Retha Bowman Edited

**Homesteading in Wallowa County**

RB: My name is Retha Kale Bownman and I was born in the hospital in Enterprise, Oregon on December the 17th, 1918.

I: Why were your parents in Enterprise?

RB: My folks owned a ranch in the east hills out of Enterprise. My mother had homesteaded a hundred-and-sixty acres right next to a hundred-and-sixty acres that her sister had inherited. Dad gave up his job with the railroad in La Grande and very foolishly, if I might say, moved to farm the east hills of Enterprise.

I: When you say homesteaded near Enterprise, do you mean they were the first owners or settlers on that piece of land?

RB: Yes. I don't know what the rules were exactly, but one had to do something with the land. My mother received a hundred-and-sixty acres. Her father had had six daughters and he saw that each one of them got to have something similar.

I: The first Homestead Act was in 1862 and I suppose in the Wallowa Valley very few people were homesteading quite that early.

RB: She's probably in the records.

I: Also very few women were given homesteads. Do you know why she was given it rather than a man?

RB: Her father had six daughters and he was a heads-up man; he wanted to see that his daughters had as much opportunity as anybody else. They all became teachers and they all taught in Wallowa County. They moved around in the country from school to school except the youngest one, Mattie. She only taught about six months, got married and did not teach any longer.

I: So she was homesteading, doing some farming, as well as teaching? Do you remember hearing her talk about her early days?

RB: Oh yes. She began teaching at seventeen. She taught a lot of boys that were a lot bigger than she was. In those days, kids just went to school maybe three to six months, whenever they were not farming or when they weather was bad. She lived in people's homes and she taught once at Swamp Creek.

I: What training did she have to teach?

RB: She graduated from high school and took a test. She had received high marks.

I: Did she leave any records of her teaching or anything related to it?

RB: It's been so long ago, most of the information is in a book about Wallowa County.

I: I just wondered since you were her daughter, she might have left certain items to you that no one else would know about.

RB: I have her first school bell that she rang, it's right over there. She told a story about the first day of school when the school board came and sat by the stove in the back of the room. They had run the last teacher out and they were going to help Ms. Rotten control these kids. Mom said she would've done a lot better if they'd stayed home.

One day out on the playground this big kid crawled out the window. She said, "Before I thought, I just said, 'You get your 'bod' right back in that building!'" Of course Mother didn't say 'bod', but he moved right quickly. I couldn't believe it! I loved my mother, she was a wonderful woman and has been very hard to live up to.

I: Why did she move around so much, she wasn't run out of each school was she?

RB: I don't know, but teachers moved around a lot in those days. She taught one year out at Deer Creek, but she wasn't run out, oh no! I think her folks moved back over to Swamp Creek. Her folks had lived at Deer Creek and she taught there one year and then they moved back to Swamp Creek.

I: Are Deer and Swamp creeks near Enterprise?

RB: Yes, Swamp Creek is out to the west. Her sister Myra, just a year younger, went to the Deer Creek School where Mom had taught when Mom moved to Swamp Creek.

I: Were you at any time a student of your mother's?

RB: I went to Ladd Canyon School where my mother taught.

They had left the farm and moved to Hood River for about three years where mother took care of a lady who was in a wheelchair and Dad worked in the an orchard. They had lost the farm not because didn't have good crops, but because there was only one or two combines in the valley, and three years in a row the combines and crew did not get to their farm before it rained. If it rains and rains and rains, grain grows again in the head no matter how good it is.

So they left Wallowa County with twenty-five dollars, went over to Umatilla and went across the Columbia on the ferry. I was about three and Reba was one-and-a-half; we're about a year-and-a-half apart. I can remember Mother telling us how scared she was coming across the Columbia River because it was just so big and fast running.

We were there in Hood River (?) about three years and Mom received a letter from my Aunt Nan who was teaching at Ladd Canyon. She said, "Mary, I am going to move from Ladd Canyon to Blue Mountain and the school's going to be open. If you're interested why don't you write them and apply if you want to come back to the valley." They wanted to come back and so they did; Mom taught at Ladd Canyon and Dad worked for farmers. Mom, Reba and I stayed with the Counsels behind the Ladd Canyon School out in their field.

I: Would this have been in about the mid-1920's?

**Going to School**

RB: I was almost six then, so it was1924. I can remember walking across the fields in the wind and the snow to school with Mother, leaving Reba with a Mrs. Peebler. I went to school with Mother in the first grade and Ed Counsel was in the eighth grade.

I: Did you feel at all peculiar being the daughter of the teacher, no teacher's pet?

RB: No. My mother expected me to do as well or better. I got no kudos at all. She wasn't cross with me but she just had high expectations. I went to first and second grade there and then we moved to Perry.

I: I know your memories of first grade may be a little dim by now, but do you remember school, activities and classes?

RB: Well, I could read before I went to school. I do not remember whether we had prayer or not; they made such a big fuss about prayer. I remember that we did the flag salute every day. We stood up and did the flag salute and sang.

I: Was that the very first thing you did when you came in from outside?

RB: You sat down at your desk and then you stood up. You're supposed to be quiet, but of course there was always one boy that managed to do something to interrupt.

I: After the flag salute what?

RB: Maybe we sang The Star Spangled Banner, or America The Beautiful and my mother played the piano for our accompaniment.

I: Wasn't that a little unusual to have a piano at school?

RB: Yes, but then she was unusual. I think we had what they now call show-and-tell; each child got to say something about what had happened to them. There might have been three other children in the first grade with me; there might've been four in the second grade. My mother taught all eighth grades, but she only had a few in each grade and some grades there might not have been any children.

I: Did she have the first-graders sitting together and the seventh-graders sitting together and so on?

RB: Pretty much, but I can remember sitting with Ed Counsel, an eighth grader, sometime during the day. We must've had mentors in those days. She didn't send me to sit with him, but he was probably helping me with reading or something.

I: By the way, were these desks all fastened together in rows?

RB: They weren't fastened together, we had separate desks. One of the nicest things about so many grades together, and I firmly believe this as an educator, is that the little kids could hear what the big kids were learning and the big kids could hear what the little kids were learning. The kids knew what they were going to get in later grades. I don't think you can beat that and I've taught all sorts of subjects and different aged students, from grade school to college.

I: When did the strict teaching or teaching of a subject of some kind begin?

RB: I suppose right after the routines when we probably began with reading, McGuffy's Reader or something like that.

I: What was the teacher doing to help you learn to read that book?

RB: I could read before I went to school. With others she taught phonics, she would have a list of words on the board.

I: You had to sound them out and talk about their meanings?

RB: I didn't have to, but the others did. I listened and probably spoke up here and there.

I: Give me your definition of what phonics is.

RB: Sounding out things. My philosophy of reading is, that people learn to read in a lot of different ways so you need different methods, like some can hear it, some can't hear it.

I: When you say "sounding out", do you mean syllable by syllable or letter by letter?

RB: Pretty much sound by sound, by syllables. I can remember like "duh", d. Po-ca-hon-tas. Puh, puh. We did a lots of "puhs".

I: Did your mother combine any sight words like 'the', 'to' and 'for'?

RB: Yes I think she did. I think Mom was pretty modern for her age, but you must remember in those days, they taught by rote and memory, and children learned by rote and memory.

There are not many people that can tell all the boundaries of the states and their capitals and the rivers. Now some people may not think that's very good, but there are many times in your life that you can use those things.

I: I don't think the argument is so much over whether you should do any of that at all, as how to combine the two or three or four. After the reading class, what did you have?

RB: We had math and that was very important. We probably didn't have recess till ten-thirty so I imagine we had maybe two classes, reading and math before recess. When we had recess, which was a lot of fun, we played a lot of games.

I: Suppose it was raining or snowing, what did you do for recess?

RB: We stayed in the schoolhouse and colored pictures. I can remember the big kids sitting around a wood stove, talking and maybe playing some kind of a game. I don't think it rained in those days.

