

BARBARA BLOOM

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[SIDE 1]

I: This is Barbara Bloom from Cove, Oregon.

BB: Right.

I: Ok, the first thing I'd like to ask you is tell me your full name, your birth date and where you were born.

BB: Well, my full name is Barbara May--M-A-Y, Bloom, and I was born in Sacramento California.

I: Is Bloom your married name or your--

BB: Right. No, that's my married name. And then my previous marriage name was Martin and my maiden name was Phelps, spelled with a "ph."

I: And your birth date?

BB: 9th of May, 1926.

I: When did you first come to Union County?

BB: 1953.

I: What brought you here?

BB: Well, my husband was born here and we came up to visit his mother, and came up this direction to get married, and he, after that, he wanted to move back home; he was born here in Cove and his father was born here, so this was really...

I: So, he had an urge to come here-

BB: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: You say you got married here?

BB: Well, no. Not actually in Cove, no. Actually we were married in Idaho, but we came up here--we were involved-- we each had children. And we, on the way up, we were dropping children off, and then stopped at his mother's, and then from there we---other things happened, and we ended up going back to California through Idaho and got married there.

I: Did you work when you came to Union County?

BB: Did I work?

I: Were you working or did you get a job, or--

BB: Let's see, what was I doing before we came? Well, before we came I was, I guess I was a foster mother, is all. But, and I had been taking student nursing--I was going to be a practical nurse.

I: I see.

BB: I was going to college in Sacramento.

I: Now did you work when you came--

BB: Well, we came here and bought the Cove General Store--that's the only way we could come was to come and buy the store from his sister.

I: I see.

BB: And we bought the store and, of course, from that second on I was working 24 hours a day between home and the store.

I: Now what was the name of that store?

BB: Cove General Store.

I: And how long did you own it?

BB: Oh, probably nineteen, twenty years approximately... twenty years.

I: And you took the store over from his sister did you say?

BB: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: Tell me about that store.

BB: Well, it was a---what did you call those old stores that had everything? [Laughs]

I: A general store?

BB: Yeah, well, that's what the name was. But we had drugs, clothing, meat market, produce, canned groceries... we had a soda fountain, and we sold gas. We had nails, and horseshoe nails. We cut glass for windows, cut pipe. We did just about everything you do in a little tiny town that has to do everything for its people.

I: Um... Wow, that's quite a store. And how many people operated that store? Was it just you and your husband?

BB: Yeah, just me and my husband. Then later on, as our family grew, temporarily here and there we hired people from Cove to work a few hours a day--the busy hours. Or he hired kids going to school; after school they'd help stock shelves. And then our kids were raised stocking shelves, sweeping floors and mopping and painting and...

I: What were the general hours of the operation?

BB: Well, my husband would leave here probably about seven in the morning and do things he had to do to open, and he'd open the store from eight until, oh, about nine, except in a small town it was hard to get people out that wanted to sit around and visit. [laughs]

I: In the store.

BB: By the old potbellied stove. So we got rid of that. [laughs]

I: And that got rid of your visitors--

BB: Well, a lot of 'em. There were some that would lean on the ice cream chest and visit and just liked to stand there---lonesome old bachelors, mainly, that did that.

I: I see. Now, was this the main business of Cove at that time as far as stores or picking up supplies or--

BB: Well, I think originally it was, because it started out as just a feed store. And then went into, gradually added on things. But there was another store at the corner across from the school when we came, and that was in 1953, '54, that we actually came up here and lived.

I: Let's talk about the--you said that there were horseshoe nails?

BB: Oh yeah.

I: And so you were selling--was that a popular item?

BB: Well, it was a hardware store, in the back--

I: As well.

BB: It was hardware. Yeah. Each section was in a place by itself in the store.

I: Uh-huh.

BB: The hardware was a very big part of the store, yes. People would come here to get odds and ends to they could repair things, because they didn't want to drive clear to La Grande.

I: And that would go for horseshoes as well.

BB: Horseshoe nails.

I: Horseshoe nails.

BB: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: Now was the--was the, before we go back to the store, was the road paved between Cove and La Grande then?

BB: When we came, oh yes, oh yes. But in the beginning, of course, it wasn't.

I: Ah hah.

BB: And of course I have stories from way back because of--I took care of my mother-in-law, and of course the family. I heard lots of stories, so...

I: Ah hah.

BB: You know, I can go way back to when they had to go by horse-and- buggy and it was a full day's trip, you know, or even a two-day trip, so...

I: So it sounds like bill _____ might have been considered sort of a journey to go to La Grande even when you came.

BB: Well, if people--I mean, men that were working on their farms, it was. They didn't want to take the time out to go. And they could pick up their hardware here. Now they go to Union--a lot of people go to Union to buy their quick supplies when they're fixing something and run out. They don't want to take the time out from their work to go. But--no it wasn't. I had to go almost every day for the store to buy fresh produce and fresh meat 'cause we had a meat counter and sold fresh meat--hamburger and steaks and bacon--you know, the usual.

I: How were your other supplies delivered out there?

BB: Well, in that period, it was--you had to order a certain amount for the big chain grocers--wholesales-- to come to your store, but it wasn't a great amount. 'Course it was in those days for us because we didn't have much money--we ate it all to get the store--but you had to have a certain amount to buy your staples. It eventually got to be about five thousand dollars worth of groceries before they'd deliver, but then the

little ones came--like your milk trucks that brought the milk and the, let's see, I think they called them "tobacco places," but they carried a sundries--candy, tobacco, and all that kind of stuff, and they would come every week. And then, oh, just, different trucks came and helped us that way--and of course the bread trucks came every other day or something like that.

I: Did you make anything yourself that was sold in the store--pastries or other food items?

