Ariel Bean, narrator
Vanessa Clemens, interviewer

6/3/2002, tape 1, side 1

VC: I guess it wasn't wound far enough so we'll try just once more. [tape interruption] It's gunna be on there. [tape interruption] Okay, try once more again. See if it's any louder. [tape interruption] Good morning Ariel. How would you like to give me your full name and your age and how many years you've lived in Union County.

AB: You've got enough down on the paper already to cover the first two. I've lived in Union County all my life except for military service and being away at school. [tape interruption, blank space for a few minutes]

VC: Alright, we'll that once more about your grandfather.

AB: In 1903 or maybe a little earlier, Grandfather, Victory Bean, wanted to more from southern Utah, Richfield, Escaline and Boulder where they lived. He came to this valley and found that there was a family by the name of Miner that wanted to move back to Utah that lived over at Nibley. So he looked over their livestock and proposed that they trade. So he knew what he was getting, but the Miner family didn't know what they were getting back in Utah but they traded livestock that way, avoiding the freight rates of having to move cattle and horses and so on. When they came the first place I know of that they settled in was up on the west of the top of the Second Street hill up where the Miller's live presently. Granddad built the barn which is still in part standing there at least.

VC: What are some of the conditions which you were raised? Comparison economic conditions with the present day.

AB: Well, the first job that I ever had was driving a slip in the hay fields when I was about somewhere between ten and twelve. I didn't have to harness the horses. I got ten cents a day. The men that were loading the hay and doing the stacking and all that got a dollar a day plus board and room.

VC: Oh my. What do you remember about healthcare needs in your family while you were a child?

AB: I don't remember much about it. If anything happened, why, you took care of it at home. We were living down on the highway avenue, as I recall, I was getting dressed out by the kitchen stove, by the heater stove one morning and before I had anything on after taking my pajama pants off I managed to back up against the stove. The cure was a raw potato poultice. It seemed to work.

VC: I'll be darned!

AB: Oh, mustard plasters were be cures there was something called dundrow mud that you had to put things on your chest, but uh, you didn't go to the doctor very often. I have a spot on my tongue where I fell and bit it and left a bump there that I've had all my life. We didn't go to the doctor to get anything sewed up.

VC: So you didn't go through the flu business like so many did?

AB: Well, yes. We had the flu when we moved out into May Park back in 1936 in that bad winter. We were snowbound there for three weeks. My dad and I both had

the flu. And Andy Brown was the one that packed a good portion, kept things going as far as the rest of livestock and whatever we had was concerned.

VC: Thank goodness for good neighbors, huh?

AB: Yes.

VC: Was there any experiences in school that you wish to recall? Maybe some of your favorite subjects or special programs or something?

AB: Well, I started school at Willow and my first four teachers' last names all started with B. The first four grades. Let's see, Brown, Bennett, then over at Union, Busick and Burns. And incidentally Roxy Burns Gertchin, who had me in the fourth grade, is still alive down in Salem or Eugene.

VC: Oh my gosh!

AB: Talked to her for her birthday here back in May.

VC: Isn't that marvelous!

AB: Ninety-three, I think.

VC: Wonderful we can live that long and have our minds!

AB: Well, she still has hers alright.

VC: That's great. What are some of the particularly happy times you had in your family?

AB: Oh, that's a tough question to go back and remember that.

VC: Well, was Christmas always special? And you birthdays?

AB: I don't remember much about birthdays except getting older. At Christmas…the Christmas that we…one of the Christmas' that we lived up on the in the 900 block on Third Street. I think I got up at two o'clock in the morning and went down and opened up my presents and when everybody else came then I passed out and was asleep on the davenport.

VC: [laugh] Couldn't wait?

AB: No, I couldn't, couldn't wait, but then afterwards I think they had to wake me up. Probably the story I should tell about Christmas was when we lived out there on what we call the Five Acres on Highway Avenue. Let's see, it tells different number now. Log Cabin Grocery used to be on the corner of Adams when you started down that street. And Al Johnson still lives on it. But anyway, for some reason at the age of six or eight, somewhere along in there, I wanted an axe for Christmas. And my dad was a con artist of a kind. He kept telling me long before that period of time that showed up that in order to figure out the size of axe that I should have Santa Clause would have to come in and measure my foot. And if I opened my eyes to see him measuring I wouldn't get anything. Christmas Eve my dad had some sleigh bells and we didn't miss him, but when those rang my sister and I popped into bed. And before very long I could feel somebody reaching under the covers and what felt like a ruler was placed against the bottom of my foot. And the next day there was an axe under the tree big enough that Paul Bunyon woulda liked to have had it, but it was too much for me. But somewhere when we moved to Catherine Creek or back to town the axe got lost along the way. I don't know what happened to it.

VC: [laugh] What part did the church play in your early years? What religion do you belong to and tell me a little bit about it?

AB: I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church. When we lived on Catherine Creek we still came to La Grande because of my dad's responsibilities in the church. And we would often be at the old tabernacle earlier than the Stoddard clan that lived katy-corner across the street. We'd get there. I presume that…my memory's not too good…I think I was baptized in the old baptismal font that was there. All I know is that when it was remodeled Vic Stoddard and I stood outside in the rain and mixed the cement to make the new one that Elmer Perry was in charge of. I was the last agent bishop of the old tabernacle. I wrote letters to Salt Lake regarding that being the oldest tabernacle in the Pacific Northwest and a historical building. And as far as I know those letters must have been filed in a circular file. But we did have difficulties with the building. The had been reshingled with thick buck shakes back in the 1930s with George R. Lyman sort of in charge and Glen Metcalf doing the work. And over a period of time the weather…the part that was supposed to weather on those shingles began to come apart and so a heavy rainstorm would wash little slivers of wood down into the gutters. And one particular place it was plugged up was on the O Street side of the building where the stairs went to the west tower room. It backed up and come over the flashing and come down the wall inside. Another difficultly was the real driving rainstorm would come through, to some degree, on the west side of the building up toward the front where the Gethsemane picture of the Savior was hung. And so we'd have a wet plaster inside so it dried out on that. The heating was a problem. If was warm enough up in the top tower room everybody in the chapel was cooking. If it was just comfortable in the chapel in the wintertime the tower room was freezing.

VC: Were there meetings in the tower room?

AB: There was Sunday School classes were held in the tower rooms.

VC: Oh, oh.

AB: Another difficulty toward the end of things about two weeks before we had a stake conference we had the drain line go out. Earnest Woodard was helping with that and he got a hold of Rotor Rooter and then he told me later, he said, "I knew we were in trouble when Rotor Rooter came up out of the ground." The line had been laid with terra cotta tile whenever they put it in, which maybe went back to about 1918 when they put modern plumbing in the tabernacle. And the tile had over a period of years, due to the action of the water and the weather and so on, had begun to cave in on itself. And fortunately we were able to replace the line inside the parking, but we didn't have to dig up a lot of Fifth Avenue to get down to O Avenue where the city sewer connection could be made. Another problem was that when they remodeled in the 1950s they put in between the recreational hall and the tabernacle a big coal bin. And a carload of coal would come in from Utah and we would have to have it unloaded here and then haul it up and fill the bin. Which that'd be stoker it was like a big worm feeding the fire cloth in the furnace. But enough coal to heat the building, the tabernacle, created quite a lot of clinkers and those were always having to be disposed of or hauled off. But I go back to the time when they were burning wood and I can remember cords of wood stacked in between the two buildings eight feet high stretching from about,

oh, maybe forty feet from the east of the Fourth Street sidewalk clear on out to the end of the recreational hall and beyond. And that was what was used to fuel the fires to keep people warm for a good many years.

VC: Did they keep it warm every day, or just during classes and church?

AB: When they got the stoker in it was easy just to let things go. Of course it would steam heat all of it. But when it was fired by hand I don't think they may have kept some fire going, I'm not sure. But you had to take the…take the four foot length cord wood, toss 'em down one level, then go in and toss 'em down another level before you toss 'em in the furnace.

VC: Oh my! That was so much work! Were you one of the one's responsible for getting the windows in our new LDS center.

AB: I don't know whether I had a hand in it or not. I, I knew it was being done, but the Stake is the one that made the arrangements with the people that came to take those windows down. The stained glass windows, incidentally, were made by a company back in New Jersey which has long since gone out of business. The peculiar thing about the stained glass is that all of the chapels, one in Baker, Halfway, Enterprise, Elgin, Pendleton, Pilot Rock and two in La Grande, all have bits of stained glass in them somewhere that came from the old tabernacle.

VC: I didn't know that.

AB: The extra glass was saved and used for that purpose. Now when we had hoped to use the circular window that was way up high on the east side of the building because it had in it the eye that represents the all-seeing eye of God. But when the people got that part down we found that there was a space of glass missing in it just about the shape and size of the eye, but too close to they eye for them to be able to replace that. So a different circular window was used in the south end of the new tabernacle, excuse me, new stake center. On the west side when they got to that big circular window there they found that over a period of years dry rot had affected the wooden casing and it had settled about six inches without making any gaps up at the top because of the flashing and whatever was there. But the glass in the bottom of the window had all bent in kind of a …if you just cup your hand it'd be sort of like that…and the lead had gone with it so that there were no cracks down at that part of the window.

VC: My gosh!

AB: Now, one of the pictures which hung on the left side of the upper tabernacle, the upper chapel, as your looking toward the front, pictured the Angel Moroni, Joseph Smith kneeling and the gold plates. That picture was saved, in a sense, by Larry Hibbert and due to his efforts it is now presently on display in the Portland Temple.

VC: Oh, that's marvelous. So everything of any historic value was saved and reused, then, pretty much?

AB: Luana Peck wanted the cover…and I forget the name of the thing…but we always used to take the stove pipe and the stove out of the house in the summertime and put one of those up there to fill up the space in the flue. She wanted the one out of the tabernacle and because her dad worked on it then. I managed to liberate that for her. I think she painted something on it maybe, I'm not sure.

VC: Oh, great!

AB: I can remember being in the first chapel that was built in La Grande for the Mormon Church. It stood on sort of facing on Fourth Street and in line with N Avenue. And I was in that. I can remember seeing the curtains. I don't recall that they were made of red flannel at the time that I saw them. That was to divide the whole hall into classrooms. But in one occasion because it was cheaper than the other material those dividing curtains were made of red flannel. Now, the Second Ward was organized about 1924 and they met in a house or another building that they had over there. But in the process of time that building was jacked up, moved across town and it is the building now where the Family History Center is located. That became the Second Ward Chapel from whenever the building was moved in the late 1920s until 1950 when both wards began to meet up in the tabernacle. But it's had it's spot in history. Besides being a ward chapel, and incidentally during the late '30s and early '40s and maybe earlier than that they would push all the benches back of the chapel area and it became the recreational hall. And I've been there when they came…they had a dance. Grandpas and grandmas came, little kids came, the babies they parked on the benches somewhere and they went to sleep for the most part, but everybody had a chance to dance in the evening. And they all had a good time at that particular place. Now a little later on when we moved out of there there was a welfare cannery in the basement. There was the bishop's storehouse on the north side for quite a while and the Family History Center and the genealogically extraction location the upper level at this point. And incidentally the use of all the materials and things there is free except that you have ta pay the freight on anything that's like microfilms that might be sent from Salt Lake to here and have to go back. But its open to the public. It's there as a public service. When the recreational hall that used to stand there and replaced the first building was built it had the best gymnasium in eastern Oregon up until the high school one was built. The building still stands up there. The one that was opened about 1936. I saw my first high school basketball played in the recreational hall that was owned by the Mormon Church. And a comment made by Cliff Hecksly who used to coach in the school district here, he said that basketball in La Grande went downhill when the Mormons had to lock the gym. And that was due to I guess vandalism that was taking place. But when I was a young man and in my teens anybody could go in and turn on the lights and play ball and all of us did.

VC: Oh, great. You're just giving me history I didn't know!

AB: My mother's name was Ellen Story. She was always called Nellie by her friends. She came through here as about a three or a four year old in that covered wagon. Along the way she came with her we'll say foster parents because when she was born in North Ogden, Utah her mother died not long afterwards and her father, in a sense, gave her to his brother and his wife who was Parley Jones. And the Jones family claimed my mother. And in fact, when my dad died the Jones family that came to the funeral in support of my mother. After going to Dayton, Washington they moved back here and she said they lived out on Gekeler Lane somewhere. She helped Sans Story plant the willow trees that grow out there along Gekeler Lane. She started school at the…let's see, is that the Liberty School that's out there at the corner of McAlister and Gekeler? Anyway, she started school there.

Later they moved into Island City and they lived in the house where…I don't know whether the doorman lives there or not…but when they widened the street they took off the front porch and they closed up everything and then boarded off all the windows on that house and painted it blue. It's still there anyway. And that's where she lived. And walked or took horse or buggy into high school in La Grande. She said Island City was an island in those days. But part of the flow…you can still see where the channel of it is in part at least through the golf course. Island City was an island at that time. I think she said there were four saloons in town, one on each corner of the crossroads. [laugh] The Kibbles were there. She went to school with some of them. And she had an Indian pony and she could race almost any of the horses that they had and this pony would outrun them. But the key word that she had learned was to lean forward along the horse's neck and yell "platawa." I didn't know what that meant. She didn't know what it meant to tell me. But later on when somebody printed some things about Chinook jargon I found out that "platawa" was the Chinook jargon meaning "to go" and that's what the horse did.