I: Did your mother have lots of games available?

RB: I don't remember being in the schoolhouse very much. We played jump rope, hopscotch. If it snowed kids put their coats on and they went outside.

I: Did the teacher go out too?

RB: She usually did, at least three or four times during the recess to check on us, to see what was going on, to make sure that some big bully was not picking on someone.

I: I'll bet that happened anyway.

RB: Not under her eye.

I: What did you do for lunch?

RB: I get this mixed up with my own teaching because I can remember the lunch buckets opening, and having tuna fish, wow! I don't remember if we had peanut butter then. We had sandwiches and an orange or an apple.

I: Did you bring some kind of drink with you?

RB: We drank out of a bucket of water with a dipper. If you wanted to take something from home, I guess we did, but I don't remember taking anything.

I: This bucket was in the schoolroom and the teacher would keep it full?

RB: Yes.

I: Everybody drank out of the same dipper?

RB: Yes.

I: Was there any thought of contagious diseases from doing that?

RB: You got shots for everything; you didn't dare get a contagious disease. I don't remember that many colds. I think it was when people started having warm houses, not getting outside to exercise when the colds began to be pervasive.

I: You think people were sick less often?

RB: Yes, quite a bit less. They didn't mix in big crowds because they lived far apart. Later I did have scarlet fever.

I: After lunch, what was the routine?

RB: We had to do our own writing or penmanship. We didn't write cursive until the second or third grade. We had to do our own work and she usually had something on the blackboard for us to do, if we could read. She made her own worksheet-type things as I remember and we'd practice while she listened to the upper grades. She had to listen to everybody so some worked and some recited.

I: Do you mean that she might write on the board a question from social studies and you had to write an answer to it?

RB: You could use your book and look up maps in the atlas. Of course this was probably more for the older children than the little ones, but there was always some work for little ones.

I: Did the school day end about three-thirty?

RB: Parents could pick up a first or second-grade child a little earlier, but most people didn't do that because the fathers had the cars. Schools were in the country where you had to walk a ways.

I: When it came toward a holiday, Halloween, or Easter or Christmas, what happened?

RB: Programs, programs, programs.

I: The teacher was expected pretty much to have a program and the parents would all attend?

RB: Yes. Actually, community life to a certain extent, existed around the little schools, and the holiday programs were very important.

I: In retrospect, where do you think your mother and other teachers got their ideas for these programs?

RB: Oh, I used to have five little program books that contained how to make decorations, good poems to read, plays to put on, but I got rid of them.

I: Do you remember about how long you'd practice for a program?

RB: It seemed like forever! We worked at the end of the day. It was something that you expected to be in, it was just like the church Christmas program. Nowadays you can hardly get a kid to be Joseph. In those days they just figured they were going to be Joseph or Mary sooner or later.

I: If it was a play were there any sorts of costumes?

RB: Mom helped make a lot with crepe paper; you can do a lot with crepe paper, not only costumes but decorating the room. The kids would be so excited by Halloween, but by Christmas, they couldn't care less, they were too tired.

I: Would you say that making decorations for these events would be pretty much the art program?

RB: Yes.

I: Was there anything more to the music program than singing America the Beautiful in the morning?

RB: Oh yes, we learned a lot of other songs. We sang probably five or six songs during each program.

I: Were you learning anything at all about reading music?

RB: Not a lot at that age.

I: Was there any use of instruments other than the piano? Drums, whistles?

RB: If one of the fathers had a banjo or something like that, he might play for the program. There wasn't any individual work with musical until I was up in seventh and eighth grade.

I: What were the discipline problems a teacher might have?

RB: Oh, I suppose she might've got a little back talk. I wouldn't say Mother was a strict disciplinarian, but she expected people to behave, to mind and to do their job well, and the parents backed her. That made discipline a lot easier. If you didn't behave at school you had trouble at home. Only once in a blue moon did you ever have a parent that didn't back you.

You get in trouble at school and you're in trouble at home. Parents didn't ask what you did, they just figured the teacher was right. They wanted their child to grow up and have it better than they did; they believed that education would do that. Now people blame the school.

I: Did she control the more unruly kids just by the force of her character?

RB: Yes.

**Perry**

I: At what point did you and your mother take off for Perry to school?

RB: I think I must've been in about third grade but I don't remember exact dates. Perry had a lumber mill, so there were quite a few people living in upper and lower Perry.

There were two schoolhouses in really nice buildings. My mother taught in the building that had the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades and she was principal of both buildings. I don't remember how many years she taught there. I skipped the third grade and the fifth. Why I'm telling you that, is that's the way they enriched kids in those days.

I: Why did your mother accept that job?

RB: I think she made a little more money there and Dad had gotten a job at the mill.

I: But it was a job with more responsibility than she had before, and she had other little kids.

RB: You didn't know my mother. She said if you started a job you finished it.

I: Initially you were living in Perry?

RB: Yes. I went to school living at my Aunt Allie's up there. When I was in the eighth grade, the folks had bought property on H Street, where the low-income housing is on H and Fourteen, just below to the cemetery.

At that time there was nothing there. The folks bought three acres and Dad built a home there. If I remember correctly, I think she was up there about five or six years. The last year she drove alone and Reba and I went to Central that one year and then on to high school in La Grande.

I: How vividly can you remember actually living in Perry?

RB: To a child you don't pay any attention to what the houses looked like, if they were big or small. We lived with Morris Robinson's mother. I don't remember if there was indoor plumbing or not.

I: I'm trying to get a sense of what upper and lower Perry looked like and what kind of a community it felt like.

RB: It was a good community. It was oriented around the mill and all the people had something in common, they were mill workers or family of mill workers. I don't remember any stores. You had people all around you, your neighbors.

I was about twelve when Dad was building the house on H Street, and he began to have terrible migraines, just terrible migraines. He had to give up his job at the mill and built this house for us. It wasn't real fancy, but a nice house for those days, and he stayed down there while Mom, Reba and I rented from Mrs. Robinson.

We did have a home of our own up there before he finished his because that summer Reba and I got scarlet fever and they put us under quarantine; Dad couldn't come in the house for fear he would take it back to other people. So we weren't living as a family up there at that time.

I loved it living in that small community of Perry. People stayed home in those days, they entertained themselves with games. We mostly played outside but

once in a while we'd have dinner with someone else, trade meals with another family. I don't remember playing in the houses particularly.

I: On the whole, was it a fairly simple existence with few luxuries?

RB: I suppose so, but we didn't think it was simple. Compared to today, it was simple. There were a few radios then and we seldom went into La Grande to see a movie.

I: Were you paying attention to the trains as they went by?

RB: We had a trains go by all the time and I loved them! You got to remember I was a child then and those memories are pretty dim. I liked living at Perry; from a child's perspective, it was a wonderful place to live.

People were nice to you, they were nice to each other. I was a little girl and the kids would play Run, Sheep, Run at night, big kids and little kids. I don't remember anybody being mean to anybody else but I am sure there probably was some of that. People entertained themselves and each other and they didn't depend on a lot of hootenanny.

I: Did you feel close to natural things?

RB: I have always felt close to the rocks, trees, the hills around Perry, the buttercups in the spring. I think you felt kind of safe there, with the hills around you, the rocks and the plants, but I've always loved that.

I: What was called the main highway at that time went very close to Perry so you could see the cars and trucks as they went by, couldn't you? Would you call the traffic light?

RB: It wasn't light traffic for those days, but now it would be: maybe five or six cars an hour.

I: In your child's imagination did you think about where those people were going and why.

RB: I don't know if I ever paid any attention to that. I don't think there were that many that went by, nor was I worried about what our neighbors were doing. Once in a while people who were carrying things for stores might go by, but there really weren't that many cars.

I: Did you hear people talk about Portland and Boise?

RB: Yes, but it was way off, like a trip to the moon so I didn't think much about it. I wasn't going to go anyway, so why wonder about it.