BB: Oh, no, no. There was no time. Yeah, we had--in fact, they brought fresh donuts when they'd come, from the donut shops. They'd pick 'em up and drop 'em off.

I: Do you recall who your major suppliers were--the upper end places you had to order from?

BB: Well, there was the La Grande Grocery, I think it was called, in La Grande that we ordered from. Then they ordered from their suppliers and it was brought and then they brought it to us.

I: Do you say that you pumped gas there also?

BB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

I: Who delivered the fuel? Was it a brand name, or local outfit?

BB: Oh--well they were local in La Grande, of course--Chevron or--can't even remember those things--'course my husband was in charge of a lot of that. You know, so I didn't--I waited on customers and did the billing and the taxes and the bookkeeping, and waited on the counter, but he did a lot of that so I didn't.

I: Now what kind of technology or equipment did you have to operate your store and--

BB: [laughs]

I: And I'm not trying to be funny but--

BB: Oh no, it is funny.

I: I, uh, I do know that it was different then than it was now.

BB: Oh, mercy. It was better then, I'll tell you. Well, yeah, you could get me cash register and get money and make change! Now, if the electricity goes down nobody can do anything!

I: That's true. Did you have a cash register?

BB: Yeah, we had an antique cash register. You pushed the keys and then pushed the button and it popped open the door.

I: So--

BB: The single drawer.

I: It was mechanical instead of electric then?

BB: It was--oh yeah, it was mechanical. It wasn't electric. And then we had a meat slicer--hand meat slicer, that wasn't electric.

I: So would you buy your meat in bulk and then cut it down to portion sizes or--

BB: Well, we bought most of it cut, but my husband would cut pork chops and bacon and that's about all he cut. He bought--because we didn't buy that much we wanted fresh, we didn't buy, you know, a whole lot, so we just brought--and there was a meat--a meat place in La Grande--can't even remember the name of that-- was out there past Anne's, I know. Out that direction, but--

I: How 'bout your bookkeeping and that sort of thing?

BB: I did it all.

I: And that was all--did you have equipment for that? That was all done by hand bookwork?

BB: Well, the charge accounts were all written by hand and yellow copy

given to the customer each time they charged, but then we had to keep those added up at the store. We had an adding machine that you punched your numbers in and pulled, hand-cranked down the handle, and did that. And of course at the end of the month you had to have it all ready for people who paid regularly at the first of the month.

I: So that, was that your policy for--was this a local way of issuing credit then?

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

I: And they would typically pay at the first of the month?

BB: Yeah. Well, whenever their paycheck came in. You know, people that were farmers, if they got milk checks, they might pay at a different time. So basically we tried to keep 'em up, pretty much. But we did have people that paid once a year.

I: Oh really?

BB: Yeah. [laughs]

I: Was that like, after the harvest, or...?

BB: Right. After the people that lived here in their little houses and had their own little cows and stuff and then they'd go off and pick apples and follow the apples from California to Washington, or the cherries and the different things and they'd come back home for the kids to go to school and then they would, they would write out a check and pay us the full amount for the year.

I: That's incredible.

BB: Yeah, it was. It was hard on us, but they were good customers and they were faithful in paying, more faithful than a lot of the wealthy ones that lived close. [laughs]

I: Did you have any problems with that?

BB: Oh, mercy, yes. [laughs] Yeah. We had a big investment that we

never got, you know, so we went out of business. People never did pay their bills--'bout five thousand dollars, course that was a lot in those days.

I: Yeah. Did people typically pay cash then or write checks or what would they--

BB: Both, both, you know, equally used. A lot of people paid cash 'cause they'd run in but a lot of 'em would just holler--you know, for a funny story, if you wanna hear funny stories--

I: Sure!

BB: Lemme let my dog--Anne's dog in. I'm takin' care of the dog and she's barkin'.

I: Right.

BB: Let's see, people, when they first came into the store, why everybody knew who we were. But my husband had lived in California and other places for many, many years and hadn't lived here so he didn't know a lot of the people, and he couldn't always remember their names from when he was a kid here, but they would come in and they'd pump their own gas--they'd stop and pump the gas 'cause they'd see we were busy then they'd, instead of coming in and waiting to write it down, they'd just holler "Hey Ed, or Bobby, I got, I just bought five dollars worth of gas, and away they'd go! Well, I didn't even know who they were a lot of the times, so we never got that money. [laughs] 'Cause I didn't know who to write it down to! And if you were with a customer, you just kept workin'. Then somebody else would come in and grab a loaf of bread and holler "Hey! I'm takin' a loaf of bread!" [laughs] And so it was--and nothing was priced, by the way--there were no prices on anything. When my sister-in-law and--- we bought it from my husband's sister, the Gorham's and when we bought it they had come up so slowly--and prices didn't change very fast in their day-- so they had it all in their heads. They knew how much everything was, but they weren't very good with the books. Anyway, when they made sandwiches for their counter, and milkshakes, people came all the way from La Grande to come out here and get the good sandwiches and milk shakes because it was so

cheap, they could get it for so cheap, well they were losing money with every sandwich and milkshake they were makin!' And of course when we took over we had to process everything and figure it out, and so we didn't keep that soda fountain very long--it wasn't makin' money.

I: So that, that was where I: was going to ask about that, too. The soda fountain served sandwiches and milkshakes and--

BB: Yeah. Maybe a cup of hot soup, but mainly, you know, things we could make up out of the store because we had, we had bologna and cheese and ham and stuff for all kinds of sandwiches--there were all kinds of lunchmeats to sell in the meats section, so we could just run over and get whatever they wanted and then we had lettuce, 'cause we had produce, so we'd go and get what we needed. [laughs]

I: Now did--was it just easier to let the soda fountain part of it go than it was to raise the price?

