to leave during the war and went down to the shift yards and they're going into the service and things, but does it seem to you that a lot of people have come back to La Grande, left at one time and . . .

FW: Some of 'em come back. And I had a lot of 'em, soon as they'd get ready to retire they'd put their house up for sale and say "I'm moving, I'm going to move to the coast." Or somebody their husband would die and she'd say "I'm going to sell the house and I'm going to move." I'd say, "Don't do that, wait a year." And I know a of a couple of [inaudible] that sold out, moved to the coast when they retired and then come back and said, "I wish I had my old house back." And I tried to say, "Well don't do things like that, rent your house if you want to or something, go down there and rent you and apartment or something and live there for a year and go through all the seasons and see if its what you want and what you like. And I don't know how many widow women I've told over the years, "Don't sell out or do anything for at least a year." But the minute their husband dies, well, I'm going to leave and I'm going to go live with my kids or I'm going to go here or go there, and most of 'em regretted it and wished they'd stayed and still had their old home back . . . And I think if people would just slow down and wait a year before they make a big decision like that they would be a lot better off.

I: Did it seem to you that days when it was really tough that people helped one another?

FW: I think more so. Of course we used to, when Dad was alive and stuff, we used to go visit people a lot. We went out, we had friends all over this valley, over to Cove and all out through the valley up the Grande Ronde River. We used to spend a lot of time up at the old [inaudible] place.

I: Well, people didn't have a lot of money and their friends were their entertainment.

FW: That's right. Now you've got television and all this stuff and people don't visit anymore. I go for . . . I don't know when the last time was I had company in this house other than somebody coming from out of town to visit me. Nobody ever comes by to see me. I go by and see a few people but I made myself a promise when I retired, that I wouldn't go and drive people nuts and sit on their doorstep and stuff and I went too far the other way, I got so I didn't go see people and do things.

I: Well, I know you help a couple of ladies I know that have lost their husbands and don't drive and you take 'em to buy groceries and I think that's good.

FW: Well, I try to help people that need it, of course, like Beverly I've known her since she was about four years old so . . . and we've been good friends all that time, she used to play with my sister and spend time at my house so I have known her ever since she was about four years old. I tried to teach her to drive when her husband died. She decided her eyes wasn't good enough so she got rid of her car so since then I haul her for her groceries when she needs me to . . . and she returns the favor, she calls me up every once in a while and says, "I'm putting on a pot of beans, do you want your name in the pot?"

I: Well, that's a nice thing.

FW: Yeah . . . I've got a lot of good friends, but like I say nobody seems to come and visit. I go see them once in a while but there doesn't too many people drop by here [laughs].

I: Well, television is the worst thing that ever happened in a way . . .

FW: Yes it is . . . and you go see somebody and their televisions on, they don't turn it off they sit right there with it on, I've got two or three people that I stop by and see and if they're sitting there watching television well they still keep glued to the television and after an hour, maybe half an hour to an hour maybe I'll say well I've got to go and get up and leave because I am really not interested in what they're watching [laughs] and I'd rather visit with them then sit there and be entertained by their television, I can be entertained by my own.

I: Well, did you ever hunt or fish?

FW: I never was into hunting, John, I just didn't care for it. My dad was an avid hunter but I really didn't care for hunting. Like I say, Dad dying when I was 11, if he'd lived I'd probably been into hunting and a lot more things I used to do some fishing but . . .

I: You ever swim down at High Banks?

FW: Used to swim at High Banks, used to swim up to Perry.

I: Yeah. That was the place all the kids used to go for swimming.

FW: Yeah, then the old Crystal Plunge down here into the [inaudible].

I: That was the talls.

FW: And the old Crystal Plunge here and then the old Pine Cone up there.

I: It was awful cold. The water was right out of the river.

FW: Yeah [laughs]. And once in a while I'd get to go over to Cove and go in that pool. Even went over one time Jerry Hendrickson was raised in the same neighborhood I was when I lived out on Spruce and Y, he got killed in the service. Him and I run together quite a bit when we was kids. We rode bicycles went to Cove one time just to go over there and see a friend of his that was working in the hay fields over there and then we went on and went swimming.

I: Yeah. Wasn't too bad coming off the hill because it was downhill for quite a long way and you could coast.

FW: Coming back up [laughs] . . . we lost some really talented people during the war. Jerry was really talented, he just loved woodworking and stuff like that and he was really talented. Bud McClure was another one . . . but he didn't even get out of the states before he got hit and killed. He was working as a photographer or something, that was C.H. McClure's son, and we was, I was raised around him and knew him all the time. Him and I got to be good friends. He went into the service and he was a photographer and they was hedge hopping some place down in Florida, and they hedged when they should've hopped or something because they piled up the plane and Bud got killed down there and he never got out of the states, but he was an aerial photographer.

I: Well, those things happen. And continue to happen.

FW: Yeah. About to run out of time are we?

I: I don't know where we are?

FW: You don't know where, I don't know where I'm at most of the time, John [laughs].

I: Well, I think La Grande is a fantastic place. I guess you do too because you've been here all this time.

FW: Yeah, I've had opportunities to leave. I've had a couple of jobs offered to me. I could have worked for Mable Walters, after she left here I went up to Tacoma, opened a cleaning plant up there, they tried to get me to come up there and I didn't do it. And I

had some job offers over in Pendleton that I could have taken. I went and checked out a few jobs here and there and I thought what do I want to leave for, I like it where I'm at.

I: Well, we all make a certain amount of mistakes in our life just as long as we can live with the mistake that we've made . . .

FW: Well, I wish my kids was closer than they are, with my son back in Lincoln Nebraska and my daughter lives back close to Chicago now. She lives in St. Charles Illinois which is about an hour, I guess about an hour . . . north and west of Chicago. I haven't been back there yet, I need to go back, I've made one trip back to Nebraska about three years ago I went back and went over Memorial Day weekend and my son had the whole week off so I, we took off and went up to South Dakota, went to Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse, and oh, Deadwood and all around different places like that. Went over and went through that Wall Drug. I don't know if whether you have ever been to Wall Drug or not, have you heard about it?

