Retha Bowman

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RB: …till I was at five. And then we came back to Union County and my mother taught at the old Ladd Canyon School. And this would be...shoot…seventy-some years ago 'cause I'm eighty-four now.

I: So you've been here since then?

RB: I…oh, yeah. I've lived here all my life really, then, see, except for those. And my mother taught there and taught at Blue Mountain and Willow Dale and at different small schools around. And so we lived here and then…does that…I don't know what that means. I don't know what that says for ya.

I: That's fine. What schools did you go to?

RB: I went to Ladd Canyon and then to Perry. My mother was…there were two…there are two buildings up there in Perry, or were, I don't know, there were two school buildings, quite nice ones. And my mother was…taught the upper grades and was principal. And then another person taught…usually a woman…taught the first four grades like one, two, three, four in one building and Mom had five, six, seven, eight and was principal of both buildings. And so we lived at Perry for a while. And then we lived in La Grande a while and then I went… When I was seventeen I went out to teach in North Powder out there. So taught there three years and got married.

I: Did… Do you remember anything about going to school in the little schools?

RB: Oh, I was gonna say… Oh yeah, I remember about going…goin' up there. And when I was in eighth grade I came…I went to Central and then I went to high school here and I graduated from Eastern Oregon three times, one for my bachelors, one for a masters and…I shouldn't say three times…yeah, well, the first time I had a certificate. When you first went to…when…when I was going to college it was a normal…what they called a normal school and all we…all that was there were people who were gonna be teachers. And so…and you've probably heard this from other people, too.

I: Yeah, I know a little bit about it.

RB: And then I…when I graduated I had a teaching certificate, I didn't have a degree. So I had that one. Then I went back and got my bachelors and then I got my masters and I was within just a few hours of a…well, I could've taken my orals if I'd 've wanted to for my PhD, but I didn't…I didn't go to…I didn't think I'd probably ever need that. But I don't know, you're…this is hard for you because how do you know what…!

I: We have some like generic questions.

RB: Hmm?

I: We have some generic questions and then we can…

RB: I don't care what you ask me. I just don't think my answers are very good.

I: No, no. Anything is good. Do you remember what it was like at the normal school? What classes you were in?

RB: Yes, I know quite a bit about it because it was all in one building, in the administration building. And down on the west end was the library. And there

was a music room. I think there were two…three floors, I think. But we did everything right in that building. And then while I was going they finished Ackerman my first year so I did my…I went three terms and then one summer and then winter term and I did my student teaching in Ackerman then.

I: So when they built Ackerman did they move the kids out of the Inlow into Ackerman or did they keep 'em…? 'Cause before weren't they…

RB: You had to…you applied…you applied to put your children or signed up or whatever for your turn to go to Ackerman because it was supposed to be the school they were using innovative ideas and all this stuff. And actually…and they had a lot of student teachers and I'm not too sure whether they're good for the kids, but… [laughs]

I: I bet it was interesting, though, to go to college…

RB: We didn't know anything else so we really enjoyed… And in those days people didn't have a lot of money, cash money, and so I was very fortunate…my sister and I both…I felt to get to even go to college. You know, most people when I was…like when I was sixteen or seventeen a lot of people had never been to the ocean yet. I mean you had one family car. When we lived in Perry we drove…Mom had got a new Model-T and I can remember riding in the front seat and we'd go to Perry and this little Model-T had bicycle wheels it looked like, you know, and we didn't have studs, we didn't have…I don't know about chains, I suppose we must've had chains because… And it used to snow a lot more than it does now. I can remember stickin' my head out the windshield and tryin' to keep a lot of the snow off of the windshield for Mom just gettin' from here… And then we just did that…we lived in Perry and we bought some property in La Grande and Dad built us a home out on H Street so that last year I rode…we drove to Perry instead of renting a place up there.

I: Is it…

RB: Go ahead.

I: Was it dirt road out there at that time, too?

RB: The highway?

I: Yeah.

RB: No, I think it was paved, but it was not very…you know, it wasn't…

I: Like one lane?

RB: Well, you could… You know, we…you know, remember…do you know where the viewpoint is goin' to Portland when you go up out and you get down there near Hood River and…? Well, you can drive on this little narrow road and it takes you way up here like this and then you go back down to the… Well, that's what…that's the old highway. And actually, if you had a flat tire or something you pretty much took up a lot of the road, you know. But it's like a lot of people were…see, I was born in 1918 right after the war and people…people had jobs pretty much, but there wasn't a lot…you didn't have a lot of cash in your…in your house, you know, I mean… And everybody was in the same boat. You were all kind of what you thought were poor, but everybody was poor, too [laughs] as far as cash and money goes. I'm probably not answering you like anybody else you've interviewed.

I: No. You're actually my first interview.

RB: Oh, you're just…you're workin' on me.
I: Yeah.
RB: Okay.
I: So, I'm tryin' to see…
RB: Who asked you?
I: I'm volunteering as…I'm a college student…
RB: I figured.
I: And I'm doing it as a school project as a volunteer.
RB: Good. This Dr. Johnson that just died…did you read about him in the paper?
I: No, I didn't.
RB: He taught Oregon history at…well, other things too, but mainly his field was Oregon history and he was…Lee Johnson, he taught in the college.
I: Did you remember him?
RB: Oh heavens yes!
I: Take classes from him?
RB: He's ninety. See, he's only six years older than I am.
I: And he was your professor?
RB: He was one of the professors, yeah. Very good. And he knew his Oregon history, that's for sure.
I: Did… Did you have any experiences with the health care at that time?
RB: Health care?
I: Did they have the…
RB: They gave us a little small pox shot. I think it was small pox.
I: Yeah, I think that's the one __.
RB: Yeah. And made a big __.
I: Did they have the hospital here then?
RB: You mean…you're talking about… I had the shot at college. Did we have a hospital here when I was little?
I: Yeah.
RB: We had when my kids were born. I think… I think probably the old Grande Ronde hospital…which was as you go out of town…
I: Mm-hmm. On the old highway.
RB: On the left on the old highway. It was there when I was… I don't know about when I was a little kid, I don't remember that, but…
I: So were there many doctor…just small practices?
RB: What? I can't hear you.
I: Were there mainly small practices of independent doctors?
RB: We had doctors in those days who even made home visits. I mean I wouldn't mind goin' back to the good old days at all. I think medical…I really think that…even when like when my Mom and Dad were ill their doctors would…I don't mean they always made…had to make a house call, but they'd come and visit you. And now, you know, it's kind of like somebody looks at your arm and somebody looks at your leg and somebody looks at your gizzard and they don't treat the whole person. We've got a few that do, but a lot of times you go for one and they just, you know, whatever.
I: It's a lot more…

RB: But it's…that's progress.
I: Yeah. [laughs]
RB: Is this thing on?
I: Yeah. That's okay.
RB: You'll hear me laughin' a lot anyway.
I: Did you attend any of the churches here?
RB: I belong to the First Christian Church. Do you know where that is?
I: No.
RB: You know where Loveland's Funeral Home is?
I: Mm-hmm.
RB: You turn the corner and go…the big brick building just off of Fourth Street you turn toward the hill.
I: Did you attend that one __?
RB: I attended the old one on Penn. We had… The one I was in when I was little was on Penn Street. There's a nice home there now. And we built this…the new one is on Penn, too, but it's several blocks…it's a block above the library, which is, you know, above, what does that mean. Well, above means going west.
I: Towards the hill.
RB: Yeah, there were lots of churches. Of course we have a lot of churches now.
I: Yeah.
RB: More than anybody ever goes to. You're not gonna… You're gonna laugh when you hear this.
I: Did your… You said your mom was a teacher?
RB: Mm-hmm.
I: What did your father do?
RB: My dad was…well, he was just a laborer. He worked for the mill. There was a mill at Perry, he worked there. But he… I don't know, he had some…something on it and I don't know what it was now. He was an invalid the later part of his life and I don't know if the doctors ever knew what it was so Mother was really our sole support those last few years.
I: Do you remember the mill at Perry at all?
RB: The what?
I: The mill at Perry, do you remember it?
RB: Yeah, kind of.
I: Was it a big mill?
RB: Yeah, it was pretty good sized. I think it was the Bowman-Hicks, but I'm not sure. I shouldn't give you that name because Stoddards had the mill up there too, for a while. I'm not very good on remember people, but yeah. You may want to come back when…or call me again me again if you want to ask anything. I'd be glad to help you.
I: Oh, well thank you.
RB: I've had three kids graduate from college and six grandchildren all graduate from college.
I: Wow.
RB: What year are you in?

I: I'm a senior. I'm graduating this term and then I'm going into the teaching program.

RB: You probably never did meet Kurt Mohlman.

I: Mm-mm.

RB: No, he'd be…he's been out…I don't know now, three years or somethin'. Okay, now you haven't asked me very…anything very solid here that you're…what are you gonna say in this.

I: Well, I'm new at this.

RB: The valley was considerably wetter when I was little.

I: And you mentioned there was more snow.

RB: Oh, a lot more snow! It used to… It started like… It would start snowing like around Halloween or someplace like that…sometime like that and then it would…lots of years it would just pile up, it never did melt. You know the snow we have now it'll snow a little and then it'll melt. Although a few years back we had a bad winter, but it's been a while. But those years, you know, it'd get…you'd have big drifts and things. And see, I taught over here at Island City and then I was the principal over there. And my…I…I was married to a rancher that we have a couple ranches, but I lost my husband. It'll be six years in September so I'm…and my son runs the ranch now.

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

RB: Fifty years.

I: Fifty years.

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

I: And what…

RB: And you didn't even know where it was. This must not be your hometown.

I: No, it isn't. I'm from Grant county.

RB: From where? Grant.

I: Grant county.

RB: That's a nice county.

I: Yeah. Small…smaller towns. There's not very many big towns here, is there?

RB: This is not a very…we haven't grown any. We just don't have a payroll. We don't have enough payroll to keep… If we didn't have the college here and Boise Cascade we'd be really in trouble. 'Cause our mountains do confine us a little bit. It's beautiful here and I love to live here, but it is confining, especially in the wintertime and as you get older. It does confine ya here.

I: What type of things did you do on the ranch? Is it cattle, or…?

RB: Oh, well, we raised sheep at first. He was logging and I was teaching and when we bought this farm the people had not kept the fence rows very well…very good and the sheep do a nice job of eating the… And we farm…we raised hay and grain and sheep. And then as we built our cattle up then we finally we just sold the sheep 'cause we couldn't do it all, you know, and we needed the…and because we'd…we'd raised the number of cattle up. But now my son runs it all for me.

I: Yeah, that's good.

RB: I worked with the sheep. I've helped lamb. I've gone to school nights and weekends and summers and worked on the ranch. You come from a ranch or a town?

I: I come from a town, but my family ranched, too. The town I lived in was not a town really. It's like so small you have your horses next door and stuff like that.

RB: That's kind of nice in a way.

I: Yeah.

RB: Of course young people like to get away from that sort of thing and…for a year or two then they don't mind goin' back.

I: Yeah. [laughs] When you first moved here was the railroad already here?

RB: Yes.

I: The one that runs right here?

RB: Yeah. My dad… My dad had a broken shoulder that…when he was young and it didn't heal completely right, I guess, and so he didn't…he was not taken in the war and he worked for the railroad. They'd bring the engines in and he'd get inside and they cleaned 'em some way. I don't know what it was. Which is what we always thought probably ruined his health, it'd be steamy and sooty and everything in there, yeah.

I: Chemicals.

RB: But see the town actually was built to go with the railroad.

I: And Union was like the county seat, wasn't it?

RB: It was and it wasn't. [laughs] Yeah, it was the county seat. I'll have to get you… Hang on here a minute. The Island City School…that's the…starts out with Narcissa Whitman coming into the valley and seeing all the blue camas and thinking it was such a beautiful valley. Tells about the first people that lived here. You can probably get this at the library.

I: Yeah. I'm sure…

RB: If you want to write that name down, why then you could probably…it would probably help you with…because whatever happened from 1918…I mean whatever it was like from 1918 on I guess I was sort of involved in.

I: It's good to have a pers…a first-hand experience besides just looking books.

RB: Yeah. This is being done sort of through the college?

I: No.

RB: I know these people like Gary Webster talked on Oregon history the other day someplace. He's on the committee, I think.

I: One of the editors is Eugene Smith and he did a project like this up in Seattle somewhere.

RB: Oh, I read about him.

I: And he brought it here and he wanted to do it for Union county. And so they're interviewing over a hundred people. And when this is done you're gonna get a transcript of it all bound and stuff all nice.

RB: I don't think I'm givin' you anything you can put in the book.

I: Oh, yeah! Anything is good 'cause we want any… And you said your husband was logging when you first came here?

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: Where did he do that at?

RB: Oh, all the way around. If I can think of the name…of Spring Creek, which is near Meacham…Limber Jim, which I think it out past Elgin, up Anthony Lakes…up on past Anthony. They…up Catherine Creek. He logged in many different…different places.

I: And why did he stop logging?

RB: Because we…after so many years we said, "Dad, why don't you quit before you get hurt. You've done your share." So then he…__ there they are, there's the family on the wall. That's my husband on the horse…with the horse. These are my… I have a little step-granddaughter too, but she'd not up there. Those are my three grand…those are my six grandchildren.

I: Are they all married and have families?

RB: The little girl at the top on the left…the two at the top are my daughter's children, that's Amy on the left…she's married…she's a nurse and she'd married and she has a little boy six and a little girl four. The guy on the right is my oldest grandson, Russell, and he's about six foot three and weighs about a hundred-and-eighty pounds, but…and he's not married…he builds houses. He lives in Winthrop, Washington. And the two middle ones belong to my oldest son. The one on the left, the little blond, that's Curt. He's here in the valley. He graduated from Oregon State and he's workin' for a farm company in farming. And the gal on the right with the red hair, Karen…Kara is…she graduated from EOC and then from Montana State and then got her PhD at Corpus Christi. She's the head of a pharmacy in…on a…in a hospital and you have to have your PhD for that. She's not married. Curt's not married. That's three of 'em that aren't married. And then the two at the bottom belong to my youngest son. The guy on the left is Tyler and he…he's grown and graduated from Pullman and he works for a farm…he's an assessor for farm incorporation in Spokane. And the guy on the right is Justin and he's twenty-eight as of Friday…last Friday. He's twenty-eight. What I need to do… And he's working in Goldendale on…I don't know…he's a graduate from Oregon State. But I need another picture of him now grown up.

I: Yeah. [laughs]

RB: They don't look like those any…they don't look like that anymore. Then I have two little great-grandchildren that live in…Amy's…in Camino Island in Washington. We're a pretty good family.

I: Yeah.

RB: ___

I: Do you remember anything about the crime? Was there a lot of crime back then?

RB: Crime. Mm-mm.

I: As apposed to now do you think it's a lot worse now?

RB: No. I think when drugs came in it really added a lot to that. People drank in those days. There were people that… I remember goin'…you know, we'd go to the dances like at Zuber Hall here and the people that ran it would not let in…anybody in that was drinking. But in Powder there were people that were just sort of known to drink and usually the police just sent 'em home to sober up. You know, it was a different attitude. Now there's so many people it's so much harder to…these are kind of scary years in a way, I think. I don't envy you young people any, I really don't. It'll come out alright if you…you know, if we hang in there

and believe in God it'll…it'll come out alright, but it's kind of scary lookin' now a little bit.

I: And even in school was…

RB: Kids behaved… Okay, I can tell you this much. When children really, I think…and parents…I know that parents appreciated education a lot more in those days than they do now. And they'd have to teach her a lot better because they wanted their kid to learn. Now a lot of times a lot of' em do the same thing yet, sure, but there's a lot of who say, that's the school's fault. Who starts 'em out right? Parents do.

I: It makes a teacher's job more difficult.

RB: When I first did teaching I was only their teacher. They came in the morning and said, "Good morning, Miss Kale," and I said good morning and we talked a while and they ran out to play. I was part of their life, but I wasn't…I wasn't their counselor, I wasn't…I didn't feed them, they brought their own lunches. I supervised the playground, of course. But you were…you did what you were supposed to be doin', teach 'em…teaching, not doing all these other.