BB: Oh, it was easier because, for a family store, and the kids were in school, it was just my husband and I, and if he had to go to town, I couldn't pump gas and make sandwiches because, for one thing, you've got to scrub your hands every time you do anything, and then come back to the soda fountain, and it was such a time-consuming split. And in the meantime someone would come in and want a dozen eggs that we just couldn't--we couldn't handle it. And we wouldn't have made enough--well, we couldn't because we had to pay the money we borrowed to buy the store, and raising six children we had-- we didn't make any money. We just ate and lived out of the store. We wore the clothes, we ate the food, we maintained, we used the gas, everything from the store.

I: Now, when did you let that store go?

BB: Well, just don't have a date in my head. I can't help you.

I: Ok.

BB: I think Anne could help you there because she remembers how old she was.

I: Oh--

BB: When, you know. I think...

I: I think you said when ... Anne though--

BB: Well, that's what I always said--around twenty years that we had it. And we took over probably 1954, so you could figure that out pretty easy.

I: Ok, um--

BB: Say 1975, quits or something like that.

I: Well let's talk about this business of customers that hung out at your store.

BB: [laughs] Well that was another thing that the soda fountain encouraged. They'd come in and have a cup of coffee and sit there and wanna visit. We had a couple of ladies that did that every night.

I: So was your store considered sort of a gathering place, then?

BB: No, not really. It was never more than one person at a time, or two people that happened to accidentally meet at the time. No it really was--at that time, when we came, they also had a pool hall across the street, and that's where the gathering of the men would be, you know, to play pool. And they might run across the street to our store and get something for it, but mainly there. And women didn't do that in those days, you know, and kids didn't either.

I: They didn't go to the pool hall.

BB: No. No, the men or--the women or the kids didn't gather there. They gathered ...bars and there, maybe around the school, so there really wasn't that type of a gathering place.

I: Now, did your ... you said that your children grew up around the store. Did they... what did they do?

BB: Oh, mainly, when they got old enough, of course, and when they came here, why they were, let's see... the oldest girl was, like twelve, thirteen--twelve, and then Whitey and Sherry, my daughter and his son were a month apart. They were, let's see... ten, ten-ish, nine, ten, and then younger ones who were on down, but as the... Patty worked in the store, and Whitey. They would sweep and then gradually they'd wait on the customer for a loaf of bread or something, you know, 'cause they could do the prices and. Course by then our prices were all marked 'cause we started markin' everything as soon as we came into the store.

I: So were, would this be part of the routine chores, or... responsibilities that you'd give the children, and--

BB: Oh yeah, they had to come and sweep the store every night after a certain hour, like eight o'clock they'd come and sweep the store, and, oh, let's see, they had different responsibilities depending on the child. But mainly sweeping and stocking shelves, and then in-between that, like I said, if somebody came in for something while Ed was out pumping gas, why then they'd probably write down... but see, when they were up there I was here, and when I was there, the kids were either in school and Ed was off to La Grande, so it was a hard thing, you know, just um, You're used where you're needed at the time.

I: Right.

BB: Ed was the one that was there from seven until ten. When he ordered on Monday nights he stayed and ordered his big orders for the--from the grocery outlet, and that would keep him there 'till twelve or one o'clock in the morning, and then he'd be down there again at seven in the morning.

I: Oh.

BB: Course it was a cement floor and he was on his feet all those hours.

I: Now what happened to that store--was it sold to somebody else, or--

BB: Well, it was sold several times. We sold it and then people couldn't make the payments and they'd come back or people had one couple--two couples-- come and buy the store from California and they were young couples ... [coughs]

I: Now what did you do after you sold the store?

BB: Well, we sold it and tried to retire, but like I said, we sold it to those couples and then they came in there and thought that all you had to do was stand there and take the money. They had no conception of what they were getting into, so if they wanted to go skiing, or go snowmobiling, they just closed the store! Well then people that had for years come--half of La Grande had come home to shop--Quit coming because they couldn't count on 'em! They'd close two days for the holidays, or something else, so they just started buying in La Grande and the business gradually went down. Well, they found out they couldn't do it, so we had to take the store back, and then we sold to somebody else, I forget who--well I could tell you, but it isn't necessary--

I: Right.

BB: And they really didn't want the store but they came in there and stripped it.

I: What do you mean by that?

BB: They took everything that wasn't nailed down. We had a-- we also sold the kerosene and vinegar, by the gallon or the quart, and we had old-fashioned spigots and they were--they were antiques. They stripped 'em of those things and we had an old pump-type thing that pumped the kerosene out into bottles for people who would come and buy a bottle of kerosene or whatever, and they took all those things out the back door and got rid of 'em and sold em, I guess, for antiques. Then they stripped the store of a lot of the nails and hardware stuff. Pipe-cutting tools, and things like that, and basically stripped the store and then--of any valued things, and then they didn't want it, so they--we got it back again. But each time it worth less, and then the last couple people didn't pay the taxes, they didn't pay the lawyer fees and all that, so we finally had to let the store go. We lost

it. So it went, you know, it just gradually went downhill. One couple that had it that didn't keep the floor swept and didn't keep it clean, well, people quit going into a place if it isn't clean and stocked nicely, so... my husband couldn't go in the store after a certain period. He couldn't go in there anymore. It upset him.

I: So what went on then, after the store was all finally closed up?

BB: Well, it stayed empty for a long time, and then some people bought it from--I don't know-- taxes I guess, and they tried to make a home out of it. They tried to make a coffee house out of it. It just never worked for anything. And then it was empty for a long time again... I think now there might be somebody else tryin' to live in there. I'm not sure. I just don't even look.