I: There were newspapers at that time and you were old enough to read, what newspapers did you see?

RB: I remember one by Currier and there was the local La Grande paper. When I was in the seventh grade I remember by father discussing politics and what was going on in the world. We were allowed to do this at the dinner table and that is why Reba and I can stand up in front of a crowd and talk, because we were encouraged at home to give our opinion, to debate and argue a point.

I: Would he get that started by saying, "Well, I read that President Warren Harding had done so-and-so. What do you think about that?"

RB: Dad and Mom were very good about that. I remember sitting on his lap; he was tall and he had long arms, and he would sit there, reading the paper and I suppose that's where we got our information. He was very good at teaching you, although he had only gone through third grade.

I: If this happened regularly with your father, this was part of the routine in the house most evenings?

RB: Yes. I remember them reading the Bible to us, discussing things and we were allowed to ask questions and talk. We felt free to talk about whatever we wanted.

He was a great Democrat and my mother was a great Republican so I heard a lot of that.

I: Do you know why he was a Democrat?

RB: Because he believed in helping others and the Republicans in those days took their money and stuck it in their pockets.

We didn't necessarily have to believe in what we were debating, we were just encouraged to join in. I remember in college where half the people in class would cry because they had to get up and say something. I've been encouraged to say what I felt all my life as long as I didn't hurt anybody. I still have firm beliefs about things, but I'm pretty 'live and let live'.

I: Is there anything else about Perry experience that stands out in your mind?

RB: That summer we had scarlet fever was miserable because it was hot and we had to stay in bed and keep out of the light, because they believed it was bad for you and it would affect your heart.

I made a lot of good friends that I knew for years from the time we were kids in Perry -- Milton Smith and Wesley Smith and Greenoes.

I: There was the mill there and there was the dam on the river. Were you ever allowed to get close to those places?

RB: No, I don't think we were allowed over there.

I: How noisy or smelly was the mill?

RB: It didn't affect me at all; it smelt like a mill, like Boise Cascade. I didn't think it was bad or good; when you smell that, you smell people working, it's productive.

I: Was all the machinery at the mill powered by burning wood or did they use coal or was there electricity?

RB: They must've used some coal.

I: Do you remember black smoke?

RB: If they had electricity they ran it up there especially for that.

I: Do you remember men working on the logs going down the river?

RB: They used to bring the logs down the Grande Ronde River and they did that for several years. That was a fun thing to see, but it looked a little dangerous to me. They seemed to be pretty good at it.

I: What sort of work was your father doing at the mill?

RB: I didn't pay attention to that. He brought home a good wage, and we had food to eat.

I do recall when we lived in Perry Mom had a new Model-T and I can remember riding in the front seat, the tires like bicycle wheels. We didn't have studs, but I suppose we must've had chains. It used to snow a lot more than it does now. I can remember sticking my head out the windshield and trying to keep a lot of the snow off of the windshield for Mom just driving from La Grande to Perry.

**Move to La Grande and H Street**

I: Let's move then to the time when you moved into the house on H Street and you started going to La Grande schools.

RB: I went to the eighth grade at the old Central School, where the Middle School is now.

I: That was very different from the Perry or the Ladd Canyon experience, wasn't it?

RB: Yes, it was a little bit of a cultural shock, partly because in my eighth grade class almost every kid had gone through first grade to seventh grade together, they all knew one another. I was the new kid on the block. I don't remember that they were unkind to me, but it took a while for me to feel comfortable. Also, the fact that we lived out on H Street, which was out a ways, I was not living near any of the other kids. They all came from town, some of them lived pretty close so they could play together in evenings, and I didn't even see them in the evenings.

I: From what you've said about yourself I think you were probably able to handle any social situations pretty well. When you were entering what we now call teenage years, or adolescent years, did you have problems that you hadn't had earlier in life?

RB: No. I suppose everybody goes through some emotional change at that time. People did not say, "Oh, you know, he's a teenager." You just sort of went through those years and then after a while when Spock or somebody came along people began to pay a lot more attention to teenagers.

Physically and emotionally we had changes. We didn't have all the modern products that they have nowadays to help us through. I remember that I was really surprised as I went from the eighth grade to high school, that I was elected right away as freshman representative for the freshman class. I hadn't gone to school with all these kids till the eighth grade, but apparently I'd made my mark enough to represent them.

I: Let's talk a little bit about what you think you did to make your mark. Were you involved in sports or clubs during the eighth grade experience?

RB: By the time I was a freshman I played girls' volleyball, which I hated because they made you stand in the same place all day and you didn't get to rotate or move around like you do now.

In basketball -- only girls played girls-- if you were a forward you stayed down in once place and you couldn't run around the whole floor. You had to stand there and throw to another girl. I hated it! I played guard and loved basketball, but I didn't like the way we had to play. One time we were scheduled to play Elgin and then they canceled it because girls shouldn't be running up and down the hall.

I: I was focusing on the eighth grade to get a sense of how you made the transition from being in a one-room school to this much larger school.

RB: I made good grades so I must've done a good job, but I don't know how I did it.

I: On the academic side what do you recall about the demands placed upon you that might have been different from the earlier grades?

RB: I think my mother instilled in both Reba and I to do a good job and to work at what you're doing; I think that helped us through things. Because a lot of kids didn't take school very seriously; they weren't going to go on to college. They were going to go out and get a job.

I: Didn't many of the kids leave school at the eighth grade?

RB: A lot of them didn't expect much of themselves, I don't say that they caused a lot of trouble, but they didn't worry about the things that would help them. I knew I was going to go on if I could, because my mom and dad said I was.

I did very well in high school. I got my first shock when I went to college because the first term I got a D in Oregon Law. I was fifteen and hadn't the slightest idea what they were talking about in Oregon law. I made good grades on everything else that first term.

I told all my grandchildren, who have graduated now from college, when they were going to school, "Don't worry, your grandma made a D the first term she went to college and look how she turned out."

I: In eighth grade was there homework?

RB: There was quite a bit of homework. I did it by an oil lamp, on my knees on the chair eating apples.

I: The house was not wired?

RB: Oh no! In the country outside La Grande then, even when I was in the seventh grade, there wasn't any electricity. It was beginning to come in, but we were far enough out not to get it. We did not have a gas lantern either.

I: In that respect it was like living out on a ranch at the time.

RB: I think I was clear out of high school before we ever had lights in the house. You didn't have anything to compare it to; you were living your life, you were better off than your parents had been.

I: La Grande High School, right next door to Central School, were you there when it burned?

RB: I don't know whether it was my sophomore or junior year, but I was there when it burned. That was a terrible year. It was a fun year in a way because you made friends with other people from other classes; everybody was always going this way and that way so you would meet all sorts of kids. I remember taking algebra on the stage downstairs in the Mormon church and sitting there with my coat on with all these books I carried.

I: The fire was caused by arson; did you ever hear any stories about the arsonist? He was a volunteer fireman who needed a little extra income and you got extra income by setting fires. It's a pretty well authenticated story. I wondered, though, whether kids had some awareness that it was an arson fire.

RB: It was an awesome year. You'd gather up all these books and walk down to the Methodist church, your lunch over here and you're wearing your coat to walk to this church or that one for all of your classes.

I'll say one thing, the fire taught us one thing; when we went to the new high school the next year we were very grateful kids! You could put your books down or leave them in your locker. People don't know how well off they are until they experience something like that fire.

I: When you came back to La Grande High, to the repaired building, were you as serious as ever about studies?

RB: Yes. I was in Girls League and I sang alto in the operettas that Mr. Loney produced. I was chosen to go to Forest Grove to the singing contest there, but I didn't ask my parents because I knew they couldn't afford to send me. I tried to explain that to Dr. Loney. No outside sports, because they wouldn't let us girls run. They were saving us for something, I don't know what.

