

Vernon Ainsworth

1972, T1, S1

MA: I am Merrill Ainsworth. I am of the fourth generation of the seven generations of my family noted here in this recording. I'm speaking today in November of the year 2000. I was born June 28th, 1919 in La Grande, Oregon. These compact disks are the result of a series of conversations with my father, Roy Vernon Ainsworth, over the period from 1972 to 1976, one year before his death. His recollections were recorded on tape, his memory was acute and accurate except perhaps with slight exaggeration in some of his fish stories. The original tapes prepared with technology current at the time of their recording are showing signs of age. In November and December of the year 2000 I am transferring their information to compact disks with a few supplemental notes covering our family's history to this time. As previously noted, this record will less cover a period of seven generations from my father's Grandmother Hansen, a little Danish lady with one arm, to my great-grandsons, Jacob, Alexander, Chase and Nick, with my generation being the fourth and being in the center of the seven. It will cover a period of 170 years, a substantial part of the history of the United States. Of the original tapes the first covers family immigration from England, the move West to Utah and Idaho and a few fish stories. The second tape discusses the family move to Oregon from Idaho, the years of the Great Depression and hunting and fishing episodes. The third tape relates interesting happenings during Dad's career with the Union Pacific Railroad and, of course, more fishing stories. The fourth is a further summation of family history. An epilogue on the last CD concludes with a summary of events in my family's life up to the present time.

MA: What is the date today, Dad?

VA: The 16th.

MA: October 16th, 1972, huh?

VA: Yeah.

MA: Okay. Tell me, Dad, about the story you were mentioning you had in mind.

VA: ___ and they had him homesteading.

MA: Yeah.

VA: Up in Idaho.

MA: Right.

VA: Your granddad he was born in...in England in a little town called Woodgreen. He was born January the 22nd, 1848. And he came to Utah about...well, he was fifteen-and-a-half years old and they came in a wagon train and him and his younger brother, James, and his little sister, Jane. Your Granddad Joseph was fifteen-and-a-half years old, Uncle Jim was twelve and Jane was ten. And during the trip from the East coast to Salt Lake their mother got sick and died and she was buried on the trail and a stone marker put up for her and left these three little kids. So my dad, or your granddad, he took on himself to be the provider and everything for the three of them. And when they got into Salt Lake, why, the good people that had wanted 'em to put 'em one here and one there and one at

another place, but my dad wouldn't go for it. He said that they were a family and he wanted to stay with 'em.

MA: Had they been coming out with a church group, Dad?

VA: That's right. They were coming out with the Latter-day Saints group. They were converted to the Latter-day Saint faith in England. And so they got a little house and Dad he took upon himself to be the kingpin of the house. And later...

MA: He would've been about fifteen then, huh?

VA: He was fifteen-and-a-half and later on sixteen. But anyway, he kept the family together and they grew up and just done fine. And Dad got a job and he worked till noon and then he went to school in the afternoon. And then I think he went to school at night a couple of nights a week. And later as they grew up, why, Dad fell in love with my mother, who was Hannah Marie Hansen. She was of Danish extraction and, of course, my dad bein' English. So... And Uncle Jim he fell in love with another girl, her name was Emma Fleeter. And they were married within a couple of months of each other.

MA: So this was in about...the marriages in Salt Lake City?

VA: Yeah. No. They were married in Brigham City, Utah and that's up north of Salt Lake. And I might mention that your granddad built the first brick house in Brigham City, Utah.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. Which is rather interesting. He was a very active mechanic and a good carpenter. So the boys after knocking around and doin' some loggin' and one thing or another and helpin' build the Union Pacific up to Promontory Point decided the best thing they could do was to go out and homestead some of this good land the good Lord had put here in this earth. So they took a light-spring wagon and one saddle horse in the spring of...I wouldn't say whether it was '77 or '78 because... And they went to a little town which was later named Kari, Idaho. And there...

MA: This was just the two of them at this point?

VA: Was just the two boys. They went up there for the express purpose of...of lookin' the situation over and when they got there it looked so good to 'em that they both filed on 320 acres of land apiece. And this was close to the Marley ___ and next to a little place...lake there called Duck Lake. So they filed on their land and explored around where they could get logs and material to build 'em a house. And that happened to be twenty-nine miles from where their land is where they had filed...or going to file for their homestead. And they put up their marker and necessary requirements and files on the land and then they explored this possibility of getting logs to build log houses. And it was twenty-nine miles from there up what the called a Little Fish Creek. You were on Little Fish Creek one time with us, Merrill, when we had lots of sage hens to eat and ice cream there.

MA: This was when we were visiting over in Kari?

VA: Yeah, that's right.

MA: Oh.

VA: And so the next spring then the boys moved in with one girl of nineteen and I think Emma...Uncle Jim's wife was twenty and they each had a little baby to feed.

MA: By the time they got there.

VA: When they left Brigham City.

MA: They left Utah.

VA: And my brother, my first...their first born was named Joseph Leon and they called him Pat and he was red-haired and had a beautiful dimple in his chin and he was really a __ comedian. So they had rounded up a few head of cattle and a couple of sow pigs and had a few chickens for them and cattle and two or three milk cows, most of 'em Red durn. Some of the Red durn is a good beef cattle and a good...a good milker. And so one of the girls drove and the other girl she tended the babies in the wagon. And Dad drove one wagon with four horses and Uncle Jim he rounded up the cattle and the extra horses and kept them together and they moved into where they built their first little log cabin. Upon arriving there the first thing they done was...was...and they had nice tents and setup for living and they decided then the thing to do was to get some preparations made for winter because she gets cold and the snow gets deep up there. That's just forty miles from Sun Valley, Idaho.

MA: Had they... Had they got there in the spring, Dad?

VA: Yes. They had got there in the spring. So they did, however, get in a pretty good pack of potatoes so they had lots of potatoes that next winter to eat. And, of course, the Lord had just made that country especially for people who came in there. They had all the trout they could want for the takin', all the sage hens, all the prairie chickens, all the deer and all the prow horn antelope that they wanted to just shoot from their backyard.

MA: Is that right?

VA: And so meat was no object for them in...

MA: No problem at all.

VA: No problem at all. And they could really enjoy life. But... So they got organized and the potatoes in and Uncle Jim then he was the horse wrangler of the thing and my dad he was the carpenter and the builder. And so they didn't want to...they wouldn't leave the girls alone for my dad to go with Uncle Jim so I think the first trip up there his wife went with him and kind of helped him get organized. And he'd bring back a load of logs. It would take him three days to go up the twenty-nine miles with a four-horse on the wagon and get a load of these logs. And in later years I got to see the little ramp he built where he put his wagon to roll these logs on the __.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. And so as soon as Uncle Jim come in with the first load of logs, why, my dad, with the other chores around, of course, milkin'...I think they had three or four cows they were milkin'...and of course they had all the butter and milk and cream they wanted and all the meat they wanted. And they had to have potatoes, of course, they took good care of that potato crop. Now __ river went right through their property and so they had no...nothing to worry about fresh water and it was full of trout. In fact, when I was a young fellow I used to go out...Mother would send me out when we were irrigating the alfalfa and tell me to get her a nice mess of fish and she wanted 'em all about twelve to fifteen inches long and instructed me not to get 'em unless they were bigger. She wanted

fresh fish. [laughs] They taught me to bring 'em back and I'd chop their heads off and clean 'em out good and wash 'em clean and then they would have trout for dinner and maybe evening. I'd pick up all the trout that I could really drag in a big gunny sack. And getting back to the building now of their ranch houses, why, when they brought the first load of logs in, well, my father had his tools and everything there and he started building a log house for himself first. And this was a pretty good-sized log house. It was about, oh, I'd say about twenty-by-forty with a partition in between the log for one big bedroom in there and the rest of it was a kitchen and a dining and living area with a big fireplace in one end that my father built with rock they'd hauled in. And they have...there's lots of clay around that country which...and my father knew quite a bit about clay. And they would take and use this clay for various things like ___. And when they got the house a-goin' and this one finished now what the clay looked like I might tell ya. It was kind of a brownish-red and there was no carpets, no lumber on the floor, but this flooring was about two or three inches of this clay mixed up and spread out and smoothed down. Now I don't know whether they used anything on the clay in the rooms in the homes they built to make them slick and smooth. However, when the house was built I know that they took and used towels. The roof was made of this clay.

MA: Heck, the roof, too, huh?

VA: The roof was made of this clay and it was about, oh, five to six inches thick. And then this clay put over the ___ which smoothed down fine and looked a little more like cement.

MA: I'll be darned.