I: No I haven't. No.

FW: Well, they advertise that quite extensively here, used to, and I had heard about the Wall Drug so I says, "Well, can we go by the Wall Drug." Well I'd never seen such a layout in my life [laughs]. It's kind of like big old wooden building stuff around and it's kind of like a flea market in there, there is a little bit of booths all over with all kinds of stuff in it. But it started out as, supposed to have been a drugstore, and they called it Wall Drug. I think that's, I don't know whether that's the name of the town where it's at or not, but they called it Wall Drug store and it's just more or less like a flea market in there, there is little booths and different things and it must be, oh a good square city block. Things like that.

I: The nice thing about traveling is you come back to La Grande and you see Mount Emily and you know you are coming home.

FW: Well I have been more places and seen more country since I retired, some even before I retired because my kids had left home before that and I'd go where my kids is at and I have been to El Paso Texas, on down to Mexico and around in there. My son from the time he left home he moved to Texas, he moved back to Portland, moved to Las Vegas and over to the Phoenix area. Lived in Gilbert before he went to Lincoln, Nebraska. My daughter left home, oh I guess the first trip after she left home, and then she moved back here, I went up to her graduation in Spokane when she graduated from Kenman Business College up there. She didn't like college so she went, decided to go to business college and took her freshman year here and she didn't like college so she went to Kenman Business College. And she's lived in Phoenix, Portland, Medesto, California, Minneapolis, Minnesota, back Danville, California, then on down to Southern California living back in what was called Dove Canyon which is part of Rancho Santa Margarita which is between Los Angeles and San Diego. And now she's back . . . in Illinois. I haven't got back there yet. She's been back there about three years.

I: Did you notice when you grew up, well of course times were tough, families didn't have any money. I remember taking one vacation all the time I was growing up!

FW: I don't think, John, that I ever had a vacation. My vacation when I was a kid was a round up. I had relatives over in Pendleton and I had a cousin that was on the city police force over there, and I would lay out of school and my mother, my sister, and I would go over and stay with my aunt or my cousins or one or the other, and go to the round up and we could use his family pass because he was on the police force and he had a family pass and any of the family could use it and we was family so we got to go over and, that was my vacation. If we had to go and pay for it we wouldn't have, and had to pay for a motel and at that time I don't think there was even much of a motel it was all hotels, and if we'd had to pay for all that we couldn't have done it. We'd scrape up enough money to ride the bus over and stay at my relatives over there and go to the round up every year. And that was a vacation and that was about the only vacation I only had was going over to my aunts in the summertime and what have you, and I usually had to work and I even . . . oh before I was quite old enough to I worked in the pea cannery over in the summertime over there.

I: There were quite a few kids that went over there and worked during that time and then come back to La Grande and go to school.

FW: Worked at the old Smith Cannery there in Pendleton.

I: What do you remember about when the cadets were here during the war?

FW: All I can basically remember is them being in the Sac Hotel . . . and some of 'em was up at the dormitories up at the college.

[end of tape]

Fred Winslow 2/11/05

Interviewer: John Turner

Narrator: Fred Winslow

Tape #1

Side A

I: February the 11th and we are continuing our interview with Fred Gene Winslow. And the last time that we talked, Fred, in your interview you mentioned that you'd had your eye straightened up as you had crossed eyes and you had an unhappy incident in school. Would you explain that for us please?

FW: Well, I don't remember ever doing anything. I might have been doing something but I don't remember doing it, but anyhow I had a teacher by the name of Miss McKenney and she come by and slam me over the head with a book and rolled my crossed eye back in and locked it in and a few words went on, not only with my family,

but Dr. Ralston made a trip down to the school. He was our eye doctor here then. He made a trip down to school and I don't think they ever done anything. Now days there would be something done about it but at that time well, they got away with them kind of things.

I: Well, that is an unfortunate incident. Then we talked about the Burger Grocery Gang. Can you tell me a little more about them?

FW: Well, it was just a bunch of us kids that all lived right there in the neighborhood. I lived right across the street from the store and there was a bunch of kids there in the neighborhood and they got to calling us the Burger Gang because we all hung out there around the store. I'm the only one left. The only other one that I can remember of that is still alive, and he really didn't hang out with us too much, is Bud Hendrickson. He is still alive. He is in town here someplace but I haven't seen him for a long time. Oh, there was Ked Heggy, Don Caldwell, Keith Roe, Bob Clark, myself, and there was a few other kids that would come around now and then. Bill Terry and Clair McManus. They was around part of the time. They were all pretty well raised right in that neighborhood.

I: You said they started out doing little chores for her and she'd give you candy and stuff like that and later when you got older she hired you to work in the store.

FW: That's right, I probably learned more math there than I ever learned in school. Take one of them grocery slips and write down the prices on it and add it up by hand quicker than she could do it with the adding machine by the time she got done teaching us how to do her math. She was a wonderful person. She had a few traits that wasn't too well liked by some of the neighbors but she was nice and she was good to all the kids.

I: At that time, how many grocery stores would you say are in La Grande? Neighborhood groceries as well as the main groceries?

FW: Well, there was Andrew's, Burger's, Divine's, Greenwood. Over here there was Nick Fellows had the one up here on the corner where Eddy Huff was at H&H Grocery. On down Second Street here from that H&H Grocery which was right across from Riveria School was Handlans Grocery. That was the ones on this side of town, down in this area. And even when I was a little younger there was another one on the corner of Y and Ash.

I: Why do you suppose there were so many family groceries?

FW: Well, I think part of it was neighborhood is easier. You didn't have the transportation--as much transportation then. And all these little neighborhood groceries and most people was having a tough time and they could get a little credit in these stores, and what have you.

I: It was depression times and they paid off the grocery bill and got a few more groceries.