I: What did you do when it was finally all done?

BB: Well, in the meantime we need money, because we never had enough to keep the store going and the family. I had gone back into nursing and I worked nights at the hospital. And, it was the St. Joe Hospital, and helped the sisters out there, and then I worked in the daytime at the store, and in-between that I kept the family going and my husband kind of retired and then I could see that that wasn't gonna work. So he got--an opening came and got him working at the cemetery, and that kept him busy the rest of his life and he loved it.

I: I heard about that, and I toured that cemetery--Anne took me out there.

BB: Mm hmm.

I: And... Now you said you went to work at St. Joseph's Hospital, the old St. Joseph's Hospital.

BB: Yeah.

I: Just by the college in La Grande. Now what did you do there?

BB: I nursed. I was a nurse. I wasn't a registered nurse and I didn't make it to the practical nurse, was--it was supposed to pay you three-

quarters of registered nurse because you had to go to college and study to become that--in California is where I did that. And I was well enough trained and had gone--I only had three months left to go, but I couldn't get it around here so I was a great help to the sisters--I could do hot packs or specialty things--I could take care of treatments and I had special patients, and just was a nurse's aide, I guess you could call it, but a little more so. I taught the new help how to make beds and do things--worked in--I charted in the office for the sisters.

I: Now who--were the sisters also the main nursing staff there?

BB: Yes. Yes, they were--they were the main staff.

I: Did they--

BB: Well-- Oh, I was gonna say yeah, they had a lot of nurse's aides and a lot of women that had come up the ranks from a nurse's aide and worked there for the sisters long enough that they were giving shots and doing all kinds of extra things. My best friend was one of those. She lived here in Cove.

I: Did any men work at the hospital in nursing at that time?

BB: Not that I remember, no. No, there weren't any men involved, other than just the doctors.

I: But no men in the nursing aides?

BB: Uh-uh.

I: --Or in the orderly categories either?

BB: No. There were no orderlies.

I: Ok, and what did you do after that?

BB: Well, I kept retiring and I went to work--I went to work--of course, husband was still working at the cemetery. I helped him every summer at the cemetery but I also got a job, let's see, have to remember what came first. Well, I helped out a friend--a couple of

friends a couple of times. I said to one lady at Eastern Star one night-- she was looking--wanted to know if any of us knew anybody that would help her get her house--the big Connelly Ranch-- out here, ready for a big Eastern Star program or something she was gonna have at her house, and so I waited until everybody was gone, and I said, well I said "I've got the time if you need help, I'll help you for a couple of weeks," so I worked there five years. [laughs]

I: That couple of weeks turned into five years?

BB: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: At the Connelly Ranch?

BB: Yeah.

I: What did you do to help them?

BB: Oh, I wrapped packages, I made table decorations for parties, I cleaned house. I wasn't a "maid;" I never made their beds unless we were stripping them to vacuum and clean the mattresses and clean the closets... I really didn't pick up after 'em or, you know, none of that. I never did dishes.

I: But you were in their private employ then?

BB: Right, yeah, yeah. I think I was hired as a cook for the ranch.

[SIDE 2]

I: And it's still December of 2005. We're doing our interview with Barbara Bloom. So it was just family?

BB: Well, yeah, it was actually just Virgil Connelly who never married. He lived at home, and Maxine Stewart, who had come home, and probably taken care of her mother at--but then Dr. Ross in La Grande and his wife--he died and she--that was very ill with cancer and she came home to live, and then--oh yeah I think that's all... so it was the three of them there at the house for awhile. Then she passed away and it was back to two.

I: And these were the people you worked for, then.

BB: Right, the Connelly's.

I: How big was the place?

BB: Well, big enough to have two elevators. [laughs]

I: Really?

BB: There was an elevator going upstairs to the upstairs part of the house-- they didn't use it much. I never used it; I just ran up the stairs, because there was, two acting bedrooms upstairs and there was two downstairs so it was just a--but there was three bedrooms upstairs, two downstairs. And there was an elevator that went from the main floor to the basement, where they kept their supplies, so if you needed supplies, you went to the elevator down.

I: You'd use the elevator to do that?

BB: Yeah.

I: Now was this the working ranch?

BB: Oh, yes. Still is a big working ranch.

I: How big--what did they produce there?

BB: Wheat, cattle. They had horses, but I don't know what--I didn't know any of the business end of it.

I: Right.

BB: But I just knew they had a lot, a lot of land. Well, see, they had two, well--three men: Grant Connelly, and Meryl Connelly, and Virgil Connelly, and they all owned large land that was originally had belonged to the father and so they had a big ranch. And then on the main ranch which was where I worked was where they did--took care of all the trucks and the tractors and they had a mechanic. But he never came in to eat or anything. I never had anything to do with

them.

I: That's very interesting. And you were there five years.

BB: Yes, about five years.

I: We don't need to know-- go ahead.

BB: I was gonna say, then I quit there and when they--the people found out that I'd quit, why, somebody in the valley wanted to know if I would help take care of a lady out on the highway to La Grande living in a little trailer and she wasn't well, and they wanted to know if I'd go out and clean her house once a week and I said "Oh, I guess I can help out, if she needs it," so I went and did that for a couple of years. She died, and then the Nash's--worked for the Nash, what do you call it--trailer place out there. Well she had to have somebody help her for awhile and a friend of mine knew her and said "Would you mind helpin' her for awhile?" So I worked there for six months or something. So it was just kind of one of those things--I kept retiring and I got a--then I was taking painting classes in La Grande, and the woman that owned it-- I didn't know her,-- one day she said "I don't know why I'm gonna ask you this, but would you work for me?"
[laughs]

I: At the painting class?