VA: And then they took and put this towel, hot towel on and smeared it on there and boy they had a good warm house a good...a good roof on there. All made out of logs hewed down and laid close together and then the stuff put in there. And the big fireplace, I know, was used practically to do all their cookin'. I think finally the next year they got a little old kitchen range shipped in forty miles that came in to Shoshone and they had to go get it, of course, that's forty miles away, from Montgomery Ward. And was very interesting to see how these two young fellas... My dad he was twenty-nine, I think, and Uncle Jim was about twenty-six-and-a-half. And the girls about eighteen or nineteen and twenty when they moved in there. But when the old snow started to blow, why, they had a chicken coup up so they could have eggs and chickens. And they raised quite a few chickens. I think the girls took care of the chickens, settin' the eggs and one thing or another. In building the houses, why, I think one of the girls would help my dad occasionally while the other tended the babies, two babies they had to look after. And Uncle Jim, of course, he'd do the haulin' and the wranglin' of the horses. And it was very interesting and I might tell you something about the land there. The only thing they had to burn that was anywhere near available was sagebrush. Now most people think of sagebrush as a little old brush that grows three or four feet high and has little stems about like your thumb. I'm talking about sagebrush that grows eighteen, twenty feet high and the bulk of the sagebrush is big around as your leg at the thigh. And that is the finest wood and the hottest wood that I think that was ever created.

MA: Is that right? They had a lot of that, huh?

VA: Oh, they had a lot of that! And when they came there they knew where the sagebrush grew big. That was some of the finest land. So on this land they took up enough thing there that...enough land there with the big sagebrush on it it lasted 'em for years and years and years.

MA: For fuel.

VA: For fuel. And it was put on there... And of course the girls'd get a little exercise once in a while if the boys were busy with a bucksaw. You know what a bucksaw is, don't you?

MA: Uh-huh.

VA: And in later years I can remember when we burnt out the big sagebrush good and we'd go down below there...below Uncle Jim's ranch and my dad's ranch...with four horses and about two or three of my older brothers and I'd go along to just be there. And they would cut a whole load of this sagebrush possibly three or four cord and pile it the big butts in and the little ones out and bring it back and, man, that was really some fuel. And it's really interesting to see how those people went into these places and actually got along and just lived off of the land, see.

MA: Uh-huh.

VA: I can remember in later years that my father went out there and in the wintertime would come in...the deer would come down to eat in the valley and he shot a big fat fawn and do you think that mother deer'd leave that fawn? No sir! She'd made little trail in the snow and come back and bawl for that little deer. And so my father then killed him. I was there. And we drug them in and butchered 'em out. Had a lot of good venison to eat. And they never took any more than they could eat. The only wasteful thing that I could see to it was when we...in the irrigation. They had no screen for the ditches and it was just tough to keep these trout from getting out onto the alfalfa and laying in the water and then dieing there and __ and so forth eating. We would drag in lots of the big ones there and chop 'em up and throw 'em in the chicken yard for chicken feed.

MA: Wow, trout that had got in the drainage ditches out in the fields.

VA: Right.

MA: Wow.

VA: And I've cut up many of 'em tha're eighteen, twenty inches long, great big trout on a big old choppin' block and throwed 'em over into the chicken pen. I could go on talkin' to ya, I suppose, for a week about that situation up there, but it just amazes me to think about how they moved in there. It's no wonder I have a little of the old-time flowin' in my blood havin' been born and raised up in a country like that where you had to be rugged. There's no question about that because the winters were terrible.

MA: How did they happen to leave that part of the country then, Dad?

VA: My mother was having arthritis so bad and Uncle Jim's wife had passed away and my father decided the best thing for us to do, and the doctor recommended, that we move to a lower climate. You see, you're up there about five, six thousand feet.

MA: Now how... When would this have been?

VA: That was in 1907 when we left there.

MA: So they had been there like twenty years?
VA: About twenty-five, thirty years. Twenty... Twenty-two and seven...around twenty-eight, twenty-nine years they had been there developing this. And these ranches were bought by ex-governor Goodingham of Idaho.
MA: Is that right?
VA: Who was a big stock man in that country.
MA: They sold the ranches they had homesteaded to him?
VA: That's right. And we moved then to La Grande, Oregon.
MA: How did they pick out that place to go in Oregon? And how did they happen to go to Oregon and what transpired there?
VA: There were, oh, connections with a Franklin S. Branwell had been up in that country and became acquainted with Dad and Mother and he recommended that they come there. He had been up there two or three times hunting and fishing and all in Wallow' and became a very good friend of the family. And it was possibly some of the best fishing country in the world and possibly is today. I can remember when...well, I guess it was around 1902 that my father got a franchise, it came in the mail, from Peekaboo. That was after the railroad had went in and we were only seven miles from the railroad then. And between putting up the first and second cutting of hay my dad would always declare a holiday for us kids and we would go fishing. And we would fish on Little Silver Creek that run down through a little valley close to Peekaboo, Idaho. And there'd be usually three or four of us kids over there fishing. All we used was a plain old...plain old little pole with a black hook on it and a grasshopper in it. And we'd just sneak around and drop that on the water and those big trout there from a foot to eighteen inches long 'd just grab it and start off and, boy, we'd heave 'em off. They didn't mess around with it because we took and cleaned these fishing items and we took 'em over to Peekaboo. Every day we would take 'em over to Peekaboo. We had a saddlehorse there and a one-horse cart and we would take these fish over the Peekaboo and they would put 'em on ice and pay us ten cents a pound for 'em. And most of that fish went to Salt Lake and in that neighborhood down there.
MA: Wow. Now how old would you have been then, Dad?
VA: I was about seven when I first made the first trip over there. Eight and nine I know we'd...I know I had the privilege of doing it at three different years I'd taken this fishing jaunt over there. There was no game law. There was no limit on how many you could catch at that time. And it was just there for the takin'...[end tape]

1972, T1, S2

VA: ...the youngsters that stayed home of our family, why...which there seemed to be plenty of them, there was nine of us there at one time...why, they shared in the old ___ Lake in the money that we would get from selling this fish. And by golly, you'd be surprised some days we would get nearly thirty dollars worth of fish over there and that was three hundred pounds! Can you beat that? That's a lot of fish! And I'll tell you that Montgomery Wards catalog after we had one of those

fishing spree had sure get a workin' over by us kids. [laughs] And you see, there were no stores there then, nothing but little grocery store, it didn't amount to very much. And it was really...really somethin'.

MA: Tell me about the move to La Grande then, Dad. Did...

VA: My father went to La Grande and Franklin S. Branwell he'd always kind of liked to raise fruit and so he bought this fruit place right out in May Park ___. It was part of the old ___ homestead. And they had twenty-seven acres, I think, all together there and part of it was in young orchard and part of it was in old orchard.

MA: These were what? Apples, Dad?

VA: Apples. Mostly apples. We had some pears and cherries and some peaches and just a general all-around fruit ranch. And people'd come from far and low there in the summertime when the fruit was ripe to buy fruit. I might tell you a little interesting thing that happened. There was three girls and their mother lived up above us there and they'd come down there to buy fruit. And once she got her fruit and she went to pay for it she couldn't find her ten-dollar gold piece. To show you how odd things get. So in about a week while I was gathering up some pears and stuff on a little slide with a horse to...[recording interruption]...for pig feed and low and behold and picked up a pear and there that ten-dollar gold piece that belonged to that girl. A prune had fell down and hit it and knocked it right into the dirt. And she...her name was Ruby Brooksy...and she got her ten-dollar gold piece back and was she a happy girl! [laugh] But really a funny...quite a coincidence that would happen, that you would ever find that. You see, we kept the orchard pretty well mulched and cultivated for apples and the dirt's soft and then this big old pear hit the ten-dollar gold piece it just went right down. When I picked it up and found that ten-dollar gold piece. Of course I knew who it belonged to.

MA: Made enough noise about...[recording interruption]...

This is an overdub. The following material is out of order from the original tape. It is the end of a railroad and Depression story which begins on CD number 2, track 2 about six-and-a-half minutes from the beginning.

VA: So he and I...I'd generally put in a couple of three dollars a week into the kitty myself and I figured that the Lord was pretty good to me, he'd given me a good job during the Depression and we didn't know what the Depression was really.

MA: Yeah.

VA: So we decided then the weather was kind of breakin' a little bit and the next day bein' Sunday, why, I went down and fixed 'em up with a lot more nice things to eat that night and told 'em that tomorrow night I would buy two tickets for Portland, Oregon and I would come and get them and we'd put them on the train and head 'em to Portland in a nice warm car, which we did. That kind of ends that story there on one of the worst nights I ever spent on this earth.

MA: Golly, Dad, that's quite a story. Did you ever hear anything more from 'em?

VA: I never heard a word from those people, not a word. It's amazing too, because they were so nice...seemed to be such a nice people that something may happened, they lost my address or something. And I gave them my name and

address, but I never heard or write 'em. But you talk about a Depression, that was the...that was the Depression of all depressions in the United States. I might add that those poor farmers down and around Ontario and Vale, Oregon were in terribly pinch. They brought in truckloads of turkeys there in Vale and you could buy dressed turkeys ten to twelve-pounds a piece for fifty cents.

MA: Is that right?