We had P. E., but all of a sudden we couldn't play other schools because this new idea of running up and down the floor was not good for girls. They thought it jiggled your insides or some new idea bout feminine hygiene.

I remember my high school years as being pretty nice. People didn't go steady. The only people that ever went steady, kids looked at as kind of odd-balls.

I: Did you know of any girls who became pregnant in high school?

RB: Oh yes. They couldn't go to school, but they could marry and most of them did.

I: You never saw a girl walking around the school that looked pregnant?

RB: No, no, no! You could see the guilty boy walking around school, but you didn't see the girl. He should've had a sign on him, too, but he didn't.

I: What was your opinion about why a girl who became pregnant and wasn't married was somehow forbidden to be seen or part of the group?

RB: That goes clear back through history, way back through history. I'm saying that that was the general feeling and while it began to get a little better as time went along, it was always the girl's fault, not the boy's. Being pregnant was vulgar or something.

I: Would it be accurate to say that it was a badge of shame to be pregnant?

RB: Yes. After you were married there was no shame, but before marriage it was just something you kept covered.

I: You strike me as someone who forms her own opinions and holds them rather strongly and I imagine as a high school student you were doing that.

RB: Yes, but we didn't have very many girls who got pregnant that we knew anything about. Of course we kind of frowned on going steady because who wanted to go with the same guy all the time. You wanted to have fun. If you went to these dances they had a big stag line and you might've danced with twenty guys that night and had a wonderful time. If you were going with one guy you were stuck with him all night.

I: Now we use the term playing the field. Is that what those girls were doing?

RB: Playing the field? I think it's the way you look for your mate. It's just one of the mating things. I think we had a better way in some ways. I'm just saying we got to know a lot of different boys. It was easier to choose somebody that you had something in common with.

I: Tell me about the graduation ceremony that you went through at La Grande High School. Was it an evening event?

RB: It was in the auditorium and I suppose it was evening. I believe the gown was blue and both girls and boys wore the same outfit.

I: Were there valedictorians, salutatorians and other people who had done really well in school?

RB: I remember I was third or fourth in the graduating class. I had been on the honor roll several times, but I don't remember any recognition in a program. They had an assembly and they read out the names. I remember sitting there and somebody said, "That was you."

I: Were these number grades or letter grades?

RB: They were A, B, and C, as I remember.

I: In 1915, the state began a test, do you remember that?

RB: My testing came when I went to EOC. I don't know about state tests, but tests in math and other subjects came when you entered college.

I: You said that it was just an accepted fact in your household that you would go to college.

RB: Yes. My mother, who only made like seventy dollars a month and my dad by that time was an invalid, saw that she put away so much money every month so that we could go to EOC at the cost of twenty-five dollars a term.

I: Did you live at home?

**Going to College**

RB: Yes, I lived at home when I first went to EOC in 1935.

I: Normal school began operation in 1929.

RB: Yes, my brother-in-law, Eugene Bowman, was in that first class.

I: So going to college probably wasn't greatly different under those circumstances from having gone to high school.

RB: I had more fun because that's when I started dating more; I hadn't dated much in high school. Dating was part of life, having lots of fun!

I: Let's stay for a bit to the academic part. You took fewer classes at college than you had in high school and that meant more free time. How did you adapt to making sure you had enough self-discipline that you could continue to do good work in courses?

RB: I think it was based on my early training at home. So many kids have trouble that first year because there's nobody to say, "Hey, get your work done, Hey, get it in." I had learned to do this from way back. When I was supposed to study, I studied.

In the administration building there was a library and I could go in there and study. I took work home all the time, too.

I: Do you remember what courses you took the first year?

RB: I had Mr. Johnson who just passed away but I don't think I had him my first year. I had Dr. Geyser who was a darling, Dr. Keizer who taught English and Ms. Zable who taught English. Dr. Addy who taught psychology or something like that. She was not a favorite of mine; she was sort of a different teacher – she liked the boys, but she didn't care too much for the girls.

I: Wasn't she from the South and had a Southern accent?

RB: I don't think that had anything to do with it. She treated me okay, but if I had carried her books or winked my eye, why, I probably would've done better.

I: When you began your coursework, did you know that you were going to be a teacher?

RB: I couldn't be anything else; I didn't have the money to go anywhere other than EOC. I was trapped. However, I had been in my mother's classrooms enough that I really felt this was what I wanted to be.

I really truly, truly, truly wanted to be a journalist, to go into journalism at the University of Oregon. But my folks couldn't afford that, and I was perfectly happy to become a teacher.

I was fifteen when I went to EOC at Christmas. I went that winter, which was three terms, the next summer, the next winter, did my student teaching the next summer, and went out to teach at seventeen with a teacher's certificate, not a degree. I had skipped those early grades in elementary school, so I was younger than most.

I: Do you think that the coursework at Eastern Oregon Normal School had much to do with how well you taught?

RB: Yes, and being in my mother's classroom really taught me how to teach.

I also want to say that most of the teachers I had at college really cared about their students, and they wanted us to have a better life. It was kind of like a big family.

I remember we had to take one of those analogy tests that start "A is to apple, b is to bananas…" and then it gets worse and worse. I said to Dr. Geyser, "I don't think I passed that." He said, "Don't worry, I don't think anybody ever does." How many teachers would tell you that now?

I: How long did you do student teaching, was it one quarter, ten weeks?

RB: Yes, about ten weeks and then I was a teacher. Isn't that dumb?

I: Aside from the student teaching did you use anything directly from your classes in your teaching?

RB: Oh yes. I learned more about the world from social studies. Part of college is just helping you grow up, giving you a little time to think about the world and where you fit in. I did that a little bit.

I: Were you feeling reasonably independent from your parents by that point? You had never lived apart from them before you went out to teach.

RB: When I went to teach I boarded with a family and another teacher; it was a big jump, and it was hard on my dad. He didn't see me every weekend. If I didn't come home every weekend for a while, they'd come up to see me. My dad really hated to see his daughters leave home.

**Teaching at Wolf Creek**

I: Which school did you first teach in?

RB: Wolf Creek out of North Powder.

I: Was that the only job that was available at the time?

RB: No. I could've had one in Flora. In those days when you graduated from college you usually went out and taught in a small school, then you earned a reputation and you might be asked to teach in a larger school.

I: How did you find out about the job in Wolf Creek outside of North Powder?

RB: I don't know, I suppose it was the county school superintendent. It might've been through Mother or maybe Mr. Sayer told Mother that there was an opening at Wolf Creek.

I: Wasn't there some office at the college that had listings?

RB: I think so, that might have been where I found the opening.

I: How did you commute from La Grande to Wolf Creek?

RB: I rode the train.

I: You rode the train?

RB: The folks would take me up to Wolf Creek on Sunday afternoon, and sometimes the Bowman boys, the man I married and his brother Quinton, (who lives in Salem, has written a book too) would ride back with them. I didn't get to see the Bowman boys because I was up here and they were going the opposite direction.

I didn't really see my husband till the Halloween dance at school when we put on a program. Sometimes the other teacher, Dolly Lee, would come home with me and we would flag the train in North Powder. The train stopped and we'd get on and ride to La Grande where they stopped automatically, or we'd get on the train here and go to North Powder. Then the man where we stayed in the wintertime would come through the fields -- the fences were cut in the winter -- and get us in a sleigh to take us back to school.

I: How far was it from the train to Wolf Creek?

RB: About five miles. Let me tell you how we got placed! I was supposed to teach the upper grades and Millie was going to teach the lower grades. We were living together at the Nice's. Millie was a real tall and thin gal from Pendleton. She came to me just before school started and said, "You know, I'm just going to be too tall to teach those little kids. You want to trade?" I said, "Sure." We traded and I taught the lower grades and she taught the upper grades. The Board didn't' seem to care as long as they had teachers. That's how I got my first position.

I: In that two-room school as two beginning teachers, did you help one another?