BB: Yeah.

I: At the studio-

BB: Yeah.

I: Do you remember the name of that?

BB: Oh, it was Arts Plus.

I: And what did you do for them?

BB: Well, I worked on the counter and sold supplies, and--

I: Art supplies?

BB: Uh-huh.

I: And how long did you do that?

BB: Oh, several years, until she went out of business, and then I worked--she was an interior decorator so she'd go off to interior decorate and I'd take care of the store and if I took a painting class and she was there but if she wanted to leave, she'd leave and I'd do the painting class and work for the counter. Then she went out of business and I worked for her as an interior decorator, oh, for a couple of years until she moved away.

I: Now where was this business?

BB: Ah, Well, ok... it was... tryin' to think of what's in there right now... there's a little... across from Penney's, next to the bank, is where it was.

I: Right. And you took a painting class there. Were a lot of classes taught there?

BB: Yeah, a lot of--yeah. They had three different teachers--they had watercolor and oils and pastels--different classes--night classes, and day classes, and they sold the supplies for the classes so that had people buying all the time for that.

I: Now were these general interest classes--people who wanted to learn painting to paint for their own enjoyment?

BB: Yeah, yeah, mm-hm.

I: Do you remember who any of the painting instructors were?

BB: Oh yeah. Jan Clark still lives in La Grande and still does--she still teaches classes, but she's very well-established painter, excellent work. She wouldn't show any of it in La Grande but she did most of her stuff out of Pendleton and--out of town, other places. And then Genie Plank--she taught more of the old-painting type, where Jan was

an artist type. And then there was Linda, Linda... somebody, that taught watercolor. And they all still do that in different respects, but I don't know how or where.

I: So you came to take a painting class and you ended up working there for several more years. This sounds like you fell into a lot of jobs.

BB: Yeah, I kept falling in. I-- I kept retiring, then it seemed like I just wasn't supposed to, I guess. But I could always use the money, you know, so--they didn't pay much, but it kept me busy and around people, and I love people, so--I always enjoyed it.

I: Now what kind of work--what were some of the things you did which you--when it led into helping interior decorators?

BB: Well, she was-- she papered walls and painted and we tore down things, you know, hammer and caulk things and ripped walls out and-- but, oh, she would have sheet-rockers come in, I think and add the sheet-rocking and we would go ahead from there mostly. And decorating, she would plan it with the owner. They were always people that had money-- I mean, you had to have money to hire an interior decorator to do your--but she was a--she could rewire and unhook washing machines and we had to take out lots of plumbing and know how to re-do things. But she did most of it and I was the "gopher" is what I called myself.

I: So she had the designs and the plans and--

BB: I just was a gopher. I did whatever. I put a lot of glue on a lot of wallpaper.

I: Did you come up with--were you able to use that in your own personal life?

BB: No. No. I never had time, no. I was involved in our church, and pretty strong--I taught primary and children and the youth in the summer and in the winter and Sunday school classes, and...

I: Now did you fall into another job after that or did you retire again?

BB: No, I basically, when she quit with me I retired, then of course my husband got sick and I--he died at home. I took care of him 'til he passed away. Then I took care of my mother for a year in the hospital bed--so I still wasn't retired but I wasn't gettin' any money, either.

I: Right. Now, did your mother pass away up here--did--was she up here to take care of her?

BB: Yeah, in my home here for awhile, but she didn't pass away here. She had to eventually go to a home, 'cause I was getting older all the time and she needed--she was blind, so she needed twenty-four-hour care and I just ran down--I couldn't-- she wanted me to talk in the middle of the night and she'd wake me up and so I couldn't get any rest. So...

I: So, let's talk about, let's talk about your church act-- What church did you belong to? Or do you have more to tell--

BB: Yeah, I've got some old things I think you might be interested in. I've never read or anybody else told. Now my husband's family came here in 1862. So they were one of the first people in the valley.

I: Where did they come from?

BB: Well, originally New York, but they went to Iowa and Ohio--you know, many years ago, in the 1800's, they'd travel so long then they'd settle down and stay for awhile and earn the money and get ready and then move some more, so they would follow and of course they came on the Oregon Trail, to Oregon, and a lot of 'em went to Wallowa, Halfway. The men that came here had--was my husband's grandfather came with--was my husband's great-grandfather that came here originally in 1862, so--and they're all buried up here.

I: And they came...

BB: And he brought--well, yeah--no. Actually... yeah, I think they did--the Blooms. The Van Schoonhovens--my husband's mother's family came later. And then they settled in Union and then moved to Cove. And then the Blooms and the Van Schoonhovens got together.

I: And so those two families are related.

BB: Yeah.

I: 'Cause they're--the Van Schoonhovens have some involvement with the history project.

BB: Yeah. Well, that's my husband's mother's brother's son, Johnny Van Schoonhoven. And he's not in line, but he would be Johnny Van Schoonhoven the 6th if his father had been a John but he was Cimian. But John the 4th Van Schoonhoven came here. But I had that the third, and the second, and the first Van Schoonhovens were in New York, or out of New York, not actually New York, but New York state.

I: What else do you want to tell me?

BB: Ok, when my mother-in-law told me and some of our discussions, that the Indians--they had a ranch that now belongs to the Finney's--I don't even know if they still own it-- but I think they do--it's up on the hill behind the post office, that hill that goes back there--well, there's a ranch up there and it was the Bloom Ranch. And the Indians used to come across from Pendleton and come across that mountain and they'd camp on their property and then they would trade food, you know, for moccasins, whatever. And they told my mother-in-law they called this the "Valley of the Sleeping Gods." And you know I've never read that anywhere.