VA: And you could buy fifteen to twenty-pound turkeys for seventy-five cents. I know when the first guy come buy with a load of turkeys I bought three or four of 'em, big ones. And my wife, your mother, like to had a fit wonderin' what I was gonna do with all them turkeys. Well, I said, I'll give 'em away. And then another time I bought a dozen __, great, big, red rooster __ you know, that dressed about seven or eight pounds and they had little chicken coop there and I put them in there. And then when we were on the road [laugh], why, I'd go and butcher one. And they were the finest chickens that you ever ate in your life.

MA: I'll bet so.

VA: And potatoes you could get them for two bits a sack, but they would like to have the sack back, that cost 'em a nickel. Onions were the same price, great big onions twenty-five cents a sack, but they would like the sack back. If I didn't have any sacks I'd just give a nickel to buy another sack. And that's a really...that's really a Depression mister.

MA: Those farmers were eating anyway, weren't they?

VA: Oh, they had...

MA: I know a lot of people weren't...

VA: ...plenty to eat, but they just couldn't get enough to buy gas to move the produce to market. And people just didn't have the money to pay for it. There just wasn't any money available. Every night coming through Huntington on those trains they had a standing order that no bums was supposed to go in the sand house. The sand house had two or three big stoves in it and it's a building, oh, maybe twenty or thirty foot wide and had these three big coal-burning stoves in there and this sand that was picked up down along the Columbia River by the carload is brought in there and goes up on the dyke and is dumped into this bin out of these dump cars. It's all got to be dried and then blowed up into the container which is some forty or fifty foot high so as they can sand the locomotives. Because wet sand and the sanders on the locomotives was no good, it just don't work. You've got to have good dry sand and all of this sand had to be dried. And then it was shoved up into the container that stood about forty foot high there, blowed up. And every bum that come in wanted to know where the sand house was nearly froze. And that night it was so bad I had that sand house just about double-deck with men, not only men, but men and women.

MA: Just in there to keep warm, Dad. [telephone ringing]

VA: That's right. [recording interruption]

MA: Okay, it's October 16th... Correction, October 18th, 1972. Okay Dad, you know how to explore the Looking Glass, huh?

VA: Yeah. I thought that would be a very good subject to explore. It's mostly fishing and having a good time.

MA: Okay.

VA: So along in the '20s and '30s when the U.P. run the regular passenger train out of La Grande at seven o'clock in the morning and back home at La Grande about five in the evening, why, that was a fisherman's paradise. There'd be twenty or thirty fishermen every Sunday morning mount that train and the engineer would pick 'em up any place along the railroad from Lookin' Glass to the mouth of the Wallowa Canyon. And it was quite a sight, and quite a smell, to see those fisherman in a car. [laughs] And of course I happened to be one of them, too.

MA: I can't believe it.

VA: Anyway, the Lookin' Glass runs into the Grande Ronde at the junction what they call Lookin' Glass. It's a beautiful stream! How it come to be called Lookin' Glass was the water is always just as clear as a crystal. You can look in those big pool...[recording interruption]...up there and see the fish down in there, you know, is really wonderful. [modem dialing up] I had fished it several times from the train and then we'd get up farther on the creek to find out...[modem static]...the other side of the hill there. So Warren Wagoner had an old...that's Pauline's cousin, double-cousin in fact...and old stack of wheat out there and it was just alive with mice. Previously to this trip I had caught a frog or two and got a little piece of skin on his back and hook and put him out on one of these big pools at the falls and let him swim across. He'd get about halfway across and one of them big ol' dolly pardon, or bull trout, either one is a proper name for them. They're a beautiful fish! And they are scavengers of the streams, especially up in that country. They'll eat anything. I have caught them with a small duck, a muskrat and big frogs and various things that gets on the water they'll take it. But they're a little different fishing, they are, than some trout. When one takes this bait...and they prefer live bait if they can get it...why, he grabs that and he goes down to the bottom with it and I don't know why unless he munches on it a little bit before he swallowed it. And when he swallows it...so when one gets a hold of your bait you just let him have it and don't pull on him at all because if you do you're liable to pull the bait of his mouth or tear the hook out of the bait. And when he swallows it and it gets down in his stomach then you tighten up on him, boy, you have got a fight. So we had the old 1923 Chevrolet then, this was about 1924, and Jess Curr and I decided to go in to the fall, that's about five or six miles up the road from Lookin' Glass. I wanted to try some of these big holes with mice. So I up there at Wagoners we went one night and dug around in that straw and we caught twenty-five mice and we put 'em in a ten-pound lard pail with a screen over the top and little straw and wheat and stuff in there so we had our bait the next morning. So the next morning before daylight, why, we headed for the Lookin' Glass. You go up through Elgin and turn off to your left there at Elgin and kind of circle around and you come over to where there's a little old schoolhouse been in there, oh, maybe seventy-five years ago perhaps, a little white schoolhouse. Just beyond that is where you leave the car and there's a little valley, or little draw, runs east and when you go up through there it puts you right in at the falls. So we headed in there with our ten-pound lard bucket full of mice and twenty-five mice we had in there. We could've caught more, but we thought that was plenty. Anyway, we got in there and this...there's three great, big, clear

pools and the water is maybe ten or twelve foot deep where it's been comin' over there for Lord knows how long, maybe hundreds and hundreds of years and it's dug out a big deep hole and the water just as clear as a crystal and there's bush up close to the edge of it. So we get in behind this brush and I drops in one first and, boy, we hooked these little mice just with a little...a little skin on the back of their thing and let 'em out gently onto the water. And he starts to swimmin' across and when he does, why, it looks like the whole bottom of the pool comes alive. Those big boys in there tryin' to take him for a ride. Of course one gets it and you just let him have it and in a few minutes when you're satisfied that he has swallowed, why, you tighten him up on it a little and boy you have really got a job then. And those trout in there, Merrill, this dolly pardon or bull trout, some of them weigh five or six maybe seven pounds! They're really big fish, you know. We fished these three big pools out there from just a little bit after daylight to about eleven o'clock. Then we made a pot of coffee and had our sandwiches and one thing another and cleaned our fish and back home in La Grande about six o'clock that evening and we had nineteen of those big boys that run along anywhere from eighteen to twenty-six inches long. And they're a fine eating fish, too.

MA: I'll bet. What'd you do with the other six mice is what I want to know?

VA: We lost them somewhere, I don't know. But it's...been real careful, but we may have pulled on 'em a little too quick gettin' kind of nervous, you know, and they would let go. And then that ended that little trip. So another little trip that we had was myself and Uncle Jim and both our boys, his number two grandson and my number one...number two son and my number one son. My number one son was about thirteen years old and his number son I imagine was around ten. And we stopped up at the hill where the old log chute was, that's beyond where you go over to the falls, and we was there real early in the morning too and we packed these little boys with pretty good packs the same as us. And we wanted to go to the old mill. Sometimes the fishing around the old mill on the main Lookin' Glass is...would be just tremendous. But it wasn't too good, but what I really wanted to was get Willy up on the North Fork, way up on the main Lookin' Glass. I'll cover that little story after we complete this one. But anyway, we had a wonderful time and we caught, oh, all the fish we could eat with fried onions and potatoes and coffee and whatnot. And during this time we was going up and planning on going up the main Lookin' Glass. It's a funny thing, three or four miles from the old mill there's hardly any water in that Lookin' Glass. And when you get up there about four or five miles from there you got a big stream of water.

MA: Is that right?

VA: And the best fishing that I ever hit in my life.

MA: What happens to the water? It goes underground?

VA: Goes underground late in the fall and there isn't any water down there at all. Anyway, after breakfast the next morning, why, bright and early we were going to head up the main Looking Glass, get this choice fishing place. I had been in there once before, but it's kind of hard on account of the brush and the contour of the land there to just determine exactly. And of course it was all my fault that we got a Brushy creek instead of the main Looking Glass because I didn't keep to the

right. Then it started to rain on us and it rained good. You don't even have...got a recollection of it haven't you?

MA: Can't say that I have, Dad. No.

VA: Anyway.

MA: I remember a few fishing trips, but I can't identify related to this one.

VA: Anyway, why, we kept plowin' up Brushy Creek, which is on the left, and I knew we were wrong so I started to fish in some of the big pools on Brushy Creek maybe ten feet wide, twenty feet long, and a caught half a basket out of a couple holes there of native trout and a few rainbow. The one thing that tickled me, it just kept rainin' and kept rainin' and finally we got up to where __ the head of Brushy Creek and I told Jim that we were on the wrong track, I was sure of that, 'cause we had went on the other side we would've been on the right. But he kept askin' his number two son, Don, if he was havin' a good time. And "yes". And about the fourth time he asked Don if he was havin' a good time and the rain was runnin' down around his ears and his neck, "Don, you havin' a good time?" "Hell no, Dad!" [laughs]

MA: Decided to be honest, huh?