I: Not raising them.

RB: Everything's a lot more complicated than it used to be. I'm not saying whether it's good or bad, I'm just saying it's different.

I: Yeah, it is.

RB: Some of it's good and some of it not good. But I think we have a…I do think we have because of drugs a lot more crime than we did.

I: Do you remember…

RB: I was gonna add another… There were little things that would happen that people would kind of overlook. Now you can't hardly breathe if you don't breathe right you can get a ticket for it, you know what I mean?

I: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's just a different attitude all around.

RB: Right. Right.

I: There used to be a large Asian population in La Grande. Do you remember any of that?

RB: I don't remember any at all.

I: You don't.

RB: But…oh, I shouldn't say that. I think there were… I don't remember anybody personal on that way, but I remember the…seeing the ditch that the Chinese dug up in the mountains up there near Sumpter, wherever that…you know.

I: The irrigation…

RB: They never did get to use it, but they dug this big ditch where they were mining, I think, as I remember. But I don't remember 'em. It's like somebody asked me once, "Did you ever see an Indian?" They were ta… Have you… No… They were talkin' about Wallowa Lake and they said, "Have you… Have you ever seen an Indian?" And I said, "Probably, they look just like the rest of us." [laughs] "I've probably seen one." Unless it's a ceremonial thing or had a round-up or something they don't…they just wear ordinary clothes that look just like us.

I: Yeah. They're… Do you remember the role of like hunting?

RB: The what?

I: The role of hunting. Do you think that that's changed a lot around here through the years?

RB: I guess I don't understand what you mean.

I: Like the hunting birds and elk and deer did that used to be a big part of the life?

RB: It's like everything else, there are so many people now that they have so many rules and restrictions. My husband used to get on…they had a ranch at North Powder and he…when he was young he could get on his horse and ride into the mountain, pretty, fairly close. He had to have a license, but it wasn't much and…I don't know…you could just hunt more. You didn't have all these "you can't hunt in this place and you have to do it over there and you have to do…" you know. I guess you'd say in a lot of ways people were freer. And it's only because they're…we've let in so many people. And I know we're the land of the brave and the home of the free, but we kind of get a little carried away with lettin' people in, I think.

I: And do you think that that might…the rules are related to the resource management issues that they have around now?

RB: Yeah, I think…I think… I think we should all be environmentalists. What I mean is we should all take care of what… This land…these ranches that we have are not ours, they're just loaned to us, and we should take care of it. But I'm not an extreme environmental. I think the trees should be harvested and people should get to use the wood and clean it up. I mean I don't like waste and I think some of the environmental stuff is a little too far over here. But…[end tape]

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RB: …more places and there were…as far as birds and things there were more birds.

I: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, there are fewer those now. I don't know, in the spring we always have about a hundred geese over on that other ranch pullin' up the wheat. See, everything's got two sides to it, or three, depending on where you are.

I: Did… You said there was a lot more water before.

RB: It was…everything was wetter.

I: Was there a lot more marsh? 'Cause I know out there there's marshy and…

RB: There was more marshy, yeah. And Catherine Creek used to run over. I remember it would flood over. And of course Islands City…now I don't remember this…I'm not that old…but Island City at one time was pretty much an island. They had water all around it, the river ran around it. And a lot of that is in this book if you want to go get that book out of the library. It'd really help ya.

I: I probably will.

RB: Yeah, it would help you, you know.

I: I'm doing history on the Union Hotel. Do you remember when that was put in?

RB: The Union Hotel?

I: Uh-huh. It was in 1920.

RB: '20?

I: Yeah.

RB: No, I don't…see, I'd only be two years…I wasn't even…I didn't live here then.

I: Oh yeah.

RB: When they built it. But I can… I taught in Union for years way back there someplace. But it was…they weren't taking…they were renting out apartments and rooms pretty much. Because when the freeway went this way instead of through Union it hurt 'em, you know, that way…economically it hurt 'em. And they were the county seat and we were…that's what you asked me about, the county seat. We finally got it back, but I don't know whether we deserved it or not. [laughs] I guess they don't have a railroad station…yeah, there was a railroad, you know, a terminal in Union. Oh, I don't know how far…but the one on… See, there's the…there's an article on Telocaset. This is kind of… This is what schools looked like, really. That's kind of what they looked like, you know. A building and a bunch of kids…little kids out. [laughs]

I: And you…you went to school up at Perry.

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: And how many kids were in your class?

RB: There were four classes. When I was in the seventh grade I suppose there were…there were quite a few kids up there because a lot of people worked for the mill, see. So in my own seventh grade class or whatever it was there probably were only ten maybe, but since you were in a room with four classes, you know.

I: So you had about forty kids…

RB: Kind of a good way to be because you hear the things that you are gonna study and you review the things you did study. And if there aren't very many…if there aren't very many people in it. The first year I taught I taught four grades, first, second, third and fourth.

I: And that was in…?

RB: That was in Wolf Creek which is just out of North Powder. I had probably twenty-five in the room and maybe three in the first grade and four in the…you know, maybe ten in the second and whatever.

I: Did they have a school at Wolf Creek and at North Powder?

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: So they had one there.

RB: And I taught in North Powder later, but that was after I was married. I taught there one year. But I'm tryin' to think about…you know, when I went to school at my first grade…I went to school and my mother taught at Ladd Canyon and I went to school to her in the first grade…that road that goes right around the hill road, that road coming off of the highway filled up with snow all the time. So you let your car out by the highway and walked into those places.

I: Oh.

RB: That wasn't… I prefer the modern time to bat.

I: Yeah. [laughs] Did they clear the roads with anything?

RB: I suppose they had some kind of a snowplow thing, but not like we do now. No, they didn't clear that road because…no, they didn't. They just waited till it melted. And what they did is a lot of the farmers and up in North Powder around out in Wolf Creek they let down a fence and they would go out through the field because it wasn't as drifted. The roads were so darned drifted you couldn't use

'em. But the fields the snow…the wind is wonderful about blowing it off of your field and into the road. And you really what you want is you want the snow on your wheat to keep it from freezing and off the roads. So it goes the other way. [laughs]

I: It works in mysterious ways, huh?

RB: You're sweet.

I: Thank you. I'm just tryin' to see… Did you… Did they have any boys' or girls' organizations while you were growing up?

RB: And what?

I: Boy or girl… Boys' or girls' organizations while you were growing up?

RB: When I was little?

I: Yeah.

RB: Church, you know, church had different things. When my son was… When I was twenty Tom belonged to the Cubs so, yeah, there must've been, yeah. I don't remember anything for the girls…4-H.

I: 4-H?

RB: After I was nine. Yeah, there was 4-H.

I: Do you remember what you took in 4-H? What…

RB: I happened to be in a cooking/sewing club. I didn't mind the cooking, I wasn't very good at the sewing. [laughs] I don't think that it did anything for me that way.

I: Did your son take animals in it?

RB: My son…sons and my daughter they all showed sheep and Teri showed her horse. Yeah, then they were in FFA. In fact, my youngest son was…spent one year as vice-president of the state in FFA and so traveled. He went to EOC… Let's see, he traveled fall and winter term and in the spring he went to EOC one term and then he went on to Oregon State. He couldn't get what he wanted up here. I get my life and my kids' lives kind of mixed up. I actually don't… The things I remember about my childhood are like…people didn't…there aren't…weren't very many cars. There wasn't a lot of cash. A man…for a man or woman that made seventy or eighty dollars a month…and I'm talking about labor, I'm not talking about wealthy people that inherited money and stuff…would run maybe, if they were lucky, seventy or eighty dollars a month. But you could buy a loaf of bread for ten cents, too. You had to be able to at that rate.

I: Do you remember what life was like around during the Depression here?

RB: Yeah, I do kind…I do kind of because that's when the men began to move around in the country lookin' for jobs. You know, people would call 'em hobos, but what they were a lot of 'em were just men who were lookin' for jobs to support their families as well. And I remember…I remember the CCC which was…you know, they took the boys out of the big city…not the bad boys, I don't mean that…but they just took these groups of kids and moved 'em out and they cleaned the old stuff out of the forests. Get 'em a job and got 'em out of the slum and thing. And so I do remember they boys in the CCC.

I: And they brought 'em around here to do that?

RB: Mm-hmm. There was a camp of 'em at…oh, up here on the mountain where that park is…whatever the name of that park is.

I: I'm not sure either.

RB: And I don't have a very good memory anymore, so. But anyway, it's up on the mountain. But they had a crew up there and they had 'em around different places. I think there was a crew at Anthony Lake. And they have 'em out…it was a good life for 'em because they had a job, they could make some money, they were out of trouble and…you know, pretty much and doin' something worthwhile.

I: Did they…

RB: Not the girls. Girls didn't do much of that sort of thing in those days. Oh, and one thing I couldn't say about when I was growin' up, until you were about…now this is just general, but…you couldn't get a job if you were sixteen or seventeen or eighteen very often because the jobs were all needed by the men and we didn't have a lot of fast food places. In fact, we didn't have any for a long time that I can remember. Finally they built that mill where the credit union is now. They had a little Dutch mill…it was a little Dutch mill. But you couldn't…I think…I don't know whether it was the A&W or which one came in first. But we didn't have those places when I grew up. So you didn't miss 'em 'cause you didn't have 'em. I mean you could go get a milkshake or something, but you got it at a store type thing or the drugstore, somethin' like that.

I: And that was before… That was before the Depression when you were growing up?

RB: The Depression was…

I: Was in the '40s?

RB: Yeah. I was married about…getting married about…I was married in 1940. That was the year we got married. And yeah, things were tough. People lost their farms. A lot of people lost their farms.

I: Do you remember… Do you remember people being affected around you?

RB: I don't remember it as much as my husband did because he was from a farm area. And many of the farmers around…his dad managed to hang on, but there… I can remember him talking about, you know, being… One of the reasons we are more of a generation of not using credit cards and things is because we lived during the Depression and we lived when you didn't have…you didn't have much. Even when you made a dollar you still didn't have very much. And there were a lot of people that were…you know, lookin' for work. Now I don't remember…we always lived out a ways so I don't…and I didn't have many kids to play with so I don't know how it really affected some of the other kids so much.

I: Do you remember not having enough food?

RB: No, we always had plenty of food because everybody raised a garden.

I: Oh.

RB: That had any room…any ground. So, you know, people lived out of their gardens a lot in those days.

I: It was probably…

RB: Nobody does now. You live a bunch of artificial whatever.

I: Yeah. If we had a depression we'd all starve.

RB: Probably. And we could have one. I don't think we will, but who knows.

I: So you didn't see the…like, you think the city people were more affected than the people who…

RB: Better or worse off?
I: Yeah.
RB: The farmers…the people on the farms had lots…they had a lot of food, you know, they raised…they could eat their beef and they usually raised hogs, they had chickens. People in town didn't have the opportunity for that, but they probably… Farmers didn't make much money. Like I said, a lot of 'em lost their farms and I don't know what the people in… We didn't have… Okay, we didn't have welfare, we didn't have hospitalization, we didn't have any of those helper things then. People seemed to live pretty well without 'em, but… But they do give more jobs to people and people need jobs if nothing else, you know.
I: Yeah.
RB: ___ I think you should enjoy your life no matter when you were born or what you live through. I know… As you get old you think that maybe the good old days were best, but that isn't true. They had their ups and downs just like anything else. It's not so good to wonder whether your…where your next pay check's comin' from. That's not so good.
I: It would be difficult.
RB: Hmm?
I: It would be difficult.
RB: Yes.
I: I know my family's from a logging family and they __ just phased out, you know, because there's ___.
RB: Oh yeah. Which is ridiculous. It should've been…you know, we burn up enough of the timber that we could've… I've had… My oldest son worked…retired from the Forest Service, but he wrote contract for 'em and my son-in-law is the fire control guy for the Okanogan…Omak-Okanogan Forest in Washington and the biggest forest in the Northwest. So I'm… But they…it's not the Forest Service particularly it's they're so confined by all these impact statements they have to write and all these rules and things that they don't get to do what they want to do. It's just like teachers spend a lot of their time now writing up what some kid's doin' instead of teachin', you know.
I: Yeah. It seems like that.
RB: What are you gonna be?
I: History… My major is history.
RB: What are you gonna do with it?
I: I'm gonna do…teach social studies.
RB: Oh, okay. That's good. I taught fourth grade for years. Social studies __ thing I really loved. We have Oregon… We teach Oregon history in the fourth grade, which is always neat.
I: I know… I took an Oregon history class from Dr. Coat, do you know him?
RB: Coat? I know who he is, but he came after I was there.
I: He just retired and he had a really good Oregon history.
RB: I don't think there's anybody…well, I know your new interim, the woman.
I: Oh, Dr. Berkholder?
RB: Who?
I: Kristen Berkholder?

RB: No. The new interim.
I: Oh, the new…Dixie.
RB: Dixie Lund.
I: The president, yeah.
RB: Dixie Lund. Yeah, I know her. But I don't think there are any teachers up there anymore that… I knew Jack Jenkins was…Jack Johnson was…he wasn't…he was the coach of the rodeo team, I know him. Lundy, but Lundy isn't there anymore. I don't think I know any of 'em anymore. I haven't gone to school now for a while. [laughs] I was on the ESD board and they meet over…after I retired, why, they talked me into runnin' for the ESD… I hope you aren't runnin' your tape while I talk.
I: That's okay. I can turn it off.
RB: Turn it off. You don't [tape interruption] …we came up and down from Powder through Union and then probably they should've put the freeway back up through Union because they wouldn't have had all that snow blinding and stuff that stops the trucks. If the weather…it snows up there, but it doesn't have the same, you know, funnel of the whatever…the wind…problems the wind brings snow so they can't see.
I: So the road… The highway that goes along the road out here, the Foothill Road, did that go through…
RB: It comes right…comes right… You can drive out there sometime if you've got…if you want to. You just…yeah, it goes right around the hill and then you can come right back by the old Island City…I mean Ladd Canyon School. It's a nice home now. Somebody took and… …and back onto the freeway again.
I: Did it go through Ladd Canyon, though, before the freeway, or was there nothing there before the freeway.
RB: There was an old wagon rut. I rode through there once on a wagon. [laughs]
I: That would be interesting.
RB: Oh yeah it was, jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk. [laughs] And there was a farmer. There was a farmer, too, in there. But they were pretty…it was pretty not…it wasn't much inhabited. Most…and people took this road, went by the old hospital and out there and on to Union. But you got to remember we didn't rove around much when we were little kids. We didn't travel. I suppose there were some people maybe that had, you know, had jobs or were rich enough or something, but most people didn't travel like to the coast or to the… Well, they probably didn't in your valley, either.
I: No. I've only been to the coast a couple times and it's been when I was older.
RB: I was… It was after I married that we finally went. I don't mean we didn't… We went up to Yakima a time or two in the car, but over Horse Heaven because my dad had a brother up there. [thud] Quit that. I don't know. I think you better find a better source for material. I don't feel like I…
I: You're fine.
RB: But you feel free to call me or come back. I'm usually around, or I…especially afternoons. I'm gone quite a bit in the morning, but I'm usually in the afternoon.
I: Okay…[recording stopped]

5/2/03, T1, S1

I: This is an interview with Retha Bowman, Retha Kale Bowman on May 2nd, 2003. Please tell me about when and where you were born.

RB: I was born in Enterprise, Oregon at the hospital, I think in…December the 17th, 1918.

I: And why were your parents in Enterprise?

RB: My folks owned a ranch on…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. And so Dad gave up his job with the railroad here and very foolishly, if I might say, moved to the east hills of Enterprise to farm.

I: Now when you say Enter…homesteaded near Enterprise do you mean that literally?

RB: Yes.

I: The first…the very first owner or settler on that piece of land?