VC: Oh my! Boy is that history!

AB: She also used to run the bases for the Kindle boys and some of the others in Island City when they played baseball because apparently she could run like a deer. I didn't inherit that.

VC: Oh, golly we! That's wonderful!

AB: What else. Sammy Storey didn't make a living, I don't know, but he was a field supervisor for sugar beet company here. And then up in…he lived in Sunnyside and still was doing the same thing. And I can remember being out in the beet fields with him on occasion. Up at Sunnyside, this was back in the time before I ever started school. He also spent some time down in southwestern Oregon, but I'm not right sure what he was doing there, whether that was with beets or not. But he worked with them someplace, mostly in Washington, up until his death back in the 1930s. Maybe I oughtta tell…say a little bit about my dad and his going to high school.

VC: Just one question. Why did they quit raising sugar beets here?

AB: As I understand it there are two reas- two or three reasons. First of all, there wasn't any water out at Nibley. Remember, it's up on the hill and Catherine Creek is down a hundred plus feet lower. And there were no wells or sprinkler systems in those days and so a lot of the territory where they were posing to raise beets was dry land and beets need a lot of water. So there's number one. Number two, I understand that some kind of disease, mosaic or something, hit the beets too and they didn't have anyway to whip that. The thirst thing that would could you not to raise beets was that it was all hand labor at the time, pretty much. You had to thin them, that's after you weeded them too. And I've seen fellows that were doing that and the green from the beet tops would be just worked into their fingers and the skin on the fingers and thumbs would be cracked as a result of, of pulling these things and working it so much. So the farmers found that by raising grain and hay that they could make as much money as they'd been making with the beets and didn't have to work as hard.

VC: Thank you. I've always wondered about that, why they had quit.

AB: That's as I understand at any rate.
VC: I think that must be pretty much the answers. What was you going to tell me about your dad?
AB: He went to high school here in La Grande and, of course, he and his older brother Vern were real interested in athletics. And when they got in high school they're both playing football. Vern played center. My dad was one of the tackles and Dr. J. L. Ingleson was the other tackle. And they had a hard time talking their dad into coming to a football game. I think the first time that he did he came in just about the time they're carrying somebody out. Football was a little different in those days. My dad said that men up to the age of twenty-six could still play for the high school. So you had…he was quite a bit younger than that when he was playing. And one time they had a game against Pendleton. A fella by the name of Trace Baker, if I remember correctly, lined up opposite my dad and he says, "I'm gunna get you kid." And the next play they carried Trace Baker off the field. My dad always got blamed for it, but Doc Ingleson the one that had done the dirty work and he laughed about it all the rest of his life.
VC: How'd he do the dirty work? He tackled him?
AB: I don't know. That was never explained to me, but he laid him out anyway.
VC: [laughs]
AB: And somebody lined up against Vern on one occasion and growled at him and say "You got Mormon in you, haven't ya?" And the next play Vern said back to him, "Yes I have, but its not coming out of me like it's comin' out of you."
VC: [laughs]
AB: But the principal of the high school would call up and say to Granddad. "Well, could Vern come to school today and Ariel stay home so they can both-" [end tape]

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AB: It's a wonder that they raised them, that's all I can say. They, they farmed for a while on the Koogenough Lane up out of North Powder. And I have a picture where all the boys in the family are lined up with boots and shovels and Granddad at the head of the line. But they made life a little tough for one of their brother-in-laws. Ethel was their older sister. The easy way to get up to the place in those days was not to go up the Second Street hill, but to go over a block or two and come up past where there was a green house and it was an easier progression. But they had shrubs and trees along the path and Vern and George Ariel Bean would hide out along the path and listen to the conversation on June Andrew as he was courting their sister Ethel. And the next day they would find occasion to repeat that in front of Ethel and their mother, with embellishments of course.
VC: [laugh] I'll bet she'd liked to kill ya.
AB: But June Andrew was a good man. He married her anyway.
VC: Oh, that's fun. That's so fun.
AB: Some of the items that I remember from around town. When I was very small, in fact I think before my sister Barbara showed up, there used to be a noodle parlor

upstairs across the street from where the Granada Theater is. And my folks liked to go in there occasionally and have some of China Mary's noodles. And they told me that while they were having noodles China Mary would take me back in the kitchen. I don't remember much about it, but eventually China Mary's establishment, or at least the building, was destroyed when they had the fire in that area. Of course later on the bank was built there.

VC: I used to go eat there with Elton.

AB: Then besides theaters there used to be the Liberty Theater up close to the old post office, which is now the city hall. And I remember…my first remembering about the old post office is that it didn't grade down into the alley there between…well, it was next to Montgomery Wards at that point, it's the health food store now. It was raised there and there was a set of mangers and hitching rails along the street there for the horses. My dad was a rural mail carrier and the winter of I think 1928 and '29 was a rather severe one. There was a lot of snow. And we spent that winter living at 1002 Third Street, which was my Grandmother Bean's home and we had an apartment upstairs. And my Uncle Grant had the house on the corner of Third and K, but there was a barn back behind that at that time. That's where my dad kept the horses. He would take three and leave before daylight in the morning. And he had a mail wagon and the two horses would be hooked in tandem at the front and one trailing and they would break the snow and go out on what was then Route 2 and deliver the mail. Now this wagon had glass front, there were slots for the reigns to come through, and sliding doors that were glassed in on the sides so that he could sit inside comparatively in the shelter. Although if he had any kind of heat he'd have to take a hot brick and I don't know that he ever did. But this was the way that he carried mail that winter. I can remember going across the street from where we lived and climbing up over the snow at the side of the street and it probably was two to three feet deep out there on the lot where Sylvan Rasmussen built the house on the corner of J and Third, which is across from 1002 Third Street. But that was long time later when he did that. The mail route, at that time, Route 2 started on Cove Avenue, went down Willow Street, then started out around toward the foothills so got to Gekeler Lane. Went to Gekeler Lane down to McAlister, stayed on McAlister and came across and that till it came clear back to Foothill Road. Around on that out to the corner of the valley out there in the…past the present Ladd Canyon overpass on the freeway. And then it headed down toward the airport, went across the south end of the airport and wound it's way around and got clear back onto Cove highway finally. Then came back in until it could turn off I think it's on Peach Lane, and get back onto the…

VC: Cove highway?

AB: No, they came back in on the Cove highway and then turned off on the lane and came back into …oh, let's see…anyway, Gekeler, I guess, and then it would come back in on Cove Avenue so that the people that were on the right side of the delivery got their mail a whole lot later than the ones that were just across the street on the other side of the road. Then Route 1, which he carried through part of the Depression and during World War II, it started out at the post office, went down to Riveria School and the first customers were over there toward where they

stock yard used to be there about that would have been Y Avenue and First, or a little bit past First. Right where the railroad used to go down to the old Mullin Hick's mill anyhow. And then along Harrison on up to Perry and do lower and upper Perry. And then come back down and come onto Blackhawk Trail and follow that. Come in past the park and go around the Sugar Addition on Russell, Cherry, and Z. And back out then down past the park, down Chandler Lane, back track on that till, let's see, I think it's Lapel Road, but anyway, come up to the Mt. Glen Road there right close to Lapel Corners. Follow the Mt. Glen Road all the way out until you came off of Mt. Glen onto Hunter and out to Hunter to the butte. Down Widdle Lane until I think it's McDonald Road, but anyway you turn and come back. Finally past where Stanleys and Knoughts live, past where…oh, can't come up with it…anyway, come out past Connley warehouse, back in through Island City. No delivery in Island City then 'cause they had their own post office, but it was in the back of a store. And then into May Park and finish up up close to what was then the Old Mt. Emily Mill, but now Boise Cascade. For a long period of time my dad traveled a hundred miles a day, six days a week delivering mail.

VC: And how long did that take him a day?

AB: He'd do Route 1 in the morning and Route 2 in the afternoon.

VC: Oh really!

AB: So he was doing probably an eight hour day. It would depend. Christmas time he would take the back seat out of the car, load it with packages because there wasn't any UPS in those days. Go up to Perry and deliver that and come back and load up again and maybe he'd have to come back to the post office to get more packages before he could finish up Route 1. Then he'd have to load up Route 2 the same. He also carried both Portland papers, the *Oregonian* and the *Journal*, The Observer and all of the catalogs. I substituted for him and for George McCoy at various times in the '40s. And the little chickens used to come in Railway Express and be delivered over the post office. And I delivered chickens out there to I think it was Tuckers that lived close to Stanleys out there anyway. But that's the way things were handled at that time. Partial post…they had a fellow that worked out of the post office and delivered the packages in town.

VC: Now, when he first started was he on horseback?

AB: I don't know when he first started. I don't remember about that. I don't think that he did this on horseback. We had a Model-T at one time and then graduated to a Model-A pickup and that was before I had anything to do with delivering the mail in either direction there as I recall. The one thing about it was that during the Depression years he did have a steady job although when the Depression hit they cut his salary $500 a year promising that they'd give it back when things got better, but it never did get better as far as he was concerned. It never was restored.

VC: Oh, that was terrible.

AB: But he had a job.

VC: Yes.

AB: A lot of people didn't have.

VC: I know. That part was wonderful. I think we need to hear a little bit more about you. You've taught school, haven't you?

AB: I tried.

VC: What did you teach?

AB: One time or another I taught everything from kindergarten on up to college level everything except I think girls' P. E.

VC: And did you focus on something special, or just…?

AB: My first job I went out I didn't know what I was getting into. They don't teach you that in college, you learn that on the job. And I was the grade school principal for Imbler school. I taught seventh and eighth grade. I coached what they had for basketball and baseball teams in the grade school. I drove bus on occasion and did a few other things, I think. It seems like I worked about sixteen hours a day just to keep my head above water, but part of that I didn't know what I was doing. I was there for three years and then my GI time was beginning to expire so I quit and spent a year going to the University of Oregon and coming out with a Masters degree there. The other degree I'd got up here at college. Incidentally, I have considered going back up there and ask them to upgrade my diploma because it does not say University on what I have from up there on the hill.

VC: Oh, yes!

AB: Then I came back in 1952 and I was doing some other things and surviving alright. The local school district in La Grande had some changes. Jack Jenkins had been with the school district and for some reason the superintendent in Wallowa quit and Jack took the job and left a problem with them up here. And they needed help and came after me. What they gave me to do was to teach one class of junior boys, total boys, no girls in the class, U. S. History. And out of that bunch there were about three students, about half of them lost their driver's licenses somewhere during the year one way or another. And Jack Beck took a .38 automatic away from one of them later on in a P. E. class. But somehow I managed to cope with those guys and get along with them well. And towards the end of the year they took 'em over…went to the courthouse and they got in on a trial. It took me about three or four days to convince 'em that if they went back to see the rest of the trial I'd have to mark them absent. But then they finally…one of 'em came up and asked, "Can't we have our own trial?" With the experience they'd had they selected a judge and prosecutor, a D.A, defense lawyer, witnesses and jury. And for about six weeks the teaching I did was sitting in the back of the room and answering a question once in a while while they went on with this trial and surprise witnesses and everything. And they were digging into the books to see what they could do and what was legal. And I'd have matched them against anybody in school for knowledge of way courts work by the time we're through But it got so good that kids were lining up outside the door when class was over with to find out what happened in the trial that morning.

VC: Oh boy!

AB: On the basis of that they figured I was pretty good at stuff and they hired me and I stayed in the junior high for long years and when they finally went to the four

year high school I …Betty Ragsdale and I moved over there and that's where I retired from.

VC: I think you taught my kids. Dan?

AB: I don't remember.

VC: Joni remembers. Dan and Joni and Julie.

AB: I could have. I run into kids everywhere it seems like and I got the place where I just tell them, "Well, I don't see as well as I used to. My memory isn't as good as it used to be. You've changed somewhat, what your name used to be." And they just kind of grin at me and tell me. Jean and I had the experience of going to Sherry's in Pendleton and the waitress that came to wait on us was one of the gals I'd had in class years before. It seemed like she had her ducks in a little better row then than she'd back in high school. Hopefully, that's that case. We had occasion of going into the Country Kitchen over in Ontario. Same thing happened. Here's another one came up. Somebody that I had in class that was a waitress over there. Got on Amtrak back in December '94 to ride down to Portland. The conductor came through. Had a mustache on. I didn't recognize who it was, but he called me by name. Turned out it was Rick Groton. There's another one I had. When Jean and I were married we went down…her double-wide was in a park out of Rouge River, but we went down to put an ad in the Medford paper and the girl behind the desk had found out that I was from La Grande said, "Oh, do you know Dean Stone?" It turned out that she'd sort of had a case on Dean Stone way back when. I knew Dean Stone back then. He was more interested in the girls going down the hall than he was in what I had.

VC: Oh, my! Gosh. Would you like teach school in this day and age?