VA: So we had to pull out of there that night. If we had stayed another day I'd of known where to go to get up on the main Looking Glass. But anyway, we came back to camp and built a good fire at the old mill and had lots of feed and the sun come out and then we had a good time. The one thing I never will forget, we packed you boys in proportion just as heavy as we did. I was about thirty-three I imagine, at that time...thirty-two or three...and Uncle Jim was probably forty. And you kids would run along with your packs up the trail goin' up to the old mill ahead of us about, oh, three or four hundred yards, lay your packs down then you'd start rollin' rocks and throwin' rocks and climbin' trees and just havin' a great time. [laughs] __ with out tongues hangin' out and sweatin' like a trooper. So anyway, we had a wonderful time and one that I will never forget. Now again to another little story about __ came up from Huntington and he wanted to hunt deer along the main Lookin' Glass on the east ridge. So he called me up at La Grande and we made a date and we went in there and we went into the old mill, we left our camping equipment there, and we hunted on the east ridge from the main Lookin' Glass. And we hunted early in the morning, we saw several does and fawns, but we never did get a chance to shoot a buck. But we had our fishin' tackle with us and some good cured angleworms. What I mean about cured angleworms...this might be good for Mike to know, too...we would dig these angleworms and we would put them in grass and grassroots for a full five days and it would kind of fizzle all the dirt out of 'em and they would be nice and pink and red and lively as a...could be. And that was the way they used angleworms for fishin' because when you put them on there you start to wiggle 'em Mr. Trout thought the was...

MA: Pretty hot stuff, huh?

VA: Pretty hot stuff is right. Anyway, we hunted till about nine o'clock and went down where there was a great big old __ tree. I can see it yet. And there was a good stream along it there and none comin' in there down at the mill. In fact, a big stream. And we...we had our fishing tackle and we went to fishin'. We

figured we only had two hours 'cause the boys was gonna have dinner about noon or one o'clock and then we had about four or five miles to hike to where the car was. We started fishing and I'll tell you now I never saw such beautiful fish, rainbow trout, in my life and every one of 'em looked like they were hatched out at the same time. They were about from twelve-and-a-half to twelve-and-three-quarter inches long and it was wonderful. And I could fifty-three in two hours and I had a nice big basket full of trout. And Jess Curr he had thirty-seven, but he had one bigger one than me. He caught one bull trout seventeen inches long.

MA: Wow.

VA: And so then we headed back and of course on those trips we always put up fifty cents a piece for the guy that catches the big trout. And Jess he was sure he had it. And finally his brother-in-law and his boy...Jess' oldest boy...were fishing and ___ that trip. Pretty soon ___ with nice fish and Jess says, "Oh my goodness!" He says, "Here's one that the guts are bigger than the fish I caught!" [laughs] And ___ Jess was good and all happened to catch one of the big bull trout. Anyway, we got back and boiled potatoes and had butter and all...and all the bull trout you could eat and coffee and bread and jelly and we was ready to come home. And we stopped in Elgin and I got fifty pounds of ice because we really had a load of fish. So ___ and good time and I put those fish down in the basement. I took part of that ice and then got some more ice and I put those fish on ice in the basement on the dirt floor with a burlap sack under 'em and I covered 'em with a big old quilt. And do you know, we had 'em off of ice there for two weeks and were just perfect to eat.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. Another little trip that we had over there was during grouse season. Jim and I and Roy Quzick went over to hunt and of course, as per usual, we wanted to make the old mill our headquarters, which we did. And we caught all the fish we could eat and we caught a few grouse, but it was not, you know, too good. So we decided to move down to the point where the North Fork of Lookin' Glass comes into the main Lookin' Glass. We got down there, oh, around three o'clock in the afternoon. We were not havin' too much...too heavily loaded.

MA: Were you gonna stay overnight then?

VA: Yeah, we stayed overnight on the point. Anyway, we got down to the point and we wanted to cover as much of the ground as we could fishin'. So Jim wanted to go up the north fork of the Lookin' Glass and Quzick wanted to go up the main Lookin' Glass, well, I said, I'll go down the main Lookin' Glass. So...[end tape]

1972, T2, S1

MA: How big a community was La Grande at the time say what there, Dad?

VA: About fifteen hundred to two thousand.

MA: Where...

VA: Very small. And the ___ past Adams Avenue and where all those streets were no paved streets and there were a few board sidewalks and the mud'd get [beep]

about ten or twelve inches [beep] deep past Adams Avenue. No paved streets at all then. Oh, that was a mess.

MA: What was the situation on these apples? Where were they sold or were they shipped out of there or what... what was the arrangement?

VA: Most of 'em went to Great Britain and France and Germany.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah.

MA: And where did they go from La Grande?

VA: To Portland and loaded on the boats.

MA: Huh. That's interesting.

VA: Because I don't know they didn't raise many apples in Great Britain, but there was quite a market for them at one time in Britain and France and Germany and through that country. It looked to me like that they should've been able to raise all the apples they wanted back there. Of course, it's one of those things, commerce and trade which would be different.

MA: Then how old were you, Dad, when you went to work for the railroad? How... How did this come about?

VA: I went to work for the railroad when I was...in 1916, I was eighteen. I told 'em I was twenty-one so I could get a job.

MA: Tell...

VA: And then when the draft come up I thought I was gonna get fired, but they let me work anyway because I'd lied about my age and I really hate to acknowledge that to my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, but then it's one of those things a fellow has to fight for in life, I guess.

MA: Tell me that story about the string of cars that got away with the people aboard.

VA: Oh yeah. You see, it was 1907 when George Palmer __ came to La Grande and built the George Palmer Lumber Company sawmill which was a big mill. And we had a...the Union Pacific has a branch going out of La Grande to Joseph. And after you hit the Wallowa River up about five miles there's a town they call a junction named Vincent. And from there there were sidetracks and Ys and so forth to handle logging trains and U.P. trains, turnaround engines and so forth. And about five miles up then they had what they call Rattlesnake Junction where there was a little flat there and these Shay engines would pull the empty cars up there and then have to leave them because they went up a...really a steep grade from there and they could only take about six or seven cars, empty cars, up this hill.

MA: Shay engines? What are those, Dad?

VA: A shay engine is a geared engine. It has a gear on...connected up to every set of drive wheels where the steam piston that runs up and down is mounted on the side of this shay engine. It runs up and down like this on a can that turns this wheel when you open the throttle to give it steam.

MA: I see. Why were these used in preference to a more conventional type?

VA: They were so much more powerful.

MA: I see.

VA: They're so much more powerful. Of course you had to have plenty of sand and if the track was frosty or wet you had sanders on these engines and all you had to do

was flip a little bob in them and blow a little sand under the front of the wheels to make them run, to make 'em stick to the rail. If they didn't sometimes, why, you would hit some of this stuff and the wheel would go around really fast you'd stop, stall.

MA: I see.

VA: So the sanders was really what you had to have on the engines whether it was a rod engine or a geared engine. This was in 1922 this accident that happened up there, it was in 1922. Along about I guess August we had run out on strike on the Union Pacific Railroad for more money, etc, and I took a job up to the loggin' camp doin' some work on the railroad locomotives up there, refueling one locomotive and so forth and just a general flunky all around. Run the shay engine up there for four days one time while the engineer was sick. And I fired for another engineer when his fireman was sick a few days. And then when we had the big forest fire in there, why, I was the mechanic that had a gasoline speeder and I had two from...we went from one place another. They would fill a whole trainload of tank cars with water and they were coupled together. And then up at the end next to the engine they had a steam pump that would pump this water out and we'd fight fire with a trainload of water in these cars. And when these cars were empty, why, they'd go back down four or five miles where they were filling 'em and just set 'em out and grab another string that was full and come right up and that just kept goin' day and night fightin' fire.

MA: They were protecting that investment in timber, weren't they?

VA: Oh yeah. The timber was gorgeous, great big white pine logs five and six feet in border, six feet through, you know. I've cut some of the most beautiful pine boards and shot...that's a term used for exceptionally fine lumber, mostly was shipped to Eastern places for furniture and one thing or another. One afternoon, why, the train didn't come in and so they finally got on the phone down there and told 'em that a string of cars had gone out. And so superintendent got a hold of me and wanted me to go down and investigate it and find out just what it was and call him back. And I went down there and when they had...when groceries and other sundries would come up to the logging camp from Vincent on this little railroad, why, there were...they was just loaded on a flat car and the people they just set down on the boxes and one thing another and rode up to camp which was about ten miles and take about forty-five minutes to an hour to make that ten miles. And they usually would come up with a string of cars they could pull a pretty good string from Vincent up to Rattlesnake Junction, but at Rattlesnake Junction they had to set out these cars and then take about half of 'em on up to camp. This day, why, they set out part of the cars, they had eight or ten, and the others were left on the main line and the engine come down to couple into 'em and bumped the cars and coupling didn't hold and the cars started to movin' down the hill. The engine run and made...tried to make two couplings, but it was useless, they were going too fast. And they were...about then twelve miles way downhill from there to Vincent. And so there was a brakeman that worked up at the camp by the name of Cantrell and four little boys, he and his wife, and they happened to be on there coming back to camp. They'd been out to La Grande. And he was very concerned about what would happen when they would strike the

D-rail down at junction. He could just imagine 'em going end over end off into the water. So he took these little boys one by one and they had come to a good bunch of brush he'd throw them out there on top of this brush. And this car was possibly making...they estimated at maybe a hundred and twenty to thirty miles an hour when it hit this D-rail. The most miraculous thing you ever heard in your life. And this fellow Cantrell had made everybody lay down and on each other and grab a hold of the...of the car decking with their hands to try to get 'em to stay on there. When they hit the D-rail goin' at that speed that car, believe it or not, went over that D-rail and stayed right on the main line. And the groceries and everything on there just went off all over the hillside there and into the Wallowa River.