RB: Yes. You stayed on it, you had a little cabin built or some', you know, and you stayed so many…you didn't stay all the year…you stayed so many days on that cabin…in that cabin and it…I don't know what the rules were exactly, did something with the land. And so she…she received a hundred-and-sixty acres. Her father had six daughters and he saw that each one of 'em got to do something like that and backed 'em so that they…

I: Now the first homestead…

RB: …had their own land.

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: Right. And also very few women were given homesteads.

RB: That's right.

I: Do you know why she was given it rather than a man?

RB: I think her father because he had six daughters and he was a heads-up man 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, and she only taught about six months and married and did not teach anymore. But I think he just backed her, saw that she, you know, that they signed the whatever they had to sign and that she was out there so many days and __ I think they put their cabins near each other.

I: So she was homesteading, that is doing some farming, I suppose, as well as teaching?

RB: Yes, I don't…I guess. I don't really…I don't…

I: Do you remember hearing her talk about her early days?

RB: Oh yeah. She went out to teach at seventeen. She taught a lot of boys that were a lot bigger than she was because in those days kids just went maybe six months or three months, whatever they could, and then they worked on the farm or the weather was too bad. She lived in people's homes and she taught like at Swamp

Creek. I would have to get the book out and read it because I don't remember all that.

I: What training did she have to teach?

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

I: Did she tell you about that?

RB: And she had high marks. Oh yes. Yes. My mother would have a lot more interesting history than I do.

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

RB: Oh, it's been so long ago. No, not…not what wouldn't be in that book from 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: Oh, I have her first bell, school bell.

I: Oh really?

RB: It's right over there. She would ring. She told a story one time about a boy that she was…oh, she's a lot more interesting to talk about than I am…and she…their first day of school the school board came and sat by the stove in the back of the room because they had run the last teacher out and they were gonna help Ms. Rotten control these kids. Mom said she would've done a lot better if they'd stayed home. And then one day out on the playground this big kid crawled out the window. And she said, "Before I thought I just said, 'You get your bod right back in that building!'" And of course Mother didn't say bod, but he did. I couldn't believe it! Oh, let's see. I love my mother and my mother was a wonderful woman and she's been very hard to live up to.

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

RB: Mm-hmm. I could, too. I was principal at Island City quite a while. Not by anything I did or __. I expected 'em to do what they were supposed to do and they did it.

I: Right. They can read the signals pretty…pretty readily. Why did she move around so much in where she taught?

RB: I don't know. They did that in those days. She taught one year out at Deer Creek, I think it was…

I: She wasn't run out of each school, was she?

RB: Oh no! Oh no! I think her folks moved back over to Swamp Creek. I think her folks lived in Deer Creek…at Deer Creek and she taught there one year and then they moved back to Swamp Creek, I belie…I have all…some of that in a book.

I: Are Deer and Swamp creeks near Enterprise?

RB: Yeah. Swamp Creek is out to the west, I think.

I: Okay.

RB: Then her sister Fannie, the next girl…no, Myra, she's just a year younger…she went into the Deer Creek school where Mom had been and Mother taught at Swamp Creek. I don't know. Teachers moved around a lot.

I: You don't know why?

RB: Wasn't anything bad, it was just… I don't know. I don't know why.

I: It was usually by their choice?

RB: Yes. Oh yes. They did that in Union county, too.

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

RB: Oh yes. I went to…

I: And you remember that experience?

RB: Oh yes! Yes, I went to Ladd Canyon School with my mother. She taught…oh, they left the farm and moved to Hood River and they were down there about three years and worked for a farmer. Mother… Mother took care of the lady who was in a wheelchair and the man…Dad worked in the orchard. They lost the farm because… They lost the farm because…not because didn't have good crops, but because there was only one or two combines in the valley and about three years in a row they did not get to his farm before it rained. And if it rains and rains and rains grain grows again in the head no matter how good it is. And so they…

I: When you say "they didn't get" you mean harvesting crews that he hired?

RB: Yeah. Didn't get to them in time. So they left…they left Wallowa county, with what'd Mom say, twenty-five dollars, went over to Umatilla and came across the…I don't know why they went that way. I don't know. But they were on the other side of the Columbia and came across on the ferry.

I: __

RB: And I was about three…yeah… 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…now this is history…I guess __ call it history when people tell you things.

I: It's second-hand history.

RB: Second-hand. That's very…that's good. How scared she was coming across the Columbia River because it was just, you know…

I: Yes.

RB: We were there about three years and Mom received a letter from my Aunt Nan who was teaching at Ladd Canyon. And she said, "Mary, I am going to move from Ladd Canyon to Blue Mountain and the school's gonna be open. If you're interested why don't you write to them and apply if you want to come back to the valley." And they did want to come back. So they came back, Mom got the school, they came back and I…she taught at Ladd Canyon and Dad worked for farmers. And we…Mom and Reba and I stayed with the Counsels behind the Ladd Canyon School out in the field. Do you know where the old Ladd Canyon School is?

I: Yes. And this would've been in about the mid-1920's, I think?

RB: I was almost six, so…I was born in 1918…this would be '24.

I: '24.

RB: '24. I can remember walking with Mother leaving Reba with a Mrs. Peebler…Peebler, not Counsel…walking across the field in the wind and the snow, brrr, and to school. And I went to school with Mother in the first grade and Ed Counsel was in the eighth grade, I remember. And who else? I don't remember who the other…

I: Did it make you feel at all peculiar to be…

RB: Dr. Young… Dr. Young's mother…

I: Lola.

RB: …I think, went to school…Banton.

I: Yes. Yes she did.

RB: She went to school to Mother someplace.
I: I've interviewed her about this.
RB: Oh, you know that?
I: Yes.
RB: Okay. Good land! [laughs] You all live in this little valley you know everybody, or they all know everything about you before you get there.
I: I've got a lot about a lot of people.
RB: Do you? Anyway…
I: Did you feel at all peculiar to be the daughter of the teacher?
RB: No. My mother expects me to do as well or better.
I: She treated you like everybody else?
RB: You bet! I got no…
I: No teacher's pet?
RB: …no kudos at all. She wasn't cross with me, she just had high expectations. I went to first… I don't remember for sure. I went to first and second grade there and then we moved to Perry and Dad went to…
I: Before you do that…
RB: Okay.
I: …I know your memories of first grade may be a little dim by now, but…
RB: Oh, I could read before I went to school.
I: …I remember kindergarten very well so I'll bet you can remember first grade.
RB: Kindergarten!
I: Yes.
RB: You lived in the modern day.
I: I'll bet you can remember first grade. Give me a little sense of what the pattern of activities was during a typical school day.
RB: I do not remember whether we had prayer or not. You know, they made such a big fuss about prayer, but I do not remember whether we prayed or not. I remember that we did the flag salute.
I: Every day?
RB: Every day, you bet. 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: Yes. You'd be… Yeah. After took and got a drink and…
I: I presume you first sat down in your desks.
RB: You sat down, then you stood up.
I: Did you fold your hands like this?
RB: Probably. Yeah, probably.
I: You weren't pause to talk or throw spit wads or anything like…
RB: You're supposed to be quiet, you were supposed to be. Of course there was always one boy that managed something. [laugh]
I: After the flag salute what?
RB: We sang…I don't think we…maybe we sang The Star Spangled Banner, but we sand America The Beautiful and whatever. And…
I: No accompaniment.
RB: She played the piano, what do you mean? Yes we had accompaniment. My mother played the piano.

I: I think that was a little unusual.

RB: Yes.

I: To have a piano.

RB: But then she was, anyway. But then we…I think we had a what they now call show-and-tell, each child got to say something about what had happened to 'em, you know, that type. And then it's really interesting because I might have had three other people in the first grade with me…I don't remember, I don't remember that…and there might've been four in the sec…she taught all the way through the eighth grade, but she only had a few in each grade and some grades you didn't have any in. But this you made ideal person to teach groups later.

I: Sure. 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 sometime during the day so, I don't know, I must've had a mentor. We must've had mentors in those days.

I: Ed was an eighth-grader?

RB: Uh-huh. But I can…he didn't…she didn't send me to sit with him, but he was probably helping me with reading or something, you know.

I: Teach one teach one.

RB: [laughs] That would be Dale Counsels' dad out here at the end of the valley.

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

RB: They weren't fastened together, but…I don't think.

I: Separate desks?

RB: Yes, we had separate desks. And we got up…when…the nicest thing about so many grades…and I firmly believe this as an educator, I do…the little kids could hear what the big kids were doing and the big kids could hear what the little kids were learning. They reviewed and they knew what they were gonna get later. And I don't think you can beat that and I've taught all sorts of things. And I've had interns from the college and I've had a college program and all that.

I: Let's get back to what happened in first grade. When did the strict teaching begin? Teaching of a subject of some kind?

RB: Strict?

I: I mean singing the America The Beautiful and having the flag salute, those were parts of the routine. When did the teaching of a subject begin?

RB: I suppose right after that.

I: What would it typically be first?

RB: Probably reading.

I: And did you have readers, something like McGuffy's Reader?

RB: Oh yeah, we had readers.

I: McGuffy's Reader?

RB: Mm-hmm. We had…I don't know…yeah, probably. Sounds familiar.

I: What was the teacher, here in this case your mother, doing to help you learn to read that book?

RB: Well sir, I could read before I went to school. But helping others…

I: She was teaching reading so she must've been doing something.

RB: She taught phonics. She had phonics on the board. He's really makin' me think of things that I didn't pay much attention to.

I: Did she have a list of words that might be in the selection you were going to read?
RB: Yes. Yes. On the board.
I: And then you had to sound 'em out?
RB: Then you just got that and… I didn't…
I: And talk about their meanings?
RB: I didn't have to, but the others did.
I: You were being taught, so you had to do what she asked you to do, didn't you?
RB: I was there. I listened. I listened, oh yeah. I listened and probably spoke up here and there, but I already knew… But we did have phonics and it didn't hurt most people.
I: Give me your definition of what phonics is.
RB: Sounding out things. But let me tell ya, my philosophy of reading is people learn to read a lot of different ways so you need a lot of different…some can hear it, some can't hear it.
I: When you say "sounding out" you mean syllable by syllable or letter by letter?
RB: Pretty much sound by sound, I think.
I: Well syllables have sounds and letters have sounds. Now you can take it a letter at a time which produces a pretty distorted result, pronunciation, or you can do it by syllables.
RB: Well, it must've been syllables then.
I: By trans-por-ta-tion, something like that?
RB: I don't remember that part. I can remember like "duh", d. Yeah, I guess so. Po-ca-hon-tas. I guess. Puh, puh. We did a lots of "puhs".
I: Did your mother combine, as you recall, any sight words like the, to and for?
RB: Yeah. I think she…yeah, yeah.
I: So you didn't have to sound all those out all the time?
RB: She…Mom… I think Mother was pretty… I think Mom was pretty modern for her age, but you must remember in those days they taught by wrote and memory and children learned by wrote and memory. And when I got into ed…oh, blah, blah, you shouldn't learn wrote, wrote is so boring, that is not true. 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: Sure. 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 section…
RB: We had math, was very important.
I: What about recess?
RB: Oh yes, recess was important. We probably had two… We probably had two… We probably didn't have recess till ten-thirty so I imagine we had maybe two classes, reading and math probably. I don't remember! I just went to school.
I: I'm just asking the questions, you tell me what you remember, that's all.
RB: This is just a…kind of like a faint picture, you know.
I: Yes.
RB: Then we had recess, which was a lot of fun, and this is when we played these games. Hmm?
I: Suppose it was raining or snowing, what did you do for recess?

RB: We stayed in the house and colored pictures or… I can remember the bid kids sitting around…we always had a wood stove…sitting around and talking and maybe playing some kind of a game, you know, that… I don't think it rained in those days.

I: Did your mother have lots of games available?

RB: I think…

I: What were the… What was a typical game?

RB: Now which one of these students of her's did you talk to? The Courtrights went to school to her when they were at Willow Dale and they were in the fourth and fifth grade then.

I: I talked to Verna.

RB: She didn't have Verna. Verna was a McClure. Okay…

I: I haven't talked to the other Courtrights yet. I'm curious about the games. These were board games?

RB: In the house?

I: Yeah.

RB: I don't remember being in the house very much. We played jump rope, hopscotch, all that stuff outside. And I don't…maybe it didn't rain that often, ha. And if it snowed, I mean, kids put their coats on and they went outside, you know.

I: Did the teacher go out, too?

RB: She usually did, yeah. At least three or four times during the recess and check anyway, you know.

I: What was she checking on?

RB: Oh, just see how it was goin'.

I: What might've gone wrong if she hadn't gone out?

RB: Oh, some big bully might've picked on some other person or something.

I: I'll bet that happened anyway.

RB: Not under her eye. [laughs]

I: What did you do for lunch?

RB: You know, I get this mixed up with my own teaching because I can remember the lunch buckets opening later…later…this is later…and the tuna fish, wow! [laughs] Did we have peanut butter then?

I: I think so.

RB: I don't know what we ate. We had sandwiches and an orange or whatever, you know, brown lunch, brown bag.

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

RB: We drank out of a bucket with a dipper, water. And if you wanted to take something I guess we did, I don't remember that. I don't remember takin' anything.

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

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: And everybody drank out of the same dipper?

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: Was there any thought of contagious…

RB: As I remember.

I: …contagious diseases from that…from doing that?

RB: You got shots for everything. [laughs] You didn't dare get a contagious disease.
I: Not for colds.
RB: No.
I: So I guess…
RB: I don't remember that many. I think it's when people started having warm houses and not getting outside to exercise and stuff is when the colds began to…
I: You think people were sick less often, aye?
RB: Yeah. Yes, quite a bit less. And then they didn't mix in big crowds 'cause they lived…you know. I don't remember. We did have things like…we haven't got that far, but later I had scarlet fever, I mean, that sort of…but we haven't got that far yet.
I: Sure. Most kids did have the usual contagious diseases.
RB: Am I giving you anything at all?
I: I'll tell you if you're not. Afternoon, after lunch, what was the ___ routine very similar to the morning?
RB: Mother… We had to do our own writing, printing, or whatever we did then, on our own.
I: Penmanship.
RB: We didn't write cursive much yet till the second or about the third grade. But we had to do our own work and she usually had something on the blackboard, if we could read, for us to do. And 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, you know.
I: You mean, for example, she might write on the board a question from social studies and you had to write an answer to it? Is that what you mean?
RB: Mm-hmm. You can use your book and looked up maps and the atlas. And of course this was more probably more for the older children than the little ones, but some…some of that work for little ones.
I: Usually first-graders can start writing in simple sentences.
RB: Were you a superintendent?
I: No.
RB: [laugh] He sounds like one.
I: I taught…
RB: He's __
I: I taught people how to teach then. That's why…
RB: So did I. I was a master teacher and I had people under me from the college. But I had a lot of fun.
I: Did the school day end about three-thirty?
RB: Not before that. I think if…if a parents could come pick up a first or second-grade child a little earlier if they got…they could get out a little earlier, but most people, you know, couldn't do that, or didn't, because the fathers had the cars and the mothers couldn't go that far, you know. Most of it was in the country school where you had to walk a ways.
I: When it came toward a holiday, Halloween, or Easter or Christmas…
RB: Programs, programs, programs.

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

RB: Yes. Actually the community life, to a certain extent, if the little schools went around the school. The programs were very important.

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

RB: Oh, I used to have…and I got rid of 'em, I'm sorry, you'd probably like to see 'em… I had about five little program books had the most…

I: Would they contain…

RB: ___

I: …contain such things as how to make decorations __ poems and plays to read?

RB: Poems, plays.

I: So it wasn't terribly difficult for people…for a teacher to come up with ideas then?

RB: No.

I: The hard part was getting the kids to learn to do the right things, I suppose, wasn't it?

RB: Yes.

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

RB: It seemed like forever!

I: Would that come in the afternoons?

RB: Yes, usually. The end of the day. But children expected it. I mean it was something that you expected to be in because…it was just like the church Christmas program. Now you can hardly get a kid to be Joseph. In those days they just figured they were gonna be Joseph or Mary or somethin' sooner or later.