RB: Oh yes with everything. We did a lot of talking after school and then there was help from Thela Mae Twidwell who taught the last year with me before she went from there to Wallowa county. I only taught three years before I was married.

I: Who cleaned the school?

RB: We did, we just stayed after school, used the oil brush on the floor, dusted and cleaned the waste.

I: Oil brushes aren't used anymore can you explain what they were?

RB: It was just a big brush that had a lot of oil on it. You went along and pushed it like they do on the gym floors. The floors were wooden and they were oiled. It's supposed to keep it cleaner. There were also a lot of young men around and we hardly ever had to build a fire in the basement; one of the young men would come and build the fires.

I: These young men, who were they?

RB: They were farmers' sons. They weren't students, just young men in the valley wanting to see what the new teachers looked like. Many a girl that went out to

teach married a farmer's son. The girl, Vella Mae who went to Flora in my place married a guy over there. It happened all the time.

**Depression**

I: You mentioned seeing men riding in railroad cars looking for work and asking for a handout. This was during the Depression period?

RB: Yes and right after.

I: What did people call those men who were riding the railroad cars?

RB: As I remember they were called hobos. I do remember my father never turning anybody down if they came and asked him for a job or food. He always fed them outside, but he never turned anyone down. Mostly these were good men really looking for work.

I: Why do you think they would get off at La Grande?

RB: They were looking for work. I just remember my father never turned one of them down.

I: Did you see some of these men?

RB: They looked a lot like my own father but younger. They weren't particularly dirty. They were just men needing work; they wanted to provide for their family and apparently they couldn't where they lived so they began to travel around. I suppose quite a few of them were single. I was maybe ten years old at the time.

I: Would they come up to your house?

RB: They came and knocked on the door and asked for work.

I: Did your father have any work to offer them?

RB: We lived on three acres and he worked for the state and the county and so no, we didn't have any work. We did have food and a lot of them really looked hungry. My father had a big heart and they got to eat. He had them eat outside because he had a wife and two daughters and maybe he was a little worried having them inside the house.

I: What sort of food would he give them? Leftovers from the night before?

RB: He'd bring out a plate that had vegetables and meat, the same things that we ate.

I: I suppose they came during the daytime?

RB: As far as I know, I don't remember any at night.

I: Did you remember your father or mother ever talking about these men and about the conditions that they were in?

RB: Of course everybody talked about the Depression. I remember my husband, whose dad owned a ranch in North Powder, talking about how many of the farmers during and after the Depression lost their farms because they just didn't have enough money to pay off their loans.

I: Can you tell us a little about the CC, boys that were in the Civilian Conservation Camp.

RB: Yes, I met a boy from Bloomington, Illinois and one from someplace in New York. We used to go to a church picnic at Hilgard Park and the CC boys were stationed there. I remember four or five of them came down where we were all eating. We were with our family and we met and talked to these boys, they were about my age or a little older.

We talked about where they lived, and how excited they were about being out in the mountains, with the forests and having a job. A lot of these boys came from the slums where they wouldn't have much work to do. I really approved of the CCC. They also worked at Anthony Lake. I didn't get to know them personally I just talked to them that day. They cleaned brush, made trails, and kept the wildfires down.

I: Were they wearing uniforms?

RB: They were wearing some kind of khaki work uniforms.

**Eastern Oregon Livestock Show**

I: You refer to the livestock show, I'm guess you mean Union Livestock Show?

RB: I remember a woman who rode a bucking horse there. There was quite an article in *The Observer* one time about her. I don't remember whether I saw her actually ride or I just saw her at the rodeo.

I: Can you describe in a little more detail what went on in those days at the livestock show?

RB: People showed their animals for prizes like they do now. I don't think they had horse racing then. They did have bareback riding and saddle bronc which is what she rode. It was pretty much the same things as they have now. It was four or five days long. It has gotten bigger now, but I think they do pretty much the same thing. My own children were in 4-H and they showed their lambs and my daughter showed horses. They showed animals, competed for different prizes like showmanship. As a child I didn't show anything.

I: Was there anything else that would've drawn people from La Grande to go over to Union?

RB: The fact is we did not have a lot of public entertainment, especially in the early summer, so it was quite the event. They always had a carnival which was good for kids and adults. I loved to ride the merry-go-round. Most of the people around here were farm people so they were interested in showing animals. We didn't have a lot big city things to do or places to go to.

**Hanging**

RB: There is another interesting event that happened in Union a long time ago. My father, who would be probably be a hundred-and-twenty-four or more, said that he rode his horse to Union to see a man who was hung. I think he was a horse thief. Dad rode his horse from Cove to Union when he was about thirteen or fourteen to see this man get hung. He said, "You know, when I got there and they got ready to hang him, I shut my eyes and I didn't see any of it." I would have, too.

I: Do you suppose that hangings were always public?

RB: Apparently, stealing horses was way up on the list of 'no-no's'.

I: Were you ever invited to witness a hanging?

RB: I think that's the only person around here that was ever hung. I just remember what my dad said. I've always thought that was pretty interesting.

**Flooding**

I: Speaking of animals, you referred to your mother riding horseback partway to the school at Willow Dale because the creek flooded in the spring. Was she commuting to Willow Dale from the house on H Street?

RB: She drove her car out to the Bates, I think, got on a horse there. This was just in the spring when Catherine Creek used to flood. Not very far out, just past where the airport is, she'd get out of her car and onto one of the horses Mr. and Mrs. Bates had, and she rode a ways through the water to Willow Dale School.

I: There really was no other way?

RB: You could go to Hot Lake and come back around, but that wasn't handy for her because it flooded over there, too. This was the handiest and she could get a horse from Bates'.

I: You remember seeing some of those floods?

RB: Yes.

I: How widely spread was the water?

RB: Do you want me to give you a sermon on this valley and the fact that they did not take flood control seriously and dam up the river when they should have?

I: I'll be glad to hear your opinions on that.

RB: I have a brother-in-law who was on the State Water Resource Board who helped get the Wolf Creek dam in so those farmers out there can water all of their land at a really low price. He tried to get it in here but the Indians were against them doing anything on Catherine Creek because of their fishing rights and the farmers of this valley were not progressive enough, to dam the river and have a backup reservoir. You could have helped nature without hurting it if you worked at it correctly. But that's neither here nor there now.

**Zuber Hall**

I: I would be interested in hearing you give some details about Zuber Hall and the dances that they had there.

RB: Dick Lindsey.

I: Were you going to dances there when you were a teenager?

RB: Oh yes. Zuber Hall was where Pat Alley's and Goss's parking lot is on Washington Street. It was run by Mr. and Mrs. Buel who were very careful about who came in. If they saw anybody drinking they either didn't come in or they were sent out.

Many of the kids I grew up with spent every Saturday night dancing there. In those days you had a big stag line on one side of the hall and a big bunch of girls on the other side. You were very fortunate to get to dance with a lot of gentlemen. Very few of us went steady until you got much older, into college. It

was just a fun time; my sister and I could walk home all the way from Zuber Hall to H Street with no worry about being out at night or in the dark or anything. Nobody ever bothered anybody.

I: Could you describe the building, both inside and outside?

RB: The building was a big wooden building and inside was large one room with a big stage for the band. Avery Millering, Bark Wheeler and Lauren Blanchard and a lot of others played in the band. I think Avery played the piano.

Just about every weekend I danced there through college and three years before I was married.

I: Was the hall designed for anything else other than dances?

RB: I have no idea. We only went there on Saturday nights. They may have had dinners and things there. As a dance hall, it was a great form of entertainment that everybody could go to and it was clean.

I: How much did it cost to get in?

RB: I don't know; it couldn't have been very much. Movies were two for a quarter to get in.

I: You said you could dance with a number of different gentlemen during an evening. Does that mean that you met a number of people that you wouldn't have met otherwise?

RB: Right. I knew quite a few of them, but I also met new people, too. It was kind of nice in a way, you had experience meeting several people instead of being attached to one person. Of course every generation has their own opinion, but we had fun.