FW: And at that time there was about four Safeway stores in town. There was one in the old Foley Hotel. There was one down under China Mary's Noodle Parlor. There was one on down where Globe Furniture is and there was another one over across by the old Hub City Lockers.

I: The one down where Globe Furniture store was the first attempt at the modern supermarket.

FW: Yeah.

I: Otherwise you went in and the clerk helped you put your groceries in a basket and then wrote you up at the counter, but they started checking you out at the counter down at the one where Globe is now.

FW: And at that time we also had a Piggly Wiggly's down there where Dolven's Appliance was in that there. There was a Piggly Wiggly store in there and there was one across the street that was called Buck Wear's Market.

I: Well, I talked to Jerry Binger and he told me that at the end of World War II there were 32 grocery stores in La Grande. And of course he was the operator of Joel's Grocery.

FW: Yeah. And uh . . . that would probably be about right with the different ones all the way around. With the old log cabin grocery out where that little laundry mat's at, out at the east end of Adams there. There was a Highway Grocery a couple of blocks from that.

I: Why do you suppose that it ended the little neighborhood groceries?

FW: Well, I think the bigger stores, carrying more items, probably had something to do with it. Plus the fact that more transportation, more people had cars now. Back during the depression there was a lot of people who didn't even own a car. They couldn't afford one, and if they had one they couldn't afford to run it. Even though gas was about two bits a gallon [laughs].

I: I can appreciate that. Now we only have the major grocery stores and there's only three neighborhood groceries in town, isn't there? Besides major ones.

FW: Well, you got J.D.s, which used to be Synden's Grocery, down there on the corner. I forgot to mention that one a while ago, and the one over on Spruce Street that was Divine's Grocery and the Willow Grocery. I think that's all there is that I know of.

I: Well, used to be handy for Mother to send the kids to the little grocery store, but now some of the people that can't drive, its so far to walk!

FW: Well, that's what's going to foul me up someday with moving Safeway out and putting it plum out in the other end of town where I could have walked over to [inaudible] and picked me up some groceries and when it gets where I can't drive well now I am going to have to have somebody take me to go grocery shopping or do my shopping for me.

I: Well, that's a real hardship . . . serves people.

FW: Yeah. There's another thing that went by the wayside, and that's barbershops. We used to have probably a dozen barbershops in town and we've got two anymore, or three.

I: I wonder what really happened there. Everybody has to get a hair cut?

FW: Yeah, well, they don't seem to do it as much as they used to or something. Of course the price of haircuts I got probably six and eight weeks and sometimes more now when I used to go in and have my hair trimmed up probably every two weeks and sometimes once a week. Just because you could go in and get it done for a dollar, dollar and a quarter.

I: During the depression do you remember when Geddis had his barbershop up on Eighth Street? He charged 35 cents and downtown was 50 cents and, boy, they were unhappy with him.

FW: [laughs]. But I think actually we've only got two or three barbershops in town here and one in Island City I think is all we have now.

I: Well, when you were driving for the laundry and the dry cleaners and you mentioned that you got a commission, besides a weekly wage. How did the commission work?

FW: Well, I got 35 percent, 35 dollars a week and what was it . . . about seven percent of everything I handled at the dry cleaning plant. When I worked for the old Modern Laundry it was just straight weekly salary. I went to work there for 17 dollars and 15 cents a week, and it was not a 40-hour week.

I: But you were able to tell people that they needed to have more things done or you gave them better service and were able to build . . .

FW: Well, I made a living at it. A pretty fair living at it until it kind of went by the wayside. It went kind of like Federal Taxi too in between times there, and it went kind of the way the taxis went too after the war was over. Well, the taxi business went because everybody started getting cars then.

I: I supposed everybody bought laundry machines to do their own laundry?

FW: Yeah, and the laundries kind of went down hill.

I: Oh, we had several laundries didn't we?

FW: Well, we had the old Standard Laundry and then the Modern Laundry, which is across from the Elks Club there, and that's the one I worked at. And then Mr. Batley-- Merlin Batley, Mervin I think, Merlin or Mervin, Merlin, I think--Batley. I went to school with his son Bill. He run the Standard Laundry and then when the war came along he either enlisted or was called back into the service and he closed that laundry down. And later we had Bert's Laundry come in here, but it didn't last too long.

I: Then we had several dry cleaning places.

FW: Well, the old Modern Laundry had dry cleaning in it, and then right after the war well, the Walters came in here and started New Way Cleaners and of course the Odorless Cleaners had been up there for quite some time.

I: That was Knight, wasn't it?

FW: Yeah, that was Brownie Knight came in and bought that one, and I can't remember just when that was. I was in junior high school or right about that time because I remember the Knights lived in them apartments right next door to where number 10 Depot Street is. They lived in them apartments when they first moved here and I got acquainted with Pat and Donna there when they first came to town.

I: What other businesses that we had and we don't have now, can you think of any of those?

FW: Well, we don't have a hardware store anymore. We had Bohnenkamp's, we had Zimmerman's, we had Western Auto, Coast to Coast, In and Out. On Coast to Coast and Western Auto there would be one and then there wouldn't be one. Then there might be one again.

I: I wonder why that is.

FW: I have no idea.

I: People need hardware and . . .

FW: You want some hardware now you either . . . The only thing we have in town is Millers and they have their line of hardware in there. Otherwise you got to go out to Bi-Mart or out to D&B or out to Wal-Mart.

I: It's packaged and you try to fit something that is in a package.

FW: Yeah, you used to be able to go in and buy two or three screws and that's all you needed. You wanted two or three screws to repair something and now you've got to go in and you buy a package of half a dozen or a dozen or something or other and they're all

packaged up and then you take and throw the rest of 'em in a drawer and forget that you got 'em and then have to go buy some more some day [laughs].

I: It's not convenient.