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

RB: Yes. Yeah, Mom helped make… And we had a lot of…as I remember…a lot of…what did they call it…crepe paper.

I: Yes. You can do a lot with crepe paper.

RB: Yes. [laughs]

I: Including dec…

RB: You're bringing me back my whole life with…

I: Including decorate the room, did you do that?

RB: Oh yeah. You'd hang, you know. Halloween I don't… Halloween was so much it's own thing. They were so excited about Halloween, kids were. And they'd always… Halloween's been kids' big thing you know. They're so tired by Christmas they couldn't care less. But Halloween to kids is exciting.

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

RB: Yeah.

I: And 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, you know. I don't remember…

I: To perform at the programs.

RB: Oh yes. They sang, oh yes. And we sang probably five or six songs during the program.

I: Were you learning anything at all about reading music?
RB: Do I know anything about it?
I: No. In school, as a student, were you learning anything about reading music, notes?
RB: No. Not a lot.
I: Okay.
RB: Not then. Not at that age.
I: Was there any use of instruments other than the piano? Drums, whistles?
RB: If one of the… If one of the father…fathers had a banjo or something like that he might play for the program.
I: But nothing for kids?
RB: No. Not when I was…not in like…not till I was up in seventh and eighth grade or somethin' like that.
I: What were the principle discipline problems a teacher might have?
RB: Oh, I suppose she might've got a little back talk. I don't remember. You see, I did her that part and my teaching sometimes a little mixed up.
I: I understand.
RB: The reason we didn't have…I don't say Mother was a strict disciplinarian. She expected people to behave and to mind and to do their job well and all that, but parents backed her.
I: Yes.
RB: 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 ya. And that happened when I went out to teach. You get in trouble at school and you're in trouble at home. And they didn't ask what you did, they just figured the teacher was right. Because they wanted their child to grow up and have it better than they did and they believed that education would do that. Now people blame the school. But you don't want to get into that, do you? [laughs]
I: No, not so much that. I want more about your direct experience, as much as you can remember.
RB: Okay. How am I doin' so far?
I: You're doing fine.
RB: ___
I: At what point did you and your mother take off for Perry to have a school?
RB: I think I must've been about third grade. Don't ask me any dates 'cause I don't… But at Perry then there was a mill, a lumber mill.
I: Yes, I have a picture of it.
RB: …so there were quite a few people living in upper and lower Perry. There were two school houses. If you have a…that's in that Union…History of Union County.
I: Yes.
RB: Nice building. Really nice building. My mother was… My mother taught the building that had the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth and she was principal of both buildings. And, you know, I don't remember how many years she taught there. I think I… I think I skipped the third grade and the fifth. Fourth grade I went to…now that might not be right because I went to Mrs. Nephi Colbms taught in

the primary one year and that might've been third grade. Maybe I missed…no, I had…I skipped third and fifth.

I: I'm mainly interested in the experience. Why did your mother accept that job?

RB: I think she made a little more money and it was…oh, and Dad got a job at the mill. That's why, two reasons.

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. [laughs]

I: She was a good worker, is that right?

RB: She said if you started a job you finished it, yes.

I: You were living…

RB: Hmm?

I: Initially you were living in Perry?

RB: Yes. We lived there than through my…let's see, I went to school to my Aunt Allie up there. Why I'm telling you that I skipped those two grades is that's the way they enriched kids in those days. And then when I was in the eighth grade my… In the meantime the folks had bought property on H Street where the low housing is on H and Fourteen, you've got Fourteen and then H Street runs it's way just below to the cemetery. Where the college students live in low cost…

I: Yeah, apartment buildings.

RB: At that time there was nothing there. The folks bought three acres there and Dad built it…built a home there. And so the last year that she taught at Perry, if I remember correctly…I think she was up there about five or six years…but the last year she drove alone and I went…Reba and I went to Central that one year and then on to high school.

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

RB: Oh, I…that now I can remember that better. I really…

I: Most of the houses, I think, were rather small, weren't they?

RB: I guess, but, you know, to a child you don't pay any attention to what the house looked like. We lived with Morris Robinson's mother. Do you remember Morris Robertson?

I: No.

RB: He was head of housing at Oregon State for a while.

I: Was there indoor plumbing there?

RB: In Perry?

I: Yes.

RB: I don't know…[end tape]

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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.

I: 'cause it was all oriented around the mill, wasn't it?

RB: Right.

I: Probably no one…

RB: People had things in common.

I: There weren't any stores.

RB: I don't think so.

I: Probably no one lived there who didn't work in some way at the mill or was a family of the mill worker.

RB: Pretty much that's true, I think, yeah.

I: So it might be called a mill town.

RB: Right. You could call it…

I: I'm sure it felt different to live there than it had at Ladd Canyon or wherever you lived before.

RB: Right because you had people around you. A lot of people they were your neighbors. In fact, when Dad was…got the house built a little ways he began…

I: You mean the one on H Street?

RB: Yeah. When I got to be about twelve Dad began to have terrible migraines, just terrible migraines, so he gave up his job at the mill and built this house for us. And he'd owned a really nice house on H Street, not real fancy, but a nice house for those days, and so he stayed down there and Mom and Reba and I rented, like Mrs. Robinson, and then… We did have a home of own up there before he did that because the year that…the summer that Reba and I had the scarlet fever they warned…put us under warantine and Dad couldn't come in the house 'cause he would take it back to other people. So we weren't living as a family up there then.

I: Did they call it warantine rather quarantine?

RB: Quarantine, usually.

I: You mean quarantine?

RB: Yeah.

I: I thought maybe that was a variation.

RB: No, that's just me.

I: Living in the little community of Perry…

RB: I loved it.

I: …for instance, on weekends, was there a lot of intermixing of people?

RB: Oh yeah.

I: Games on…

RB: Yeah, but people did that in those days. They entertained themselves.

I: Did you get into one another's houses?

RB: No, I think we mostly played outside then once in a while we'd have dinner with someone else, you know, trade meals or something. No, I don't remember playin' in the houses particularly.

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

RB: I suppose we didn't think it was simple then.

I: In retrospect.

RB: In compared to now I guess it would, yeah.

I: Did you have radios?

RB: Very few.

I: Did you come into a movie in La Grande occasionally?

RB: Very seldom.

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

RB: I had a train go by here all the time. I love 'em! I guess so, yeah. You got to remember I was a child, though, see. When I got older it'd been…like by the time I was in the seventh grade I probably would remember more. I just lived… I liked living at Perry.

I: I think you're remember more than you would think. [laughs] Especially…

RB: I'm having a lot of fun, anyway.

I: Especially because you started this by saying the things you remember most are your feelings.

RB: It's the feelings, yes. Am I getting 'em out?

I: Yes. Your feelings and what you observed.

RB: I think it was a wonderful place to live. Now that's from a child's perspective.

I: Yeah.

RB: See, 'cause I'm sure Mom and Dad and their…had the…had problems just like anybody.

I: I'm trying to get you to be specific about why it was wonderful.

RB: I guess because people were nice to you, they were nice to each other. The kids, as I remember, I'd play like…here I was a little girl and they'd play this Run, Sheep, Run and this stuff at night with a lot of these big kids and little kids, I don't remember anybody bein' mean to anybody else. There probably was some of that, but I don't remember. People just did things… 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: Always have.

I: The rocks, the trees…

RB: Always have.

I: …the hills. I mean especially at Perry.

RB: Yeah. And the buttercups in the spring.

I: And maybe you might've felt closer to them there than you would have anywhere else in the valley.

RB: No, I feel pretty close to 'em right here.

I: Just because Perry is in a kind of an enclosed area so I would think living there you would feel as though you're almost always in touch with natural things.

RB: I think you felt kind of safe there, yeah. You had to… You had the hills around you, you had the rocks and the plants, but then I've always loved that, so I don't know when that started, probably the day I was born.

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

RB: Not for those days, but now it would be. You didn't, you know, you didn't…

I: In those days were you seeing maybe five or six cars an hour?

RB: You might. But see…

I: What… In your child imagination what did you think about where those people were going and why they were going wherever they were going?

RB: I don't know if I ever paid any attention to that.

I: A child, I think, couldn't help but look at those cars, try to see who's in them and wonder about where they're going, especially if you didn't go anywhere, especially if your existence…

RB: I don't think there were that many went by and I don't think we worried about what our neighbors were doing that way because almost nobody did that. Once in a while people that…people that were carrying things for stores might go by, but there really weren't that many car cars.

I: I'm not suggesting anybody should…would've worried about what other people were doing, just wondering.

RB: Probably…I don't know. I'm a pretty good wonderer, so I don't know. I might have.

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

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

I: Are you telling me then that you didn't try to imagine what they looked like or what people did there?

RB: I don't know. I have a good imagination, but whether I used it then or not I don't know.

I: There were newspapers at that time and you were old enough to read, you knew how to read before you went to first grade, what newspapers did you see and what do you remember…?

RB: Didn't we have one by Currier or some…what was his name? We read the local paper.

I: The La Grande paper?

RB: Yeah. And then…but there was another one…

I: At the time it contained quite a variety of news, not just local news, but world news.

RB: I suppose. My dad… I can remember talking…later as I…like when I was in the seventh grade and this and that, about that age…I can remember by father discussing politics and what was going on in the world. Like we were allowed to do this at the dinner table and this is why Reba and I can stand up in front of a crowd and talk because we were allowed and encouraged to give our opinion and, you know, to debate or argue or whatever you want to call it, you know.

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

RB: Yeah. Dad was…and Mom was too, but Dad was very good about that.

I: How were you supposed to form opinions of subjects like that?

RB: I don't know because he let us…he let us give our own…

I: But you have to have some information. Where did you get it?

RB: I suppose he read the paper to us because I remember sittin' on his lap and he would…he was tall and he had long arms and he would sit there and read the paper over and I suppose that's where we got it.

I: Ah, good.

RB: He was very good at teaching you that way.

I: And after he read it… Yes, he was acting like a teacher.

RB: He only went to the third reader himself.
I: I suppose being married to a teacher, though, he felt some responsibility.
RB: I don't know. He was just that kind of a guy. I was lucky.
I: I know this may be pushing too far, but…
RB: Probably not.
I: …if this happened regularly with your father, was part of the routine in the house most evenings, is that right?
RB: Yes. And I remember them reading the Bible to us…Mama and Dad and discussing things and we were allowed to ask questions and talk… You know, a lot of people don't even talk to their children now, so…
I: That's what I'm curious about. I'm trying to get…
RB: We felt free. We felt free.
I: I'm trying to get a little more specific about what those discussions were like.
RB: He was a great Democrat and my mother was a great Republican so I heard a lot of that. [laughs]
I: Do you know why he was a Democrat?
RB: Yes, because he believed in helping others and the Republicans in those days took their money and stuck it in their pocket.
I: Also he was a laboring man.
RB: I don't know, this is…you know, this is… But we didn't have necessary believe what we were debating, we were just allowed to do it. And I can remember going in college and 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 with it. And I still have firm beliefs about things, but I'm pretty live and let live. How we doin'?
I: Fine. 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 that wasn't as bad as measles that way, but they believed it was too bad it would affect your heart, you know. Let's see, what else? I made a lot of good friends that I knew for years from the kids that I went to Perry with, Milton Smith and Wesley Smith and Degreenoe, of course I get that mixed up…I think I went to the Greenoes, maybe Ma had just taught them later. You know, you get a little… Let's see, what else about Perry?
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 remember that. No, I don't think so. I don't think we were.
I: Was there a fence around it so you couldn't get through it?
RB: I don't remember that either. Must not 've played on that part of town.
I: Do you think the boys might've done it more than the girls?
RB: Probably.
I: How… How noisy was the mill and how…also how smelly?
RB: Didn't affect me at all.
I: Well…
RB: I mean I don't remember. I don't remember that it was…it smelt like a mill, Boise Cascade.
I: You're giving me the impression that you ignored it.

RB: I don't think it was bad. I think it's like Boise Cascade, when you smell that you smell people working, it's productive. You can look at things half-full or not half-full.

I: I'm not telling… I'm not asking you whether you liked it or not just what it was…

RB: If I liked it I would've been more…or disliked it…

I: What the sensations…

RB: If I disliked it I would've remembered it more.

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

RB: Must've used some coal.

I: Do you remember black smoke?

RB: If they had 'lectricity they ran it up there specially for that. So I don't…

I: It's quite possible that they did.

RB: They might have. I don't remember that.

I: And at that time didn't men have to go out…sort of go out and stand on the logs and move them around with pick…pick axes?

RB: They used to bring 'em down the Grande Ronde River and I remember…but they did that for several years. I can remember them bringing the logs down the river. I guess I must've seen it then.

I: Yeah, you must have.

RB: And that was a fun thing to see. And it looked a little dangerous to me, but they were pretty good at it. The way a guy made a livin'.

I: As far as you know while you were there were there any accidents?

RB: I don't know. I don't know.

I: Do you think you would've heard about them if there had been?

RB: Yeah, but I don't remember 'em. Sure, I probably would've heard about it then.

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

RB: I don't know.

I: You didn't talk about it?

RB: Probably. I didn't… I didn't pay attention to that. He brought home a good wage, we made…had food to eat… Now if you ever get up to high school I might be able to remember a few more things! It's kind of like I said, I lived it. I just lived, I didn't… If I were a man, like you, I would be more logistic, I would remember dates and I would remember places. I am not a man and I am not a logistic thinker, I'm a feeling thinker!

I: I'm not asking you for dates.

RB: You know what I mean, though.

I: It's experiences I'm asking about.

RB: Well, some of 'em I didn't have, I guess, 'cause I can't remember 'em.

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. Did you say you were in eighth grade?

RB: I went to the eighth grade in…in, um, where the mid school is now, it was the old Central.

I: Yeah, Central School. It was only __, I think, at that time. Now that was very different from the Perry or the Ladd Canyon experience I must assert.

RB: Yes, it was a little bit of a cultural shock, I guess, partly because in my class in the eighth grade almost every kid had gone from the first grade to the eighth grade…or the seventh together.

I: Yeah, in a one-room school. Yes.

RB: And I was the new kid on the block. I don't remember that they were unkind to me, I don't mean that, but it took a while to get…feel comfortable. And the fact that we lived out on H Street, which was out a ways, I didn't have…I was not living near any of them. They all came from town and they lived…some of 'em lived pretty close together so they could play together in evenings and stuff and I didn't even see them in the evening. I didn't seem to have any trouble, you know.

I: From what you've said about yourself I think you were probably able to handle any social situations pretty well. At that time when you were entering what we now call teenage years, or adolescent years…they weren't called that then, were they?

RB: No.

I: You were thirteen or fourteen years old.

RB: People didn't make anything of you bein' a teenager. We missed that.

I: It wasn't necessarily a distinct stage of life.

RB: We didn't get any more honor than anybody.

I: Yes. Did you perceive yourself as having problems that you hadn't had earlier?

RB: As a teenager?

I: Yeah.

RB: [sigh] Oh, 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.

I: Redefine that period of life.

RB: Yeah.

I: …the last twenty-five, thirty years.

RB: I have… I suppose physically and emotionally we had changes, yeah. We didn't have all the modern products that they have nowadays to help us through 'em. I don't know. I was… I remember that was really surprised when I…as I went from the eighth grade to high school that I was elected right away as freshman representative for the freshman class when I hadn't…see, I hadn't gone to school with all these kids till the eighth grade. But apparently I'd made my mark enough to represent 'em apparently.

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 volleyball, which I hated because they made you stand in the same place all day and you didn't get to…you know what I mean? You didn't rotate…you didn't do it like you do now.

I: You were assigned a position and you stayed there all the time?

RB: Yes and I didn't like that.

I: And this was a girls' team?

RB: Yeah.

I: No mixing of boys and girls.

RB: No boys. And basketball if you were the forwards you stayed down here and you couldn't walk…you couldn't run around the whole floor. You had to stand there and throw to the… I hated it! I played guard. I loved basketball, but I didn't like the way we… And one time they said we could play Elgin and then they canceled it because girls shouldn't be running up and down the hall. But this is when I began to get into the music and loved it.