AB: No. I think I'm well out of it. I think the discipline is worse. The social conditions are worse. You got more problems. I was talking with one of the administrators at the high school just last night and he said he'd be glad when it's over for the year. That the pressure is considerable. And I remember being in a meeting, teachers' meeting, one fall before school started and the superintendent came in and looked around and said, in effect, "I wish that the parents could see how much more refreshed the teachers look at this point than they looked back in June."

VC: Oh, I'm sure. I think to teach now days would be extremely difficult. There's just not the discipline, the desire to learn, or anything that we were raised with.

AB: I've said before, we're probably the only country in the world where we pay taxes to send the kids to school and then in many instances the parents figure, "Hey, we don't have to worry about that kid as long as the school teachers have got him for the day."

VC: Yea, that's part of the problem, I'm sure.

AB: Something about some of the buildings in town. There was an article in the paper a while back where I think John Turner and Jack Evans or somebody else, had listed the Safeway stores. If I remember right I think they missed one because I'm quite sure that the location where Globe Furniture is now was once upon a time a Safeway store. The reason I remember is that the underpass didn't used to be there. And in order to get onto the Island City highway you came right down that street on the side of the building, crossed over Adams and followed that little

curvy thing around, went across the railroad tracks to get onto the Island City Strip. That's back before the underpass was built. When it was built it was only two lanes wide to start with. I have seen it filled from Adams onto the other end clear full of water. That happened I think back in the flood that came in January of '65, I believe. That's a case where if the water had been about another fourteen inches deeper at the head gate to the May Park water ditch it would have come over the head gate and it would have come down, not only down the ditch, but it probably have come down the old river channel and I would have been perched on an island, too. Now another thing that was changed. On the area where they Federal Credit Union is now there on that little triangle that faces Spring Street on the south, there used to be the old Dutch windmill and that's where Purdy's had their ice cream store. When that building was…when they quit making ice cream or whatever, that building was moved down to just across the railroad tracks as you come across the Cherry Street crossing and turn to the right and was made into an apartment. And I think Mrs. Sian owned it. I think her name had been Shultz before that time. But they lived just further on down the street toward Willow School. Incidentally, Willow School and Greenwood and Riveria didn't have any gymnasiums back when I started school. That was all built on at a later time. In fact, Willow Street wasn't even paved back when I started school.

VC: Is that right?

AB: Oh, and right where the city garbage disposal office is there used to be an old vinegar works, a place where they made vinegar. You really got a whiff of that as you walked by on the way to school. I had to go across that crossing and pass there. But that lasted I don't know how long. Quite a number of years at any rate.

VC: Probably because we raised apples here, huh?

AB: We did raise apples here. As I was told, on one occasion they raised so many apples in the valley out around Imbler that the Imbler farmers loaded up enough apples on a train to make a shipload and those apple were taken to England to sell. Back when I taught at Imbler Lyle Wilson was probably the only apple man that was left out there and practically all the apple orchards were gone. Apples are a labor intensive crop. You have to prune, you have to thin the apples, you have to spray, then you have to pick the apples and see that they're boxed properly or graded. And again, one fellow could do a whole lot more with hay or grain by himself than he could do with apples and that made the change over. Incidentally, when grass seed…after World War II became quite a crop in the valley. My dad's humble to the fact that the grass seed that was too small to make it through the cleaners, in other words it was rejected and the good seed was saved, and the hulls that were processed were high protein content. And so we began to haul that and feed to beef herd that we were building and it made the cattle look just as sleek as could be. The only difficulty is that you get real thin manure when you use that for feed.

VC: [laugh]

AB: Later on they started to pellet it out here. And when we were getting it, why, the farmers were giving it away because it fell of the cleaner into their seed sacks and we'd take it and dump it for them and roll the sacks and see that they got the sacks

back. And so they were glad to get rid of it that way and they didn't have to worry about the labor end of it. My biggest day of hauling that stuff I think I put 15,000 pounds in the lawn. That takes a lot of that light stuff because a sack of it might not weigh fifteen to twenty pounds.

VC: My gosh that was a lot of sacks!

AB: Yea. I was busy that day.

VC: Oh well. You've been busy all your life sounds like, really.

AB: My perception of a farmer's life now is two things. One, due to the machinery it's a whole lot easier than it used to be because there was a lot of hand labor. For a hay field, for example, you had to shock the hay with a pitchfork. You had to use a pitchfork to load it on the slip or on the wagon to haul it. You had to stack they hay and a fellow that could make a good haystack was somewhat of an artist at the time. The grain was cut with a binder and put into bundles. Then those bundles had to be shocked and let dry. Then you picked them by hand and put them on a wagon to haul 'em to threshing machine where you pitched 'em off. And that's all done with a combine anymore. One fella can take care of a larger grain field than probably a crew of six to ten men coulda done under the old system. The other thing about it is, though, that if you got enough money to start farming nowadays you don't need to. You just invest it at a low percent of interest and you'll make more money. Farming is probably about as big a gamble as you'll find due to the weather, the markets, transportation. For example, the…I've been told that the fellow the truck driver that pulls out of Willie Hammon's stills, that's what they call those things where they get collect the peppermint oil from the thing, has to be insured for a million dollars. Part of that is the price of the oil itself, but I think a lot of it perhaps is a protection from possible spills and cleanup that might follow. But it's expensive. Machinery, tractors, combines. A hundred thousand dollars sometime will get you in the door, but it won't pay for it all.

VC: Take a while to get that all paid off.

AB: Yes. It'd take quite a while.

VC: Definitely. It don't sound too lucrative anymore. You just about have to…they say you gotta inherit it or you don't make it.

AB: Where people back a hundred years ago were making a living for family on forty acres. You can't do it now.

VC: I believe it.

AB: In fact, you'd need ten or fifteen times that much probably to have a cropable farm business. You have to specialize in some particular expensive type of …or high priced thing at the market.

VC: I agree.

AB: Once upon a time back in the '50s I thought maybe I'd get rich raising cherries. I had about 450 trees at one time here in May Park. To begin with, when my folks moved out here at the end of Riddle Road we had some cherry trees and all we had to do, it seemed like, was water them a little bit and pick the cherries. And over the course of time the cherry fruit fly moved into the valley on us and that has to be sprayed for. The fruit fly isn't as fast as the house fly. I have actually caught cherry fruit fly with my fingers in the orchard. But a funny little sort of

brownish fly. Got a white diamond on his back and a stinger tail that lays the eggs in the cherry that develops into a worm. So over a period of time the Growers' Associations had to inspect the cherries quite thoroughly. But other things that have come in since that time besides the cherry fruit fly, shot hole bore, little leaf gamosis and the labor situation has changed to where generally what you will see in the large orchards in the valley will be a crew of Mexican pickers with a crew boss. It used to be that you had Caucasian people who were following the fruit and would work the orchards. The half of them usually started maybe in Stockton, California, then the Willamette Valley, then the area around The Dalles, and then possible either here or up into Yakima. But if they came here then they next cherry end of things was probably over in the east side of Flathead Lake in Montana. Then they would swing back into Washington for thinning apples or picking pears or something else. There were some people that were doing that and you had all kinds. Those that were just existing from one job to the next and those that had their own living accommodations, trailers or whatever, that they took with them and various layers in between. That kind of thing has changed and I'm not current with it except that I know that the Dale Hug orchards and the Johnson orchards are some of the bigger ones in the valley and that they do have labor camps as well as Miller's over at Cove, too. They provide at least some kind of shelter for the pickers that come in.

VC: Don't the same ones come back about it every year?

AB: Over a period of time, when I was in the business, yes we'd have the same ones come back. And they would work here in May Park because we would be a little bit earlier with our cherries than they would be out on Pumpkin Ridge or over Cove. And so they could sort of clean up our place here and still get in considerable amount of work somewhere across the valley.

VC: That worked very nicely for everybody. And the climate kind of worked so they can travel around to the different places.

AB: We always figured that about the 10th of July we could start picking our low ends. The Bing Zilanders would come a later time. Of course they got some other variety besides that. But there was only one year in the time that my folks had cherries we had everything picked by the 4th of July. It was an early year.

VC: Oh my!

AB: But there are other times…there was one year when I had cherries on half of the trees because Mike Carol got an orchard to the west had smudge and the wind had rolled that heat from his place down at sort of an angle all the way through what I had. Where it had touched down I had cherries and where it had skipped I didn't have.

VC: I'll be darned! That was some'm.

AB: Yea it was.

VC: Yea, the pits. If you could have had 'em everywhere it'd been nice. I want to know if you remember any stories about the Indians.

AB: Yea, I've got a couple of 'em. I'd started down in Utah. My dad knew some of 'em down in southern Utah. In fact, his mother and dad had a store in Boulder at one time and- [end tape]

6/3/2002, tape 2, side 1

AB: You check.

VC: Okay, we're just trying to check to see if it's recording. We got a new tape in. I hope it is. Alright. [tape pause]

AB: Back to the Utah situation where Grandma was selling lots of vanilla to the Indians and thought that they were becoming great cake makers and getting a little more civilization and so on. And she was quite shocked to find out they were buying the vanilla because it was high alcohol content. I…my dad was scared by an Indian down there at one occasion when he was young because he was only thirteen when they moved to Oregon. But after my dad died my mother and Ruth Shinsel got some kind of thing going and they had representatives from several Indian tribes here at my mother's home in May Park for a dinner or something. Chief Clance Burk was one of those from over Umatilla. He was a Round-Up chief. And my mother served Parker House rolls. My brother, who was quite young at the time, got interested in how many Chief Burke was eating. And he claims that Chief Burk ate twenty-two of those rolls.

VC: [laugh] Your mother must of made a big batch!

AB: I think she did. But Chief Burk was pretty good sized.

VC: He must of really loved those rolls. I think that's something.

AB: He was acquainted with my Uncle Jeff quite well. My Uncle Jeff had a feed store one time over in Pendleton where he had seeds and bulbs and things like that. And he got along pretty well with the Indians over there. They liked him. They came and invited him to their root festival one year. Jeff said, "I'd like to come. I have quite a few extra tulip bulbs that I can bring to the root feed." The Indians just kind of smiled at him and said, "You bring pie."

VC: Oh! They wanted some pie. No root bulbs, sorry. Oh golly!

AB: I can remember being on the old Bowman Hicks mill grounds when it was still a logging mill back in those days and before it went out of business in the '30s. There was a railroad spur which came from the railroad yards down across the river and they could dump their logs in the millpond off of those railroad cars. Whether they got any of the logs that came down the railroad from up past the Starkey store a ways or not, I don't know. But that railroad was still in operation and I've seen railroad engine take the spur and go up Meadow Creek on toward where the Starkey settlement happened to be, or maybe I should say where Camp Elcana is located presently. There also was a railroad spur up Five Points Creek. That had been taken out before 1934 or '35 because it was not there when I spent time riding after cattle up in that country back in that time. However, I did see a place up there where they had been logging up on top of the ridge and they had created a chute by facing a part of the logs and putting them together like a V and greasing it so that they could skid the logs down there and they'd drop off down where they could be picked up and put on the railroad and moved. Part of the construction on the house that I live in was made with lumber which came from the old Bowman Hicks mill when it was torn down. My dad got a lot of shiplap from there. The floor joice in the house were beams in the old Bowman Hicks

mill. And a green shed which sits back off the end of Riddle Road was moved from over at Bowman Hicks mill. We did that all back in the '30s when the mill was being torn down and it'd gone out of business. I can also remember that the Stoddard lumber company was at one time located at Perry and later moved up to Pondosa there right next to Medical Springs. David __ Stoddard, as I understand it, sort of parted company with the rest of the Stoddard boys by the point where they decided to make that move. The two lumber companies in town, of course, were the Mt. Emily, which was owned by Stang and Kinsles had an interest in it and some others. And it was during that time that Stang was operating that that the Stang Manor was built and occupied as the home for them. That reminds me of the story that I won't tell, but up where they weighing scales are west of La Grande is where the Pinecone Auto Court used to be and the Pinecone swimming pool. I think basically we're swimming in Grande Ronde river water, but we could bicycle up there. And can I remember the Ingrams I think had it and Budding Room had a motorcycle and he would ride it up toward Perry and then we'd hear him coming down the highway and look up and he'd be standing on the seat of his motorcycle coming down the highway going on past the swimming pool.

VC: Oh my gosh! A regular acrobatic, huh?

AB: I guess. I don't know whether he ever wrecked it or not. He didn't the times we saw him doing that anyway. Speaking of swimming pools, the Crystal Plunge was located at the northwest corner more or less of the Second Street viaduct. I think the city's got some storage in there for things. But that was the local swimming pool.

VC: Is that right? My gosh. That was a long time ago, huh?

AB: Yea, I was a kid back in those days, so I knew where the swimming pools were. [laughs]

VC: Of course. Oh gee.

AB: There were a lot of swimming holes in the river back in those days, too, back in the late 1930s before RD Mack and Company took all the gravel out and they pour pollution in so much. Although when we first moved out to this territory the river did run kind of muddy because I think they were still dredging up there on the Grande Ronde River up above the forks.

VC: Uh huh.

AB: Above the Tony Lay property. Different direction. You go up the Grande Ronde River toward the Grande Ronde Lake that way instead of up Chicken Creek. I think that was still going on then.

VC: Gee wiz. I image we better come to a halt. What do you think.