FW: No. It's like I told 'em years ago when the old First National Bank was here and they first started . . . I guess having progress and doing things. The bank kind of got took over by First National out of Portland or something, I don't know just how that went at that time, but anyhow I went in one day and filled out a withdraw slip to get some money out of my savings account and handed it to the girl and she went over and got on the telephone. And I stood there and stood there and waited and waited and finally she came back over and give me my money and I said, "Well, this is progress isn't it." And she says, "What do you mean by that?" I says, "Well, I used to come in and give you a withdraw slip . . . You'd go over and pull the card out of the . . . pull the drawer out, pull the card up look at it, and hand me my money, and I was gone out of the place in two or three minutes. I said, "I stood here over 10 minutes waiting for you to have somebody in Portland tell me whether I could have my money or not. Now that is progress." [laughs].

I: Well, individual service seems to have gone by the way.

FW: It has.

I: Well, what other businesses can you think of that we had that we don't have anymore? Like clothing?

FW: We have no men's clothing stores at all. We have a couple of women's clothing stores that just opened up within the last year or so. That one over there on Depot Street in the old Sommer Hotel Building and you've got one around in the old Wards Building that just opened up a short time ago. But other than that you had no men's clothing stores. You had no women's clothing stores. You had no shoe stores. We used to have two or three shoe stores in town. We had a kids' store, maybe a couple of 'em, and I don't know, there must have been at least half a dozen women's stores around. Different types. And we don't have them anymore.

I: Well, growing up there was Trotter's, and it seemed like Harry McCarthy, who owned Trotter's, groomed the kids growing up. You could charge something there and if you paid your bill you could charge something more and he always had the best looking kids working in his store that wore clothing. Well, and it was a nice place to shop. Sam Zion's Men's Store.

FW: You had Zion's Men Store and Sam was a nice fellow. I bought a lot of things off of him and he's the one that really got to fitting me with shoes and he didn't carry my size in stock all the time and I'd have to go in and say, "I need a pair of shoes, Sam." And he'd say, "Okay, I'll order 'em and have 'em for you in a few days." And then one day he got me a pair of shoes and they didn't fit me anymore because my feet had grown. I'd gained some weight and my feet had grown a little bit so I had to start going to a

larger shoe and then he had them in stock all the time [laughs]. But he was a nice guy to deal with, and I bought quite a bit of stuff off of Sam. I bought stuff and I bought all my uniforms when I was working at the cleaning plant. I bought them all through Trotter's.

I: Another thing we don't have is Second Hand Stores. Like we had Lonny Fiddler and Rogers and . . .

FW: Turners, Turns . . .

I: Max Turn ... What do you suppose the reason for that is?

FW: I don't know. The only thing you've got now is a Salvation Army.

I: And an antique store.

FW: Well, there's another thing. We have got this one bakery in town now. This little one down there.

I: Kneads?

FW: Yeah, I guess that's what it is. Kneads, is that it at the corner of [inaudible] Cupboard Lunch . . .

I: Cupboard Café.

FW: Cupboard Café. It's in there. And in where Paul Thomas has his barbershop. She took all the building there. But we used to have a couple little bakeries here in town. There was Winter's Bakery and then it was. Oh, I can't think of the guy that took it after Winters had it. And then there was the old McWilliam's Bakery over where Salvation Army is now. That was locally owned and run for a long time and then he finally, when he got old enough, he sold it to Eddy's and Eddy's run it for a while and then they closed it out and started trucking their bread in here from Boise or some place.

I: Well, even doughnut shop you had Dick Hartsog had the D&V Doughnut Shop. Later Bud Bennett . . .

FW: Yeah.

I: And then George had it.

FW: Well, what's his name, Ken who runs Ken's Yard Service. Gannon--he's the one that bought it off of Bud, but he didn't run it too good so he got out of it pretty fast [laughs]. My wife was working there at the time. My ex-wife.

I: Well, do you suppose it is places like Safeway's baking and Albertson's and what have you, or do people just don't buy those things anymore?

FW: Well, either that or there's just nobody that wants to get into it anymore. I don't know what it is. [inaudible] used to do pretty good that was around there in the old Ward's building. It done pretty good there for a long time and then it changed hands and then it went by the wayside, so either these guys that take them over knew nothing about it and thought what the heck he's making money I can do it. They don't know how to run the thing after they get it.

I: Well, after the other one went out there has just been nobody to take their place.

FW: Nope.

I: Well, things have happened. Well, La Grande boasted having three hotels at one time, and I don't know, what do you suppose happened there? Motels are there?

FW: Motels are around and I think that if they hadn't have tore down the old Sac Hotel it would probably be going strong today, but it needed some changes and stuff. The hallways was narrow and one thing or another, but it was a well built building. They had an awful time tearing it down.

I: They sure did. Well, the faces around La Grande have changed quite a little bit for businesses.

FW: Well, the people around town have changed a lot too. I used to be able to call a bigger share of the people in town by their first name. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, and all of 'em because I dealt with most of 'em. Now I can go down to the grocery store or something, maybe I'll be in there half an hour, forty five minutes, and maybe I'd see one person I know and maybe I will see none at all. And other days I can run into three or four.

I: Well, it has changed that way . . .

FW: 'Course we had our old bowling alley downtown. Under where the Red Cross Drug was. We had a duck pin alley at one time down at part of the Sac Hotel Building.

I: I didn't know about that.

FW: Didn't you know that one there?

I: No.

FW: Yeah, there . . . and there's another thing we had about three or four plant stores around town.

I: True.

FW: Now you've got one. In town.

I: Arrow.

FW: Arrow's all you got in town. And you got to go out to Sears. That's the only two you got around. You haven't got much choice anymore. Raymond Ray had the one down where the old Safeway store was and the Foley Hotel. Raymond Ray was in there and sold hot point.

I: And didn't Rosenbaum have . . .

FW: Yes, Rosenbaum had appliances and . . .

I: George Tiss. Tiss's [inaudible] Music.

FW: Yeah, they had refrigerators and stuff. We bought our first refrigerator off of Tiss's.

I: There has been a lot of change.

FW: A lot changes . . .

I: Well, can you think of any of the things that are the service is better? Or do you think in a lot of cases it's worse because . . .