I: What were the musical opportunities available?

RB: I had Dr. Lony, who was my music teacher. And he was very ___.

I: Yes, in the eighth grade?

RB: No. No, no. I don't remember who taught it in the eighth…

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

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

I: But you said you were involved in sports, were these after school sports or was this part of…

RB: Not in the eighth grade, I wasn't. We didn't do that in eighth grade. That was when we became freshmen. Yeah, it was after school…no, we did in P. E. too, I think.

I: Okay.

RB: Are you…

I: So apparently you were active enough and good enough at P. E. that people respected you.

RB: I guess.

I: And for the… 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 maybe because 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 it very seriously, you know. They weren't gonna go on to college. They were gonna get out and get a job.

I: Many kids left school at the eighth grade, didn't they?

RB: Pardon?

I: Many kids did leave school at the end of eighth grade.

RB: Right.

I: They didn't go on to high school

RB: Right. And a lot of 'em didn't expect, you know, to… So I don't say that they caused a lot of trouble, but…and I supposed they did some…but they didn't worry about the things that would help 'em. And I think… I knew I was gonna go on if I could because my mom and dad said I was. [laugh] And I don't know, I think I just did what I…I did very well in high school. I got my shock when I went to college because the first term I got a D because I took Oregon Law from…who was it…I didn't have…I was fifteen, hadn't the slightest idea what they were talkin' about Oregon law. I made good grades on everything else that first term. So I told all my grandchildren who have graduated now from college, all of 'em, I said…when they were goin' to school I said, "don't worry, your

grandma made a D the first term she went to college and look how she turned out." [laughs] Well, give 'em a little…

I: Sure. Good advice. In eighth grade was there homework?

RB: Yes. There was quite a bit of homework and I did it by an oil lamp up on my knees on the chair eating apples. I'm eating apples and studying under this oil lamp who's light is out about that far.

I: So the house was not wired.

RB: Oh no! There was no… In the country around even La Grande then, even when I was in the seventh grade, there weren't any. It was beginning to come in.

I: I thought you said that when you were in eighth grade you were living on H Street?

RB: We were.

I: Yes. And at that time there was no electrical service.

RB: I shouldn't say…there might've been some out in the country. There was in La Grande, but not…see, we were out just far enough…

I: That's why I'm puzzled. If you were in eighth grade and living on H Street in La Grande why were you using an oil lamp for homework?

RB: 'Cause we didn't have electricity in the house.

I: That's what I wanted to establish.

RB: And we did not have a gas lantern like we should a had.

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

RB: Yes. Most… You know, most country places… It's like I was saying, they were beginning to put in a few around and by the time I was out of… I don't know, I think I was clear out of high school before we ever had lights in the house. I think. Maybe into college. I remember that… Of course… You know, you didn't have anything to compare it to. You were livin' your life then and you didn't have anything to compare to. You were better off than your parents had been. And, you know, now I can compare all that stuff, but then that's what I did to learn and that's what I did to get through my studies.

I: Sensible people had a tendency to accept things the way they were pretty much.

RB: Whether you liked it or not.

I: La Grande High School, right next door to Central School, when it was a…I think you mentioned that you were there or it was in your sophomore year that the school burned?

RB: I don't know whether it was sophomore or junior. Maybe it was sophomore. I don't know, one of those years.

I: It doesn't matter too much.

RB: That was a terrible year.

I: Yes. Well, many people have talked of that experience.

RB: It was a fun year in a way because I guess you made friends with other people from other classes 'cause everybody was always goin' this way and that way, you know. But I can remember sitting…taking algebra on the stage in…downstairs in the Mormon church and sitting there with my coat on and here are all these books I carried, you know, and your overshoes if you left 'em on, which I…

I: The fire was caused by arson. Did you ever hear any stories about the arsonist?

RB: Is that one of the kids from my class?

I: No.
RB: No. What was that one?
I: He was a volunteer fireman who needed a little extra income and you got extra income by setting fires.
RB: I'd forgotten that. I probably knew it at one time.
I: It's a pretty well authenticated story. I wondered, though, whether kids had some awareness that it was an arson fire.
RB: Yep it was and it was an awesome year. You'd gather up all these books and this stuff and walk down to the Methodist church…
I: I didn't say awesome I said arson.
RB: Oh, I thought you said awesome.
I: I guess it was awesome, too.
RB: It was awesome. You just pile up all these books that you're gonna study all day and you got your lunch over here and this here and you're wearin' this coat and all this stuff and you walk there and then you walk down the Methodist church __ or the Zuber brick…
I: Nobody had a backpack.
RB: Never heard of 'em.
I: Right.
RB: Would've been nice. It would've been real nice. [laughs] But we didn't know any different. We just knew we were… I'll tell ya, it 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 and leave 'em in your locker and you didn't have to… People don't know until they…until they experience something how well off they are.
I: When you came back to La Grande High…to the repaired building were you as serious as ever about studies?
RB: Yeah. I seemed to do… I was in Girls League. I sang…I was in the operettas that Mr. Loney…I sang alto and I was in the operettas that Mr. Loney gave. And I was chosen to go to Forest Grove to the singing contest or whatever, but I didn't even ask my parents because I knew they couldn't afford to send me. Tried to explain that to Dr. Loney and he was sweet and so was your mother-in-law. I remember them. And what else did I do? No outside sports, see, because they wouldn't let us run. They were saving us for something, I don't know what.
I: You mean the girls?
RB: You know, we had it in P. E., but we…they all of a sudden we couldn't play other schools and things because this new idea of running up and down the floor was not good for girls, you know.
I: Did they say anything more about that…the reason for that? What was not good for you?
RB: I think it jiggled your insides or something. I don't know. [laughs]
I: It was the new idea about feminine hygiene?
RB: Oh yeah. __ I don't know. Something.
I: By the way…

RB: I remember my… I remember my high school years, you know, they were pretty nice. People didn't go steady. The only people that ever went steady everybody looked at as kind of odd-balls.

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

RB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. That's always…

I: What happened to them?

RB: I guess they got married, I hope.

I: Did they disappear from the scene suddenly?

RB: They couldn't go to school, but they could marry and most of 'em married.

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

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

I: Yes.

RB: I'm very much pro-whatever.

I: And by that time I should think you would've had some opinions on matters like this.

RB: I did.

I: What… What… 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: Yes. But at the time you weren't thinking about history, you were…

RB: No, but I'm just 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. And being pregnant was vulgar or something. But having a…but seeing the baby was so darling.

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

RB: Yes. Yeah. And I don't know after you were married that it was shame, it was just something bad about it, you know, keep it covered. And then now, shoot.

I: Didn't you wonder about that at the time?

RB: Probably. I've always been very pro-woman. I'm not a women's liber.

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

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

RB: I think so. You can change my language around any way you want to. You won't hurt my feelings. Isn't that the way it is?

I: I just wondered if you think that term that we use now really applied to the way things were then?

RB: Playing the field? I think it's the way you look for your mate, yeah. It's just one of the mating things, you know. But I think it's a lot better. When marriages only…when they only have fifty percent of 'em last eight years now I think we

had a better way in some ways. We go to try out and I'm just saying we got to know a lot of different boys. And it was easier to choose somebody that you had something in common with you and you had…that you could… It was better than marryin' a guy you went lived with and you went with and then you lived with and then you got married and then you divorced with. I don't… Of course I've got seven grandchildren so ___. They ain't none of 'em livin' with anybody so I'm okay so far, that I know of. Good heavens, turn that thing off!

I: No.

RB: No. Now what do you want to know? This is fun!

I: Tell me about the graduation ceremony that you went through at La Grande High School. Was it an evening event…[end tape]

5/2/03, T2, S1

I: …graduation ceremony at the La Grande High School.

RB: I think it must… It was in the auditorium and I…it was…I suppose it was evening. They had everything like that at evening so I suppose it was. I don't remember it very much.

I: Was there in your…as you remember it, a gown that you wore and a square hat?

RB: It seems like it was blue. Yes. Seems like… Of course I graduated from EOC three times, so I think it was blue, the graduation...

I: Did the boys and the girls wear the same outfit?

RB: As I remember.

I: And was there a baccalaureate ceremony at a church?

RB: Must've been.

I: You don't remember that?

RB: Mm-mm.

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

RB: Yeah. I remember I was third in the class or fourth or somethin' like that.

I: What recognition did you get?

RB: Nothing.

I: In the program?

RB: Yes. They had assembly and they read all that. And I remember sitting there and somebody said, "That was you." [laugh]

I: Was your… Was there something called an honor roll?

RB: Oh yes. Yes, you were on the honor roll if you could make it.

I: And you'd been on the honor roll several times, I suppose?

RB: Yeah. I made pretty good grades in high school.

I: Were these number grades or letter grades?

RB: No, they were A, B, and C, as I remember. I think.

I: All the grades I got in high school and before were number grades.

RB: You'd get numbers?

I: Mm-hmm. At that time that you were in school were…was there any Oregon state exam in any subject?

RB: Oregon state?
I: Yeah. An exam put out from the state of Oregon? Are you aware that there had been in 1915 and up till later there had been…
RB: Yeah, I think I can remember Mother talking…
I: …exams in all the subjects.
RB: Yes.
I: Yes. By that time it had dropped out of schools?
RB: My testing came when I went on to EOC. You know, I don't know about state tests, but tests in math and all that came…you did that as you entered or whatever.
I: Oh, entrance exams. ___
RB: Now you understand that if you ask three people the same thing you've asked me and we lived together and went to school together that our stories'll all be different?
I: Yes.
RB: Okay.
I: I know that. On certain details. You said earlier that it was just an accepted fact in your household that you would go to college.
RB: Yes. And my mother, who only made like seventy dollars a month or something, and my dad by that time was an invalid. He just… She saw that she put away so much money so that we could go to EOC twenty-five dollars a term…
I: The assumption that you would live at home? Yes. And of course there was only one building on campus at that time.
RB: At EOC?
I: Yes.
RB: Yeah.
I: Let's see, when did you graduate from high school, what year?
RB: '35.
I: '35. Okay. Normal school began operation in 1929.
RB: Yeah. My brother-in-law, Eugene Bowman, was…he was in that first class, I think.
I: So going to college probably wasn't greatly different under those circumstances from having gone to high school.
RB: Oh, but I had more fun because that's when I started more dating. I didn't date in high school particularly.
I: Oh was it? Okay. [laughs]
RB: Well, that's part of life, havin' fun!
I: Or maybe dated a little more seriously.
RB: No, not till I got out.
I: Let's stay for a bit, though, to the academic part. Of course you took fewer classes at college than you had in high school and means more free time.
RB: Are you kidding!
I: Yes. I'm not kidding. That is your…you spend less time in class than you had in high school and also nobody's looking over your shoulder all the time to see what you're doing.
RB: That's the thing. That's where the kids fail.

I: Alright. How… How did you adapt to that? Making sure you had enough self-discipline that you could continue to do good work in courses?

RB: I think it still is based on my early training because this happens to so many of the kids from high school going to college. They have trouble that first year because there's nobody to say, "Hey, get your work done, Hey, get it in." And I had learned to do this, see, from way back here.

I: Exactly how… Exactly how did you apply that training when you were in college?

RB: When I was supposed to study, I studied. And when I was given…

I: Where did you go to study?

RB: In the administration building you came up the front steps and hall went like this and down here was the library and you could go down there at the library and study. And that's all I did between, you know…

I: Is that where you did most of your studying?

RB: Yes. Well, I…you know, and I took work home all the time, too.

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

RB: I could look it up, I suppose.

I: English? Composition? History? Chemistry?

RB: I had Mr. Johnson who just passed away. I don't think… I didn't have him the first year.

I: Did you take any work in science?

RB: Had Dr. Geyser who's a darling. And Dr. Keizer who taught English and Ms. Zable who taught English. And Dr. Addy [grumble] who taught psychology or something. And…

I: Why did you go [grumble]?

RB: 'Cause she was sort of a different one. Well, anyway…

I: You don't want to say how she was different?

RB: She liked the boys, but she didn't care too much for the girls. [laughs]

I: And she was from the South. She had a Southern accent.

RB: I don't think that had anything to do with it. She treated me okay. She was alright with me. If I could've carried her books for her and wink my eye, why, I probably would've done better. [laughs]

I: When you begin this coursework…

RB: Dr. Skein…

I: …did you have clearly in your mind that you were going to be a teacher?

RB: Couldn't be anything else. I didn't have the money to go anywhere else and…

I: You were trapped.

RB: I was trapped. But I had been in my mother's classrooms enough that I…this is…yeah, I really felt this is what I wanted to be. I didn't… I really truly, truly, truly wanted to be a journalist, go into journalism, and I wanted to go to the University of Oregon. But my folks couldn't afford that at all and so I was perfectly happy to become a teacher. And I went…okay, I was fifteen when I went over there at Christmas I went that winter, which was three terms, the next summer, the next winter, did my student teachin' the next summer and went out to teach at seventeen. See, I had two winters, two-three terms…that'd be a term and I got a teacher certificate not a degree.

I: Oh, so you were…you managed to do that at that age because you had skipped two grades earlier.

RB: Yeah. Not because I was any…

I: So you were, what,…

RB: Too darn young.

I: …fifteen when you went to college?

RB: Till Christmas, see, September, October, November, December then I was… 'Cause I was seventeen when I went out to teach. [laugh] I was the best teacher they'd ever had they said in the primary grade.

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

RB: Yes. Yes. And…

I: You really do?

RB: I think being in my mother's classroom really taught me how to teach.

I: I would've guessed that.

RB: But I also want to say that the teachers I had at college then cared, most of them, and really…they really cared about their students, the ones I've named, and they really wanted us to have a better life. And it was kind of like a big family. And, of course, a lot of things have changed, but… I remember [laugh] we had to take one of those tests that start "a is to apple, b is to bananas…" and then it goes up and gets worse and worse and worse and worse, you know.

I: Analogies.

RB: Yeah. And I said to Dr. Geyser, "I don't think I passed that." And he said, "don't worry, I don't think anybody ever did." [laughs] You know, I mean, how many guys'd tell you that now? But…

I: Aside from the student teaching that you did, that was one quarter, I suppose? Ten weeks?

RB: Yeah. And then I was a teacher. Isn't that dumb?

I: But aside from the student teaching do you judge that you learned anything in the other courses that you used directly in your teaching?

RB: Oh yes. I learned more about the world in social studies and I grew. Part of college is just helping you grow up, giving you a little time to think about what you want to be and…you know, you need to grow up a little bit. I did that a little bit.

I: Were you feeling reasonably independent from your parents by that point?

RB: Yeah, I think enough.

I: 'Cause you never lived apart from them before you went out to teach.

RB: I did not live apart from them until I went to teach, no.

I: That was…

RB: No, I didn't feel tied to…you know, I didn't feel…

I: Did that feel like a big jump?

RB: When I went off to live by…?

I: Yes.

RB: When I went to teach I boarded with a lady and a family and another teacher and yeah, it was…it was a different jump, but it was hard on my dad. He didn't see me every weekend…[laugh] If I didn't come home every weekend for a while

he'd…they'd come up to see me. My dad he really hated to see his daughters leave home.

I: Tell me where you first taught.

RB: I'm the first.

I: Which school you first taught in?

RB: Wolf Creek out of North Powder.

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

RB: No. I don't know…oh, I could've had one in Flora. It'd… In those days when you graduated from college you usually went out and taught in a small school and then you made a reputation and then you might be asked to teach, or you might…when you apply they would know your…

I: Sure. How did you find out about the job in North Powder?

RB: I don't know.

I: Wolf Creek.

RB: I don't know. County school superintendent, I suppose.

I: Was there some…

RB: Might've been through Mother. Maybe Mr. Sayer told Mother that it was there. I don't know.

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

RB: Yeah, I think so.

I: That's probably where you found out about it.

RB: Probably they did. Yeah, probably did. Along with everything else.