I: Did you dress up to go there?

RB: Oh yes, we always dressed up nicely, recently bathed. By that time everybody in town had a bathroom and water in the house.

I: Claude Anson told me that at least the farm people always took their bath on Saturday, came into La Grande and walked up and down Adams Avenue just to meet each other or maybe go to a movie show.

RB: When I was a little girl my mother would take Reba and I and park on Main Street to watch the people walking up and down. In fact, even up to the time I had my own children one of the amusements in town was just parking along the street and watching people walk up and down the street. It's hard to believe, isn't it?

I: What was amusing about that?

RB: People are funny! Here's all these people walking up and down the street; it wasn't something unusual.

I: I suppose you would talk about them as well.

RB: Yes, I suppose some, but mostly it was just watching people go by. It was kind of like if you're at a carnival or someplace like that, all these people go by and you're curious, you notice what kind of clothes they have on and what they're doing or saying. People didn't have a lot of money so this was one way of entertaining yourself, watching people walk by.

I: People still love to go to parades, just to watch other people and animals. Some of the people who perhaps were especially interesting to watch were the evangelists who came to town once in a while.

RB: Believe me, they preached hell and damnation and when you got up to leave, even if you were in there for only fifteen minutes or so, you went out of there shaking and you behaved! I mean they didn't get up there to be liberals or anything!

I: Were they graphic about punishments for sin?

RB: Very graphic!

I: Where did they hold forth?

RB: Usually in the church or a tent, but I don't recall where.

I: They had traveling shows, they'd spend two or three days apparently in every town.

RB: Oh, everybody went because it was another form of cheap amusement. I'm not saying that they didn't have their beliefs, but it was a show and it was scary for the kids. I don't know if it scared the parents any. It's kind of like Erma Bombeck said, "We used to be afraid of what our parents thought, what God thought, and what the evangelist was telling us, so we didn't do things that we would've done."

I: Do you remember hearing them describe the flames of hell and how they would lick about your feet and your ankles?

RB: Oh yes, yes.

I: Did you do anything or were you changed in any way by hearing them talk?

RB: I don't think so, I was too young to be changed by what I was listening to.

I: Did you think that they were maybe somewhat funny?

RB: No, not then, I didn't think any of it was funny. I did looking back on it.

I: Was there singing?

RB: Oh yes, and people sang and went forward to join the church. I wonder now if we could use some of that once in a while.

**A handshake is a Man's Word**

I: Talk more about a man's handshake being his word.

RB: I remember my father and father-in-law talking about that. When we bought this place, Forest and the gentleman that we bought it from shook hands on it and then we put money in escrow. When Forest shook that man's hand that was it, that sealed the bargain. Doesn't work anymore in many cases.

I: Was it your belief that once that happened there was no going back on your word?

RB: That's right, unless they both decided to end the agreement. I remember that as plain as anything. We had discussed buying it, looked into it and talked to the gentleman several times. He came over one morning while we were eating breakfast and said, "Well, Forest, you've bought a farm" and shook hands.

I: Do you think knowing that a man's handshake was sealing the deal, helped people's relationships?

RB: I think there was more trust in your fellow man. If you could do this, just a handshake and not a bunch of papers, I think it added to trust and friendship. I'm sure there were cases when maybe it didn't work; I'm not saying it was always perfect. I was too young probably, but I'm sure that this spread into the how you felt secure working with other people, that their word was good.

I: I just thought you might remember other ways in which you noticed the good effects of that.

RB: Maybe I could use this for an example. When I applied for my first teaching job I talked to two board members, and they said you have a school. I didn't worry about it. I knew if they told me that, I would have a school.

I: Were they telling you this well before September?

RB: I applied before September. When I talked to them and they said, "You have a school" then I knew I had a school. I knew they weren't going to renege.

I: When would you get a piece of paper that you said you had a school?

RB: Pretty quick. I think it came through the county school superintendent.

I: By they way, did you have to be interviewed in any way to get a position in the school?

RB: I have never been interviewed.

I: Tell me how that worked then. They just knew about you from other people and thought that was enough of a basis?

RB: I suppose they knew my mother and knew she had a good reputation. I suppose you would call that an interview because I talked to them.

I: That is not a very formal interview.

RB: Not very formal. When I taught at Ladd Canyon, I called the chairman of the board and said, "I hear your teacher is not going to be back next year and I would like to apply for the job." (The man I was talking to was in the eighth grade when I was in the first.) He said, "Yes, we are looking for a teacher. We're going to have a board meeting Friday night." I said, "Do you want me to come out and talk to you?" He said, "Oh no, we know all about you. You have a school."

When I moved to Union where I taught four years, the principal came out to see me out at Ladd Canyon. He said, "I need someone to teach split grade." I said, "I certainly can do that. I taught four classes at once, I guess I can teach the fourth and fifth grade." He said, "You've got a job."

When I came to La Grande the principal at Island City told me there was a vacancy and he wanted me to come over. I was at the public library when the superintendent called and said, "Could you come up to my office?" So I went up to his office and he said, "What do you think about reading?" I said, "Well, I believe in it." When I was going to be interviewed I walked around and got on his side of the desk and I said, "Oops, off to a good start." He said, "Mr. Lovely wants you at Island City. We know enough about you." That's where I went.

I have been on an interview team with six, seven people that scare the poor interviewee to death; you don't really learn anything about them. You don't learn whether they can teach or not, you just learn whether you scared them to death or not.

I: Were you living in Union when you taught there?

RB: At that time the District wanted you to live where you taught. I said, "I can't move the farm over here, George." That was the end of that.

We moved here in '55; I taught two more years in town three days a week. It was in '58.

I: How aware were you of the Union Hotel?

RB: They were renting out apartments.

I: Did you hear people talk about what the hotel had been in early years?

RB: It was quite a nice hotel. Because the freeway did not go through Union, I presume they lost a lot of trade, so they had changed it into apartments.

I: Did it have a pretty run-down quality at that time?

RB: A little more than it was when it was a hotel, but those people kept it pretty well taken care of without making much money on it.

It made a difference when the freeway did not go through Union, which is where it should have.

**Farm Products**

I: There were a lot of creameries around Union county at one time do you recall any of them?

RB: My mother-in-law in North Powder had a cream man who came to her house to buy cream and eggs. That was her pocket money.

I: Did you ever look closely at those trucks to see if they were refrigerated?

RB: I bet they were in Powder because Powder had an ice plant for a long time.

I don't know about the others. I never did go out and look in the truck. They just came and picked up the cream and eggs. I think the cream was left out by the mailboxes early in the morning.

I: I guess the idea was that cream didn't spoil quite as quickly as milk, is that right?

RB: It must not have.

I: Were they using the shiny metal cans with the round top?

RB: Yes. When we first moved here there were several of those on the ranch. The gentleman down the road, Art McCall, had a dairy for a long time even after we moved here. Later, the restrictions just got to where he couldn't afford to have it anymore.

I: You said several people sold eggs, were picked up the way the cream was?

RB: I think they were, but I'm not sure about that. Mother may have taken them into town. I don't remember how the eggs were transported, I just know that she could use the money from the eggs and the cream for her spending money because she didn't work.

I: I remember as a little boy seeing the cottage cheese being made, do you remember how it was done?

RB: My mother heated the milk in some way and them put it in a real clean white dish towel like a large cloth bag. She hung it up and I can remember it dripping. That was the best cottage cheese I've ever eaten and they don't make it like that anymore.

I: Would this be served with each meal or when would you eat it?

RB: It was just put on the table in a bowl and you ate it with the other food. We had lots of vegetables because almost everybody had a big garden.

I: Could you eat it for breakfast, lunch, or dinner?

RB: Sure. I don't know if I did, but I do remember it was very good and it was much better than what we have now.