FW: Well, I sometimes wonder. I've got a favorite saying that I won't say into this [laughs] but I get tired of trying to do business with somebody and have to suck up to 'em in order to get them to even take my money. But I can ask them to come and service something or do something and you can't get it done.

I: Well, we had businesses like electrical shops, and there isn't an electrical shop in town anymore that I know. We had plumbers. We haven't got a plumbing shop in town. You can call a plumber but you can't always get them.

FW: Yeah, there is no place you can walk into and talk to 'em or anything like you used to be able to. You had two or three plumbing shops and electrical shops like Buckley's, and Space Plumbing, and those kind of places. I think about the only thing we have now is this dome out there that you can walk in and buy stuff. They don't have a plumber and they don't have an electrician, but they got the stuff you can buy.

I: That's strange because people need those things even more than they did in the old days!

FW: One thing that I wonder about sometimes. You know, when I was a kid I think the folks bought almost all my shoes at J.C. Penney's, and they had a big shoe department in there and had somebody working in the shoe department. Now we have no shoe store in

town and so they've got a few down in the basement in the corner instead of having a shoe department in there which I think they could do real well with shoes here now, but they don't have 'em. I've never got a hold of the manager and asked him why they don't do something, but something needs to be done around here.

I: Well, it's odd because we have more population and more of a buying area because La Grande includes Elgin, Imbler, Cove, Union . . .

FW: North Powder. Course a lot of people in North Powder go to Baker because it's easier to go to Baker most of the time than it is to come over the mountain to come in here . . . But I don't understand why we have lost so many of the downtown businesses when you get right down to it. Most of 'em are the businesses you have downtown now, because we lost a good one when we lost the Keith O'Brien or Falk's, or whatever, it used to be Falks and then it was Keith O'Brien's. When it went out, big department store and you could buy lots of thing in there like men's and women's clothing and household furnishings. Not furniture but household stuff--beddings and all that kind of stuff. I don't know. Seem to me like some store ought to be able to do something and I can't understand why the Emporium went out but it went out.

I: And growing up you had Montgomery Ward's that had all these different things. Did you ever think that you would see a time you wouldn't have Montgomery Ward's?

FW: No I didn't. It was . . . Well, more or less they had a shoe department too and a clothing department, men's clothing department, women's clothing department, all kinds of appliances, all kinds of furniture. And then all of a sudden it's gone.

I: Would you say that the fact that we have a mobile community where they can get in their car and travel a number of miles away and buy something that, that had something to do with it?

FW: I think that's got quite a bit to do with it because you hear people saying, "Well, I went to Tri-cities shopping." Or "I went here or there or someplace else or run down to Boise and I got some stuff down there," and I don't know, even when I was working at the cleaning plant. it used to amaze me the number of people that when I'd go to deliver something to their house and there'd be a package laying there on the porch that the mailman had left from Charles F. Burg's or Meyer & Frank's or somebody in Portland. So there was a lot of people here are that time, and that was from 1950 – 1972 that I worked there at that one cleaning plant. And there was lots of people here that was getting stuff from Meyer & Frank and Charles F. Burg's and some of those places down in Portland 'cause I'd see the packages with the names on 'em.

I: Well, our whole picture town has changed considerably . . . businesses . . . and restaurants that we used to know?

FW: Well, we don't have restaurants anymore. What do we got? One or two actual restaurants and the rest of 'em we've got Chinese food we got Mexican food and we got about one or two restaurants and everything else is fast food.

I: Yeah ...

FW: What was the one that was out on the end of east Adams there a drive-in we had? Was that Three Little Pigs or something?

I: Three Little, uh, we had Little Pig Drive In.

FW: Yeah, Little Pig Drive In. I was out there one day and seen Bing Crosby out there.

I: I heard that he was in town.

FW: He was out there and had some of his kids with him and he stopped there to get something to eat. And I didn't talk to him or anything but I seen him and knew who it was. Another one that used to come to town pretty regularly was Gene Pallette.

I: And he was from down on [inaudible].

FW: Yeah, he had a ranch down on there and he was in business with Ed Gettings. Out in Elgin they had a sawmill together. And he'd come in to town and he would come in on train and I'd take him in cab. This was in the '50s when I was driving cab, or '40s. From '46 to about 1950 when I was driving cab. And I'd take him out to Elgin to see Ed Gettings and then bring him back in here and he'd stay at the hotel and call up to the ranch and the guys would come from the ranch to pick him up and take him up to the ranch. And I guess he thought we was going to get invaded or something. I don't know what he thought, but he ... I guess when they cleaned out that place up there he had tons of stuff. Sugar and all kinds of stuff up there and he had been one of Basche Sage's biggest customers. He had all kinds of stuff that he bought from Basche Sage up there and he had a real clean out up there when he got ready to get rid of the ranch up there and they had a big sale up there and really cleaned ... and had all kinds of stuff that he had horded away because he thought we was going to be invaded, I guess.

I: He had guns and all sorts of things.

FW: Yeah.

[side B]

I: ... black man in town that you knew of?

FW: Well, to my knowledge he was the first one here. And that was in 1929 when I moved first moved here and lived down on Madison Street right across from the ole ... I don't know whether it was a telephone company or the light company had a pole yard

there back of the Patton Lumber Company. And I guess what my mother told me, I was only about four years old when we moved here, four years going on five. And here come this big black man walking down the street and I guess I went into the house screaming my head off. And that's the first one I'd ever seen and he was August Stange's chauffeur. And he lived on down just below where we was living. And lived on east of us there a few houses and he would drive August Stange to work and then I guess take the car back home and then walk back to his house and then he'd have to go get the car and walk go back and get August, but he worked for August Stange as a chauffeur.

I: August Stange was the owner of Mt. Emily mill.

FW: Yeah, and Mrs. Stange never knew how to cook, never cooked. She always had a cook up there and housekeepers. She never done anything in that line until they sold their big house and built their new one and then she started learning how to cook. She didn't even know how to boil water [laughs]. So I was told.