I: And you couldn't commute from La Grande to Wolf Creek so how…

RB: No. See, I rode a…

I: You rode the train?

RB: The folks'd take me like…this is…boy, I have a long history and I haven't even got the good part yet. [laughs] Well, I'm not married yet. I had a wonderful husband and I haven't gotten to him yet. The folks would take me up to Wolf Creek on Sunday night…Sunday afternoon…this is sometimes…and the Bowman boys, the man I married and his brother Quinton, who lives in Salem, has written a book too, would ride back with 'em. But I didn't see the Bowman boys because I was up here and they were goin' that way. And I didn't really see my Forest or my husband till the Halloween dance at school when we'd put on a program. And then sometimes the other teacher would come home with me and we'd…this Dolly Lee would flag the train…this is so interesting…in North Powder and stop the train and we'd get on and ride to La Grande and they automatically stopped here…or we'd get on the train and get to Powder and he'd flag it 'cause he knew we were coming back. Then the man that we…where we stayed in the wintertime we'd comet through the fields where they cut the fences and come through the fields and get us in a sleigh and we'd go back to school.

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

RB: Five miles, I imagine. And I had first, second, third and fourth. First year… First two years Millie __ from Pendleton taught the upper grade.

I: Where were you staying?

RB: And let me tell you how we… Let me tell you how we got placed! I was supposed to teach the upper grades and she was gonna teach the lower grade. She

was a real tall gal, real tall and real thin. She came to me just before we…school started and said…we were livin' up there together with the…at the Nices...and she said, "You know, I'm just gonna be too tall to teach those little kids. You wantta trade?" I said, "Sure." We traded and I taught the lower grade and she taught…the board didn't care…and she taught the upper grade. Now that's how I got…

I: This must've been a two-room school.

RB: In the meantime I've been on interview teams that had eight people on it, you know. [laugh] Yes, life was simpler.

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

RB: Oh yeah.

I: With specific aspects of instruction?

RB: Everything.

I: How am I going to teach this particular thing?

RB: We did a lot of talking after school and…yes, yes. ___ and then Thela Mae Twidwell, who lived in Wallowa county…who went from there to Wallowa county taught this last year with me. I only taught three years before I was married.

I: Who cleaned the school?

RB: I did… We did.

I: How did you manage that?

RB: What?

I: How did you manage to do that?

RB: We just stayed after school and used the oil brush on the floor and dusted and cleaned the waste…

I: Explain that. Oil brushed aren't used anymore.

RB: No, no, no.

I: Explain that.

RB: Why aren't they?

I: No. Explain what it is.

RB: Oh, 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, you know, and you could…the floors were wooden and they were oiled. Don't ask me why. It's supposed to keep it cleaner or something. But we…we were at the age where there were 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 were young men who were what, farm laborers?

RB: No, they were farmers' son.

I: But they weren't students, you mean?

RB: Oh no. They were just young men in the valley wanting to see what the new teachers looked like.

I: I imagine so.

RB: Lookin' 'em over.

I: A good opportunity.

RB: Because, like I said, many a girl that went out to teach married a farmer's son. The girl that went to Flora in my place married a guy over there. Vella Mae married one from Wallow'. Yeah, it's just the way it was.
I: What could be more natural, huh?
RB: Yeah.
I: I think we'll…[recording stopped]

5/15/03, T1, S1 (same tape as 5/2/03, T2)

I: This is a continuation of the interview with Retha Bowman. It's May 15th, 2003. One of the items that you mentioned in your notes was seeing men riding in railroad cars looking for work and asking for a handout. This was during the Depression period, was it?
RB: Yes and right after.
I: What did people call those men who were riding the railroad cars?
RB: As I remembered they were called hobos.
I: Hobos, yes.
RB: And I do remember my father never turning anybody down…any of 'em down if they needed…if they came and looked…would ask him for a job or food. He always fed them outside, but I remember he never turned anyone down. Because these were…mostly were men really looking for work, good men.
I: Had they come from a great distance, do you think?
RB: I think some of 'em did, yeah. [telephone ringing]
I: Like the Midwest? [recording paused] Do you think some of these men had come from the Midwest perhaps?
RB: Could be, you know, I don't remember.
I: And why do you think they would get off at La Grande and not go on?
RB: I suppose they were looking for work, or…
I: Why wouldn't they go on to Portland where maybe there would be more jobs or maybe not? Maybe there would be a lot of jobs around La Grande?
RB: I have no idea. I just remember my father never turned one of 'em down.
I: Did you see some of these men?
RB: Yes.
I: Do you remember… Do you have images of how they looked?
RB: They looked a lot like my own father, but…or younger, you know.
I: Did they look like down and out, hungry, dirty?
RB: Yes. They weren't dirty particularly. They were just men that were needing work and they wanted to provide for their family and apparently they couldn't…where they lived they couldn't find anything so they began to travel around. And I suppose quite a few of 'em were single. I have no idea. I probably was…let's see, maybe ten years old or something like that.
I: Would they come up to your house?
RB: Oh yes. They came and knocked on the door and asked for work.
I: Would they just walk along the street knocking on doors?

RB: I don't know. I really don't know. I just know that they knocked on ours. And as a child, of course, I was interested in it kind of, you know.

I: Your father didn't have any work to offer them, right?

RB: We lived on three acres and he worked for the state and the county and so no, we didn't. But we did have food and a lot of 'em really looked hungry, or he thought they were, and he had a big heart and they got to eat. But he kept…he had 'em eat outside 'cause he had a wife and two daughters, I suppose, and he…

I: Was he a little bit worried about what they might do?

RB: I suppose.

I: Did you ever talk to them yourself?

RB: No. That I remember, no.

I: What kind of… What sort of food would he give them? Left-overs from the night before?

RB: Oh, he'd bring out a plate that had…no…vegetables and, you know, the same things that we ate and yeah, I suppose some of 'em were left-overs.

I: I suppose they'd come during the daytime often, wouldn't they?

RB: As far as I know. I don't remember any at night. I suppose we'd do the same thing, you know, if we were out of work and couldn't find work. And if our economy doesn't pick there are gonna be people probably looking for work that way.

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

RB: Oh yeah. Of course everybody talked about the Depression, you know, when they lived that there. I remember my husband, who's dad owned a ranch in North Powder, talking about how many of the farmers during and after the Depression because they just didn't have enough money to pay off their farms and they lost a lot of 'em. His father didn't happen to, but there were many of them that did lose their farms. Of course I was pretty young, you know, so what I remember is what I heard __.

I: Sure. I remember some of that, too. I was a little younger than you, but I do remember that period and the difficulties. You also mentioned in your notes about the CC boys there, Civilian Conservation Camp.

RB: Yes.

I: These were all young men and they had come from all over the United States and…

RB: I met a boy from Bloomington, Illinois and one from someplace I think in New York.

I: Now how would you have met these men?

RB: I think I… I think we were at a church picnic at Hilgard Park and the CC boys were stationed there. And as I remember four or five of 'em came down around where we were all eating. This…we were family…in a family…with our family and we met these boys and I talked to…talked to some of 'em. They were about my age or probably a little older.

I: What can you remember talking about?

RB: Oh, where they lived, where they came from and how excited they were about being out in the mountains and with the trees and having work, having a job. A

lot of these boys came from the slums and places that, you know, they wouldn't have the chances that they had. And I really…I really approved of the CCC. They also worked at Anthony Lake a lot around, but I don't…I didn't know any of them.

I: What kinds of work did you find out that they were doing?

RB: Oh, they'd…they cleaned brush out of the mountains and they made trails and I suppose kept the wildfire down, you know, because they did clean out the brush and this and that. But they were…the ones I met were really nice young men. I don't know any more about 'em than that. I just met the couple of 'em that day.

I: How close did you get to the camp where they lived?

RB: I don't remember that I did.

I: 'Cause it wasn't far from Hilgard Park.

RB: No, it wasn't really far from Hilgard, but I don't remember whether I saw the camp or not. I remember these boys were just walking through and stopped where we were all eating and we got to talking and on. It was interesting.

I: They weren't wearing uniforms, were they?

RB: They were wearing some kind of work uniforms. I think they were kind of.

I: Were they all dressed in a similar way?

RB: Khaki…I think so. I probably was fifteen or sixteen maybe. I don't know.

I: I imagine they would've been quite interested in you.

RB: Yeah. I enjoyed visiting with 'em. [laughs] And I thought they were… It was neat that they could have work and certainly the mountains needed it.

I: Yes, and still do.

RB: And we could use it now.

I: You refer to the livestock show, I'm guessing that that's…you mean Union Livestock Show?

RB: Yes.

I: Which has been going for many years, hasn't it?

RB: Yes.

I: And the lady who was…who was…

RB: She rode bucking horse. I don't remember if I saw her riding.

I: Was she a performer, you mean?

RB: Yes. She rode bucking horses.

I: Did this professionally?

RB: And there was quite an article in *The Observer* one time about her. And 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 rodeo or livestock show is what they called it, didn't they? It wasn't really a rodeo.

RB: They showed…people showed their animals and…for prizes like they do now. I don't know if they had horse racing then or not. I don't remember that. But they had bareback riding, saddle bronc, which is what she rode…what else did they do? The same…pretty much the same things they have now.

I: I haven't been to the livestock show so I'm not sure what they do now. Was this a show…

RB: You have never been to a rodeo or a livestock show?

I: Not Union Livestock Show.

RB: Oh.
I: I've been to other horse…
RB: I was gonna say you have an experience to look forward to.
I: I should go.
RB: You should go.
I: And I will. Would have this have been a week-long show in Union?
RB: I think it's about four days. Something like that.
I: Oh, just four days.
RB: Something like that. It hasn't changed much. It's gotten bigger, I suppose. But I think they do pretty much the same thing. My own children were in 4-H and showed…at that time we had sheep and they showed lamb and my daughter had a horse and she showed horses. And they…they showed animals for which…and did what they called showmanship which is showing their animal off and then they got…you know, competed for prizes.
I: Which is still being done, I suppose, in much the same way at the Union County Fair.
RB: Yeah.
I: What else…
RB: And, you know, I don't…as a child then I didn't belong to it. I didn't show anything in it so I don't really know as much about it then as I did when my own. But my oldest son is sixty-two so, you know, that's back there a ways.
I: Was there anything else about that even that would've drawn people from La Grande to go over to Union?
RB: The fact is we did not have a lot of entertainment so it was quite the entertainment of the year, you know, in the spring. 'Cause there aren't a lot of things…there weren't a lot of things to do out in La Grande then. And I think the college was started in '29…I think the first class graduated in '29…
I: The school opened in 1929.
RB: Maybe that was it. But, you know, there was not a lot to go to so people went to the… And most of the people around here were farm people so they were interested in the horses and showing animals. We didn't have big city urban stuff, you know, sidewalks, a lot of sidewalks and things then.
I: What other things were there to do around Union when you went to one of those shows or what that the only thing?
RB: Oh, they always had a carnival, I suppose. They've had 'em for years and I'm sure they had a carnival or some type which was good for kids and adults. I love to ride the merry-go-round. [laughs] I'll have to tell you a story about that, the livestock show. My father, who would be way over a hundred now, he'd probably be a hundred-and-twenty-four or more, said that he rode his horse to Union to see a man that hung…I think he was a horse thief, if I remember correctly…that he rode his horse from Cove to Union when he was about thirteen or fourteen to see this man hung. And then he said, "You know, when I got there and they got ready to hang him," he said, "I shut my eyes and I didn't see any of it." I would have, too.
I: Do you suppose then that hangings were always public…
RB: Apparently.

I: …in those times?

RB: Apparently. Apparently. And stealing horses was way up on the list for no-no. 'Cause…

I: You were never invited to witness a hanging?

RB: No. I don't think… I think that's the only person around here that was ever hung, you know. And, of course, I just remember what my dad said. I didn't see it. I wasn't even born then, of course. But I've always thought that was pretty interesting.

I: Yes.

RB: And I'm sure it's probably written down somewhere.

I: Is that so?

RB: Have you got any material there you can really use?

I: Oh yes. Speaking of animals, you referred to your mother riding horseback partway to the school at Willow Dale because the creek flooded in the spring.

RB: And that isn't too far from here, you know.

I: Was she commuting, as it were, 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. Now this is just in the spring when… Catherine Creek used to flood every spring and it hasn't been too many years since it's did it. Not very far out here past the airport she'd get out of her car and then onto one of the horses that they…Mr. and Mrs. Bates had and ride a ways and through the water to Willow Dale School…

I: There really was no other way?

RB: …where she taught the Courtright triplets which is Burr Courtright, Betty Graham and Bernice Graham.

I: And there really was no other way to get to the school from La Grande?

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

I: You remember seeing those…some of those floods?

RB: Oh yes.

I: How wide… How widely spread was the water?

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

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

RB: It's pretty strong. I have a brother-in-law who was in the State water resource board who got the Wolf Creek dam in where those farmers can water all of their land at a really low price. He tried to get it in here and between the Indian…this is…this is what I've heard, now, you know, these things you don't…unless you're right in it you can't prove all it…but the Indians were against them doing anything about Catherine Creek because of their fishing rights and the farmers of this valley were not progressive enough to say, hey, and backup reservoir up the Grande Ronde River which would have provided…[end tape]

RB: But that…you know, that's neither here nor there now.

I: One of the many points of tension between the needs of farmers and others in the valley and nature's way of doing things.

RB: Yeah. But you could help nature without hurting it if you worked at it correctly.

I: That's what we would like to think, yes.

RB: And I think we can.

I: That's what engineers, for the most part, I think, try to do.

RB: They did a good job in North Powder area. They should've had me on the soap box, then, shouldn't they?

I: Maybe. Another subject that I would be interested in hearing you give some details about is Zuber Hall and the dances that they had there to a orchestra by a man who was well known at the time.

RB: Dick Lindsey, yeah.

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

RB: Oh yes.

I: Alright. So you probably have fairly vivid memories. I know where Zuber Hall is, but would you say specifically where it was?

RB: It was where…if I'm correct it was where Pat Alley's where you parking lot and Goss's…

I: Yes. On Washington Street.

RB: Yeah, on Washington. Run by Mr. and Mrs. Buel who were very careful about who came in. If anybody was drinking they saw that they were…either didn't come in or they were out. And many of us, you know, many of the kids I grew up with spent every Saturday night dancing. And in those days you had a big stag line over here and a big bunch of girls over here so you were very fortunate you got to dance with a lot of gentlemen and you didn't…very few of you went steady, you know, until you got up…way up into college anyway. So it was just a fun time. And you could walk home…my sister and I could walk home all the blocks from Zuber Hall to H Street 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, in more detail?

RB: The building was a big wooden building, as far as I remember. And inside it was…it was large one with a big stage up here. Of course, I was younger, maybe the stage and everything weren't as big as I think it was [laugh] then.

I: The stage was for the band?

RB: Yes. And Avery Millering and Bark Wheeler and Lauren Blanchard and a lot of those played instruments. I think Avery played the piano. I don't know, it was just a fun time. I danced there through college and three years before I was married, most of us, even if we were… I shouldn't say every weekend, I guess, because there'd be a few that I didn't come home.

I: Was it possible to do any…I mean, was the hall designed for anything else other than dances?

RB: You know, I have no idea. I don't know what… I don't remember what…

I: You only went there on Saturday nights, is that it?

RB: Right. And I just don't remember. They may have had dinners and things there. I don't know. And that didn't…

I: Did they serve…

RB: That didn't attract me.

I: Did they serve and food or beverage during the dances?

RB: No, that I remember. Does anybody else mentioned the Zuber Hall?

I: Yeah.

RB: Quite a few people.

I: Mm-hmm.

RB: It was another form of entertainment that everybody could go to and it was clean. They did keep it clean, you know.

I: I wonder if it would've been possible for the Buels to earn a living operating this place?

RB: Oh, I think they did.

I: How much did it cost to get in?

RB: I don't know.

I: It must not 've been very much.

RB: A quarter probably. Probably a quarter. Movies you could go two for a quarter for while.