MA: Were these flat cars, Dad?

VA: These were flat cars.

MA: And how many were on it other...other than the Cantrells?

VA: I think there was nine people on there and these four little boys that their daddy had threw off into the brush because he wanted to save them. But this...this car then run for about, oh, I guess it's about three-and-a-half to four miles, could be a little more or less, from Vincent to where it started uphill again then it...then they could stop it and get the handbrakes workin'. But when a car goin' that fast, why, your handbrakes there's nothing you...they're just no good. And...but bumpin' into this car, why, [ring] they couldn't catch it.

MA: Was it just one car, Dad?

VA: Yes. Yeah. They had... They had pulled up on the main line and cut this one car and let it sit there. Then they go up and back in and set these...half of this bunch of cars out on the siding then they take the other cars and come and to pick this car up to take it up to camp.

MA: I see.

VA: And it's... But anyway, I got down...I got down there as fast as I dared come down the hill and looked the situation over. And the first thing we done was down a mile from there we found one of those boys and he was dead. His head had hit a rock evidently. And all four of the little boys were dead. We finally found...located them all by just about dark. And so we took the bodies and wrapped them up and took 'em into camp and they were brought out to La Grande for funeral the next day. But it was the most terrible thing. And every one of those people that had stayed on that car were not injured.

MA: Isn't that amazing.

VA: It's the most amazing thing I ever heard of. I don't... Well, it was just going so fast and when it hit this D-rail it just raised up a little bit and kept right straight on. You'd think possibly the back trucks'd maybe broke, but it didn't.

MA: It's going too fast. Went right over the top of the...

VA: It's going too fast. Went right over the top and stayed right in the line and went down there.

MA: Back up the other side.

VA: Yeah. And clear down...see, the railroad was going down to where the Grande Ronde River comes in the Wallowa River and then when it started up...you're goin' up then from where the Grande Ronde River empties into the Wallowa

River. I guess they call it the Grande Ronde from where...from there on down. It is called the Grande Ronde. But the Wallowa River...that junction there, this point.

MA: And they send the engine down to get the car back up to...

VA: Oh yes. Everything was cleaned up that evening.

MA: How?

VA: A lot of tears and a lot of crying goin' on at camp.

MA: I should think.

VA: Four little dead boys. They'd been in age from about eight to two. A terrible thing.

MA: That's quite a tragedy for that father in both...

VA: Mother.

MA: ...in both ways, not in just losin' 'em, but thinking how it had happened, you know.

VA: Yeah. The brush is thick along there and what he had in mind...he could vision what it was gonna be like when this thing went over the D-rail.

MA: It was really a knowledgeable decision.

VA: Yeah, it was.

MA: It was the best thing he could have done probably.

VA: The best anybody could have done. It sounded really reasonable. And they were possibly only goin' sixty or seventy miles an hour when he threw these little boys off in the brush thinking that would save them. But it killed all four of those little boys. The prettiest little youngsters you ever did see in your life. And it just about wrecked him.

MA: I'll bet.

VA: It just about wrecked Mr. Campford, he was ___. But I done a lot of work for those people up there through the years. The railroad company'd send me out to work for 'em. When we's out on a strike, why, I needed a hundred-and- ___ for one engine and the superintendent called me up and asked me when I was comin' back to work. I said, "Mr. B___, just as soon you can get them flus up here to me and I can get 'em in I'm comin' back to work for Union Pacific." He says, "I'll have them flus up there in the morning for ya." [laughs] Which he did. So that was quite a...quite a deal. I'll tell you those people that were on that car were really shook up though.

MA: I'll bet. A lot... A lot of curves I expect on that downhill run. I'm... Some miracle that they all stayed aboard. There really isn't too much to hand onto on a flat car, is there?

VA: No. He made 'em hang onto the...off the side when they were turning like this he made 'em all grab the hold there and lay and stick their legs over each other so that they would be enough to kind of hold. And he done a wonderful job gettin' 'em down...layin' 'em down on a flat car because he expected when they hit down there for it just to go to pieces and just to throw bodies all over the...all over the universe. But I'll tell you the groceries and the boxes weren't held on there. When they turned that corner down there and hit the D-rail that stuff all along the road there and maybe a ton of provisions they just went up in the air and

out across the country and scattered beans and coal and canned goods and everything all over the country there.

MA: Did you ever investigate any other railroad accidents, Dad?

VA: No. We had another bad accident up there, Merril, when I was a mechanic taking care of these pumps when they had the big fire up there in the fall of 1922. I'll tell you about a bad accident that happened. They have what they call donkey. I don't suppose you know what they are. But they're a little steam stationary engine that has a boiler there furnish the steam to this stationary engine and they run long cables off down in the hills and they hook it onto a log and give the high sign and that log...they turn this little engine on they drag it right up to the track, see?

MA: Mm-hmm.

VA: Great big old pine log. They were workin' where they had a bunch decked down in the canyon there and they had the...this donkey engine pullin' the logs up. So then we got in to one great big log there and the fellow give him a high sign to do it and somehow or other, they don't know just what happened, but anyway just to mention that, they turned the thing on, why, this log hit a big old stump there and it snapped the cable in two. And what do you think it done? It cut that fellow completely in two, this cable end, steel cable about three-quarters inch.

MA: This was the guy up at the donkey that was running the engine?

VA: No. The guy down at the bottom that was a-hookin' the logs.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Cut him completely in two. I brought his body back into camp.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. Terrible accident.

MA: I should say so.

VA: This cable was snapped right off and of course it possibly stretched forty feet before it broke. See, a big long cable several hundred feet long. And ___ he never knew what hit him. Pretty easy way to die to be cut in two right quick. [laugh] I don't know, it's...I had some great times. Anything else you'd especially like to hear about?

MA: Yeah. Something you mentioned...hmm. [recording paused] Stockly number five? What's that, Dad?

VA: I'll tell ya, well, it was about a quarter to nine. We were living at 1025 Y Avenue and you were about three years old then and the finest little fella that God ever give a man for a son. And they called me and I was very apt with a cutting torch and working on...I done all the work on snow equipment for the Union Pacific. And evidently they...well, anyway, they wanted me to go so they called me and I had fifteen minutes to make the train and they said they'd hold the train for me over there because the work crew had a dozer stuck in a bridge and the main line was tied up between Camilla and Pendleton. So I called roundhouse and told 'em to get two tanks of gas, one of sevaline, to test 'em out to be sure that they were full and I'd have Pauline she'd take me over and I'd take my equipment, which I knew was with me then, and be over there. And they had to hold the train about five or ten minutes for me to get on 'cause by the time they got their stuff over there and I'd get my winter clothes on...man, it was ten below zero and the snow

was deep and you had to have some clothes on and especially up on top of the mountain. So I got everything organized and got in the baggage car and as we approached the dozer I could it wasn't on the main line, it was on the sidey. And Mr. Giles, the superintendent, had told me that they would have the crew there, the dozer crew, there to help me. What they had was a wrecker coming out of Pendleton about three a.m. to load this dozer and bring it into La Grande for repair, but they couldn't move it until the lower structure part of it was cut off. Of course I knew where to cut it to repair it just when we got it into the shop. So pretty soon we pulled up there on number 717...[recording transcribed previously]

Vernon Ainsworth

1972-76, T1, S1

1972-76, T1, S2

[person speaking, but the sound is distorted and unintelligible]

1972-76, T2, S1

VA: ...so pretty soon we pulled up there on number 7...17...along 17, the Portland Rose, and we stopped ___ Ronny says, "Ainsworth, here's where you get off." I said, "It looks kind of bad, don't it?" And so slipped those tanks out into the snow about six foot deep there and I took my stuff and jumped out into it right up clear to my chin in snow. And, well, I was kind of burned up because they told me the crew 'd be there to help me, see?

MA: Were you alone? No one else there?