I: Few people are like that today.

FW: Yeah, we've got a set of them around yet today that can't boil water.

I: Can I ask you, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, what were the first things that happened that you knew, and what were you doing?

FW: Well, let's see. That was in '41. I was still in high school. What little I went. And I can't remember too much about it. I know I got called up in '42. I got called up and went to Spokane to take a physical and I was standing up there with my hand in the air to be sworn in and they called me back and told me that they wasn't going to take me because I had inactive T.B. And I told them they didn't know what they was talking about but they insisted on it and there was little postage stamp size x-rays that they took and there was some color in my lungs so they said I had inactive T.B. so I came home. When up to doctor Gilstrap and had some large x-rays taken and had them sent up to the T.B. hospital down at The Dalles come back that I did not have T.B. an never had T.B. I had scar tissue in my lungs from having double pneumonia twice as a baby and I started smoking when I was 11 years old and of course there was spots in my lungs but there was nothing wrong with my lungs. I turned that into the draft board. Took the letter down and give it to 'em and they never reclassified me. And then when the Korean, or the, I guess it was Korean bit came along in the '50s. I got called up again and went to Boise and had a physical. Passed that one. My lungs was still in the same shape. I was still smoking and still had spots in my lungs but they never found them, I guess. I don't know but anyhow I came back home and they decided I was too old for 'em then. They wanted to let the young kids. They didn't want anybody my age. So I never did go into the service.

I: Well, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, do you remember them putting men with rifles on the railroad bridges out of town?

FW: No I never seen any of that. I can't remember what was going on . . . whether it was about the time of that Korean bit or what I was in the J.C.s and that's the Junior Chamber of Commerce. And we built a observation booth up on top of the Sac Hotel.

I: That was to spot airplanes?

FW: To spot airplanes. We built that observation tower . . .er, booth up there on top of the Sac Hotel and that was the time that they was filming the "Painted Wagon." And who was in that movie . . . I can't remember what his name was now.

I: I remember "Pillars in the Sky."

FW: Oh I guess it was "Pillars in the Sky" rather than "Painted Wagon."

I: That was filmed with Jeff Chandler up on the Grande Ronde River . . .

FW: Yeah, and they stayed in the Sac Hotel and they rode up and down the elevator with us sometimes when we was hauling stuff up on the roof and then they came up to look on the roof to see what we was going up there [laughs]. We would haul the materials into the hotel, in through the hotel lobby and stick 'em in the elevator and ride up as far as it'd go and then pack 'em up the rest of the way [laughs].

I: Well, getting back to the starting of World War II . . . things had happened around locally. Of course a lot of the young men were called up for a physical to be drafted and . . . a number of people went to the Portland area to work in shipyards. 'Course it was very soon we had rationing and you couldn't travel very far. What were the biggest changes you saw during that era of time?

FW: Well, the fact that you had gas rationing going on. You had sugar rationing going on . . . you even had to have shoe stamps in order to buy a pair of shoes. I don't know, some people had all the gas and more gas than they wanted. I worked for one place . . . I worked for Bill Rivers delivering eggs and produce and stuff and we had all the gas we wanted. We had no trouble getting gas at all. And then other times you'd have trouble depending on . . . I worked part of the time at the Modern Laundry. Tires were shot on my truck and I had to go to Union once a week and I had to fight with the ration board in order to get tires and then all they wanted to give me was them old . . . some old cheap recaps that wouldn't hold together when you got 'em out on the highway and drove 'em. So I had an awful go around with the ration board but I finally got some decent tires for my truck so I could, and at that time we was doing all the laundry. We done the Grande Ronde Hospital's laundry. We done the Sac Hotel's. We done the Foley Hotel's. We done the . . . they couldn't get help. There was so many people that was gone due to the war and one thing or another. And the Foley Hotel had a laundry room. So did the Sac Hotel and so did the Grande Ronde Hospital but they couldn't evidently get the help or something because we had all of 'em I was taking care of.

I: Did you notice a difference when the cadets came in 1943 and they put them in the Sac [inaudible] Hotel?

FW: Uh, I didn't have too much to do with that. I wasn't . . . I can't remember just when I went to work for the Modern Laundry. I know there was cadets around here.

I: They blocked off [inaudible] street there alongside the hotel and when they got to [inaudible] they had to walk them off there on the street. Then they walked, marched them up at the college in their classes. It was the 354th Air Division or Squadron and then they took pre-flight out at the airport.

FW: Yeah, I wasn't around where the cadets was so I didn't know too much about them.

I: Well, I know some of the boys were a little bit disgusted because that meant competition for the girls that were in town.

FW: Yeah, the cadets was running around with a lot of the girls 'cuz the girls thought them uniforms was real nice [laughs].

I: And then you wanted to go to a show on the weekend and there was usually a line for a block. We were operating the Granada Theater and the State Theater and the Liberty Theater.

FW: Yeah, we had three theaters at that time.

I: And they were always full on the weekend because that was about the only thing in town to do.

FW: Yeah . . . Was the old Zuber Hall operating at that time?

I: Well, I was working at the theater. I think they were.

FW: I think it was but I am not positive about it.

I: Zuber Hall was for dancing . . . Do you remember after the war when the fellows come back from the service and a lot of them were going to college on the G.I. bill and they would have a dance at the Zuber or the college or the high school. The young fellows would dress up real nice and they would take a corsage to their girlfriend. Remember any of that?

FW: I was never into any of that. I never even had a girlfriend until well after that and I was out working and not anytime when I was going to school or right after I was out of school. I did go with one or two gals that was going to college here, but . . .

I: Well, they had a lot of dances back in those days but I don't think today you could hardly have a dance. Because there's not too many people dancing except for maybe

down at the senior center. There's a few of those people dance when they have music at their dinners down there.

FW: Yeah, that's another thing that's going by the wayside is there paternity clubs like the Elks and the Eagles. There's no dances at the Eagles anymore. They don't have one very often at the Elks.