I also recall them butchering a hog. This big old hog was dipped in hot water and then it was scraped to take off all the hair. I was probably twelve years old. They had to scrape the hair off and they cut it into hams, roasts, chops and it was hung it up. Some people salted their meat in those days. Can you imagine that? Salted their meat to keep it from spoiling.

I: Do you remember eating meat that had been preserved that way?

RB: It tasted really good. But now we are warned about too much salt. I'm sure that the cooks washed a lot of that salt off.

I: This salted or preserved meat could be fried, chops fried or roasted, or bacon, all those kinds of variations on eating pork.

RB: What was it with pigs' feet? Did they make some kind of a sausage that was put into the intestine? Now I'm sure I didn't stand and watch all that because it probably went over several days, but I remember some of that.

I: Did anybody put you to work helping with that?

RB: I'm sure they did because their kids were expected to help the family.

**Finding a Husband**

I: Maybe we should talk a little about your finding yourself a husband. You said you married two or three years after you started teaching?

RB: I taught three years and was married at the end of the third year.

I: You also said that a lot of the young women teachers married sons of farmers nearby.

RB: Yes, because they would come in and help at school, but I didn't meet my husband that way. At one time a young girl that went out to teach was quite a catch and the farmer wanted their sons to marry somebody who had an education. You were really most popular than you'd ever been in your life. We laugh because I had that contract for Flora way over in Wallowa county, but then I received this one from up here so I chose this one. Later I met the girl who took my job in Flora and she married a farmer's son over there. I said, "Do you suppose that if we had switched jobs we would've married each other's husbands?"

I: Can you tell me how he approached you?

RB: I was going with a boy who was teaching in Lostine. I wasn't particularly thinking about any other young man, although we were not really serious, we had had a good time together, and I liked him. The folks would take me up to where I boarded in Wolf Creek and then they would pick the Bowman boys up and take them back down to college. They were going to college and I was up there.

I: Did the Bowman boys live in North Powder?

RB: Yes, on a ranch out of Powder. So I didn't really see him until Halloween because he was coming this way and I was going that way. Also, he was going with another girl from Baker and I was involved with the man in Lostine.

There was a grange hall right next to the school and we put on this big Halloween program and dance. He came up and introduced himself and danced with me. He told me he loved to hunt and he rode a horse beautifully; he'd ride up into the

mountains to hunt. He'd been on a fire tower that summer and when he got to college he was behind in his classes. He went to college till about Christmas; his folks wanted him to help run the ranch so he quit college around Christmas and went to work on the farm. We started going together off and on for a couple of years.

I: What did "going together" mean then?

RB: He came and asked me if he could bring me home for Christmas so he brought me down for Christmas and came back and got me at New Years. We went to the movies. You didn't eat out much in those days. I don't remember that we ever ate out. We'd have like a milkshake or something. He was red-headed, a wonderful, wonderful man.

I: How did he propose?

RB: He was very romantic. We'd gone together and he wanted to get married. I wasn't ready and so we broke up and then later we got back together again. He drove me up one night under this big pine tree that's still there up at Wolf Creek. He says, "Okay, now we're going to stop all this foolishness. When are we getting married?"

I: What made you think that you weren't ready to get married?

RB: The first time we were together, I was only eighteen. We went together off and on for almost three years. At first I told him, "I like you, I care for you, but I'm not ready to marry." We broke up then for a while, several months in fact, and then got back together. That's why he said no more of this foolishness.

I: Did you think when you became twenty-one if you didn't get married pretty soon you might turn out to be an old maid?

RB: Well, it's kind of a dead-end street for young girls to go out and teach in a way. It was an opportunity, but you had to move around a lot; you never stayed too long at one place.

I: When you say it would be a dead-end I guess you mean that if you continued teaching in one or more one-room schools that's all you'd ever do?

RB: To a certain extent I guess that's what I mean.

I: What would've been bad about that?

RB: I wasn't the type not to be married. I think it probably is okay for a lot of people, but he was pretty persuasive.

I: Did you know some women teachers in one-room schools who had been doing it for fifteen or twenty or twenty-five years?

RB: Thela Edvalson never married; she taught in Union. But I didn't know a lot of women who didn't marry after a couple of years, getting married was just part of the deal in those days.

I: It would've been possible, wouldn't it, to be married and have children and then resume teaching in a one-room school?

RB: Do you know my first contract said "null and void if married"? They didn't think you could get pregnant if you weren't married. It doesn't make any sense!

I: I'm asking a somewhat different question. If a woman had married and perhaps had had children and then decided that she wanted to resume teaching in a one-room school could she get a position?

RB: Oh, I think probably if she had a good reputation, yes.

I: Maybe that's how older women might have taught in one-room schools?

RB: My mother taught for forty-three years; she was still teaching when she was in her seventies. I only taught thirty-seven years.

I: Were there many men who taught in one-room schools?

RB: I guess; I didn't know of any. It was easier for them to get into city schools because they needed somebody that looked like they could handle discipline. Whether they were very smart or not, if they looked like they could handle discipline, they were hired. A lot of them were hired to coach and to handle discipline.

A lot of the kids were bigger and older than they are now when they went to school, because a lot of them would miss school and then go back.

**School Operations**

I: Let's talk a little more about school operations. You mentioned that you recalled the first gelled printer at school.

RB: Oh, we were so excited! We were in the old school in Island City when they bought us one of those gelled printers; it was a wonderful invention. Before that we wrote everything out on the blackboard that we might want to put up. Of course, it got ink all over you and it led to people using it too often.

It was just a little rectangular box, with what looked like kind of thick jelly. You put the paper in someplace, I don't remember where, and you turned a wheel and it ran it off a copy.

I: Do you remember the name for it?

RB: No. When I was principal in the new school we got the new copier and I had a little problem because the teachers were using paper like it'd gone out of style. They were running everything off! I said, "Hey guys, we have a budget. Let's sort of keep this down a bit."

I: Writing on the board information that might've been on a sheet of paper was more laborious; do you think there was some advantages in the teachers using the board instead of the machine?

RB: Oh yes. I think the children could see what was going on. When I first went out and worked on the board a lot, many students enjoyed working at the board too, and the rest of the kids could see what they were doing and could help each other. For instance, a student was up there doing a math problem and having a little trouble, I would hope that one of the other students would very politely say, "Hey" and go up and help the one who was having a problem. I think there was quite a bit to say for blackboards. Then came the worksheets.

Some of it was just plain busy work and some of it I think was worthwhile. The trouble is if you don't have time to take a group and go back over, talk about the worksheet, let them correct their own as you were talking about it or having the kids help each other, they didn't learn anything. They would fill in the blanks, but they didn't get anything back about it. What did they learn if they filled in the blanks?

I: Worksheets also became common among some teachers as a form of homework.

RB: Parents at one time expected homework.

I: Before there were worksheets how would you give homework?

RB: That's a good question. I don't know that they did a lot of homework then.

I taught primary grades first and I don't remember sending many books home with the students. I taught eighth grade one year which I really liked and taught sixth grade as well.

We had a mother in Union who almost cost the principal his job because when he was teaching one of the grades he didn't correct the workbooks that were handed

in. The kids came home and it hadn't been corrected. The parents expected homework and they wanted to know what their child was doing.

If you did it right, you could teach them some good study habits. It could also be overdone because if it isn't supervised, lots of times it was just a waste. I was ahead of my time.

I: Were there any other effects that you noticed of having machines that would duplicate worksheets?

RB: Some of the books had worksheets that went along with the textbooks, but if it wasn't corrected orally so the child knew whether he was right or wrong, it didn't do a very good job. It is true that education is just trial and error to a certain extent.

We had a supervisor from the college who just had a fit if one of the student teachers would not have a textbook in their hand. Well, I agree that to a certain extent, you do need a guide, you can't just fly, especially the younger teachers, off into the wild blue yonder without some guidelines. On the other hand, if you're clutching that textbook all the time, that's not so good either.