I: Did they ever tell her why they called that?

BB: Because when you look around the mountains, you see--you see the mountains have the shape of the --the main one is the Indian chief with the Indian Headdress that's right up above Cove here.

I: So they're a mountain band-

BB: She's never seen that--well, you can see it better in the fall, when the oranges and the different colors make the feathers going down the mountain but he--it's a side view of an Indian, and one section of a mountain is his nose and his chin, his forehead and the little top point that they always had in their hair when they had--when they cut it is

there, and it's very interesting. My mother in law showed it to me when I first came here and then you can look around and you can see, oh, all the way around to Union Mountains over on that side on the La Grande side going to Union, there are sleeping gods, and this was all water, out in the middle. They had to use boats to go to La Grande many years ago, and they couldn't get to Union either--they had to build the road to Union because it was water. So that's why it's built the way it is up on the side of the hill

I: Huh.

BB: going around. And the Bloom--well, I'll tell you that where there's some good stuff on the valley is at the college library. It was Cove in the 1880's. There's a lot of stuff up there. I found out things about my--they used to have a bowling alley here in Cove and a hotel that my husband's ancestors--I thought they owned it but in studies I've found he actually was the manager or what do they call it now-- like people get the Kentucky Fried Chicken and they have a, what do they call that... they buy it up--they kind of own that from other people you know, and they...

I: Like a franchise?

BB: A franchise, yeah. And I think he was the--kind of a franchise manager of the hotel, but Grandfather Samuel Bloom.

I: Now-

BB: But anyway they were very much involved in the Union Country and I found out that my husband's father had won playing bowling at the bowling alley--there was a man's night and a women's night--the women bowled in those days.

I: Huh.

BB: And so it was--quite a little town here.

I: Now, were those businesses still there when you came?

BB: Oh no. No, because the town burnt down during the wood stove and

the kerosene-lantern times. It burned down twice, I think they said-- two or three times the town burnt down. The only thing that was left was the bank--there was a bank here-- there were parts of the bank-- the bricks and things--still a little bit left in town when we came. That's where the tavern kinda--the restaurant's there now. Was there, but that's where it was. It was very interesting-- in the jail, they had a jail, and a sheriff, and [laughs]

I: And were they done with that also when you came?

BB: Oh, yes. It was just leftovers, yeah. But... quite intriguing when you get back into it, but like I said, there's a lot of interesting history over there at the library.

I: Now are there other businesses that were present when you were--

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

I: --That aren't there anymore?

BB: Yeah. There was where the ice cream, where the little Cove drive-in is, that was a big machine shop-type where they'd fix cars and I suppose tractors and things like that. There was a beauty shop where--up by the library area. It was a little more of a town then, you know. Now people do it in their homes--beauty shops. They build a room on, you know, and a lot of things are done a little different.

I: Now have you always lived in the house in Cove?

BB: No. We came here once and moved into a--that was before Anne and Rick--when we first came here we lived in a house that was--well, it had about fifteen windows broken in it and no furniture, a wood stove, and a pitcher pump to pump water, and I was a city girl,

[Audio cuts off]

but that's the only place I could find to live. We came here, and then we lived there through the summer and part of the winter, and we moved downtown to the Methodist Church parsonage across from the old Methodist church which burned down while we lived there, and it's a short distance from the football field, and Skip Herrera, the football coach, lives there now. They've remodeled it and made a

beautiful home there. But that's what--and then went--lived up on the hill in an old house up there. And then when my mother-in-law passed away with--

I: Now these previous places you talked about were--were those rentals?

BB: Yeah.

I: How many children--you had six children between you and your husband?

BB: Well, yeah. He had two, I had two, and we had two. Yeah.

I: What was the age spread of those--of the children?

BB: Well, there was Sherry and Whitey are the oldest, and they're the same age--or just a month apart. That was--Whitey was Ed's son and Sherry my daughter, and then the next ones were--there was three-year difference and then there was the next one was my son, Tom-- Well, the oldest one was Patty--she was three years older than Sherry, Whitey. Patty was three years older, like I told you at the beginning--about twelve when I got her and thirteen when we came. And then the others were around 9.

I: Did they all finish with Cove?

BB: Well, basically yes, yes. And then went on to college, yeah.

I: Now did you encounter ... well, you definitely encounter difficulties raising kids, but were there particular problems associated with children from different marriages... _____ did you have that worked out?

BB: Well, we worked it out. My step-children called me "Mom" of their own choice. When my daughter, step-daughter died in California she was married and raised three children. When she died, she had her ashes sent here to be buried. My stepson, Whitey, lives in Halfway and he still worries about me and does things for me all the time--very close. In fact, Thanksgiving we had one--at least one from each family here, so. There was my daughter Sherry from my first

marriage, my son Tom Libson from North Bend, and then my son--stepson, was from Halfway, was here. And then Anne and her brother Rick were here. So there was a representative of each family, which-- I just thought it was so great. I just really enjoyed having them all here.

I: That's good.

BB: Oh, it was a wonderful day.

I: Now you're living in the house on--is it Orchard?

BB: Yes. And it was his--my husband's mother's.

I: Uh huh.

BB: And--and his. He bought it for her when he moved away. He made payments to her every month, or sent her the money for payments and paid the taxes on the property 'till she died, so that's how come we got it, instead of the--it getting split up with the rest of the family.

I: And, is there property associated with the house, a large lot?

BB: Yes. Yeah. It's about a lot and a half, I think.

I: Is that barn yours that's out there?

BB: No.

I: Ok.

BB: I wish it was, but...

I: It's a nice looking barn.

BB: Yeah.

I: Was the freeway in when--

BB: No. No, the freeway wasn't.