I: Do you remember when you were a kid when the Elks would give out candy at Christmas time?

FW: I never did go up there.

I: You never went down there?

FW: No, I never did go up there.

I: Well, they would give you an apple and an orange with some candy in a sack and sometimes the kids would be lined up for a block.

FW: Well, that was, see that was the old Burger Grocery down there at Halloween on their trick or treating. She would work for two weeks or so before Halloween sacking up penny candy and stuff and had boxes of it sitting there and then Halloween night she'd open the front door and she had a deal set there and she sat there behind it on a chair and pass out these sacks of candy and stuff to the kids. And they never done anything around Burger's Grocery but they didn't get Mr. Synden too well so he . . . 'cuz Mr. Synden didn't treat the kids like the rest of the people in the neighborhood so there was a few problems a time or two up at the old Synden's Grocery. But Mrs. Burger always had I don't know how many of those she would fix up. And then on the fourth of July she, we always had a fireworks stand when I was a kid living down in that neighborhood. Down on the corner from us just across Z Avenue. Right on the corner of Z and Spruce there, there's usually a fireworks stand set up there. And she'd buy a bunch of fireworks and she'd shooting off roman candles and skyrockets and one thing or another around there we had a big fireworks display down in that neighborhood every Fourth of July that Burger's put on.

I: There's something that's changed. There's still a booth now and then that sells fireworks but it's quite regulated but you don't have as many kids losing fingers and maybe an eye that happened during that time.

FW: Yeah, we, there's a lot of changed been made since we was kids.

I: Do you ever find it hard to find something to do when you were a kid?

FW: Not too much. Summertime we was down at the river swimming because the old Crystal Plunge that was there by the viaduct . . . It closed down and at that time we either had to go to Cove or go up to where the mountain springs or something or other . . .

I: Pinecone?

FW: Pinecone. That's what it was, Pinecone. We'd have to go up there. So we had two or three pretty good holes down here in the river so most of us swam in the river besides we didn't have the money to go up to Pinecone.

I: Down to Highbanks?

FW: Yeah.

I: Just above Riverside Park there on the river.

FW: Yeah we . . . go down there. There was a big gang of kids of us that was down there all the time. I had a good friend that lived in the neighborhood there by the name of Jerry Hendrickson. Him and I used to be about the first ones in the river every spring. We'd get in there while there was still ice floating down the river and swim across the river and roll over on one side and build a fire over there and then come back over and then we'd swim across and then go in and stand there by the fire and get warm again. There'd still be ice floating in the river. The rest of the kids wouldn't hardly go in with us. Then Jerry got killed in the service.

I: Did you ever ice skate?

FW: No, I never did. Never did ice skate. There used to be some ice skating going on the pond. That's another thing that's disappeared.

I: Remember . . . Pioneer Park?

FW: Riverside Park, er, pond is gone.

I: Yeah. Well, at Pioneer Park they had one too. I lived in that neighborhood. And we'd have two or three days of real good skating and somebody invariably opened the head gate and the water would come in there and the wind would cause it to ripple and it would ruin the smooth skating.

FW: Oh yeah. I remember something about that pond over there. What was it that happened? They put in a . . . was putting in some sewer lines to take care of the street runoffs or something or other and they got 'em running the wrong direction and drained the pond over there when they opened it up [laughs]. Somebody was telling me about . . . that the pipe was lower than the pond.

I: Well, it's an interesting thing. Most people don't realize that there is a 22 foot drop where the river comes in at Orodell in there where Commercial Tire is now at Fourth and Jefferson. And the floods that we've had, that's the original course of the river down through there.

FW: Yeah.

I: And so when high water come along we always wondered why the water went down there. Well, that was the reason.

FW: Well, it used to have the ditch that run from all the way through this whole end of town and over and then down Spruce Street. Zigzagged across different streets and what have you and then down Spruce Street to X and then X out to the millpond and then there was irrigation rights off of that besides that.

I: Yeah.

FW: Because there was a place right there where I lived it run under the sidewalk there and you had a plank in there you would pull up and drop a board in and turn the water and send it down Y Avenue where people had water rights down there. Now you don't even have a millpond out here anymore.

I: What happened in '65 when we had the flood in this area that you lived in here?

FW: Well, I lived over here on Second Street just a block from where I'm living here now. And we was evacuated. They told us get out and the water was running down the street. That was '64, because that was the year my daughter was born.

I: Oh.

FW: And I took them all up to my mother-in-law lived up on Eighth Street just below the hill up there. And I took the family up there and left 'em and then I came back down to the house. I wasn't supposed to be there but I came down anyhow and I went down in my basement and the floor wasn't too good in there and I had a well in the basement. The water was coming up out of my well and coming up to the [inaudible] on the floor, so I disconnected my pump from the well and put a hose on it and threw it down there on the lowest spot I had on the basement. Started pumping water and I kept the water down in my basement. I wasn't even supposed to be there and I was staying there anyhow. I went in and went to bed. Hear the pump running and the power went off. The lights went out. Well, I'm going to have a mess now. I finally went to sleep. I took most of my bedding up to my mother-in-law's for the kids because at that time I had five kids at home with that new baby. So they was all staying with my mother-in-law and she didn't have enough stuff so we took most of our bedding up there so I piled some coats and stuff on me and was in on my bed. The lights come back on. I could hear my pump take off and start running again and I went down. I never did have too much damage done in my basement. Kept the water out of my furnace and everything. House next door to me on the south side of me the guy had bought that house and he had put a bathroom down in the basement. He fixed a basement down there put a bathroom and stuff and he had water plum up to the rafters up to the ceiling in that basement there. And the funny part

of it was the house on the north side of me didn't even have a cement floor it was just a dirt floor and it wasn't even wet [laughs].

I: Strange things happen.

FW: But I was able to keep the water out of my basement. Saved everything and didn't have an expense of a new furnace and all that stuff.