AB: I was willing to halt some time ago, but… Oh, minorities, we did have Chinese in town. I understand that they even their shooting the old post office steps or thereabouts at one time. As I remember it, the area that they lived in basically was on Fourth Street in what would be part of the old Safeway building presently parking lot.

VC: Yea, they found a lot of artifacts there, didn't they, when they were digging.

AB: I don't know as to what they found, but that's where they lived as I recall. There were several houses along there at that time. In high school I don't remember any

Chinese being there when I was there. There might have been. We had one negro fellow that came out for football. I think his last name was Washington. But we didn't have very many members of the negro race or any other than Caucasian in high school when I was there. I came after the Trices and before the Hiliards and the…

VC: Butler.

AB: Butlers, well, Hawthornes, got there. In fact, I had some of the Hiliards and the Hawthornes in class at a later period when I taught in the school district. For the most part actually they were good kids.

VC: I have to hand it to Helen raising that many kids and all of them going on to have decent careers. That's really a one-man, I mean a one-woman feat what she did.

AB: About the Indians in the valley. They used to come into the valley for the camas. And we still have a lot of that growing. Some of it up…what is it, I'm going to say Marsh…

VC: Hot Lake area?

AB: More back toward Ladd Creek Marsh area where it comes out of the mountain. But also there used to be a lot of it the corner of Gekeler Lane and Highway 30. The stuff that you eat is the blue variety. If you find white camas you don't because that's also known as death camas.

VC: Oh really! Now what do you mean? What's blue, the root?

AB: No, the flower is blue or the flower is white.

VC: Oh, and you want the blue one?

AB: If you're gunna eat any you want the blue one.

VC: I'll be darned. Have you ever tasted it?

AB: No, I've never been invited to a root feast and I haven't been brave enough to go out and try it on my own. Then you have to acquire a taste for it.

VC: Did you know what they did? Did they boil it, did they…what'd they do or do you know?

AB: It's a root like a garlic or an onion, you can eat it raw I presume. But for the Oregon Indians the main three food groups of course were the salmon, wild game, and camas.

VC: And they come here to pick huckleberries, too.

AB: I didn't have any arguments with them about picking huckleberries anywhere.

VC: No.

AB: Or with the bears either. There weren't it seemed to be as many bear out then as there are now. And all the times I've ever spent in the woods I have never seen a cougar although I have heard 'em cry. And they've proliferated in the last number of years.

VC: Because they don't let anybody kill 'em anymore. And there's cougars up behind my son's place out there by the 4-H area, that's where he lives.

AB: You don't have to go that far. They've been spotted up here in La Grande on the…one of the Baum boy's property.

VC: And behind the hospital.

AB: And up in that area.

VC: Yea, the gals were getting' to the point where they'd be 'fraid to come out at night because of the cougars at the hospital. Well, Ariel, I'm going to quit. Now I don't know whether they'll use all of this or what, but this.
AB: They may not use any of it.
VC: Oh yes they will. [tape stopped]

Ariel Bean

7/25/03, T1, S1

ES: This is an interview with Ariel Bean on July 25th, 2003. You have a long list of subjects we can talk about. Suppose we talk about the…one of the early jobs that you had in La Grande. Was it with the railroad?
AB: Well, that… I worked for the railroad in 1942. I ended up working out on the rip track.
ES: What… What's… What is a rip track?
AB: This is where they brought in all of the boxcars that they were refitting that way and equipping…remodeling them so that they would be able to haul heavier freight.
ES: Is a rip track like a siding track then?
AB: It was… It was a siding. It had a… It was open on the sides, but it had a long roof over it.
ES: Now where was that in relation to the present Grande Ronde…I mean La Grande depot?
AB: This was all, shall I say, north of the depot.
ES: Yeah.
AB: At one time there was a walkway that went across the tracks there on the west…west end of the depot someplace, but this was…all this was north of the depot. In fact, if you went on…on Monroe and followed it on around where it curves and comes over to Fourth Street you would've been closer to this material.
ES: How did you happen to get this job?
AB: Went and asked for it. [laughs]
ES: What did that involve? Going up to the superintendent there?
AB: I don't remember who was in charge, but they were looking for help there. In fact, they brought a bunch of fellows over from Nampa to work what they called Carmen or Cartouche, to work in these various areas. The rip track was just a siding and, well, of course you could say the same thing I suppose for the back shop or the roundhouse. The roundhouse was where they did engine maintenance that could be handled or didn't mean tearing down the boilers or anything. They did that over in the back shop. But there were a lot of fellows that were working there that year. You want…oh here…alright.
ES: When you applied for that job what skills did you bring to it? Just strength?
AB: Muscle.
ES: Yes. [laugh] But it required a certain amount of skill, didn't it, from what you've described?

AB: I was a foreman's helper is what it amounted to finally and so he was in charge of giving the directions or they told him and then he told us what to do and we worked along with him. We used a pneumatic drill to ream out the rest of the rivets where we burned them out so that this spider could be dropped out and reamed out and then put back in with larger rivets.

ES: Would you explain what the spider is again?

AB: The spider is sort of a square box of heavy metal, steel, which sits on the trucks, that's the wheels for the…and the rest of the carriage put together, which were in the front and the back of a boxcar. And I don't know probably parlets maybe I shouldn't say it, but all that connects that is about a two-inch metal round piece that goes up into the spider and down into the trucks and that's all that holds that thing together.

ES: These box cars probably would've been made, what, maybe twenty-five years before you were working on them? Sort of getting old?

AB: Goodness only knows what…what the age of 'em might be. What they did they'd take up part of the floor in each end so you could get in there and work this and then that was replaced and they were usually repainted and sent back out on the…on the road. But it was so that they could haul a heavier load without pulling things apart, I guess.

ES: Did you ever find out why La Grande was chosen for that kind of repair?

AB: We used to be a division point, I think. In other words, the road crews ran from about Nampa to here and then from here on over. They figured that by the time the engineer had made that run he'd put in a day's work. And of course back in the old days when you're runnin' steam, why, you're fireman was probably pretty much worn out from shoveling coal before he'd made all that trip.

ES: But repairing boxcars seems like a different thing from just running trains. Was La Grande so well-equipped for repair…making repairs that that's why it was chosen?

AB: They had the roundhouse for engines. They had the back shop which they could do the boiler work in. They had the rip track which could do this. In other words, it was a division point. All that stuff was moved over to Hinkle eventually.

ES: Could it be that at that time the La Grande was made a division point and there was work here in order to help support the community?

AB: I don't know as to that. All I know is that I kind of figured on the day the…they figured it was a day's work for the road crews when they came from Idaho this way or from the west this way. And of course you realize that to get in and out of here that a big train with boxcars would have to have helper engines to get over the…over the grade. You see, you've gotta climb from here until you get past Baker and start in Pleasant Valley. Then you begin to go downhill. But you gotta pick up from about Farewell Bend you gotta help 'em all the way up that hill. And then of course you got the same thing going over the top until you start drop down into Umatilla County.

ES: How long were you working at this freight car repair job?

AB: I just was there that summer because I was tryin' to make some money so I could go to school and I had to go…I needed to go away to get in on what I wanted to do. They wanted me to have a lot of physics and math so I could get in…or I

wanted to get in Air Corps to fly and that what they said you had to have a lot of physics and math in order to get in and so that's what I was working on.

ES: While the time you were working there that summer did you get to know the men…the other men fairly well?

AB: Yeah, but that was a long time ago and my memory's shot for the most part.

ES: I was just wondering if you could give me some sense of what…what these men's attitudes were and what they talked about and how much you respected them?

AB: Respect was one thing. First of all it was a dirty place to work. Everybody wore an extra set of overalls because you couldn't sit down anywhere without getting grease or soot or dirt on ya. And they weren't well-known for their genteel language.

ES: That's what I suspected, yes.

AB: And I didn't work with very many of 'em. The guys that I was…the one I was assigned to was one of these that had moved over from Nampa and his best buddy was in the soup because he'd been chasing around some woman here when they came over and when he moved his wife over that caused complications. They ended up living next-door or something and, you know, for young kid tryin' to behave himself, you know, that's not too much of an example.

ES: My understanding is that during that period there were a good many prostitution services available in La Grande for railroad workers and mill workers. Did you observe that that was the case?

AB: I don't know anything about it except that I knew…I knew a kid that I was goin' to school with that worked for the laundry and he said he could tell 'em apart by whatever they turned in for laundry. Now that's all I know about it.

ES: Tell who apart?

AB: The prostitutes.

ES: Tell them apart from respectable women, you mean?

AB: No. He could tell 'em apart this one from that one.

ES: Oh!

AB: That's all I know about it.

ES: Okay. I guess we'll just leave that to speculation.

AB: I…it could deserve a lot of speculation I suspect.

ES: Were you aware that they were…there were brothels all along Jefferson Avenue?

AB: The only ones I was aware of, I think, were on Fir Street up overhead.

ES: The building that's still there?

AB: It's still there.

ES: Painted grey?

AB: In fact, I think the upstairs entry is right next to the alley there and I think it was across the street from the old Salvation Army building.

ES: Did have any sort of sign or red light?

AB: Not that I remember. I don't know whether it had one or not.

ES: What did you observe about the taverns that probably many railroad men frequented?

AB: Don't know a thing about 'em. I didn't.

ES: I wouldn't expect you would.

AB: They wouldn't let me in anyway, I was underage.

ES: You were about eighteen then?
AB: Yeah. That summer I… Let's see, that summer, yeah, I would've been nineteen.
ES: What I'm aiming at here in your perception of whether La Grande was fairly a wide-open town at that time?
AB: I don't have any idea. I was living out here and I stayed home at night for the most part unless there was a ballgame or something.
ES: You just went into work and then went home.
AB: From seven…seven-thirty to three-thirty and then I had…we had the garden here and there's always stuff to do at home, too.
ES: Sure. Sure. There were some eatery places, weren't there?
AB: Yeah. There were a whole bunch of those. The Yellow Dog was a little one that was on Fir on the same side of the street as Zimmerman's and was across and down two or three doors. And it was just kind of a narrow walk-in place. It wasn't a big restaurant. The Lavender Lunch was on…
ES: Before you go to that, The Yellow Dog would you just go in and order a hot dog and then take it out to eat?
AB: I don't remember. I was in there with my dad a few times, but I don't remember for sure. It seemed to me like there was a very small table or something back in the back where you could eat. But, yeah, I think we took ours out though.
ES: Was it patronized mostly by men?
AB: I don't know.
ES: With a name like Yellow Dog I'd expect it to be for men.
AB: I would presume you're right. [laugh] Lavender Lunch…
ES: Lavender Lunch, yeah, that sounds more refined.
AB: It was down on… It was on Depot Street across the…across from where Mamacita's…well, the old J. C. Penny building, it's across the street from that right there on the alley.
ES: Wasn't that the Sommer Hotel Building?
AB: It was in the same block, I don't know if that was part of the building or not, it might've been.
ES: I think it is.
AB: That was a little fancier place, though.
ES: Do you remember how it looked?
AB: No, I don't. It's too long ago.
ES: You didn't go in there?
AB: Yeah, I was in there, but, good night, you're asking me about something sixty years ago!
ES: Some of these details last.
AB: It's been out of business for fifty probably, or more.
ES: I've heard several people mention it, but nobody's described it. Do you think it had tablecloths and waiters or waitresses?
AB: I couldn't tell you. I don't know. Now if you go down to the Green Parrot Grill that was a little bit… That was down…where the __ Building is…
ES: It was really part of the Foley Hotel, wasn't it?
AB: Yeah, I think so, the old Foley.
ES: Right. Do you remember that one better?

AB: It was…of course you had…you had these…these shade trees out there in front of it at that time, too, on Adams which disappeared eventually then they try to replace. It had booths and as I recall, yeah, they had somebody to wait on ya, I don't know waiter or waitress or whatever. And I think you could get a pretty good meal for a dollar, if I remember right.

ES: Home-cooked, I suppose you'd say?

AB: Yeah, probably. I __ whatever it was. You know, high school kids didn't eat out all that much.

ES: I wouldn't… No, no.

AB: Except… Except you could go across the street from the old high school over on the…it'd be the southwest…southeast corner of Fourth and Adams and Mrs. Needier had a beauty parlor in one part of it, but you could go in and get a nickel hamburger at one time when you were in high school. Yeah, that's what you got, you got the bun, you got the meat, I think she may have furnished the ketchup and mustard, but that was all for a nickel.

ES: That's as close as we came to a fast food restaurant at that time, huh?

AB: Yeah, I would think so. You know, you'd get over there during your noon hour time and have some. But there were quite a few kids that go over there and do that every once in a while. Which reminds me of grocery stores, we're talkin' about food. You know, there used to be a lot of little ones around town.

ES: Yes.

AB: And they aren't there anymore. There's, oh goodness…

ES: There may be three left, I think.

AB: There's one on Spruce…

ES: There's a Willow Street one.

AB: …and the Willow Grocery and what used to be Sinden's where…Wayne Simonis had for a while and now I think somebody else's got it down there on Fir and Y.

ES: Say that name again?

AB: Sinden.

ES: Cynon? S-y-n…

AB: No. S-i-n-d-e-n, I think.