I: What was that?

RB: Movies.

I: Movies, oh yes.

RB: Two for a quarter. And I don't remember too much about them.

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 've met otherwise?

RB: Right. And, of course, I knew quite a few of them, but I also met new people, too. And so, you know, it was kind of nice in a way you met a lot of people that you could…you had experience meeting several people instead of being attached to one person and not… Of course every generation has their own opinion, but we had fun.

I: Did you dress up to go there?

RB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. We always dressed up nicely. A lot more than I do now.

I: Everybody had a bath recently.

RB: Yeah.

I: Mm-hmm.

RB: Oh yeah. Everybody was clean.

I: Were the girls wearing…

RB: By that time everybody in town had a bathroom and had water in the house, pretty much everybody, let's put it that way. Yeah, no problems that way.

I: Claude Anson told me that at least the farm people on Saturdays always took their bath on Saturday and then came into La Grande and walked up and down Adams Avenue just to meet each other.

RB: Mm-hmm.

I: And maybe occasionally went to a show, but mostly just to meet other people and talk.

RB: Right and when I was a little girl my mother would take Reba and I and we…she would park on Main Street and, in fact, even up to the time I had my children one

of the amusements in town was just parking along the street and watching people walk up and down the street. [laughs] It's hard to believe, isn't it?

I: Yes. What was amusing about that?

RB: People are funny! You know, but everybody did it. It wasn't something… It wasn't something unusual.

I: And I suppose you would talk about them, also.

RB: Yes, I suppose some, but mostly it was just watching people go by. And it'd kind of like if you're at a carnival or someplace and 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. It was just… And people didn't have a lot of money so this was one way of entertainment, watching people walk by. Just like Claude said, walking up and down the sidewalk. But you could also sit in your car and watch 'em. [laugh]

I: Passing parade, you might say.

RB: Yes.

I: Yes. People still love to go to parades just to watch other people and animals, of course. 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…when you left one of those…and of course I was little and probably up…I don't remember any after maybe I was fifteen or something…but, I mean, you went out of there shaking and you behaved! I mean they didn't get up there and be liberals, you know.

I: They were graphic about punishments for sin.

RB: Very graphic. Very graphic.

I: Where were they… Where did they hold forth?

RB: Usually in the church, although I don't know where now, don't ask me where, but I have been in a tent and listened to 'em, too. But I don't remember where the tent was.

I: That used to be rather common.

RB: Oh, okay. Somebody else remembered.

I: They would come… Well, not just here, but in many places.

RB: Oh. I don't remember that. But I do remember…

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

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

I: There was a fear factor alright.

RB: Yeah. We cared what they, you know, thought.

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, that type of thing, yes. But…

I: Did you… 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…

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

RB: What?

I: Did you think they were somewhat funny?

RB: No.

I: None of that.

RB: Not then. I did looking back on it. No, I didn't think it was very funny then, but…

I: Was there singing, too?

RB: Oh yes. People sang and people went forward, you know, joined the church. But they were… Sometimes I wonder if we need that once in a while again. [laugh] Although I don't necessarily condone it.

I: They're available on television now.

RB: Yes, yes. And I don't watch them. How we doin'?

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

RB: Yes it was. And I can remember my father talking about that and my father-in-law. And I can remember when we bought this place the gentleman that we bought it from of course he and Forest shook hands on it and then we, you know, went ahead and…and put money in escrow and did all the things that made…got the papers and things. But when he shook that man's hand that man…that was it, that sealed the bargain. Doesn't 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, you know, they had an agreement. I remember that as plain as anything 'cause, you know, we discussed buying it and looked into it and talked to the gentleman and all this several times. And he came over one morning while we were eating breakfast and said, "Well, Forest, you've bought a farm" and shook hands. And that…

I: And how did knowing that a man's handshake was sealing the deal help people's relationships?

RB: I think there was more trust in your fellow man, you know. If you could do this was just a handshake and not a bunch of papers. I think it just added to trust and friendship. And I'm sure there were cases when maybe it didn't work even then. I'm not saying it was always perfect.

I: What were some of the other effects of feeling as though you could trust someone's words?

RB: I don't understand what you mean.

I: What were some of the other effects in other parts of life, perhaps, of…we're talking here about a property deal, but I suppose you mean you could shake hands on many…many other…

RB: Oh, I'm sure you could.

I: …on other points that people might want to agree over.

RB: I don't… I don't… Of course I was too young, probably, to be…to remember what ones those might be, but I'm sure you're right, that this spread into the how you…how you felt secure working with other people. That their word was good.

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

RB: No. Well, when I got…maybe I could use this for an example. When I applied for the first place I taught I talked to the board members, two of them, 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 in earlier part of the year, well before September?

RB: Yeah. I applied before September, yeah. But when they, you know…when I talked to them at the end of all this they said, "You have a school" then I knew I had a school. I knew they weren't gonna renig.

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

RB: Pretty quick. And I think it came… I think it came through the county school superintendent, but I'm not sure.

I: Uh-huh. By they way, had you had to interview 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 basis?

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

I: Yes.

RB: That was, I suppose, the kind they had then. You talked…

I: But not very formal.

RB: Not very formal. And when I went… When I taught at Ladd Canyon I called the chairman of the board and said, "I hear your… I hear your teacher is not gonna be back next year and I would like to apply for the job." And of course the boy…the man I was talking to was in the eighth grade when I was in the first [laughs] and he…he said, "Yes, we are looking for a teacher." And I said…he said, "We're gonna have a board meeting Friday night." And I said, "Do you want me to come out and talk to you?" And he said, "Oh no, we know all about you. You have a school." Then when I moved to Union, where I taught four years, the principal from over there cam to see me out at Ladd Canyon and he'd heard about me. And then I told him I'd… I went back over later and found out what kind of a job I was gonna have. And he said, "I need someone to teach split grade." And I said, "I certainly can do that. I taught four classes at once, I guess I can teach the fourth, fifth grade." He said, "You've got a job." And then I… When I came to La Grande the principal at Island City wanted me and wanted me to come over and told me that there was a vacancy. 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?" [laugh] And I…"well, I believe in it." [laughs] 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." Anyway, he said, "Ron…Mr. Lovely wants you at Island City." And he said, "We know enough about you." And so that's where I went. And then if I moved up in the district I was never…and yet I, myself, have been on an interview teams with six, seven people that scare the poor interviewee to death

and you don't really learn anything about 'em, you just, you know, you don't learn how…whether they can teach or not you just learn whether you scared 'em to death or not. [laughs] You don't need to put all that in.

I: You reminded me that you taught in Union. Were you living in Union?

RB: No.

I: …at the time you were…

RB: But at that time they would like to have you live where you taught. I said, "I can't move the farm over here, George."

I: Right.

RB: And that was the end of that.

I: This would've been in the 1940s, perhaps?

RB: We moved out here…no, it'd be later. We moved out here in '55 and I was teaching…I taught two more years in town three days a week. About '58.

I: I see. How aware were you at that time you were teaching in Union of the Union Hotel?

RB: They were renting out apartments in a sense.

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

RB: It was quite a nice hotel. And I never…can't remember the names of the people that ran it when I was there. But because the freeway did not go through Union, I presume, and went this other way they lost a lot of trade. And so they…they at that time had put it into apartments. And that's all I know about it then, you know. I guess I was in it a time or two, just looked around, you know.

I: Was it… Was it… Did it have a pretty run-down quality at that time as you looked at from the outside?

RB: A little more than it was when it was really a hotel, but those people kept it pretty well for, you know, for takin' care of that whole big thing and not making much money on it…well…

I: No, I don't see how they could.

RB: Made a difference when the freeway did not go through Union, which is where it should have. We wouldn't have all these trucks stuck up Ladd Canyon. [laugh] Don't put in my opinions. Well, I don't mean…make 'em…

I: There's nothing wrong with your opinions. There are two or three items you wrote about…that have to do with farm…farm products. There were a lot of creameries around Union county at one time and you recalled seeing a truck, I guess, come by and pick up cream?

RB: I do not… We did not have that here, but mother-in-law in North Powder, yes, the cream man came and she…and she could sell…she got the money from the cream and from eggs. That was her pocket money. Yes, I've seen that there, but not here. Not with me.

I: So do you think the system was, in earlier years here, for the person who operated the creamery to come out and pick it up rather than having the farmers deliver it in town?

RB: Right. That's what I knew then.

I: Did you ever look closely at those trucks?

RB: Uh-uh.

I: I wonder if they were refrigerated in any way.

RB: Probably not. Well, I don't know. I bet they were in Powder because Powder had a place for a long time…

I: Ice.

RB: Ice. So they probably… They probably did have ice in them. I don't know about the others. And I don't…I never did go out and look in the truck. They just came and got 'em…picked it up. I think they left the cream out by the mailboxes, put it out there early or something.

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 don't know.

I: Were they using the cans that we still see? The shiny metal cans with the round top?

RB: Yeah. When we first moved here there were several of those on the ranch. And so I presume these people… The gentleman down the road, Art McCall, had a dairy for a long time even after we moved here. Then the rules and restrictions just got to where he couldn't afford to have it, you know, anymore.

I: How were they… You said that they…several people sold eggs, also. They were picked up the way the cream was?

RB: I think they were, but I'm not sure about that. She may have taken them into town. I'm not sure about that.

I: How were eggs transported at that time? I don't suppose they had the paper cartons that they do now.

RB: You're asking me some tough questions. How did they get their eggs to town? I wish my husband was alive. He could tell could tell you how his mother got…

I: Eggs are kind of hard to transport, wouldn't you agree? Be rather careful with them.

RB: She had something she put 'em in.

I: Maybe…maybe sawdust or __?

RB: Something. Something. I don't remember. I just know that she could use the money from the eggs and the cream for her spending money 'cause she didn't work out like…

I: Yes. And making cottage cheese. I remember…

RB: Oh I loved that!

I: I remember as a little boy seeing the process that I think you saw, so describe it. How's this done?

RB: My mother would…let's see…I don't know how she started out. Did she cook it?

I: You had to get the curds somehow, didn't you?

RB: She heated it some way and them put it in this…like a real clean white dish towel except it was…I don't think they called it a…you know, it was that kind of material.

I: Like a bag, wasn't it?

RB: A bag. And hung it up and I can remember it dripping. And that's the best cottage cheese I've ever eaten and they don't make it like that anymore. They stick all that stuff in it now.

I: You're a little vague about what you had to do before you put it in the bag.

RB: Yes. I don't remember. It seemed to me like she heated it, but I'm not… You'd have to do something like that.

I: I would think so. Did you…

RB: One thing I do remember, too, though, is seeing a hog butchered. This big old hog dipped in this hot water and then scraped to take off all the hair. Now I don't remember…I don't remember seeing it butchered, but I must have. But I do remember, it's just a picture in my mind of this…puttin' 'em in this hot water. I was probably twelve years old or something like that. And you had to scrape the hair off and then they cut it into hams and this and that and hung it up. And in those days people salted it. Can you imagine that? Salted their meat to keep 'em from spoiling and hung 'em in a…and smoked 'em, hung 'em in what they called a smokehouse and smoked 'em.

I: Without a freezer how else are you gonna preserve it?

RB: No other way, I guess.

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

RB: Yeah. Tasted really good. But now they'd warn…they'd be warn you about the salt in it.

I: Yeah, but…

RB: I'm sure that the cooks washed a lot of that salt off, you know.

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

RB: And what…and pigs' feet. What did they…they made some kind of a sausage that they put in the intestine and I can remember some of that. See, when the folks butchered this hog some of those steps. 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: Didn't anybody…

RB: Those were good days!

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

RB: I'm sure they did because they didn't believe in their kids…everybody believed their kids havin' lots of, you know, spare time. And you were expected to help the family.

I: Sure. Why should you sit around? You could be working.

RB: They didn't have ya for lookin' at ya. [laughs]

I: Indeed. So you remember eating the cottage cheese. Would this be served with each meal or when…when would you eat it?

RB: Oh, I'm sure she made it every once in a while. I'm sure you had to store up enough curdle…curdled milk or whatever it was.

I: I'm trying to understand what part of the menu it was.

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

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

RB: Sure.

I: Alright.

RB: Sure.

I: That's what I was getting at.

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

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

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

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

RB: Yes. You see, when you went out…

I: Because they would come in and help at school.

RB: Yeah.

I: Is that how you met your husband?

RB: No. No. See, at one time a teacher that went out, a young girl that went out to teach was quite a catch because the farmer wanted their sons to marry somebody who, you know, had an education or this or that. And so it was quite a…you were really most popular than you'd ever been in your life because… We laugh because I had a contract for Flora, which is way over in Wallowa county, and then I received this one from up here so I chose this one. Later I met…I met the girl who took my job in Flora and she married a farmer's son over there. And I said, "Do you suppose [laugh] that if we'd 've switched jobs we would've married each other's husbands?" Because it's just sort of the in thing.

I: Can you tell me how he approached you?

RB: Yes. Let's see, I was going with a boy that was teaching…he got out of college at the same time I did, this boy, and he was teaching in Joseph…no, Lostine. And so I went up there and I wasn't particularly thinking about any other young man, although we were not really serious, but we had had a good time together, you know, and I liked him. But anyway, so I didn't…the folks would take me up to teach, they would take me up to where I boarded.

I: Was this in Wolf Creek or Lostine?

RB: Yes. No, in Wolf Creek. To where I boarded and then they would pick the Bowman boys up and they'd ride back down to college. They were going to college and I was up there. So I didn't even see Forest…

I: The Bowman boys lived in North Powder, is that right?

RB: On a ranch out of Powder, yeah.

I: Okay.

RB: So I didn't really see him till…till Halloween 'cause he was comin' this way and I was goin' that way and I suppose…and he was goin' with somebody else from Baker and I was involved with this one. And at school…they had a grange hall right next to the school and, of course, you know, here we are into this programs…we put on this big Halloween program and dance in them and he came up and…he came and introduced himself and danced with me. And he loved to hunt and he rode a horse beautifully and he'd ride them up into the mountains to hunt. He went to college till about Christmas, but he'd been on a tower that summer and when he got to college he was behind. His brother was going here, but he'd started right at the beginning.

I: You mean a fire watch tower, don't you?

RB: Yes. And so… And his folks wanted him to run the ranch…to help run the ranch so he quit college and went to the farm. And we started goin' together and went together a couple of years off and on.

I: What does "going together" mean then?

RB: Let's see, he'd come down, he'd bring me home, 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 and 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, but we didn't…it's like, you know… But we would see a movie. And then…I don't know. He was red-headed. A wonderful, wonderful man.

I: How did he propose?

RB: [laugh] He was very romantic. We'd gone together and he wanted to get married and I wasn't ready and so we broke up and then later we went back together again. And so he drives me up one night under this big pine tree that's still there up Wolf Creek. And says, "Okay, now we're gonna stop all this foolishness. When we gettin' married?" [laugh] That was my…[end tape]

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I: Alright. Go ahead.

RB: Now what did you just ask me?

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

RB: I was twenty-one years old, I taught three years, and I loved him and I…and it was…I thought it was time to get married. I don't know.

I: I thought you said it the other way around. That when he talked about getting married you thought you weren't ready.

RB: The first time… The first time I was only eighteen.

I: Oh, I see.

RB: See, the first year we went together…

I: He kept at this…

RB: We went together off and on for the three years, see. Well, two-and-a-half out of it. So I wasn't ready yet. And I told him, I said, "I'm…you know, I'm not…I like you, I care for you, but I'm not ready to marry." And so we broke up then for a while, several months in fact, and then went back together. That's why he said no more of this…had enough of this foolishness.

I: Was it in your mind that when you became twenty-one if you didn't get married pretty soon you might turn out to be an old maid?

RB: No. Well…it's kind of with a dead-end street for young girls to go out and teach in a way. You know, it was an opportunity, but you had to move around pretty…you know, you couldn't stay too long at one place and they don't even now. Now they'll stay in the city school a long time. But I don't know, I guess I was just ready then. And I did care about him, you know. We were in love.