VA: I was the only one there and nobody else there in the canyon here and ten below zero and snow clear...clear ___. But anyway, I seen where there was a phone box right close there so I called Mr. ___ up and told him. I says, "Just what did you want me to do? Do you want me to go ahead and do the best I can here?" I said, "There isn't any crew here to help me." I said, "This thing is when they backed it out of the...off of the bridge there they just got it packed full of snow. It's got to be dug out." And I says, "I don't know what I can do alone." He says, "That's too bad." He says, "You just do the best you can." He says, "and if we have to ___ when the crew gets in there from Pendleton, why, it'll be all right." So I went back and go up in the ___ and got me organized and there's lots of shovels there. So I went to shovelin' snow for about a couple hours. After a couple hours...a

couple hours in there of shovelin' snow I had the ___ shoveled off and a big spot shoveled off when I could put up my tanks and go to work on this dozer cuttin' it loose.

MA: What were you cutting it loose from, Dad?

VA: The dozer part of it is a frame that goes up and down. It operates up and down on the outside and then it operates by air and big arm goes in like this, knuckle arms, and you can go down sagging and pick all the snow off ___ off down into the canyon.

MA: I see.

VA: One side or the other or you can use both sides, see, and use it as just a regular ___ plow. I went to cut 'em and everything ___ and everything went on all right. And I was getting down in there and of course the heat from the ___ torch soon melted a lot of that snow down underneath there, you know. Or I'd get the little braces and I'd cut the braces off ___ that you could take 'em into the blacksmith shop and make a ___ and that's all we'd have to do. And you had to cut that off so that they wouldn't hang down when the dozer was put onto a train. So I got the...was getting along fine, just fine. I had about...I had one side completely ready to go and part of the other side and was up to the nose, that's up where the coupling is at the front of this dozer. And, well, where this coupling is on the front end of the dozer, why, I couldn't reach it so I had to get up there and stand on the head with my feet in the air and crawl down in here with my feet up in the air to cut off a couple of...one of them braces. And about the time I got them braces cut off I heard the biggest roar comin', it just sounded like all hell was roarin' down through the canyon there that night...and ten below zero and just a clear as a bell and still, you know, and see a bobcat occasionally and this and that and the other rollin' around out there with their eyes shinin'...and I knew it was Number 5, the mail train, Hotshot Special. ___ I went to get out of...[sound missing]

MA: ___ you were hooked on the lever there.

VA: So the time I got out, unhooked all the ___ and got out, well, the mail train had run by and this red fuse-E, which is an engineer just dashin' runnin' past the Red through Z, you know, that's against all rules and regulations. Of course, I knew that too, however, why, he just "hoo, hoo, hoo" with the whistle and applied the brakes and you never saw a scene in your life that will equal that with the sparks and the hot metal flyin' off of those wheels just lit up that whole canyon on both sides. A picture of it would be somethin' to look at.

MA: He really hit those brakes, huh? [laughs]

VA: Yeah. Of course I thought, well, I'm in bad, I may have a lot of flat spots on that train and may have to cut 'em all or limp 'em to Pendleton and transfer everything. So self-preservation then, the law of nature, why, I don't know why it come to me right quick, but I grabbed this red fuse-E and run around to the other side of the dozer and I stuff it way back in the snow just as far as I could and then I lit my torch and I laid it down and cut a...cut the...

MA: Oxygen down.

VA: Oxygen down a little and here the little red sparks was flyin' off of this. This engineer he backed up to the thing and he looked at that and, "What's the idea of red fuse-E?" "What do you mean red fuse-E?" I said. I said, "I got nothin' here but a __ torch." I said, "If you can't tell the difference between a red fuse-E and a __ torch, why, you better get into Dr. Booley and have your eyes tested!" And we argued for a little...as much as two men, I says, "The best thing you can do mister is get the hell out of here with that train or you're gonna be in bad." I said, "I suggest you have your eyes tested when you get back into La Grande." He "whoo, whoo" and away the train went.

[laughs] So the record was Mr. __, he was __ at Reese, he come in the next mornin' pick it up there about three-thirty and I had it already to pick up and put on a flat car. And then I went in and they took care of my stuff for me and the gas and everything and I went in and the cook in there fixed me a nice big breakfast and then I crawled in the sack and they woke me up at seven-thirty, I was back in La Grande ready to go to work. [laughs]

MA: Did you ever hear any more from the...?

VA: No.

MA: ...__?

VA: No. Anyway, the next morning I went right to work there at the shop. I didn't go home. I had my sleep and a good feed and so I went to work. And I got to thinking about ten o'clock that I suppose when that fella makes a case of this that that was a red fussy and he gets me into it down over it. So I told the __ woman about a Frank Woham and I says, "I believe I ought to go across to...I can get along Mr. Gile and give him the picture of things so if this thing comes up...because Gile would have the indirect charge of the...of the trainmen and enginemen." __ says, "Maybe you better do it." And so I got a hold of Mr. Giles, the superintendent, and asked if he could give me a few minutes of his time, that I had something very important to discuss

with him from last night. "Sure. Come right over Vern." So I went over and I told him the story of the red fusee. I've never saw a superintendent of the railroad laugh so much in my life! [laughs] And then days later, why, he called me up and told me that he'd never heard a word about the red fuse-E from the engineman. [laughs] So that kind of ended that. That was ___.

MA: You were gonna tell me about the night in Huntington, Dad.

VA: Oh, that's a pretty long story. I'm gettin' tired.

MA: Oh yeah? All right, we'll do it another time.

VA: We'll do it another time. ___ tomorrow morning.

MA: Okay. [tape paused]

MA: You were gonna tell us about that bad night at Huntington, Dad, right?

VA: Yeah. I thought that'd be kind of interesting to remember.

MA: This is October the 17th, 1972.

VA: 16th.

MA: Yesterday was the 16th, right?

VA: ___

MA: What you told me. I made ____.

VA: Well, ___ these ___. I think maybe I told you wrong, I don't know. Don't make much difference of one day.

MA: Okay, Dad.

VA: Is this thing here pointed right to me?

MA: Yeah. You're in good business there.

VA: I thought it'd be kind of interesting, Merrill, to know what really transpired and what happened during the Great Depression of 1929 to about 1937. The worst period was from 1929 to 1933. And the Union Pacific, along with every other big corporation or railroads, were in an awful financial stress for no business. People lost their homes, their bank accounts and everything, including me. So the Union Pacific was fighting to keep things in operation and so in 1931 in October they decided to readjust their operation to curtail expenses. So they moved the route from Huntington...or from La Grande to Huntington and along with that moved the old ___.

MA: Made that a division point there instead of La Grande?

VA: Yeah, made a maintenance point instead of La Grande.

MA: I see.

VA: And La Grande wasn't doing any of the work on the engines. They were running from Huntington to Reese, right through La Grande. So I went to Huntington and took nine ___ and Helberg and two sets of

bottle washer to Huntington so we could wash ___ on a twenty-four hour basis down there. And the first year at Huntington I worked days as boiler ___. And then she kept a-gettin' tighter and tighter and tighter and so in October 1932 the ___ the night foreman's job at Huntington and assigned those duties to the boil foreman. So the boil foreman he went on nights. And everything went along pretty good. We were only runnin' about two freight trains east and two freight trains west a day besides the passenger trains and the mail train. So I'm leading up to this story of this worst night that I believe I ever spent in my life. The foremen in those days worked twelve-hour shifts and you usually turn your work over to your other fella in the line-up, why, you generally up in about twelve-and-a-half to thirteen hours a day. And the Union Pacific they had a good place to work, but they didn't have any respect for young human flesh, if you could take it, and you had to be tough to take it. So this night in particular was a novel star and wind and snow and it was ten below zero when I went to work about seven p.m., as usual, about six-thirty usually I would go to work. And you can't imagine on the freight trains the poor fellow that came through Huntington strangling, hungry and cold with nothing to eat. And so we set up a kind of a relief program. I operated the program and Senator King would collect money, fifty cents or a dollar or two bits here and there, from the engineers and fireman and trainmen and turn the money over to me. And I wouldn't give these poor hungry fellows the money, but I had a little yellow pad that I would write to...and okay them to take this across to a little restaurant. I can't remember that fellow's name that run the restaurant there at Huntington. A great big fellow.

MA: Howell?

VA: No, it wasn't Howell. Howell came in a little later. But he was an awful nice fellow and so we lined up with him and I would right ___ to go over and they could have all the hotcakes and a couple of eggs and coffee all they could drink and all the hotcakes they could eat for two bits. And if they wanted a couple of big bowls of soup and crackers and coffee, hot soup, and this fellow that run the restaurant done a wonderful job of makin' this big pot of stew and soup. And you could go in there for fifteen cents and have all that you could eat, good hot stuff comin' in there on them cold trains and crackers and coffee. And it worked out pretty good that way. I suppose we spent around seven or eight dollars on that program.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. So this particular night I came to work as usual, as I previously mentioned, and it was terrible cold, Merrill. It was ten below zero, we had thermometers up, you know, over in the roundhouse and outside and around so we could know how cold it was, and it was ten below and a forty-mile a wind blowin' and the sagebrush bein' broke off and the sand and the dirt and the snow was blowin' in through there. You could hardly stand up against it at time. So I had the Portland Rose that was due in at 9:10. So I set the engine out, 3216. She was to cut in on there to go east at Huntington. The 5407 brought the train in that night, eleven cars loaded to the gads with people all asleep and a couple of day coaches for them to ride in. So we set this 3216 out and I called an extra ___ that night because I wasn't gonna send an engine out without somebody ___ heater, injectors, feed-water pumps, steam heat and everything was in operation.