ES: D-e-n, okay.

AB: I'd have to look up the spelling. Jean went to school with the daughter of the Sindens. But there used to be one across from Riveria School and then there…let's see, Joel's of course, you've probably got that one.

ES: Mm-hmm.

AB: You can talk to Jerry Binger about that. He'd know more than I do.

ES: Yes.

AB: A family named Mills had one on about First and L, somewhere right in there. And there there's, of course, Fourth Street Grocery, which is now that Curves for Women thing. And then there was one on…it was on C…I can't remember whether it was on the corner of Second…Second Street or Third Street. I'd have to go look. I know which one it is if I go look, but I don't remember now.

ES: What's your explanation for why there were so many neighborhood groceries?

AB: Durin' the Depression a lot of people jacked up their automobiles and left 'em in the garage and walked. And so if you could walk to the grocery store it was a lot

easier than tryin' to go clear downtown to where Safeway or Piggly Wiggly or something else happened to be.

ES: You think that people bought nearly all their groceries at those places?

AB: I don't know. You could go… Of course, milk, you know, was delivered. And if you let it sit out in the cold the next day you might find the milk…the paper milk cap on the old milk bottle was about an inch, inch-and-a-half up above the top of the bottle because of the… I don't know that it ever broke any bottles, but it froze a few.

ES: Do you remember shopping yourself at one of these neighborhood groceries?

AB: No, because first of all my dad had a car. As rural mail carrier that was a necessity. He was always makin' car payments because of that. He found that…and of course the roads weren't paved in those days, they were gravel if you were lucky, and rough and field level and the snow drifted 'em in a lot of times. And so he found that about thirty thousand miles was time to start over with a new one. So he would make car payments most of his life.

ES: This is sort of parenthetical, but was the post office paying him in any way for the use of his car?

AB: They paid him mileage, but it didn't pay…it paid…just barely paid for the gas and the oil and so on and maybe tires. It didn't pay for the car, it was his car.

ES: I think we would say now that he was being ripped off.

AB: In a sense you could say that because when the Depression hit they lowered his wages five hundred dollars with the promise he'd get it back when things go better. He was still workin' for 'em when he died in 1954 and he never got it back.

ES: Spent a lifetime being ripped off.

AB: Well… But the thing about it is you had…he had a job when a lot of people didn't have…

ES: Yeah, sure. Sure.

AB: …during the Depression.

ES: Back to neighborhood groceries. You yourself didn't shop in them?

AB: Not for groceries. I've… My mother dealt with… I don't know. I don't think that we had a charge account like a lot of 'em did, you know, during that time.

ES: Many people could run up…run up a bill and pay it once a month or once every two months, whatever they could manage.

AB: Yeah. Whatever period for whatever long of time. Due to the fact that we had the farm out there and sold cream to the Union Creamery, why, they could…they could draw butter and cheese against, you know, the cream. So we had that going for a while on that end of things. But I can remember going to the grocery store with a twenty dollar bill to buy enough groceries for a family of four and a couple hired men for a month. Let me see, a Waldo Geddes was a grocer here in town, but I think that grocery store was…I don't know whether it was…I think it was in the block across from Penny's, too.

ES: That'd be g-a-d-d-i-s?

AB: G-e-d-d-e-s.

ES: G-e-d-d-e-s?

AB: Uh-huh. And I know she traded with him quite a bit and sometimes sent me in for stuff. I remember he suckered me into bitin' a green persimmon one time, so it was free. It was… He was that kind of a joker. But I don't know, you know, where once in a while we might go to one of these small grocery stores for something if…you know, they kept all kinds of hour to accommodate people.

ES: What would be your estimation about the importance of these neighborhood groceries for social exchange? Not just buying groceries, but gossip and all the other kinds of things that help to build the fabric of a community?

AB: I don't know that I can answer that one. In a sense I suppose they did act as a maybe a little neighborhood center. The fact that some of 'em are still going is a pretty good indication of that because basically that's the people that are supporting the thing are those that are close by or at least used to be. That's not so much the case anymore because people drive out to…well, look out at the strip what we got out there, grocery stores.

ES: I think it was common, too, for the owner of the grocery to live right in the same building, wasn't it?

AB: Yes. I think so.

ES: Maybe a little easier to have those long hours.

AB: Oh, I forgot two of 'em, too. Over… Highway Grocery was one of 'em there across the street from Safeway where H. O. Nelson's got his Emporium now. That was a grocery store, Highway Grocery, at one time. Then… Then where you make the turn-out there across the street from Wendell's that was the Log Cabin Grocery and it actually had the appearance of a log cabin. And, yeah, they…the…I think the Smith family that ran that one if I remember right. They had a daughter named Bunny and my dad was always teasing her and ask her if she could move her nose like a bunny. And I don't know that I've got 'em all in that I remember even. But, you know, that…that would be what's kept them going would be the general neighborhood.

ES: The La Grande city directory's a pretty source for all the names of the groceries. Dorothy Fleshman has numerous copies of the old directories.

AB: I worked for 'em in 1948 when they made that one.

ES: The city directory?

AB: I went to every house west of Greenwood and north of the railroad track plus some others in town and also Imbler and Elgin.

ES: And you had to ask questions?

AB: The fellow that was running it, Polk, R. L. Polk and Company, had a series of file cards and he'd give you some of those for your territory and you'd go out and verify the information on it and ask 'em if they wanted to be in the new directory, they had a choice. Gosh, you'd show up with that card and verify the information, ask if they wanted to be in. I got invited into more places in that part of town I'd ever been in before. There are a lot of people that want somebody to talk to and I think that's still the case. Total stranger and they invite me in and start tellin' me their troubles. You have a hard time just getting your day's work done that way.

ES: I imagine you just a few factual questions to ask, didn't you?

AB: Yeah. The name, the address, telephone number and whether they wanted to be in the directory or not. In other words… And whether they still lived there or not. If they didn't you made out a new card for the people…

ES: Did you also ask how many people lived in the house?

AB: Yeah, you had the names of the ones that were there. You ran into some peculiar situations, too. Menage…what is it the French say, ménage a trois?

ES: Menage a trois, uh-huh.

AB: Yeah.

ES: Since you worked for that you must've had some impression about the importance of the city directory at the time.

AB: It must've important enough that they paid for it with advertising basically, I think, or from contributions of those businesses and whatever in town.

ES: What were you thinking at the time was the reason for having one?

AB: I didn't pay any attention to the reason. It was just a job. When they got through with that I went to work for a while for the…with the city engineer.

ES: Was this all before you went to college?

AB: No.

ES: Or in between?

AB: This was all before I went to work out in Imbler during that summer.

ES: Oh, I see. Teaching seventh grade out there.

AB: Yeah, seventh and eighth grade, bein' the grade school principal and coaching sports and driving bus and whatever else.

ES: Were you still in college when you were doing these jobs?

AB: No, I'd graduated. I graduated in March, I think, I finished up. So this was from that period till that September. Yeah, the city engineer at that point we did two things I can remember. We went to the cemeteries in town and put down all of the information that we could read off of the stones at that time in Hillcrest, the Catholic one and Grandview. And he did all the fancy stuff to draw the plats and everything in there after we got the information. The other thing we did I ran…I ran a stick and he ran the…what you'd call a surveyor's instrument, it was more of a level then anything. And we had the manhole covers off of all the manholes we could find in town and he took the depths and so on. And I think as a result of the work we did that summer that they put in the storm sewer. The… See, the sanitary and the storm all went the same disposal system to begin with and it was overcrowded by population and storms. They came down like…yeah, M Avenue, would come down from way up to the west down and down that hill and when they got enough water goin' into catch basins from the storm, a thunderstorm or whatever, the manhole cover at the bottom of Sixth Street hill was lifted off of the cover because of the water pressure going on out. So they were in the process of changing all of that.

ES: At that time where do you think all of the sewage and the runoff water went?

AB: Where'd it go?

ES: Yeah.

AB: It went to that old disposal plant that's where the Pepsi-Cola bottling place is, or close to it. And then when they got through treating it…

ES: Was this just an open pond? Was it an open pond?

AB: Yeah, it was all open. When they got through treating it it went in that ditch that went on out across the valley someplace. I'd have to go out and trace that, but it went down along the railroad track and then I think it turned and…you know where the sale yard is presently, the cattle and so on…I think that ditch went on past there and on out across. And I don't know whether they used it for irrigation or what out there. I can tell you that where you live you know the stream coming down there out of Deal Canyon?

ES: Yeah, that used to come down there, yes.

AB: It still does.

ES: In a pipe, yeah.

AB: That goes under the sidewalk on First Street and part of it goes down this way under the high school. That's why the high school auditorium has been flooded a time or two because the pressure coming through, they didn't put in big enough pipe to handle it. That goes down to…I think it's I Avenue and then goes over and joins up with Mill Canyon and all goes under the college over there somewhere until it comes out down below. The other half of it goes down First to Jefferson and comes around and used to go down the alley between Adams and Jefferson. When this big flood hit in '65, I think it was, it put water in the basement of the stores like Globe Furniture and Zimmerman's, I don't know what all. They finally redid that one and put in a bigger flow down…I think they tore up Jefferson and took it down and it goes across the underpass and goes into the ditch there. But all of that stuff came at a later time as a result of what the city engineer was working on that summer when I worked with him.

ES: Did you get any information about who may have designed the first sewer system for La Grande?

AB: Oh good night! Mercy no! That was…

ES: That would've been about 18--…

AB: He had some plats and so on of all the… but they weren't complete. Like from the old, you know, Fergie's Dutch Windmill…

ES: Mm-hmm.

AB: …there was a little four-inch line ran out of there clear down to Penn A…Penn…Pennsylvania Avenue to drain from that area. Of course they had to replace and redo that one, too.

ES: Less than adequate…

AB: Less than adequate.

ES: Not planning much for growth.

AB: And the reason that they took the storm stuff out to the east was that there is a dip down there from Y Avenue down like, you know, a hollow like this up to the river bank. And they were afraid that they'd flood everybody out when the pipes breaking if they took all that water down that way and dumped it in the river so it went out the other way…[end tape]

7/25/03, T1, S2

ES: How 'bout swimming pools? You had some firsthand knowledge of them.

AB: Okay. Crystal Plunge was located on the west side of the Second Street viadock north of the railroad track. I think the city uses that as a storage space now. And they had a…

ES: Who had the idea of putting it in there?

AB: As I understand it they either had an artesian well there finally and I don't know who had the idea. I was just a kid when I swimming down there. Except I remember the water was cold. It wasn't very warm. And I don't know when it disappeared, long time back.

ES: Describe it a little more.

AB: Gosh, just a concrete hole in the ground. I can't describe it any better than that. I don't remember anything about…

ES: Twenty-five by thirty, something like that?

AB: I would guess probably close to forty maybe. I'm not sure. And you might be right about the width. I have no idea.

ES: Think that with the artesian well that that was the only means of changing the water? They didn't use chlorine or any other purifier?

AB: Who needed chlorine back in those days? [laugh] I'm not even sure they put anything in the city drinking water at that point.

ES: Was this… Was this a pool frequently mainly by young boys?

AB: Oh no. No, no. Kids of all sizes and varieties and I guess some adults too. I don't remember so much about that.

ES: Was it open maybe five or six months in the year?

AB: I think five would be stretchin' it quite a bit. Four might've covered it. You've got to remember the water wasn't warm, first of all, and come September the days aren't too warm either sometimes around here.

ES: Right. Did you ever hear of an accident where a boy was killed there?

AB: No. Not that I recall. The only accident I remember of a kid dieing is from…a Shultz kid, I think, on expedition from Willow School went and fell down Devil's Slide up there just above Orodell. And that I don't remember because I was going to school somewhere else at the time.

ES: Why do you think the Crystal Plunge closed?

AB: I couldn't give you a good reason. Sometimes the facilities just plain wear out or… You know, nowadays somebody'd come along and condemn the place probably. I couldn't tell you why.

ES: Could it have been a money-loser?

AB: Probably.

ES: Was there a place to change your clothes there or any…any…

AB: There had to be that. In connection with a swimming pool you had to have a place to change.

ES: You could put your bathing suit on at home and bike down there, I suppose.

AB: Yeah, I suppose you could.

ES: I guess I was…

AB: There probably were people that did.

ES: …I was wondering about amenities. Was it just a plain pool of water or was there anything else that was part of the attraction there?