I: But it was paved in La Grande.

BB: Oh yes.

I: Was La Grande considered a kind of a journey to a big town or--

BB: No. Uh-uh. No, like I said, I had to go there almost every day. Not on the weekends, but... went every day to pick up fresh produce and stuff. We had a good car and, no--no it wasn't any project. People worked in La Grande and worked out of La Grande just like they do today. Basically, it was--it was the same. Not as much, not as many women worked then, you know--a lot of women were at home in those days.

I: Right.

BB: Yeah. But they helped on the ranches. See, they were workin'; they just weren't getting paid and didn't go anywhere.

I: Yes. I have a sense of that from a few of the women that I've interviewed from out there.

BB: Have you interviewed Arlene Goodson? Oh, she would be a fabulous one for you to do.

I: I'm gonna put her name on that list.

BB: She lives next door to me.

I: I should have gone door to door, huh?

BB: Yeah--well, no. I think she's the only one left here that's--she came here shortly before we did, and then our husbands became close friends and then I knew her through--of course through the store, we knew everybody, so... but they sold their big ranch and moved next door and rented. She still rents.

I: ...

BB: Well they had a big ranch out here and that's an interesting story, because they had equipment that was put here--that was put on their ranch by the government that registered the earthquakes in the valley. Which, we have them all the time, you know. They're not strong enough for us to feel but we are in a very, very busy volcanic area.

I: Ever felt an earthquake out there?

BB: I think I felt 'em a couple of times. When I was sleeping upstairs, I had that sensation. Of course, I was from California so I knew the sensation, but I never read anything about it, so nobody was aware of it. But somebody that was aware, that was familiar with earthquakes, would have noticed it. It's never been--you know, nothing ever shook. You know. So...

I: How 'bout your other activities. You said a little bit about church... What church did you belong to out there?

BB: Well, I go to Union to church. There's none in Cove. I belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints--Mormons. Yeah.

I: And so you said--

BB: Very active. Oh, I've taught Relief Society and Sunday School. I've done a lot of solo work and in the choir for many, many, many, years.

I: So they don't have a ward in Cove so you go to Union.

BB: I go to Union, yeah.

I: How far is Union from Cove?

BB: About eight miles.

I: Ok.

BB: But people say "You go clear to Union" and I always laugh and say "If I lived at home in Sacramento, it would take me longer to get to church if it lived just blocks away than it does for me to get to Union. You know, from Cove to Union is straight, you know, one stop sign.

[laughs]

I: You're right. If you were in the Bay area or somewhere you-

BB: Oh, see I lived in San Francisco and Oakland and Alameda and Redwood City and--I mean, I came from the big cities so this was quite--in fact I came to this--I came to this town to visit and be introduced to my mother-in-law-to-be, and they told me they were going to take me to town after awhile, so we got in the car a couple of times and went to see somebody and went up to the swimming pool--to see the pool, and then we went someplace else and--I forget--out in the valley to see the elk or something and then we came back to the house and I said "Well you said you were gonna take me to town! When are we going to town?" And they laughed and said "You've been through it three times!" [laughs] And I've told that story so many times because it was hilarious.

I: Now did you belong to the Mormon Church before you got married?

BB: Yeah. I was baptized when I was eight, but I wasn't active until I was up here.

I: Ok, would that be considered being raised in church, then?

BB: No. I wasn't. No, I wasn't raised in the church.

I: Ok, and so--

BB: But my parents and my grandparents were all members and came over to Salt Lake in the beginning, so--

I: Did they?

BB: Yeah. So, they had moved from Utah to California on a ranch and there weren't any churches there at the time-- in those days, there weren't that many church buildings, so they just kinda got lost in the shuffle--but I had all the--what would you say--the morals and the--but I was raised with those standards--but it was a very subconscious thing--it was never talked about. It was just the way I: was raised, so when I came up here it was easy for me--the only thing I had to give

up was coffee. And I didn't have to give that up! I could drink it all I want. I mean that's a choice thing.

I: Sure. What other activities are you involved in, or volunteer work--

BB: Well, I was a 4-H leader. I taught knitting--what else did I-- I helped with the leather, I taught the earlier kids the--some--I don't think I did it much--a little bit with Anne and Rick. I had all the tools for leather tooling. So--let's see, what else--it's hard for me to remember all the things I've done.

I: You mentioned Eastern Star.

BB: Well, I belonged to that because my sister-in-laws and my brother-in-laws were very active in the Mason's and the Eastern Star and I was a soloist, and they wanted me to sing so I had to join, though because of my husband and his families I joined, but I was never really a--

I: You never held office?

BB: Well, I finally agreed to once, but I didn't really want to get into it that much.

I: Where is the ... area?

BB: It's the--actually, the old Mormon Church. It's out on the-- well, it's before you come to the school and it's just a big ole building with no windows in it--I think that---well, the wind was on the side, but they're blanked--covered all the time.

I: I see.

BB: Now the Eastern Star and the ... is a secret organization, so they have different types of things. It's the only building of that type in that area--about, well--you know where the football field is.

I: Yes.

BB: It's a block toward La Grande from the football field--right in that area--can't miss it once you looked for it.

I: Let's see--I'm running out of tape on this side. Let's just turn it over now.

[END]

[Begin recording - Small amount of dialogue before transcription begins.]

I: You were going to tell me...

BB: Oh, the swimming pool.

I: Right.

BB: And the fires. The swimming pool, when my husband was a boy, was nothing but a bunch of rocks around the spring--the natural warm springs that comes up there. And they paid five cents to go swimming in it. [laughs]

I: Who did they pay?

BB: Whoever owned it at the time--I don't remember.

I: I see, ok.