I: You referred to the fact that there were probably more than seventy-five one room schools in Union county at one time. Did you visit very many of them?

RB: I had been in my mother's classroom in Perry and at Willow Dale. I'm sure I visited her there a few times. You don't learn to be a teacher in six weeks of student teaching, but being in my mother's classroom helped a lot. At seventeen I never would've made it as a teacher, if I hadn't been in her classroom enough to know how to handle the students.

I: Did you have information about what was going on in some of the one-room schools of Union county other than the ones you were in.

RB: I'm trying to think. There's one at Blue Mountain and Aunt Nan taught there, but I don't think I was ever with her. Aunt Fanny taught at Shanghai.

I don't remember visiting other schools, except the ones that my mother was in and that wasn't very often. I was also her student too, in the first and seventh grades and she treated me just like any of the students. You wouldn't have known I was her daughter.

I: With that many one-room schools in one county, I suppose the county superintendent visited all of the schools?

RB: Yes, they went around and visited.

I: How do you think the county superintendents could have made sure that there was a similar level of quality of learning in all these schools?

RB: It seemed like we had a meeting in the fall of all the principals and teachers and they talked to us then. I don't remember one in the spring. Mrs. Cousins only came to see me at the end of school to see if I had the register. I lost a half a day and I never did find it and she didn't either.

I: I would really like to find out whether there was any reasonable means for making sure that what was going on in each of these many one-room schools was up to a certain level of quality.

RB: I think they visited around at the different schools.

**Hot Lake**

I: One subject that's always of interest around here in what the Hot Lake Sanitarium looked like and what went on there. Did you actually meet or see Dr. Phys, the original Dr. Phys?

RB: I don't think so.

I: It would've been his son, probably.

RB: I don't remember them at all. What I remember are the canaries in cages and the palm trees. My aunt Fannie had stood up on a chair when she was a child and fallen into this pot-bellied stove that had a lid open at the top. She burned the top of her head.

Later when she was married and lived in Cove she got some sort of chemical spray from the apple trees she was working on in the orchard. She had scratched her head and got this spray in the cut and they thought it had caused the cancer on the top of her head. My grandfather offered to pay for her treatment at Hot Lake. I went with Mom and Dad to the Sanatorium when Aunt Fannie was staying there.

I: Do you have any images left of seeing aside from the canaries and palm trees?

RB: No. Except later on after I was married and first lived in La Grande, my sister and I used to go with Gene Robinson, our minister, and we would go out to Hot Lake and visit the old people who were there. Gene was one of these very open, happy, friendly people that knew everybody, a wonderful minister. He, Reba and I would sing to them if they wanted. Gene would talk to them a while, pray for them and then he'd say, you know, "You want us to sing?" So we'd sing in this trio.

I did get to see the rooms then, but it wasn't pretty anymore. It was okay and kept up, clean and nice, but it wasn't anything like it was when I was a child, with the canaries and palm trees. They had a lot of things going on out there and they raised their own food.

I: Did people talk about that place commonly?

RB: The biggest drawback of that place is, it blows so hard out there. There are those nice hot springs that people enjoy, but everybody that tries to make something out of it, there is still that wind. The way the Phys used it, it was for a different purpose. People thought when they took those mineral and mud baths, that it really helped them and maybe it did.

I: One of the things I've heard said is that although they didn't advertise it, some of their main treatments were for syphilis. Why do you think that's probably so?

RB: I think there was quite a bit of that back in those days, it was the main sexual disease that they were aware of anyway. I suppose people did things in those days just like they do now and sexual diseases spread.

I also heard that Dr. Roth did abortions out there. I don't know if there was any truth in that or not.

I: It was well-known as a place for surgery, was it not?

RB: I don't know.

I: Hot Lake has always been kind of a mystery for people in the county, hasn't it?

RB: The Indians came in the early days, put their wigwams up and had their hot baths or whatever. It was comfortable to be there in the wintertime.

**Bookmobile**

I: You referred to a bookmobile that made the rounds of county schools.

RB: Yes, it came out to Wolf Creek and brought us books for the children, maybe once a month. The children could keep the books that long but, a lot of the kids didn't take books. You had to encourage them to take books. I could use the books in the school, too. I remember the bookmobile only at Wolf Creek, none of the other one room schools.

I: Do you think it visited at one time all of the schools in the county?

RB: I think so, yes. It would come quite regularly but they didn't stay more than a day. The librarian Mabel Doety was in charge of it.

I: Was the bookmobile only for children?

RB: I don't remember. I assume that adults could use it, too, if they came to the school. I suppose most of them knew when it would come. People didn't read much in those days. A lot of country people didn't do a lot of reading aside from the newspaper and a few other things; they weren't veracious readers.

I: Do you suppose it was because they had so much work to do?

RB: A lot of it, and a lot them really didn't go that far in school. I mean they could read, and they worked hard, but at night they went to bed. Farm work was seven days a week, from early in the morning till late at night.

**Doctors/House calls**

I: Do you remember that many doctors made house calls in early years?

RB: I don't remember ever seeing a doctor at my home during the time I grew up. I do remember when I was first married when the doctors were doing that. I remember hearing that some gentleman who was at Haines or in Powder for a long time, he would get in his buggy and go way out. He went way up to the homestead where my husband was born but he got there late.

Way back then, they'd travel in a buggy or a wagon if there was an emergency. I've just heard that, I never saw it. When I was first married I remember Dr. Stoddard going to see my father when he was ill and Dr. Fredericks going to see my mother just to check on her. I don't know whether they did it because they were her friends or because they still did house calls.

I: Do you know how a house call was originated? Would a doctor just come by because he knew that the person was ill and might need some assistance or would he get a phone call?

RB: I think both. I don't remember us ever calling one to come to the house. We had the La Grande Clinic when my children were little.

I: You did say you saw a doctor come to your family's house?

RB: Oh yes.

I: Do you remember clearly what the doctor brought with him?

RB: He came to eat chocolate cake at my house.

I: Did he come with anything in his hand?

RB: It's hard to remember things like that. I just remember Dave went out and spent time with Dad when Dad was bad and he wasn't going to make it; he would go out, kind of talk to him and visit with him. I suppose he learned some things about him while he was there. Also with Dr. Frederick. I never had one come to the house for me. David came 'cause he was a friend and he liked chocolate cake. He'd drop in about lunchtime. My husband had helped him build that clinic up there so they were friends for many years.

I: If the doctor though the patient needed a prescription of some kind, pills or a syrup or anything like that, would he bring those things along with him?

RB: I don't think so in these cases. They might to other cases, yes. They didn't take medicine like they do now, just aspirin, cough syrup or castor oil, -- the Watkins Man.

I: Yes.

RB: George Fleshman's father was the Watkins Man. You got your cough syrup, your vanilla and your this and that from the Watkins Man.

I do think that way back there the doctors did make house calls when it was an emergency, but they had to drive so far to do it in a wagon or a buggy. Then it got to where generally people, because they all had cars, could go to the doctor.

I: Do you have any idea how the doctors were paid? Were they paid in cash right on site or did they send a bill?

RB: We got a bill from Dr. Banner, my first baby cost fifty dollars. My next two cost seventy-five dollars a piece.

I: Were these home deliveries?

RB: No, they were at the old hospital up as you go out of town. We got a bill and my husband just paid when he took me home.

**The Ranch**

I: How long has the family been involved in the ranch?

RB: Fifty years. We moved down here in '54 so I think this is the forty-ninth going on fiftieth year that we've lived here.

I: What type of things did you do on the ranch?

RB: At first we raised sheep. My husband was logging and I was teaching when we bought this farm. The people who had owned it before had not kept the fence rows very well and sheep do a nice job of eating down the weeds and grasses. On the farm we raised hay and grain and sheep. As we built up the number of cattle we finally we just sold the sheep because we couldn't do both types of animals.

I worked with the sheep, helped lamb. I've gone to school nights and weekends and summers and worked on the ranch.