AB: I don't remember on that one. I presume they had diving board, but don't presume it for sure.
ES: How many times do you think you went there?
AB: Not enough to get much etch in my memory, I guess.
ES: Mostly when you were quite young?
AB: I would've been… This would've been probably during the time that we lived up on Third Street and I was in the…I was in the sixth and seventh grade, in there, so I'd a been, what, thirteen, fourteen, somewhere along in there.
ES: By the time you were in college was it closed?
AB: I couldn't tell ya. I think probably it was.
ES: Of course you were less interested in using it at that age, I'm sure.
AB: I got to the place, you know, where you could drive you could go to Cove.
ES: Yes.
AB: Cove was a little bit warmer water. I could tell you more about the facilities than I could about Crystal Plunge.
ES: Alright. Let's talk about Cove. How many times did you go there?
AB: I don't remember except that Royal Borkgren was a good guy and he never ratted on any kid that had skipped school to go to his swimming pool. [laugh]
ES: Borkgren, b-o-r-k-g-r-e-n?
AB: I think so. The last time I saw them she was down at OHSU, and this was 1960…let's see…1960, no wait a minute…1978 and she was down there to have some kind of cancer treatment and I don't know what. And I never did see them after that. Of course they sold the facility.
ES: They had run the pool for quite a number of years, hadn't they?
AB: Yeah. In fact, it has changed. When he was running it there was a big log that ran across the center of the pool from the side where the changing rooms were and the diving tower clear across the pool. And in those days it was verboten for somebody to get up on there and walk across the pool and dive in from the log or whatever.
ES: What was the log intended for?
AB: I don't know. It was just there.
ES: It sounds as though if you were diving off the diving board you might hit it.
AB: The diving board was far enough to the north side of it that there's no problem. In fact, the tower…the little tower that they had was far enough to the side that there would've been no problem. I think you went up the…you went up the steps this way and could climb up on the log, but the tower took you on up this way so you were several feet away from the log. And it was about… It was about the same level as the tower and so, you know, it was here and tower was over here so there wasn't any problem with that.
ES: From your perspective what were the attitudes people had about the Cove pool?
AB: It was a great place for kids and for people. I know that a lot fellas that worked in the harvest or whatever over at Cove would end up in the swimming pool in the evening. A place to I guess should I say cool off and clean up.
ES: Yeah, exactly.
AB: Although they made you take a shower before you got in. And Royal was just a nice guy. I saw him… I saw him fish niece of my first wife out of the pool. The

kid didn't have any fear and she just went right out and jumped in the deep end of things, couldn't swim. But he had the stuff to fish 'em out with and I suppose that that wasn't the only one he done that way. But from La Grande Harvey Carter organized a group of us and we went over there and took the lifesaving course that they taught at the time. And so that was in connection not only with I guess community stuff, but the Scouts that's where lifesaving testing took place and the training for it and so on for the lifesaving merit badge.

ES: What information do you have about how the Cove pool got started? It sounds… It seems to me there would've had to be a pretty substantial capital investment in the first place.

AB: I don't have the slightest idea. It was there when I discovered it and I don't know…

ES: It probably goes back about a hundred years, doesn't it?

AB: Let me see. I can go back before 1940…I can go back sixty-five for sure. And I don't think it was… It wasn't a new facility then although Royal always drained the pool and saw that it was scrubbed down and cleaned and he kept the maintenance up and that sort of thing. So I have no idea how old it was.

ES: Did you hear people considerably older than you talking about having gone there?

AB: There aren't very many people around that are gettin' older than I am. [laugh]

ES: No, I mean at the time when you were eighteen or twenty did you…

AB: No. At that age you don't pay much attention to older people.

ES: Well, that varies with individuals. Some are more observant than others.

AB: I think that I was…I was too much concerned with the guys that I was with rather than the older people. But yeah, they…in fact…well, let me see. If I remember correctly…this is a story from the background…my mother and dad and my Uncle Walt went swimming over there and something that my Uncle Walt did, rubbed my mother's foot against the, you know, the rough…it was not really a smooth finished concrete on the walls in places…rubbed her toes against the wall and took off a corn and she never went back again. [laugh] And that's all I can remember about older people.

ES: She limped away with a bloody foot, huh?

AB: A corn missing anyhow. [laughs] But I don't ever remember my mother or dad goin' swimming.

ES: Was it at that time a place for family reunions or gatherings?

AB: He had a facility, a little park facility up away from the pool and in fact I took the… This is where we could go for year…end-of-the-year picnics. In fact, I think the last I remember from here, Harvey and so on, I think a bunch of eighth-grade kids, I was one of 'em, went over there, but they stopped taking La Grande kids. You know, insurance became a big proposition and lawsuits and so on so that quit. But I took Imbler kids over there along with mothers and so on and they swam in the morning and we had our picnic and bar-be-que and they swam in the afternoon and got sunburned real well. And he had a place up away from the swimming pool. I think they've closed it off. But you could go up a little road and he had a park area back there and I think he had some…if I remember right he had some teeter-totters in there type of thing. And then of course you had the

area down by the pool where he had these little bar-be-que stand things. So, yeah, you…family picnics, a lot of family picnics over there as far as I know.

ES: At the time that you were visiting the pool you probably observed Cove itself, the town, were there features of that that stick in your memory?

AB: The school was there on the corner before they built across the street for the new one. But I don't remember… I don't think we paid much attention to the town. We weren't too…too busy headin' for the pool. Of course the…let's see…the gravel road in there…

ES: Till recently.

AB: Yeah, for the most part.

ES: Were you aware at all of the Ascension Camp?

AB: No. We'd come in the other way and we never got down to Ascension Camp, goin' in on the highway and comin' back that way.

ES: What were you… Did you ever hear anything about the Ascension Camp?

AB: Not particularly.

ES: Is that because it was Episcopal?

AB: No, it was because it was fifteen miles away. [laughs] I didn't know they had another one up above Cove, either, but I think that belongs to somebody else. There's another church camp up there, you know, up above the swimming pool.

ES: I guess I didn't know that.

AB: It's still there. I don't know who's that is for sure.

ES: And then there was the Pinecone swimming pool.

AB: Yeah.

ES: Did you go there often?

AB: Oh, every once in a while we'd ride up there on our bicycles. And I think they got the water for that from the Grande Ronde River and of course it's…it was located where the highway weighing station is now about. And they had… They had, should I say, auto camp I think they called…we call it a motel now…in connection with the swimming pool. And Ingrams had that at the time I remember and they had a son named Bud that had a motorcycle. And we'd be… Some of us young'ne's 'd be in the pool and we'd…we'd see him get on that motorcycle, and of course you could hear it, and he'd ride up toward Perry and then pretty soon we'd see him coming back down the highway standing on the seat of his motorcycle, which none of us wanted to try. [laugh] But they had a tower there on the east end of that pool and dressing rooms and beyond that I don't remember too much.

ES: Do you remember how much it cost to get in?

AB: No, but it couldn't 've been very much or we'd 've limited completely.

ES: Riding your bicycles out there this would've been a road that vehicles were using to travel…

AB: On the old highway.

ES: Yeah, traveling to Portland and fairly heavily traveled, wasn't it?

AB: Didn't seem to me like we got past all that on a bicycle. You know, freight trucks basically didn't exist at that time. There might've been some, but basically they didn't exist. Gasoline tankers did, but they…they came in, you know, rarely. I suppose that we followed that same rules as the cars did. We didn't ride on the

wrong side of the street like a lot of characters in La Grande do nowadays, including adults, which, if I understand it correctly, is illegal, but it's still done. And I don't know why it started. It just gave us a little exercise. One thing about it is we could coast quite a bit of the way back to town.

ES: Oh yes. Were there other places to stop at or loiter at on the way to and from that pool?

AB: I suppose you could stop anywhere and loiter, but, no, there wasn't anything from the time…from the time you left the Gangloff Park until you got to Pinecone there really wasn't anything although you could get off the side of the road. There's a place under…under and near the old railroad trestle across the highway where you could get off the side of the road. You could go up I think it was Bear Creek which took off down in that corner. But there wasn't…there wasn't anything along there.

ES: No place to fish along the way?

AB: There's water, yeah, you could fish, but… When you got a swimming suit you're not really into fishin'. You've got something else in mind, I guess.

ES: Did you remember seeing the brickyard on any of those trips?

AB: I know where it was located and I know that a lot of bricks came out of there. But the brickyard was down under the highway. We're up here on the highway and it's clear down here on the flat.

ES: You didn't… You weren't curious enough to go down there and…so you could get a closer look?

AB: They're just a bunch of bricks to kids and all. We weren't concerned about it particularly.

ES: There was steam coming out and a lot of noise, I imagine?

AB: I don't remember any particular noise. There could've been, but you got the railroad tracks down there below that and they're running, remember, a lot of steam locomotives at that time. And so I think probably the railroad noise would have blacked that out a lot of time because your engineer'd be up…up toward that end of the track heading west and he'd toot that whistle to get a high ball so the conductor at the rear end could signal, yeah, we're clear to go. So, no, I never did get down near the brickyard when I was a kid.

ES: But you're aware of it?

AB: I don't know. Maybe.

ES: I don't… I suppose by the time you were noticing those things that the bricks were being brought from the brickyard on trucks rather than with horse and wagons.

AB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

ES: Did you… Do you remember seeing any buildings apparently being built with bricks that had been made there?

AB: You'd get better information out of Jack Jensen on that probably than you would from me. I don't… I don't remember. I don't even know where a lot of the bricks came from. I know they begin to ship 'em in from Utah or Idaho or somethin', a railroad car of 'em even later on. I don't know anything that was built with bricks. I can… I can look up maybe where the bricks from the old tabernacle came from and how many of those they had and so on. They had

thousands of 'em. But beyond that I don't know. I didn't… I didn't pay much attention to what they were building with bricks. Except I know Leo Hansen was a good bricklayer back in those days.

ES: Uh-huh. I have a picture of him with the YMCA building. I think he was the one who laid the brick for that.

AB: And I don't even remember where that was.

ES: That became the Odd Fellows hall. It was across from the Sacagawea Annex where the parking lot is.

AB: Yeah. In between that and the fire station, yeah. That… That was built before I remember because it seems to me I was in there, I took some guitar lessons or something one time and I think that's where the fella had his what passed for a studio. I don't remember for sure. That's the only time I was ever in there.

ES: Do you… I know there was a gym and swimming pool in there when it was a YMCA, but that was before you were doing such things.

AB: I have no idea.

ES: It was built in 1914 and I don't think it remained a YMCA for very many years.

AB: I didn't start swimming for probably upwards another eighteen, twenty years.

ES: You do remember the building, though.

AB: Oh yes.

ES: Because it wasn't too long ago that it was knocked down.

AB: It was… It was a… I think… Didn't it go down that whole block on the Washington Street side as I remember?

ES: Yes. During the time you were living in La Grande as a younger man, later too, what were some of your observations about politic? How politics was done around here?

AB: I will have to go back to a more recent age for that. I was told that most of the politicking took place in Graham's Drug Store for a long time. That's where McGlasson's is now.

ES: Yes.

AB: And when it went out of there the politicians moved down to…oh, what was it…deBord's, which was in Pat's Alley. In fact, I early one morning took my car in to be serviced at Goss's and I hadn't had breakfast and I went over for breakfast and what I'd do, I ended up with a…in breakfast time here with all wheels in town in for breakfast. And that's about all I know about politics.

ES: I'm sure you read articles in the newspaper.

AB: I was told by a school superintendent one time, I forget which one, that he had a list of twenty people and if those twenty people were in favor of the school budget it'd pass. He never did tell me which twenty.

ES: Did this give you the impression that politics in La Grande or maybe all of Union County was kind of a boss system? A few people calling the shots?

AB: Let's put it this way, rather than the boss system it was a few big frogs in a little puddle. And, well, for example, Old Man Smith, that's Gordon Smith's grandfather, came to La Grande, he was looking for a site for this pea cannery that they eventually built in Pendleton. He came to La Grande, told 'em what he was looking for and so on. And the…he did the same in Pendleton. And he told them that he would be back at his home in Ogden at a certain time. The Pendleton

delegation was down there with a deed to the property where Melanie Square is now when he got back. And if I recall it correctly La Grande didn't even give him an answer. Now that tell you about the politics.

ES: Do you generalize it beyond that? Has that been the approach that people in La Grande have taken to other kinds of projects?

AB: You… Were you back here when they started talking about the correctional facility, the prison and so on?

ES: I knew about that.

AB: Okay. The wheels in La Grande didn't want to have anything to do with it so where is it? Over there next to Ontario where the Idaho governor swears at us occasionally for having put it so close. And where does the crime in the state take place basically? In the Willamette Valley area. It doesn't make sense to me to put a prison over at Ontario when you got to transport most of your people clear across the state.

ES: What is there about La Grande management or attitudes toward civic projects that so often has seemed to place La Grande behind the curve?

AB: I don't know. I think it's kind of the attitude that I saw displayed down in Ft. Worth when I was in the service, had a rail stop over there. And here's a sign in the window close to the depot and it says, "Let's keep the business in Ft. Worth. Dallas is big enough." And I think that's the settle, La Grande is big enough. Because…

ES: If it were bigger there'd be more problems? Is that the idea?

AB: Sure. But there'd be more jobs. Maybe the school population wouldn't be declining quite so badly. Yeah, you always get more problems with more size, but on the other hand take a look at the expansion of the college. I walked over that hill before there was any college building on it and then they started out small with just the administration building. Then pretty soon they had Ackerman school and the gymnasium and that's all they had to start with. You can go ahead and take a look at the other stuff. They're still building. And they've taken in everything between Sixth Street and Twelfth…well, not Twelfth because the cemetery takes out that chunk, that and the armory and so on. They've taken in that territory clear up to C Avenue. And maybe eventually it will expand. Eventually. __ finally made it out. What else've we got on here? Oh, the high school.

ES: I'd like… I'd like you to talk as much as you're willing to about your experience in being a teacher in the La Grande system.