MA: Why, Dad? Afraid they'd freeze up, you mean?

VA: Right, afraid they would freeze up. And so ___ our house there, our regular house there, he went out and took the 3216 out, she was a coal bearer, everything was burning coal at that time east of Huntington.

MA: This was before the days of oil-burners, isn't it?

VA: Yeah. We had oil-burners only from La Grande to Portland. And I instructed him to stay there and instruct the engineman about the heater, be sure that they were left on because it was terribly cold. Of course you had steam heat in the cabs of these engines and it's nice and comfortable in there, temperature around seventy-five or eighty. So what does Mr. Engineer do but turn off the steam heat. And unbeknowing to me when the train pulled in we cut the 5407 off and put the 3216 on the train and I couldn't...we couldn't get any steam heat through all these cars and it would be a disaster if we couldn't get the steam heat through. So I kept the 5407 standing by always on a night like that just in case that I had to cut the engine off, put another engine on to keep the train warm because two or three hundred sleepin' in there at ten below zero that wouldn't of been...boy, she was tough. I had a big old sheepskin coat on and turned up around and my cap on and gloves...two pair of gloves and my long jeans, wool pants and brother I want to tell you you needed every bit of clothes you had. We backed the 3216 in on the train and we couldn't get no steam heat through. So we fussed around for a few minutes and a ___, who was lead car man on the second shift. He says, "I know what's the matter." And we always kept waste...oily waste and a big long rod arrangement that you could put all the waste on clamp

it on there and light it to thaw out any pipe. So he stuck this oily waste under the cab of the engine and sure enough, why, he broke that pipe loose and the steam come through and about that time the engineer and firemen come out of the cab from the...so I told 'em to get back in there and take it. And what I should've done is fired both of 'em and called another crew. But I didn't because I was afraid it would create unnecessary delay. So, boy, I'll tell you it was a pleasure to me when I could see those ___ up on that train and the steam line goin' though that train because it was...it would add such...if you froze a train up there and busted all those pipes those coaches would've been tied up for weeks before they could've been put back in service. We finally got 'em...all the steam heat through and everything in operation and the train pulled out and so I went...started back to the roundhouse office and I was goin' by the rip track...went by the rip track which was on my way to go back to the roundhouse...so I went by a boxcar, the door was open about six inches, and I thought I heard a little baby cry. I says, "Oh, good Lord no! That can't be right on a night like this." However, I stood there and sure enough I could hear that little baby cryin'.

MA: I'll be darned.

VA: And it makes me cry to think about what would've happened if I hadn't of got a hold of that little family. I pulled the box car over and threw my flashlight in there...I always carried a good three-cell flashlight focuses light...throw a light for a hundred or two-hundred feet...

MA: Yeah, I remember that.

VA: And here in one corner of the boxcar was about three or four old blankets covered with coal dirt and everything was a bunch of little kids and a man and his wife curled up together there to try to keep warm. So asked the man, I says, "What are you doin' here?" He says, "I'm tryin' to get to Portland." He says, "If I can get to Portland," he says, "I'll be all right." He says, "I've got a brother there that's expecting me." I says, "Man," I says, "You can't stay in here tonight." I said, "This car I noticed on the bully is cut out for wheels. She'll be here for a couple of days." And the thought came to me, what in the world could I do with that family? And so the Union Pacific maintained a big storeroom, it was about thirty foot square and it had steam heat in it, set right down close to the barrel room, and it was an emergency supply room and it had everything in there imaginable for supplies, bed and cushions, caboose cushions

which are about four foot...about four inches thick and about six to seven feet long, made a nice bed to sleep on in emergency. So I says, "My goodness..." Now I had a key to it and the roundhouse foreman...the day roundhouse foreman had a key to it and that's the only two people in Huntington that had access to this place. And among the other things that was in there was 40-30-30 carobean rifles and lots of ammunition.

MA: What'd they need those for, Dad?

VA: I expect they'd had 'em in there in the days of the Indians, but the Indians were gone now and they just left 'em there. [laughs] And there was lots of canned goods in there, canned beans and various things like that and soups and whatnot, just emergency rations, crackers and stuff. And the eatables were usually changed out every year in there to have fresher ___. So I thought, well, my goodness, I've got to do something with this little family. So it come to my mind just as quick as a flash, I'm gonna move 'em in there even if I get fired, which I fully expected to do if they found out what went on, and I thought I'd plead my case if it came to that. So I took it upon myself to gather this little family up and there were six little children, the oldest one, I think, was eleven and the baby was about six or seven months, that's the one that was cryin'. And all in the world they had in there was a half a bottle of milk frozen solid as ice and part of a loaf of bread. So I told that man, I said, "You come with me now. Let's gather up here." And it was just maybe fifty yards to this building where we had this emergency supply. And I put him in there and I knew nobody else could get in there but me and the day foreman. And the day foreman was W. C. Johnson, little red-headed fellow was a fine man in Huntington. So I put them in there and that poor little baby was just about blue it was so cold. And the little kids all had their nose runnin' they were so cold and they was just covered with coal dust and it was a pitiful sight to behold. Now in this building we didn't have any bathtubs, but we had a nice big washbowl and toilet facilities in there. And so I took this family and I put them in the emergency supply room and they're all hungry and cryin' and whimperin' so I went across then to the restaurant...I didn't want them to go acrossed or exposed to anybody, but they were in this building...[tape interruption]...and I got, oh, maybe a gallon-and-a-half of big soup, of good thick soup, hot soup, and a big box of crackers. There were all the dishes they wanted to use in the world right in the...in the building. And I got four quarts of milk and I think

seven or eight hamburgers. Hamburgers at that time, believe it or not, cost us ten cents a piece and milk, I think, was eight cents a quart. And we always got a generous supply from this restaurant there who was trying to...appreciated what the railroad men were doing ___ unfortunate people. [crying]

MA: What happened then? Did they stay in that building? [telephone ringing] [tape pause] You got 'em fed up with some hot soup anyway, Dad?

VA: Yeah. You ready to go?

MA: Yeah.

VA: I told this fella and his wife, "Now just stay right in here and don't get out." And they could keep it just as warm as they wanted to in this building, but I didn't want them to go out roamin' around or open any doors and to be quiet in there as possible. But, you see, the next day was Saturday, this was a Friday night, and there'd be nobody in the storeroom...the storeroom was part of this building...and it was closed up with the exception of W. C. Johnson and me who had a key to the regular locomotive supply room and the storekeeper did not work on Saturday. But if we wanted anything we could go in and get it and leave a requisition form. [tape pause] Well, towards morning I went over and got another gallon of milk and a dozen hamburgers and big box of cookies and a dozen Hershey bars and brought...I figured they could ___ because I told 'em the Union Pacific wouldn't miss a can of beans or two that they could warm on the radiator there if they wanted to or some soups there, too. So the next day was Saturday so when I come to work, why, after I got rid of the day roundhouse foreman...however, I had told him that I didn't want him to go in that room that day. I told him in two or three days I'd tell him the story. And he said, "Fine." He said that was good enough for him. So I went in then Saturday evening and boy all those little kids was all cleaned up just as slick as a whistle as you could see and the mother and father were cleaned up and it was a beautiful, beautiful family, Merril. Just you can't imagine what the difference of gettin' out of that box car covered with coal dust in ten below zero and the wind blowin', what a difference it made for those little kids to get in there and get their bellies full of good warm food and into a good warm place.

MA: Where did they come from, Dad? Did they tell you?

VA: They came from Ohio.

MA: Is that right?