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

RB: Sort of. Well, yeah, to a certain extent I guess that's what I mean.

I: And what would've been bad about that?

RB: I wasn't the type not to be married. [laugh] I guess. I think it probably is okay for a lot of people. And 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: No.

I: Nobody? Hmm. I've heard some people talk about older women…

RB: Thela Edvalson did. She never married. She taught in Union. So that's where there are one or two.

I: Okay.

RB: But most girls married. Because getting married was just part of the deal in those days.

I: It would've been possible, though, 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"? 'Cause they didn't think you could get pregnant if you weren't…if you were married. It doesn't make any sense! They based that on the fact they couldn't get the girl…the woman before to quit.

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, yeah.

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

RB: Yeah. My mother, of course, taught forty-three years. I only taught thirty-seven. I was only in education thirty-seven. She was in there forty-three. She was still teaching at about seventy-somethin'.

I: She's a good example then, of how to do both.

RB: And you could, but there weren't very many. There weren't very many that did that.

I: Occasionally there were men who taught in one-room schools, weren't there?

RB: I guess.

I: You didn't know any?

RB: Oh, I didn't know any. Yes, I'm sure there were here and there, but you didn't hear much…you didn't hear that much.

I: Salaries were low.

RB: They got… It was easier for them to get into city schools because they needed somebody that looked like they could handle discipline. Whether they had very smart or not they can…if they looked like can handle discipline. A lot of 'em were hired to coach and to handle discipline, or look like they could. Well, I guess there's nothing wrong with that, but that was the…that was the reason. Let's face it! [laughs]

I: Perhaps not the best qualifications, but perhaps a necessary one. Yes.

RB: 'Cause a lot of the kids were bigger and older than they are now when they go to school. 'Cause a lot of 'em would miss school and go back, you know, and things like that.

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

RB: Oh, we were so excited!

I: Yes, well, talk about that because they're not even seen anymore, are they?

RB: No. We were in the old school in Island City, as I remember, when they bought us one of those. And, you know, before that we wrote everything out on the blackboard that we might want to put up. And here we had this wonderful thing. Of course it got ink all over you and it led to a…it led to people using too many, in my opinion.

I: Describe it first.

RB: Oh, what it looked like? It's just a little…it was a box, rectangle box, with a bunch of…looked like kind of thick jelly. And you put the paper…you know, I don't remember how that worked. You did something and turned a wheel and it ran it off. You probably remember… I'm talking to people better than I do.

I: It's not my… It's not my…

RB: You don't remember, but I mean in talking.

I: Oh yes, I do remember, but it's not my information we're getting here, it's yours.

RB: I know, but I'm tryin' to get mine straight here.

I: Do you remember the name for it?

RB: Mm-mm. And then when we got…in the new school when we got the new copier…and I was principal then, I had a little problem because the teachers were usin' paper like it'd gone out of style. [laugh] They were running everything off! And I said, you know, "Hey guys, we have a budget. Let's sort of keep this down a bit."

I: The writing on the board of information that might've been on a sheet of paper was more laborious, took more time to do, do you think, though, that there was some advantages in the teachers using the board instead of the machine?

RB: Oh yes. Yes. Oh yes.

I: What?

RB: I think other children could see what was going on… My students when I first went out and worked at the board a lot partly because they enjoyed working at the board and the other was the rest of the kids could see what they were doing and they could…I wanted them to feel free to help each other. Say a guy was up there doin' a math problem and havin' a little trouble. Then I would hope that one of the other students would very politely say, "Hey" and help each other. And yes, I think there was quite a bit to say for blackboards. And ___ not a lot for worksheets after a while. I…

I: They came to be known by many people as busy work.

RB: Some of it was. Some of it was just plain busy work and some of it I think was worthwhile. But the trouble is if you don't have time to go back over…take a group and go back over and 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'd filled a blank, but they didn't get anything back about it. What did they learn if they filled a blank, or didn't?

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

RB: Parents at one time expected homework.

I: Yes. Before there were worksheets how would…how would you, as a teacher, give homework?

RB: They probably… That's a good question. I don't know that they did a lot before then, homework.

I: You could've had homework in reading from a book…

RB: I taught primary grade, see, first and I don't remember sending many books home with them. Now when I…I taught in eighth grade one time, one year, I really liked it and taught sixth. That was later, though, and you could assign… We had people… We had a mother in Union that the principal almost lost his job because when he was teachin' one of the grades he didn't correct the workbooks that were handed in and they came home and it wasn't correct and…[laugh]…parents…that's what they base some of this…parents expected homework and they could know somewhat what their child was doing. And then if you did it right they could teach 'em some good study habits. But it could also be overdone because if it isn't supervised it really lots of times is just waste. I'm ahead of my time.

I: Were there any other…

RB: So I've been told.

I: …effects that you noticed of having machines that would duplicate worksheets?

RB: Somethin' good for it?

I: Yes.

RB: Some of the… Some of the books had worksheets that went along with the textbooks, you know, and in some cases…but like I said, if it wasn't corrected orally some way so the child knew whether he was right or wrong it didn't…it was just a kiddin' ourself. But we didn't __. But educa… You know very well that education is just trial and error to a certain extent.

I: Yes. It still is.

RB: 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 with that to a certain extent, but you do need a guide. You can't just fly…especially the young teachers can't fly off into the wild blue yonder without some guidelines. On the other hand, you're clutchin' that 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.

RB: I read that in one of those books.

I: How many… Did you visit very many of them or have occasion to see what was going on in them?

RB: I've been in my mother's classroom, of course, in Perry and at Willow Dale I'm sure I visited her there a few times. She's the reason I…I mean I don't feel that my student teaching taught me…you don't learn to be a teacher in six weeks of student teaching. Being in my mother's classroom…I never would've made at seventeen if I hadn't been in her classroom enough to know how to handle this.

I: What I'm wondering now, though, is whether you had 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 tryin' to think. There's one at Blue Mountain, Aunt Nan taught there, but I don't think I was ever with her. Fruitdale…oh my goodness…Shanghai, Aunt Fanny taught there. I come from a…

I: Obviously…

RB: I don't think so, no. I wasn't except the ones that my mother was in and that wasn't very often, you know, except the classes I was in the first grade and seventh, I think, with her. I missed the third…I skipped the third and the fifth so it had to be the first and seventh. But you learn a lot if you, you know…and she treated me just like any of the students. You wouldn't a known I was her daughter, which is very wise.

I: With that many one-room schools in one county I suppose the county superintendent…and there always was a county superintendent, wasn't there?

RB: They went around and visited.

I: Yes. How do you think the county superintendents could have tried to make 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…a meeting of all of the…someplace. And they talked to us then. I don't remember one in the spring. I don't… Mrs. Cousins only came to see me at the end of school to see if I got to have the register. And I lost a half a day and I never find it and she didn't either. Did you lose part of your glasses?

I: Yeah. [recording paused] 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 and that was what they did mostly, I think, was visit around to the different schools. And then what they did with that I don't know. 'Cause Mr. Sayer was here a long time, I guess.

I: Of course if there was as much turnover in teachers as you say I suppose…

RB: They moved around a lot. And you asked me about it and I don't know why, but they did.

I: If the teacher was having a great deal of difficulty probably that teacher didn't stay very long.

RB: Probably not.

I: Yeah.

RB: And I think it was really hard for some of the young girls to keep discipline when those big kids, big boys.

I: Yes, I would think so, too. Every day must've been a struggle.

RB: Probably went out and probably got married early.

I: Yes. [laughs] 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. Fie, the original Dr. Fie? I don't think you would have.

RB: I don't know. I don't think so.

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

RB: Yeah. And I don't remember him…them at all. What I remember are the canaries in the cages, the palm trees. My aunt Fannie had fallen in…she'd 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. Burned the top of her head and so later when she was married

and lived in Cove she got apple spray…they had an orchard and she worked in it and she scratched her head and got…this is what they think caused the cancer in the top of her head. And my grandfather offered to pay for her treatment and this and that at Hot Lake and that's why I would…I went with Mom and Dad to the Sanatorium where Aunt Fannie…yeah, Aunt Fannie was.

I: Were you able to get beyond the lobby where the palm trees and the canaries were?

RB: Yeah. We saw her so I guess we did.

I: In the room that she was staying in.

RB: Yes. Yeah.

I: Do you have any images left of that?

RB: No. Except that later on after I was married and first lived in La Grande my sister and I used to go with Gene Robinson, who was our minister, and we'd go out to Hot Lake and then it was an old people's…and we would…Gene was one of these very open, happy, friendly people that knew everybody. A wonderful minister. And Reba and I… He and Reba and I would sing to them if they, you know, if they would want to. Gene would talk to 'em a while and pray for 'em and then he'd say, you know, "You want us to sing?" and so we'd sing in this trio. So I did get to see the rooms then, but it wasn't pretty anymore, I mean, it was okay. It was kept up. Clean and nice as far as I remember, but it wasn't anything like… But I was just a child when I saw those…the canaries and the palm…that's what stuck with me.

I: Sure.

RB: And it was clean and colorful and they had a lot of things going. They raised…you know, they raised their own food and things for the…for the sanatorium…of course, part of this I no doubt heard.

I: Did people talk about that place commonly?

RB: The biggest drawback of that place and it'll never go over it is because the wind blows so hard out there that if…with those nice hot springs and things it could be more summery, people would enjoy 'em, but everybody that takes it and tries to make something out of it is still go that wind that blows just like a… How many times are you gonna sit out there by a hot tub, you know, it's… But the way the Fies and…they had…the way they used it it was for a different purpose.

I: Yes.

RB: And of course people thought when they took those mineral baths and mud baths and stuff that that really helped 'em and maybe it did and maybe it didn't, I don't know. At one time it was quite a nice building.

I: One of the… One of the… One of the things I've heard someone say is that although they didn't advertise it some of their main treatments were for syphilis.

RB: Probably.

I: Why do you think that's probably so?

RB: I think there was quite a bit of that, you know. I mean I think that was the main sexual disease that they had then, that they were aware of anyway. And I suppose people did things in those days just like they do now and it spread. I also heard…and don't…is that on? You're not…you don't type all this, though, I mean it doesn't all go in?

I: No.

RB: I also heard that Dr. Roth did abortions out there. See, you can heard everything and I don't know…I don't know if there was truth in that or not. But I heard that quite a bit and it could be. But…

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

RB: I don't know. Probably. They did quite a bit…

I: That may have been…

RB: Yes.

I: …with the earlier Dr. Fie more than with the later.

RB: It might've been. It seemed like Roth had those older people there. Wasn't he the…I think he was the one that…

I: I'm not sure about that.

RB: I'm not either. You know, I didn't go very often.

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

RB: I guess.

I: Partly because of the hot water that come bubbling up out of the ground.

RB: The Indians came, you know, they came real early and I don't blame them, put their wigwams up and had their hot baths or whatever. It was comfortable to be there in the wintertime, I would think.

I: Yes.

RB: But I don't know, human nature is human nature.

I: It doesn't change quickly.

RB: Nothing new under the sun, it just have to wait for it to come around again.

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

RB: Yes, and it came out to Wolf Creek and brought us books for the children. And I don't remember maybe once a month. I think it was about once a month and then the children could keep the books that long and, of course, a lot of the kids didn't take books, you know. You had to encourage 'em to take books. And then I could use 'em in the school, too, and then they'd come back and pick them up. And where else did…I don't remember…well, no, not in Union or Ladd Canyon. Just Wolf Creek, I guess, is where I remember.

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

RB: I think so, yes, it would. __ quite around regularly.

I: How long would it stay at each school?

RB: Because we didn't have a lot of books, you know.

I: Right.

RB: Oh, they'd just be there, you know, one day when they were…that day that they were bringing things, as far as I remember. They didn't stay.

I: Was it a librarian who was in charge of it?

RB: Yeah. And I don't know whether Mabel Dotey did that or not. I cant' remember now.

I: She might not have had time.

RB: ___ maybe one of the others.

I: Was it… Was it part of the service for the librarian to come into the school, talk to the kids?

RB: No. I don't remember that, that she did. I don't remember. You know, she could have, but I don't remember that.

I: Was it… Was the bookmobile only for children?

RB: I don't know. I don't really… I don't remember. Probably…probably adults could use it, too, if they were, you know, came to the school and looked and the… And I suppose most of 'em knew what the date, you know, about when they would come. But people didn't read in those days much either. A lot of people…country people didn't do a lot. They read the paper and a few things, but they didn't…they weren't as veracious readers, you know.

I: Primarily, do you suppose, because they had so much work to do?

RB: A lot of it. And a lot 'em really didn't go that far in school. I mean they could read, but…but…and they worked hard, yes. And night came they went to bed. And they could get the paper read they…

I: Sure. And farm work, of course, is seven days a week.

RB: Yeah. From early in the morning till late at night.

I: How 'bout these house calls that many doctors made in early years? This was a standard practice, I suppose?

RB: Not…well, I don't remember ever seeing a doctor at my…at the home…at my home during the time I grew up. I don't remember that, but I do remember when I was first married then the doctors were doing that. I remember the…hearing that the doctor…Dr…some gentleman that was at Haines and Baker…or in Powder for a long time…got in his buggy and went way up to the homestead when my husband was born and, of course, he got there late. But they used to travel. Way back there they'd travel if there was an emergency. They'd have to travel in a buggy or a wagon or something. Now I didn't see that. I've just heard that. But when I was…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. And I don't know if they…they were all friends, but I don't know whether they did it because of her friends or because they still did house calls to some of their…

I: I wondered whether you knew how a house call would be originated? Would a doctor just come by because he knew that the person was ill and might need some assistance…

RB: I think that's what I saw.

I: …or would they telephone always to summon the doctor when he needed to come?

RB: I think both. I don't remember us ever calling one to come, you know, to the house. We had the clinic. We had the La Grande Clinic when my children were little, you know. We could…when Dad was bad so we could go up there. I think, though, they…if you called them they would come if you needed 'em. And now you…I don't think you'd ever find one to do that.

I: No.

RB: They might in an emergency.

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

RB: Oh yeah.

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

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

I: Well, what… Did he come with anything in his hand?

RB: I don't remember. I think… He… 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 gonna make it, but he would go out and kind of talk to him and visit with him. And I suppose he learned some things about him while he was there. Also with Dr. Frederick. And I never had one come to the house for me. David came 'cause he was a friend and he liked…like I said, he liked chocolate cake. He'd drop in about lunch and…[laugh] But my husband had helped him build that clinic up there so they were friends for many years. But…

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

RB: I don't think so, in these cases. They might. They might to other cases, yes.

I: Maybe we're talking about too recent times here because in the early part of the twentieth century…I don't suppose someone who really needed medicine would have time to get into a…into town to get to a pharmacy.

RB: They didn't take medicine like they do now. Aspirin, cough syrup…

I: Castor oil.

RB: Yes. The Watkins Man.

I: Yes.

RB: George Fleshman's father, the Watkins Man. You've talked to George, of course you have.

I: Yes.

RB: Okay, his father was the Watkins Man and you got your cough syrup and your vanilla and your this and that from the Watkins Man. But they… 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 and then it got to where you generally people could…because they all had cars, could go to the doctor. And now the doctor…send you to one doctor for your shoulder and the other for your knee and…you know, specialists.

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, or…?

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

I: But these weren't home deliveries, were they?

RB: No, no. They were at the old hospital up as you go out of town. But we got a bill. Or my husband just paid when he took me home.

I: I was trying to refer more to the times when doctors did make house calls.

RB: I don't know.

I: How they…

RB: I don't know how they worked that. Probably with a piece of meat that somebody cut.

I: That, too, I suppose, yes.

RB: In some cases.

I: I need to talk to somebody who's a lot older than you about these things.

RB: About… Have you talked Carlis and Wilma Easley?
I: Not yet. I know…
RB: I don't know Wilma could do much about it. She'd not very well. I don't think you learned anything new. Was there anything new?
I: Well…
RB: You just expanded on…
I: Yeah, that was the…[recording stopped]