AB: You had good days and you had bad days and you had good kids and bad kids.

ES: That's true everywhere. Yeah, I know about that.

AB: You've been there. There were times when…when the…and I did a shocking thing to the school board. They thought they were doin' real well by the teachers and we got out the charts of the other places of comparable size in the state, you know, beginning…salary schedules and so on and it kind of floored 'em because they weren't doing as well by us as they thought they were. But I've seen the time when they were ready to go with what they thought the teachers aught to have and what the teachers were agreed on and I've seen other times when…I won't mention any names 'cause he's got descendants that live in town…but I

guess a member budget board go out of the meeting where they'd give teachers a two hundred dollar raise and he was madder than all heck because they got it. So, you know, it was back and forth. And I never had very much to do with the board just because here's the superintendent and he's the one that deals with the board and he's the one that deals with the teachers. I did have… I did have a lot to do with one of the superintendents because I happened to be the Education Association president for a year way back when. But I didn't have any difficulties in dealing with him. I just found one procedure for dealing with him, though. If you had something to suggest that meant a change or consideration or whatever don't ask him for an immediate answer, give him a few days. He's more likely to say yes if you gave it a few days. The automatic answer is no. That seemed to be… I've experienced that in other situations. That seems to be a…what shall I say…management fallibility. They want time to decide a lot of the time. If it's reasonable a lot times they'll go along with ya if they've got a little time to think it over.

ES: I don't think there's anything about…unique about La Grande in that respect.

AB: No, probably not, except that when they were considering building the new high school building some of us made it to a board meeting and we tell 'em some of the difficulties they're having in the old LHS. And, you know, I talked about some of the things and the longer I talked the bigger the eyes got and the more I could tell they didn't believe a word I was saying about the state of that building.

ES: Tell me what some of those difficulties were.

AB: For one, I had a window…this was in the room on the southeast corner of the building, second floor. I had a window that I could not close by about four inches. So to keep the draft out from the wind that blows that direction I had a towel stuffed in there in the wintertime. And the other windows were not really weatherproof totally. The floor joice had sagged in some places so that they're down this way and you come along and then they come up into place where they're held on the walls.

ES: To the point of being dangerous, do you think?

AB: They probably could've used that building for another hundred years and it'd still been in better shape than some of 'em that I saw over in England. But, you know, it's just… Another thing that happened, I was in the room in the middle over… The old library, you know, was a single story on the north side of the main structure and I had a room up above that. And one, I guess, spring day we had the windows open fortunately when the __ cannon blew. I didn't lose any glass, but it sure rattled the windows and if I hadn't 've had them open and the door to the room open it might've taken some glass out on those kids.

ES: Are you making the case that the building really needed to be torn down or…[end tape]

ES: I was asking whether the old La Grande High School had enough historical value to maybe have considered saving it, repairing it, even though it might've cost more than a new building?

AB: We don't do things that way in this country. It's not the thing. The old Foley Hotel is gone. The new Foley Hotel is gone. Safeway's gone. The LDS tabernacle is gone. St…Old St. Joe came along at a later time and it's been reworked to be the county building. We live in a…what shall I say…build 'em up, tear 'em…wear 'em out, tear 'em down society. We don't think about saving things.

ES: Have you been in on discussions where that was demonstrated?

AB: Yes. I was… I was the… I was the last agent bishop for the old tabernacle. I wrote letters to the powers that be regarding it's status as the oldest tabernacle in the Pacific Northwest. There were people in town who were not members of the LDS church that felt that it should be…it should've been preserved. And we even had the…the head man in the building department out here going over it. But finally the decision was made far away from here that it was time to let it go. And there were structural problems…

ES: Yeah, you told about that in your previous interview.

AB: So…

ES: Were there just a few people in town who thought that it had historical value and that made it worth preserving?

AB: Let me put it this way, there were several interested nonmembers that talked to me and of course there were members that were too. It is a historic spot, or was I should say, as far as the Mormon church is concerned in this area.

ES: Oh yes. Oh yes.

AB: Because at one time Union Stake headquarters stretched from Boise, Idaho to Portland, Oregon and this is where the headquarters had to be. That lasted for about a year back about 1901, 1902. But that's I guess sort of beside the point. Everything's gone now. Yeah, the high school…back to the high school. In remodeling it they would've run into the asbestos problem they ran into when they tore it down. They would've had to replace all of the windows because they were no longer weatherproof. Well, start counting on that. They probably would've had to revise the heating plant. You know, they had the stoker set in that little building, well, it's kind of in…in the corner of the L between the part of the high school and they gym. They would've had to probably revise that. The… All the time I taught there that school was only closed once because of weather factors and that's when a lot of snow melted off the field and ran around the corner and filled up the place where the stokers were and put 'em out of business. It got cold in there and had to…had to go…send 'em home. Although we did have to send some kids home when it seemed like bomb threats were the thing there for a while and we had several in that school and had to send the kids home while we checked things. Of course there was never anything there at all. Get back to the old times. Before they built the new gymnasium, which was opened in 1936, they surveyed the football field and found…and it was a baseball field too…they found that it was nine feet lower on the northeast corner than it was on the southwest corner. So that's when they leveled up the field. And of course in

the process of that the old baseball backstop that was in the…in the northeast corner of the field there and kind of, well, up against Third Street where it went through, never was paved, was down in that area. They had to do for that in order to do the leveling. And that was all part of the package with the new…new gymnasium. I think that's about the time they started burning coal, too, because they put…put the gymnasium in the area where they used to stack the cord wood that went in for that. When they built that gymnasium, why, it was probably the best one in Eastern Oregon. I don't know how long that lasted, but for a while anyway.

ES: Did you ever hear any stories about Blue Mountain University?

AB: Only that it was on the site where the old Central School was and I don't know about that.

ES: I think it was farther back.

AB: It may have been. I think Ella Hall and Margaret Adler, who are I think aunts of Genevieve Carter… Genevieve might be able to tell you something about…I don't know. But I know that they had some connect or went there or something. They were neighbors down here with my folks. That's the only way I __ that.

ES: Was it your impression that it was truly a college or was it just an advanced…or high school in fact?

AB: I have no idea except I can say this, that my mother went to La Grande High School and came out of there with a teaching certificate. Now that aught to give you a clue maybe on the other place. I don't think it would be considered anything more than maybe a junior college at the most if it was.

ES: Yeah. It was a private…privately organized institution I think.

AB: I don't know. Haven't any idea.

ES: Okay.

AB: Oh, let's…let's go to mail delivery.

ES: Oh, mail delivery. You told about the routes in your previous interview.

AB: Let's go to town. Toots Garrity took care of all the parcel post delivery. And there wasn't any UPS so he took care of all of the packages that were too big for a route carrier who walked to carry. So that would've been very small packages. He also took the route carriers' mail, which had been bundled and routed in the post office, to drop boxes around town to which he had the keys and the city carrier had the keys. And when the carrier had taken certain amount of his route then he'd go to the drop box and if he had a lot of letters he'd put them in there for safekeeping while he got the next bundle of mail out and delivered it. David B. Stoddard worked the north side of town and at one time he had a horse and buggy of a sort to deliver. And people that talked about it said the horse knew the route as well as David B. did and knew where to stop every time and wait while he did this route. The carriers worked five-and-a-half days, you had a Saturday morning delivery, which you don't have anymore I guess in the city, do they?

ES: Yes.

AB: I don't have any idea. They did all… They walked everywhere. They didn't have any fancy mail car to take 'em around every place. And rural routes, well, it was outside the city then, I guess, because rural route 1 came in, went down Russell Street and south on Cherry, back out on Z and on out on Spruce to go on

out in the country. And then the other one started on…on Cove Avenue about where the Willow Grocery is, a little bit further west maybe, went down Willow Street, caught a big bunch of boxes there where the motel is now, the Smokehouse Restaurant area, and then went on out and it finished up coming back in on Cove Avenue. And the people that lived on the north side of Cove Avenue got their mail late in the afternoon where the one on the other…south side got it early. But that was part of rural route then. That's all city delivery now. And of course the town's added a whole bunch of things. The… I already told you about the other st___. Leave that, I guess.

ES: Okay. Do you want to talk about the box factory that burned down?

AB: The only thing I know about it is it was located where B & K Auto Salvage is presently. And they had a railroad branch…siding line, I guess you'd say, cut right across Highway 30 in the box factory. It caught fire for some reason back in the early '30s, I would guess about 1931 or '32 because there big…we could see the smoke from where we lived out on Catherine Creek. It all burned down and was never replaced.

ES: What do you know about the kinds of boxes they made and where they got the materials?

AB: I suspect the materials came in on the freight car. I'm not sure. They had the siding there for moving materials.

ES: Wasn't there a sawmill around here that could provide it?

AB: They may have been able to because at a later period of time the Mt. Emily mill over here was making some material that was about a quarter-of-an-inch thick and about twelve inches high by fourteen inches or so long. I think… I think they…that was a bunch of stuff that went into the sides of the suitcases or something, I'm not sure it was what, but I've got some of it. In fact I…I made a little filing cabinet out of some of that material. My father-in-law worked the mill and when they quit doing that, why, that stuff was surplus. They didn't grind it all up and it didn't go to particle board. But that… But as to the use, they used to raise a lot of apples out around Imbler. I was told that at one time the orchards in Imbler were sufficient that they loaded up a trainload of apples, took 'em to Portland, put 'em on a ship and ended up taking 'em to England. Somebody'd have to check the accuracy of that, but…

ES: I think that generally is accurate.

AB: There were a lot of orchards out there.

ES: Yeah.

AB: And Lynn Wilson was probably the last apple orchard man that lived out there. And they still had scattered groups of trees here and there although by the time I knew anything about it for sure there were more cherry orchards out that way than apples by far. But I think…I think the reason they quit apples is a labor intensive crop.

ES: Oh yes.

AB: And they found they could make as much money growing grain and hay and…

ES: More.

AB: …then of course long… I guess after World War II they hit…hit it big with grass seed and H. L. Wagoner put up the cleaning plant in Imbler and the… They all

used to do that with a binder and wagons, thrashing machine and so on and now they swath it and run a combine in the fields. You don't have those grass stacks around like you used to.

ES: Do you recall what this box factory was called?

AB: That's the only thing I ever knew it by was box factory. You've got to remember I wasn't but about maybe ten years old when it burned down, if I was that old.

ES: Had you been inside it?

AB: No. I just… We just went past it when we went out where we lived.

ES: I think you mentioned previously that you knew about the vinegar works that was near…on Willow Street.

AB: That was located where the City Garbage plant is now.

ES: Yeah, right.

AB: It…

ES: You smelled it, what else did you know about it?

AB: Oh, it was pretty strong because the kids that lived over south of the railroad track like on Highway Avenue, which is now about Eighteenth Street, I think, and in that area had to walk past it to get to Willow School. And they had enough vinegar made that it smelled pretty strong. I don't know when that disappeared, either.

ES: Did you see or use the product?

AB: You'd have to ask my mother. I don't know. I'm not very strong in drinkin' vinegar even though it's supposed to be good for you nowadays. It was there for some time and it's just like some of the other businesses that once were good business and, you know, they're not there anymore one reason or another.

ES: Now there was a flour mill near there, too. You must've seen that. The Alliance Flour Mill?

AB: Yes. And if you want to know about the inner workings of that you're gonna have to see my brother because he worked there.

ES: Oh, he did?

AB: He worked… He worked at that flour mill and he worked the Island City one, he worked in the one at Alicel, he worked the one in Imbler for Kiddles when he was a kid going to college and then after he was married, too, I think. He can tell you about the inner works of all 'em.

ES: Did he operate the machinery?

AB: That's what he was there for, yes. He can tell you all about it.

ES: You'd call him a miller?

AB: No, because he didn't grind.

ES: What did he do?

AB: He… He took the grain in, weighed it in, saw that it got in the proper bins or silos, whatever you want to call 'em, and gave the tickets out the farmers or whoever was doin' the hauling for 'em. But that…no. No, let me see. A fellow named Shaeffer that lived out on Hunter Lane at one time was the last miller that I knew out there at Island City. That's a long ways back. But he…he worked in all those places and ran 'em all. He could tell you about it. I… My only experience was delivering grain there a time or two and hauling screenings away a time or two and I didn't have anything to do with it.

ES: Hauling what away?

AB: Well, when you…when you haul your grain in unless you got a real clean crop they'd separate it, run-over separator. Like if you got wild oats growin' in your grain, well, they can separate the wheat from the oats, or the wheat seed, whatever. And so you'd get some of that back sometimes.

ES: You'd have to haul it away yourself?

AB: Yeah. They wanted you to anyhow.

ES: Would they deduct that from whatever the money they gave you for wheat?

AB: They weighed… They weighed your… They weighed your load in, see, and all this stuff's in the load. Yeah, you get subtracted for that, yeah.

ES: Why were you bringing wheat in? I didn't know that you…

AB: Because I was growing wheat down here. We owned the place down there where the trailer courts are. In fact, when you…when you make the corner down here and turn on West Road to go out to Riddle, my dad and mother and I owned everything from there to the railroad track at one time. We bought that in 1948 and farmed it for a while before my dad died and we kind of went out of the farming business and then sold off bits and pieces of it here and there. Put me out of business.