VA: Yeah. But they happened to get in the worst blizzard that we had ever witnessed in Huntington and the coldest one. Anyway, why, when Senator King come in that night...now Senator King was an engineer. I think I previously mentioned that, but he would collect this money and turn it over to me and then, oh, there was fifteen or twenty of 'em around Huntington that were giving fifty cents or a quarter. And we didn't give these people the money, as I mentioned, because we thought they'd maybe go buy beer with it or something else. We wanted 'em to have good warm food which we thought was the right thing to do. Anyway, Senator Kind and I set and discussed it for quite a little bit in the office and I think I had seventeen dollars for that in our kitty. I kept track of everything I spent and everything and Senator King and I would talk it over. He was a wonderful man. I call him Senator King...I can't remember his first name, William C. or something like that, but he was a...he had previously been a senator in the state of Idaho, but he was an engineer also on the Union Pacific railroad. And when he was elected to the senate in Idaho, why, he still...[tape interruption]

MA: Here are a few concluding notes on my generation. I attended elementary and high school in La Grande, Oregon except for my last year of grade school and the first and part of the second year of high school in Huntington, Oregon. My dad was transferred there from his post in La Grande during the Depression years by the Union Pacific railroad. His supervisory post at La Grande was eliminated because of the Depression and he went Huntington as the night foreman of the Union Pacific maintenance division point there. On CD number 2 he relates an interesting story of the winter conditions there during the Depression years. I picked out my wife-to-be, Betty Lee Burns, during my junior year in high school at La Grande. At a high school basketball game I bet my friend, Henry Stoddard, twenty-five cents that I could take her home from the game. I won the bet and my wife of now over sixty years. Betty and I went our separate ways for advanced schooling, but kept continually in touch. After I finished with my engineering degree I returned to La Grande to claim Betty as my bride. I thought then and I think now that this was probably the best decision of my life. My college grades were such that I was fortunate in being selected by the Douglas Aircraft Company headquartered in Santa Monica, California as a participant in a program for graduate engineers they called Department 66. This

program transferred and engineer from one department to another through out the company each week or two for a year without really expecting them to be very productive. This provided the young engineer with a great and well-rounded exposure and must experience really in aircraft engineering and manufacturing. I was able to find a nice studio apartment in Santa Monica for twenty-five dollars a month out of my principally \$26.44 weekly engineering take-home pay. I met Betty at the railroad station one rainy evening in Glendale, took her out to dinner and to our new home in Santa Monica. World War II was about to begin and at Douglas we were building aircraft being flown directly to Britain under a land-lease agreement negotiated by our president in Congress to support a beleaguered Great Britain as the United States was not yet in the war. A second night job at the Interstate Aircraft Corporation in El Segundo plus extra pay for overtime work on special assignments at Douglas let us accumulate enough funds to move from our apartment to a rental house and then, with the birth of our Michael, to buy a home. Our home at 11217 Grand Place in West Los Angeles was purchased through William Hiler, who, with his brother Grover, were prominent real estate brokers and real estate developers. Bill was to become our friend and my mentor for the rest of his life. The house was a beautiful two-bedroom home with hand pegged oak floors throughout, fireplace, big lot and in a lovely neighborhood. The purchase price was \$4,500. On a visit to the area many years later we find...or found that not only the house, but the entire neighborhood was sacrificed to a freeway interchange. World War II intervened. At the time of Pearl Harbor we had not yet moved into our new home and were living in a rental house about two blocks from the east end of the main runway at the airport where the Douglas Aircraft Company was located. Barrage Balloon Companies and anti-aircraft batteries were rushed in from the Midwest and we were personally enveloped in a maze of barrage balloon defenses, anti-aircraft batteries and camouflage structures for the Douglas facilities. There at this rental home we listened to the fireside chats from Franklin Delinore Roosevelt by radio, observed blackout regulations and air raid drills and experienced the infamous scare-generated Japanese air raid on the Douglas plant. Anti-aircraft firing fallback was coming down like rain. The location of the aircraft "shot down by our anti-aircraft fire" as reported in newspapers the next morning, was a couple of miles from our house. I volunteered for Navy service in preference to being drafted and for the opportunity

to receive engineering graduate training in aircraft electronics. The importance of electronics, formally just radio, in war was just being realized with the invention of radar, radio-direction finding, electronic navigation and communications. The Navy was establishing a large program to educate engineers from other fields in the field of electronics. I was fortunate, after passing successive examinations, to qualify and be selected for this program. We gave Bill Hiler power of attorney to take care of our new home. I put Betty and Michael on the train for La Grande, Oregon and got on a train myself for Chicago and the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. After Navy boot camp I came back to Chicago for training in general electrical basics and electronics. After graduation there I was reassigned to Texas A&M at College Station, Texas for graduate work in aircraft electronics design and operations. Betty left her temporary job in the health department in La Grande and joined me later in College Station. There she worked as a secretary in the agronomy department at the college. A weekly foray into Brian, Texas for dinner and a movie was our highlight of the week. On completion of my graduate work at Texas A&M I was assigned to duty at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station main base. Betty went to La Grande and brought back Michael from my parents who had been caring for him. Here, after a short while, we procured a nice small apartment being vacated fortuitously by old friends from La Grande. Navy Chief Dick Walker and his wife were being reassigned shortly after we arrived. My duty there at the base consisted of design and performance of modifications on aircraft there were being trans-flown from Britain via Corpus Christi for __ work to the South Pacific for service there as the war was beginning to wind down in Europe. My next assignment was transferred to the San Diego North Island Naval Air Station. We drove across the country after a false start and returned to Corpus Christi in a defunct, newly purchased, too-well used car. A swap for a black Studebaker got us going again. Four days of my ten-day delayed order transfer and we were still moving through the Texas panhandle. Duty in San Diego was similar to that in Corpus with the exception of being on flight pay and on flight...[end tape]

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MA: ...so we purchased a nice house on Poinsettia Avenue in Loma Porto and I was able to be off-base during my off-duty hours. I set up a radio repair shop in our garage and in my spare time did radio repair work for local radio and appliance stores. Betty got work as a Western Union communicator and deliverer and was able to work from the house and care for Michael. Betty liked this work except for the miserable responsibility of relaying telegrams from the military reporting deaths and missing in action cases to local San Diego families. Except for a brief transfer to the aircraft carrier Essex for discharge duty in San Francisco at war's end, this concluded our military duty. Back in West Los Angeles Bill Hiler had, at our request, sold our home at a nice profit at a point earlier when we didn't know when or if we would be returning. Now he had a nice apartment waiting for us and we were ready to return after selling our home in Loma Porto. On a trip to Van Ise from San Diego, visiting an old school friend, Bob Burk and his family, I located and purchased acreage in Northridge where we would later build a home. My work at Douglas had disappeared at war's end and after taking on other less than satisfactory assignments there I moved to the research and development facility of the Bendix Corporation in North Hollywood. We moved from the apartment Bill had procured for us and into a large investment property in Sheviat Hills which he was holding for renovation and resale. Betty, working with an architect, designed the home we immediately started building on the property in Northridge. This was to be a nice rural commute from my new work location in North Hollywood. Here at Bendix were accumulated some years of great experience with great people. During these years I had the opportunity to mature professionally, participate in and then head a series of interesting and challenging activities. Other than the fact that considerable travel was involved and this kept me from home too much, the professional exposure was ideal and kept me at the cutting edge of fast moving technology. Post-war developments were many in electronics with the Korean War and Vietnam, Sputniks and the Space Race all escalating the tempo. I was retained as a consultant by the U. S. Navy Research and Development Board and for a year chaired their committee on Electronic Miniaturization. During these years I was able to personally develop two other ventures. The first was a magnetic door lock which was premature and a financial flop. I

had developed it for potential sale, but by what was then Sears Roebuck. Upon completion the manufacturing cost was too high and Sears didn't think they could sell it profitably in competition with their lines of traditional mechanical locks. However, it was the forerunner of the magnetic key cards that open doors and gates everywhere today. I then developed an electro-chemical destatisizer, which was trade named...which we trade named Electrosol. After introducing the development by presenting a paper at a meeting of the Society of Chemical Engineers in Cincinnati the product found a ___ market in removing the electrostatic charge from things from carpeting to phonograph records and, interestingly, to rotating cylinder action lamps, which were then very popular. The product was compounded in large cases and large kettles in our kitchen in Northridge and shipped in cases of gallon jugs everywhere. With funds accruing from this source we were ready to try something a little larger. We had started the Circon Component Company in Northridge, California in our home and garage and a second garage which we built specifically for the purpose in early 1954. In 1955 we began looking for the best place to move the business and after numerous visits settled on Santa Barbara, California. We negotiated leases with Bill Hiler's help with the City of Santa Barbara for three buildings at the Santa Barbara Airport where we began operations in the first of January in 1956. The negotiated lease provided renewal options for a period of twenty years and an option to lease a fourth building if it were ever vacated. These lease was a valuable resource as we grew and industrial rental rates...rental rates escalated over the coming years. I was requested and was granted and indefinite leave of absence from my affiliation at Bendex. We operated an electronic research and development facility at Circon which was supported financially by manufacture and sale of the products we developed. The name Circon we derived from the words circuit and connector, which were the first products that we designed and produced. In corporation soon followed and the Circon Corporation still functions successfully in new buildings in Yolia, California forty-six years after it's Northridge beginnings. We sold the business in 1970 and I concluded a twelve-month management contract in 1971. During my concluding months at Circon I supervised construction of an office, shop, library and working lab building on our home property in Santa Barbara. Here I have kept occupied pursuing my many interests since that time and here I am recording these notes in conclusion of this

family record. May God be with you, listener, and will subsequent generations of this Ainsworth family.