BB: I don't know that he remembers that Borcrands owned it when we were conscious of it, and when we came.

I: So, that was the public swimming pool then.

BB: Oh, it—

I: But it was owned privately.

BB: Yes, well, it's always been private. It's still private--privately owned.

I: Ah-huh.

BB: But anyway I thought that was kind of interesting to tell about growin' up there and being able to swim.

I: Now, is that pool still around?

BB: Oh yes, oh yes. 'Course it's not--no rocks there. It's a regular swimming pool.

I: Right.

BB: And when it was priced like it should have been, it was very popular. People came from all over to go there. Then it got so it was out. It out-priced itself. That's another story. And then the fires, it was all done with the local people. And my husband, because of us owning the store across the street from the firehouse, why he was kind of responsible for if the fire alarm went during the day and the men were all gone or something, or out on the ranches, he had to run over and blow the whistle. And they called the store to report the fire, and he'd run over and blow the whistle. And if I was available then he and whoever came would come to the fire, and they just took whoever would be... show up.

I: So, that was truly a volunteer fire department, then.

BB: Oh, yes, yes. In fact, he got a retirement from it-- a sheet of paper that was thanking him for it. But my boys used to help as soon as they were teenagers. When the whistle would go off, of course it woke up the mom first. Men sleep sounder. And I would run around helping them all get ready to go to the fire.

I: Ah-hah... So, that was really a community effort.

BB: Oh, yes. Yeah, and it was very family-oriented. And in fact they had a thing on it down at the history center. And I, after I heard everybody talkin', I volunteered and I said, "Don't forget the women!" 'Cause they were tellin' about the men, and I said, "You know, the women are the ones that were--saw that they had their boots and their clothes and knew where everything was in the middle of the night." And it was very important that the women were acknowledged. You know, we didn't do much, but if we hadn't woke 'em up, they'd have slept through the alarm! So anyway, that'll wrap that up.

I: Now, did they have equipment or were they organized?

BB: Oh yeah, it was organized. A certain amount of people were responsible.

I: Did they have to go and train?

BB: You know, I don't--I think they must have had some. Yes, I'm sure they did, but like I said, I was--I was a pretty woodsy woman.

I: Right.

BB: So a lot of things just kinda went in and out of my part of life, and I didn't pay attention to.

I: Now, I've heard people talk about there's an Elder down here in La Grande that I talked to who was big on roller skating when he was young.

BB: Yes...

I: And I heard that the Coliseum was the place to go

BB: My kids went roller--my children roller skated up there. That would be Sherry, and Tom, and Whitey, Anne and Rick. I don't think it was open still when they did because they had to re-do the floors constantly because those old roller skates were hard on the floors. So they had to re-do the gym floors after roller-skating season. And of course, the more things they got in La Grande, and the more modern it got, why the less people used it. It just kind of faded away, yeah. There used to be a dance hall, too, here, down here. That was in long before me. It burnt down when my husband was still little.

I: Uh-huh. What--did they have a festival of any sort there?

BB: The cherry festival...

I: The cherry festival.

BB: Oh yeah, Cherry Fair in the summer. Arlene Goodson or Betty Puckett could tell you more about that.

I: Did you have any involvement in that in the past?

BB: No. No, uh-uh. My daughter Sherry was involved in something there once or twice, but I've never even gone to it. I was always too busy doin'... so that everybody else could go. You know what I mean. It's like football and basketball. Basketball, I got a little more involved, but football I had to work in the store so my husband could go watch the kids play football. So, those other things I didn't get a chance to be involved in.

I: Were there any other opportunities for you to be involved with the children? School activities...

BB: Well, 4-H, like I said, I did. I always did 4-H, and always took the kids places, and didn't mind chaperoning at things or. But mostly I couldn't because there was a ten-year gap from my first child to my next child who was Anne. Sherry's ten years older than Anne, so. And I had little ones and couldn't do a lot of things. When my others were big enough, they need me to do things, so, and with the store and the bookkeeping. And I made a lot of their clothes and did a lot of things. I mean, I shortened and lengthened and did all kinds of things to help that way. So...

I: Were the older children involved in taking care of Rick and Anne?

BB: No, not really. Sherry, maybe a little bit, but then Sherry actually went to high school in La Grande and lived with my mother for a few years. So yeah, they were just like most kids. If there's kids in the family they kinda, you know...

I: Now, did your mother follow you to this area?

BB: Yes, she did. I called 'em. They lived in California, and I called them and asked them and told them that I needed some help some way. And they--my stepfather wanted to move anyway--he was a mover. He liked to go to new places, and so he was ready. So they just sold out down there and moved up here and bought a home in Cove and helped in the store.

I: Now what were their names?

BB: Rogers. Dick Rogers.

I: Ah-hah.

BB: He played polo a little bit out here at the polo field. A little bit in his old age when they started playing he went out.

I: And what was your mother's name?

BB: Lela Rogers.

I: And did they live out their lives here?

BB: Yeah, they both died in La Grande.

I: So, they were already retired then before they came up.

BB: No, no. He was--he had a meat business, or he was a meat-cutter. Butcher, I think people call 'em, but he didn't like being a butcher. He was a meat cutter. He didn't kill the animals, didn't butcher it.

I: Right.

BB: He was a meat cutter.

I: In La Grande.

BB: In... well, he--no. Well, eventually, yeah, but in California, then in our store. He was just in the store, and then they moved two--two or three times later. And he went to, let's see, tryin' to think of the name, not Prineville, but that area, down in that area. He moved there and had a shop. And then he worked at... I think at Hyde's out here in La--Island City for awhile. And he just liked working, and he liked that, so he was always needed 'cause he was good at what he did. So, yeah.

[End recording]