I: When you were growing up as a kid how did you heat, how did you parents heat your house?

FW: Well, part of the time we heated with coal. Part of the time we heated with wood, depending on where we was living.

I: Seems like you used to be able to buy a whole load of wood for two or four dollars from the mill.

FW: We'd get box ends and slab ends.

I: Slabs were cheaper than the boxes.

FW: Yeah, and we'd get a load of box wood and then get a couple of loads of slab wood and most of the box wood we used for kindling. And we burned wood when we was living down there on Spruce and Y. We burned wood in that house. But uh ... we lived in a brick house over here on W just about where W runs into Jackson over here, and that house had a coal furnace in it and we burned coal in that but it was lump coal. And the house after my dad died we bought this place over on Second Street. Mom bought this one over on Second Street. It had a coal furnace in it and just took one big floor register. And the way the furnace set in there, there was just a little hallway back in and around at that place. Wooden walls around it, and we burned lump coal in that all the time. There wasn't room enough to put a stoker in there so we used nothing but big lump coal in that one. I really missed that when I took it out because I'd come home at night and pull my chair up there and set my feet in the middle of that in the winter time and get my feet warm because I'd been out slopping around in the snow all day long. Even if you wore a pair of overshoes it was still like you were standing in a bucket of ice water because you'd get snow on your shoes and then climb back in the car with the heater running and it just kept melting that snow off and it was just like you stood in ice water all day long. Finally we got so my mother got so she couldn't take care of the furnace anymore and I was gone so much that I finally put in a gas furnace. And that first year with that gas furnace in there we almost froze to death because it was a different type of heat [laughs].

I: Well, you know, a lot of these houses that had a partial basement in there were then people dug 'em out and finished the basement. I know the house my parents lived in it had partial like that and it seemed like so many houses that I knew they had the walls down there but they never put the whole basement.

FW: Well, this was just a half basement and then somebody knocked a whole back in there and put the furnace in. Well, the V.A. ruined that house over there because going back in there, there was wooden walls up about four feet high up in there. But when I sold the house it went on a veteran's loan and they made them tear all that out. They wanted me to tear that out and I says no I'm not doing anything more to this house not at this price. If I am going to sell this house we will renegotiate this and it's going to be a better price if I've got to do any more work on it. I didn't want to sell it anyhow. My wife wanted to sell it. We were breaking up. So they insisted that the guy that bought it said he would do the work that they wanted done and part of it was to tear that wood out of there 'cuz they didn't want any wood touching dirt.

I: Yeah.

FW: Well, the last time I was in the house over there you go in the basement and walls was down in there and the dirt had all caved down in and it was so musty in there you couldn't even breathe and I had to get out of there 'cuz it choked me up so bad. And that was the last time I went in there. It was after it had been sold and tore out and it changed hands a couple of times and they had it up for sale and I just went in to look it over and see what they'd done to it. You couldn't even breathe down in that basement. We'd never had that problem all the years I lived there from 1938 till 1974.

I: Yeah. Strange thing . . . Now many times they want you to put visqueen underneath the house as a vapor barrier.

FW: Yeah, there's been a lot of changes around here. A lot of little old buildings gone that used to be here. What was it the . . . now I am having trouble thinking of the names again [laughs]. Does that come with old age John?

I: Very possible.

FW: Rogers. Rogers had a second hand store across from where the hub city was there. Had a little old wooden building there. And there was wooden sidewalks down Madison Street at that time. Most of Madison Street down there was wooden sidewalks. Part of it didn't have and sidewalks. Still don't [laughs] . . . But I don't know, John. I guess you can call it progress, I don't know. I sometimes wonder.

I: Well, at those early times the population was about eight thousand and then it's 12 thousand now. There's been some changes. Not always for the best.

FW: Well, we got more changes coming and I don't think they're for the best but there isn't anything I can do about it. I really don't think we need that big Wal-Mart out there but I've got nothing to say about it. They aren't going to take my word for it. But I think Wal-Mart's going to start having some trouble one of these days because they closing up a store up in Canada because they wanted to unionize it. They say that the store just isn't doing any good and they aren't making any money but the main reason they're closing it is 'cuz they don't want a union in their stores. They proved that down in Texas here a

few years ago when the butchers all was going to go union, well, they just got rid of their butchers and started buying their meat pre-packaged from the wholesalers that way and now they've done away with the butchers in the store down in Texas. They don't want unions.

I: Well, we used to have two packing houses here and [inaudible] packing plant.

FW: Yeah, which was the old Mount Emily.

I: Yeah, they don't seem to have any place around here that uh . . .

FW: No, I noticed there's one outfit that comes in here and delivers out there to Joe's says Tri-city on it but that's out of Meridian over there in Idaho is where their meat comes from. Deliver around town here.

I: We had one in Union and one at Elgin.

FW: Well, the big grocery houses we used to have here.

I: True.

FW: We had two of 'em. Interior Grocery and Baker La Grande Grocery.

I: And they were wholesale to the grocery stores. Those are changes that have happened and most people don't think of those things.

FW: No, they don't. And what have we got now, we got one or two little print shops here now and we used to have three or four of 'em.

I: Yes.

FW: [inaudible] and Palmer's, and Palmer's, of course I guess Palmer's still operates . . .

I: Sharp who run the Eastern Oregon Review; he did a certain amount of printing . . . I mentioned to somebody the other day that uh . . . not Red Cross but uh . . . Payless Drug Store started here in La Grande. The very first store. Gene Dettrick was the manager.

FW: Yeah, my sister worked there and one day a salesman come in and he says uh . . . come in and he says, "Where's the 3-P girl?" My sister says, "Who?" "Oh, the 3-P girl that works here." "Oh, I don't know of any 3-P girl. What do you mean?" "Well, she's pretty, petite, and pregnant." [laughs] He was looking for one of the help in there or some salesman looking for the help that done the buying off that particular deal or something or other. But she was pretty, petite, and pregnant. Yeah, look at the drug stores we used to have.

I: True.