ES: Were you thinking of being a farmer yourself at that time?

AB: No. We just had the land and needed to use it. No. I had to teach school to make a living so I could afford to farm.

ES: I see. [laughs] You mentioned that your father was killed. Was it an accident?

AB: That was my grandfather.

ES: Oh, your grandfather. A farming accident?

AB: No, he was logging out in…well, it was out there on Foothill Road up above the area where they feed the deer and the elk when they do that occasionally. It was up on top somewhere. And my dad was working right next to him and they stopped for lunch and somebody let a tree hang up and it came down and hit him. Didn't leave a mark on him, but it was fatal. And that was…that was in 1913 and the two oldest one…older ones, older than my dad, in the family had married and my dad was the oldest single son that was left. Kind of had the responsibility of looking after the family for a while. In fact, he didn't marry for the next ten years. Well, I should take that back, he was married in 1920. So I know the general area. I don't think anybody knows the exact spot because all of 'em are dead or gone. One of Walt Smutz uncles… I went with Walt one time and he talked to us about it. I can't remember which one it was. I know where the place was now, but he remember seeing this…seeing him come by after the accident and that sort of thing. No, my dad went into La Grande clinic, had a complete physical and the doctor told him he was good for another twenty years and he lasted long enough to get down to the old post office and sign a pay voucher and that's where he died. That day.

ES: The day of the physical you mean?

AB: They day of the physical.

ES: The doctor missed something?

AB: Probably, but it was something that an EKG or whatever it was wouldn't tell ya. Jean says that's only good if you're having a heart attack right on the spot

otherwise it gives you a clear reading. No, what happened was that somewhere back along the line in his activities or whatever it apparently had weakened a chamber of the heart. When he got down to the post office it took occasion just to rupture. The doctor couldn't 've done a thing for him. He'd 've been right on the spot. I was… When Lloyd Walsh was working at the clinic and he got the word and came down and got me…or came to school and go me and I guess he'd told Harvey what the situation was and I went down to the post office and I'm the only one that saw my dad in the postmaster's office with a catalog for a pillow. And I had…had the…I don't know which mortuary…and I had him out of there before my mother and brother and the rest of 'em ever saw that. Let's see. What didn't we cover? Oh, football. Always in those days we played Baker on what was Armistice Day. And it didn't matter whether the snow had been pushed off the field or what it was. I know we went to Baker one time and the snow drifts on the side of the field where they pushed it off the field were about three feet deep.

ES: Are you talking about the time when men who were twenty-six years old were still allowed to play football with the high school players?

AB: I'm talkin' about the time when I played.

ES: Oh, when you played.

AB: When we go back…go back a while, yeah, I can tell you stories about that if you want to hear it.

ES: When you were playing football there were older men? No?

AB: No. No, I think they… I think they'd cut the limit down to about eighteen by then.

ES: Why did you want to play football with a team?

AB: I don't know. I guess I was crazy enough to want to do it.

ES: Did you realize that injury was likely?

AB: Yes, but that isn't what broke my nose. I didn't… I didn't get any injuries out of that like some of 'em did. But to go back in ancient history back when my Uncle Jeff was in high school he had a denatured skunk that he'd take along with him and he traveled with the team. I don't know whether he played or not.

ES: The mascot?

AB: Yeah, it was sort of a mascot. They never had any…

ES: You call it… You call it denatured, huh?

AB: He'd been treated so where the scent was no longer quite so strong. Anyhow, as long as he took Newell along they never had any difficulty up in Baker, there were never any fights or anything. There were fights at a later time because when I was going to high school there was another kid in high school that had a…a little hand satchel that he took along with his fightin' clothes in. And he's usually get in a fight with somebody up in Baker out behind a billboard somewhere or somethin'. This was back… This was 1938, '39.

ES: What do fighting clothes look like?

AB: Oh, I don't know. I never did get in on one of his fights or didn't…never did see it. I suppose somethin' that was…was ragged enough that if it got torn up it wouldn't make too much difference. It wasn't… It wasn't as nice as what he usually wore, anyway.

ES: And you said when you went along there weren't any fights? Why?

AB: I said when my Uncle Jeff went along there weren't any. He had the skunk, remember?
ES: Oh, I see. He used it as a…what? A threat?
AB: A protective device let's call it. [laughs]
ES: Your uncle Jeff was the one who was called…was named Jesse but he didn't like that name?
AB: He never went by it if he could get out of it.
ES: Did most of the guys who played football at that time think it was a macho thing to do? I mean were you…was your manliness at stake there?
AB: I don't think so exactly because Jack Ferguson was a starting guard his senior year, he weighed 137 pounds, and he was good enough that when they made the selection for the Blue Mountain All-Star team or whatever he was selected in 1939.
ES: I bet he ran fast.
AB: Well…
ES: Slippery.
AB: He was slippery I guess because they couldn't block him out or something. But anyway, so I don't think it was too macho a thing. The biggest kid we had weighed 205 pounds and he didn't play first string. He'd get clobbered maybe now, but he didn't play…he never…he never started a game or anything.
ES: I suppose football players, though, were admired around the high school?
AB: You got a letterman's sweater to wear, you know, and you got a stripe on the arm for this year or this year or whatever and some of those guys had four stripes before they graduated from high school.
ES: Can you describe team spirit?
AB: I think it must've been pretty good because we went undefeated in the state, I think, in 1939. Didn't have any playoffs, though. We didn't get to go across the state anywhere. Yeah, it… And there was… There was a lot of rivalry. Baker… We played Baker twice a year, once early in the fall and once on Armistice Day. And Pendleton. We beat 'em once here in La Grande in a snow storm and then the other time, why, we played the zero-zero tie in the Round-Up grounds in Pendleton. And that's the year when they didn't make a yard on the punt return because Marion Huff nailed everybody down there right after they got the ball. I don't know. We even played The Dalles. That was something to ride down there on the school bus over the old road at about thirty-five miles an hour. In fact, coming back from one night down there the next day I put a peanut on the outside of the bus window and that peanut stayed on there and road all the way back to about Meacham. I give you an idea of how fast we weren't moving.
ES: Describe the coaching.
AB: Cec Sherwood…
ES: Cease?
AB: Cecil. Later on he was a grade school principal down in Roseburg. And Harold Hoyt was the assistant coach. And Harold Hoyt was on the school board down there and helped Cec get the job later on. But he…he coached a…what should I say…I guess you'd call it a single-wing maybe. Moved the left tackle over so he had two tackles in offence side-by-side. Your quarterback handled the ball on

every play. He wasn't up under the center, he was back here. And defense he played a six-man line, two linebackers and three…well, two halfbacks and a safety.

ES: How much emphasis on sportsmanship?

AB: I think on occasion there wasn't any.

ES: Do whatever you need to do to knock 'em down?

AB: I shouldn't even mention it on tape because I heard the coach tell Peewee Marshal what to do one time. I don't think Peewee managed it, but it was laid out there for him if he could. Peewee was big enough and tough enough and fast enough that if the occasion had opened up he probably could've done what the coach wanted him to do.

ES: Would it be accurate to say that generally coaches, football coaches anyway, were suggesting to the team you do whatever you need to do, win at all costs?

AB: No, because…

ES: Bend the rules?

AB: If you… If you got to bending the rules you got to remember you got…

ES: Referees.

AB: …about three referees out there and you got a head linesman as well as the other and they're watchin' for this stuff.

ES: Did the coachers cuss out the players in the locker room?

AB: I don't remember… I don't remember that it was ever done. I'm not saying it wasn't, but if it was done it wasn't aimed at me anyhow.

ES: Did you have the impression the coach was pretty tough?

AB: The coach wanted to win, sure. And yeah, he…he wasn't afraid to call a spade a spade. He wasn't a very big guy, but that didn't bother anything. No, I don't recall any… I don't recall any swearing going on. There might've been some, but like I say, I was…what should I say…I was a minor matter so it wasn't aimed at me.

ES: No, but you could pick up what was going around at the time. I suppose for most of La Grande High School's history winning in sports has been very important.

AB: I would say that's probably right.

ES: Any more important than the academic part?

AB: They have never cut sports. I have seen them cut orchestra, foreign language and juggle other things around.

ES: Is this probably because the coaches and the administrators think that the community values sports so highly that they would be outraged if there were reductions in teams?

AB: Maybe, but I've seen 'em do the same thing at Imbler. I know the fella who's music job they cut.

ES: Yeah. I think if that was the attitude it probably was the same attitude in all the high schools around here.

AB: I think probably.

ES: Communities tend to…

AB: In fact, I can go further and say I know the fellow who was a star athlete for Baker High School. He lives up in Enterprise now. The coach did all kinds of things to keep that guy eligible to play. Now I know in La Grande High School

on the bulletin board there was a place where the athletes had…the teachers had to signoff as to whether you were eligible for that game or not. And there were two or three guys that lived in fear and trembling from about Wednesday on till they got cleared on Friday.

ES: Do you mean students or teachers?

AB: I mean students 'cause the teachers had to signoff.

ES: I know, but there was a lot of pressure on the teachers, too, wasn't there?

AB: I don't know. There might've been…[end tape]

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AB: I don't know, we pretty much covered the page, I think.

ES: Okay. Any random thoughts?

AB: Random thoughts? Oh, the shoeshine parlor was run by Angel Mitzopolis.

ES: Angel Mitzopolis.

AB: Mitzopolis. His daughter Anne Rodriquez lives over on Blackhawk Trail.

ES: Oh yes, yes. She was a teacher at the high school, or maybe still is.

AB: No, I think she retired. She went out along with the rest of 'em due to the PERS thing that's kickin' around now. But she…she might remember something about it. And Ada is still alive and she lives over on Fir across the street from what used to be the Hendricks Methodist church. Incidentally, that was another location of a grocery store, where she lives. But… And she… I don't know what she is, ninety-something, and she's still putting it on Louie, her son-in-law, to get in there and get that garden cultivated so she can get out and plant garden. Anne can tell you what that women put in. I don't know, it's somethin' like a hundred I think or something last year and I don't know what else.

ES: Tell me more about the shoeshine parlor.

AB: All I remember that it was combination shoeshine and hat blocking deal. Don't ask me what they did with the hats, I don't know. But, you know, the shoeshine he had several different stations and they're all up here raised on the…you know, raised seats so the shoe shiner doesn't have to bend over and the little shoe trees or whatever these things are out here where you put your feet on. And I don't remember what it cost or anything, but it was right in there close to what once upon a time was the location for the A & W root beer thing. I don't know if anybody remembers about that, either.

ES: The custom of most men who were in business downtown was to dress up quite a bit every day, wasn't it?

AB: It runs in my mind that Homer Loffel usually wore a suit and a tie, that'd be Penny's. And I think that John Group and Les Pepper were dressed __ tie maybe and suit at least part of the time for Trotters. Zion's I don't remember about.

ES: When you saw men on the street if they were…if they worked downtown were most of them wearing suits? Shirt…white shirts and ties?

AB: I don't…

ES: And shiny shoes?

AB: Don't put me on record for that. I don't know.

ES: There was more than one shoeshine parlor so somebody had to be patronizing.
AB: Yeah. I guess they did. Of course you had barbershops scattered all over town, too. The Sacagawea and… They moved. They folded sometime and they had to move.
ES: You patronized them, didn't you?
AB: Yeah, once upon a time. In fact, used to get a haircut for about a quarter.
ES: Yeah. What do you remember about conversations in the barbershop?
AB: I don't remember much anything because my brother-in-law who's a barber moved back to town and when he did he started cuttin' my hair and that lasted for quite a long time until he got to where he couldn't do it anymore. Then my wife signed me up so I got one of my former students cuttin' my hair now. [laughs]
ES: My memory of barbershops, the old kind, is that there were…it was always men in there, you never saw any women, and that you could get two-bit opinions on politics or just about any…
AB: Just about any subject, yeah.
ES: And of course a lot of men were waiting in chairs so the conversation was among several people.
AB: And I remember, you know, they used to shave a lot of fellows, too.
ES: Yes.
AB: There was always hot towels.
ES: Yes.
AB: Let me see, they finished up with witch hazel or something like that, whatever it was.
ES: That's right.
AB: Yeah. It always… Always this big bunch of all kinds of colored hair on the floor that they'd sort of sweep aside until they really cleaned up at the end of the day.
ES: Do you remember the kind of clippers they used on your neck?
AB: The first time were these that were, you know, you operated by hand. Then they got the electric ones later on. Of course they used to shear sheep with hand tools, too, before they got the electric.
ES: Do you remember how the…the hand-operated clippers felt?
AB: If they got the least bit dull they pulled.
ES: Yeah. On just about every stroke. [laughs] Was there cigar smoking in those barbershops? Cuspidors for chewing tobacco?
AB: I suppose there was, but I don't remember for sure. Good night, I haven't been to a barbershop for twenty, twenty-five years probably like that.
ES: The recent ones, of course, wouldn't be like that.
AB: No, they went out pretty fast.
ES: Yeah.
AB: I don't know. I think you've run me dry.
ES: Okay.
AB: At least for this point anyhow.
ES: Sure. [recording stopped]